Genesis 182

The Road to Serfdom

Genesis 47:13-26

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Let us take our Bibles this morning and open them to Genesis 47. We will be trying to cover, Lord willing, Genesis 46;13-26 today. The title of our message this morning is "The Road to Serfdom." It is actually the name of a book by Friedrich Hayek.

If you want to understand what the whole Book of Genesis is about, it is God raising up the Nation of Israel and preserving them so that He can export His Messianic blessings to the whole world through this special nation. He has done that through promises that He has made to Abraham, and those have been passed down to Isaac, and then from Isaac to Jacob.

Then it looks as if the Nation of Israel is ready to morally self-destruct in Canaan. Because of negative influences, God uproots the Nation of Israel (only 66-70 people) out of Canaan, and brings them to a place of safety in Goshen, in the land of Egypt. When God does a work, He picks a person. The person that He picked for that particular work, the preservation of Israel, was a teenager named Joseph.

We have followed his story as we have moved verse-by-verse through the Book of Genesis. Joseph, having been betrayed by his brothers as a mere teenager, is now in the place of prominence in Egypt. The family, just like God said would happen, has come to Egypt, and they have been given the best of the best in the midst of a famine—a place called the land of Ramses in Goshen in Egypt.

As all of that is happening, what we have a description of today is the famine's course. How bad was it exactly? Remember, the prediction is that there are going to be seven years of prosperity in Egypt (and really all over the known world), followed by seven years of adversity.

Famine's Course (Genesis 47:13-26)

I. Cash (13-14)
II. Livestock (15-17)
III. Property (18-22)
IV. Leasing of the land (23-26)

We are in the midst of those seven years of adversity. How bad was it? Well, it was bad. Here we have a description as we look at these verses this morning (Genesis 47:13-26): the depletion of cash within Egypt (Genesis 46:13-14); the depletion of livestock within the land of Egypt (Genesis 47:15-17); the depletion of property within the land of

Egypt (Genesis 47:18-22); and the whole thing culminates with a leasing agreement, leasing of the land (Genesis 47:23-26).

Let us take a look at this famine. Notice, if you will, Genesis 47:13. It says,

> *"Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine."*

Notice that it mentions Canaan, where Israel came from, and Egypt. In other words, this is a famine that covered the known world. This is why God saw in advance what was going to happen in Canaan, and how He had already made provision for His people to leave Canaan to that place of agricultural robustness in Goshen. It is one of the major reasons why God got His people out of Canaan and moved them to Egypt with Joseph being the instrument that God used.

It is very exciting to learn in the Bible that long before we have a financial need of some kind, God has already made provision for that. Did you know that, as members of His family, God has done that for you? He sees financial lack coming before we do, and He has already made provision.

The family comes. They did not know what, how, when, where, why, or who, but they do not need to know because God's character is that of a very good God who, at the end of the day, cares for our physical needs. Keep that in mind in this world of ups and downs, high gas prices and inflation, and downsizing and layoffs. Keep in mind who your provider is: it is the Lord. The Lord is going to take care of you.

If God already gave you the greatest gift, Jesus Christ, why would He not give you these lesser gifts? Let us say, for example, I said to you, "I bought you brand new tickets to go on a cruise." Would you accept that from me? Let us pretend I can do that. You pack up, you go to the place where you board the cruise line, and then as you are coming out of your house, before you get to the place where they board the cruise, you say to me, "I cannot really afford the Uber. I cannot really afford a taxicab." I say to you, Well, tough luck then. No cruise for you."

Of course I would pay for the taxi. if I am giving you the greater gift, the cruise, why would I not give you the lesser gift, the taxicab? But you see, that is how a lot of us treat the Lord. "Lord, thank You that You died on the cross for me, gave me the ultimate gift, and absorbed the wrath of a holy God in my place; but I really cannot trust You for this month's mortgage payment or rent or whatever the financial need there is." Of course you can trust God for those things. He already gave you the greater gift. We just have to learn to trust Him for the lesser gifts.

Long before this famine broke out, God knew what was going to happen. He had already arranged for His people, Israel, to sojourn in a very special place, but the rest of

Egypt, who does not know God, is not so fortunate. Their money becomes depleted. Genesis 47:14 says,

> *"Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house."*

Money for grain, all over the land of Egypt, is brought into Pharaoh's house. You will notice here that Joseph is completely upright, ethical, and moral as he deals with the subject of money. When we select leadership in this church, we select elders and deacons, and the nominations start with the floor from you. What kind of people should you select? The first thing you look for in terms of a leader is are they honest in financial dealings? An elder or a deacon handles resources, they handle money.

