

## **This World is Not Our Home**

Genesis 47:13-31

### **Intro: Too Much Comfort is Dangerous**

We often talk about the importance of responding well to suffering in this life. But I wonder if we talk enough about how to respond well to prosperity in this life.

The greatest danger to your soul is not suffering. It's not the experience of discomfort in this life. The greatest danger to your soul is the experience *too much* comfort in this life, leading you to a sense of false sense of security that this world is your home.

This is what the people of Israel would've taken away from reading Genesis 47: We shouldn't long for Egypt; we should long for the promised land.

The first half of this passage prepares us for the second half. The first half contrast the difficulty the Egyptians faced during the famine vs. the flourishing of Israel in the famine. However, Israel is still in Egypt!

We get the sense they're settling in Egypt, rather than sojourning. But, in the second half of the passage, the heart of Jacob is revealed: he still longs for the promised land.

If with you been with us in our study of Genesis, you know that as the theme of God's place for God's people develops across the storyline of the Bible, it finds its ultimate fulfillment, not in a piece of real-estate in Palestine, but in a new creation!

And so, the driving take-away for us is simple: Don't settle in this world, but long for the world to come. Let's take that in two parts...

### **Don't Settle for This World**

Let's see how that principle plays out. **[v13]** This is a fulfillment of Pharaoh's dream that the famine would get severe. What was unknown was that it would get severe in other parts of the world, including Canaan.

Notice, both the land of Egypt AND the land of Canaan languished. In other words, the people of Israel would've died had they not

come to Egypt. But if Egypt is languishing, does that mean the people of Israel, who are now there living in Goshen, are languishing too? Let's see. **[v14]**

So it *looks like* both the Egyptians and Israelites are struggling, if all the money found in both lands has been spent on food. The word "found" carries the idea of the people fervently rummaging to look for every last penny. It's a dire situation. But who's really being affected? **[v15]**

Why is it only the Egyptians, and not the Israelites, asking for food? Notice, they're wanting a free handout. "All the money is gone, so give us food. Give it for free." Why? "If you don't, we'll die in front of you."

That's how a society collapses. Joseph can't just start giving out free food to everyone. But he also can't just let the people starve. Look what he does. **[v16]** So animals become the form of currency. But even that can only last so long in a famine. **[v17]**

The phrase “that year” tells us, had Joseph not come up with this plan, they would’ve died out in a year. He is strategically taking care of them. This is important to keep in mind because what happens next could wrongly be interpreted that Joseph is a cruel tyrant. **[v18]**

“We got nothing to give you for more food. All we have is our property (land) and ourselves (bodies). That’s all we own now.” So notice what THEY propose. **[v19a, “Buy us”]** See what they’re suggesting to Joseph? “We will sell ourselves into Pharaoh’s service AND sell our land to him. For what purpose? **[v19b]**

They want seed, not to eat, but to plant. They’re suggesting in exchange for seed that they become farmers to cultivate the land so that it doesn’t become desolate. But this means they will not own the land they live on nor will they own themselves—they will become Pharaoh’s servants. **[vv20-21]**

What about the people of Israel in Goshen? Will they have to sell themselves and their land to Pharaoh too? Hold on to that.

For now, notice an exception for a certain group of Egyptians. **[v22]** The priests of Egypt, who performed various religious rituals on behalf of Egyptian gods, were an exception. They kept their land and were funded by the government. Why mention this? Who cares?

I think it would've stuck out to the original Israelites who read Genesis because later on, when they inherit the promised land of Canaan, their priests would have special privileges but opposite of this.

The priests of Israel—who come from the lineage of Levi, Jacob's third son—would serve in the temple and help lead the people in worship, but would earn their livelihood NOT through possessing their own their own land (because they wouldn't) OR through some sort of state-funded system, but through the tithes and offerings of the people.

So the fact that Moses mentions here that the Egyptian priests got to own their own land and were funded by the state may have triggered something like, "Is Egypt better? Should we

have settled there?” No. The priests of Israel need to trust the Lord to provide for them because Israel is distinct from Egypt.

