

Nothing But the Best

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[0 : 00] Well let's turn now with God's help to Genesis and the passage that we read in Genesis from 46, Genesis 46, 28 right through to 47, 28 as well.

This is a very emotional moment in the history of Joseph and his father and his brothers too I'm sure, but especially Joseph and his father Jacob.

Because after all these years when Joseph had been lost to Jacob and indeed he had thought he was dead, the news had come to him as we've seen before of his being alive and being governor of Egypt.

And I saw last time Jacob rather made his preparations to journey into Egypt to meet up again with Joseph his son.

And we saw last time how the Lord met him to encourage him and to be assured that God himself was going to be with him as he went to Egypt and that he would bring him back again from Egypt.

[1 : 04] And we saw how important that was to Jacob at that juncture. Now here they are, he's made his way to Egypt and here's the account we have of this reunion.

But it's very brief, it's nevertheless very poignant and very emotional even to read it when they met each other. And we read there in verse 29 that he wept and he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

Now there's a lot packed into that, a lot of emotions, a lot of many, many years of despair. But now they've come to be reunited.

Yet that's not the main part and the main emphasis in the passage. Because that is really dealt with fairly briefly and it's within the compass and within an emphasis on something else that the passage here right through makes more important even than the meeting again of Jacob with his son Joseph.

And that is Israel's settlement in Goshen. Because again and again going through this passage you'll have noticed that that was mentioned. And as mentioned at the very end of the passage where we read in verse 28 or verse 27.

[2 : 23] Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen and they gained possessions and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. That's really the great emphasis of the passage.

Israel's movement. Israel not only just in the sense of Jacob himself of course who's called Israel but the people that belong to him. His whole family, all their possessions, all their flocks, everything they have.

They have come to settle in Egypt. They're not just there for a short time to leave and go back again to Canaan. They're here for a long time. They've taken everything they have with them into Egypt. That's the great point that Genesis wants to emphasize for us here. How God's purpose for Israel, how God's purpose working towards what he will eventually show in the great demonstration of redemption that will be in the Exodus.

How that is being prepared for by bringing Israel into Egypt. And not only bringing them to Egypt but showing what they mean to him as a people. Because as we'll see they actually come to get the best of the land.

[3 : 31] Best at least suitable for their purposes. And all of that is under the governorship of Joseph. Because you'll have noticed again reading through the passage how yes although he went into Pharaoh and spoke to Pharaoh about his father and his brothers coming to Egypt.

And how they were in the land of Goshen. Nevertheless you can see it's Joseph that's actually made the arrangements. And Pharaoh although he is the chief. The great governor, the great king. He's in a sense just rubber stamping what Joseph's policy is. He's quite happy to leave it to the wise decision making policy of Joseph. That's how they come to settle in Goshen.

Because Joseph as the governor of Egypt has arranged it to be so. And of course that reminds us as we've been seeing all along of certain aspects of the ministry and the person of Jesus.

Although the Bible doesn't call Joseph a direct type or representation of Jesus. We've seen all the way along how impossible it is to leave out the affinities with the ministry of Jesus.

[4 : 41] The close resemblance to certain aspects of Christ's person and ministry. And it's no less the case in this instance. Because there you have an image if you like of the way that God providing for his people under the lordship of Jesus.

Actually comes to dispense benefits and blessings. Which is why we can call our study today nothing but the best. That's what belongs to Israel in Goshen.

Let's look at first of all the position of Joseph's people. Looking at their identity and their unity and their superiority. We're going to pass over these fairly quickly. Let's look at the main points.

So the position of Joseph's people. And then secondly the providence of Joseph's God. Now their identity is a very important issue in the passage as well.

This is Goshen. Which we've noticed previously was prepared for them. And Goshen was an area of Egypt that wasn't all that suitable to most of the Egyptians.

[5 : 48] But it was very suitable to the people of Israel with their flocks and herds for grazing purposes. There were other parts of Egypt more fertile for the growing of crops.

Which the Egyptians had much of. But as far as the purposes of Israel were concerned for their flocks. For their mostly flocks that required shepherds.

