

The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 66



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV=Literary Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV=Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakh (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

An

THE MANNER OF JOSEPH'S RULE

^{nGen 41:47} And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. ⁴⁸ And 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: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. ⁴⁹ And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. ⁵⁰ And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. ⁵¹ And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. ⁵² And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. ⁵³ And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. ⁵⁴ And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. ⁵⁶ And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands". Genesis 41:47-57

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The "seven plenteous years" foretold by Joseph, as revealed to him by God, came to pass, just as he said. The earth, as obedient to the Lord, brought forth fruit "by handfuls," or abundantly. Joseph gathered up the fruit, as revealed to him, and stored it in the cities. Crops reaped around a city were stored up in that city. During this time, before the famine came, Joseph

had two sons – Ephraim and Manasseh, born to him by Asenath, given to him as a wife by Pharaoh. The birth of these sons proved to be an epoch that enabled Joseph to forget the years of trial through which he had traversed. As the famine progressed, all of the unstored food ran out, and the people cried out to Pharaoh. Pharaoh told them to go to Joseph, and to do whatever he required of them. Joseph then opened

the storehouses, and sold the grain to the Egyptians. The famine continued to increase in intensity, and "all countries came into Egypt to buy corn because the famine was severe in all the world." Everything Joseph had said came to pass. And, as was characteristic of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph's obedience was flawless. Thus far, obedience has been the consistent trait of the faithful.

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EVENTS IN THE WORLD ARE NOT NECESSARILY MEANINGLESS

The narrative of Genesis is establishing that, while they are not the

focus of Divine attention, events that take place in the world are not meaningless. It is possible to assume an intellectual posture that brushes aside anything and everything that takes place in this world as though it was insignificant. This has particular regard to events that are not obviously associated with what God is doing. A brief review of some of these events will serve to illustrate the point.

- ➔ The marriage of Cain (Gen 4:17).

- ➔ The building of the city of Enoch (Gen 4:17).
- ➔ The bigamy of Lamech (Gen 4:19).
- ➔ The building of the city of Nineveh (Gen 10:11).
- ➔ The attempt to build a city and the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-10).
- ➔ A famine in Canaan (Gen 12:10).
- ➔ The conquests of Chedorlaomer (Gen 14:1-17).
- ➔ The immorality of Sodom (Gen 13:13).
- ➔ The generations of Ishmael (Gen 25:12-17).
- ➔ Another famine in Canaan (Gen 26:1).
- ➔ The marriage of Esau (Gen 26:34).
- ➔ The generations of Esau (Gen 36:1).
- ➔ Pharaoh's imprisonment of his chief baker and butler.
- ➔ The famine during the time of our text (Gen 41:56-57).

The point that is to be seen in all of these texts is that God is governing the world. He assesses people that have no covenant with Him, and to whom He shown no particular favor. He weaves circumstances together for the ultimate good of His people. He controls the amount of iniquity that is committed, as seen in the flood and the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain. When an uncovenanted people aspire to make a name for themselves, God aborts their plans.

Events such as those I have mentioned also provide a context in

done in order to encourage men to seek Him and trust Him. It is also a means He employs to teach heavenly dignitaries about Himself.

GOD IS THE TRANSCENDENT CONSIDERATION

God Himself is the premier consideration – not men, not circumstance, and not the world. The knowledge of God is the most lofty knowledge. Fellowship with God is the superior companionship. Involvement with God is the prime participation.

If all of that seems obvious, know that this is not how men – even some religious men – see things. Those who traffic in things pertaining to life and godliness soon find out there is a prevailing ignorance concerning God and His ways. To the naive it is startling when that fact comes home to the heart. **People, as a whole, are fundamentally unacquainted with God.** This ignorance has dictated their misunderstanding of Scripture, missing the main reason for life, and perceiving the seriousness of sin.

If, in these studies of Genesis, our understanding of God is not increasing, we are not really learning anything important. Those in Christ should be able to see this clearly. Of all people, they should know that “*eternal life*” is knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). They should know that Jesus “*is come to give us an*

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which God works out His purpose. **In that working He confirms His own authority and power, showing them to be absolutely transcendent.** All of this is

understanding,” that we might know God (1 John 5:20). The New Covenant is one in which there is an unqualified guarantee: “*they shall all know Me*”

(Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11). All of this presumes several prominent factors in shaping the thoughts of the redeemed.

- ➔ The presence and use of faith Heb 10:38).
- ➔ Regular subjection to the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15-17).
- ➔ The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5-6; 1 John 3:24).
- ➔ The present teaching of Jesus (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20).
- ➔ The intercessory ministry of Jesus at the right hand of God (Heb 7:25).
- ➔ The ministration of the body of Christ through the various gifts placed within it (Eph 4:11-16; Rom 12:1-6).

Where these are in place, whether a person is studying Genesis, the Psalms, the Gospels, the Epistles, etc., their knowledge and understanding of God Himself will increase. This, in turn, will have an extensive impact on the way he thinks, what he says, and what he does.

➔ *"Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit **they refuse to know me**, saith the LORD."* (Jer 9:6).

➔ *"Therefore My people are gone into captivity, **because they have no knowledge**: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst."* (Isa 5:13)

➔ *"For My people is foolish, **they have not known Me**; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good **they have no knowledge**."* (Jer 4:22)

➔ *"Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for **they know not the way of the LORD**, nor the judgment of their God."* (Jer 5:4)

➔ *"Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because **there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land**."* (Hosea 4:1)

THIS CONDITION IS MORE SERIOUS WHEN FOUND IN THE CHURCH

It is infinitely more serious when a

Covenant, which promises that all within it will know the Lord from the very least to the greatest (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11). Second, the knowledge of God is guaranteed by the ministry of Jesus: *"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given **us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true**, and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God**, and eternal life."* (1 John 5:20).

When the apostles confronted a church that had members within it that did not know the Lord, a rebuke was issued. The Corinthian church is an example. Paul wrote to them, *"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; **for some have not the knowledge of God**: I speak this to your shame"* (1 Cor 15:34). Other versions read, *"there are some who are ignorant of God,"* ^{NIV} *"lack knowledge of God,"* ^{CJB} *"don't know anything about God,"* ^{GWN} *"some of you have no understanding of God,"* ^{NJB} and *"some of you have not the knowledge of God [you are utterly and willfully and disgracefully ignorant, and continue to be so, lacking the sense of God's presence and all true knowledge of Him]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Anyone who is unaware of this situation lacks a genuine interest in the things of God, and are themselves proof of the condition. This circumstance is serious beyond description!

AN ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION

Add to this the fact that the book of Genesis is a resounding testimony to the global government of God, which testimony provides an extensive revelation of both the Person and nature of the Living God. There are countless depictions of this fact.

Anyone who is unaware of this situation lacks a genuine interest in the things of God, and are themselves proof of the condition.

ISRAEL WAS FREQUENTLY INDICTING FOR NOT KNOWING GOD

Israel was frequently indicted for not knowing God–i.e. not being acquainted with Him, or being basically unfamiliar with His ways and will.

professing Christian or church is ignorant of God! There is no acceptable reason for such ignorance. There are at least two considerations that make such nescience unacceptable. First, it contradicts the nature of the New

THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH BY HANDFULS

^{Gen 41:47} ***And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.*** Other versions read, *"brought forth abundantly,"* ^{NKJV} *"produced*

plentifully," ^{NIV} *"produced abundantly,"* ^{RSV} *"fruit in masses"* ^{BBE} *"heaps of produce,"* ^{CJB} *"outstanding harvests,"* ^{CSB} *"large harvests,"* ^{GWN} *"yielded generously,"* ^{NJB}

"bumper crops." ^{NLT} *"by handfuls [for each seed planted]."* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"by fistfuls."* ^{INTERLINEAR}

I am not satisfied with the wording of most of the versions. Words like “*abundantly*,” ^{NKJV} “*plentifully*,” ^{NIV} “*outstanding*,” ^{CSB} “*large*,” ^{GWN} “*generously*,” ^{NJB} and “*bumper*” ^{NLT} do not seem to me to be strong enough. This was a miraculous harvest, caused by the God of heaven. It was not a natural phenomenon.

