

Joseph's Administration during the Famine Genesis 47:13-31

Section 1: Joseph's Administration During the Famine

Genesis 47:13-26 – “Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. ¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

¹⁵ So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed.”

¹⁶ Then Joseph said, “Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone.” ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year.

¹⁸ When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.”

²⁰ Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's. ²¹ And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. ²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations allotted to them by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands.

²³ Then Joseph said to the people, “Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. ²⁴ And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones.”

²⁵ So they said, “You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.” ²⁶ And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, which did not become Pharaoh's.”

Background Notes for Section I

From the Scripture record, it's clear that Joseph was a good administrator for Pharaoh. He was a good administrator during the seven years of plenty, when he collected and stored up the grain, and he was a good administrator during the years of famine, when he distributed the grain. Notice that Joseph did not have a “free give-away program”! He made the grain available to the people, but there were **no free handouts**. And no one badmouthed the government! Instead, the people were very thankful. Maybe this is a good model for our own government to follow!

Does it seem to you that this account makes Joseph sound hardhearted and unkind in taking the people's land and animals for Pharaoh? No - not at all! Remember, this was a life and death situation. Without proper and even-handed administration, there would have been riots - maybe even anarchy.

Notice how smoothly Joseph administered the distribution of the grain during the famine. No one starved, as far as the record goes. There were no riots. There was no anarchy. Joseph instituted a feudal type of setup, and thus he provided seed for the people in a fair and even manner. The people became “crown tenants,” if you will. Not only were the people

willing - they even suggested this! *“Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate”* (v19).

But you'll notice that Joseph let them keep **more** than just enough to survive. He let them keep 80%, and he cared for them and their little ones. In verse 24 we get the sense that Joseph really cared about the people. Only 20% was taken in taxes for Pharaoh. That was a very low tax in the ancient world - and it still is today! The people recognized that Joseph had saved their lives. No wonder they praised him: *“So they said, “You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants”* (v25).

Joseph was the perfect model of the ideal “benevolent dictator.” It has never been repeated since, and it never will be - until our Lord returns!

Doctrinal Point for Section I

The bottom line in the “fullness of the times” will be Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 1:10, we read: *“that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”*

Notice that phrase, *“the fullness of the times.”* Exactly what and when is *“the dispensation of the fullness of the times”*? It cannot be eternity, because it is still in “time.” The fullness of the times is when Christ returns to reign on this earth. It is the time that is often called the Millennium, because it will last for a thousand years (Revelation 20). Ephesians 1:10 says that during that time **everything** will be subject to Christ. The bottom line in the fullness of times will be Jesus Christ. How does that tie in with the story of Joseph? In Genesis 47, I believe we have a “picture” of that great time in the future when Jesus Christ will reign on this earth. In his time of exaltation, everything was gathered together and summed up under Joseph. The bottom line was **Joseph**. Everyone knew it, and everyone was thankful! I believe that here we have a small glimpse of one aspect of the future reign of Christ. The bottom line in “the fullness of the times” will be **Jesus Christ!**

Practical Application for Section 1

Let’s put in a good day’s work.

In the record of Joseph’s administration of Egypt, we have to conclude that he was a very busy man. Joseph could have “rested on his laurels” and let subordinates do all the day-to-day work, but he didn’t. He stayed on top of the situation at all times. Joseph had a **secular** job in the **secular** state of Egypt, but **he worked as unto the Lord**, because he knew that’s where God had placed him.

Joseph put in a good day's work, and so should we! Colossians 3:23 says, *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men."* Let's not be lazy, whatever job or occupation the Lord has given us. I recall working at a company with a Christian who didn't do a good day's work. I'll never forget some of the comments that the unbelievers made about this man, and the comments had to do with the fact that this man was lazy – he didn't put in good day's work. What a sad testimony! Let's put in a good day's work.

Section 2: Jacob's Last Will and Testament

Genesis 47:27-31 – *"So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.²⁹ When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt,³⁰ but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."³¹ Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed."*

Background Notes for Section 2

When the famine was over, the Jacob's family didn't return to Canaan. They continued to live in Goshen, in the land of Egypt. There they would grow in numbers and become a nation. *"And they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly"* (v27).

This was in accordance with God's plan. Remember Genesis 46:3, when Jacob went down to Egypt God said to him: *"I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there."* Jacob's family probably thought they would return to their homeland when the famine was over, that was not God's plan. When Jacob was ready to die, he had Joseph "place his hand under his thigh." In that day, this was the way of taking a solemn oath and promise, especially in a matter concerning descendants. (See Genesis 24:2-4.) Jacob's parting wish was that he would not be buried in Egypt. Jacob wanted to be buried with his forefathers, the rest of the Patriarchs, at the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron: *"Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place"* (v30).

Doctrinal / Teaching Point for Section 2

The bottom line for the believer is to live and die in faith.

Jacob lived and died in faith. Although over his lifetime he had a lot of lessons to learn in the School of God, but he was a man of faith in life, and he died in faith.

Jacob did not want to be buried in Egypt. Why not? Because of the promises of God! Jacob knew that God had promised to bring his descendants back to the Land that He had promised to Abraham and Isaac. Genesis 46:4: *“I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”*

Jacob knew that his descendants would return from Egypt. Jacob was not only a believer, but he died in faith, believing the promises of God right to the end. He never doubted God. That’s what we mean by “dying in faith.”

Phil Clarkson was a good friend of ours in the Chicago area. Phil went Home to Heaven several years ago after a long battle with cancer. I visited with Phil over the last several months of his life. Even when it became clear that God was not choosing to heal him here on this earth, there was no change in his faith. He never questioned God and he never doubted God’s love and His promises. Phil lived in faith, and he died in faith. What a great testimony!

What about us? At the end of our lives, will our faith be like Jacob’s unwavering faith? The bottom line for the believer is to live and die in faith.

Practical Application for Section 2

Are we listed as worshipers in God’s “record book”?

John 4:23 says that God is looking for worshipers who will worship him in spirit and in truth: *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”* Jacob worshiped God. Verse 31: *“So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.”* In Hebrews 11:21, God’s “record book” spoke about this occasion: *“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.”* Jacob had a lot of rough edges in his character, but when he died he was a worshiper of God.

Are we “just believers” - or are we truly **worshipping God**? Are we worshipping **God the way He wants us to worship Him**? Are we worshipping in **spirit** and in **truth**? Remember, God is seeking true worshipers. Are we listed as worshipers in God’s “record book”?