As we have pointed out a number of times, in the story of Joseph there are two lines: the line of the type and the line of life. Before we consider further the line of life, we need to see another point regarding Joseph as a type of Christ.

(17) Reigning

Joseph was a type of Christ reigning in His kingdom during the millennium. If we take note of the prophecy in the story of Joseph, we shall see that his record is a picture of Christ's reign in the millennial kingdom.

(a) Supplying People with Food

According to this picture, Christ will do four things during the millennium. First, He will supply people with food, that is, He will satisfy everyone's needs (47:15-17). Although the whole earth was under a famine, Joseph was able to satisfy everyone's hunger. Today everyone is hungry and no one is satisfied. But when Christ is reigning during the coming thousand years, He will meet everyone's need and satisfy everyone's hunger.

(b) Keeping People Alive

As Joseph was reigning in Egypt, he kept people alive (47:19, 25). Because Christ will satisfy everyone's needs, He will be able to make everyone alive, to make everyone living. If you examine the prophecies regarding Christ's reign in the millennium, you will see that Christ will make everything living. Today, death is everywhere; everyone and everything is dying. But during the millennial reign of Christ, there will be hardly a sign of death. Rather, everything and everyone will be full of life.

(c) Keeping the Land Producing

Joseph also kept the land producing. He gave the people not only food, but also seed (47:19-23). In the millennium Christ will make everything productive. In today's situation, on the contrary, everything is diminishing. But when the millennium comes, everything on earth will be productive. In order to produce, we must have seed. While food is for satisfaction, seed is for production. As He reigns in the millennium, Christ will not only afford people food to satisfy them, but supply them with seed to make them productive.

(d) Taking Special Care of Israel

Joseph also took special care of Israel (50:21). This typifies that during the millennium Christ will take special care of Israel. Israel's specific function on earth is to testify of God. Although Christ is in favor of Israel, today Israel has no faith in Christ. The Jews worship God, but they do not have the proper faith in God through Christ. Instead, they believe in God in their own way. However, whether or not Israel is in unbelief, they are still the testimony of God, even today. There will be many nations on earth during the millennium, but only one nation, Israel, will be God's testimony. For this reason, Christ will take special care of Israel. When He renders this care to Israel, it will indicate that He is absolutely for God's testimony. Likewise, the reason Christ loves the church is that
the church is God’s testimony. Therefore, in the millennium Christ will satisfy everyone, make everything alive, make everything productive, and take good care of Israel as God’s testimony.

Now we come to the line of life. When I first read that Joseph collected money, cattle, and land in exchange for food, I said, "Joseph, you are a robber. You not only robbed the people, you extracted everything from them. You collected their money, livestock, and land. Eventually, you collected their very being. Joseph, what kind of landlord are you?" Joseph alone held the lifeline, and the lifeline was food. Those who wanted food had to give something to Joseph in order to get it. If they wanted satisfaction, they had to pay for it with money, cattle, or land. First Joseph "gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan" (47:14). Verse 15 says, "And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money hath ceased" (Heb.). When the people said this to Joseph, he told them to give him their cattle. Thus, the people brought their cattle to 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" (47:17). A year later, the people came to Joseph again in need of food once more. This time there was no need for negotiation because there was a mutual understanding between Joseph and the people. The only thing they had left was their land and themselves. Therefore, they told him to buy them and their land for bread (47:19). Eventually, in Egypt Joseph was the only landlord, banker, and cattle raiser.

Joseph had the supply of life, the supply of food. According to our natural concept, Joseph should simply have given it away. But we should not bring our natural, worldly concept to the reading of the Bible. Joseph had the life supply, and the people needed it. They had to do something in order to get it. Before we see what the people had to do, we need to point out the reason Joseph became so rich and had the life supply. It was because of all his sufferings. From the time Joseph was seventeen years of age, he had been suffering. Even after he had been enthroned and was in power, he was still suffering because he was separated from his father. As we pointed out in the previous message, he had the power and the position to do everything necessary to have his father brought to him. But he refrained from doing so because he was in Egypt to fulfill God's will. In order for God's will to be fulfilled, Joseph had to suffer. Although he was the ruler, he suffered until the day his father was brought to him. Because of his suffering, he had the riches. It is the same today in the church life. It is those who suffer who are able to give others the supply of life. This thought is found in the hymn regarding the grapevine (Hymns, #635). The last two stanzas were arranged by Brother Nee:

Not by gain our life is measured,
But by what we've lost 'tis scored;
'Tis not how much wine is drunken,
But how much has been outpoured.
For the strength of love e'er standeth
In the sacrifice we bear;
He who has the greatest suff'ring
Ever has the most to share.

