

1. In the Beginning: Gen 1:1-5

Intro: *Genesis means "beginning or origin"; it's a book of beginnings. In what ways is that true?*

The book of Genesis explains the beginning of the universe and our world, the birth of the human race, the origin of sin and death, the founding of the Jewish nation through whom Christ came.

Many dismiss Genesis 1-11 as being irrelevant or incorrect. Why should we take it seriously?

Jesus did! He quoted from it. In Matt 19:4-5 He quoted from Gen 1:27 & Gen 2:24. Thus, from Jesus' view alone, we ought not to view Genesis as just a collection of ancient myths and legends, but as God's revelation to us – it's inspired of God (cf. 2 Tim 3:16).

How should we view Genesis in relation to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Genesis is foundational to the Gospel. In Genesis we learn of our special creation and relationship with God, the origin of sin and death, and the damage done to our relationship with God through sin. Genesis sets the scene for why we need a rescuer and a ruler; who is revealed in Scripture to be God's Son – Jesus.

What are the key things we learn about God in Genesis?

In Genesis we are introduced to the true and living God. By His interaction with people we learn so much more than creation could ever reveal. We see His holy and glorious character, and we get a glimpse of His plans and purposes. Above all things, we see that the Creator can be known personally by humans.

What are the key things we learn about humans in Genesis?

We were created special and were created to be in relationship with God and to rule with God. Despite the Fall in Genesis 3, God did not wipe humans out or cut Himself off from them. He continued to pursue them and relate to them; ultimately, He would bring us fully back to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Study: *Read Gen 1:1. What does God want us to know? How well have we listened to Him?*

God wants us to know our origins. It's important for us to know this, and we even have been made to want to know this. But sadly, in the main, we have not listened to what God has told us. Many would prefer to believe in the "big bang" and evolution, or an "alien establishment", then what God has declared.

What's strongly implied in the first verse of Genesis about God? (cf. also 1 Tim 1:17; Rev 1:8)

God and God alone has created everything from nothing. Also, everything has had a beginning, but God. God has always been – He alone is eternal and uncreated.

What image is given of the earth in Gen 1:2? How should we take this verse in relation vv.1 & 3?

In v.1 God created time, space and matter. In v.2, the matter that made up the earth was without form and light. It was a waste place. However in v.3 and beyond, God would make it habitable and beautiful.

The Spirit of God is mentioned in Gen 1:2. What does this verse convey about the Spirit?

The Spirit of God was present at creation. He was also poised to do whatever God commanded.

In Gen 1:3 we have God's first words. What is so significant about them? (Cf. Heb 11:3)

God simply spoke, and what He spoke came to be. This pattern continues through the Creation story. God is able to speak and bring things into existence (cf. Psa 33:6; Rom 4:17).

Light is created on the first day. What's significant about this?

In the Bible light is associated with God Himself. God is light (1 John 1:5); Christ is Light (John 1:4, 1:9, 8:12). God was filling Creation with light – a great symbol of His presence and goodness.

After God created light, He said that it was good (Gen 1:4). The word "good" is repeated consistently in Genesis 1, and it reaches a climax in v.31 ("very good"). What are we to make of this?

God is good, and all that He commands and does is good. Because He is good, creation is good.

After God created light, He made a separation between light and darkness. What does this show?

God is a God of order. Things aren't left blurred and diffused together. Things are not just in one big "soup mix". We shall see this order and distinction between things in the rest of God's creative acts.

God created light on one day (Gen 1:5). He created things on set days. Are these "days" 24 hour days? Or is "day" being used metaphorically or poetically, or as a symbol for an age period?

The fact that God can create by simply speaking into existence things that aren't means there is no real problem believing that creation took place over six literal earth days. Also, according to God's Word, it would appear that God created the way He did to set a pattern for us (Exod 20:9-11) – work six days, and rest on one day of the week. By the way, our seven-day week is based on the Creation story in Genesis.

Summary: God reveals our origins in Genesis. Without Him, nothing would have existed (Rev 4:11)

2. God Said and It Was So: Gen 1:6-25

Review: *Genesis 1-11 is often minimised or considered irrelevant; even by notable Christians. This is because of their belief in evolution. But how should we take this part of the Bible? Why?*

We should consider it to be inspired of God, and to be factual and foundational to the Gospel. The Lord Jesus quoted from Gen 1&2. Paul based his theology of the Gospel on the creation account in Genesis (ie, that this world was good, and that death came through sin – Rom 5).

What do we learn about God in the opening verses of Genesis? (cf. also Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3)

God was there at the beginning – indeed, He and He alone is eternal (1 Tim 1:17; Rev 1:8). God is able to speak and bring things into being. He is able to create from nothing – the only One who can.

Study: *Read Gen 1:6-8. What did God create on the second day?*

We understand God created the atmosphere (which in the Hebrew mindset is called the first heaven). The waters below the earth would become the oceans (day 3). The water above would become the clouds.

PS: Some believe that the earth was surrounded by a giant water canopy that made life ideal, and that it was this water that deluged the earth during the flood in Gen 6.

The atmosphere around the earth is remarkable. In what way?

Compared to what we know about other planets, we have a large atmosphere that protects us from cosmic rays and meteorites (many of them burn up in our atmosphere). But more importantly, its mixture is perfect for life. We have a good amount of oxygen (essential for life), a small amount of carbon dioxide to keep things warm (but not too hot like Venus), and a large amount of nitrogen to keep things stable.

Read Gen 1:9-13. On the third day, what things were created?

God created land and oceans. He then commanded plants to grow forth from the land. Our earth "oozes" plant life; even after a bush fire, from the ground plant matter grows. It all goes back to God's command.

In Gen 1:12-13 God uses the word "kind" in the creation account. What's significant about this?

It indicates that plants and trees were made in their various kinds; ie, fir trees, citrus trees. Although there is great diversity, there is not a blurring of the species. They are distinct and separate. This fact is verified in what we observe. Creation supports the Genesis account, whereas evolution teaches the opposite.

Read Gen 1:14-20. This section of the Bible is amazing. In what way?

We can appreciate, more than any who have gone before us, the enormity of the universe with our technology. The universe is huge, and the number of galaxies and stars is incredible. But God created these for our benefit – to give light, to help us navigate, and to determine times and seasons. It's amazing!

There is also something else about the heavens that God wanted it to do. What's that? (Psa 19:1-3)

He wanted it to declare His glory. The heavens declare the greatness and glory of our God – to think that He made everything we see on one day! Wow! And that He knows every star by name (Isa 40:26).

Read Gen 1:20-23. What did God do on day 5 of creation?

He filled the oceans and waterways with life. He filled the sky with life. He made fish and birds, plankton and great sea monsters. God filled His earth with abundant life; in the water beneath and the sky above.

PS: The great sea monsters could also include some of the dinosaurs we have discovered through fossils.

What also is evident in Gen 1:21-22, which we also saw in Gen 1:12-13?

Everything was made according to its "kind". God has great variation in creation, but everything is distinct from other "kinds". We do not live in a "soup mix"; instead, everything is orderly and distinct.

Read Gen 1:24-25. In the first part of day 6, what did God make? What things do you notice?

God made all the land animals – from reptiles to mammals. They were all made in their various kinds.

From Gen 1:3 to 1:25, what are the key things we learn? What do we learn about God?

At every step of creation, God spoke and it came to be. Everything made was good. Everything was made distinct from other things in Creation. Also, God formed things, and then He filled them with living things. From this we learn that God is holy (like no other, commanding into existence things that aren't), that God is good, that God is the God of order, and that God loves to fill His creation with life.

Are there any parallels in Gen 1:1-25 to what we know in the Gospel?

Without Christ our lives are empty and barren, and without Him we are in darkness (like the earth in Gen 1:2). But in Christ through the Spirit we have light (John 8:12) and fullness of life (John 10:10).

Summary: God spoke, fashioning this earth for His glory and filling it with life. Praise His name!

3. Made in the Image of God: Gen 1:26-31

Review: *What are the recurring themes in Gen 1:3-25 as God creates a perfect world for habitation?*

Everything God speaks is fulfilled. Everything God makes is good. Everything is made according to its "kind". We do not live in a creation with everything merged together – which is what evolution would do.

There are great parallels between Gen 1:1-25 and what we know in the Gospel. What is that?

We are like the earth in Gen 1:2 – empty, barren and in darkness. But when we embrace Christ, we are filled with His light and His abundant life through Christ's Spirit. We are God's re-creation in Christ.

Study: *Read Gen 1:26-27. What are we to make of God creating man last?*

Mankind was not an afterthought as some mythologies teach. He was not a biological freak as evolution teaches. He was created as the goal and crowning glory of God's creation. It was "very good" (Gen 1:31).

The fact that mankind is the crowning glory of God's creation is evident in the way God made us different to all the other creatures. In what way have we been made different? How is that emphasised?

We have been made in God's image. God emphasises this three times in Gen 1:26-27. It's important!

What does it mean to be made "in the image of God"?

It means that we have been made like God (ie, in God's "likeness: Gen 1:26). This does not mean that we are awesome like God, but it does mean that we bear characteristics of God. Eg, we have the ability to be creative like God; we have the ability to communicate like God; we have the ability to connect and know others. Like God, we also have emotions and a sense of rightness, and many other things.

Consider mammals and humans. What are some of the similarities we have with mammals? What are some of the differences we have with mammals? What do the similarities and differences show?

We have similar bones and muscles and joints, etc, as mammals do. But unlike mammals, we can be creative, we can communicate at a very deep level, and we can be connected and know others. Our similarities show that we have a common Creator, but our differences affirm that we haven't evolved from mammals, but God has made us special – in His image.

In the creation of mankind, something is different. God says "let us". Why does He say that?

God says "let us" because we believe the Lord Jesus was with God the Father in creation, including the creation of mankind. God could not have been speaking to angels when He said "let us", but to His Son, for we were made in their image.

There are three important references in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus being our Creator, together with God the Father. Discuss the following verses: John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:1-2.

Note: In Col 1:15, the word "firstborn" is better understood as the one who has "first place".

Mankind was made "male and female" (Gen 1:27). What does this reality declare?

It clearly declares that God has made us. There is no way that evolutionary processes and chance could produce a perfectly compatible couple as God did. This is design – at its highest level.

In Gen 1:26-28, we learn we were made to rule. How does that relate to the "image of God"?

We were made to rule creation under God and for God, ruling in righteousness and reflecting His glory.

In Gen 1:28 God commanded mankind to rule and reproduce. How have we done?

We have miserably failed to rule God's earth well – ruling in righteousness and reflecting His glory. However, we have been "fruitful and multiplied". It's the only command we have ever obeyed!

What is the other key purpose for why we were made in God's image? (cf. Gen 2:15-17; 3:8)

We were made to know God. Unlike any other creature on earth, mankind was made to be in relationship and in fellowship with God. This was only possible because of how we were made in God's image.

A huge implication of us being made in God's image concerns Christ's coming. In what way?

If we hadn't been made in God's image, Jesus could not have become one of us. Mankind is compatible with God. As a result, the eternal Son of God could come and take on human form and represent us at the cross, thereby bearing our sins and saving us from its consequences (cf. Phil 2:6-7; Heb 2:14-16).

God created mankind to live in a beautiful world. How good was it? (cf. Gen 1:29-31; 2:15-16)

It was very good. There was no death or killing – only plants and fruit were eaten. But above all, mankind enjoyed a full and unhindered relationship with God. God and man literally walked together. Wow!

