

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – SERMON 19

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

Genesis 46:5-47:12

INTRODUCTION

- This world is in a horrible mess, and yet we are constantly being enticed with its allurements.
- That is why there are repeated warnings throughout Scripture not to love this world or be conformed to it (1 John 2:15-17)
- Each of us have weaknesses to particular worldly temptations that we must be on guard against.
- We have reached the point in the story where Jacob and his family migrate from Canaan to Egypt.
- They would spend the next 400 years there before leaving to possess the Promised Land.
- Egypt in Scripture is generally portrayed negatively and represents the world.
- There were many dangers that Israel would face dwelling in Egypt – particularly of being corrupted by the Egyptian culture – yet God situated His people there in such a way that they could remain separate and holy people, even in an ungodly land.
- Likewise, Christians dwell in an ungodly world with many temptations that threaten to draw us away from God, yet it is possible to remain pure and holy even in the midst of this wicked world.
- God provided Israel with a place in Egypt – the land of Goshen – where they could be *in* Egypt, yet not *of* Egypt.
- Christians are *in* the world, but not *of* the world (John 17:14-16)
- The land of Goshen represents separation from the world.

Note three objectives of separation:

I. SEPARATION FOR PROSPERITY

- A. These events were all part of God's plan and purpose for Israel

1. God had specifically told Abram that his seed would spend 400 years in another land before returning to Canaan (Genesis 15:12-16)
 2. God had made numerous promises to Jacob that his seed would possess the land of Canaan (Genesis 28:10-15; 35:9-12; 46:2-4)
 3. This was a critical point in the history of the nation of Israel
 4. Through this migration and resettlement, God would preserve His chosen people physically, culturally, linguistically, socially and religiously as a distinct nation.
- B. Events that may seem insignificant and personal may have far-reaching consequences
1. A family of seventy went to Egypt from Canaan
 2. 400 years later Moses would lead a nation of over two million out of Egypt
 3. From such small beginnings they became a great nation from whom the Messiah would eventually come (cf. Zechariah 4:10)
 4. God delights in using the small, weak and despised things of this world to glorify Himself (1 Corinthians 1:26-29; cf. Luke 12:32)
 5. Believers should learn to see the events in their lives not as chance or random occurrences, but part of God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 1:11)
- C. Israel prospered and grew in Goshen
1. God promised to make them a great nation there (Genesis 46:3)
 2. They dwelt in the "best of the land" (Genesis 47:6)
 3. They "grew, and multiplied exceedingly" (Genesis 47:27)
 4. Note that though Pharaoh offered to supply them with everything (45:20) Jacob brought all he had with him so he would not be depended upon the heathen for his livelihood (3 John 5-7)
- D. Separation from sin is a condition of fruitfulness
1. The things of this world are like thorns that choke the word and make unfruitful (Matthew 13:22)
 2. God "purgeth" the branches that they may bring (John 15:2)

3. The blessed and fruitful man of Psalm 1 is separated from sinners and feeding on God's word (Psalm 1:1-3)

II. SEPARATION FOR PURITY

- A. God's design for Israel was that they were to be distinct from the other nations (Numbers 23:9; Deuteronomy 7:6; 33:28)
- B. The Israelites were increasingly joining with the Canaanites
 1. Esau married Hittite wives (Genesis 26:34-35)
 2. Dinah was allured and defiled by the Shechemites (Genesis 34:1-2)
 3. Judah befriended Canaanites and eventually married one (Genesis 38:1-2)
 4. Simeon married a Canaanite (Genesis 46:10)
- C. God removed Israel from the corrupting influence of the Canaanites
 1. The people of Canaan were becoming increasingly wicked (Genesis 15:16)
 2. By Moses' time, they were committing incest, sodomy, bestiality and child sacrifice (Leviticus 18:24-25)
 3. It was for this reason that God required them to be utterly destroyed (Deuteronomy 20:16-18)
- D. Christians are called to be separate from the world
 1. God's people are to be a *peculiar* people – His exclusive possession (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9)
 2. People ought to see a difference in Christians
 3. We are not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2)
 4. We are to keep unspotted from the world (James 1:27)
 5. Christians are "called to be saints" (Romans 1:7)
 6. It begins with setting our affections on things above (Col 3:1-2)
- E. The world hates us for not conforming to their ways
 1. Joseph carefully instructed his brethren to tell Pharaoh they were shepherds, knowing that the Egyptians abominated shepherds (Genesis 46:31-34)

2. The world hates Christ and hates those who follow Christ (John 15:18-21)
3. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26)
4. Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4)

III. SEPARATION FOR PILGRIMAGE

- A. Jacob described his life as a "pilgrimage" (Genesis 47:9)
 1. Like Abraham, he "sojourned" looking for a city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:9-10)
 2. God's people confess they are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13-16; cf. Psalm 119:54)
- B. This must be the Christian's attitude to the world
 1. We are "strangers and pilgrims" here (1 Peter 2:11)
 2. The world's affairs occupy only as much as is necessary for proper living
 3. We are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20)
- C. This attitude will be reflected in our priorities in life
 1. We seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33)
 2. We lay up treasures in heaven, where our heart is (Matthew 6:19-21)

CONCLUSION

1. There are many who profess to be Christians but are not willing to suffer for Christ's sake
2. Such are mere professors who will be cast into hell on the Day of Judgment (Mark 8:34-38)
3. Are my affections on heavenly things, or the things of this world?
4. Will I, like Demas, forsake Christ for the love of this present world? (2 Timothy 4:10)
5. Or will I obey God's command to "come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing"? (2 Corinthians 6:17)