He who treats himself severely
Is the best for God to gain;
He who hurts himself most dearly
Most can comfort those in pain.
He who suffering never beareth
Is but empty "sounding brass";
He who self life never spareth
Has the joys which all surpass.

If we do not suffer, we have nothing to give others. Because the grapevine undergoes many sufferings, dealings, cuttings, and breakings, it produces rich wine to cheer man. Brother Nee realized that the more we suffer, the more we have to give. Without suffering, anything we say is like tinkling brass. We may make noise, but there is no life in what we say. Therefore, as this hymn says, our life is measured not by gain, but by loss. Therefore, the reason Joseph could be so rich was that he had suffered. During the years of his suffering he stored up the riches.

During the seven years of plenty, Joseph stored up the grain. He did not take care of his own interests. It was not an easy task to store all that grain. For seven years Joseph gathered the grain and stored it in barns. This was a big job. On the one hand, Joseph was laboring; on the other hand, he was suffering because he was separated from his father. During these seven years he did not care for himself, but made arrangements for others to be taken care of in the future. What he did in the seven years of plenty was for the people. He did this at the cost of taking care of his own interests, at the cost of seeing his father.

If we would be able to supply food to others, we must undergo a long period of suffering. Joseph did not have all the grain when he was seventeen years of age. He did not have the grain until he was thirty-seven years of age. At that time he became rich not in power, but in food and in the life supply.

It is the same today in the church life. The older, experienced ones have the supply. Again and again, Brother Nee stressed that we must take care of our physical life so that we shall not die at an early age. In one of his trainings Brother Nee asked the trainees what age they thought was the most useful age. Then he pointed out that a brother once said that the most useful age is from seventy to eighty. Because of this, Brother Nee charged the trainees to take care of themselves and not to commit gradual suicide. He told them to sleep well, eat well, drink well, and exercise well so that they might have a long life. When Caleb was eighty-five years old, he said that he was just as strong as he was at forty. The riches are not with the inexperienced ones. In order to be rich, we need to suffer for a long period of time. It took Joseph twenty years, from the age of seventeen to the age of thirty-seven, to become rich. Eventually, after many years of suffering, the food was in his hands. Because he had the food, all the hungry ones came to him.

According to my opinion, Joseph should have been generous with the people and said, "Whenever you need food, simply come to me and I'll give it to you." When I read Genesis 47 as a young man, I thought that Joseph was not generous. It seemed to me that he squeezed everything out of the people. I praise the Lord for showing me why Joseph was not generous. The reason is that the life supply should not be sold cheaply. If anyone in the church life is willing to give away the life supply in a cheap way, we must question whether the supply he has is genuine. The genuine life supply is never sold cheaply. Joseph seemed to be saying to the people, "Do you want the supply? If you do, then you must pay the price." The concept of generosity is a worldly concept. Joseph was in another realm, where there was neither generosity nor scarcity, just the supply and the price. Many Christians today sell things cheaply. But in the Lord's recovery nothing
is cheap. If you want the food, you must pay the price. The greater the price you pay, the greater supply you will receive. Some today are opposing the Lord's recovery. But deep in their heart they know that this way is not wrong. They oppose it because the cost of taking it is very high. Thus, they take the cheap way and criticize the costly way. We cannot receive any food supply without a cost. Joseph will not sell you the food at a cheap price.

The people who came to Joseph for food paid four kinds of prices: their money, their cattle, their land, and themselves. How happy I am that the record in the Bible is so complete! These four items cover all the prices we need to pay today. When we pay with our money, cattle, lands, and ourselves, we receive all four types of supply. The first supply is not as rare or precious as the fourth supply. Each supply is more precious than the previous one, and the last is the most precious of all.

Let us now consider what money signifies. According to a superficial understanding, money is what we depend on. Actually, money represents convenience. The monetary system in this country is very convenient. In Joseph's time the people used silver. They had to carry silver with them and weigh it out when making a purchase. But today when we pay a bill, we simply write out a check for a certain amount. This is very convenient. However, when the supply in our checking account is depleted, we lose this convenience. At such a time we may worry about paying our bills. We all like to have a surplus in our checking account. But what will you do if this supply runs out?

Some are not willing to pay the price for the supply because they are concerned about losing their conveniences. Some may say, "Should I take the way of the church? Surely this way is good, but if I take it, I will lose certain conveniences. My wife or my relatives may be unhappy with me." But the more conveniences you give up, the more life supply you will have. Today's Christians, however, keep their conveniences, but have no life supply. In many cathedrals, chapels, and church buildings people hear messages every Sunday about conveniences. They go to these places to get more conveniences. For them, to take the way of the Lord's recovery is costly and inconvenient. Yes, if you take this way, you will lose your conveniences, but you will gain the supply.