Summary: Mankind didn't evolve from animals. We were made unique in God's image! Thus, we can relate to God and rule on His behalf. Ultimately, Jesus could come in our form to save us.

4. Work and Rest and Relationship: Gen 2:1-17

Review: *What does it mean when the Bible says that we were made in God's image? (Gen 1:26-27)*

We were made like God; in His likeness. As a result, we are able to reason and think, able to design and work, able to communicate and express our emotions, able to be rational and moral, etc.

What privileged status do we have because we were made in God's image? (Gen 1:26)

We were made in God's image to rule His world; ruling in righteousness and reflecting His glory.

Study: *Man was made last, as the crowning glory of God's creation. But the creation story didn't end on day 6. There was a 7th day. What was it about? What do we learn is the end-point of creation? (Gen 2:1-3)*
In the 7th day, God rested from His work. Thus, the end-point of creation was rest after work.

How has God's "seven-day creation" account in Genesis profoundly affected our lives?

Our life is governed by a weekly seven-day cycle because of the seven days of creation in Genesis. Also, in each week, is the need to work and rest. Like God, we ought to work six days and rest one. Do you?

How has our culture moved away from the work/rest model in Gen 1:1-2:3. Why have we?

We are a culture that works hard and barely rests, leading to stressed lives and broken relationships. This is the result of how our sin has disconnected us from God, and how we have sought to find worth in our work, or to use work to meet our needs. We have lost the joy of rest, and especially resting in God.

Conversely, what happens if we don't work, and just constantly rest (or be idle)?

We lose meaning and purpose in life. God is a worker – the great worker (cf. John 5:17). Being made in His image means we ought to work too. There's something important about working - and resting.

In one sense, the rest of the 7th day was lost when mankind sinned against God. Distress and restlessness came. But in Christ, what has God planned for us one day? (Heb 4:9-11; Rev 14:13)

If we are in Christ, we will enter an eternal rest. The rest mentioned in Gen 2:2-3 will be a reality in God's new creation. Until then, we "taste" of that rest now by being in Christ (cf. Matt 11:28-30; John 6:35).

Gen 2:4-9 gives further detail of the way God created things. What do we learn from Gen 2:4-6?
Vegetation didn't naturally spring forth from the earth (as evolutionists teach). It only came about when God spoke it into existence (Gen 1:11), and when God provided water for it, and humans to care for it.

The creation of Adam is especially highlighted in this section. What's significant? (Gen 2:7)

Adam was made from the dust of the ground, with ordinary common earthy elements such as carbon and water. Yet, he became an amazing living being when God, the author of life, breathed into Him.

Evolutionists teach that life has sprung up by having the right combination of chemicals and cell processes. What does the Bible say about that, especially in the creation of Adam?

Life does not spontaneously occur by having the right combination of chemicals and cell processes. Life is supernatural; it's from God. Only when God breathed into Adam was he no longer just a lump of clay.

How did God care for Adam? (Gen 2:8-15)

God planted the garden of Eden for Adam to live in and enjoy. Its fruit was good – not bad. He also got Adam to work it so that Adam would find satisfaction and enjoyment in life. It was paradise.

Two special trees were in the garden. What were they (Gen 2:9)? Why were they there?

One was the tree of life. Its fruit would enable Adam to live forever (Gen 3:22). The other was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God used this second tree to test man's loyalty to Him. Would Adam trust God for his provisions, or would he go after the one thing God had not permitted him to take?

NB: God does test our loyalty to Him. Cf. Abraham (Gen 22:1-2). Cf. Jesus (Matt 4:8-10).

What did God mean when He said to Adam that he would die if he ate from the forbidden tree?

As we see from Gen 3:19, Adam would die physically. His body would suffer ageing, and no longer would he live forever on earth. It also caused Adam to die spiritually through sin (cf. Eph 2:1); ie, his relationship with God would be damaged (Isa 59:2).

There is something outstanding in Gen 2:16. What is it? How does this relate to the Gospel?

God could communicate with Adam, and Adam could respond. Here is the goal of why we were created in God's image – so that we could be in relationship with God. Indeed, this is the goal of the Gospel. Christ died and rose again to reconcile us back to God (John 20:17; Col 1:19-20; 2 Cor 5:18-19).

Summary: The goal of creation is man being in relationship with God; working for God, but also resting in God. In Christ, these important themes in Genesis 1&2 are recovered and realised.

5. Man, Woman and Marriage: Gen 2:18-25

Review: *The end-point of creation was not man's creation. What was it? What can we learn from this? (Gen 2:1-3)* The end-point of creation was rest – God resting and enjoying His creation after He made all things. We have been made in His image, and we ought to be the same – working and resting.

God cared for Adam and put him in a beautiful garden to work it and enjoy it. Adam could enjoy the fruit of all the trees of the garden, except one. Why do you think God had an exception? (Gen 2:15-17)

God wanted to test Adam. Would he trust God for everything, or would he take things into his own hands?

Something amazing is revealed in Gen 2:16. What is it? Why is this possible?

God spoke to man. We can be in relationship with God. This is because we were made in God's image.

Study: *Adam was in a perfect world with a perfect relationship with God. But what wasn't good? (Gen 2:18)*

It was not good for Adam to be alone; ie, to be without another human, even though he had fellowship with God. We should understand that everything was good, but God knew something could be better.

What do we learn about God in Gen 2:18?

It was God, not man, who saw things weren't good. God truly cares for us. We can trust Him (1 Pet 5:7).

What would God provide for Adam (Gen 2:18)? How are we to understand these words?

God would make a "helper suitable" for Adam; literally, a "helper corresponding to". God didn't make a clone of Adam. Woman was different but similar, in order to correspond and complement Adam.

The word "helper" is used to describe the creation of woman. This word is often dismissed. How should we understand this word? What is God saying? (cf. Eph 5:22; 1 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:12-13)

God created woman with a God-given role: to help man. That's why she is to submit to her husband (Eph 5:22), and not to lead in church (1 Tim 2:12). It's not because of the Fall, but God's design in Gen 2:18.

How is the woman's role similar to the role that Jesus has in the Godhead? What does this imply?

Jesus eternally submits to God the Father (cf. 1 Cor 15:27-28). As a result, we should see the women's role as an honoured and special role. We should never despise it, or show contempt for it.

After God said He would make a helper, what happened in Gen 2:19-20? What is this about?

God gives Adam the privilege to name the animals and birds. Thus, God encourages man in his role of being God's ruler over His world (Gen 1:26). However, in v. 20 it also reiterates that there was no suitable helper for man; ie, no animal or bird could match the helper that God was about to make for Adam.

It appears from Gen 1:27 that God made man and woman on day 6. Is it possible for Adam to name all the animals and birds, and for Eve to be made on the same day? How?

It is possible. God brought the animals and birds to man. Consider also that there would have been two dogs from which all the dog breeds came from. There probably were two cat kinds from which the big cats in Africa to the domestic cats in our home came from (DNA mapping has helped us understand this).

God made Eve in a different way to Adam (Gen 2:23-24). What's significant?

Adam was made from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7), but Eve was made from the flesh of man. She came from man and out of man, and therefore is completely compatible with man, and able to be one with him.

There is a beautiful symbolism found in what part of Adam God took to fashion Eve. What is it?

God didn't take a part of Adam's head to form Eve, to indicate that she would rule over man, nor Adam's foot to indicate that she would be down-trodden by man, but from Adam's side - the flesh near his heart. This is a beautiful picture of how Adam and Eve were to walk together side by side.

In Matt 19:4-6 Jesus quotes Gen 2:24 as a key foundational verse on marriage. Why is this?

Gen 2:24 gives us the foundation for marriage. God made Adam and Eve distinct and yet complementary, so that they could be joined and be one in marriage. God designed Adam and Eve for marriage.

What key commands do we see in Gen 2:24 in regard to marriage?

When we marry, we are to separate from our parents and start a new family. The man has the key role of embracing his wife (to bring her into himself). Together, they are to be one; the primary goal of marriage.

Jesus gives us some commentary on Gen 2:24 in Matt 19:6. What is that?

When we marry, God consider us to be one. Therefore, no person is to break the marriage bond.

The last verse of Gen 2 is intriguing. What are we to conclude from it?

Adam and Eve were naked without shame. In marriage, oneness is being open and vulnerable to each other.

Summary: God made marriage. God made Adam and Eve for marriage. Marriage is about oneness.

6. Man's Rebellion and God's Response: Gen 3:1-13

Review: *Why did God make Eve? (Gen 2:18) What was different about Eve?*

God made Eve as it was not good for the man to be alone without a fellow being like him. Eve was not a clone of Adam. She was made similar, but different, in order to correspond and to help Adam.

What do we learn about marriage from Gen 2:18-24?

God made man & woman for marriage. In marriage we leave our parents, join together, and become one.

Study: *In Gen 3:1-5 we are confronted with "the serpent" for the first time. Who is he? (Rev 12:9)*

He is not some mythical talking snake, but Satan or the devil – a real being who had rebelled against God.

What do we learn about Satan from Gen 3:1-5?

He is crafty (v.1a); he comes to Eve when she's on her own (vulnerable). He twists God's words to make God out to be uncaring (v.1b). He makes God out to be a liar by telling Eve she wouldn't die (v.4). He plants the thought that God is selfish by not wanting them to be wise like Him. He tempts Eve to sin.

In the light of Satan's craftiness, lies and temptations, what is his ultimate goal?

He wants us to think bad of God, so we don't worship Him. He wants to destroy our relationship with God.

Often we need to be reminded of the reality of the devil and what he is up to. What do we learn about him from the following New Testament verses? (John 8:44; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:9-12, 17)

He is a liar and a murderer, he seeks to devour and destroy, and he loves to accuse us (cf. Job 1:9-11).

Eve responded well to Satan (vv.2-3), but how did she stumble and fall? (Gen 3:6; cf. 1 John 2:16)

She fell through desire (or lust). When she saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food (the lust of the flesh), when she saw that it was pleasant to the eyes (the lust of the eyes), and when she believed it would make her greater (the pride of life), then she took and ate. Desire and lust led to sin (cf. Jam 1:14-15).

Did the devil make her do it? Why or why not?

The devil didn't make her do it. The devil can only tempt us. We sin by choosing to give into wrong desire. We also sin when we convince ourselves that God's way is not the best, and we could do better ourselves.

What can we learn about overcoming sin from this foundational passage?

We need to listen to God; Eve failed to do that. We need to control wrong desires (cf. Rom 8:13). We need to be aware of the devil's schemes, and our own vulnerabilities (Eve was alone and had desires).

In Gen 3:6 it says that Eve gave Adam the forbidden fruit and he ate. What's so wrong here?

Adam did not listen to God either, but instead he listened to his wife (cf. Gen 3:17). Also, Eve encouraged or even enticed Adam to eat and sin. It's bad enough to sin; it's even worse to encourage others to sin.

What was the first effect of Adam and Eve's sin? (Gen 3:7)

They both felt naked; which implies they felt ashamed. Sin always brings shame – when exposed to light.

Gen 3:1-7 may well be considered the saddest passage in the whole Bible. Why?

Mankind, the crowning glory of God's creation, had sided with Satan and rebelled against their Maker. God's good and perfect creation had been corrupted, and now death, decay and difficulties would follow. Most importantly, mankind's relationship with God had been severely damaged. We were now "lost".