So the people of Egypt (with the exception of the priests) sell themselves into servanthood and sell their land to Pharaoh in exchange for seed so they can become farmers. Joseph agrees to this system. **[v23]**

Don't miss the irony of this: Joseph came to Egypt as a slave. He was stripped of all he owned. And now, he says, “I have bought you (Egyptians) and I have bought your land.” It's an insane turn of events that only God can accomplish.

Let us be reminded of this simple truth: God can do whatever he wants. He is not bound by your hard circumstances. He can turn things on a dime if he wants to.

*There have been countless times the elders of Kinney have worked through tough issues (like in any church), and we just say to the Lord, “We don't know what to do, but our eyes are*

*on you. Turn this difficulty around for good.”  
And guess what: he’s done again and again  
and again and again!*

Whatever you’re going through, keep praying that prayer. “Lord, I don’t know what to do, but my eyes are on you. Turn this for good.” And watch the Lord work.

Joseph, once a slave in Egypt, is now the boss of all Egyptians, providing an economic plan for them so they don’t die. **[v24]** So 20% tax on what their farming produces, and they get to keep 80%, which was far more generous than what was normal in the ANE. Joseph is not a harsh taskmaster. He’s trying to care for the people. And the people are really happy with him. **[vv25-26]**

But the question remains: What about the people of Israel? The Egyptians are struggling so much in this famine that they’re willing to sell their land and themselves to stay alive. Will the people of Israel have to do the same? **[v27]** What a contrast! They’re flourishing!

Not only are they gaining possessions, unlike the Egyptians who sold their possessions for food, but they're also gaining in people. Did you hear that language? They "were fruitful and multiplying greatly."

What does that remind you of? It should remind you of a lot in Genesis. That was the first command given to the first humans: "Be fruitful and multiply." The problem is Adam and Eve sinned, which meant having babies spread sinners across the earth. And that's exactly what happened.

In fact, things got so bad on the earth, in Gen. 6, God sent a flood but preserved the family of Noah. And what did God command Noah after the flood? "Be fruitful and multiply." But sin remained.

That's why God called Abraham in ch12, and instead of *commanding* Abraham to be fruitful and multiply, God *promised* he would make him fruitful and multiply him by making him into a great nation that would become a blessing to the whole world.

We've been waiting and waiting. Abraham finally had Isaac when he was 100yrs. Then Isaac had a few sons, and now Jacob (Isaac's son) has about 70ish people in his family. But that doesn't sound like a great nation.

Yet here, for the first time, the people of Israel—the people of Abraham—are described as fruitful and multiplying...but they're in Egypt. They're not home yet.

So only the first part of God's promise is being fulfilled—the people are growing. But the problem is, they're growing in land not their own! Why ever leave, if Egypt is working out just fine?

In fact, v27 says, "Israel *settled* in the land of Egypt." When Joseph's brothers first asked Pharaoh for a place to stay during the famine, they said, "Let us *sojourn* in land," meaning, "It's only temporary. Egypt isn't our home." Now it seems they're settling.

I think we're meant to feel as readers, "Don't settle! Egypt is not your home! Yes, God is

protecting and providing for you in Egypt, but you should never feel settled in Egypt!”

As the storyline of the Bible continues, Egypt becomes known as a place of false security. How many times did the people of Israel, after they were rescued from slavery in Egypt, say, “We should go back!”?

In Numbers 14, they’re consumed with fear over how hard it’s gonna be to take over the promised land, and they say, “Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? ...Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” Egypt is a place of false security because truly, it’s a place of bondage.

And that same temptation that faced Israel faces God’s people today. It’s the temptation to believe the lie that this world brings true security. And therefore, instead of sojourning, we settle!

Think of what might that look like for us? Consider some diagnostic questions that reveal whether we’re settling for this

temporary world rather than longing for the world to come.

*1. Do I prioritize the things of the world over the things of God?* Church involvement is often a basic test case for this. When Christians *make a habit* of missing Sundays for work, sports, leisure, or they just prioritize “me time” over time with church members, it’s often a revealer of priorities. Ask yourself: In what ways am I prioritizing the things of this world over the things of God?

