



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### Talk Genesis 41:46-57: Seven Years of Plenty and Seven Years of Famine

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*"Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable. 50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim. "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

*53 Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do." 56 The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses<sup>[c]</sup> and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. 57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands."*

### Background Notes

In Genesis 41:46 we read that Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He was seventeen years old when he was betrayed by his brothers (Genesis 37:2). So he was in Egypt a total of thirteen years before he was elevated to the position of prime minister. Some of that time was spent in Potiphar's household, and some that time was spent in prison, but we can't be sure of how many years in each situation.

When Joseph was elevated to the position of prime minister of Egypt, he went right to work. Joseph had storage granaries built in cities all over Egypt, and during the good years of plenty twenty percent of the grain was collected and stored up for the seven years of famine to come. Look again at Genesis 41:34-36: *"Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine."*

The fact that the phrase "all the land of Egypt" is used a number of times in this chapter is quite significant for dating the time of Joseph correctly. Look again at verses 41-44: *"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in*

*garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." And in verse 46, "Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt." And in verses 54-55: "...and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do."*

**All the land of Egypt** means both Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. As you know, Egypt is a long narrow country that lies along the Nile River. Lower Egypt is the Nile Delta area, and Upper Egypt is 400 miles up the Nile. Right now you might be saying, "Big deal, so what?" Well, it's important for biblical chronology! You see, some scholars have proposed that Joseph came to power at the time of the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, about 1730BC. However, the Hyksos didn't rule over both Lower and Upper Egypt, or over "all of Egypt," except for a very brief period. So it appears that Joseph rose to power **before** the Hyksos invasion, around 1900BC. This fits in very well with the biblical chronology of the date of the Exodus.

I wish we had more time to discuss this subject, but if you want to check further, read I Kings 6:1, then get out some commentaries and noted bibles. Read what the Scriptures and the commentaries say about the chronology, going back from Solomon's time to the time of the Exodus.

In verses 50-52 we read that Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. These two sons would become tribes in Israel. There was no "Tribe of Joseph" in Israel; the Tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim took the place of the Tribe of Joseph. In this way faithful Joseph got a double portion of the inheritance! See I Chronicles 5:1 in this connection: "*Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright...*"

## **Doctrinal Points**

### **1. Godly believers can wisely plan ahead if they really depend on the Lord's direction.**

That almost sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? If you plan ahead, are you depending on the Lord's direction or depending your own foresight and discipline? If you are depending on the Lord's direction, should you plan ahead? It's not a contradiction.

In Matthew 6:34 the Lord said, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*" The Lord wasn't saying that it's wrong to plan for tomorrow. We can wisely plan for tomorrow while still depending on the Lord. What the Lord meant was "Don't get uptight, don't get anxious, and don't worry about tomorrow." Tomorrow is in **His** hands!

Was Joseph depending on the Lord? Yes! Did Joseph plan ahead? Yes! Depending on the Lord and planning ahead at the same time is not a contradiction. In fact, these things go together. They are complementary. Godly believers can wisely plan ahead, if they also truly depend on the Lord's direction. If you are really depending on the Lord for direction, you will wisely plan ahead for what you're going to do with your time, as to what you're going to do with your abilities, as to what you're going to do with your money – and then trust Him to show you if He wants you to move in a different direction.

Recently someone asked me, "What I you do if someone were to give Growing Christian Ministries \$10,000?" I replied, "Well, I don't know." And they said, "Maybe you'd better plan ahead, because that could happen. Make plans for the future." You know, he had a point. I need to look ahead and plan wisely as to how the Lord wants me to direct this ministry for the future. And now I do have a plan just in case any of you happen to hand me ten thousand dollars as I leave here this morning! Actually, I'm pretty sure I would use that \$10,000 for more radio time. Radio time costs money, and right now I think that would be the best and wisest plan for the expansion of this ministry. But God may have a different plan for the ministry, and I need to be sensitive if He chooses to change my plans.

As a church, are you depending on the Lord? Are you planning ahead as to ministries, as to programs, as to growth? Depending on the Lord and planning ahead go together. In fact, Godly believers can wisely plan ahead if they really depend on the Lord's direction.

## **2. Godly believers can be abundantly fruitful if they really forget past disappointments.**

Where do we see that truth taught? We see it in the names that Joseph gave his two sons. *"Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction"(v51-52).*

Notice the order: first Manasseh, then Ephraim. Do you see the spiritual principle? Joseph was fruitful in the land of his affliction because he was able to forget the horrible things that his brothers had done to him, and the hardships that he had suffered in Egypt. It doesn't mean that these things were erased from his memory, but does mean that Joseph was not bitter, and Joseph did not hold grudges. Joseph was ready to forgive! Joseph recognized the providence of God in all of these events. Joseph did not take revenge on Potiphar's wife, or on the butler, or on his brothers; therefore, Joseph was fruitful in the land of his affliction.

What about us? Lets ask ourselves, "Am I bitter about something that someone has done to me or said about me? Am I holding a grudge because I have been wronged?" If we're bitter or hold grudges, we will never be very fruitful. We must turn past difficulties and problems over to the Lord, and forget how we have been wronged. Even if those who have hurt us never ask for forgiveness, only then, can we be fruitful.

Some time ago I spoke with a Christian man who was bitter over something other Christians said about him more than forty years ago. I was riding in the car with this man, and that's about all he talked about for two straight hours. Sadly, this man is not a very

fruitful Christian -- and he never will be, because he just cannot turn his grievance over to the Lord and forget it. Can you forget past wrongs? If you want to be a fruitful Christian; you must be able to do this. Godly believers can be abundantly fruitful if they really forget past disappointments.

## **Practical Application**

### **Have you come to the right place for bread?**

*"So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do"(v55). : "So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands"(v57).*

We have already seen a number of parallels between Joseph and the Lord Jesus. Joseph is a beautiful Old Testament picture of our Lord Jesus. As Joseph lived with his brothers, but was rejected and betrayed by them, so the Lord Jesus came to his own people, but he was rejected and betrayed and crucified. But as Joseph was raised to power and glory, and exalted over the whole land, so Jesus Christ has been raised to power and glory, and been exalted over the whole world.

When the famine came, everyone had to come to Joseph for bread. If they didn't come to Joseph, they perished. Do you see the spiritual lesson? In John 6:48, Jesus said, *"I am the Bread of Life."* As everyone had to come to Joseph for bread in order to live, so everyone must come to Christ for life, because He is the Bread of Life. So our practical application is the question: Have you come to the right place for bread?

Many people today are not coming to the right place for the bread of life. They are looking for the bread of life in religion, and religious ritual. They are looking for the bread of life in good works. They are looking for the bread of life in mystical experiences. And on and on we could go. But these are the **wrong** places to seek the bread of life! As people had to come to Joseph for bread in order to live, so we must come to Christ, the Bread of Life, for salvation and eternal life.

Is it possible that you are still searching for fulfillment and meaning in life? Why not receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? He truly is the Bread of Life.

Have you come to the right place for bread?