The second item the people had to pay for the food supply was their cattle. It is easy to understand what is signified by cattle. Cattle signifies the means of our living. Joseph's brothers were concerned about their donkeys, worried that Joseph would find some excuse to take them away. Today you may care very much about your automobile. Perhaps you are afraid that it will be stolen. If so, your automobile is your donkey. For those with a doctoral degree, their degree is their donkey. For others their position is their donkey. But Christ, the rich One, the Supplier, is here, and He is neither generous nor stingy. Although He does not want to squeeze anything out of you, for your sake He requires that you pay a price. He will never sell His supply cheaply. After you pay your money, you need to pay with your cattle. Only by handing over your cattle will you receive the second supply. When both our money and our cattle have been handed over to Him, we shall be restful and at peace.

After handing over our cattle, we need to hand over our land. The land represents our resources. The Lord Jesus is a "robber"; He "robs" His lovers of everything. He takes our money, our cattle, and our land. He may say, "Give me your land. Do not keep the resources under your control, but hand them over to me." This is not a teaching, but an observation of what I have seen in the lives of many. Some dear ones were able to pay their money, but not their cattle. Others could give up their cattle, but not their land.
Their concept was that the Lord Jesus always gives them things, but never "robs" them of things. But the Lord Jesus in His recovery "robs" us of everything—of our convenience, our means of livelihood, and our resources. If you are willing to give the Lord your lands, you will receive the third supply.

The last item the Lord requires is ourselves, including every aspect of our being. The Lord Jesus will claim every part of you. Have your ears been claimed by Him? If they have, you will not listen to anything other than Christ. Have your lips been claimed? If so, then they will be used differently. Has your whole being been claimed by the Lord Jesus? I doubt that very many have handed over their whole being to the Lord. Why are there still so many opinions, and why is there so little oneness and building in today's Christianity? It is due to the fact that very few are willing to hand themselves over to Christ.

Although you have heard many messages on consecration, you have probably not heard a message on handing yourself over to the Lord. Regarding consecration, we have been influenced by the Keswick Convention, which followed Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith in emphasizing consecration as the key to everything. Do you want to be holy? Then you must consecrate yourself. Do you want to have your prayers answered and be victorious? Then you must consecrate yourself. But although we followed the Keswick teaching regarding consecration for years, we eventually discovered that it was not all that was needed for the life supply.

Consider what happened among us in 1948. Due to some confusion and turmoil, Brother Nee had to discontinue his ministry for a number of years. Some of us were burdened that his ministry be resumed, and we did our best to bring this about, but we could do nothing to help the matter. Before his ministry had been recovered, some of us had arranged to meet with him in his home for a time of fellowship. Although there were about thirty who wanted to attend that fellowship, Brother Nee would allow only me and two sisters to meet with him. He was not willing to sell his supply cheaply. Eventually, he allowed the others to sit in on the fellowship in a room adjoining his living room. The first morning no one said anything for a long period of time. Finally, unable to tolerate the silence any longer, I asked him to say a word about the confused situation of the churches in the provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung. In response, he poured himself out like Niagara Falls for more than an hour. His word was full of light, power, and impact. For at least six years he had not spoken a public word in that district, although a few had contact with him privately. Brother Nee's fellowship that day concerned the line of Jerusalem. (See the last chapter of Further Talks on the Church Life.) After he stopped speaking, no one said a word. Then one sister said, "Why don't we take Brother Nee's word and practice it?" With tears, everyone present said, "Amen! We want to practice it." Then Brother Nee replied, "If you intend to practice this way, you must hand over in writing yourself and everything you possess." My point in sharing this is that we need to hand ourselves over to the Lord. Perhaps you have consecrated yourself to Him, but have never handed yourself over to Him. Today Christ is claiming not only your money, cattle, and land, but also yourself.

By making the last payment, the payment of themselves, to Joseph, the people partook of the top portion. When you pay the first, second, and third price, you enjoy the first, second, and third portion. But when you pay the highest price, you enjoy the best portion. Eventually, we receive not only food for satisfaction, but also seed for reproduction. In order to get the food and the seed, we need to pay the full price. Before handing over ourselves, we must hand over everything else. After they gave everything
to Joseph, the people could say, "Praise the Lord, we are released! We don't care for our money, cattle, land, or even ourselves. We just enjoy the rich supply." All that remained was the enjoyment. What a great blessing it is to give up everything for this enjoyment!