What is so surprising about God's response to Adam and Eve's rebellion? (Gen 3:8-9)

Despite man's rebellion, and the hurt and anger God felt, He sought them. God could have annihilated them. He could have abandoned them. But He arose and came to them in grace, calling out to them.

God's actions here reveal His future intentions for us fallen sinful human beings. What's that?

God would not annihilate or abandon mankind, but He would pursue us in His grace. Indeed, as we know through the coming of Christ and His ministry, God would bring us rebels back to Himself through Christ.

As God graciously engages with Adam and Eve, what is their response to God? (Gen 3:10-13)

When Adam and Eve heard the Lord God they ran and hid. Then when God questioned them over their sin, they blamed others for their sin. Adam blamed Eve, and even had the audacity to blame God ("the woman you gave to be with me"). Eve blamed the devil. How sad was man's response to God's grace!

In Gen 3:7-13 we see the three actions we do when we sin. What are they? What should they be?

When we sin, we try to cover up and pretend everything is okay (3:7). We also run and hide so that we don't have to face the consequences (3:8). Thirdly, we blame others and dismiss ourselves from any wrong-doing (3:12). Instead, we should come openly to God, confess our sins, and call on Him for mercy.

Summary: Although man sinned & rebelled against God, He sought them and called out to them.

7. Punishment, Promise and Provision: Gen 3:14-24

Review: *What's so surprising in the account of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God? (Gen 3:8-9)*

God did not annihilate or abandon them over their rebellion, but arose and pursued them – in grace.

In Gen 3:7-13 we see three common actions when we sin. What are they? What should they be?

When we sin we cover up (v.7), we run and hide (v.8), and/or we blame others (vv.12-13). Instead, before a good and holy God, we ought to come humbly, confess our sin, and call on Him for mercy (1 John 1:9).

Study: *What did God do next after mankind's sin (Gen 3:14-19)? What do we learn about God from this?*

God handed out a just punishment. Our God is gracious; He's also just and righteous (Exod 34:6-7).

What punishment did Satan receive from God? (Gen 3:14) What did this mean?

Satan would be cast to the earth; metaphoric language is used to describe this. Like a snake crawls on his belly and eats dust, Satan would no longer walk the courts of heaven; he would be cast down to the earth.

What is significant about God cursing Satan in Gen 3:14?

To be cursed by God is the most serious sentence of all. Satan would never receive mercy; he was damned.

Consider Gen 3:16-19. What else was cursed? What was not cursed?

The earth was cursed. This is significant; that's why the present heavens and earth will not endure forever. One day they will be completely destroyed (2 Pet 3:10). However, Adam and Eve weren't cursed (they were punished). If they had been cursed, then there would have been no hope for us.

In Gen 3:16 God punishes Eve. What's her punishment?

Firstly, she would endure great pain in childbirth (cf. mammals do not generally endure great pain when giving birth, but humans do). Also, she would be ruled by her husband.

How are we to understand a husband's rule over his wife as a punishment, according to Gen 3:16?

In Gen 1:28 we see that Eve was made to rule with Adam over the creation (Gen 1:28), and was made to be his helper (Gen 2:18). They were "side by side". It appears that Eve's sin caused her to lose that joint rule. This is what Paul picks up on in 1 Tim 2:12-14 when speaking of the role of women in church.

Before Adam is punished, what does God point out to Adam? (Gen 3:17) What can we learn here?

Adam is reprimanded for listening to his wife. No matter how persuasive or dear a person is to us, we are to listen to God first. A key point in the Bible is that we have failed to listen to God (Psa 81:8-13).

In Gen 3:17-19 God punishes Adam and all mankind. What's the punishment?

No longer would the ground produce fruit with little labour. It would be hard work. But above all, humans would not live forever on earth. Death would come upon us because of sin (just as God said in Gen 2:17).

Death is not natural; it wasn't at the beginning. When did death come into the world? (Rom 5:12)

The Bible makes it very clear that death came into the world through sin. This is a very important foundational truth for the Gospel – for in the Gospel Jesus defeats death for us by dealing with our sin.

The punishment that fell upon Adam & Eve continues today, even after Jesus' coming (it will cease one day for believers when Jesus returns). What should death and childbirth pains remind us of? It should remind us that we are born and we live in a fallen world, and that we need to be rescued.

Despite the punishment that fell upon Adam and Eve, was there any hope? (Gen 3:15)

There was hope. While passing judgment on Satan, God promised to raise one from the woman's seed who would crush Satan for us. This, of course, was a reference to Jesus. It is the first prophecy on Him.

How are we to understand Gen 3:15 in the light of the Gospel? (cf. Col 1:13-14, 2:13-15)

Jesus would be born of woman (Gal 4:4). He would crush Satan at the cross ("bruise him on the head") to rescue us from him, and Jesus would be "bruised on the heel"; ie, wounded at the cross to save us from sin.

In His grace, God promised Adam and Eve a rescuer. What else did God do? (Gen 3:20-21)

In grace, He clothed them with garments of skin, replacing their inadequate coverings of fig leaves (3:7).

For God to provide animal skins what did He have to do? What was this a picture of?

God had to kill an animal to clothe them. This is a powerful picture of God one day putting His own Son to death, the Lamb of God, so that our sin might be removed and we might be clothed in righteousness.

What do we learn from Gen 3:22-24? Why do you think God did this?

As part of man's punishment he was driven out of the garden of Eden. He was prevented from taking from the tree of life so that we could not live in our sinful state forever. That's a good thing. Praise God!

Summary: God punished Adam & Eve, but in His grace He promised a rescuer and clothed them.

8. Life in a Fallen World: Gen 4:1-26

Review: *In Gen 3:15, who is God referring to that would arise from the woman's seed? What would He do?* God is referring to His own Son, who would conquer Satan at the cross for us (Col 1:13-14; 2:13-15).

In Gen 3:21 God killed an animal and clothed Adam and Eve. What is this a picture of?

It's a picture of God putting His own Son to death for us so that we might be clothed in His righteousness.

Study: *In Gen 4 we read of Adam and Eve's children. What was life like for them? (Gen 3:16, 17-19, 24)*

It was so different to what Adam and Eve knew in Gen 2. Sin had changed everything. Driven from God's presence and paradise, there was now death and decay, pain and problems, sin and suffering.

Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve. They were born into a fallen world, but what else was fallen? How was this revealed in Cain? (Gen 4:1-8)

Human nature was now fallen. Instead of expressing the image of God (ie, righteousness and holiness, compassion and care), we see Cain giving full expression to his fallen human nature. He became jealous of Abel, and with an uncontrolled anger, he plotted and killed his brother Abel.

In Gen 4:1-8 God's interaction with Cain is so surprising. In what way?

God knew the evil thoughts of Cain, and yet He came to help him do what was right. We see God's desire to still be involved with us, and to help us in our battle with sin. We also see that our relationship with God wasn't completely dead (it was severely damaged though). This was because of God's grace!

In Gen 4:6-7 what lessons do we learn from God about overcoming sin in a fallen world?

Sin springs from wrong desires (cf. Jam 1:14-15). We must master our desires, or otherwise our desires will master us and we will become a slave to sin. NB: The language God uses of sin is that of a lion crouching and getting ready to seize its prey; sin's prey is US.

The New Testament teaches us a lot about the power of sin and overcoming it. What do we learn from the following key verses? (Rom 7:18-25; Matt 26:40-41; Rom 8:13)

Sin is a power or principle at work within us. It seeks to overpower and control us so that we become its slave (cf. John 8:34). We must pray to God to help us overcome it through His Son and His Spirit.

After Cain killed Abel, God challenged Cain in regard to where Abel was (God knew, but He gave Cain the opportunity to repent and confess). What was Cain's response? (Gen 4:9)

Cain, like Adam and Eve in Gen 3, did not humble himself and confess his sin. Even before God, he denied knowing where Abel was, even though he knew what he did to him and where he had left him.

Cain asked God: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Was he? Are we to be our brother's keeper?

Cain should have been his brother's keeper, just as we ought to be ("brother" standing for any fellow human). We were made in God's image to love and care, to protect and help each other. Only in Jesus, who taught us to love each other and to love our enemies, would this reality be realised again.

God passed judgment on Cain for his sin. What do you make of the sentence? (Gen 4:10-11)

God sought to deter Cain from sinning. God had given him a chance to repent and confess his sin. But he chose not to. So God condemned and cursed him. Cain is the first person in the Bible to be cursed. Like Satan, he was damned (cf. the New Testament references to Cain in 1 John 3:11-12; Jude 11).

Read Gen 4:12-16. What was the state of Cain (and us) when we choose not to repent?

Our life becomes difficult, we become restless, and we are cut off from God's goodness and presence.

There is a serious warning given to us from Cain's story. What is it? (cf. Luke 13:1-5)

Unless we turn from our sins, confess them, and seek God's mercy, we will also be condemned (cursed).

Where did Cain get his wife from? (Gen 4:17; cf. also Gen 5:3-5)

Cain married a sister, for Adam and Eve had many children. NB: Back then, it was okay to have children through close relations due to the human gene pool being pure. It's not the case now!

What do you notice about what humans were capable of in Gen 4:18-22?

God made humans capable; we weren't "dumb" cave men. People knew how to farm, play music, and forge metal, even at the beginning. But man's brilliant capability went hand in hand with moral inability.

In Gen 4:23-24 we read of another murder by Lamech. From the Fall, life in God's creation was now seriously messed up through sin. Yet there was hope. What hope do we read about in Gen 4:25-26?

People could call on the Lord, and Seth's line is mentioned, through whom Jesus the Saviour would come.

Summary: In a fallen world, God was still present and we could call on Him. Also, Jesus was coming.

9. God's Justice & Grace: Gen 5:1-6:12

Review: *We, like Cain & Abel, are born into a fallen world. What does that mean? (cf. Gen 4:5-8)*

We live in a world where death, disease and decay occur, where sin abounds, and where we are distant from God. Our human nature is also fallen – we no longer reflect the image and glory of God.

What's so amazing about God in Gen 4:6-9?

God came to Cain to turn him away from the evil he was planning to do. Also, God came to Cain after his sin in order to give him an opportunity to humble himself and confess his sin – sadly, he chose not to.

God ended up cursing Cain. What did that look like (Gen 4:11-16)? What lessons do we learn?

Cain became a restless man, cut-off from God. Similarly, if we don't humble ourselves, confess our sins, and seek God's mercy we will be restless, and find ourselves separated from God eternally (in hell).

Study: *In the list from Adam to Noah's grandfather only one stands out. Who and why? (Gen 5:21-24)*

Enoch stands out. He walked with God for three hundred years, before God took him up; ie, he didn't die.

Enoch "walked with God". What does this mean? How does it come about? (cf. Heb 11:5-6)

Enoch was in fellowship with God, living a life pleasing to God. Such a life requires faith in God, and it also requires a choice; ie, after the birth of Methuselah, it says that Enoch walked with God (v.22).

How was it possible for Enoch to walk with God even though the Lord Jesus hadn't come yet?

In the Old Testament people could still have fellowship with God, even though we are sinners. Faith is the key. Faith makes a person right with God (cf. Gen 15:6). We also need to realise that even though Jesus hadn't come yet, His sacrifice would cover both New and Old Testament believers (cf. Rom 3:23-26).

Noah's father Lamech stands out in Gen 5 by a statement he made. Was it fulfilled? (Gen 5:28-29)

Noah wasn't the one who brought rest and removed the curse of sin. But God used Noah to save the human race from extinction, and through one of Noah's descendants a Saviour would be born, even Jesus.

