

Wisdom or Foolishness?

Genesis 47. The famine in Egypt and Canaan was so severe that both nations literally wasted away (V 13). Joseph, having been in charge of the food storage program during the seven years of abundance, 'suddenly' became the people's live saver, because nobody else had food to sell. So, on Pharaoh's behalf, Joseph sold food for literally all the money available in Egypt and Canaan (V 14), then traded food for the Egyptian's horses, sheep, goats, cattle and donkeys (V 17), took their land (except from the priests) and eventually reduced all Egyptians to servitude to Pharaoh (V 18-21). In the end, Joseph gave the people seed to plant the ground again, allowing them to keep 80% for their families and new seed for the next season, while giving the other 20% to Pharaoh (V 24), something he established as a law (V 26). Probably because of the severity of the seven years of famine, the Egyptians thanked Joseph for saving their lives, even if it meant being henceforth in bondage to Pharaoh (V 25)!

- Reading this whole passage, I can't help but think how stupid and ignorant the Egyptians must have been for ending up in servitude. Surely, during the seven years of plenty the word must have spread many a time that a severe famine of seven years was coming. After all that was the very reason why Joseph officially collected and stored a fifth of all the abundance produced year after year. I am at loss why the Egyptians didn't take appropriate measures themselves, and can see only two reasons for it: (a) they simply didn't believe that something bad was coming, or (b) they were too negligent or lazy to do something themselves, trusting their government to take care of things.
- Those who know me know that I am not an advocate of putting trust in false securities based on human wisdom. Storing up and stashing away wealth or provision for times in need, taking out insurances for all sorts of eventualities, and things like that is based on human wisdom, if God is not clearly involved. From a biblical point of view such measures are foolishness in the Lord's eyes, because they show that we put more trust in schemes and things we can't control than in our Creator who is in charge of it all anyway.
- But here, in Joseph's case and situation, we don't talk about human wisdom and man-made schemes. Here we don't talk about creating a sense of security for 'just in case' or 'if'. Here we talk about the Lord explicitly announcing for what is to come during the next 1.5 decades, downloading clear instructions to his servant for what to do in seven years of abundant harvests to survive seven years of severe drought. Not to act on it must be considered foolishness.
- Of course, we could argue that it's not good Christian behavior to take advantage of those in need, like Joseph apparently did. But then again, he didn't sell for personal gain (all income went to Pharaoh) and the Egyptians were in need because they were bad stewards not properly utilizing what was entrusted to them, hence qualified for losing everything (Luke 19:12-27), and acted pretty much like the five foolish virgins running out of oil (Matthew 25).
- So where does all that leave us? Well, in a sense (considering what is written about the end times) we are heading for a season of severe drought, where what we considered to be readily available will no longer be at our disposal. So, are we listening to God's instructions of how to survive when Babylon (the world finance and trading system) collapses, or have we become complacent, lazy and negligent trusting in our worldly governments to take care of us? Are we aware that we also like the Egyptians at that time, albeit this time for the wrong reasons, are heading for complete servitude to an evil control that will deprive us of everything and ultimately destroy us (Revelation 13)?

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- Perhaps the bottom-line relevance for everything in our life is this: Whether what we decide and do has to be considered wise or foolish depends solely on whether or not God is the author of it.