

**Beneath Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat:
Life in the land of good and evil (Genesis 49:29 – 50:26)**

If we read Genesis as a whole book, rather than as a random collection of ancient stories, we will begin to discover the thematic threads that run through it. Among the most important of these is the battle between good and evil that rages within God's fallen creation. In the opening chapters of Genesis we are told that God's creation was meant to display his goodness and loving kindness to all humanity (E.g. 1:27 - 31). But Genesis 3 describes how the world fell under the curse of the Evil One when Adam and Eve were tempted and ate from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (3:1 - 7). Consequently, Adam and Eve died outside the Garden of Eden, just as at the end of Genesis, their descendants Jacob and Joseph died in Egypt, outside the Promised Land. Nonetheless, throughout Genesis we continue to see God's determination to show his goodness to his sinful people (like when Joseph showed God's grace to his brothers, even after they sinned against him). Thus, Joseph's reassuring words to his brothers, '*You meant to do evil against me; but God meant it for good...to save many lives*' (Genesis 50:19 - 20) reinforce this theme of God's goodness overcoming evil, that runs through the rest of the Bible. Almost two millennia later, in his inaugural sermon to Jacob's descendants, the Apostle Peter says of Jesus, "*this man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him... Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" (Act 2:22 - 36. See also Acts 7:9 - 10, 51 - 53). In other words, although the world intended to do evil against Jesus, God used it for good, to save the lives of the many. And so like Jacob and Joseph we can believe that God's grace that has brought us safe thus far will surely lead us home.²

1. Read Genesis 49:29 - 50:14 and 50:24 - 26). Why are Jacob's and Joseph's requests to be buried back in Canaan (the Promised Land) so important?
2. Read Genesis 50:15 - 17. Given that 17 years had passed since Joseph was reunited with his family (Genesis 47:28) why do you think his brothers were still concerned that he might take revenge on them?
3. Why do you think Joseph wept when he heard their plea for mercy?
4. Read Genesis 50:18 - 21. Explore the relationship between what Joseph's brothers intended to do and God's bigger plan of salvation. How is this similar to what happened to Jesus? (Acts 2:22 - 39)
5. Can you think of a time when God used difficult circumstances in your life to bring about good?
6. Reflect back on this story about Jacob and Joseph's family. How has this series helped or challenged your faith?

¹ Although some translations use the word 'harm' the original word used here is literally 'evil'.

² From 'Amazing Grace' by John Newton.