Most people weren't like Enoch. What happened as time went on? (Gen 6:1-5, 11-12)

People became wicked and corrupt. Sexual immorality occurred (v.2 – men took any woman they wanted) and violence escalated (v.11). Indeed, in v.5 God declared that man's thoughts were only evil continually.

What a contrast we have between Gen 1:27, 31 and Gen 6:11-12. Why was there such a difference?

This was because of the consequences of the "Fall" in Gen 3. In Noah's time we see the results of humans having a fallen sinful human nature (no longer reflecting God's image), and living independently of God.

Who are the "sons of God", the "daughters of men" and the "Nephilim" in Gen 6:2 & 4?

There is much debate on this. I believe the plain reading of Scripture would indicate that the "sons of God" refer to males, the "daughters of men" refer to women who God made from man (ie, Eve was made from Adam's side), and that the Nephilim were giants (cf. Num 13:33), descended from Adam & Eve.

What does God pronounce in Gen 6:3? What does it show us? Why did He do this?

God declares that humans would begin to live for approximately 120 years. In His grace, this didn't begin to happen for a few more generations, although after Noah no one lived 900 years plus). It shows us how God ordains things by His great power. This was also God's response to curb man's wickedness on earth.

Read Gen 6:6. What do we learn about God from this verse?

God isn't a cold ruler and judge, but a loving Creator who was grieved that humans had rebelled against Him and rejected His rule. Sin isn't just a matter of breaking God's law; it hurt and insults our God.

It appears in Gen 6:6 that God regretted making mankind. What are your comments on this?

In terms of big picture, God didn't regret making man, as He knows all things, and knew how bad things would get in Noah's day, even when He made humans. But God does feel and respond to His creation.

God doesn't just grieve over man's wickedness. What else does He do? Why? (Gen 6:7)

God brings judgment on the world for the people's sin. He is loving and good, but He is also just and righteous. From the opening chapters of Genesis we see that God brings judgment on sin.

One man stood apart from the rest of mankind. What would God show him? Why? (Gen 6:8-9)

God would show Noah favour (grace), not because he was a perfect man, for we all sin (Rom 3:23), but because he walked with God by faith. Noah would be rescued from judgment because he believed in God.

In Noah's story we see God's judgment and grace. What do we learn about God's ways?

Unbelievers will receive judgment; believers will receive grace. This is core to the Gospel of Christ.

Summary: Justice is not the final word for our sin & rebellion: with God there is grace if we believe.

10. The Flood – Destruction and Salvation: Gen 6:13 – 8:22

Review: *Enoch walked with God three hundred years. He was a man of faith. But most other people weren't. With a fallen nature and with God pushed away, what happened to the world? (Gen 6:5, 11-12)*
The world became wicked and corrupt. People's thoughts were only evil continually.

What do we learn about God from His response to the world becoming wicked? (Gen 6:6-8)

God is not a cold judge, but a loving Creator. He was deeply hurt by man's rebellion toward Him.

Study: *The "Flood" story in Gen 6-8 is often dismissed as a fable. Should we believe it? Why?*

Jesus believed the "Flood" story (Matt 24:37-39). So did the apostle Peter (1 Pet 3:18-20). So did God as He spoke to His people through His servant Isaiah (Isa 54:9). We also have the record of a worldwide flood in ancient cultures (Manu Indians, Egyptians, American Indians, Peruvians, Chinese) to affirm it.

Should we believe in a worldwide flood or a local flood? (Gen 7:17-20)

The Bible declares that it was a worldwide flood. Also, the evidence of fossils all over the world, including in the middle of Australia, points to a worldwide flood. In such a catastrophic event, millions of living things would have been quickly buried under sediment from the flood.

Where did all the water come from for a worldwide flood, and where did it all go? (Gen 7:10-12)

There must have been a massive amount of water in the atmosphere for it to rain for 40 days – perhaps a water canopy rather than just clouds. Also, as we consider the oceans, there would have been enough water to flood the earth, especially if the earth was flatter in Noah's day. Indeed, if Psa 104:6-9 is about the "Flood", then God changed the terrain so that the waters could recede, as well as sending a wind (Gen 8:1).

Another thing that makes people dismiss the "Flood" story is in how Noah got all the animals, reptiles, and birds on the boat, and where he put all the food for a year. How did it all fit?

Firstly, God chose the size of the boat (Gen 6:14-16), and it was He who brought the living creatures to Noah (Gen 6:20). Being the perfect planner, God would have ensured that everything fitted. Also, we know that God could have selected juvenile animals (not full grown), and just one set from every species (ie, one set of dogs from which all the dog breeds would come). Also, in regard to food, God could have caused the animals to be in a hibernating state. All things are possible with God (Matt 19:26).

We have sought to affirm the Bible's "Flood" story. But why would a loving and good God bring a flood of destruction upon mankind and living creatures. What do we learn about God? (Gen 6:11-13)
God will judge sin. He will not allow sin to go unpunished and to remain unchecked. In the "Flood" story, we see that He was even prepared to destroy His own creation because of man's wickedness.

Recent surveys indicate that Australians no longer believe in Judgment Day, even if they believe there is a God. Even some Christians don't believe in it. What should we believe? (Heb 9:27; 2 Pet 3:3-7)
We are to believe there is a Day of Judgment; a day when we will stand before God and be judged for our sins. The "Flood" story serves as a reminder that God judges sin. As He did it before, He will do it again.

When we play down the reality that God judges sin, how do we damage the cross of Christ?

The glory of the cross is that Jesus was judged in our place, being punished for our sins so that we could be forgiven (Isa 53:5-6). If God doesn't judge sin, then it means that Jesus suffered needlessly.

What else do we see in the "Flood" story? (Gen 6:17-20) What is it a powerful picture of?

Not only does God judge, but He also saves. The "Flood" story is a powerful picture of Jesus. Just as those in Noah's boat were saved, when we are in Christ we are saved from judgment and destruction.

Why did God save Noah and His family? How does this relate to the Gospel? (Eph 2:8-9)

He saved them by His grace, and He saved them because Noah had faith in God. It's the same in the Gospel – we are saved by God's grace to us in Christ, and when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus.

What do we learn from Noah if we truly have faith in God? (Gen 6:9, 6:21-22, 7:1-5, 8:20)

We will trust Him and obey Him, despite the opposition. We will also give thanks and sacrifice to Him.

What was God's response to Noah's faith, obedience and sacrifice? (Gen 8:21-22)

God saved Noah, and promised to never flood the world again, despite man's sin. What grace!

Did the "Flood" change mankind's heart? Did Noah save the world from sin's curse?

The "Flood" did not change man's heart. Man continued to sin. Even Noah sinned (Gen 9:20-21). The world was still waiting for one, even Jesus, to arise to defeat Satan and to deliver us from sin and its curse.

Summary: God will judge us for our sins, but if we trust Him, He will save us from what we deserve.

11. Covenant, Confusion and Christ: Gen 9:1 – 11:32

Review: *What was God's response to man's sin in Noah's day? What do we learn about God? (Gen 6:7)* God judged man's sin by bringing a flood upon the world. God judges and punishes us for sin because He is righteous and just, as well as loving. One day He will judge all people on Judgment Day (Heb 9:27)

What else do we learn about God in Noah's story? (Gen 6:14-18) What does this point to?

God is not only the God of justice; He is also gracious. By His grace, He saved Noah and all those on the boat. Similarly, through God's grace and through faith in Christ, we will be saved from God's judgment.

Study: *Compare God's words in Gen 1:28-30 with Gen 9:1-3. What changed after the Flood? Why?*

The fear of humans would be upon animals; ie, harmony between us and animals would be lost. Also, we could now eat animals for food. Life was now different, reflecting how we live in a fallen world due to our rebellion against God. Only in God's eternal kingdom would it be reversed (Isa 11:6-9).

What rule did God establish if an animal or human killed another human. Why? (Gen 9:4-7)

God established the rule that if a human is killed, then that human or animal that did it is to be put to death. This sentence is because humans have been made in God's image; human life is precious. NB: When we fail to acknowledge that we have been made in God's image, then human life is treated cheaply.

God made His first covenant with humans in Gen 9:8-17. What was it? What was it based on?

The covenant was that God would never flood the world again, destroying all flesh. He would ensure this, despite man's ongoing sin (Gen 8:21), because of His grace. The covenant required nothing on our part.

Compare the three great covenants God made through Noah, Moses and Christ. What is common?

They came about through the actions of a man of faith, and his obedience to God. They were based on God's grace (they weren't deserved). They had a sign to remind people of the covenant – a rainbow for Noah's one, circumcision for Moses' one, and the seal of the Holy Spirit for Christ's one (Eph 1:13-14).

How do the various covenants compare? (cf. Heb 8:6-12)

The covenant through Noah brought freedom from the judgment of a flood. The covenant through Moses brought blessing to Israel (if they obeyed); the covenant through Christ brought freedom from judgment (Rom 8:1), greatest blessing (Eph 1:3), and reconciliation with God (Col 1:19-22); it was far better.

Read Gen 9:18-27. Was Noah the deliverer spoken of in Gen 3:15 and Gen 5:29?

No! Noah sinned by getting drunk, and causing his son Ham to sin and be cursed. He did not deliver from sin's curse. One was still to come, through Shem's line, who would defeat Satan and deliver us from sin.

In Gen 11:1-4 what do we read of humans doing? Why were they doing this?

They were building a city and a huge tower reaching into the heavens. They built the city to stop them being scattered across the face of the earth. The huge tower was perhaps to protect them from any other flood or natural disaster that might decimate them. It was also to make a name for themselves.

What was God's response to the building work? (Gen 11:5-9)

God was not pleased with their building work. He stopped their work, He scattered them across the earth, and He intentionally brought confusion to the various people groups by giving them various languages.

Why did God do what He did in regard to the city and the tower they were building? (Gen 11:6)

God could see that with one language, and with our God-given abilities (for we were made in God's image), we would advance quickly. But this was dangerous, for being fallen, it would encourage us to look to ourselves, rather than to God, and to dethrone God and to rule in His place - this was not good.

In Acts 17:26-28, we see why God did what He did at Babel. Why was this?

He wanted humans not to look to themselves or to their abilities, but that they might look to God and depend on Him. Even the punishment on Adam and Eve in Gen 3 was to this end; that we might seek God.

Are human abilities and technological advances bad?

They can be - when we leave God out of our lives. Today we live with incredible technological advances, but as we leave God out of our lives, we see more abuse and pain than ever before through our advances.

Gen 11 ends with the birth of Abram. He also would not be our deliverer. But when our deliverer came, the Lord Jesus Christ, how was He different to those involved in building the tower of Babel?

Christ came and built a kingdom where God would be known and worshipped. He came not to rule in the place of God, but for God. His rule brought in everlasting righteousness and peace – a better covenant.

Summary: God has acted to help us seek Him and know Him; not to be independent of Him.

12. God's Promises to Abram, and Abram's Response: Gen 12-14

Review: *God made a covenant through Noah. What was it? What was it based on? (Gen 8:20-22)*

God would never flood the world again as a judgment on sin. This covenant arose from Noah's obedience and God's grace (for humans would continue in sin). NB: The New Covenant in Christ is also based on obedience and grace. Through Christ's obedience and God's grace we can be saved from judgment.