For most of these flocks Goshen was ideal. Not only so but Goshen was actually on the furthest sort of outreach of Egypt going eastwards.

And it was a difficult land really to in a sense to police or to keep secure. A lot of different tribes and nomads would come and settle in Goshen over the years.

And prove a problem to the Egyptians. Because a lot of them were very wild sort of uncontrolled people. And that was a security problem for the people of Egypt. So for a people to come into Egypt who wanted permanently to settle in Goshen.

[6 : 52] And make Goshen their own area of settlement for a long term. That was a huge advantage to Egypt. It wasn't much use to them for agricultural purposes.

But as a security Israel's coming into Egypt was ideal for the Egyptians. As it was ideal for Israel for their flocks. There's God at work. We'll see it in the second point.

The providence of God has at work remarkably just to make it exactly the right time. Not just for Israel but even for Egypt. For them to come to Goshen.

But one of the main reasons why we... And you see it in the passage. That Israel were given Goshen and that Joseph in his wise policy chose Goshen for them.

Was the need to keep themselves separate from. And distinct from the Egyptians. The Egyptians were pagans.

[7 : 49] The Egyptians worshipped all different kinds of gods. As you know Israel needed to keep themselves separate from that paganism. They needed to remain and keep their identity as the people of God.

The true and living God. And that's what Goshen afforded them. Goshen enabled them to live their own separate identity from the Egyptians. And indeed with Pharaoh's approval they were able over the years to do that.

For some time at least. Now that's an important point for ourselves. And there are two sides to that. As we try to apply that to ourselves today. The first is that as Christians.

We need to maintain our distinctness. Jesus spoke to the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. As you remember Matthew 5, 6 and 7.

One of the things he said there was you are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. In other words God has given to his people a spiritual property.

[8 : 49] That communicates itself to the world around them. He has given them the kind of life. The kind of spiritual life. And vitality. And well-being.

That he illustrated by saying you are the salt of the earth. Salt is a savoury thing. It adds taste to food. Salt is a preservative.

It was in the past it still is. And that both of these elements are important for the Lord's people. But we have to work at maintaining our distinctness.

Because just like you find in a ship. Especially the old type timber ships. Over a period of time if they are not looked after. Water begins to seep into it. And if you let water seep into it. It changes its characteristics. It becomes unbalanced. Unlikely to sink. It is the same with our Christian lives. We have to maintain our distinctness.

[9 : 47] We have to keep ourselves by God's own means. As he has given to us in the word. In our prayer life. In our being together in fellowship and in worship.

As the people of God. It is important for our generation. Just as it was for Joseph's generation. That his people. Were kept distinct from the Egyptians. That is not racism. That is not in any way. Denigrating the Egyptians to a lesser status as human beings. It means spiritually. That Israel retained. Their identity as the people of God. The second thing. That is important in applying that to ourselves. Is that we as Christians need to insist. In the day we live in. That Christianity. Biblical Christianity. And the values of Christianity. And the principles. And the precepts of Christianity. Are accorded the same liberties.

[10 : 47] And the same rights. As are given to any other groups in our land. You very well know. That there is great pressure. Exerted.

Against Christians. Against Christians. Exercising their right. To believe. The Bible's teaching. On all aspects of human relationships. And it doesn't matter. What source that comes from. Whether it's government itself. Or minority pressure groups. You and I. Have to insist on the fact. These add out Christian principles. And we have a right. To expect. That they will be upheld. That they will be honored. That they will actually be kept. As our rights. Just as much as anyone else's rights. That's not. To say that we're not. As you very well know. We're not in favor of persecuting principles. We abhor these. Nobody.

[11 : 45] Should be persecuted. For what they believe. Even if they believe. Something very different to ourselves. Something very against. The word of God's teaching.

They still have the right. To expect. They will not be persecuted. For holding these views. But at the same time. Christians have the right. To expect. That their Christian views. Will be respected. Fully respected. Fully catered for. And fully given the place. That they ought to be given. Of course. We as Christians. Would want to go further. We'd want the Christian religion. To be. The only proper. Recognized religion. But. Tolerance. Of other religions. Is itself. A Christian principle. Even though we understand. That Jesus. Is himself. Exclusively. The way. The truth. And the life. In the presence of God.

