

and
 come to me,
 and
 I will give you the best of the land of Egypt,
 and
 you shall eat the fat of the land.'

19 And you,
 Joseph,
 are commanded to say,
 'Do this:
 take wagons from the land of Egypt
 for your little ones
 and
 for your wives,
 and
 bring your father,
 and
 come.

20 Have no concern for your goods,
 for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours."

Pharaoh approves, even commands, that Jacob move his entire family to Egypt.

This is incredible!

The unbelieving ruler of a powerful nation is moved by God to provide for one man and his family!

How cool is that?

We serve a God who is able to direct the hearts of powerful rulers to provide for His people even in the midst of a worldwide famine.

God continues to do this for His people today. It is right for us to pray to God our Father to give us our daily bread. And when we pray this, we are to believe that He can even move the hearts of unbelieving kings to do so.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that God does not "always" work in this way. Move forward some 400 years to the time of Moses. What do we see God doing at that time? We are told several times that God hardens the heart of Pharaoh. He might have just as easily "softened" the heart of Pharaoh. But God had different purposes in mind.

It is important to remember that both Pharaoh's are under the control of the sovereign hand of God. And both rulers are carrying out God's good purposes for His people.

The same God who frees Israel from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh during Moses' day, formerly led Israel down to Egypt 400 years before.

God is sovereign over both Pharaoh's. And He is working out His good purposes in both situations. When God does not answer your prayers in the way that you want, hold onto the truth that He is still good and sovereign. Be patient and continue to wait upon Him.

But when God makes the most powerful ruler in the known world favorable to you, it is good to be in awe of our God.

Read Genesis 45:21-24.

21 The sons of Israel did so:

and
 Joseph gave them wagons,
 according to the command of Pharaoh,
 and
 gave them provisions for the journey.
 22 To each and all of them
 he gave a change of clothes,
 but
 to Benjamin
 he gave
 three hundred shekels of silver
 and
 five changes of clothes.
 23 To his father he sent as follows:
 ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt,
 and
 ten female donkeys loaded with
 grain,
 bread,
 and
 provision
 for his father on the journey.
 24 Then
 he sent his brothers away,
 and
 as they departed,
 he said to them,
 "Do not quarrel on the way."

Everything is provided for the move to Egypt to take place.
 Joseph and Pharaoh have thought of everything.
 Abundant provisions for the journey.
 Carts to carry those who cannot walk.
 New clothing which would be a reminder of Joseph's royal coat that was destroyed.
 And an abundance of silver and extra coats given to Benjamin.

As the brothers draw near to home, Jacob again takes center stage.
 We have been focused on Joseph and the brothers so long that we may have lost sight of Jacob.
 But God has not forgotten Jacob. He has not been indifferent to His trials.
 Jacob continues to grieve over the loss of Joseph.
 He has been forced to send his beloved son, Benjamin, to Egypt.
 He is wondering if he will see any of his boys again.
 Fears are his constant companion. And all he can do is wait...
 He has not received any updates.
 He does not have a cell phone.
 All his previous victories and the great promises of blessing surely appear to him as vanity of vanities
 now.

Then he sees a great caravan approaching.

Read Genesis 45:25-28.

25 So
 they went up out of Egypt

and
 came to the land of Canaan
 to their father Jacob.
 26 And
 they told him,
 "Joseph is still alive,
 and
 he is ruler over all the land of Egypt."
 And
 his heart became numb,
 for he did not believe them.
 27 But
 when they told him all the words of Joseph,
 which he had said to them,
 and
 when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him,
 the spirit of their father Jacob revived.
 28 And
 Israel said,
 "It is enough;
 Joseph my son is still alive.
 I will go and see him before I die."

The brothers run up to Jacob and happily declare, "Joseph is alive! And he is ruler of all Egypt!" Jacob is stunned. The ESV says "numb."

He is trying to take in the possibility that Joseph might be alive, and his heart is not in a place to accept the good news.

Jacob is trying to wrap his mind around the possibility that the son he thought was dead is now alive.

Then the brothers tell Jacob all the words of Joseph. We are not told what particular words were most convincing, but something in them must have rung true to Jacob.

