

The Promises of God

Genesis 47:1-31

The family of Israel was finally all together, settled permanently, peacefully and productively in the land of Goshen in Egypt. Then on a convenient day, Joseph brought Jacob himself to meet Pharaoh. It must have been quite a meeting. Earth's greatest King encountering the man chosen by God to lead His people in that day.

Joseph's presenting his father before Pharaoh's throne is a fine token of a son's proper respect for his father. Joseph knew the true worth of a godly character and personality, and surely he knew therefore that his father was more than Pharaoh's equal. And so we have the simple old shepherd standing before the powerful Egyptian monarch. And a simple reading of this passage gives the implication that Pharaoh seemed to recognize that he was speaking to a man of unusual spiritual depth and perception, a man who had known and walked with God for many years. It is likely that Scripture records only a small portion of the actual conversation of Jacob and Pharaoh.

So what is to be gleaned from this great encounter between Israel and Pharaoh? A repetition of God's great promises! Perhaps the greatest of those promises is the promise of exaltation. God would exalt his people, even before the high and exalted King of the mighty nation of Egypt. So, in this meeting with Pharaoh,

I. JACOB DEMONSTRATES GOD'S PROMISE TO EXALT HIS PEOPLE.

LJoseph went first to Pharaoh, to receive Pharaoh's blessing just as God had promised. We looked at verses 1-6 briefly last week. Let me read again the recorded account of the subsequent

meeting of Pharaoh and Jacob,
v.7-10

Notice what happened. Joseph presented his father Jacob to Pharaoh. He presented him before Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, verse 7. He blessed him again when he left.
v.10

That blessing would consist of Jacob invoking God's blessing upon Pharaoh and his family, much like I do as a minister when I read a benediction at the conclusion of a worship service. I invoke God's blessing upon you, the people of God. For Jacob, such a blessing would, no doubt, include an earnest petition to God for his mercy and grace to be shown to Pharaoh.

Such a blessing is a great thing, and in this case, just as in the case of Abraham and Melchizedek, the implication is clearly that, "the lesser person is blessed by the greater." We read in, Heb.7:7 "Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better."

The whole context there is this,

Hebr. 7:1 "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though

they have come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.”

Melchizedek is greater than Abraham because he is a type of Jesus Christ. And Jacob is greater than Pharaoh because God had called him to be the father of his people Israel. When Jacob blessed Pharaoh, surely “the lesser was blessed by the better.” Indeed,

A. God exalts his people to a position of honor.

Jacob, the old shepherd, was in an honored position when presented to Pharaoh. For Jacob was chosen by God! I should note that we share in that blessing today, for we, too, have been exalted by God to a position of honor. For we have been exalted to the same position as Jesus Christ.

Eph.2:6 “...and [God] raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”

Keep this in your mind, as we read through these chapters of Israel going down into Egypt. They left their own land, the promised land, because they faced famine and impending death. They became foreigners and sojourners in a land not their own. They would eventually be enslaved in Egypt. But all the while, they were God’s people, exalted to a position of great honor.

Jacob demonstrates that position of honor, by invoking God’s blessing upon the great and mighty king Pharaoh. And then Jacob speaks of another honor which God had given him. Life itself. Long life. For him as with his ancestors. The only details of the conversation between Pharaoh and Jacob dealt with Jacob’s age. It originated with Pharaoh’s first question. Such an emphasis demonstrates that,

B. God exalts his people with long years of life.

v.8

Such a full answer.

v.9

Jacob had lived 130 years. We read in verse 28 that he would live another 17, surviving to the ripe old age of 147. But even with that, he realized that he wouldn’t survive as long as Abraham and Isaac. Yet surely, as the line of God’s people, as the patriarchs, God exalted them with long years of life.

Even so, Jacob called his life a pilgrimage, giving God the credit for all the supervision and governing that determined the circumstances of his life. He was a pilgrim, a stranger, a sojourner. Without a permanent home on earth, looking forward to a heavenly home, but blessed with long life in the line of Abraham and Isaac. And so we read in,

Hebr. 11:13 “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Because of that faith, Jacob could openly say that,
v.9 “...few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.”