[12 : 41] And his relationship. With human beings. So these are the two things. Their identity. Was kept. By them being accorded. The land of Goshen. The area of Goshen. And that.

Means. We have to maintain. Our distinctness. And that we have to insist on. The values of Christianity. To be respected. And upheld. When there's pressure. To change that. Second. Thing that this. Enabled them to. To have. Was a sense of unity. And for that reason.

It was important. That Jacob. Actually came to Egypt. I mean. You could have thought of. A possibility. Of Jacob. In his old age. Not really being that. Able to go to Egypt. And perhaps. Joseph saying. Well. Instead of. Making my father. Move to Egypt. With all that he has. At this stage of his life. I'll go. I'll go. And arrange to meet him. In Canaan.

[13 : 36] And then I'll come back to Egypt. When the time is right. But in God's purpose. It was so important. That Jacob. Actually come to Egypt. Why? Well.

For one reason. At least. And it is this. That here. Now. In Egypt. You have the whole. Of Israel. In embryo. You have the Israel. Who is Jacob. Who carries the name. Israel. As the head. Of this family. And you have all. His descendants. In the world. And all their possessions. And they are all now. Arranged. As one people. Under his headship. That's what God. Has arranged. He is protecting. The unity. Of these people. Along with their sense. Of identity.

They have come to Egypt. Under the headship. Of their father. The patriarch. Jacob. And from him. Downwards. Here is. Everything you could say.

[14:30] Is called Israel. At that moment. Under his headship. They are all. One family. In Egypt. And of course. That too.

Has affinities. With. The kind of people. That God's people are. They have. A oneness. Under the headship. Of the Lord. A oneness.

Which doesn't come across. Directly from this passage. Because Jacob. Is not. Necessarily. A type of the Lord. In this instance. But the principle. Is there. And it doesn't matter. Where God's people. Are placed. You still find. That principle. That comes through. Strongly in the New Testament. Whether it's. In Corinth. Or in Philippi. Wherever the Lord's people. Are placed.

They are the church. Of God. Which is at. Corinth. Or Philippi. They are arranged. Under the headship. Of the Lord. As the people. Of God. And we've seen.

[15:25] So many times. That. The unity. That belongs. To God's people. Unity. Not just in terms of. Inward. Spiritual unity. Believing the same things.

Essential things. But also. An. An. Outward unity. As far as possible. Because it's a very. Destructive thing. When that outward unity.

Is. Deformed. Or disrupted. It affects the gospel. It affects the. The way the gospel. Is viewed. It affects. Our witness. It affects.

Our impact. In society. Our voice. Amongst. Our communities. So we value that. Unity. As the Lord's people. That seek to.

Maintain it. You remember. Peter. When he came to write. His first letter. One of the things he said. In 1st Peter. Chapter 2. And verse 10. You are.

[16:19] A holy people. A holy nation. But he went on to say. Who were not. Once. A people. But you are now. A people of God. Isn't that interesting?

They were. A people. In a sense. They were human beings. They belonged to different races. Different backgrounds. But they were not a people. They were not unified. Into. A particular. Structure of people.

But now. He says. You are. The people. Of God. So there is their identity. And there is their unity. And we can also say. And we need to say it very carefully.

There is their superiority. You might say that. That is. Something that has already come through. In the sense of their being. Separated from the Egyptians. And Goshen. And so on. And there is an element there.

That shows. God is looking after them. Particularly. As a people that are. To him. Very precious. But there are two things. In the passage. Where the superiority. Of these people. Of Israel.

[17:18] Well that is shown for us. First of all. The way Jacob met. With Pharaoh. That itself. Is a very interesting passage. Verse 7. Joseph brought in.

Jacob his father. And stood him before Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob. How many are the days. Of the years of your life. And Jacob said to Pharaoh.

The days of the years. Of my sojourning. Are a hundred and thirty. Few and evil. Have the days of the years. Of my life. Been. And so on. And then Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And went out.

From the presence of Pharaoh. Now there isn't. Very much said there. But. What is said. Is really couched. Between two. Very important references.