Why did God stop the building of Babel and scatter the people? (Gen 11:6-8; Acts 17:26-27)

God knew that with one language we would advance quickly. But this was dangerous, for being fallen, it would encourage us to look to ourselves, rather than to God; and to dethrone God and to be our own god.

Study: *After the Flood and the tower of Babel, what was the next big event to occur? (Gen 11:31-12:1)*

God called a man named Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and Haran and come to the land of Canaan.

How does Abram's calling fit into God's grand plan to send us the Saviour promised in Gen 3:15?

God chose a man named Abram, for through his descendants the Saviour would come. He would live in and minister in the land that Abram was to sojourn in and inherit.

What is the scope of God's promises to Abram? (Gen 12:1-3)

God promises to make Abram into a great nation and to bless him, and to bless those who bless Abram's people. They were also to be God's instrument through which the nations would be blessed.

How would Abram's offspring bring great blessing to all people groups? (Gen 12:3; Rev 5:9-10)

From Abram would arise Jesus, God's Son, through whom the nations would be blessed with the Gospel.

Abram's people were "blessed to be a blessing". In what way is that true for a Christian also?

We have been richly blessed by God in Christ (Eph 1:3), and this has not just been for our gain, but that we might be a blessing to God and others; ie, building up fellow believers and helping the lost be saved.

What was Abram's response to God's calling and His promises? Gen 12:4-8

Despite difficulties and dangers, Abram trusted and obeyed God and went from his family and friends into a foreign land. When he came into the land he sacrificed and worshipped to the Lord. What a response!

Abram was a man of great faith (Heb 11:8-10). Yet, what do we learn from Gen 12:10-20?

Although Abram trusted God when he went to Canaan, he failed to trust God when he went to Egypt. He took matters into his own hands in order to "save his own skin", and he didn't seem to care for his wife's fate. Surely, we see that though Abram is known as a man of great faith, he was still growing in faith.

We are to grow in faith like Abram. How does God grow faith in us? (Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:6-7)

He grows faith in us through His word (as we read and study it) and through the trials of life.

Abram and Lot separated. What do we learn about these two men and their choices? (Gen 13:5-13)

Abram trusted God to take care of him, whereas Lot chose the Jordon valley because it looked better. Lot had deceptive sight, for the Jordon valley had wicked people in it that would harm Lot's walk with God.

As Abram grew in his trust in God, what do we see God doing for him in Gen 13:14-18?

God encouraged him by broadening His promises to Abram. His descendants would be very numerous, and they would inherit a great land; a land flowing with milk & honey (Exod 3:8); ie, exceptionally good.

What remarkable story do we read in Gen 14:8-16? What do we learn about Abram?

Not only was Abram a man of faith, but by faith he arose and courageously fought against a vast army in order to rescue his nephew Lot. We see Abram's loving fatherly heart. How has faith in God changed you?

After Abram's amazing victory, who does he meet and what happens? (Gen 14:17-20a)

Abram meets Melchizedek. He blesses Abram, and he blesses God for giving Abram victory.

What was Abram's response to Melchizedek and to the king of Sodom? (Gen 14:20-24)

Abram gave a tenth of all he had to God, acknowledging God had indeed given him victory. He also refused to accept anything from the king of Sodom, for he trusted in God to provide for him. What faith!

In the New Testament Jesus is associated with Melchizedek. Why is this? (Heb 6:19 – 7:3)

Melchizedek is a picture of Christ. Melchizedek was a priest, yet he wasn't of the line of Aaron; and Jesus, our great high priest, was not of the line of Aaron either. Melchizedek means king of righteousness, and he was the King of Salem (Peace); and Jesus is truly THE King of Righteousness and THE King (prince) of Peace. Melchizedek blessed Abram; and Jesus blesses us. Melchizedek brought bread and wine; and Jesus introduced bread and wine in the Lord's Supper to help us remember His death for us.

Summary: Abram grew as a man of faith, whom God used to bless us; ultimately through Christ.

13. The Case for Faith – Righteousness and Promises: Gen 15-17

Review: *God blessed Abram so that through him all the nations would be blessed (Gen 12:3). How?*

Through Abram would come Jesus, our Saviour, who would bless all people groups with His salvation.

Abram's faith was not always a great faith. It had to grow. From Gen 12-14, give examples of Abram showing great faith (ie, trust in God), and at other times when he didn't?

Abram trusted God and went to Canaan (Gen 12:4); by faith, Abram went and rescued Lot (Gen 14:14-16), and gave a tenth to Melchizedek; but Abram lacked faith when he went to Egypt (Gen 13:10-13).

Study: *As Abram continued to live in a foreign/hostile land (Gen 14:1-2), what does God do? (Gen 15:1)* God encouraged Abram to not fear, and He promised to protect him and bless him. What a loving God!

Despite God's encouraging words, what was troubling Abram? What did he do? (Gen 15:2-3)

Abram was troubled that he had no direct heir, even though God had promised him descendants beyond number (Gen 12:7; 13:15-16). So he shared his troubled heart with the Lord. Do you? (1 Pet 5:7).

God assured Abram that his heir would come from his body. What was his response? (Gen 15:4-6) Abram believed in the Lord – ie, he took God at His word, believing it would come to pass.

When Abram believed God, what transpired? What great truth did God make known? (Rom 4:1-5)

God credited Abram's faith as righteousness; ie, being right with God. It's not earned through doing good works, but is received through faith. This truth is core to the Gospel. We are made right by faith in Christ.

Read Gen 15:12-18? What do we learn about God as He declared things to Abram?

God knows all things. He rules over the nations, establishing nations and bringing others down. God also loves to make known His plans to those who befriend Him. What a great God we worship (Isa 46:9-10)!

God gave amazing promises/prophecies to Abram in Gen 15:12-18. How were they fulfilled?

Abram's descendants lived in Egypt for about 400 years (Exod 12:40) where they were enslaved. God judged the Egyptians and brought His people into Canaan (Exod 20:2), and brought judgment on the previous inhabitants for their sins (Deut 9:5). Abram lived to a ripe old age (Gen 25:7-8). God is faithful!

What do you make of Abram & Sarai's actions in Gen 16:1-6? What resulted?

It appears they became tired waiting for God to give them a child, so they took things into their own hands. They lacked faith in God. The result was calamitous; tension between Abram, Sarai & Hagar, and constant conflict between Hagar's descendants and Sarai's descendants (as we shall see).

NB: Hagar probably came from another incident where faith was lacking (cf. Gen 12:10-16).

Despite a real lack of faith on Abram's part, what do you notice about God in Gen 16:7-12?

God heard and saw Hagar's affliction (16:11) and cared for her by sending the angel of the Lord. Hagar and her child would not perish, even if Abram's actions were not by faith. What a loving act of God!

What do you make of the prophecy the angel of the Lord made to Hagar? (Gen 16:11-12)

The Arabs/Muslims come from Ishmael, and they continue to fight themselves and others, as God declared.

What are we to make of who the angel of the Lord is from Hagar's response? (Gen 16:13-14)

It seems that "THE angel of the Lord" may be a divine being; even the Lord Jesus in a pre-incarnate state.

After Abram had failed to trust God, what did God do some time later? (Gen 16:15 - 17:5)

Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, God again established His covenant with Abram – He had not given up. This time, God further confirmed His covenant with Abram with a name change – Abram meant "exalted father", but "Abraham" meant "father of many nations". What grace God showed to Abraham!

Read Gen 17:1-11. What were the key points in the covenant God made? What was its sign?

God would multiply Abraham's descendants and bring many nations and kings from him. God would be their God and give them Canaan. Abraham needed to walk with God, and circumcision was the sign.

In Gen 17:15-22, what did God make clear to Abraham?

The descendants of Abraham who would be blessed through God's covenant would not be through Hagar's offspring, but through Sarai's offspring. Sarai even gets a name change to confirm this.

What was Abraham's response to this gracious covenant God made with him? (Gen 17:3, 17, 23)

Abraham worshipped God, and by faith he obeyed God by circumcising each male. Faith and obedience go together, otherwise faith is dead (Jam 2:17). He also laughed, for he and Sarah were well passed the child bearing stage. Sarah's child would indeed be miraculous and be born according to promise.

Summary: Faithlessness brings calamity, but faith in God brings righteousness, blessing & promise.

14. Relationship, Retribution and Rescue: Gen 18-19

Review: *In a dialogue between God and Abraham, what important truth do we discover in Gen 15:6?* God credited Abram's faith as righteousness; ie, he was declared to be right with God, not through good works, but through faith alone. This truth is core to the Gospel. We are made right by faith in Christ.

Despite God's promises, what did Abraham and Sarah do in Gen 16:1-6? What was the result? They didn't trust God but they took things into their own hands. The results were disastrous.

Study: *Who came to visit Abraham and Sarah and to have a meal with them? (Gen 18:1-5,13,16; 19:1)* The three men that came to visit and eat a meal with Abraham and Sarah were the Lord and two angels.

The Lord confirmed that Sarah would bear a son. What was her response? (Gen 18:9-12) Why? She laughed. She thought it was impossible for her to have a child by Abraham as they were both old.

The Lord took issue with Sarah laughing? What did He want to bring out? (Gen 18:13-15) He wanted to make it clear that nothing is impossible with God (Mark 9:23; 10:27).

What is revealed about the Lord's heart in Gen 18:16-21? What does this indicate? The Lord had respect for Abraham, and as they walked along, the Lord Himself thought of sharing His plans with Abraham; and so He did. Truly, the Lord and Abraham were friends (Jam 2:23). Consider: The Lord Jesus has befriended us (John 15:12-15), and has shared God's plans with us.

What would Abraham do to gain God's respect? (Gen 18:19) What can we learn for ourselves? Abraham would be a good father, teaching his children the way of the Lord. We should be the same.

After God shared with Abraham His thoughts, what did Abraham do? Why? (Gen 18:22-25) Abraham pleaded for Sodom, because his nephew Lot was there (Gen 13:11-12). He knew Lot was a righteous man, and he knew God was just, not treating the righteous and the wicked alike. So, with courage, he asked God to spare this wicked city if there were 50 righteous people.

Read Gen 18:26-33. What are your thoughts on this intriguing dialogue between the Lord and man? What a relationship the Lord and Abraham had! Abraham could openly speak to the Lord, yet with deep respect, and the Lord would listen and respond positively. In Christ, we also can approach God boldly (Heb 10:19) and ask Him for anything in His name (cf. John 16:23-27).

Abraham mediated successfully on Lot's behalf. Who has mediated for us? (1 Tim 2:3-6) The Lord Jesus has mediated successfully for us. Through Him we are spared judgment. Hallelujah!

Read Gen 19:1-9. Why was there such an outcry to the Lord from Sodom and Gomorrah? These cities was committing gross immorality (Jude 7). They practiced homosexuality and other indecent acts. Even Lot treated his daughters badly, for women were treated very lowly (something Jesus repaired).

Although Lot treated his daughters badly, what do we see God doing for Lot? (Gen 19:10-13) God showed Lot and his family great mercy. The angels blinded the men of the city so that they could not harm Lot or his family, and they urged Lot to gather all his family and flee to safety.

What reply did Lot get from his future sons-in-law (v.14)? How does that typify things today? Lot's future sons-in-law made fun of Lot's plea. Today, people continue to make fun as we warn them of the coming judgment of God, and the need for them to repent of their sins and flee to Jesus (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Lot hesitated to flee from Sodom. We are not sure why. But what did God do? (Gen 19:15-17) God showed Lot and his family compassion. The angels grabbed their hands and took them out of the city.