How tragic it is when you have someone that is unethical in that position. Jesus actually had that problem. Judas, His friend, was embezzling from the bag. That is why he got upset when expensive alabaster oil was poured on Jesus to worship Him. Judas said, "Should not this expensive oil be sold and liquidated? We could have money to give to the poor?" Then in parenthesis the text (John 12:3-6) says that He really did not care about the poor because he used to help himself from what went into the bag. Embezzlement, we call it. He wanted the alabaster oil sold so more money could be in the bag for him to steal from.

Countless stories happen in churches of leaders that are unethical in the area of finances. What the Bible says is that when you select leaders, make sure that they are ethical in how they deal with money.

First Timothy 3:8 says,

> *"Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain."*

The good old King James Version calls it "filthy lucre." There is nothing wrong with money. The problem is the love of money; the problem is people wanting to use the resources of the church to enrich themselves. Make sure when you select leaders, that their character is free from the love of money. Joseph is that way. He has had access to all kinds of finances, all kinds of money is being brought to him, and he is putting it where it belongs, not enriching himself in the process.

It always amazes me how politicians can go into public life as a public servant, be given a particular salary, and all of a sudden they are buying the most expensive beachfront property you can imagine. Where in the world did they get that money? That does not look right. We have to be very careful about things like this. The world is watching. Joseph, when it comes to this issue of money, is extremely ethical.

By the way, did you know that the Bible talks more about the issue of money than any other single subject? I so appreciated the book, as a new Christian, "Money, Possessions, and Eternity" by Randy Alcorn. I do not agree with every little thing in the book, but he does a great job of giving you every biblical text that deals with money. It was an exhausting study to learn as a new Christian, how much the Scripture deals with the subject of money and finances.

The Bible says, if you cannot be faithful in something small, how could you be trusted with something big? If you cannot be trusted with something as minor as honest, ethical financial dealings, how in the world is the Lord Jesus Christ supposed to trust you with the souls of men and women in terms of proclamation of the gospel. Joseph, however, is circumspect; he is upright, and he is dealing honestly.

We move away from cash into livestock (Genesis 47:15-17). First of all, the money fails. We already know that. Genesis 47:15 says,

> *"When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, 'Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone.'"*

"Our money cannot buy food anymore," is basically what they are saying. "Our money has become worthless now." Is it not interesting that the Bible warns us over and over again about this? Be careful about earthly goods, earthly finances. One day you could have it, and it could be very valuable; the next minute it can disappear.

Proverbs 23:5 says,

> *"When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.*
> *For wealth certainly makes itself wings*
> *Like an eagle that flies towards the heavens."*

There is nothing wrong with having money. The issue is, does your money have you? There is nothing wrong with possessing possessions. The issue is, do your possessions possess you? Have they become so important in one's life that they have crowded out a relationship with the Lord?

One of the greatest, most misquoted verses in all the Bible is that people think the Bible says money is the root of all evil. The Bible does not say that. It says what? Love of money is the root of all evil. I know people that have money, but they do not love it. I know people that do not have money and love it. The issue is not possession; it is a heart attitude.

Jesus says in Matthew 6 that you cannot serve both God and mammon. There is only room in a person's heart for one god. If you will not serve the true and living God because a "god"—little G—has crowded out His place, then we have moved into idolatry.

In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul writing to Timothy, says,

> *"Instruct those who are rich in this present world"*—in other words, it is okay for a Christian to be rich, but there are special instructions for that Christian—*"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited."*

In other words, do not think yourself more important than others because your bank account is a little higher.

> *"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope"*—there is the problem—*"on the uncertainty of riches, but on God"*—who wants to make our lives miserable. Oh, it does not say that—*"who richly supplies all things to enjoy."* (1 Tim 6:17)

If you find yourself in a situation where you have resources above and beyond your needs, which is the definition of wealth, do not be conceited about that. Do not fix your hope on it; fix your hope on God. It is okay to have it. The reason you are not to fix your hope on it is because it is uncertain—*"the uncertainty of riches."*

Here is this group of people in Egypt, ruling over the known world—the empire of the day—who lost their wealth, and lost their money. In fact, the Bible teaches that there is coming a future time when the nations will become poverty stricken. You see that in the third seal judgment (Revelation 6:5-6. If you read those chapters, it talks about what I believe is runaway inflation—too much money chasing too few goods—taking the currencies of the earth at the time, yet future in the Tribulation period, and reducing their purchasing power by 90%, if I am reading that right.

In Revelation 18:15, when Babylon falls in the Book of Revelation, the ones that wail and cry the most are the great merchants of the earth who made themselves wealthy through; Babylon, I should say, made them wealthy (Revelation 18:15-19). When that city is destroyed in the seventh bowl judgment, the people that are connected to that city, that are crying the loudest, are the ones that became rich and wealthy through Babylon. That is the danger of attaching one's hope, security, and sense of self-worth to something that could be here and gone tomorrow, like money.

