

Foreshadowing in Genesis Chapter 47

Introduction

One of the most famous individuals in the book of Genesis is *Joseph* – the first son of Jacob and Rachel. The account of Joseph’s life begins in Genesis chapter 37 – and that account continues all the way to the very end of Genesis, in chapter 50.

Of course, quite a bit of information is contained in chapters 37 through 50. However, here is an *extremely* brief summary of Joseph’s life:

1. Joseph is the “favorite son” of his father, Jacob.
2. In dreams, God reveals to Joseph that he will eventually obtain a position of authority over his brothers – despite the fact that ten of his brothers are older than him.
3. Joseph’s older brothers become very angry with him – primarily because they do not believe that they will ever have to serve Joseph. As a result, Joseph’s brothers betray him – and sell him to slave traders.
4. Joseph is then taken to Egypt, and he undergoes many trials there. However, God is with Joseph; and therefore, Joseph ends up victorious over his trials.
5. This victory allows Joseph to become the “second in command” of Egypt – second only to Pharaoh. In that position, Joseph is able to **save** his family – and the people of Egypt – from starving to death in a severe famine.

This concise summary of Joseph’s life bears a striking resemblance to the events in Jesus’ life. Consider these examples about Jesus’ earthly ministry:

1. Jesus is the “favorite son” of his father, God.
2. Though prophecy, God reveals to Jesus that he will eventually obtain a position of authority over his brothers (the Jews) – despite the fact that there are many older (and supposedly wiser) Pharisees and Sadducees.
3. Some of the Jews become very angry with Jesus – primarily because they do not believe that they will ever have to serve Jesus. As a result, those Jews betray Jesus – and turn him over to the Romans.
4. Jesus then suffers many trials at the hands of the Romans, culminating in his death by crucifixion. However, God is with Jesus; and therefore Jesus ends up victorious over his death – when God resurrects him.
5. This victory allows Jesus to become the “second in command” of the universe – second only to God. In that position, Jesus is now able to **save** his family (the Jews) – as well as everyone else – from eternal death.

The “famine program” in Genesis 47

As mentioned above, Joseph saved his family – and the Egyptians – from a severe famine. The following passage describes the exact events that occurred, when Joseph saved the Egyptians from that famine.

Genesis 47:13-28 (ESV):

¹³ Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. ¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house. ¹⁵ And 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. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.” ¹⁶ And Joseph answered, “Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.” ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. ¹⁸ And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord’s. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.”

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh’s. ²¹ As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. ²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.

²³ Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. ²⁴ And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.” ²⁵ And they said, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh.” ²⁶ So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh’s.

²⁷ Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. ²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.

Summary of Genesis chapter 47

Here is a basic summary of the “famine program” events in Genesis 47:

- Joseph provided grain to the people of Egypt during the famine. Of course, that grain was then used to make bread. So, in essence, Joseph provided bread to the people of Egypt.
- During the famine, Joseph gained control over the entire land of Egypt – because the people of Egypt were eventually forced to **sell their land** to Joseph, in order to purchase grain.

- After Joseph gained control over Egypt, he did not retain that control for himself. Instead, he turned over that control to the ultimate ruler of Egypt – Pharaoh.

- There are two specific groups of people, who were not forced to sell their land to Joseph. One group was the priests of On. They were not required to sell their land, because they received an automatic allotment of grain from Pharaoh. The other group was Joseph’s relatives – the descendants of Jacob (i.e., Israel). Jacob and his descendants were actually given land to settle in, in the region of Goshen.

Is anything similar to Genesis 47 going to happen in the future?

At first glance, it appears that Joseph “took advantage” of the Egyptians during the famine – i.e., that he used the famine as a tool, to wrest the Egyptians’ money, livestock and land from them. However, is it possible that there is a “deeper meaning” in that passage? In particular, since many of the events in Joseph’s life are prophetic of Jesus’ life, is it possible that something similar to the events in Genesis 47 will occur with Jesus, in the future?

Let’s take a look at the events of the famine, and see if there are any “parallels” to them in Scripture.

First off, Joseph provided bread to the Egyptians. So, consider these verses about Jesus, in the context of *providing bread*:

John 6:35,51,58

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

Jesus, himself, is the spiritual “bread of life”. So, in a sense, Jesus is also providing bread to people – because followers of Jesus will obtain **everlasting** life.

In addition, Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem. The Hebrew words for Bethlehem are *beit lechem* – which means *house of bread*. In this context, that meaning would refer to a *place* (house) where *sustenance* (bread) originates.

As a result, it certainly appears to be “by design” that Jesus – the bread of life – was born in Bethlehem – the house of bread.