Read Gen 19:18-25. What do we learn from this part of the story? In His compassion, God listened to Lot's request and so they could flee to Zoar and be spared there. He then brought retribution and destruction upon the wicked. God is truly righteous. He will judge sin.

What happened to Lot's wife (v.26)? What can we learn from Lot's wife? (cf. Luke 17:28-33) Lot's wife perished because she looked back; probably because her heart was still in Sodom. We are to ensure that our heart is not toward the things of this world. We must leave all behind and follow Jesus.

Read Gen 19:27-29. In what way is God to be glorified from the events in Gen 19? God did better than what Abraham asked for. There weren't ten righteous people in the city, but God rescued the only righteous people in the city of Sodom, and brought judgment upon the rest.

How is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot an example to us all (cf. 2 Peter 2:4-9)? God will judge those who do not repent of their sins, but He will rescue all those who trust in His Son.

Summary: God will judge the unrepentant, but He will rescue the righteous from judgment.

15. A Test of Faith and a Picture of Salvation: Gen 20-22

Review: *In what way did the Lord and Abraham have a great relationship? (Gen 18:17-18, 23-26, 32)*
The Lord shared His thoughts with Abraham, and he reverently shared with the Lord (cf. Jam 2:23).

How is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot an example to us all (cf. 2 Peter 2:4-9)?

God will judge those who do not repent of their sins, but He will rescue all those who trust in Him.

Study: *Read Gen 20:1-18. What do we see in Abraham again?*

We see a lack of faith. In v.1 we don't see God consulted about where he should live, and in v.2 he tells those about him that Sarah was his sister, so that he might be spared death (v. 11).

What can we learn for ourselves from Abraham's lack of faith?

When we don't trust God, and do our own thing, not only do we harm ourselves, but we harm our loved ones (cf. Sarah), and we cause others to suffer (cf. the effect Abraham's actions had on Abimelech).

Does Abimelech get in trouble for Abraham's actions? How are we to understand this?

Abraham may appear to be getting off free from his actions because he "was a prophet" (v.7). But we should understand that he is being shown grace. Through Abraham God would bring forth His Son.

God is gracious, but what other glorious attribute about God is seen in Gen 21:1-2?

God is faithful. Just as He promised, Sarah gave birth to a son, even though she was past child-bearing.

In what ways do we see Abraham following the Lord in Gen 21:3-4 and Gen 21:33-34?

He obeyed the Lord by naming his son Isaac, just as God said (Gen 17:19), and he also circumcised Isaac according to God's word (Gen 17:10-12). He also called on the name of the Lord and worshipped Him.

There's a family crisis in Gen 21:9-11. What does God do? (Gen 21:12-21) What can we learn?

God helped Abraham see Isaac was the one who would inherit the promises. God gave Abraham wisdom to know what to do. Also, God helped Hagar and Ishmael. God can be trusted to sort out our messes.

Read Gen 22:1-2. God's words to Abraham seem so "unlike God". But what must we understand?

God was only testing Abraham's faith, just as He tests our faith from time to time (cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7). However, like for Abraham, He will never test us beyond our limits (1 Cor 10:12-13).

What is quite remarkable about Abraham? (Gen 22:3-4; Heb 11:17-19)

Without hesitation, and without questioning, Abraham obeyed God. Even though he knew the promises God had made concerning Isaac, he trusted God completely. He now believed God can do the impossible.

Why did Abraham respond the way he did to his servants and to his son? (Gen 22:5-8)

Abraham believed Isaac would not die, or if he did, that God would raise him up. He believed he and his son would return home, and that God would provide a sacrifice. How right he was! Faith helps us see.

Read Gen 22:9-12. What do you see in Isaac and Abraham? Is there something else here?

Isaac seems to be a willing sacrifice (there's no mention of a struggle). Abraham is prepared to go all the way in obeying God's word. There is something else – a picture of Jesus and God sacrificing Him for us.

What striking parallels exist between Abraham sacrificing Isaac and God sacrificing Jesus?

The phrase "your son, your only son, whom you love" (v.2) is used of Isaac; God uses similar words of His Son (Matt 3:17). Isaac was sacrificed at Moriah (v.2); the place of Solomon's temple (2 Chro 3:1), and where Jesus was sacrificed. Wood was placed on Isaac (v.6); the cross was placed on Jesus (John 19:17). Abraham had power to put Isaac to death (v.6b); God had power to put Jesus to death for us (Isa 53:6,10).

God stopped Abraham sacrificing His Son. Why didn't God stop with His Son? (cf. Mar 14:36).

It was not possible for God to secure our salvation without sacrificing Jesus. There was no other way.

God provided Abraham a ram (Gen 22:13-14). There's another picture here. What is it?

Another picture from this story is that we are like Isaac. We ought to die; in our case, for our sins. But God has provided another to be sacrificed in our place; even Jesus, the Lamb of God (cf. John 1:29).

Read Gen 22:15-19. What amazing promise does God make? What was it based on?

Not only would Abraham be greatly blessed, but God promised to send Jesus (Abraham's seed – Gal 3:16) to bless us all (ie, provide salvation). This greatest blessing came through Abraham's obedience.

Reflect on the link between obedience and blessing. Cf. Abraham and Jesus (Rom 5:19)

Through Abraham's obedience God would send His Son to save us. Through Jesus' obedience God would bring salvation to us. Through our obedience to Christ we can be a blessing by helping others be saved.

Summary: God tested Abraham's faith, and gave us a glorious picture of our salvation in Christ.

16. Walking by Faith and the Will of God: Gen 23:1-25:18

Review: *Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac? (Gen 22:1-2)*

God was testing Abraham (v.1), to see if he feared Him (v.12); to see if he was prepared to sacrifice his best for God. Sometimes God will test our faith, to see how genuine it is (cf. 1 Pet 1:6-7).

The story in Gen 22:1-19 has striking parallels with another story. Which one and in what way?

It has striking parallels with the sacrifice of Jesus. Just as Abraham went up a mountain to sacrifice his son Isaac, with Isaac carrying the wood, so God led His Son up Calvary, with the wood of the cross on Him.

Read Gen 22:15-19. What amazing promise does God make? What was it based on?

God promised to send Jesus (Gal 3:16) to bless us with salvation. This was through Abraham's obedience.

Study: *Read Gen 23:1-4, 17-20. When Sarah died, what did Abraham do? What is significant about this?*

Although Abraham was a foreigner and had no rights to own land in Canaan, yet he still bought land to bury Sarah. This was the first possession of Canaanite land in Israel's history. Abraham purchased, by faith, what God promised him. This land also became the burial place for the patriarchs (Gen 49:29-33).

Why did Abraham send his servant away to get a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:1-4)? What can we learn?

Abraham didn't want his son marrying a Canaanite, for they worshipped idols. Similarly, in the New Testament, we are not permitted to marry a non-Christian, but a fellow Christian (1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14).

In choosing Isaac's wife, Abraham wasn't just using wisdom. What else do we see? (Gen 24:5-9)

Abraham had faith that God would send His angel to help his servant choose the right wife for Isaac. As a believer, we are to use human wisdom and reasoning, but we must walk by faith (cf. 2 Cor 5:7).

When the servant reached his destination what did he do (Gen 24:10-14)? What can we learn?

He prayed. This is the first prayer in the Bible where God is sought for guidance. He prayed humbly, and he also shared how he would like the Lord to reveal His will. What do we do when a situation arises and we are not sure what God's will is? Do we, by faith, humbly pray and seek Him? (Pro 3:5-6; 1 Pet 5:6-7)

What do we observe in Gen 24:15-27? What is our response to God when He answers prayer?

God immediately answered the prayer of Abraham's servant, and the Lord in His kindness did it in the way Abraham's servant had asked. In response, the servant worshipped the Lord. Are we "blown away" by how quick the Lord can answer prayer at times? Do we give thanks and worship Him in response?

In Gen 24:32-49 Abraham's servant explained how Rebekah was the one God had chosen to be Isaac's wife. What do you notice about his manner, which helped Rebekah's family respond positively? The servant spoke humbly and honestly to Rebekah's family, explaining the way the Lord had guided him. He did not manipulate or force their hand. He stated things plainly and trusted God for a favourable response. Do we do the same? Do we trust God for the outcome, or do we "make things happen"?

Read Gen 24:50-52. Why did Abraham's servant worship the Lord a second time?

He knew that God had caused Rebekah's family to give a favourable answer. What family would give their daughter to a stranger, who would take her to a foreign land? Surely, the Lord had brought this about.

What do we notice in Gen 24:54-58 about Rebekah?

Rebekah was ready to immediately go with this "stranger" to a foreign land, and become the wife of Isaac. Surely, God had even prepared Rebekah's heart, so that she was ready to go.

Read Gen 24:61-67. How do we know the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah was God's doing?

God answered specific prayer and brought about right circumstances and prepared people's hearts. It was answered prayer that affirmed that Rebekah was God's choice for the wife for Isaac.

What can we learn from this story about knowing God's will?

We discover God's will as we honour God according to the truth He has revealed to us, as we pray to Him with dependence, and as we look to Him to show us the way forward. It's then that God "opens and closes" doors, and even brings about circumstances so that we might discern His will. Praise His name!

Read Gen 25:7-10. How did Abraham's life end? What can we make of this?

Abraham's life ended well. He lived a long life and died a satisfied man. His sons Ishmael and Isaac honoured him. Abraham died a blessed man, for he walked with God and was God's friend (Jam 2:23).

What can we learn from Abraham's life?

Abraham wasn't always faithful, but he grew in faith, and as he did, he came to know God and His will.

Summary: Abraham walked with God & grew in faith. God reveals Himself & His will to such ones.

17. Jacob's Deception & God's Grace: Gen 25:19-28:22

Review: *We often think that knowing God's will is difficult and mysterious. But what do we learn from the story of Abraham choosing a bride for Isaac in regard to knowing God's will? (Gen 24)*

Abraham allowed God's truth to guide him; ie, Isaac wasn't to marry a pagan (v. 3). He trusted that God would provide a wife (v.7). Abraham's servant prayed and looked for specific circumstances (vv.12-14).

Abraham died at a great age of 175 years. What are the key things we learn from Abraham's life? Abraham stumbled many times, but his faith grew until he was able to trust God concerning the sacrifice of his son (Gen 22). He also grew in his relationship with God. He was the friend of God (James 2:23).

Study: *What challenges did Isaac and Rebekah face? What did Isaac do? (Gen 25:19-21)*

They couldn't have children, so Isaac prayed; 20 years (Gen 25:26). Do we persist in prayer? (Luke 18:1-8)

When Rebekah was pregnant, what did she do? What did she learn? (Gen 25:22-23)

Rebekah prayed. The Lord told her that she had twins, and that the older would serve the younger.

What does Rom 9:10-16 declare about this passage in Gen 25:23-26?

God chose Jacob to be the one who would inherit the blessings, even before he was born, and despite knowing that Jacob was a deceiver and a supplanter. Behold God's sovereign choice and His grace.

God chose us to be saved in Christ (Eph 1:3-6). What attitude should we have towards the Lord?

We should be humble and thankful that God chose to save us in Christ. He didn't have to! What grace!

What problem did Isaac and Rebekah's family have (Gen 25:27-28)? What should we learn?