This is what is happening now all over Egypt. Joseph, as God is giving him wisdom, makes an offer. It says in Genesis 47:16:

> *"Then Joseph said, 'Give up your livestock, and I will give you food for your livestock, since your money is gone.'"*

The exchange that Joseph wanted to do is summarize in Genesis 47:17:

"So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for their horses and flocks and herds and the donkeys; and fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year."

Is it not great to know that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills? Psalm 50:10 says,

"For beast of the field is Mine,
The cattle on a thousand hills."

People say, "The Lord may own the cattle on a thousand hills, but does He own the cattle on the 1,001st hill?" That is Hebrew parallelism there, where the second line repeats what is in the first line, but in different words. The first part of it is: "Every beast of the forest is Mine," "The cattle on a thousand hills" being symbolic language for everything that God owns. God owns it all. You may not own it all, but God does. He has promised that He is going to provide for you.

Even beyond earthly provisions, there is something waiting for you in heaven that inflation cannot touch. Did you know that? It is called your inheritance. First Peter 1:3-4 says,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

I may be down to my last buck, but you know what? My heavenly inheritance is intact, because I, at the point of faith alone in Christ alone, have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Nothing can take that away.

This is why Jesus, in Revelation 2:9 could say to the church at Smyrna, "I know your poverty." The poverty that He was speaking of there, I believe is the lowest level of poverty a person can descend to, a level of poverty which is basically unknown where we live, but people throughout the world sadly can experience it. He says,

"'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...'"

It is interesting. He says the exact opposite to Laodicea at the end of Revelation 3. This is a church that had everything: they had wealth, money, budgets, and finances. The financial outlook looked very bright, and He said, "But you are poor, because you have learned to trust those things instead of trusting Me."

The Book of James says the man who suffers trials should exalt himself in his high position (James 1:9). Why would someone going through trials be in a high position? Because the man that is going through trials is trusting the Lord, not earthly resources. The problem with having earthly resources is that the rich are used to buying their way

out of their problems. If you are buying your way out of your problems, why trust the Lord? There is no point in praying for your daily bread if you own your own bakery, right? But the person that is in a poverty stricken condition is actually rich, because now they are learning to trust the Lord who owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

We have to look at this issue of money and finances very carefully, because our culture places such an emphasis on it. Of course, you know the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus, in Matthew 6:19-21 says,

> *"'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'"*

If your treasure is in earthly things, that is where your heart is; if your treasure is in heavenly things, that is where your heart is. As we come up on Thanksgiving this week, thanking the Lord for our blessings, I would just encourage all of us to hold on to those blessings very, very loosely. Certainly, we in North America have earthly blessings beyond what most of the world has, but hold on to it loosely. It is very deceptive; it is very uncertain. Look to the Lord, Who is ultimately the source of those earthly blessings.

We move away from cash to livestock, and now we get into the real estate business: property (Genesis 47:18-22). The people come needing bread. There is some timing here. Notice Genesis 47:18:

> *"When that year was ended, they came to him the next year..."*

They have been trying to get by with what they had. Now the year is over and the people are in this state of desperation. This is what is happening all over Egypt. That desperation is in Genesis 47:18b and c. Notice the things that they were already learning to live without:

> *"When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, 'We will not hide from my Lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's.'"*

The money has been spent already. We know that from Genesis 47:14. The cattle belongs to Pharaoh (Genesis 47:16-17). If you do not have any money and you do not have any cattle, what do you have left? What they are saying is, "We have the clothes on our back and that is it. We have bodies and property and nothing else."

You see that in the last part of Genesis 47:18. It says,

> *"'...There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands.'"*

Things cannot be getting more bleak. Think about living in that kind of financial circumstance where you have nothing but your body and your property, and that is it. You do not have cash, you do not have food. The issue becomes, why did it get this way? It got this way because that is what God said would happen. You remember the prophecy was given in Genesis 41:30, Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream. It says,

> *"'And after them [the the fat years, the prosperous years] seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land.'"* (Genesis 41:30)

The prophecy was: after the fat years are over, there is going to be such a time of poverty that you will not even remember the prosperous years. Those seven fat years, those seven good years—you will not even remember what it was like, the poverty is going to be so bad.

The reason this information is being recorded for us is to show that God's short term prophecies happen. Second Peter 1:19 says,

> *"So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you would do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."*

"We have the prophetic word made more sure," made more sure than what? Made more sure than eyewitness testimony. If you back up in this passage here (2 Peter 1), it is talking about how Peter was an eyewitness to the transfigured Christ, and how in prophecy you have something more sure even than eyewitness testimony. The most powerful evidence you can introduce in a court of law is eyewitness testimony. Yet Peter says you have something more sure even than eyewitness testimony, which is prophecy: history in advance. God said it would happen and this is what happened.