The Amplified Bible appears to have captured the true sense of this statement: “*by handfuls [for each seed planted].*” The lexical meaning of the word translated “*handfuls*” is “CLOSED HAND, FIST, HANDFUL.” ^{STRONG’S} This was probably more than a hundredfold. It was enough so that a storage of 20% of the miraculous annual harvest, over a period of seven years, would result in a supply of grain for seven years of famine—a period during which the nations of the world impacted by the famine would also be supplied food.

A Later Demonstration

Many years later, this same principle of a special abundance would be experienced by the Israelites en route to Canaan – even during their forty-year wanderings in the wilderness.

God fed the Israelites regularly with “*manna*,” a small wafer-life seed that was gathered on a daily basis. The Israelites were not permitted to store manna through the week, or to gather it on the Sabbath day. Ex 16:26 — “*Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none*” (Ex 16:26). Not withstanding this prohibition, “*it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none*” (Ex 16:27). After being rebuked by Moses he said to them, “*See, for that the LORD hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go*

out of his place on the seventh day” (Ex 16:29). That meant they had to do two things: First, gather twice as much manna on Friday. Second, stay in their house on the Sabbath.

A SPIRITUAL PARALLEL

There are times when special grace is present among God’s people, and unusual insights are ministered to them – like “*handfuls*” of truth. The principle of unusual times is not only found in this Genesis-text, but was also demonstrated during the ministry of the Lord Jesus. On a “*certain day*,” when Jesus was teaching “*it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, there were Pharisees and doctors of the*

as keeps us sensitive to such times and places. This involves living by faith and walking in the Spirit, with our affection set on things above. It will require that we do not get caught up in incidentals and novelties that diminish spiritual capacities.

I am persuaded that many souls miss remarkable advantages and blessings simply because they are not prepared to receive them. They have grown too dull to see spiritual possibilities. During great outpourings of grace and the Spirit, they are simply occupied with other things. It ought to be added that we have not been licensed to go about judging other

Our responsibility is to proclaim the manner of Divine workings. It is then the obligation of each believer to so order their lives that they do not miss available benefits.

law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem.” It is said of that occasion, “*and the power of the Lord was present to heal them*” (Luke 5:17). This was the time when four men let a palsied man down through the roof, and Jesus healed him, (Lk 5:18-25). Later, there was another occasion when it was said, “*And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all*” (Luke 6:19). During the ministry of Paul, there was a time when it is written, “*And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them*” (Acts 19:11-12).

As these texts confirm, there are special times and environments in which unusual Divine benefits can be realized. The objective, so far as we are concerned, is to walk in such a manner

people in this matter. Our responsibility is to proclaim the manner of Divine workings. **It is then the obligation of each believer to so order their lives that they do not miss available benefits.**

In the Luke 5:17 text, where the power of the Lord was present to heal, it appears that four men picked up on it, and brought their palsied friend to Jesus for healing – on **that** day. Realizing the possibilities of the moment, they could not be dissuaded from getting their friend to Jesus – even if it meant breaking through the roof to do so.

O, that we could see more sensitivity and alertness among the people of God regarding such matters! We have experienced a measure of this here, but have only touched the hem of the garment. Let us seek full deliverance from the spirit of mediocrity and spiritual, dulness. Grace and glory are at stake in this matter. No person can afford to be obtuse in this matter.

JOSEPH LAID UP THE FOOD

“ ⁴⁸ *And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food*

But Joseph was equal to the challenges of this assignment. Because of his faith and faithfulness, he met no challenge that he could not resolve, and was apparently never intimidated by this great responsibility.

in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same."

Confirming his faith, Joseph is obedient to do what God has called him to do. God's call was confirmed when Pharaoh assigned the responsibility for gathering and managing the excess to Joseph. Keep in mind that this was not spelled out in Pharaoh's dream.

JOSEPH GATHERED UP ALL THE FOOD

"And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt . . ."

The blessing did not make Joseph forget what he was called to do.

Prosperity has a way of eroding the memory of some. During such times they forget their primary allegiance to the Lord. However, it was not so with Joseph.

During those seven years he never forgot what he was to do. In his gathering he did not skip a year here or there, imagining that he would surely have enough. **True obedience is consistent, being driven by faith.**

In Christ Jesus the matter is even enhanced over that of Joseph. It is said of those in Christ Jesus that they are *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto*

obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (1 Pet 1:2).

It also ought to be noted that all of the people were willing, as when the materials for the Tabernacle were gathered (Ex 35:21;22,29). The same was true when the materials for the building of the Temple were gathered (1 Chron 29:6-9). **Begrudging givers bring no glory to God, nor do they bring blessings down upon themselves.**

JOSEPH LAID UP THE FOOD IN THE CITIES

" . . . and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same."

Considering the abundance of the grain that was being stored, this task required wisdom, diligence, and faithfulness. But Joseph was equal to the challenges of this assignment. Because of his faith and faithfulness, he met no challenge that he could not resolve, and was apparently never intimidated by this great responsibility. It can be the same with you!

JOSEPH GATHERED CORN AS THE SAND OF THE SEA

" 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number."

I want to again emphasize how the abundance of the grain that was being stored did not cause Joseph to act foolishly, or to cease the work assigned to him. **Great numbers of people have been spoiled by abundance, not being able to handle it.** In a parable, Jesus spoke of a man who lost his soul because he did not know how to handle his bumper crops. He tore down his barns and built larger ones reasoning, *"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"* (Luke 12:19). That

very night, however, his soul was required of him, and he died. He did not know how to handle an abundance!

GATHERING AS THE SAND OF THE SEA

"And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much . . ." Other versions read, *"huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea,"* ^{NIV} *"amassed grain like the sand of the sea,"* ^{CEB} *"laid up corn as sand of the sea exceeding much"* ^{DARBY} *"like unto the sand of the sea in multitude out of measure,"* ^{GNV} and *"the granaries were full to overflowing."* ^{LIVING}

The amount of grain that was stored was only 20% of the total harvest, and yet it seemed altogether

disproportionate.

HE FINALLY QUIT COUNTING

" . . . until he left numbering; for it was without number." The amount of grain was so vast, they finally quit counting it. Under ordinary circumstances, at the end of those seven years of plenty, they would have gathered enough corn for considerably less than two years (140% of an annual harvest). Now, however, at the end of the seven years, they had enough grain to feed Egypt plus the surrounding countries for seven full years.

That serves to give us a better definition of *"abundance."*

Something Else to Note

It also ought to be noted that during this abundance, more work – more effort – had to be expended to gather the 20% and store it. During these years of plenteousness, they could not at the same pace they did before. **The cultivators, harvesters, and those who stored the grain had to work harder, and extend their efforts and labors.**

One additional thing: the seven years of plenteousness only occurred in Egypt. None of the surrounding countries experienced this increase. During the time of famine, they would have to depend upon Egypt.

ABUNDANCE, THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The “salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim 1:10) is characterized by abundance and increase. No place is made for spiritual meagerness or spiritual poverty – conditions that are universal in the contemporary church. **The presence of spiritual impoverishment contradicts the nature of God and Christ, as well as the salvation over which they preside.** There is cause for alarm concerning the glaring absence of people being “rich toward God” (Lk 12:21). God has supplied an abundant salvation, but men are not taking in much of it. It is a pathetic situation, and no satisfactory explanation can be provided for it.

Ponder the following, which parallels the astounding plentitude that characterized the grain Joseph stored up for the time of famine.