Isaac and Rebekah's family had favouritism operating. As Christians, we ought to treat our children, and even fellow believers (God's children), equally (cf. Jam 2:1-4). Favouritism brings friction and fraction.

Read Gen 25:29-34. What is revealed about the characters of Esau and Jacob?

Jacob only cared about himself. He had no hesitation using the situation to his advantage. Esau despised his birthright. He was only concerned about immediate needs. He was godless (cf. Heb 12:16).

In Gen 26:1-5, what special event occurred in Isaac's life?

The Lord appeared to Isaac, and confirmed to him the blessings and promises He had made to Abraham.

Despite the Lord's promises, what did Isaac do in Gen 26:6-11?

Like his father Abraham, Isaac did not trust God with his safety in the land. Fearing that someone might kill him and take his wife, he took things into his own hands, and lied about Rebekah being his wife.

We can have the same flaws as our parents have (as we see in Isaac). What does wisdom teach us?

Wisdom teaches us to see their mistakes and don't repeat them (ie, break the cycle through Christ's help).

Esau's wives brought grief to both Isaac and Rebekah. Why? (Gen 26:34-35)

Esau married pagan women, who did not worship the true God. He was truly a godless man (Heb 12:16).

Read Gen 27:1-29. Although Esau was godless, what was Jacob like?

He was a deceiver. With his mother's prompting, Jacob deceived his dad in order to steal the blessing.

Although what Jacob did was sinful, in what way did it accomplish God's plans?

God chose Jacob to be the one who would inherit the promises (Gen 25:23). Isaac was against this; wanting Esau to be blessed instead. Yet, in the end, Isaac fulfilled God's will (Gen 25:29).

God is able to accomplish His will, even through sinful actions. What do we learn in Acts 2:23?

God accomplished His will of bringing salvation to us by using the evil men who put Jesus to death.

Read Gen 27:30-40. How is Jacob described (vv.35-36)? What didn't he deserve?

Jacob is described as a deceiver and supplanter; a wicked conniving man. He did not deserve the blessing.

Jacob was in danger of being killed for his sinfulness. What happened instead? (Gen 27:41-28:5)

God intervened and used Rebekah to get Jacob out of danger. Not only would Jacob be safe, but he would end up marrying non-Canaanite women; ie believing women. God was truly being gracious to Jacob.

God's didn't just protect Jacob. What extraordinary thing happened in Gen 28:10-15?

God revealed Himself to Jacob in a dream, and made great and generous promises to Him. God's dealings with Jacob are a showcase of how great God's grace is (cf. God's grace to Saul of Tarsus).

Did God's grace have any impact on a selfish and sinful Jacob? (Gen 28:16-22) What about us?

It sure did! Jacob worshipped the Lord, and vowed to make Him his God. This was the first time that Jacob came into relationship with God; not because of Jacob's efforts, but because of God's doings. If we have tasted of God's grace in Christ, we ought to be profoundly affected as well (cf. Paul: 1 Cor 15:9-10).

Summary: Jacob was a deceiver, but God's grace changed him to worship and follow the Lord.

18. Jacob – Growing in God's Grace: Gen 29-31

Review: *Before Jacob came to know God, what was he like? (cf. Gen 25:29-34; 27:30-36)*

Jacob was a deceitful and conniving man; a selfish and sinful man. He had no regard for his brother Esau.

When Jacob fled for his life because of Esau's intent to kill him, what did God do? (Gen 28:10-16)

God showed him incredible grace. Despite his sin, He promised to bless and protect and be with Jacob.

What was Jacob's response to God's grace? (Gen 28:18-22)

Jacob worshipped the Lord, and made the Lord his God. This was the first time Jacob came to know God.

Study: *Jacob journeyed and came to his mother's brother Laban. What was Laban like? (Gen 29:13-25)*

Laban was a deceitful man. He deceived Jacob by giving him his daughter Leah in marriage, rather than Rachel. We shall see as we go along that Laban was a very selfish and deceitful man - just like old Jacob.

Often God may bring into our lives people who are challenging and difficult. Why?

In our interaction with difficult people, God wants to reveal things about our life that are not right so that we might change. It might be that we are like that "difficult person", but are too blind to see it; or it might be that God wants to teach us how we should deal rightly with such people (cf. Matt 5:44-48).

How did Jacob react to Laban's deceitfulness? (Read Gen 29:26-30) Why?

Jacob humbled himself and served Laban for another seven years. This response by Jacob was, in part, due to his love for Rachel. But also, experiencing God's grace leads to humility and service as well.

What do we learn about God in His dealings with Leah? (Gen 29:31-35)

God saw that Leah was unloved and so He blessed her with children, whereas Rachel was kept barren. God sees all things and helps the afflicted and down-trodden (cf. Psalm 113:5-8).

What do we learn about Rachel in Gen 30:1-24? What do we learn about God?

Rachel was jealous of her sister (vv.1, 8); she blamed her husband for being barren (v.1); she manipulated Leah to get what she wanted (v. 15). Yet, God was gracious to Rachel and enabled her to bear a child.

Jacob wanted to go home, but Laban had other plans. What was he up to? (Gen 30:25-28; 31:6-7)

Laban, a deceitful man, didn't care for Jacob's well-being. Rather, he was only interested in using up Jacob to make himself rich. He behaved in the same way Jacob had behaved toward his brother Esau.

How did Jacob behave toward Laban, despite his deceitful dealings with him? (Gen 30:29-33; 31:6)

Jacob dealt honestly with Laban and he served him with all his strength. Truly, Jacob showed himself to be a man of God, who walked with God and followed the Lord's ways.

Laban didn't care for Jacob. He would have been happy to leave Jacob destitute. Yet Jacob ended up being prosperous. Why was that? (Gen 30:43-31:16)

Just as God had promised Jacob when he first met Him (Gen 28), God had been with him to bless and keep him. God looked after Jacob. What a faithful God! And Jacob had learnt to trust in God.

God called Jacob to return home to his relatives (Gen 31:3, 13), which meant returning to Esau, who had formerly wanted to kill him. Despite being fearful, what did Jacob do? (Gen 31:17-18)

Jacob trusted the Lord and obeyed him. God promised to be with Jacob and help him (Gen 31:3).

What do we learn from Gen 31:19, 34-35?

Rachel stole her father's household idols and deceived him about their whereabouts. Also, the fact that there were household idols shows us that Laban, and perhaps Rachel, had a compromised faith. Though they were meant to know the Lord, they served idols. This would explain why their lives were ungodly.

When Jacob left, Laban pursued Jacob to harm him. What did God do? (Gen 31:22-29)

God intervened by giving Laban a dream so that he would not hurt Jacob. God is amazing!

In Gen 31:38-42 Jacob shares his testimony to Laban. What do you make of it?

Jacob gave all praise to God. It had been God who had kept him through a very trying time. In response to God's kindness and grace, Jacob had chosen to be honest and faithful in his dealings with Laban.

Read Gen 31:43-55. What do you see in the characters of Laban and Jacob?

Laban continued to be selfish, possessive and controlling (vv.43,50), whereas Jacob acted as a peacemaker in a situation where he could have been so easily provoked.

What do you make of Jacob's life after he had encountered the Lord? What about us?

Jacob was a changed man. God's grace had changed a selfish deceitful man, into an honest servant-hearted man. If we have encountered God's grace in Christ, we should be changing as well (2 Cor 3:18; 5:17).

Summary: When we encounter God's grace and come to know Him, we are changed for the better.

19. Jacob's Fear but God's Faithfulness: Gen 32-33

Review: *For twenty years Jacob lived with Laban - a selfish, scheming and deceitful man. Sometimes God may bring into our life a difficult person. Why would God do such a thing?*

God often does this to help us see our own sinfulness (in Jacob's case he was with a man who was just like how he used to be). God is in the business of helping us grow in holiness. Jacob did! Are we?

Jacob behaved honourably and selflessly before Laban (Gen 31:38-42); so different to how he used to be. What do you think caused Jacob to be such a changed man?

By God's grace, Jacob had come to know God personally (Gen 28). He also trusted God to care for him and provide for him. It is these things that cause a person to become a godly man.

Study: *As Jacob returned home at God's command, what new challenge did Jacob face? (Gen 32:3-8)* Jacob knew that he would meet his brother Esau, who twenty years ago wanted to kill him (Gen 27:41). He was afraid of Esau, and became even more afraid when he heard what Esau was planning.

Gen 32:1-2 is an interesting passage that comes just before we read of Jacob's fear of Esau. Why do you think God may have caused this to happen?

Before going through a stressful time, God often brings into our life a time of comfort and reassurance. Meeting the angels of God would have reassured Jacob that God was truly with him (Gen 31:3).

What was Jacob's response as fear gripped him? (Gen 32:9-12)

Jacob prayed! He laid before the Lord his fear and concern, and asked God for His help (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).

Jacob didn't just ask for God's help. What else do you notice about his prayer?

Jacob humbled himself, expressing how he was unworthy of all God's favour. He also reminded the Lord of His faithful and loving promises. Do we pray like this; with humility and trusting God's faithfulness?

After prayer, what did Jacob do (Gen 32:13-26)? What can we learn from this?

It's so important to pray first, before taking action in a given matter. Also, often it's important to take action after praying, rather than doing nothing; but praying first will help us do what is right and best.

Read Gen 32:24-30. Who wrestled with Jacob? (cf. Hos 12:3-5)

Hosea identifies him as an angel, who is very closely connected to God (often he is called "the angel of the Lord"). Jacob's name change (v.28), and Jacob's comments in v.30, indicate it was God who wrestled with Jacob. But if so, why didn't He prevail over Jacob (v.25)? If it was God, it would have to be Jesus, for no one has ever seen God the Father (John 1:18). NB: The word "angel" means messenger. When we use this definition, then "the angel of the Lord" could refer to Jesus; ie, the messenger (Word) of God.

Why is Jacob wrestling with someone so mighty?

It was symbolic of how Jacob had wrestled with God and man. He had wrestled with Esau to obtain the Abrahamic blessing. He had wrestled with God in prayer so that he might be blessed and kept. His new name Israel, which means "strives with God", would reflect this. The name Israel was also prophetic, because the nation of Israel that came from Jacob would also wrestle/struggle/fight with God and man.

Read Gen 33:1-3. What is striking about Jacob's actions? Who does it remind us of?

In case Esau came to harm him and his family, he wisely separated them to minimise harm. But he went ahead of them all. He was prepared to give up his life in order to spare his family. Such an action reminds us of Jesus, who came from Jacob's seed. He went before us and gave up His life to save us (Mark 10:45).

What happened as Jacob and Esau met? (Gen 33:4-11)

Everything worked out well. God had truly gone before and had removed Esau's enmity against Jacob, and had enabled Esau to graciously receive Jacob. Jacob, on his part, was quick to honour God (v.11).

What can we learn from Jacob when we are facing a difficulty that seems insurmountable?

Like Jacob, we need to "wrestle" with God in prayer that He might help us (Psa 50:15). We then need to trust Him that He will go before us and make the "crooked way straight" (Pro 3:5-6).

After Jacob settled in Canaan, what noble action did he do? (Gen 33:18-20) Why?

Jacob built an altar to the Lord and worshipped Him. Jacob was thankful for all that God had done for him. God had kept him while he was with Laban, and had preserved him before Esau. He praised God!