Jesus staked his whole reputation on his ability to predict the future. He said to the disciples huddled in the Upper Room in the New Testament,

> *"'From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He'"* (John 13:19).

"I Am" being a divine name. In John 14:29 He says,

> *"'Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.'"*

He made a bunch of predictions about Passion Week, most of which happened that week. He says, "When these predictions happen in real time, you will know exactly who I am." Boy, did they know who He was! These disciples that heard Him say that went out into the world, and every single one of them, with the exception of John, died of unnatural causes. James the son of Alphaeus was clubbed to death; Simon the Zealot

was martyred; James, the son of Zebedee, was executed; Thaddaeus was beaten to death; Peter was crucified upside down; Matthew was beheaded.

What Happened to Christ's Disciples?		
Disciple	**Place**	**Martyrdom**
James the Son of Alpheus	Jerusalem	Clubbed to death
Simon the Zealot	Jerusalem	Martyred
James the Son of Zebedee	Judea (Acts 12:2)	Executed
Thaddeus	Mesopotamia	Beaten to death
Peter	Babylon, Rome	Crucified upside down
Matthew	Parthia (Tehran)	Beheaded
John	Asia Minor, Patmos, Ephesus	Fried in boiling oil
Philip	E. Turkey	Tortured & crucified
Thomas	India	Speared
Bartholomew	India	Flayed & crucified
Andrew	Ukraine, Russia, Greece	Hanged

Are you having a rough day? Think about what these disciples went through. John—they tried to kill him, but he was very stubborn; he would not die. They put him in boiling oil, and he would not die (we know from church records). They finally just threw him out on an island called Patmos, not knowing what to do with the guy. That is where God wanted him, because on the island of Patmos he received the vision that we called the Book of Revelation.

Philip, who heard Jesus say these things, was tortured and crucified; Thomas was speared; Bartholomew was flayed and crucified; Andrew was hanged. Why would they leave the Upper Room and go out and live for Jesus to the point of death? They had ironclad proof of who Jesus was, because everything He said would happen that week, happened right down to His crucifixion, resurrection, and ultimately His ascension; right down to how He would die, who would kill Him, who would betray Him, and who would disown Him. He predicted it all and it happened. Who can do that other than God?

Jesus made this prediction on Palm Sunday (Luke 19:41):

> *"When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it."*

Luke 19:44 says,

> *"'and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.'"*

Jesus, similarly in the Olivet Discourse, said the exact same thing concerning the temple that the disciples were so proud of because of its beauty. Jesus said this:

> *"'Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.'"* (Mark 13:2)

Do you know what? About 40 years later, it happened. When Rome sacked Jerusalem, the temple caught on fire; the gold melted and oozed down between the bricks. The Roman soldiers, in order to get their hands on the gold, took the temple apart, brick by brick. You can go to the land of Israel today and see the remainder of what Jesus said would happen.

If God says something is going to happen, it is going to happen. That is why when I get a chance to talk about this, I always promote this book by the late John Walvoord: "Every Prophecy of the Bible." Things like we are reading about here in Genesis, everything that God says will happen, happens—short term and long term. Everything God says about the future that is yet to come is going to happen, because God, who is outside of time, is already there.

This makes the God of the Bible different from all of the other competitors out there: this uncanny ability to predict the future. It is the ultimate apologetics device. Apologetics, meaning a defense of the faith. This is one of the things you could talk about. Look at what the Bible predicts and look at how it all happened, like the Bible says.

Look at the things happening in our world right now, which the Bible also predicted. You start talking like that around the Thanksgiving table with unsaved relatives and friends and you are going to have a pulpit right there. "You mean the news stuff that I keep watching on TV—the universal hatred for Israel, the alignment of Russia, Turkey, and Iran against Israel in the last days—these things are predicted in the Word of God?" Your answer is, "You bet your bottom dollar they are."

This is why the severity of this famine is recorded for us, because God said back in Genesis 41 that this is what will happen. In the midst of all this, the people are making an offer (Genesis 47:19):

> *"'Why should we die before your eyes, both we and the land?'"*

"We are very near death here. We have got property, we have got our bodies, and that is all we have." Now here comes an offer with a solution in the second part of Genesis 47:19:

> *"'Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.'"*

Here is the deal: Joseph is to purchase their land for Pharaoh in exchange for food. Now the food that is going to be given to them is seed that they can plant in the land which they are now, shall we say, renters—they do not own the land anymore. Joseph is to purchase their land in exchange for food, specifically seed. "If you give us this opportunity—because we do not have anything other than our bodies and land, we do not have any food—then we will be servants to Pharaoh. He will own the land and we will serve him."