The carts and the clothes and Benjamin being given the silver all begin to work on Jacob's unbelieving heart.

After some time, Jacob's heart softens, and he begins to believe, and his spirit revives.

The joy of being re-united with Joseph is all he can think about.

What seemed an impossibility only a short while before, might happen!

Jacob quickly decides to take his entire family down to Egypt.

His primary motivation is that he wants to see Joseph!

He is not thinking about faith in the covenant promises.

He is not thinking about God's larger plan to build a great nation for himself.

He is thinking about his son, Joseph.

How do you think God feels about His covenant child at this moment?

Do you believe that Jacob's happiness is shared by God?

The story continues as Jacob reaches Beersheba, the southern border of the Land of Canaan.

Read Genesis 46:1-4.

So
 Israel took his journey
 with all that he had
 and
 came to Beersheba,
 and
 offered sacrifices
 to the God of his father Isaac.

2 And
 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night
 and
 said,
 "Jacob, Jacob."

 And
 he said,
 "Here am I."

3 Then
 he said,
 "I am God,
 the God of your father.
 Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt,
 for there I will make you into a great nation.

4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt,
 and
 I will also bring you up again,
 and
 Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."

As Jacob reaches the southern tip of the Promised Land, he begins to fear that he might not be doing what God wants. After all, was not the point of calling Abraham out of Ur to lead him to the promised land of blessing?

Jacob has been so excited about seeing his son, that he temporarily forgot about God's larger plan. But now that he is about to cross over the border of that land, he does not want to abandon those promises.

And so, he seeks God.

He offers sacrifices to God. These sacrifices prepare Jacob to seek God face.

He is seeking communion with God.

He is crying out to God for direction.

Surely, he wants to know if God approves of his leaving the Promised Land.

The uncertainty of this moment is one that we all have felt at one time or another.

How often do we suffer great anxiety over some big decision in our life?

Which job should we take?

Is this the right person for me to marry?

Where should I live?

And often the struggle boils down to our trying to figure out this question: Am I following God's will for my life? Or am I simply doing what I want to do?

Am I taking the easier road?

Or am I truly walking in faith and obedience?

For Jacob, he can clearly see how God has wonderfully provided for his family through Joseph. And Joseph certainly believes that he has been elevated to such a high position to save the people of Israel.

On the other hand, leaving the Promised Land to go to Egypt has never been a good idea. Will this result in the abandonment of the faith altogether. Will his family simply be incorporated into the Egyptian culture?

It would not be too difficult to make a case that Jacob should resolve himself to remain in Canaan until God provided for him there.

In the end, Jacob is taking his family down to Egypt for a very human reason: He wants to see Joseph before he dies.

God graciously appears to Jacob in his doubting.
God cares about Jacob's fears.

What is it that God tells Jacob?

First, He declares himself to be Elohim, the God of your father. We see in this that God is telling Jacob that He is both the personal God of their family and the supreme God over all.

He could have used the covenant name of Yahweh. Instead, he speaks of being "Elohim". This is the general term for God Almighty. In other words, God is sovereign over the land of Egypt, not just Israel.

This leads us to the second statement.

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt.

Leaving the promised land is my will for you. It is not the end of the covenant promises. Rather, it is the means by which I have determined to fulfil the covenant promises.

This naturally leads us to the third statement.

"I will make you into a great nation in Egypt."

Contrary to human logic, God is going to make this small family into a great nation. And He is going to do this while they are living in a foreign land, ruled by a foreign king.

Something similar is happening today with the Church.

Jesus is gathering His people from the farthest corners of the earth.

He is building His church in the midst of the unbelieving world.

Then God says to Jacob.

"I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again."

Jacob is old and feeble.

How will God bring Jacob back to Canaan?

Joseph will be the one to watch Jacob die in Egypt.

And Joseph will carry Jacob's corpse back to the land of Canaan.

On a personal level, God is greatly encouraging Jacob.

God is fine with Jacob leaving the Promised Land.

God assures Jacob that the Covenant Promises will continue to move forward.

And Jacob will be able to enjoy precious time with his son before he dies.

While God cares for Jacob as an individual, He is also working to fulfill his larger plan.

What is God's larger plan?

