

RADIO ADDRESS by ...



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ECONOMIC CRISIS # 2 - ECM  
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## ECONOMIC CRISIS # 2 - ECM

Last Sunday we began an examination of an economic crisis that developed in Egypt 3700 years ago. I hope you have had an opportunity to read the account for yourself in Genesis chapters 41 and 47. It is a fascinating story.

God enabled Joseph to interpret a dream of the reigning Pharaoh in which he saw seven head of fat cattle devoured by seven lean cattle and seven full ears of corn devoured by seven withered ears. The interpretation was that Egypt was about to experience seven years of plenty followed by seven years of devastating drought and famine. Faced with this knowledge that an economic crisis was coming, Pharaoh appointed Joseph deputy ruler of Egypt and put him in charge of the nation's economic planning. In commissioning Joseph, Pharaoh said to him, *"For as much as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy work shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou . . . I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."*

It is hard to imagine what the reaction of the Egyptians must have been to Joseph's appointment. Joseph was a young man only thirty years of age and for the years immediately prior to his appointment he had been in jail. He had been brought into Egypt by slave traders and sold into servitude to the household of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's palace guard. Furthermore, he was an Israelite and relations between Egypt and Israel were strained by reason of Abraham having deceived a previous Pharaoh who had wanted Abram's wife, and also because Abraham had banished from his household the Egyptian woman, Hagar, who had borne him a son. But these things didn't deter Pharaoh from appointing Joseph to the highest position of authority and prestige in Egypt. Anwar Sadat is not the first Egyptian head of state to go contrary to public expectations. Perhaps there is even a parallel between the reasons why both Egyptian leaders decided to do what they did. Pharaoh was acting to insure his own survival and the

survival of Egypt's economy. Sadat today is in much the same position.

Pharaoh welcomed the opportunity to involve someone other than himself in the responsibility of making hard and unpopular decisions to insure the nation's survival in the face of the economic crisis Joseph said was coming. Like most political leaders he was glad to have someone as a buffer between him and the people if economic conditions became really bad. Who better to involve than the man who had made the prediction that an economic crisis was coming. In fact Pharaoh had everything to gain and little to lose by appointing Joseph head of his department of economic planning. If he did nothing and Joseph's prediction proved true, not only Egypt's economy but Pharaoh himself would be finished. If the crisis did not materialize, Joseph, not Pharaoh, would be discredited. If it came and Joseph's preparation was successful, Pharaoh could take credit for having put Joseph in charge. If famine came and Joseph's preparation proved inadequate, Joseph could be blamed and Pharaoh might be able to save his own skin. So Pharaoh made his decision and issued his decree appointing Joseph, and economic planning became the order of the day.

Government officials were appointed in every region of the country, and throughout all Egypt huge storehouses were constructed. This was something tangible that the people could see and Pharaoh's and Joseph's popularity rating undoubtedly went up in the public opinion polls. The people didn't complain too much when the government commandeered one fifth of their entire food production and put it in storage against the coming time of famine. It never seemed to occur to them that they could have laid the one fifth of their production in store for themselves and still owned it. Instead they were induced to turn it over to the state by the government's promise of social and economic security if a famine came. It is a fact worth noting that when promise of social and economic security becomes society's first priority, two things usually happen. First, more and more the people look to their government to provide the social and economic security they seek. Second, they become more and more willing to sacrifice indi-

vidual freedom and independence in exchange for state guaranteed security and ready to accept more and more regimentation of their individual and collective lives.

In the case before us, Egypt's regulated economy went into full operation and had behind it all the dictatorial powers Pharaoh had assigned to Joseph and his army of state officials which meant that any dissenting voices were quickly and effectively silenced. Then the crisis came. *"And the seven years of plentousness, that was in the land of Egypt were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn."*

Pharaoh and Joseph's political stock went up as the people acclaimed them for their bold action that had enabled the country to prepare. For awhile it looked as though their economic planning had solved the problem. The crops in Egypt and the surrounding countries withered in the fields but in Egypt the great storehouses were full of corn. The country also experienced a national windfall profit as their export trade skyrocketed. Representatives from all the surrounding countries came to Egypt to buy corn and the influx of foreign capital swelled the government coffers. Things were looking good.

Before long the Egyptian people realized they were running out of money. The record says, *"And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt for the corn which they had bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when the money failed in the land . . . all the Egyptians came unto Joseph and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth."*

There was plenty of corn left in the great granar-

ies but no purchasing power in the hands of the consumers. In all their economic planning they had ignored the fundamental requirement that an equation must be maintained between the selling price of available goods and consumer purchasing power.

Instead of correcting the deficiency of money, the state decided to take livestock in exchange for corn. We read in Genesis 47, "*And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.*"

Before long the people had no more livestock to barter. "*When the year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die.*" So Joseph took their land in exchange for corn and then the government removed the people from their land and herded them into urban centres and made them the property and servants of the state. Not only had the state taken all their possessions but their freedom as well. "*Then Joseph said unto the people, behold I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh.*" This is the ultimate end of those who make economic security their number one priority and think the way to get it is through subservience to a supreme welfare state. So insidious were the steps by which they lost their independence and freedom that they ended up asking their state benefactors to make them their slaves and thanking them for having saved their lives. They said, "*Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.*"

Surely there are important lessons here for society today. We on this continent have known times of plenty and now we can see the spectre of

lean years approaching, the world energy shortage, water shortages, food shortages, the signs are all there. We have seen the increasing tendency for materialistic society to make economic security its number one priority and a growing demand that the state guarantee economic security and prosperity and even affluence. That the ultimate end of such demands and such attitudes is the loss of individual independence and freedom is no longer a concern to the many whose cry is give us more bread, more liesure, more cars, more televisions, more subsidies, more pensions, underwrite our social and economic security and we will acclaim you the saviour of our lives.

It is significant that the prophetic scriptures tell us that the ultimate end of this attitude and trend will be the ruthless socialist world government of the coming anti-christ.

On the other hand, we read in the 11th chapter of Daniel, *"After the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time."*

The anti-christ will break up the monopolies and the multi national corporations and he will scatter the prey and the spoil among the people and they will say, "He is wonderful". In Revelation chapter 13, we read that all the world will acclaim him and say, Who is like unto the beast? that is the anti-christ. After he gets them wholly dependent on him, Revelation 13 goes on to say, *"He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark. . . . that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues, and nations."* That is what the scriptures say will take place in the future. It is almost a repetition of the process that happened 37 centuries ago in Egypt, in the days of Joseph. Ladies and gentlemen,

that is not what God desires or intends for men and women. God intends people to be free. Christ said, "*You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*" The Bible speaks of the glorious liberty of the children of God. The first stage to that liberty is to exercise your individual freedom to respond to Jesus Christ when he asks you to let Him be your Saviour and Lord.

This address was one of the weekly talks heard on Canada's National Back to the Bible Hour, a christian layman's broadcast which has proclaimed the Gospel for more than 50 consecutive years.

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