The folks were so desperate that this is what they came up with. This is what Joseph offered. What happens in Genesis 47:20-22 is how Pharaoh attained the land. Notice Genesis 47:20:

> *"So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's."*

Slowly but surely, what happens over the course of time is the land is no longer their own private property, no longer the private property of the people, but it belongs to Pharaoh. Ultimately, this is how the people ended up in slavery.

I do not think Joseph has a malicious motive here. I think this situation works because he was, as we have studied, in a mentoring relationship with the existing Pharaoh. In fact, the existing Pharaoh looked at Joseph as his father; he was that much of a mentee to Joseph, mentor. The problem is, another Pharaoh is going to come to power down the road that does not know Joseph. This becomes the explanation as to why the people were pushed into poverty.

John Adams, the second president of the United States said this:

> "The moment the idea is admitted into society, that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. If 'Thou Shalt Not Covet,' [which protects property] and 'Thou Shalt Not Steal' [which protects property] were not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society before it can be civilized or made free."[1]

I do not think Joseph has a malicious bone in his body; I think he is trying to do what is right for the people. But you see, the Book of Genesis is going to be followed by the

[1] John Adams, A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, 3 vols., American Constitutional and Legal History, ed. Leonard W. Levy (London: Dilly, 1787; reprint, NY: Da Capo, 1971), 3:217

Book of Exodus, where there is going to be a different pharaoh on the throne who will move in a tyrannical direction. The road to tyranny is already set through the surrender of private property.

Be very careful out there, Mr. and Mrs. America, of anybody in the midst of a crisis that promises to solve the crisis for you if you just give them a few emergency police powers. All human beings are tainted by a sin nature. Whether your candidate won the last election cycle or did not win the last election cycle, I can guarantee you this much: whoever is running the show now has the exact same sin nature as the rest of us do.

All human beings have an impulse in the direction of totalitarian control. Oftentimes the stage is set for totalitarianism long in advance. That is what I am seeing here with Joseph. Although Joseph is acting, I believe, in goodwill—this scenario works as long as we have the right pharaoh on the throne—the problem is the pharaoh is going to change. As we move into the Book of Exodus, we will see tyranny develop. The road to serfdom has already been prepared through the surrender of private property.

Although Joseph is doing these things, in the big picture, I do not really see these things as good. Yet the circumstances are so desperate, this is what the people have been forced to do. Notice what happens here in Genesis 47:21: there is a population transfer.

> *"As for the people,* [Joseph] *removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other."* (Genesis 47:21)

He herded people into cities, because they did not have property to maintain anymore. There is a giant population movement all over the land of Egypt, and the people are acquiescing to it because of the severity of the famine—the movement of the people from the country to the cities. Obviously, this is big because it says "from one border of Egypt to the other." Be very careful about people wanting to herd you to a particular place. The reason dictators always want to herd you to a particular place is because you are easier to watch over that way. We see that kind of thing happening here even in the Book of Genesis.

There is an exception, however, for the priests. Look at Genesis 47:22:

> *"Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not have to sell their land."*

Now the priests get an exemption here. Why is that? Because the priests are an extremely powerful class within Egypt. That becomes the explanation of the seven mountains that you see in Revelation 17:9-10. It says this:

> *"'Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have*

fallen, one is, the other is yet to come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.'"

The seven mountains are seven kings or kingdoms absorbed into the Antichrist's system. What will the Antichrist's system be? It will be an absorber of all of the anti-Semitic kingdoms and religions that preceded it. Who are the five that have fallen? Number one, Egypt, that we are reading about here; number two, Assyria; number three, Babylon; number four, Persian; number five, Greece.

Then John says "one is": that is the inheritor of all the preceding, in Rome. Then he says, "one will be": that is the empire arising out of the cultural inheritance of ancient Rome—the two feet of the Daniel 2 statue, which will absorb all of these other anti-Semitic systems. In other words, the Antichrist's empire that is coming will be bad, but it will be worse than all the others; it will be the baddest of the bad, because it will absorb everything that is wrong and evil in all of those prior systems.