- ➔ **SATISFACTION.** “They shall be **abundantly satisfied** with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” (Psa 36:8)
- ➔ **PEACE.** “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the **abundance of peace.**” (Psa 37:11)
- ➔ **LIFE.** “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come **that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**” (John 10:10)

- ➔ **GRACE.** “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive **abundance of grace** and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:17)
- ➔ “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, **grace did much more abound.**” (Rom 5:20)
- ➔ **HOPE.** “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,

we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly.” (2 Cor 10:15)

- ➔ **EDIFICATION.** “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, **maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**” (Eph 4:16)
- ➔ **LOVE.** “And this I pray, that **your love**

The cultivators, harvesters, and those who stored the grain had to work harder, and extend their efforts and labors.

that ye may **abound in hope**, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Rom 15:13)

- ➔ **CONSOLATION.** “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so **our consolation also aboundeth** by Christ.” (2 Cor 1:5)
- ➔ **FAITH, UTTERANCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND DILIGENCE.** “Therefore, as ye **abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us**, see that ye abound in this grace also.” (2 Cor 8:7)
- ➔ **GOOD WORKS.** “And God is able to make **all grace abound toward you**; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may **abound to every good work.**” (2 Cor 9:8)
- ➔ **FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** “Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and **increase the fruits of your righteousness.**” (2 Cor 9:10)
- ➔ **FAITH.** “Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labors; but having hope, **when your faith is increased**, that

may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” (Phil 1:9)

- ➔ **THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.** “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God.**” (Col 1:10)
- ➔ **THE INCREASE OF GOD.** “ . . . the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, **increaseth with the increase of God**” (Col 2:19)
- ➔ **THANKSGIVING.** “Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, **abounding therein with thanksgiving.**” (Col 2:7)
- ➔ **LOVE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER.** “And the Lord make you to increase and **abound in love one toward another**, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.” (1 Thess 3:12)
- ➔ **PLEASING GOD.** “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, **so ye would abound more and more.**” (1 Thess

4:1)

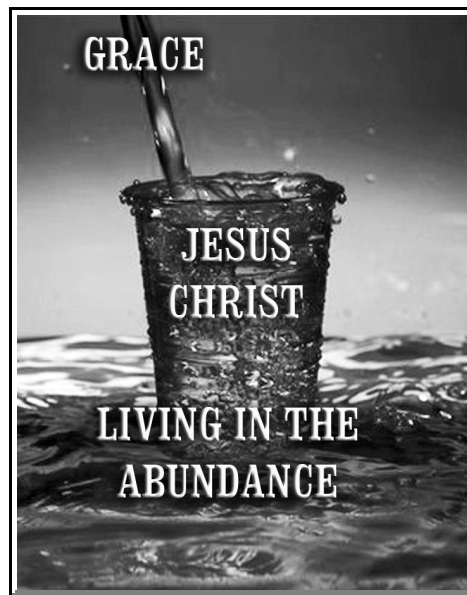
- ➔ **FAITH AND LOVE.** Grace that is ***"exceeding abundant with faith and love"*** (1 Tim 1:14).
- ➔ **THE HOLY SPIRIT.** *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior."* (Titus 3:5-6)
- ➔ **SHOWING THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD'S COUNSEL.** *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath."* (Heb 6:17)
- ➔ **MERCY.** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* (1 Pet 1:3)
- ➔ **THINGS TO BE ADDED.** *"faith...virtue...knowledge...temperance...patience...godliness...brotherly kindness...charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (2 Pet 1:5-8)
- ➔ **AN ENTRANCE.** *"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet 1:11)

During the time of spiritual plentifulness, the people of God must extend themselves – gathering more, storing more, and laboring with more fervor. Many professed believers are to static. They gather the same amount during an abundance as they do during

more normal times. Such people have not considered that times of famine will come – times when they will have to be sustained by what they gathered at other times – when spiritual fruit was plentiful.

This kind of gathering must be done properly – even as when Israel gathered the manna. They had to work harder on the sixth day – gather more. If they attempted to do this on any other day, the extra they had would rot. Blessed is the person who can see this principle of spiritual life.

Also, just as surely as Egypt and the surrounding countries could not have survived the seven years of appointed famine, **so the body of Christ cannot survive without the abundance the Lord has provided.**



All grace is brought to us through the Person of Christ. He alone is *"full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). That is, grace and all that it brings has been localized in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the parallel breaks down, it is the overflow of grace that is actually

given to men. The picture breaks down in that grace is never diminished in Christ Jesus.

Because of this arrangement, grace can never be exploited or abused. Men have access to it only through Christ Jesus. If they are not abiding in Him, or if they are walking after the flesh, grace is beyond their reach. Those who fear speaking about grace, thinking that men will abuse it, have ungrounded fears – really they are nothing more than imaginations. However, although they are imaginations, they have been perpetrated by the devil to move men to minimize the grace of God, or not to speak of it at all.

It is time for the church to declare war on spiritual meagerness. It reproaches Christ when His followers remain in a state of spiritual ignorance, living as though an abundance had not been provided for them. Small and sporadic works are out of order. The lack of godly qualities is inexcusable. The people of God must not learn to live in such a condition. Such an impoverished state is evidence of unbelief, which leads to condemnation.

The truth of the matter is that spiritual life is sustained by an abundance of resources, not scarce and sporadic supplies. The percentage of professing Christians that are attempting to sustain spiritual life by small and infrequent spiritual supplies is staggering. Whatever men may think of this approach to life, it is nothing more than a vain imagination. **God did not provide an abundance so men could live on small dosages of that Divine plentitude.**

Those who approach life with a small and decreasing appetite for the things of God will eventually fall away. For them, that is unavoidable.

TWO SONS BEFORE THE FAMINE CAME

" 50 And unto Joseph were born | two sons before the years of famine | came, which Asenath the daughter of

Joseph gathers the grain as the Lord had revealed it should be done. When the famine came, he opened the storehouses and distributed the food– Given O. Blakely

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Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.”

Sometime during the years of plentiful harvests, two sons were born to Joseph. They were not born during the famine, but during the time of plenteousness. They were born while Joseph was busy administrating the gathering of the grain into the cities. Some are of the opinion that these were twins. BRUCE MELECH Just as Joseph was kept alive physically during his stay in Egypt, so, from, time to time, he was revived and encouraged in that strange land.

Until this point Joseph’s encouragements included the following.

- ➡ When the Lord prospered everything he did (Gen 39:2-3).
- ➡ When he was made the head over Potiphar’s house (Gen 39:4-5).
- ➡ When the Lord gave Joseph favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison (Gen 39:21).
- ➡ When he was made the manager of the prisoners in the king’s prison house (Gen 39:22).
- ➡ When the Lord was with him as the head of the prisoners, making everything he did to prosper (Gen 39:23).

- ➡ When the dreams of the baker and the butler were fulfilled by them being released from prison (Gen 40:20).
- ➡ When he was made the head over all of Egypt (Gen 41:40-44).

Now, another benefit was given to this man of God. His wife, given to him by Pharaoh, bare him two sons. This ensured that his name would be carried on through those sons.

The endurance of hard experiences did not move Joseph beyond the place of blessing, and the same needs to be said of you. Blessing will come if you abide!

THE FIRST SON WAS MANASSEH

“⁵¹ And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.”

MANASSEH

“And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh . . .”

This is Joseph’s first son. He also joins the number of Abraham’s seed that were born outside of Canaan, which were all of Jacob’s sons, with the exception of Benjamin, who was born near Bethlehem (Gen 35:16-19): including Joseph: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, and Joseph.

All of the promises of Abraham, who himself was not born in Canaan, were passed to Isaac and Jacob, both

of which were born in Canaan (Gen 18:1; 21:1-8; 25:24-26).

The name Manasseh means, “Who McCLINTOK & STRONG’S MAKES TO FORGET,” “FORGETFULNESS; HE HITCHCOCK THAT IS FORGOTTEN,” AND “CAUSING TO FORGET.” FAUSSETT

This birth marked an inward epoch in the life of Joseph. He therefore named his firstborn son to honor that event. Now, every time Manasseh’s name was uttered, what took place when he was born would be remembered. This was frequently the manner of the Patriarch’s. **Their lives were deliberately wrapped up in the purpose of God.** Thus, even the naming of their children became an occasion for giving glory to God.

