



—  — **GOOD** —  —

MEANT IT FOR GOOD



Studies in Genesis 37-50



STUDIES BREAKUP

The book of Genesis lays the foundation and sets the stage to understand the message of the Bible and the world in which we live. It records the creation of a good world by a sovereign God through His powerful word, the rebellion and downfall of humankind as they grasp for equality with God and reject His good rule, the judgment and grace of God in response to human sin and rebellion, and the election of Abraham and his descendants to reverse the curse under which humankind has fallen and to establish God's saving purposes for the world.

The focus of these studies will be on the life of Joseph, one of the greatest heroes in the entire Old Testament. The story of Joseph is found in the later chapters of Genesis (chapters 37-50) and forms part of the larger story that recalls the history of Abraham, his son Isaac, grandson Jacob, and great grandsons who were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel (one of whom is Joseph). Following the creation of the world, the fall of humankind, and the outworking of sin (Genesis 1-11), God calls one man, Abraham, and broadly promises him three things: 1) that his descendants would become a great nation; 2) that they would inherit the promised land; and 3) that they would be blessed in their relationship with God and that through them God's blessing would come to the nations (Genesis 12: 1-3). The call of Abraham is like a light that breaks through the clouds of darkness which hover over a cursed and scattered humanity. It is the sovereign promise of a gracious God to reverse the curse under which the entire human race has fallen and to re-establish the paradise that was lost as a result of human sin. The ultimate fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham casts our eyes forward to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the establishment of a new creation – it is a story that will take the rest of Bible to tell! That is not to suggest, however, that the rest of the Old Testament is like the advertisements and previews at the cinemas, simply an unrelated 'time filler' to entertain us while we wait for the real thing to begin. As Moses (the author of

Genesis) recalls the life of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, we find the descendants of Abraham increasing in number, blessing nations, and waiting in anticipation to inherit the promise land. In other words, one of the key themes of Genesis 12-50 is God's ongoing faithfulness to, and partial fulfillment of, His promises to Abraham. Furthermore, as God continues to act in history - progressively revealing His plans and fulfilling His promises - He not only provides us with examples and warnings that instruct and guide, but He also provides types and shadows that anticipate, announce, and prepare us for the coming of Jesus and the salvation found in Him.

Whether through Sunday school stories or a Broadway musical, the life of Joseph has captivated the hearts and minds of both young and old for generations. As the favourite son of Jacob, Joseph is spoiled by his father and despised by his brothers. When Joseph is sent to check on his brothers who were in the fields tending the family flocks, their jealousy and hatred drives them to sell Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to Midianite traders, who bind him and take him to Egypt as a slave. In Egypt, Joseph is quickly established as a leader in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Joseph's godly character and conduct in the midst temptation from Potiphar's wife leads to further affliction and injustice, and results in his imprisonment. A God given ability to interpret dreams sees Joseph released from prison and brought before Pharaoh who is distressed by a troubling dream. When Joseph rightly interprets the meaning of Pharaoh's dream as a God-given warning of impending famine, Pharaoh is impressed by Joseph's wisdom and virtue, and appoints him viceroy over Egypt. As leader, Joseph devises a plan that not only blesses and saves the Egyptians from starvation, but also ensures the survival of his own estranged family who come to Egypt for provisions during the harsh famine. The story of Joseph is colourful and full of tension and drama, highs and lows. It touches on contemporary issues like breakdown and reconciliation in family relationships, sexual misconduct, and the importance of integrity and godliness in the midst of temptation and trials. It speaks to questions like 'where is God in the midst of pain

and suffering?' 'Is He really working things out for our good?' 'Can we trust God to continue to provide for, and protect us?' Primarily, however, Joseph's story is one sustained lesson that teaches us of God's providential and sovereign ruling of human history, in which he not only overcomes, but also works through the evil intent and plans of human beings to achieve his saving purposes. It is a story that points us forward to another Son who was also loved by his father and sent to his brothers, and yet was betrayed and sold for silver. This Son not only suffered temptation and persecution but also death on a cross, before being raised victorious and exalted as Lord providing salvation for his people. In the Bible, the truth of God's providential and sovereign ruling of human history is most evident at the cross of Christ. For nowhere is the truth of Joseph's words to his fearful brothers in the closing chapter of Genesis more clearly seen than in the death of Jesus... 'You meant evil... God meant it for good' (Genesis 50: 20).

STUDIES BREAKUP

- Study 1 **Good's Good Intent** (Genesis 12: 1-3)
- Study 2 **A Dream Beginning?** (Genesis 37: 1-11)
- Study 3 **When Family Fails** (Genesis 37: 12-38: 30)
- Study 4 **When Evil Triumphs** (Genesis 39: 1-23)
- Study 5 **When Dreams Come True** (Genesis 40: 1-41: 57)
- Study 6 **When the Past Returns** (Genesis 42: 1-44: 34)
- Study 7 **When Revenge is Possible** (Genesis 45: 1-28)
- Study 8 **God Meant it for Good** (Genesis 50: 15-23)

COMA QUESTIONS

Context

- What has happened so far in the narrative? Have there been any major events, characters or themes?
- What has happened just prior to the section you are reading?

Observation

- What do you learn about the main characters in this section? How does the author describe them? How do they describe themselves?
- Is time or place significant in the events that happen in the passage?
- Is there conflict or high point in the passage?
- Do you think there is a major point or theme in this section of the story?
- What surprises are there?

Meaning

- Are there any 'editorial' comments from the author about the events in the narrative? How do these comments illuminate what is happening?
- Does someone in the narrative learn something or grow in some way? How? What does this person learn?
- How does the passage point forward to what God is going to do in the future? Does it prophesy or anticipate Jesus Christ in some way?
- How could you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

Application

- How does this passage challenge your understanding about who God is and what he is like?
- Is there some attitude or behavior you need to change?