God is working to make a great nation for Himself. And He is beginning that work by taking this small group of 70 people down to Egypt.

In this 70 people, God has formed a small microcosm of the vast multitude that He will eventually redeem for Himself.

In this 70 people, we see a small picture of the complete people of God.

70 is a symbolic number of the whole.

In this 70, we see that God is working to save a whole people for Himself.

In Romans 11:26, Paul writes, ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved,

Where does Paul get the idea that "all Israel" will be saved?

And what does that even mean?

Does it refer to a mass conversion of Jews just before Jesus returns?

Or does it refer to the sum total of redeemed Jews throughout all history?

Or does it refer to the sum total of all redeemed Jews and Gentiles throughout all of history?

The entirety of all God's elect people.

My purpose today is not to argue one of these positions.

My purpose is to help you see that this concept of "all Israel" or "Israel as a whole people" begins here in Genesis.

And hopefully, seeing God's purpose to redeem a "whole people" for Himself will inspire you to love the whole Church.

John 6:35-39 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. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

It remains a mystery to me how this can be. But it encourages my faith that it is true. And it fuels my love for the whole Church.

When Jesus returns, we will see clearly that He has redeemed all His people.

The total sum of all the redeemed throughout all of history will be visibly joined as one bride for Jesus Christ. She will not be missing any body parts. She will be whole and entire, complete in every way.

This idea of a whole people of God, a visible congregation of God's people begins in Genesis 46.

Read Genesis 46:5-7.

⁵ Then
Jacob set out from Beersheba.
The **sons of Israel** carried
Jacob their father,

their little ones,
 and
 their wives,
 in the wagons
 that Pharaoh had sent to carry him.
 6 They also took their livestock and their goods,
 which they had gained in the land of Canaan,
 and
 came into Egypt,
 Jacob
 and
 all his offspring with him,
 7 his sons,
 and
 his sons' sons with him,
 his daughters,
 and
 his sons' daughters.
 All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

Notice the emphasis on “all of Jacob’s offspring.” The entirety of Jacob’s offspring make the move to Egypt.

And notice in verse 5 that Jacob’s 12 sons are called the “sons of Israel”.

Jacob’s children might have been called just that: children of Jacob.

But instead, they are called “sons of Israel”.

Israel is the “new name” that God gave Jacob.

And these 12 “sons of Israel” constitute the whole people of God.

From these 12 sons, God will form a great nation. And this great nation will forever be divided into 12 distinct, yet united, tribes.

Later, when God establishes the priesthood, the high priest would wear a breastplate indicating his service to all Israel.

Exodus 28:21 ²¹ There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes.

Jesus is the King of Israel. And the NT Church is incorporated into God’s one plan to save “all Israel.” Jesus’ 12 disciples rule over the 12 Tribes of Israel, and yet they are also the foundation stones of the NT Church.

Luke 22:28-30 ²⁸ "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven at the end of the ages is designed with 12 in mind.

^{ESV} **Revelation 21:12** It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed-

The people of God (the sons of Israel) will be made up of people from every tribe and nation on earth. They will be so numerous that they cannot be counted by the naked eye.

And they will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to save “all Israel”.

The people of God will be complete.
None will be missing.

This is the point of the long list of names in Genesis 46. God is teaching us to think of His people as a single unit.

He does it by calling them all “the sons of Israel”. And He does it by forming them into a unit of 70.

The number 70 is a number of fullness in the book of Genesis.

After the Flood, in Genesis 10, the entire world was divided into nations. Guess how many nations are named? Seventy.

Read Genesis 46:8-28.

8 Now
 these are the names
 of the descendants (**sons**) of Israel,
 who came into Egypt,
 Jacob and his sons.
9 Reuben, Jacob's firstborn,
 and the sons of Reuben:
 Hanoch,
 Pallu,
 Hezron,
 and
 Carmi.
10 The sons of Simeon:
 Jemuel,
 Jamin,
 Ohad,
 Jachin,
 Zohar,
 and
 Shaul,
 the son of a Canaanite woman.
11 The sons of Levi:
 Gershon,
 Kohath,
 and
 Merari.
12 The sons of Judah:
 Er,
 Onan,
 Shelah,
 Perez,
 and
 Zerah
 (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan);
 and
 the sons of Perez were
 Hezron
 and
 Hamul.
13 The sons of Issachar:
 Tola,
 Puvah,
 Yob,
 and

14 Shimron.
 The sons of Zebulun:
 Sered,
 Elon,
 and
 Jahleel.

15 These are the sons of Leah,
 whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram,
 together with his daughter Dinah;
 altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.