Another item about Genesis 47 is that Joseph gained control over the entire land of Egypt. So, consider these passages, which refer to Jesus, in the context of *gaining control over land*:

Isaiah 42:1,4 (ESV):

¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.

Daniel 7:13,14 (ESV):

¹³ “I saw in the night visions,

and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

Zechariah 9:9,10 (ESV):

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Luke 1:30-33 (ESV):

³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

The above passages (along with many others) indicate that when Jesus returns, he will gain control over the entire earth. In other words, Jesus will obtain a position of authority over all the lands of the earth – similar to the way that Joseph obtained a position of authority over the land of Egypt.

In addition, note that in Genesis 47, the Egyptians did not give up their land *immediately*. Instead, the people first gave up their money, and then their livestock, before finally giving up their land. This may also be a foreshadowing of the future; because currently, only a *minority* of humans is willing to sincerely follow Jesus.

So, when Jesus returns, there will probably be many people who will not be willing to submit to Jesus' rule *immediately*. As a result, those people will presumably need to go through a gradual process of "giving up" their resistance to Jesus – similar to the way that the Egyptians needed to give up their money and their livestock, before finally giving up their land.

Genesis 47 also states that Joseph did not retain control over Egypt for himself – instead, he handed over that control to Pharaoh. In fact, Genesis 47 states "Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh" and "The land became Pharaoh's".

It makes sense that Joseph would turn over control of the land of Egypt to Pharaoh – because Pharaoh was the ultimate ruler of Egypt. In other words, even Joseph was still in *subjection* to Pharaoh.

So, consider the following passage, which describes Jesus during the Kingdom of God age, in the context of *handing over control*:

1 Corinthians 15:24-25,27-28 (ESV):

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he [Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

²⁷ For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

The above passage tells us that after Jesus' 1000 year rule, Jesus will hand over control of the kingdom to God. Jesus will do this because God is the ultimate ruler of the kingdom – and because Jesus, himself, is in *subjection* to God. In other words, Jesus is the "second in command" of the Kingdom of God – similar to the way that Joseph was second in command of Egypt.

Finally, Genesis 47 describes two specific groups of people who did not lose their lands, during the famine. One group is the priests of On, and the other group is Joseph's relatives – the Israelites.

So, consider the following passages, about two specific groups of people who will have an "inheritance" in the Kingdom of God:

Group 1:

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV):

⁹ But you [Christians] are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his

marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Revelation 5:8-10 (ESV):

⁸ And when he [Jesus] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 20:6 (ESV):

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Group 2:

Jeremiah 23:3-8 (ESV):

³ Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴ I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

⁵ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’

⁷ “Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when they shall no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ ⁸ but ‘As the Lord lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ Then they shall dwell in their own land.”

Isaiah 43:1,5-7 (ESV):

¹ But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

⁵ Fear not, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you.

⁶ I will say to the north, Give up,

and to the south, Do not withhold;
bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the end of the earth,
⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.”

Zechariah 8:7-8 (ESV):

⁷ Thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, ⁸ and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.”

Group 1, above, refers to followers of Christ – i.e., Christians. Those Christians are referred to as “priests of God”, and a “royal priesthood”. In addition, those Christians will *rule* with Jesus, for 1000 years.

So, it appears that the account of the priests of On, in Genesis 47, represents a foreshadowing of Christians in the kingdom of God – because Christians will be the *priests* in the Kingdom.

Group 2, above, explicitly refers to Israelites – especially to Jews. Of course, Jesus, himself, is a Jew – i.e., he is a descendant of Judah. As a result, the people in group 2 are literally *relatives* of Jesus.

So, it appears that the account of Joseph’s family obtaining land to settle on, in Genesis 47, is a foreshadowing of Jesus’ family (the Jews) obtaining land to settle on, during the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

Here is a concise summary, of the “links” that I can see between Genesis 47 and the Kingdom of God:

- In Genesis 47, Joseph provided people with physical food;
- In the Kingdom of God, Jesus will provide people with spiritual food.

- In Genesis 47, Joseph gained control over all the land of Egypt;
- In the Kingdom of God, Jesus will gain control over all the lands of the earth.

- In Genesis 47, after Joseph gained control over the land of Egypt, he handed over that control to the ultimate ruler – Pharaoh;
- In the Kingdom of God, after Jesus gains control over the earth, he will hand over that control to the ultimate ruler – God.

- In Genesis 47, the two groups of people that did not have their lands confiscated were: Joseph’s relatives, and the priests of On;
- In the Kingdom of God, the two groups of people that will not have their “inheritance” confiscated will be: Jesus’ relatives (the Jews), and the kingdom age priesthood (Christians).

As a result, it certainly appears to me that the events described in Genesis 47 “foreshadow” events that will occur, in the Kingdom of God.