Jacob. Blessed. Pharaoh. There is Pharaoh. He is the most powerful man. In the world. He is. The.

[18:13] Governor of Egypt. He is the one. Who has the final say. And the first say. Even though. Joseph. Joseph. Has been left so much. To carry out. His own policies. But.

Pharaoh is. The number one. And regarded. In. In Egypt. Even as a god. And yet. There you have. The old man. Jacob.

This. Israel. This man of God. And as soon as he comes into. The presence of Pharaoh. You can just picture him. He lifts up his hand. And he pronounces. Covenant blessings.

Or at least. The blessings that belong to him. And his people. As covenant blessings. But he pronounces. A blessing. On Pharaoh. He blesses Pharaoh. In the name of God.

He seeks the blessing. Of the Lord for him. What a great privilege. This Pharaoh had. Did any other Pharaoh. Ever have such a privilege. Person to person.

[19:07] As this Pharaoh had. With this old believer. Jacob. He came into his presence. Led by his son Joseph. And he blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh engaged in conversation.

With him. And it seems. That what Jacob said. To Pharaoh. Really caught his mind. And caught his attention. He came down. As it were. To the level. Of ordinary conversation.

With Jacob. And Jacob. Expressed. His feelings. About. The days. Of the years. Of his life. And all we read. Is Jacob. Blessed Pharaoh.

And went out. From his presence. And he left. Pharaoh with that. You see. There is an example. Of. How by the endowment. Of God.

And God's grace. He gives. To his people. Such as Jacob. There. Such as Israel. There. A superiority. Even over the likes. Of Pharaoh. You would expect.

[20 : 02] Pharaoh. To have been. Utterly in charge. Of everything. That happened. In that situation. You might have expected. That before. Jacob said. Anything. You would have asked. Pharaoh permission.

You would have. To speak. He blessed. Pharaoh. He blessed. Pharaoh. And he went out. From his presence. In God's eyes.

Jacob is the superior. One. Jacob is the special. One. He is above. Pharaoh. Spiritually. And in God's estimation.

And the second place. You see it. Is in the way. That. Joseph's policy. Gave. The Egyptians. Servitude. He made them servants.

Of Pharaoh. Now. It's. Sometimes a bit difficult. Perhaps. To just. Think of. Of Joseph's policy. There. You read there. From. Verse 13. Actually.

[20 : 56] All the way through. To verse 26. Of this policy. Of Joseph. And how the people. Of Egypt. Came to him. When their money. Ran out. And. When their money.

Ran out. Joseph said to them. When they were still. Clamoring for food. Of course. Well. Give me your livestock. And he. Got them. To give him. Possession. And ownership.

Under Pharaoh. Of their livestock. When that. Actually came to an end. They still came to him. A year later. And they said. Well. We won't hide from our Lord. Our herds. The livestock. There's nothing left. For us.

But our bodies. And our land. Buy us. Make us servants. Of Pharaoh. And that's what Joseph did. Now. You might think.

That that's being somewhat. Cruel. On the part. Of Joseph. Is he not being just. A bit like a tyrant there. I mean. He's coming there. Eventually. To. With his policies.

[21 : 50] Even though it's at the Egyptians. Request. To make them effectively. Bond servants. Of Pharaoh. And yet. In verse 25. You can see. That it was not that at all.

Because they said. You. Have saved. Our lives. May it please. My Lord. We will be servants. To Pharaoh. In other words. The policy of Joseph. Was a wise one.

He dealt with their request. In this wise way. Because this was really. Providing a lifeline. For them. It provided them. With security. They wouldn't otherwise have. And even in the.

Production of the land. That effectively. Was now Pharaoh's. They were allowed. To keep four fifths. Of the produce. And a fifth. Went to Pharaoh's attacks. They had security. They were under. Joseph's wise. Policies. His insight. You can see it even in that. But. All of that. Is within the references.

[22 : 48] To Israel. And Goshen. You've got references. Before this passage. Of Joseph. Dealing with the Egyptians. You've got references. After that passage. Thus.