MADE TO FORGET MY TOIL

“ . . . For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil . . .” Other versions read, **“all my trouble,”** NASB **“all my hardship,”** NRSV **“my hard life,”** BBE **“all my labors,”** DOUAY **“forget entirely my troubles,”** NAB **“what he meant was that God had made up to him for all the anguish of his youth,”** LIVING **“all my miseries,”** ABP and **“my sufferings.”** GNB

I do not think Joseph was in continual remembrance of the troubles he endured. The point here is that until this time, he could not forget them. Perhaps there were things he saw or heard that stirred the recollections of his troubles. They were significant.

- ➡ Being stripped of the coat of many colors that was given to him by his father (Gen 37:23).
- ➡ Being thrown into a pit (Psa 37:24).
- ➡ Being sold as a slave, and all of the experiences that went along with such a transaction (Gen Psa 37:28).
- ➡ Being put on the auction block, and finally purchased by Potiphar (Psa 37:36).
- ➡ The lies concocted against him by

This was frequently the manner of the Patriarch’s. Their lives were deliberately wrapped up in the purpose of God. Thus, even the naming of their children became an occasion for giving glory to God.

Potiphar's wife – things he could not disprove (Gen 39:7-19).

- ➔ Being put in prison, and shackled with chains that hurt him (Psa 105:18).

Keep in mind that Joseph was young when he experienced all of these things – seventeen when they started. He had not been hardened by the world, but was tender. He no doubt experienced fear as well as pain, and the feelings that come from being moved from place to place, and made the property of a stranger.

All of these had left scars on Joseph. But now, with the birth of Manasseh God Himself had made Joseph forget those difficult experiences.

MADE TO FORGET MY FATHER'S HOUSE

" . . . and all my father's house." Other versions read, "all my father's household," ^{NASB} "suffered at the hands of my family," ^{CJB} "and everyone in my father's family," ^{NLT} "my parental home," ^{TNK} "for the loss of his father's home," ^{LIVING} "the things of my father," ^{ABP} "my family back home." ^{CEV}

This may seem to some like a rather harsh and ungrateful statement. However, when you remember some of the things he endured in his father's house, it becomes apparent that it was a legitimately difficult time for Joseph.

- ➔ When they saw the coat his father gave him, Joseph's brothers "hated him" (Gen 37:3a).
- ➔ His brothers could not speak peaceably to him (Gen 37:3b).
- ➔ When Joseph had a dream, and told it to his brothers, they "hated him yet the more" (Gen 37:8).
- ➔ When he had another dream he told it to his father, and Jacob rebuked

(Gen 37:10).

- ➔ When he told his dream to his brothers they envied him (Gen 37:11).

The expulsive power of newness of life is a marvelous provision. We must capitalize on it in our assemblies, and our private lives as well. We will find relief from troubling care in the marvelous wake of the newness of life.

- ➔ When Jacob sent Joseph to find his brothers, and see if it was well with them and the flocks, they saw him coming they conspired against him to kill him and said, "And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams." (Gen 37:19-20).
- ➔ They stripped Joseph of his coat, cast him in a pit, and eventually sold him as a slave to some passing merchants (Gen 37:23-28).

Those were some hard things to bear for a seventeen year-old boy (Gen 37:2). Yet, the Scriptures do not say that Joseph continually dwelt on these experiences. They do suggest that from time to time he remembered them – and probably with much sorrow. All of these bitter experiences occurred because he told the truth None of them took place because of foolishness.

It was the birth of new life that was used by God to enable him to forget all those household experiences.

THE POWER OF LIFE

There is a principle to be seen

here. Many people have had some heart-breaking experiences in their lives – experiences that are difficult to forget. However, when "newness of life" is received from God, it has a way

of blotting out the recollection of formerly troubling things. It is not that there is no recognition of them. However, there is a peace that comes along with newness of life – a peace that makes the past look different. Or, as it stated in Scripture, "old things pass away" (2 Cor 5:17). Perhaps you have had such an experience. If you have not, and there are still abuses and injustices that trouble you, make a determination by faith that you will cast "all your care upon" the Lord, knowing that He cares for you (1 Pet 5:7). The fact that immediately after that text we are admonished to resist the devil, "steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet 5:8-9), suggests that Satan exploits "care" or "anxiety." ^{NASB} We have this promise, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psa 55:22). Having been liberated from cares and burdens, we will be able to more freely walk in the newness of life.

The expulsive power of newness of life is a marvelous provision. We must capitalize on it in our assemblies, and in our private lives as well. We will find relief from troubling care in the marvelous wake of the newness of life. This is because of the superiority of spiritual life – being alive unto God brings a whole new set of marvelous experiences.

THE NAME OF THE SECOND SON WAS EPHRAIM

" ⁵² And the name of the second | called he Ephraim: For God hath caused | me to be fruitful in the land of my

Joseph gathers the grain as the Lord had revealed it should be done. When the famine came, he opened the storehouses and distributed the food– Given O. Blakely

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affliction."

We do not know if these were twins or not. If not, we do not know of the length of time between the births. **The point here is that in a display of His Sovereignty God intruded into Joseph's life and brought relief from toil and**

children in the land where I've been treated harshly," ^{CEB} *"made me to grow in the land of my poverty,"* ^{DOUAY} *"has increased me in the land of my humiliation,"* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *"made me fruitful in this land of my slavery,"* ^{LIVING} *"God has made me successful in everything,"* ^{ERV} *and "God has prospered me in the*

And where did this singular blessing take place? *"In the land of my affliction."* And what was this land? It was the dominating, prosperous land of Egypt. It was a famous land, with a well known Pharaoh. But for Joseph, it was *"the land of my affliction."* That is where a false report was raised against him. That is where he was imprisoned for more than a decade. That is where he was shackled and chained.

Now, he had been made the head over the land of Egypt – but he does not refer to Egypt as the land of his promotion, or glory, or advantage. Instead, it is the land of his affliction.

Now, he had been made the head over the land of Egypt – but he does not refer to Egypt as the land of his promotion, or glory, or advantage. Instead, it is the land of his affliction.

grief. Men are to reckon on God being able to do this. They do not have to live with constant recollection of grievous experiences.

land of my sorrow." ^{MESSAGE}

THE SECOND HE CALLED EPHRAIM
"And the name of the second called he Ephraim . . ."

The fruitfulness to which Joseph refers is that of having children. He is not speaking of the accumulation of riches, flocks and herds, or honor among men. Some of the versions mistakenly apply this word to Joseph's "success," ^{ERV} or "prosperity." ^{MESSAGE}

The name Ephraim means, "FRUITFUL, INCREASING," ^{HITCHCOCK} "DOUBLE FRUITFULNESS," ^{EASTON} "DOUBLY FRUITFUL," ^{FAUSSET}

Joseph is doubtless thinking within the circumference of the covenant made with Abraham, then Isaac, and then his father Jacob. There was the promise of *"seed"* (Gen 12:7 ^{ABRAHAM}; 26:3 ^{ISAAC}; 28:3 ^{JACOB}). These promises of *"thy seed"* were mentioned thirty-two times from Genesis 12:7 through Genesis 35:12. Now the promise is confirmed in Joseph.

In this we behold how God was preparing Joseph to bring Jacob and his family into Egypt – something that was not in his conscious planning. There is no word here of Joseph longing for Canaan, or desiring to again be in his father's house. It almost sounds like sacrilege – until we consider the purpose of the Almighty. **It appears to me that God severed Joseph from an affection for Canaan, for he would never return there as a citizen again.** In fact, he was to prepare the environment into which all of Abraham's offspring would enter and multiply. Nevertheless, in his spirit he sensed the hostility of this land, as compared to that of Canaan.