When the Lord Jesus comes, the whole earth will be under one landlord and one banker. All the land will belong to Christ, and we shall hand over whatever we have and whatever we are to Him. We are the enjoyers, not the lords. At that time in Egypt everything was under the hand of one lord. Joseph moved the people to cities "from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof" (47:21) in order to have an even distribution. There were no rich and no poor. It is the same today regarding the spiritual supply. Christ has the riches. The amount of these riches that He is able to supply us depends on what we are willing to pay. If we are willing to make the first payment, then we shall receive the first supply. But if we are willing to make the other payments, we shall receive more supply. If we make the fourth payment, we shall receive not only the food to satisfy ourselves, but also the seed to produce something for others. How marvelous this is!

If you study Genesis 47, you will see that eventually the whole land of Egypt became a land of enjoyment. No longer were there distinctions between high and low and rich and poor. All the people became enjoyers on the same level because everyone and everything was under the same lord. This is a picture of the millennium. In the millennium there will be no capitalism or socialism. Everyone will be on the same level because everything will be under the Lord's hand. He will have bought everything, and He will have claimed everything and everyone. Truly the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psa. 24:1).

The situation during the millennium will be very different from today. Before Joseph came to the throne, the people were on different levels. But after he was enthroned and the people came to him for food, Egypt became a prefigure of the millennium with all the people on the same level. Everything was under one man and belonged to him because that man had the riches and could claim everything. It must be this way among us in the church life today. Because Christ has claimed everything of us, we all are now on the same level enjoying the riches of Christ. All the points mentioned above also are seeds that are developed in the New Testament.

Joseph not only supplied the people with food, but also took care of his father's burial (49:29-31; 50:1-14). The burial of Jacob was not a simple matter. According to Hebrews 11, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all received the promise of the good land, but died without inheriting it. This is a strong indication of resurrection. Abraham died with the expectation that he would be resurrected. No doubt Isaac and Jacob had the same concept. Jacob died in the hope that one day he would rise up to inherit the land. For this reason, he charged Joseph not to leave his body in Egypt, but to bury him in the land of his fathers. Jacob realized that death to him was a time of sleeping and that on the day of resurrection he would rise up to inherit the good land. This is the significance of the burial of Jacob. The fact that Joseph buried him according to his request indicates that he had the same faith as his father. He also believed that they would rise up to inherit the good land.

Joseph also supported his brothers and comforted them (50:15-21). Joseph's brothers could not forget what they had done to him, and they were afraid that after their father's death Joseph would do something to get revenge. Joseph wept when he heard his brothers' request, for he had no thought of rendering evil to them. Rather, he said, "Fear
not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive" (50:19-20, Heb.). Joseph also promised to support them and their little ones. Then he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (50:21). Joseph seemed to be saying to his brothers, "Your intention was evil, but God's intention was marvelous. He intended to send me here to save many lives. Please do not be bothered. I thank you for what you did to me. You helped God to fulfill His purpose." In the church life we need this kind of spirit. Even if others offend you, you need to consider that whatever they do to you is of God. If you take everything as of God, all the offenses will be over.

Joseph comforted those who had offended him. What grace he had! Because the offended one could comfort the offending ones, they could enjoy a pleasant life in the kingdom. Remember, Joseph and his brothers represented the people in the kingdom. Because of Joseph's excellent spirit, they could enjoy a good time together in the kingdom. But suppose Joseph wanted to render evil to his brothers. If such had been the case, the kingdom would have been an impossibility.

Like Jacob, Joseph died in faith. As he was dying, he charged the children of Israel not to leave his bones in Egypt, but to bring them into the promised land (50:22-26). This indicates that he expected the resurrection. He believed that one day he would rise up to inherit the good land and participate in all the enjoyment that would be there. Hallelujah for Joseph's victorious end! In the consummation of the book of Genesis we see Christ, the kingdom, and all the aspects of the overcomers. How we thank the Lord for all this!

In the beginning of this book, God created man in His image to express Him, and He gave man His dominion to represent Him. After the experiences of so many called ones, this book concludes with a life that, in Jacob on the one hand, expressed God in His image and, in Joseph on the other hand, represented God with His dominion. How excellent and wonderful this is!

However, what is portrayed in Genesis was still a shadow in the age of typology. By Joseph's time the reality had not come. Hence, in this sense, Genesis concludes with a verse showing that Joseph died and was put in a coffin in Egypt. He died expecting the age of fulfillment in which he would share in the reality. In brief, as a whole, the book of Genesis begins with God's creation and ends with man's death and his being put in a coffin, even in Egypt. Because of the fall, death, the coffin, and "Egypt" are the destiny of fallen man. Thus, fallen man needs God's redemption, which is fully revealed and typified in the next book, Exodus.