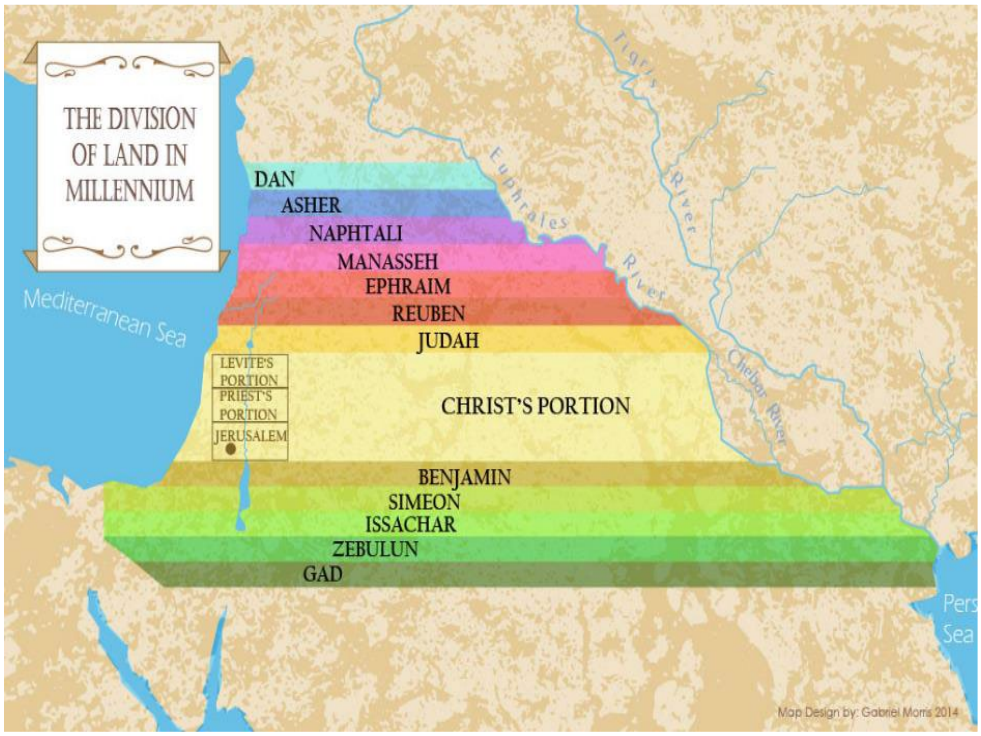
Right here, at the beginning of the list is Egypt, which was an Occultic empire, and you can tell it is an occultic empire because the pagan priests had an abnormal amount of power. We know that they had an abnormal amount of power because their land was not taken away from them; they were given an exemption. It was actually the religion of Egypt which was controlling Egypt, the priests being given this special place. That is the beginning of these seven kingdoms or mountains that we see mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

You can always tell which direction a country is headed in by the priests or the gurus people look to in times of trouble. I have seen a very interesting development happen in my lifetime, where people in the United States of America are turning to the dark side to find some path forward. One of the things I have seen in my lifetime develop is all of these sort of crime shows, whodunit shows, and I see in these shows (sometimes the reality shows) that the police officers or the detectives turn to someone who conducts a seance, someone who traffics in the world of the occult, giving them some special understanding or insight concerning how to solve this crime.

I am thinking to myself, "Do these people not understand that Satan comes as an angel of light?" Maybe the forces on the other side will guide you in such a way that you solve a crime, but you are opening the door to something that ultimately, at the end of the day, is not benevolent, but malevolent. I am seeing more and more of that in the United States of America. This is something going on worldwide, the turning to the occult as some force for good.

That is what Egypt was like; and it is what Assyria was like; and Babylon and Persia. These are all groups that persecuted the Jewish people. It is what Greece was like; it is what Rome was like. The saying goes, "Rome conquered Greece politically, but Greece conquered Rome culturally." All of those Grecian deities continued to live in Rome, just the names were changed around. Instead of Venus, we will have Mars.

All of that insanity will get absorbed into the Antichrist's system. Here you are seeing the very beginning of it, the priests having this abnormal amount of power in Egypt. Satan has his program, and God has His program, too. Did you know that? Did you know that in God's system, in the Millennial Kingdom, the priests also get an abnormal portion of land (Ezekiel 47)?



The priests were privileged in the Nation of Israel in the days of Joshua. They did not get land, but they got special residences throughout the land. It is almost like God is saying, "Okay, Satan has his thing; here is My thing. Egypt thinks the priests are special; I think the priests are special, both in the days of Joshua and in the Millennial reign of Christ."

If priests are special, that should make you feel really good because you know what you are in God.? You are a priest. Did you know that?

Revelation 1:6 says,

> *"'and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.'"*

What are we going to do as priests? Revelation 5:10 says,

> *"'You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'"*

That is your future in Jesus: you are a priest, and your destination ultimately is to rule and reign under Christ's delegated authority in the Millennial Kingdom. Everything you are going through right now in your life is preparing you for that role, just like everything Joseph went through in his life prepared him for the role that he has here.

What is this life? It is nothing more than training time for reigning time. God is preparing your character in a special way, so that when the time comes, you will be able to exert authority over planet Earth the way He would want it executed and exerted. It is a completely different way of looking at life. You Are a priest.