A double blessing for Joseph, just as he would, through Manasseh and Ephraim, receive a double allotment in the distribution of the promised land (Josh 14:4; 16:4; 17:17).

AN APPLICATION

GOD CAUSED ME TO BE FRUITFUL
" . . . For God hath caused me to be fruitful . . ." Other versions read, *"The second son he named Ephraim and said, "God made me fruitful in the land of my suffering,"* ^{NIV} *"in the land of my misfortunes,"* ^{NRSV} *"given me fruit in the land of my sorrow,"* ^{BBE} *"given me*

THE LAND OF MY AFFLICTION
" . . . in the land of my affliction."

So far as the record is concerned, these are the only children Joseph had.

Whether we are speaking of our natural state or our spiritual state, we can look at both natural and spiritual children as refreshing fruit in the land of trouble. In this land of toil and sorrow, even in an infant state they bring us joy and relief from the hardships of an alienated world. This is nothing less than the grace of God!

THE SEVEN YEARS OF PLENTEOUSNESS WERE ENDED

⁵³ **And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended."**

AND
"And . . ." Other versions read, *"then,"* ^{NKJV} *"when,"* ^{NASB} *"now when,"* ^{DOUAY} *"so,"* ^{GENEVA} *"at last,"* ^{NLT} *"so at*

last," ^{LIVING} *"and went by,"* ^{ABP} *and "as soon as."* ^{ISV}

This is Divinely established

calendar language. The reference is to "THE seven years of plenteousness." These years had been established by God, and they commenced and would be terminated according to His word. He was controlling "the times" (Acts 1:7).

THE SEVEN YEARS OF PLENTEOUSNESS

" . . . the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt . . ."

As already stated, these plenteous years did not occur anywhere else. God did not even allow men to behold the extraordinary crops in Egypt and send someone to learn how to have such a massive reaping. Plenteousness was not the result of human planning or ingenuity. **The harvests were miraculous, and there was actually no way to account for them apart from the working of the Lord.**

These great harvests were not the result of planting more seed than usual. The same amount of seed they had always planted yielded more fruit – like seven heads growing on one stalk from one seed (Gen 41:5).

I do not doubt that some Egyptians got used to these bumper crops, thinking they would continue on always. Only those who knew the purpose of God could think any differently.

WERE ENDED

" . . . were ended." Other versions read, "came to an end," ^{NIV} "were past," ^{DOUAY} and "passed away." ^{SEPTUAGINT}

God appointed a time for miraculous harvests to commence, and one for them to conclude as well. I have no doubt that the period involved was precisely seven years in length. Whether anyone else did so or not, I am persuaded that Joseph monitored that time every closely. For him, it was the time assigned to store up sufficient food to keep all that were impacted by the coming famine alive. He could not be dilatory in his work or inconsistent in the task of gathering 20% of the food throughout the land of Egypt. **For seven years, he could not be distracted to other things, so as to affect what he**

was doing.

Not only was he required to gather and store the grain, he was also responsible for the care of that grain. It must be secure, and stored in such a manner as to allow for its proper ventilation, guard against the intrusion of thieves, etc. In other words, at the conclusion of those seven years, if Joseph had done his job well, Egypt and the surrounding nations would not be kept alive.

A Spiritual Observation

There are times when we experience unparalleled spiritual plentitude– like "showers of blessing" (Ezek 34:26). Such a time is described as taking place in the early church: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and **great grace was upon them all**" (Acts 4:33). Another

men have studied, or become better organized, or planned in a more intelligent manner. Rather, it is because men came into the domain where such things can take place. They have resisted the devil and drawn near to God, as they are enjoined to do (James 4:7). They have sought first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33), and set their affection on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2). As a result, and in honor of their faith, God has poured out an extra measure.

Those who ignore this, and choose maintain their normal manner of gathering will be like those who failed to gather a double portion the day before the Sabbath (Ex 16:5) – or, perhaps like those who would gather enough manna each daily only for breakfast. Other choose to be pulled away by earthly considerations that are

Man who languish in spiritual poverty do so because they did not gather properly during copious outpourings. They spent critical time on lesser things, and thus have not been prepared for the times of need that come upon every soul.

time, after the sons of Sceva were overcome by a demon possessed man, it is written, "And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. **So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed**" (Acts 19:20). Those believers who had been given to curious arts availed themselves of that occasion, bringing their devilish books together and burning them.

Such times do not come because

not of themselves wrong. But they are wrong because they demand time that should be given over to the Lord.

Times of spiritual plentitude sometimes come to a temporary end. In such times, if souls have not gathered from the extra bounties that have been supplied, they will faint in the day of adversity.

Man who languish in spiritual poverty do so because they did not gather properly during copious outpourings. They spent critical time on lesser things, and thus have not been prepared for the times of need that come upon every soul. Of course, such times must be recognized, which ability comes by a faith that has been kept.

THE SEVEN YEARS OF DEARTH BEGAN TO COME

^{54a} *And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said . . .* Other versions read, *"the seven years of famine began to come,"* ^{NKJV} *"Then came the first of the seven years of need,"* ^{BBE} *"The seven years of scarcity,"* ^{DOUAY} *"the seven years of famine set in,"* ^{NAB} *"seven years of hunger,"* ^{ERV} *"The seven years of famine arrived,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"The seven years of scarcity and famine began to come."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

AS JOSEPH HAD SAID

" . . . according as Joseph had said . . . Other versions read, *"just as Joseph had said,"* ^{NASB} *"which Joseph had foretold,"* ^{DOUAY} and *"just as Joseph had predicted"* ^{LIVING}

God will make no room for men to come to an improper conclusion. He will see to it that those who trust Him will not credit this famine to a change in the climate, or bad soil, etc. This was a precise time that had been declared by Joseph, His servant.

BEGAN TO COME

This does not suggest that the famine *"began"* slowly to develop, although that is possible. The famine itself, however, lasted seven full years, and it immediately followed the seven years of plenty. The meaning here is that the period of famine *"began."* There were no crops to harvest – at least none of any consequence. What happened to Cain happened to all of the Egyptians: *"When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth"*

(Gen 4:12).

This would also suggest that the Nile River did not overflow its banks, supplying irrigation to that desert-like area.

God had decreed that the ground would not yield crops to Egypt and surrounding countries – and it did not. I do not doubt that some of the Egyptians attempted to cause the ground to yield its fruit – but it did not. Joseph could now say, *"this is that"* (Ex 16:23; Acts 2:16; 1 John 4:3).

Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following: " . . . THE MOST COMPLETE PARALLEL TO JOSEPH'S FAMINE WAS THAT WHICH OCCURRED IN A.D. 1064-1071, IN THE REIGN OF FATIMEE KHALEEFEEH, EL-MUSTANSIR-BILH, WHEN THE PEOPLE ATE CORPSES AND ANIMALS THAT DIED OF THEMSELVES; WHEN A DOG WAS SOLD FOR FIVE, A CAT FOR THREE, AND A BUSHEL OF WHEAT FOR TWENTY, DEENARS." ³³ (UNDER THE HEADING "FAMINE")

ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT SHOULD BE MADE

As *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Tim 3:15), the church must apprise men when what God has declared takes place before their eyes.

- ➡ The way of the transgressor is hard.
- ➡ Those who find themselves enslaved to sins of various sorts should be reminded, *"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"* (John 8:34). And again, *"of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage"* (2 Pet 2:19).

- ➡ Those who attempt to find God in nature and in the world's religions must be told, *"Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come"* (John 7:34).
- ➡ Those who insist on sinning and indulging in the appetites of the flesh must be told, *"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out"* (Num 32:23).
- ➡ Those believers who experience inner warfare must be told, *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would"* (Gal 5:17).
- ➡ Those experiencing spiritual freedom need to be told, *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). And again, *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).
- ➡ Those who experience inappropriate intrusions of unwanted thoughts should be told, *"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"* (Rom 7:23).

One aspect of spiritual growth is being able to recognize the proper source of contradicting things and people we encounter. The church plays an indispensable role in this matter.