Israel settled. In the land of Egypt. In the land of Goshen. In other words. You can see the superiority. Of these people of God. As they are afforded. Liberties. In the land of Goshen. They can do their own thing there. They're not bonded to Pharaoh. They have the liberties. That are proper. To the people of God. Under his lordship. Whereas the Egyptians. Are bonded to Pharaoh. Now we have to be very careful. In. Saying. That God's people. Have. A superiority. But there is. A superiority. Given.

To the people of God. By God himself. Every Christian. In this place today. Belongs. To a people. Who are superior. Let me say.

[23 : 45] Immediately. Not superior. Because. You and I. Are better people. Essentially. In ourselves. Than anyone else. The better people. The superior people.

Is not in terms. Of being more deserving. Of God's favor. Than anyone else. It is superior. In the sense of. Being made superior.

Being granted. A status. By the grace of God. In the salvation. That is in Christ. You are granted. A status. That belongs. Uniquely.

To yourselves. And to all the people. Of God. Who are his people. Wherever they are found. That is. Something. In itself.

Quite amazing. And something that. That we have to appreciate. Because sometimes. We don't appreciate it. You find it. In these passages.

[24 : 38] I have mentioned. I think in. The notes of the sermon. That is. For example. In Deuteronomy. In one of the. Great passages. Of the Bible. Moses. In chapter. 33.

Of Deuteronomy. There. Where. Moses. Final blessing. On Israel. From verse. 29. Especially. Verse 29. But you will notice. In verse.

28. How there is. A reference. To. Something that is. Very. Very. Like. What happened. In Egypt. In the days of Joseph. May even be based on that. So. Israel.

Lived. In safety. Jacob. Lived. Alone. As if he is really. Going back to Egypt. Moses here. And saying. You remember. Almost saying.

Well you remember. How it was. With Israel. And Goshen. With Jacob. He lived alone. In a land of grain. And wine. Whose heavens. Drop down. Due. Happy. Are you.

[25 : 32] Or you could say. Blessed. Are you. O Israel. Who is like you. A people. Saved. By the Lord. And in the passage. From verse 26.

There. The two things. That are brought together. Are. The uniqueness. Of Israel's God. And the uniqueness. Of Israel. As God's people. There is no other God.

But this God. And there is no other people. Like this people. Whose God is the Lord. Well that's our privilege today.

That God has given us. Spiritual superiority. By being made. His special possession. His special people. And you come.

Into the possession of that. By putting your trust in Christ. By taking him. As he's offered in the gospel. To us today. As your own personal redeemer.

[26 : 31] By faith. Through repentance. In turning from sin. To God. As our catechism puts it. And seeking to live obediently.

Under the lordship of Christ. You come into the possession. Of this great status. And the Bible. As you know. Expands on that. In the New Testament. Especially.

It fills out. On all of that. Especially in terms of how we are adopted. And what our adoption signifies. As the people of God. As the saved people of God.

All who are saved. So. You can follow it out there. There's other lessons there. Second Samuel. Chapter seven. And then David's great statement there. And first Peter two nine.

We already mentioned that passage as well. You can follow these out. Yourselves later on. If you look them up. So. The superiority. Of this people. That Joseph belonged to.

[27 : 25] Their identity. Their unity. And their superiority. And it's interesting isn't it. That. All the way through. Although. From now on. Although Joseph is still the governor of Egypt.

He lives. Still where he was living. In his governor's palace. Or residence. But his heart is in Goshen. His people are in Goshen.

His inheritance is with the people of Goshen. And when he came to die. He wasn't buried in Egypt. He was put in a sarcophagus.

And his bones. His remains were carried. With these people. Many hundreds of years after this. To the land of Canaan. The promised land. The position of Joseph's people.

The providence. Secondly. Of Joseph's God. I'm just going to mention this. Basically at closing. The providence of Joseph's God. Now. We've seen. How remarkable it is.

[28 : 26] That God's providence. All the way through this. Study of Joseph's life. We've seen. How God in his providence. Is going ahead. Preparing the way. And working out his plan.

And it's the same. When you come to the providence here. Of what's happening. Providence of God. First of all. God's timetable. Again. Comes to the fore. If we can use the word timetable. Just think of all that's happened. Connected directly. To this moment. Of Israel. Coming to Goshen. Joseph. Joseph. Is sold into Egypt.