Sometimes I will go out to lunch with a group from the church after service, and the food will be served. There is that awkward moment: should we pray for the food? Or, as my dad used to say, "Should we just start in like dogs?" Everybody's looking at the pastor to pray for the food, as if I am the only one that can pray for the food. I do not mind praying for the food (some of that food needs to be prayed for), but the truth of the matter is, whether I pray or you pray, it does not matter. You are just as much a priest as I am.

"But I have some personal problems, and I want to talk only to the pastor about my personal problems." I do not mind talking to you about your personal problems, but the truth of the matter is, I do not have any special path to God that you do not already have. Why don't you go to Jesus, your ultimate High Priest, with your problems?

What we have done is to take the clergy and put them in some special camp, not understanding that we embrace the priesthood of all believers. Israel had priests that came from Levi. Every member of the body of Christ is a priest, and every member of the body of Christ is a saint. Did you know that you are a saint? J. Vernon McGee said, "If you are not a saint, then you are an ain't."

I was watching my favorite cable station this morning, and there were all my favorite announcers on the analysts' curvy couch. They were very Roman Catholic in their beliefs, and they were saying that there are people that have lived that have actually been saints, and there are people that are alive today that could become saints. "Maybe if we mind our P's and Q's and do not smoke or chew or go with girls who do, then we can become saints, too." That is what they were saying this morning on TV. I turned to my wife and I said, "You talk about a bunch of people that have completely and totally missed the point."

The truth of the matter is, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are already a saint. Jesus has decreed that of you. His righteousness has been transferred to you at the point of faith alone in Christ alone, where God the Father does not see you as you are, but He sees you through the lens of the righteousness of His Son. Now, if that is a positional reality, if that is a birth truth, if that is something that cannot be undone (which is what your Bible says), then it saves you the foolishness of spending your life living right to become a saint.

The Bible says it is the exact opposite: live right because you are a saint. Do you see the difference? We do not live right to become saints; we want to live right because we are already saints. As the Book of Ephesians says coarse speech and sexual immorality are unfitting for God's people. So, I will avoid coarse speech and sexual immorality, not because I am trying to become a saint, but because I am a saint. It is just not fitting for who I am.

The priests in Egypt were a big deal, but God says, "They are a big deal in Israel, and they are a big deal in the Church Age. In fact, priests and saints are such a big deal that I am going to make anybody that trusts in My Son for the forgiveness of their sins and the safekeeping of their soul, a saint and a priest instantaneously." No process. The theologians call it the punctilious point in time. (I spent a lot of tuition money learning big words like that; I have to share them with somebody.)

At a punctilious point in time——at a specific point in time, the moment you trusted in Christ, just like that, sainthood; and just like that, priesthood. Now I want my behavior to catch up with my practice.

Then you go down to Genesis 47:23-26 and you see the leasing of the property. Notice Joseph's initiation; he makes an offer here. Genesis 47:23 says,

> *"Then Joseph said to the people, 'Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, here is seed for you, and you may sow the land.'"*

"The land belongs to Pharaoh; you are now serfs for Pharaoh; but you can plan on the land as part of the agreement," is what is being said here. The lease agreement is spelled out there in Genesis 47:24:

> *"'At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones.'"*

So that is the agreement. It is a feudal system with the Egyptians as serfs. The land does not belong to them anymore. In the midst of an emergency, this was very helpful to them because all they had were bodies and land. They had no food; they had no money. "Here is the seed that you can use to plant on the land. We just ask that Pharaoh gets 20% and you can keep 80%."

You look down at Genesis 47:25, and you see the people agreeing to this.

> *"So they said, 'You have saved our lives!'"*

Why would they go along with this? The reason they went along with this is they trusted Joseph; they trusted his character because he had already worked on their behalf. They do not know anything about a pharaoh that is coming that does not know Joseph, but

they trusted Joseph because you know what, folks? At the end of the day, actions speak a lot louder than words.

You can tell people anything you want to tell them, but when they see your character of uprightness, faithfulness, and consistency they will trust you. They had seen Joseph not embezzling, not getting them to acquiesce so he could benefit, so they trusted Joseph. May our characters be that way.

You see the agreement given there in Genesis 47:25:

> *"'Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves.'"*

Out of gratitude they submitted to this, and everything worked great as long as Joseph was around. Joseph is in that mentoring relationship with the existing Pharaoh, but you see, the problem is there is coming another pharaoh.