BUT IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT THERE WAS BREAD

^{54b} *. . . and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread."*

Now we learn something that was not affirmed in Joseph's interpretation

of the Pharaoh's dreams, yet was in the purpose of God.

THE DEARTH WAS IN ALL LANDS

" . . . and the dearth was in all lands . . . Other versions read, *"the*

famine was in all lands," ^{NKJV} *"in every country,"* ^{NIV} *"every other land,"* ^{BBE} *"in the whole world,"* ^{DOUAY} *"in all the land"* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *"all the other lands,"* ^{NIB} *"all the surrounding countries,"* ^{NLT} *"in all the earth,"* ^{ABP} *"an international famine."* ^{ISV}

Once again, the various versions present a distorted picture concerning “all lands.”

- ➡ Some read “the whole world” BBE/ABP
- ➡ Some read “all lands.” KJV
- ➡ Some read “surrounding lands,” AMPLIFIED or “surrounding countries.” NLT
- ➡ Some read “the land,” meaning Egypt. SEPTUAGINT
- ➡ Some read “all other lands” NIV

The first meaning of the word translated “lands” is: “LAND, EARTH 1A) EARTH 1A1) WHOLE EARTH (AS OPPOSED TO A PART).

Some say the famine was in Egypt and the surrounding countries. This would take in Syria, Arabia, Palestine, Canaan, etc. The difficulty with that view is that verse fifty-six reads, “*And the famine was over all the face of the earth.*” There, however, it reads, “*the face of the earth,*” an expression not used in our text.



Most students of this passage consider it to refer to all of the neighboring lands, as opposed to the entire earth. This is probably so, as journeys to Egypt from distant countries

beyond the seas is not likely. It appears that the lands south and west of the Mediterranean sea are intended – still a very large area. The dark areas of the adjoining map indicate the extent of Egypt’s Kingdom. No bread could be found in these countries. The famine had not come only to Egypt, but to all the territories it managed as well. Nothing that was planted yielded a harvest for the next seven years.

IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT THERE WAS BREAD

“ . . . but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.” Here again, Egypt proper is separated from the territories over which it presided. All through the land of Egypt there was corn, or grain. It was not in the fields, but in the granaries located in the various cities. Joseph had executed his job faithfully. He was a good and faithful servant of God. Now, before all the people, God will fulfill His purpose.

GO UNTO JOSEPH

“ 55a And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph . . . ”

WHEN ALL THE LAND WAS FAMISHED

“*And when all the land of Egypt was famished . . .*”

Prior to this statement it was clearly stated, “*but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.*” Yet, here it says, “all the land of Egypt was famished” – “*famished,*” or “intensely hungry.”

The people had apparently laid some food aside as time went on, but it had now been depleted. Bread was actually in all the land, but, even if they knew where it was, it was not accessible to them. After diligent search, they could not find any food.

This Parallels A Spiritual Famine

This so exactly parallels Amos’ prophecy of a spiritual famine that it justifies a few remarks about it. Speaking through His prophet Amos, God said, “*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst*” (Amos 8:11-13).

In my judgment, this is precisely what is taking place in our day.

- ➡ The Lord sent the famine of bread in Egypt, and He has sent a famine of hearing the Word of God today.
- ➡ The Lord sent the famine in order that Joseph might manage the distribution of food, so His people

Israel, would come down into Egypt. He has sent a famine of hearing the Word of God so His people will get where the food is.

- ➡ The people in Egypt used up what had grown naturally, and got to the point where they had to live on what came supernaturally. So the professed church has used up what has been supplied by men, only to be in a state of spiritual starvation.

The difference between the days of Joseph and those of Amos is that the professed people of God had given themselves to wrong things, and ignored Divine provisions. **That is the condition that prevails today.** Any discerning person knows that a grasp of Scripture and the knowledge of God is glaringly absent in the modern church. It is not pleasant to talk about it, but it is imperative that it be declared. If the people are ever going to turn to God in a meaningful way, they must be

apprised they are experiencing a famine of *"hearing th word of the Lord."*

THEY CRIED TO PHARAOH

" . . . the people cried to Pharaoh for bread . . . "

They should have cried to Joseph. He had been made *"governor over Egypt"* (Acts 7:10) by Pharaoh's own decree (Gen 41:41-44). Pharaoh had ridden throughout the land with Joseph riding in his second chariot, declaring that Joseph had been made *"ruler over all the land."* He had said to Joseph, *"I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt"* (Gen 41:44).

But now that the people had run out of bread, they did not go to Joseph. Perhaps they have forgotten what Pharaoh had said, and with the passage of time had come to think of Joseph only as a kind of icon, or political straw man. At any rate, they did not associate their present need with the one who had been given the reins of the Egyptian government.

A Parallel Circumstance

In this *"day of salvation"* (2 Cor 6:2), God has made crystal clear that all authority has been given to Jesus, His exalted and enthroned Son (Acts 2:36; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11; Col 1:18; 1 Pet 3:22). Yet, in this day of spiritual famine, the people are not turning to Jesus. They are going to the worldly rulers, so to speak – the institutional men. They are seeking for spiritual sustenance at the hand of counselors, psychologists, motivators, fund-raisers, entertainers, organizers, Higher religious educators, etc. But this approach has not brought relief from the famine that has been imposed upon the people. **It has not resulted in spiritually minded people, growing believers, or the possession of confidence and hope.**

Still, in spite of these obvious results, few people have come to the point where they will acknowledge what is really happening.

God has imposed a famine by pouring out the spirit of deep sleep, and closing the eyes of the seers. As it is written, ***"For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep. And He has closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, He has covered and muffled. and the vision of all this has become for you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, Read this, I pray you, he says, I cannot, for it is sealed. And when the book is given to him who is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray you, he says, I cannot read. And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips but remove their hearts and minds far from Me, and their fear and reverence for Me are a commandment of men that is learned by repetition [without any thought as to the meaning], Therefore, behold! I will again do marvelous things with this people, marvelous and astonishing things; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the understanding of their discerning men will vanish or be***

address the spiritual famine that is upon us. God will not allow them to do so, just as He did not allow harvests of grain to be reaped in Egypt.

PHARAOH SAID, "GO TO JOSEPH"

" . . . and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph . . . "

Pharaoh knew that he personally did not have the answer to the dilemma, but he knew who did. He told the people, *"Go unto Joseph."* **Get to the right place. Go to the person who can resolve this situation.**

A Spiritual Parallel

The solution to starving in a spiritual famine will bring no glory to the flesh. It will not be conducive to the development of a religious career. **People must go to Jesus.** Those who are *"weary and heavy laden"* must come to Him (Matt 11:28). They must see Jesus – the exalted and enthroned Jesus – as the Primary Man – even the ONLY Man who can see to it that they are fed, experiencing spiritual nourishment and growth. Eternal life, after all, is knowing *"The only True God, AND Jesus Christ"* who He has sent (John 17:3).

But this approach has not brought relief from the famine that has been imposed upon the people. It has not resulted in spiritually minded people, growing believers, or the possession of confidence and hope.

hidden" AMPLIFIED (Isa 29:10-14).

This is why the religious professionals cannot satisfactorily

The cry must be heard loud and clear: *"We would see Jesus"* (John 12:21). Until that cry is heard, there will be no resolution to the problem.

DO WHAT JOSEPH SAYS!

^{55b} . . . **what he saith to you, do."** Other versions read, *"Whatever he*

says to you, do." NKJV *"you shall do,"* NASB and *"Do what he tells you."* NIV

Pharaoh himself honored the exaltation of Joseph. He told Joseph

that he was over Joseph *"only in the throne,"* or *"in matters of the throne"* AMPLIFIED (Gen 41:40). This was a matter over which Joseph, by Pharaoh's appointment was presiding.

Note that it was not enough to *"go unto Joseph."* **The people had to do what he said.** They would not be given food unless they came to Joseph and did what he said. He would not hand them the key to the storehouses – they had to do what he said.

