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JOSEPH AND CHRIST

The history of Joseph the son of Jacob, as given in the book of Genesis, is one of considerable interest. Taken just as a true story of a life, there are but few like it. "Truth is stranger than fiction;" and it is certain that many, both young and old, have read this history with thrilling interest and lasting profit. The exemplary conduct of Joseph is worthy of admiration and imitation.

His relation to the history of God's cause and people, in their early stage of development, is important. As an example of the over-ruling Providence of God in the affairs of men and nations, showing how man, seeking his own selfish ends, and to a certain degree succeeding, may yet have his plans thwarted, and the seeming evil turned to good account, the history of Joseph is most remarkable. For many reasons his history has been justly valued by

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many; but to us the most important feature of his case is its *allegorical* character. This feature of bible history, though overlooked by many, and denied by some, is becoming more and more apparent. The story itself, though true, as we fully believe, sinks into comparative insignificance when its *spiritual* import is seen. The greater eclipses the less, and the spiritual is greater than the natural, but while this is true, there can be no doubt that those who appreciate the spiritual, value the letter, because of its deeper import, even more than those who see only the letter; just as men who expect to be changed from the natural to the spiritual body in due time, value the natural body because it *is* a stepping stone to the higher, more than do they who ignore the spiritual, and who act on the epicurean principle: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." We regard Joseph's history as representing in its general features the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a type proper, as in the law, we would expect "every jot and tittle" of it to be fulfilled, but in an allegory we look for a picture only on general principles. The case of Abraham's two wives, and their sons, Isaac and Ishmael, which is declared to be "an allegory," (Gal. 4) will illustrate. Every feature of their lives is not mentioned, but there is a most remarkable correspondence between the facts in their history, and the facts in relation to the two Jerusalems; to which Paul makes the application. We do not intend to *make* parallels, or to force into use any feature of Joseph's life, and say this and that must have a parallel; but using as a basis what is *revealed* of Christ elsewhere, we *find* the parallels, and by these, as illustrations, confirm the truth. We regard these correspondences as strong evidence that the same mind that created the gospel plan, superintended the lives of the ones of whom the history is given, and inspired in his own way the writers. The evidence seems all the stronger in view of the fact that many features of this

correspondence have not long been seen. They have been hidden away as jewels in the earth, to be uncovered for the encouragement of the faith of the disciple in this hour of bold and defiant infidelity. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." It seems as if no Christian could have any difficulty in tracing the many features of our Saviour's life and work in the life of Joseph, when their *attention* is called to them.

Joseph was the well beloved son of his father: "Israel loved Joseph more than all his children," Gen. 37:3. For this fact, his reproof of sin, and for his ambitious dreams of coming glory, his brethren hated him. So Jesus, the "beloved Son" of his Father, on account of his condemning their wickedness, and because of his royal claims, as one born to be their king, was hated by his brethren—the Jews. The words are almost identical. "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" said Joseph's brethren, when he had told them of his dream of their sheaves making obeisance to his sheaf." "We will not have this man to reign over us;" We have no king but Caesar;" said Jesus' brethren. In both cases the malice became so intense that death was determined on. They both went down into the pit, and were both delivered from death. It is true Joseph did not actually die, but neither did Isaac, who in another case prefigured Christ, and it is said "Abraham offered his son Isaac," and also "Received him from the dead in figure." The pit was a figure of the death state into which Christ descended. Joseph was counted dead, and his resurrection was thus in figure; but Christ's death and resurrection were both in fact.

The events do not *all* occur in the same order in both cases; but both were severely tempted and yet resisted; both occupied for a time the position of a servant, and were shamefully abused; both were favored of God in their sufferings and their cause miraculously vindicated; both had a price set upon them by their enemies in certain "pieces of silver;" and both gained a glorious victory, being exalted to the "right hand of power." Pharaoh committed all power of his kingdom into Joseph's hand: "Thou shalt be over my house and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou." Gen. 41:40. He was royally robed and enthroned, and before him went the cry "Bow the knee."

What Pharaoh did thenceforward was done through Joseph, and the only way to obtain the blessing of Egypt was by the "way" or mediation of Joseph. So Christ was exalted to the right hand of God; "sat down with the Father in his throne;" had all power given unto him in heaven and earth; "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow;" and it is said of him, "Let all the *angels* of God worship him." "He is Lord of all," "the way the truth and the life," and "no man cometh unto the Father except by" him.

One grand feature of the work of Joseph is that of giving the needed *bread*, and there was no where else to go; so it clearly represents Christ's work as Life-Giver. "I am the bread of life;" "I am

the truth;" "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." "The *words* that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are *life*." Well may we say as did Peter: "To whom shall we go; thou hast the words of eternal life." Oh, that all our readers might realize that we are as fully dependent on the Lord Jesus for Immortality and Eternal life, as were the Egyptians dependent upon Joseph for the support of the natural life. Eternal life only in Christ, is the essence of the Gospel. The first man did not have it, and so did not lose it. He was natural; and the flesh was tried and failed that the *need* of the Second Man might be appreciated. Let us remember that in order to get the Bread we must *apply* for it as did the hungry to Joseph. "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Oh, ye hungry ones, feed upon his precious truth and be filled. We would not overlook the realization of Joseph's youthful dreams. His brethren that scorned him and cast him out had at last to come to him for bread, and they gladly bowed before him. He whom they rejected and counted as dead became their benefactor and saviour. They looked on him whom they had pierced (in figure), and they mourned and were ashamed, but he fed them and even excused them—"It was not *you* that sent me hither, but *God*." "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to *preserve life*."—Gen. 45:5-8.

Let God's mercy be praised!

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When Christ left the Jewish house desolate it was not eternally, but "until the time come when ye shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." In the coming day of restitution, the Lord says: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication (favor and prayer), and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn."—Zech. 12:10. Yes, they will mourn and be ashamed of themselves, when in prayer before him whom they despised, even as did Joseph's brethren when they discovered their brother. But it is the mourning of penitence, and not of despair; it is caused by the spirit of *favor* which is shown them by the long lost brother now restored. They find him exalted as a King and Life-Giver, and he cares for them. They give themselves to him and he gives them a home and all they need. Thus we see that Joseph in many ways represents Christ, and confirms our view of God's plan of the ages.

Truly, God is good, and "his mercy endureth forever." Well may we say, "how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." What we cannot discover he can uncover or reveal; and "thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," and the glimpse he has given us of his plan and his love. "We love him because he first loved us." We love one another because "he hath given us of his spirit." "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

J. H. P.

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