

Introduction
--------------

Big Idea: Israel is still central to God's redemptive plan

1. When God first called Abraham and established His covenant with him, He made a series of promises (READ Genesis 12:1-3):
  - a. He would make him into a great nation
  - b. He would bless him
  - c. He would make his name great and he would bless others
  - d. He would bless those who would bless him, and curse those who cursed him
  - e. And in him He would bless all the families of the earth
2. Three of these promises are easy to understand when simply taken at face value—God certainly blessed Abraham, his descendants became the great nation of Israel, and Abraham's name was indeed made great and is remembered and revered to this day
3. Two of these promises, however, are a bit more challenging:
  - a. What did God mean when He said he would bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him?
    - 1) This is a **\*\*HOT\*\*** topic among Evangelicals today because most think of it in political terms and whether or not the United States should continue to support modern Israel
    - 2) While I believe a sound Biblical argument can be made that we should stand behind the Jewish people and the modern state of Israel, when we think of God's promise in a purely political sense we miss the primary intent:
      - a) First and foremost, this was God's promise of prosperity and protection to Abraham and his descendants (Isaac repeated the promise to Jacob; SEE Genesis 27:27-29)
      - b) Second, it was also a promise of God's blessing to others who treated Abraham and his descendants appropriately, and a warning to those who would mistreat them
      - c) Finally, blessing or cursing Abraham and his descendants isn't really about Israel—it's a reference to whether or not someone recognizes and accepts God's redemptive plan—if we reject His plan for Israel, we reject His redemptive plan for mankind
  - b. What did God mean when He said that Abraham would be a blessing, and all the nations of the Earth would be blessed in him?
    - 1) We know from Galatians 3:8 that the reference to all the nations of the Earth being blessed in Abraham was ultimately a reference to the Gospel: **"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."**

- 2) However, we also have examples in the Scripture of people and nations being blessed by God because of their relationship to Abraham and his descendants prior to the Gospel:
  - a) For instance, the Bible says in Genesis 30:27-30 that Laban was blessed by God and prospered because of Jacob, and Laban even declared to Jacob, **“...I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account.”**
  - b) And, we’ve seen in the story of Joseph how Potiphar, Pharaoh, and all the land of Egypt and Canaan were blessed by God because of Joseph
4. I believe we see elements and foreshadowing of these two promises in our passage today, Genesis 46:31-47:26:
  - a. In the first half, we see how Pharaoh was blessed by God through Jacob because he blessed Jacob’s family
  - b. In the second half, we will see how all the land of Egypt and Canaan were blessed by God through Joseph

A. Pharaoh was blessed by God through Jacob because he blessed Jacob’s family (46:31-47:12)

1. In chapters 45 and 46 we witnessed two incredible and emotional reunions:
  - a. The first reunion is in chapter 45 when Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers:
    - 1) At first they were rightly terrified because of what they had done to Joseph (45:2), but he calmed their fears declaring that it was ultimately God, not them, who sent him to Egypt to **“establish for [them] a remnant in the earth and to keep [them] alive for a great remnant of survivors”** (45:7)
    - 2) This led to an emotional reunion with hugs, kissing, and tons of weeping!
    - 3) When news of this reached Pharaoh, he was so pleased he instructed Joseph to send his brothers back home with wagons and all sorts of provision to get Jacob and bring him to Egypt
    - 4) Pharaoh also told them not to worry about any of their goods back in Canaan because he would give them **“the best of the land of Egypt”** and they would **“eat off the fat of the land”** (45:18, 20)
  - b. The second reunion is in chapter 46 when Joseph and Jacob were finally reunited after 22 years:
    - 1) There was more hugging and weeping just like with his brothers (46:29), and Jacob even declared, **“Now I can die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive”** (45:30)
    - 2) That’s where we stopped last week, and our passage today picks up with Joseph introducing his family to Pharaoh
2. Our passage for today starts with Joseph introducing five of his brothers to Pharaoh and the Pharaoh’s gracious and generous response (READ 46:31-47:6):

- a. Joseph introduced his brothers to Pharaoh as shepherds so that they could settle in the land of Goshen (34): **“so that you may live in the land of Goshen...”**
  - 1) Goshen was a lush and fertile region in the Nile Delta in northeast Egypt and it was perfect for grazing flocks and herds which made it perfect for Joseph’s family
  - 2) However, there appears to have been another reason why Joseph wanted them to settle in Goshen (34): **“for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians”**:
    - a) Egyptians were mostly farmers who settled on their own plot of land, and they apparently had a disdain for nomadic people who typically wandered around and lived in tents
    - b) Goshen was located away from most of the large cities and cultural centers of Egypt so by living in Goshen Joseph’s family would have been less offensive to the average Egyptian
    - c) It also would have served to isolate his family from many of the cultural and religious influences of Egyptian life
- b. Pharaoh’s response when he met Joseph’s brothers was both gracious and generous (47:5-6):
  - 1) When Pharaoh learned in chapter 45 that Joseph’s brothers had come to Egypt, he was pleased and instructed Joseph to send his brothers home to fetch their father and families and return to Egypt where he promised to give them the best of the land (45:18, 20)
  - 2) He made good on that promise when he met Joseph’s brothers saying (47:5-6): **“the land of Egypt is at your disposal; have your brothers settle in the best of the land of Goshen”**
  - 3) He didn’t stop there, though; he even instructed Joseph to put some of his brothers in charge of his own flocks and herds, giving them jobs as part of his royal staff (47:6): **“and if you know any excellent men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock”**
- c. After this, Joseph introduced Pharaoh to his father, Jacob (READ 47:7-10):
  - 1) There was this interesting interaction between Pharaoh and Jacob over Jacob’s age:
    - a) Pharaoh was apparently fascinated by Jacob’s age because he asked him how he was (8): **“How many are the days of the years of your life?”**
    - b) This might have been because the average lifespan in ancient Egypt at the time was less than 40 years; some Pharaoh’s lived into their 70’s and 80’s but Jacob was 130; it was probably the first time Pharaoh had seen someone so old!
    - c) Jacob’s response that his days were **“few and evil”** and had not attained to the length of his fathers was Jacob’s way of saying that his life was shorter than theirs and filled with more trouble and difficulty