16 The sons of Gad:
 Ziphion,
 Haggi,
 Shuni,
 Ezbon,
 Eri,
 Arodi,
 and
 Areli.

17 The sons of Asher:
 Imnah,
 Ishvah,
 Ishvi,
 Beriah,
 with Serah their sister.
 And the sons of Beriah:
 Heber
 and
 Malchiel.

18 These are the sons of Zilpah,
 whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter;
 and
 these she bore to Jacob-
 sixteen persons.

19 The sons of Rachel,
 Jacob's wife:
 Joseph
 and
 Benjamin.

20 And
 to Joseph
 in the land of Egypt
 were born
 Manasseh
 and
 Ephraim,
 whom Asenath,
 the daughter of Potiphera the priest of On,
 bore to him.

21 And
 the sons of Benjamin:
 Bela,
 Becher,
 Ashbel,
 Gera,

Naaman,
 Ehi,
 Rosh,
 Muppim,
 Huppim,
 and
 Ard.
 22 These are the sons of Rachel,
 who were born to Jacob-
 fourteen persons in all.
 23 The sons of Dan:
 Hushim.
 24 The sons of Naphtali:
 Jahzeel,
 Guni,
 Jezer,
 and
 Shillem.
 25 These are the sons of Bilhah,
 whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter,
 and
 these she bore to Jacob-
 seven persons in all.
 26 All the persons belonging to Jacob
 who came into Egypt,
 who were his own descendants,
 not including Jacob's sons' wives,
 were sixty-six persons in all.
 27 And
 the sons of Joseph,
 who were born to him in Egypt,
 were two.

**All the persons of the house of Jacob
 who came into Egypt
 were seventy.**

28 He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph
 to show the way before him in Goshen,
 and
 they came into the land of Goshen.

We could spend a good deal of time wrestling over the details of this list of names. Instead, I am only going to point out a few details that will make clear that Moses is intentionally working to make the numbers add up to 70.

Israel's sons are organized according to his wives and concubines. Leah is the first and their number totals 33.

15 These are the sons of Leah,
 whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram,
 together with his daughter Dinah;
 altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.

Only if you add up the names it is unclear who the 33 are.

Two Ways to reach 33:

1. Only sons and omitting Ohad. (He is not on any other list in the Bible)
 - a. 6 Sons
 - b. 25 Grandsons (omitting Ohad, but including Er and Onan)
 - c. 2 Great grandsons
2. Sons and Daughters, but excluding Er and Onan.
 - a. 6 Sons
 - b. 24 Grandsons (Ohad included, but not Er and Onan)
 - c. 2 Great Grandsons
 - d. 1 Granddaughter (Dinah)
3. Daughters (more than Dinah, but not named)
 - a. Excluding Er and Onan
 - b. Excluding Ohad.

Whatever option you take you are left with questions.

Why include this person and not this person?

Next we come to Zilpah's children, Leah's maidservant.

¹⁸ These are the sons of Zilpah,
whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter;
and
these she bore to Jacob-
sixteen persons.

Here the numbers are clear, but one wonders why only one daughter is named.

How to reach 16!

1. 2 Sons
2. 11 Grandsons
3. 2 Great grandsons
4. 1 Granddaughter (Serah)

Why is Serah included when other daughters are not?

The children of Rachel and Bilhah are straightforward. But why not include any of their daughters.

Then we have the issue that only 66 people traveled in the caravan.

But we are told that there were 66 that traveled in the Caravan!

²⁶ All the persons belonging to Jacob
who came into Egypt,
who were his own descendants,
not including Jacob's sons' wives,
were sixty-six persons in all.

How do we get from 66 to 70?

It just so happens that 4 sons were not in the caravan.