He’s not complaining there, only acknowledging the reality of living in this fallen world. Compared to eternity, his days were few. Evil means difficult, full of trouble, yet compared to eternity, those troubles were light, the days were short. There is no sense of hopelessness or regret in Jacob’s words, nor is there any implied in the evaluation of him given in Hebrews 11. Jacob’s words are words of faith, pointing to God’s blessings despite the

difficulties of his earthly sojourn, because despite those difficulties, God had exalted him greatly!

The Apostle Paul had this same sense of God's blessing in the midst of earthly suffering,

2Cor. 4:7 "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you."

2Cor. 4:13 "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Jacob's life demonstrates all that! God has promised to exalt his people, ultimately to "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" than any "light affliction, which is but for a moment." And

that should be a great encouragement to you, whatever those "light and momentary troubles" might be.

Jacob's life demonstrates something else, too.

II. JACOB DEMONSTRATES GOD'S PROMISE TO PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Remember, they fled Canaan because of the famine. And look what awaited them in Egypt.

v.11-12

We see that,

A. God provides his people with abundance.

They got the best part of the land. Remember, they got it because Pharaoh and the Egyptians were prejudiced against shepherds, and wanted to keep them isolated from the rest of the Egyptian population. In God's providence, the isolated land was the best land!

It was called the district of Rameses, which is the same place as the land of Goshen. Just a different name. And every family had plenty of food, measured and distributed according to need, "according to the number in their families."

The abundance of those provisions is emphasized by the contrast which is described in the following verse,

v.13

There was no food anywhere, except that God's people had plenty! That principle is still true, proclaimed by,

Ps. 37:23 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not

seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread. 26 He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed.”

Similarly, Jesus’ words,

Matt. 6:25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Those are words of simplistic, earthly prosperity. They are words of comparison, an evaluation of this world, this age, in the context of eternity. They are words of perspective, and therefore, promise. Ultimately, a spiritual promise, demonstrated in the provisions of this world. So the family of Israel, the nation of Israel, had an abundance. They had adequate food and clothing and shelter. As they lived in the freedom of separation in the best land of Egypt.

Yet, the bulk of this chapter goes on to describe the depth of famine and poverty experienced by the people of Egypt, and Pharaoh’s gradual accumulation of all the property and all the people. The contrast is what I would like you to see, the contrast between the dire straights of the Egyptian people forced to sell their land and eventually their own freedom, and the great abundance experienced by the family of Israel. The contrast shows that God enabled Israel to prosper through the remaining years of that famine. And so, as a general principle true now as it was then,

B. God provides his people with the ability to remain prosperous.

The Egyptians were given no such ability.

v.13

As a result,

v.14

But something obvious would happen eventually. They would run out of money. Notice, that this wasn’t a welfare distribution. This wasn’t a free gift of a government dole. It wasn’t an entitlement. Surely, had Joseph instituted such a welfare program, he would have destroyed personal and national morale and would have bankrupted the government. Joseph required payment, and it is noteworthy that there was little, if any, complaining about the terms. To the contrary, the citizens were grateful to Joseph for saving their lives, recognizing that they were being treated fairly and generously and that there could really be no other plan which would work as well under the circumstances. Apparently, no Egyptian in those days mistrusted Joseph’s motives nor misconstrued them. So,

v.15

And Joseph answered appropriately,
v.16

And they did.
v.17

Actually, in years of famine, it was a relief for the people to have their cattle taken off their hands. The animals likely would have died in their care, anyway. Nowhere is there a hint of taking advantage of people in need. Just the honorable opportunity for the people to pay for what they got. That lasted a year, and the people came back to Joseph and offered to buy grain with all that they had left.

v.18-19

Again, notice. Joseph is not enslaving them. They are selling their own services in exchange for grain. They are forfeiting their own freedom in exchange for the provisions needed to sustain their own life. It was a free and voluntary commitment.

v.20-21

The only exception was the land given to the priests.
v.22

The terms were fair and generous!
v.23-24, 26

And the response of the people was gratitude.
v.25

Again, I wish to emphasize the contrast. God's people were given great abundance and the ability to remain prosperous. So great is his mercy and lovingkindness. God is the same God today, blessing his people by providing for our needs, having that

outward worldly provision be a sign of the spiritual prosperity that is ours in Christ.