A Spiritual Parallel

Here is the answer to the spiritual poverty that continues to exist in the professed church. There are cursory invitations to come to Jesus, **but little is being said about doing what He says.** Jesus once asked, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). That is a formidable question, and it must be answered by every person who is disobedient to Jesus. *"Why?"* **Why does anyone come to Jesus, yet refuse to do what He says?** Why does anyone call Him their Lord, yet ignore what He tells them to do? Has God ever given the slightest indication that He is indifferent about people ignoring what Jesus has demanded of them?

There needs to be a great revival within the modern church of doing what Jesus said. Think of some of the things He has required of us, and ponder if there really is any excuse for them not to be obeyed by us.

➡ *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (Matt 5:16)

➡ *"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"* (Mat 6:25)

➡ *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matt 6:33)

➡ *"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* (Mark 8:34)

➡ *"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."* (Luke 6:36)

➡ *"Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness."* (Luke 11:35)

➡ *"And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."* (Luke 12:4)

➡ *"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."* (Luke 12:35-36)

➡ *"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."* (Luke 12:40)

➡ *"Have faith in God."* (Mark 11:22)

In all of our ambitions, plans, and doing, we must make sure we do not ignore the words of our Master. He will not permit us to call Him *"Lord"* while ignoring what He requires of us. That is rather elementary, yet it is vital! **Jesus must be honored by all men, for God has exalted Him to the place of absolute preeminence.**

THE FAMINE WAS OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH

" 56a And the famine was over all the face of the earth . . ." Although I must admit I say this with caution, I will reaffirm that this probably had to do with the domain over which Egypt ruled. However, I must also acknowledge that this is done with considerable reservation.

This description of the famine differs from the one given in verses thirty and fifty-four: *"the famine shall consume the land,"* and *"the seven years of dearth began to come."* Here the text reads, *"all the face of the earth."* The literal rendering of the text is, *"the famine he-became over all-of*

the faces of the earth." INTERLINEAR

I will let the matter rest there, simply saying it seems to me that more is being said here than the various versions indicate. The condition will be further explained in later verses, bringing additional clarity of the matter.

JOSEPH OPENED THE STOREHOUSES

" 56b . . . And Joseph opened all the storehouses . . ."

By this, the text means Joseph opened the storehouses in every city – all of them. **He did not open them,**

however, until everything available to the people was consumed. They were not opened as long as any food

remained in the hands of the people. By Divine intention, the people could not receive food from the storehouses until no other food was available.

I do not doubt there was a lot of redistribution of the remaining food, as people sought to sustain themselves as the famine grew worse and worse.

A Spiritual Principle to Be Seen

In Christ Jesus, God has supplied spiritual storehouses that are brimming over with nourishing food for the soul. They are referred to as *"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places"* (Eph 1:4), *"all things that pertain to life and*

godliness" (2 Pet 1:3), and include *"the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col 2:3).

However, like the storehouses of Joseph, these are not opened until there is a perceived need for them. Simply put, *"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places"* are not available to those who have neglected the Word of God, are not living by faith, and are not walking in the Spirit. **If the resources that are readily available are ignored, there can be no expectation of the storehouses being opened to the individual, or to a congregation of believers.**

The rich things of God are not available to those who are merely curious to know them. I do not believe this is generally known. **There are multitudes of professing believers that are in a state of spiritual starvation because they have not eaten, so to speak, what has been made available to them.** They have resources available to them that they are ignoring in preference for the baubles of this present evil world. Such poor souls will find the rich storehouses of God's grace closed to them. When some souls are feeding on Divine riches, they will sit idly by, unaware of what is happening. God will not give them access!

JOSEPH SOLD THE CORN TO THE EGYPTIANS

" 56c . . . and sold unto the Egyptians . . ."

Notice, Joseph did not give the grain to the Egyptians, he sold it to them. Was not this the grain they had themselves given to Joseph? Indeed, it was, **but it represented excessive harvests that were given to them by God.** Now, they had to pay to receive these reserved resources.

Some are of the opinion that Pharaoh purchased this excess corn from the citizens of Egypt, as opposed to gaining it by a form of taxation. I prefer to think he obtained the corn at his own expense, which will better fit into this being a type of obtaining Divine resources.

The Type Seen

There is a sense in which the rich things of God must be bought by those

receiving them. One church, which was dying of spiritual malnutrition, was admonished by Jesus Himself to buy from Him *"gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see"* (Rev 3:18). Solomon exhorted to purchase truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding: *"Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding"* (Prov 23:23). Speaking of God's great salvation Isaiah said, *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"* (Isa 55:1).

There is a price to be paid for the rich things of God – and it is not in terms of money. If, for example, you

want God's *"beauty,"* you must give your *"ashes"* in exchange for it. If you desire *"the oil of joy,"* you must exchange your *"mourning"* for it. If you want to wear *"the garment of praise,"* you must exchange *"the spirit of heaviness"* for it. Therefore it is written that Jesus was raised up to appoint, or grant, to those who mourn, *"to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified"* (Isa 61:3).

Simply put, if a person wants what God has prepared for them, they have to give up the flesh and the things pertaining to it. That is the price, and it is to be paid. Those who refuse to make this exchange – spiritual bartering – will perish from spiritual hunger. That simply is the way things are.

THE FAMINE WAXED SORE IN EGYPT

" 56d . . . and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt." Other versions read, *"became severe in Egypt,"* ^{NKJV} *"so great was the need of food in the land of Egypt,"* ^{BBE} *"In the*

land of Egypt, the famine became more and more severe," ^{CEB} *"the famine was grievous"* ^{DARBY} *"the famine had oppressed them,"* ^{DOUAY} *"the famine became more and more severe,"* ^{CEB} *"the*

famine had gripped the land of Egypt," ^{NAB} *"the famine grew even worse in Egypt,"* ^{NJB} *"The famine, however, spread over the whole world,"* ^{TNK} and *"the famine grew extremely distressing*

in the land of Egypt.” AMPLIFIED

This is the explanation of why Joseph opened the storehouses. **The famine came to the point in Egypt, where it was unbearable.**

The fact that the famine “*waxed sore in Egypt*” suggests that the whole world was not affected **to that extent** – especially in areas beyond the Egyptian rule were concerned. Remember. The interpretation Joseph gave of Pharaoh’s dreams did not refer to other nations. He had said the years of plenty and famine were to “*all the land of Egypt.*” In the least sense, that would be the geological border of the land. In the optimum sense, it would be its political borders.



In this consideration, the famine is viewed as an earthquake, with the land of Egypt being the epicenter of the famine. The famine extended into the political boundaries of Egypt, probably with lesser intensity. The world was impacted, but not to the extent of Egypt itself. There, the famine was the worse. However, “there” was also

where the food supply was located.

In the purpose of God, all of this was setting the stage so Jacob and the souls with him – seventy souls in number – would come into Egypt, as God had declared to Abraham. The following would result from that migration.

- ➔ Israel, during a time of favor, would begin to multiply exponentially (Ex 1:7).
- ➔ The growth of Israel would be interpreted by a new Pharaoh as a threat to Egypt (Ex 1:9-10).
- ➔ The oppression of Israel would commence, lasting four hundred years, as God had told Abraham (Ex 1:11-22; Gen 15:13).
- ➔ Israel would be delivered with a great deliverance (Ex 13:3).
- ➔ The fame of that deliverance would spread abroad (Josh 2:10; Num 22:11).
- ➔ The deliverance became a key means of identifying and encouraging the people of God (2 Kgs 21:15; 1 Chron 17:21; Ps 114:1; Hag 2:5; Heb 3:16).

THE IMPACT OF A FAMISHED CHURCH

Just as the famine in Egypt impacted the world around it, so a famished and impoverished church has an impact on the world about it. **Since it is the sole “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), there is an immediate effect upon the world when that ministry is not maintained.** That is precisely why Babylon the Great, Satan’s version of the church, is said to

be “*THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*” (Rev 17:5).