A great famine. Extends. From Egypt to Canaan. Joseph is. Then. Promoted. And made governor of Egypt. And then Joseph's brothers.

Are forced to go to Egypt. For food. And eventually. As we saw. They came. To recognize him. Or he came to. Reveal himself to them. They went back. Under his instruction.

[29 : 24] They got their father. They brought their father down. And just at that precise moment. After all of these years. And even everything before then. That led to it. At that precise moment. Goshen. Is empty. And ready. To receive them. You see. God's. Timetable. Is always. Absolutely. Spot on. May not look right to us. At times. And we may ask ourselves. Well. Why is this happening to me now? And we may be asking. How long is this going to go on for? When I feel this pain. And when. I'm in this predicament. Friends. Remember. When our trust is in the Lord. We are trusting in a God. Whose timetable is always right. Whose diary. Is always being worked out. According to his appointments. You could put it this way. There may be something of an Egypt.

[30 : 21] In your own believing experience today. A difficulty. A dark patch. A trial period. That you have to go through. But when our trust is in the Lord.

In this Lord of Joseph. The Lord of Jacob. The Lord of his people. In every generation. If. God. Brings you into. An Egypt experience. He will always. Provide for you. A Goshen. Of some sort. To live in. If we look hard enough. If we believe. Truly that God. Is the God who looks after his people. Then we will discover. That there's a Goshen for us as well. Where we can retain our identity. Where we can enjoy. The privilege of fellowship with himself. Where we can wait upon him. And wait for things to develop. And for him. To guide us.

[31 : 20] It may not be. In our estimation. That the Goshen God gives us. Looks as good to our eye. As what other people have. Maybe there were some people. In Jacob's family. Or descendants here. Over the years. That looked at Goshen. And said. Well I'd rather. We had got somewhere else. More fertile. Somewhere along the banks of the Nile. Or whatever. It doesn't look really. As if we've got the best of it. After all. And especially when. Things began to get really difficult. And the oppressions began. Sometimes it's like that in life too. Isn't it? You wonder. Why it's like that with me. But. Not with someone else. Remember this. When your trust is in the Lord. He will give you a Goshen. That he knows. Is suitable for your situation. And not necessarily suitable.

[32 : 16] As you yourself would have it. But this was perfectly. Relevant. And appropriate. And designed for Israel. At that time.

So was every Goshen. And indeed. Every Egypt type experience. As we go on in life. Because the provision of God. God. Always fits. Not just our circumstances. But his purpose. And that's always higher. Purpose of God. Short term. What is it? It's to keep. This people. And their identity. Separate from the Egyptians. The purpose of God. Long term. What is it? It's to bring. These people out of Egypt. After years of oppression. With a glorious redemption. With a deliverance. That became itself. One of the major illustrations. Of redemption. In Christ. When they were delivered. Through the blood.

[33 : 13] Of a Passover lamb. To walk with God. On the way. To their inheritance. And God. Will always have his intended outcome fulfilled.

What you and I. Need to remember. And what's required of us. Is that we put our hand in his. By faith. And by being led. Under his leadership. Let's enjoy. The Goshens he gives us. The places where light. Is given to us. When Egypt is in darkness. The places where we have. The best. And nothing but the best. From the hand of God. Because God. Never gives his people. Anything less. Than what's best. For them. Let's pray. Gracious and eternal God.

[34 : 17] We give thanks. For. That teaching of your word. That is. Across so many. Centuries. And millennia. Still so relevant. For our own day. And for our circumstances. And we give thanks today. That you had. Taken account. Of our circumstances. Today. Even long before. This word. Was ever put. Into its form. As it is now. Your mind. Was constantly. Upon your people. And as God. From all eternity. You had perfect. Knowledge. Of all the circumstances.

Of your people. In the course of time. So we thank you. For your word. And for its relevance. And application. To our own. Circumstances. Today. Blessed to us again.
We pray. And make us. To dwell. Upon it. Teaching. That we may carry it. In our hearts. Hear us now. We pray. For Jesus sake. Amen. Amen. Thank you.