Mat.6: 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

There is one final promise from God represented by Jacob's life, the greatest of them all, and that is that,

III. JACOB DEMONSTRATES GOD'S PROMISE TO BRING HIS PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT.

I've said it before, and I'm sure that I'll say it again. God's purpose for sending his people into Egypt was so that he could deliver his people out of Egypt. Canaan was the promised land. Not Egypt. Jacob certainly knew that. And so we see Jacob giving his son one final request.

v.29-31

The seriousness of the request is emphasized by oath which Jacob requires his son to take, putting his hand under his thigh. It was a solemn vow, a promise he would be obligated to keep. And so it is assured that,

A. Jacob would leave Egypt before his burial.

Now, in one sense, we could all say, that doesn't matter. After all, when a man dies, his body goes to the grave where it decays, and his soul goes to the Lord where it is immediately made perfect in glory. When the body is raised, it doesn't matter where it was buried. It doesn't matter if it went into the sea, or if it was placed in the ground, or entombed in a sepulcher. It doesn't matter if the body was diseased or disfigured, or even if it was

cremated.

The body returns to the dust, and at the resurrection the Lord will raise up from the dust a new body. A perfect, immortal, spiritual body. So it doesn't really matter where Jacob would be buried.

But it did matter here. It mattered because Jacob's request to be buried in Canaan was an act of faith. It was an act of believing God's promise. And though it is certainly true that God could have raised his body from an Egyptian grave, still Jacob saw to it that his own burial would be a testimony of his own faith. He believed God's promises. And his burial would show it!

God had promised him the land of Canaan, so he made sure that after death, his body would remain in that land. We read specifically that this request of Jacob was itself an act of faith.

Hebr. 11:21 "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff."

Jacob would come out of Egypt. Thus he demonstrates God's promise to bring his people out of Egypt. We've already seen that faith in Jacob, for he said to his brothers,

Gen.45:7 "And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

There would be a great deliverance. And what is the title of the very next book of the Bible? Deliverance! Or more commonly, Exodus. God brought his people out of Egypt. And it wouldn't be a small group of 70 men. It would be a great multitude, estimated at over 2 million men, women and children.

B. Jacob's family would leave Egypt with great prosperity.

That prosperity begins even during these first initial five years of famine.

v.27

Their flocks of sheep multiplied and thrived. And so did their own numbers. It's not hard to figure out how they could number over 2 million within the 215 years up to the exodus. They married and they had children. God richly blessed them. He made them into a great nation. And then he delivered them out of Egypt.

We are now that nation. We, the church of Jesus Christ. We are now the Israel of God, the nation of his people. And these promises so vividly demonstrated by the life of Jacob are for us. God exalts us. He provides for us. And most of all, he delivers us. From slavery.

Not slavery to the Pharaoh of Egypt, but from slavery to the dominion and power of sin. And so we read in the NT book of,

1Pet. 2:9 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

That is us. We are God's holy nation. We belong to God, because he has chosen us. So we sing his praises! I'll end with these words of praise and worship.

Psalms 145:1 "I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. 3 Great is the LORD, and

greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable. 4 One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts. 5 I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works. 6 Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, And I will declare Your greatness. 7 They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, And shall sing of Your righteousness. 8 The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. 9 The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works. 10 All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, And Your saints shall bless You. 11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, 12 To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. 14 The LORD upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season. 16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. 18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. 20 The LORD preserves all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy. 21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.”