There are moral deficiencies that would not exist if the church was doing its job. Such things as the spread of sodomy, abortion, and aggressive violence would have more difficulty surfacing if the truth was being sounded forth faithfully.

However, even given this situation, the famine is more severe in the church, just as the famine of our text was more severe in Egypt. **To not be able to obtain spiritual resources is more serious than the conditions in the world that are caused by sin.** A lukewarm “Christian,” for example, is in a more serious condition than someone in the world that has hit the bottom of the moral pit. This is so because the lukewarm “Christian” has sinned against more truth. He has chosen to turn his back on the Savior that delivered him, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. People “*who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,*” yet fell away, are in an infinitely worse condition than those who have never believed (Heb 6:4-6; 2 Pet 2:20).

These are matters upon which those who are of sober minded do well to think. It is imperative that the saints labor to avoid a spiritual famine.

While this parallel is certainly not exact, it does enable us to see an aspect of truth that is essential. Salvation makes no allowance for a weak and impoverished church.

THEY CAME TO EGYPT TO BUY CORN

“⁵⁷ ***And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.***”

ALL COUNTRIES CAME
“*And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn . . .*”

There was no doubt some time-

lapse involved, as word got out in countries impacted by this famine, that grain could be procured in Egypt.

Keep in mind, that in his

interpretation of the dream, and in his exaltation and commission by Pharaoh, there was no mention of other nations. **Unless Joseph received some special revelation about this, it was a circumstance to which he had to immediately respond, and that with a lot of wisdom.** I do not know that he realized Canaan, where his father and brothers were, was going to be affected by this famine.

The countries did not come to Pharaoh, but to Joseph. That means that:

- ➔ The word was passed along that he was in charge of the distribution of grain.
- ➔ They also came to “buy” grain, knowing that it was not being given away.
- ➔ They came because they needed to come.

Something to Note

If men will not steel themselves against it, hardship can awaken a sense of need, as well as the determination to meet it.

Pass the Word Along

Those who have found what is needed in Christ need to pass the word along, following the example of four lepers who came upon a stash of food that had been abandoned by a host of Syrians that God had forced to run away, leaving their tents, horses, asses,

and all their supplies (2 Kgs 7:6-7).

When the lepers came into the vacated camp, and saw the abundance that had been abandoned, *“they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it”* (2 Kgs 7:8).

Then the lepers thought of the situation differently. They reasoned, *“We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household”* (2 Kgs 7:9).

They then reported to the porter of the city, *“So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within”* (2 Kgs 7:11).

The king, like many skeptics replied, *“And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and*

get into the city” (2 Kgs 7:12). But one bold and insightful soul reasoned, “let us send and see” (2 Kgs 7:13). They did, and found that the report was precisely correct (2 Kgs 7:13-16).

Something like this no doubt happened in the surrounding nations that were affected by the famine.

THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION

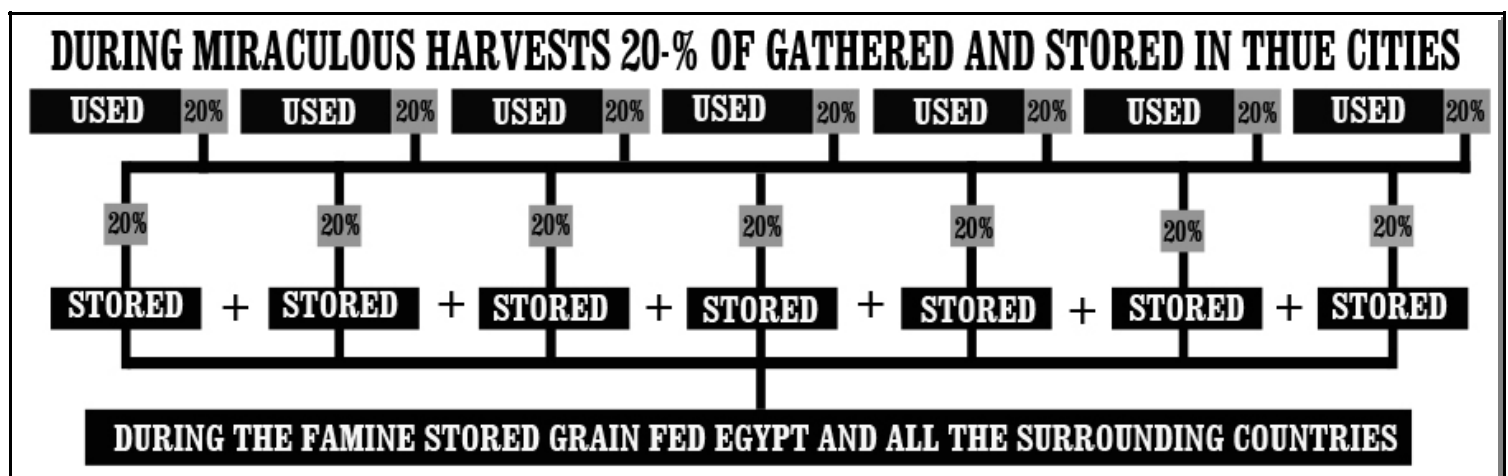
Since Jesus has been exalted, and is administrating the Kingdom, the faithful have sent out the word that bread is available, and in copious supplies. Those who have dared to go and see have found it to be so. Pass the word along brethren! Pass the word along!

THE FAMINE WAS SORE

“ . . . because that the famine was so sore in all lands.”

They came because the famine was “so sore in all lands.” It grew worse and worse until they had to do something about it. Some historians report of this very famine, “WHEN THE PEOPLE ATE CORPSES AND ANIMALS THAT DIED OF THEMSELVES.” SMITH'S DICTIONARY

But those who were of sound mind went to Egypt, and sought out Joseph. They believed the report they had heard, and took advantage of the opportunity afforded them. They found the means by which they could be sustained. Have you? Or, are you unaware of what is provided, and given to eating garbage?



The magnitude of the harvests during those seven years of plenty is worthy of consideration. Each year Joseph gathered and stored twenty-percent – one fifth of the total harvest. That was done for seven years. Twenty percent of seven years or ordinary harvest would have yielded 140% of a year's harvest. If a years harvest was 100,000 bushels, storing 20% for seven years would amount to 140,000. Distributing that amount to Egypt alone would amount to 20,000 bushels each year – one fifth of the normal harvest. In order to obtain sufficient for seven years of famine, however, you would have to have a double harvest of 100,000 bushels each of the seven years – or 700,000 bushels.

But even that would not be enough, for the distribution of the stored supply was distributed to surrounding countries for seven full years. That would require a staggering harvest each of the seven years of plenty – perhaps even a triple harvest.

NOW, THINK OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

The spiritual resources that have been, so to speak, stored up for us, are referred to as *“all spiritual blessings”* (Eph 1:4) and *“all things pertaining to life and godliness”* (2 Pet 1:3). These, of course, differ from the corn of Egypt in that **they never do diminish.**

Now, for over two thousand years, the saints of God have been kept alive, and even flourished in the courts of the Lord, by availing themselves of these rich treasure. How great they must be! What possible reason can be cited for remaining spiritually impoverished?

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/20/13. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The sixty-seventh lesson will cover verses 1 thru 20 of chapter forty-two: **“FAMINE IN CANAAN AND THE APPEAL TO JOSEPH.”** The scene now returns to Jacob. The famine has struck Canaan, and Jacob hears there is “corn in Egypt.” He sends Joseph’s brothers to Egypt to buy corn, keeping Benjamin at home. When they came to Egypt they went to Joseph and bowed down before them. Joseph recognized them, but they did not know him. He remembered his dreams, and tested the integrity of his brothers, charging them with being spies. He demanded that they bring their youngest brother to Egypt, then imprisoned them for three days to think things over. He then told them to bring their youngest brother to verify their words, and they agreed to do so. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.