*2. Is my heart dull towards the things of the Lord, though it’s thrilled by the things of this world?* March Madness (college basketball) is going on right now. It can be very telling to watch grown men show forth great excitement over some teenage boys putting a ball into a circle...when they hardly ever show forth any excitement about the gospel.

*I remember a guy who watched basketball games with great thrill but when he showed up to church he looked like he wanted to die. Enjoy March Madness! But don’t blame your*

dullness towards the things of the Lord on your personality if you're not dull towards the things of this world in the same way.

Test your life. What in this world thrills me more than the things of God? Work? Video games? The praise of man? A relationship? Money? Success? *Is my heart dull towards the things of the Lord, though it's thrilled by the things of this world?*

*3. Is my heart more burdened by things that will not last or is it burdened by eternal things?* Think of what has been weighing on you this past month. Is it of eternal significance? Many times, it's not. Often temporary things like money, work, status, approval...they keep us up at night.

But the thought of my neighbor going to hell, or that young person in our church who needs someone to disciple them, we know that's important, but the burden isn't the same.

*4. Do I tolerate certain sins? Are there some sins I treat more like a pet than a predator?*

“Everyone gets angry sometimes.” “All guys lust; it’s not the end of the world.” “What’s wrong with a little buzz every night to take the edge off?” Stop treating your sin like a pet that wants to snuggle you rather than a predator that wants to kill you.

First John 2 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world” because “the world is passing away along with its desires.” Don’t settle in Egypt! Rather...

### **Long for the World to Come**

That’s what the second part of the passage is about. The focus shifts from the people of Israel settling in Egypt TO Jacob longing for the promised land. **[v28]**

Mind you: Jacob came to Egypt (with the rest of his family) 2 years into the 7-year famine. And yet it says here, he lived in Egypt 17 years. Which means, he lived another 12 years in Egypt after the famine was over. What gives?? Why didn’t he go back to Canaan? Why did he die in the Egypt? Did he want to settle there?

Moses records the last days of Jacob's life to show that, though Jacob died in Egypt, he longed for the promised land...and so should you. **[v29a]** On his death bed, he's making an oath with Joseph. This is how formal oaths were made—the person who makes the promise puts his hand under the thigh of the one to whom he makes the promise.

It's the same thing Abraham made his servant do when he told him to find a wife for his son Isaac (24:2). So this is a big deal. Jacob wants to ensure Joseph will do what he's about to ask him to do. **[vv29b-30]** Jacob's too old to make the journey back to Canaan. So as he's about to die in Egypt, he wants to make sure his body doesn't remain there. He wants his body to be carried back to Canaan and buried in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Isaac were buried. Why?

Is this no different than what we do today? Buy a grave plot before we die so that our bodies can be buried next to other family members? No. This request is not driven sentimentalism. It's driven by theology.

It's driven by faith in the promises of God. One person said, "Jacob makes this request because he doesn't believe he'll just become dust when he dies. He believes he'll live again." (Duke, 207) Jacob knows that God promised a land of rest for his people to settle in forever, and it's not the land of Egypt.

So he wants his body buried in the land his people will settle in, so that one day, he would rise there, and experience eternal rest.

Jacob longs for the land of rest. And that's why he finds great comfort when Joseph agrees to his request. **[v31]** That bowing could be an act of worship to the Lord, or it could just be a sign of relief and comfort. He just lays himself back on his bed, knowing God will bring him home...because Egypt is not his home.

## **Conclusion**

This world is not our home. Don't settle in it. We are sojourners who await the world to come, the new creation where Christ Jesus reigns as King.

Can I address you who are not yet Christians?  
Do you really believe this world is all there is?  
Is deepest satisfaction really found in going to  
school, building a career, having a family,  
retiring and then dying? Don't you think we  
were made for more?

We were. We were made for an eternal new  
creation (heaven). Do you know how do you  
get there? Most think it's about being good. "If  
I'm good enough, I'll get there." Do you realize  
the exaggerated self-assessment you must  
have to think your good enough to be  
welcomed by the God of the universe into his  
perfect place of paradise?

Don't trust yourself! Trust in the Lord's grace  
revealed in giving up his Son for sinners who  
deserve hell. **[Gospel]** Trust in Christ today  
and do not settle for this world, but long for  
the world to come.