I find myself today, regardless of what party is in control of the White House. Believe me, I have my particular partisan views on all of that, as you can imagine. You probably heard me hint at it on more than one occasion. Even though I personally am thrilled with the election results—and I think a lot of good things happened in that last election cycle that I was pleasantly surprised by and did not expect—the people on the throne now, and the people coming into that position of power have the exact same sin nature as anybody else. No matter who is in control and whether your side won or lost, you better watch them like a hawk, because power corrupts and all power corrupts absolutely.

I find myself today in agreement with James Madison, the chief architect of the United States Constitution. He said this during the Constitutional Convention:

> "All men having power ought to be distrusted to a certain degree."[2]

This is why James Madison in "The Federalist Papers" says that we need divided government; because no matter if the good guys win and the bad guys lose, the good guys are not angels and they have the same sin nature as anybody else. Madison wrote this in Federalist Paper #51:

> "But what is government but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government, which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you first must enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."[3]

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[2] James Madison, *Madison Debates: July 11, 1787*.

[3] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, trans. Clinton Rossiter (New York, NY: Penguin, 1961), 322.

I think it is a good thing, quite frankly, when the nominees to the new cabinet have to pass through Senate confirmation. "But, Andy, whose side are you on?" I am on the side that has a distrust for human nature, that is whose side I am on. That is what my Bible teaches.

So, I like the idea of a divided government. That is what James Madison is saying: that is the greatest reflection of human nature. The United States government does not make any sense if you believe people are inherently good, but it makes perfect sense if you believe that people have a sin nature. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

I think Joseph is doing a lot of good, but he is paving the way to something that no one can see. It is coming in the Book of Exodus, a new Pharaoh. They set themselves up for it because they acquiesce their private property. Thomas Jefferson said this:

> "...in questions of power then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the constitution..."[4]

When it comes to power, let us quit talking about how confident we are in people. Let us talk about restraints we are going to put on people, because the people that we may like or may have voted for have the exact same sin nature as anybody else. Money and power do funny things to people. If you do not watch it very carefully, it will move in the direction of tyranny—the road to serfdom.

This whole thing ends here with Joseph bringing forth a new law. The content of the law is made in Genesis 47:26:

> *"Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt valid to the day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth."*

"You keep 80%; Pharaoh gets 20%. This law that Joseph wrote up was "valid to this day." What does that mean? It was valid until the day Moses authored the Book of Genesis.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says this:

> "Genesis 47:26 records the new law: 'And Joseph made a statute concerning the land of Egypt unto this day,' meaning unto the day that Moses wrote up the account of Genesis."[5]

Remember the toledot—the written records that have been saved up and passed down through the generations that Moses compiled in Egypt. Moses is compiling those things about the time of the Exodus. We are here in the patriarchal period, predating Moses by

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[4] Papers of Thomas Jefferson 30:529-556.

[5] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 621.

several centuries. All of these things happened historically before Moses compiled the information, but by the time Moses got down to the work of compiling, several centuries after these events happened, that law was so effective that it was still in place.

> "This means that the law that Joseph put into effect a long time earlier was still in effect in the days of Moses. It also means that the Pharaoh of the Oppression, the Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus, was still benefiting from the policy of Joseph, although he 'knew not Joseph,' meaning he did not recognize or appreciate what Joseph had done."[6]

Look how this ends: there is the exception for the priests. Again, Genesis 47:26:

> *"...only the land of the priest did not become Pharaoh's."*

It is just like God made special provisions for the priests in the land of Israel.

Would you like to become a priest today? Would you like sainthood declared on you today? You may have struggled your whole life to become a saint. I can offer it to you instantaneously because it is not my offer—it is God's offer. The offer is: Jesus' final words on the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Everything that is necessary to bridge the gap between fallen humanity and a holy God has been paid for. All you have to do is receive it as a free gift, and the only way you can receive a free gift from God is to believe in the One that He has sent.

"Believe" is another way of saying "trust." If you will put your personal trust in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and His promises, just like that, you have riches of a spiritual nature that are beyond your comprehension—including your own sainthood and priesthood. God looks at you like you are positionally perfect, and you have unfettered access to God. You do not have to go through a man to get to God. All of that is available for the taking simply by believing or trusting what Jesus has done for us 2,000 years ago. That is the gospel.

"Gospel" means "good news," and wouldn't you say this is good news? I cannot think of better news than this. If you have received it already, what a thing to be thankful for this time of the year, in addition to some of those lesser gifts that perhaps God has given you.

If it is something that you need more explanation on, I am available after the service to talk, but my hope and prayer is that anybody within the sound of my voice, as the Spirit is placing them under conviction, either listening or watching in the building, observing through archives after the fact, would place their trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. Our invitation is to do that, and to do that now. Today is the day of salvation. Amen. "Do not boast about tomorrow," the Bible says. "You do not know what a day will hold" (Proverbs 27:1). But you have right now, and you have this moment.

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[6] Ibid.