- 2) The most important aspect of their interaction, however, has to do with Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh:
  - a) Notice that Jacob's meeting both begins and ends with Jacob blessing Pharaoh—in fact, it's the VERY FIRST and VERY LAST thing he does (RE-READ 47:7 & 10)
  - b) Often in the Bible, blessings are a way of bestowing God's favor upon someone as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving, and that's what we see here
  - c) I believe Jacob blessed Pharaoh as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving for how Pharaoh had treated not only Joseph but his entire family
  
3. Takeaway: God blesses those who bless the descendants of Abraham:
  - a. Pharaoh blessed Joseph and his family by not only saving them from starvation but settling them in Goshen and giving them the best that Egypt had to offer
  - b. In return, Pharaoh received God's blessing through Jacob
  - c. There's a lot of debate today, even among evangelicals, as to exactly how, or even if, God's promise to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham applies today:
    - 1) Most evangelical Christians believe we should support and defend the modern nation of Israel if we expect to receive God's blessings as a nation, and if we don't we will be cursed as a nation
    - 2) However, there's a growing trend, especially among younger Christians, that modern day Israel is not the Israel of God (it's been replaced by the Church) and therefore we shouldn't support or defend Israel; in fact, many actively condemn Israel
    - 3) The problem with this growing trend, in my opinion, is that it is driven mostly by politics and a faulty view of eschatology
    - 4) The Bible clearly states that God's redemptive plan includes redeeming and restoring the literal nation of Israel and fulfilling all His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—not just in a spiritual sense but an earthly one
    - 5) This is part of God's redemptive plan, and in fact we—the Church—are grafted into Israel (we don't replace Israel) and since this is true, we must assume His promise to bless those who bless and curse those who curse Abraham's descendants still applies today
    - 6) This doesn't mean that we have to approve of everything Israel does—after all they are still in rebellion against God and will be until they recognize Jesus as their promised Messiah
    - 7) So, the best way we can bless Israel is to pray for them, evangelize them, and support them against their enemies

B. All the land of Egypt and Canaan was blessed by God through Joseph (47:13-26)

1. Joseph's family settled in the land of Goshen only two years into the seven-year famine and things were already pretty bleak (47:13): **"Now there was no food in all the land because the famine was very heavy, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine."**
2. Things were dire, but there was hope because of the wisdom of Joseph and the actions he took in storing up massive warehouses of grain during the seven years of plenty:
  - a. Initially, people were able to buy grain using cash (READ 47:14)
  - b. However, the money soon ran out, so Joseph accepted livestock in trade for grain (READ 47:15-17)
  - c. That lasted for about a year before the livestock ran out, so Joseph accepted land and service in exchange for grain (READ 47:18-24)
3. Some view Joseph's actions here as harsh, opportunistic, and taking advantage of the peoples' desperation by stealing their money, livestock, land, and making them slaves:
  - a. However, this would go against everything we've learned about Joseph thus far, and most importantly the people didn't see it this way—in fact, they viewed Joseph as their savior (READ 47:25)
    - 1) The people were also the ones who proposed to Joseph the exchange of land and service for grain (47:19)
    - 2) V. 21 also says that Joseph provided for those who sold their land by moving them into the cities, and he didn't accept land from the priests but allowed them to keep their land
    - 3) Finally, even though they had sold their land, Joseph enacted a law that allowed them to continue farming the land after the famine and keep 80% of the produce for themselves while giving 20% to Pharaoh (essentially a tax)
  - b. We have to keep in mind that Joseph was overseeing a massive government operation designed to keep as many as 4 million people alive for seven years
    - 1) Governments don't run for free, and since most of Egypt's taxes came from grain, there was no revenue for most of this time because nothing was growing
    - 2) So, Joseph's actions kept the people alive and the government functioning—no easy task
4. Takeaway: God's plan is still to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham:
  - a. God blessed the land of Egypt and Canaan through Abraham by using his descendant, Joseph, to save them from the famine
  - b. In a similar way, God has blessed all the nations of the earth through Abraham by making eternal salvation possible through His seed, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:8): **"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.'"**
  - c. However, God's promise to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham includes more than just the spiritual blessing of salvation; God's promises include a

time of unprecedented earthly peace with Jesus reigning over the nations for a thousand years