- A. Two sons were born in Egypt
 - a. Manasseh
 - b. Ephraim

- i. Joseph was not in the caravan, but he did travel to Egypt earlier.
- B. Two died before the journey even began, but they were sons of Israel.
 - a. Er
 - b. Onan

Thinking through these things can be very baffling. I don't expect you to figure it all out. But, I do think all of these questions make it very clear that Moses is purposefully wanting to reach the number 70.

He brings this up in the first few verses of the book of Exodus.

Exodus 1:1-5

These are the names of the sons of Israel
 who came to Egypt with Jacob,
 each with his household:

2 Reuben,
 Simeon,
 Levi,
 Judah,

3 Issachar,
 Zebulun,
 Benjamin,

4 Dan
 Naphtali,
 Gad
 Asher.

5 All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons;
 Joseph was already in Egypt.

From these 70, God makes a great nation.
 And God redeems this great nation out of their slavery to the Egyptians.
 God does not rescue 10 of the tribes, as if He were limited in His power to redeem.

The point of speaking in numbers of fullness is not to make people saved who are not saved.
 The point is to show that God is not forming a mass of individuals, a mob who belong to Him.
 He is forming one whole people for Himself.

Peter speaks to the Christians as a corporate unity.

1 Peter 2:9-10 ⁹ But you 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.

Paul wants the Gentile believers to know that they too are part of this one nation of God.

Ephesians 2:19-22 ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Why should all this matter to you?
 We live in a time where the Church has fallen on hard times.
 Most Christians care about their personal relationship with God.

They might care about a few close friends or family members.
But the visible church is something to be criticized. It certainly is not something to devote your time and energy to.
But God loves the visible church.
Jesus died for the Church as a whole.

Ephesians 1:22 - 23 ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 5:23 ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

And we should love what God loves.

The challenge for you today is whether you care for the Church, the visible church, as a corporate body of believers.

Loving and caring for the church as an institution that God is forming is desperately lacking in our world.

But this is where we must maintain the proper tension.
You cannot love the Church without loving the individuals in the Church.
And you cannot rightly love the individual without leading that individual to love the Corporate Church.

Both are necessary.
This is why this long list of names is sandwiched between God's individual concern for Jacob.
God is caring for all the sons of Israel. He is redeeming a whole people for himself.
But that does not prevent our God from caring about Jacob as an individual.

²⁹ Then
 Joseph prepared his chariot
 and
 went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen.
 He presented himself to him
 and
 fell on his neck
 and
 wept on his neck a good while.

³⁰ Israel said to Joseph,
 "Now let me die,
 since I have seen your face
 and
 know that you are still alive."

Do you see how God provides for Jacob and Joseph as individuals?
God cares for them and their personal desires.
God cares for you and your personal desires as well.
He does love you as an individual.

But he also loves and cares for the "big picture" plan of redeeming a whole people for himself.
The chapter ends with God settling His whole people in a place where they can grow as a distinct people into a great nation.

31 Joseph said
to his brothers
and
to his father's household,
"I will go up and tell Pharaoh
and
will say to him,
'My brothers
and
my father's household,
who were in the land of Canaan,
have come to me.

32 And
the men are shepherds,
for they have been keepers of livestock,
and
they have brought
their flocks
and
their herds
and
all that they have.'

33 When Pharaoh calls you and says,
'What is your occupation?'

34 you shall say,
'Your servants have been keepers of livestock
from our youth even until now,
both
we and our fathers,'
in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen,
for every shepherd is an abomination
to the Egyptians."

God makes sure that His people are not lost through intermarrying with the Egyptians. This will not be assured by the obedience of Israel. It will be assured by the hatred of Egyptians for shepherds.

God will use the prejudice of the Egyptians to keep His people separate and distinct as a people.

Summary:

1. Trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.
 - a. His blood was shed for you.
 - b. He loves you, in all the details of your life.
2. Trust in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the Church as a whole.
 - a. He died for His whole body.
 - b. He is in the process of Saving His whole people.
3. You belong to something that is far larger than yourself, something grand and glorious: The Church... Israel.
 - a. Every other institution in this world will cease to exist.
 - b. The only institution that is eternal is the Church.
4. Devote yourself to labor in the Church.

1 Corinthians 15:58 ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.