As Christians, in what way are we to imitate Jacob's actions? (1 Thess 5:16-18)

Like Jacob, we are to rejoice in God's grace (32:10); pray always, and especially in time of trouble (32:11), and worship and give thanks to God (32:20), who alone is good and faithful. Are we like this?

Summary: In all our trials and fears, pray and seek God, who faithfully helps us through Christ.

20. Jacob's Challenges but God's Comfort: Gen 34-35

Review: *Jacob greatly feared meeting his brother Esau (Gen 27:41). What did he do? (Gen 32:9-12)*
He prayed. He humbled himself and thanked God for His grace, and he humbly asked God for His help as he put his trust in God's promises. Do we pray like this? We ought to!

Everything worked out as Jacob met Esau. What promises do we have in Psa 50:15 & 1 Pet 5:7?
Like for Jacob, God promises to rescue us in the day of trouble, and to care for us when we are anxious.

Study: *As Jacob and his family lived in Canaan, what terrible event occurred? (Gen 34:1-5)*

Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped and defiled by a Canaanite named Shechem.

How does Shechem's father, Hamor, deal with his son's sin? (Gen 34:6-10)

Hamor dismissed his son's deplorable actions by saying that his son loved Dinah and wanted to marry her. He also sought to smooth things over by offering trade to Jacob and his family.

What do you think Shechem would have concluded from his father's dealings with Jacob?

Shechem would have thought what he did wasn't wrong, and he could get away with whatever he did.

What does such parenting result in? How should we parent?

It results in children becoming selfish and sinful, and who try to get away from any consequences. If we are a parent, we ought to bring right consequences to our children's sinful actions (cf. Pro 13:24; 29:15).

Read Gen 34:11-17. What is happening in the conflict? Why is this happening?

When Shechem speaks, there is no acknowledgment of the terrible sin he had committed. He just wants to marry Dinah. As a result, things escalate. Jacob's sons respond deceitfully. As we shall see, they were plotting to harm Shechem and his people. When we cover up sin, sin will find us out (Num 32:23).

What do we learn about Shechem and Hamor in Gen 34:18-24?

They are deceitful as well – they convince the people of the city to be circumcised by making the false claim (a lie) that Jacob's property and possessions (he was a rich man) would become theirs.

We have seen deceit in "old" Jacob, deceit in Laban, deceit in Jacob's sons, and now deceit in Shechem and Hamor. What do we learn in Jer 17:9-10? What can we do about this human condition?
From the Fall in Gen 3, every human heart is deceitful to such an extent that it is beyond comprehension. To get our way, we will deceive and lie. Our only hope is to have a changed heart. This only happens when we meet God and are right with Him; like "new" Jacob. For us, it happens when we meet Christ.

Read Gen 34:25-29. What was the result of this escalating conflict?

Jacob's sons, in particular, Simeon and Levi, killed Shechem and Hamor, and every male of their city. This was the deceitful plan that they had concocted when dealing with Shechem and Hamor in Gen 34:13.

How did Jacob respond to the actions of his sons? (Gen 34:30-31)

He seemed to be opposed to their actions. He also now feared that the Canaanites. NB: Jacob seemed to be quite a man of peace, which is what we are called to be as Christians (cf. Rom 12:17-21).

Jacob was afraid the Canaanites might strike him. How did God look after Jacob? (Gen 35:1-5)

God called Jacob to move to Bethel (ie, away from the hot spot), and he put a dread on the surrounding people so that they did not arise and attack Jacob and his family. God can be trusted to look after us.

What is surprising about Jacob's family? (Gen 35:2-4) What can we learn? (cf. 1 John 5:21)

Jacob's family (not Jacob) had foreign gods (idols), which Jacob commanded to be put away. Their worship of God was not pure. We, also, can have idols in our life. May we guard our hearts from *them*.

Where had Jacob returned to (Gen 35:6-7)? What principle can we glean from this (Acts 22:4-8)?

Jacob returned to the place where he came to personally meet and know the true God. It's good for us to remember the time when we first met Christ and were saved, and came to know God. It encourages us.

God again met Jacob. What happened this time? (Gen 35:9-15)

God confirmed Jacob's name change to Israel, which went hand in hand with the covenant He was making with Jacob. In the covenant, God promised to make him a mighty nation and promised him the land of Canaan. Jacob had stolen the blessing from Esau, but God confirmed it: what grace!

What did Jacob endure in Gen 35:16-22,27-29? What could he rejoice in? (Gen 32:9-10, 35:23-26)

Jacob endured the pain of seeing Rachel and his father Isaac die, as well as the shocking news that his son Reuben had slept with Bilhah. Sin and its effects (eg, death) can often confront and challenge us. But God had been with Jacob to comfort and bless him with 12 sons. Esau and Jacob even buried Isaac together.

Summary: We may face many challenges, but God is with us and will also comfort us (2 Cor 1:3-4)

21. God's Greatness-Working Out His Plans Despite Our Sins: Gen 36-38

Review: *Jacob endured living with Laban, meeting his brother Esau who had threatened to kill him, the rape of Dinah his daughter, two sons who caused trouble by destroying a Canaanite city, the death of Rachel and Isaac, and the sin of Reuben. How did Jacob cope? What was his strength? (Gen 35:7,13-15)* Jacob's strength was in the Lord. Since he came to know God personally, Jacob trusted in God to look after him and to comfort him (cf. 2 Cor 1:3-4), no matter what he faced.

Study: *After Isaac's death in Gen 35:29, we have an account of Esau and his descendants in Gen 36. Jacob's story continues in Gen 37, especially of his son Joseph. What do we learn about him? (Gen 37:1-4)* Joseph was hated by his brothers because he would tell on them, and because he was Jacob's favourite son.

Favouritism was a problem in Isaac and Rebekah's family (Gen 25:27-28), and now we see it a problem in Jacob's family (the next generation). What can we learn from this?

The sins and shortcomings of one generation often pass down to the next generation, either by genetics or through learned behaviours. Only in Christ, and by the power of the Spirit, can we break these patterns.

Joseph had two dreams from God (Gen 37:5-11). What did they mean? How would they help him? God was showing Joseph that he would be a ruler. The dreams would help Joseph during difficult times.

Should Joseph have shared his dreams with his family?

Joseph, being young and immature, unwisely shared his dreams. He should have kept quiet (cf. what Paul did when he had visions - 2 Cor 12:1-7). We are to live peaceably (Rom 12:18) and humbly (Phil 2:3).

Read Gen 37:12-20. What was the result of Joseph sharing his dreams with his brothers?

It resulted in them plotting to kill Joseph when an opportune time arose. They truly hated him and had no concern about killing him and covering up their evil deed by deception; and thus, negating his dreams.

Joseph would have been killed – for sure. How did God intervene? (Gen 37:21-24)

God used Reuben, the eldest brother, to intervene and rescue Joseph from his brothers.

Read Gen 37:25-28. Who takes a lead role? What motivates him to carry out his plan?

Judah takes a lead role. Motivated by monetary gain, he encouraged his brothers not to kill Joseph, but to sell him to some passing traders for a slave in order to make twenty shekels of silver.

Consider the actions of Joseph and his brothers in Gen 37. What did their actions accomplish?

Their actions accomplished God's will for Joseph to go down to Egypt, and to become a great leader in Egypt. God can use man's foolishness and wickedness to accomplish His will (cf. Act 2:23). Incredible!

What prophecy would begin to be fulfilled as Joseph went down to Egypt? (cf. Gen 15:13-14)

God prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land (Egypt), where they would be oppressed and afflicted for 400 years. Joseph's journey to Egypt as a slave was the start of the fulfilment of this prophecy. God's word is always true (cf. Isa 40:8; Matt 24:35).

How did Joseph's brothers cover their sin (Gen 37:29-35)? What do their actions remind us of?

They deceived their father by returning Joseph's coat to him with goat's blood on it, so that he might believe that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. Jacob once used to be deceitful. He deceived his own father by killing a goat and using its skin. Now his own sons were deceiving him by the use of a goat.

Despite all that had happened, what had God accomplished? (Gen 37:36)

God had arranged for Joseph to be in Egypt as a slave; but not just any slave somewhere in Egypt, but the slave of one of Pharaoh's officers. From here, God would raise up Joseph to be Egypt's prime minister.

What do we learn about Joseph's brother Judah in Gen 38:1-5, together with Gen 37:26-27?

Judah was quite ungodly. He took a Canaanite wife. Previously, he also had arranged for Joseph to be sold as a slave, though Joseph had pleaded with them that they might release him (cf. Gen 42:21).

Read Gen 38:6-19. Judah's two sons were killed by the Lord for their sin. But what did Judah do?

Judah had sex with a prostitute. But in actual fact, it was his daughter-in-law Tamar, who had disguised herself. She had done this act because Judah had not honoured his pledge to give her Shelah (v.11).

Read Gen 38:20-26. What almost happened to Tamar? What did Judah have to confess?

Tamar was almost executed, but when the truth was revealed, Judah confessed his unrighteousness.

What was significant about the birth of Tamar's children? (Gen 38:27-30; Matt 1:1-3)

Tamar gave birth to Perez and Zerah. It was from Perez that the Lord Jesus Christ came from. How incredible that God should rule over men's sins and accomplish His purpose of establishing Christ's line.

Summary: Despite our sins and failures, God is able to accomplish His plans (Isa 43:13; Eph 1:11)

22. God's Purpose and Joseph's Perseverance: Gen 39-40

Review: *How had Joseph become alienated from his brothers? How did they respond? (ch37)*

Joseph was favoured from birth by his father for special treatment. God also gave him great promises in dreams. However Joseph was far from wise or gracious in his responses. His brothers also responded with anything but grace, hating him and selling him into slavery.

At this stage in the family history, how has God already turned the brothers' wickedness towards the accomplishment of His good promises?

God has used their hatred to bring Joseph into Pharaoh's court (37:27, 37:36), and has used Judah's wickedness against Tamar to bring about the descent of Jesus! (Gen 38:27-30)

Study: *Read Genesis 39:1-6. What measures are given of Joseph's success in Potiphar's household? What reasons are given for this success?*

If the Lord is with him, he is successful (vv.2-3). Everything prospers in Joseph's hand (v3). Joseph receives favour (v4) and promotion (v4-5), material success (v5) and responsibility (v6). All these things are provided as blessings from God (vv2,3,5,6). Although Joseph must have acted responsibly, the emphasis is on God's divine favour.

Read Genesis 39:7-20. How hard would it have been for Joseph to maintain his integrity in Potiphar's household? What reasons strengthen Joseph to maintain his integrity?

It would have been hard to resist the repetitive seductions of Potiphar's wife, especially were Joseph to wish to be ambitious. Instead, Joseph wishes to reward the trust placed in him by humans, but ultimately his concern is not to sin against God. (vv.7-8)

Why does Joseph suffer for his integrity? Do we?

Joseph suffers because of the wife's sin, but also for following Yahweh (v9, 14, 17).

How are we blessed if we suffer for righteousness? (cf. Matthew 5:10, 1 Peter 3:14)

We may not receive earthly reward, but God's favour is upon us when we suffer for His sake.

When unbelievers are in authority over us, how should we respond? (Eph 6:5, Col 3:22-25, 1 Peter 2:13-25) Why?

We should serve with faithfulness of heart as well as of action, because in doing so, we are serving Christ, revering God, bringing peace, and can make a good witness.

What limitations are placed on Christian obedience? (1 Peter 2:16-17, 1 Cor 7:21)

We are never to obey commands that demand sin, because God is the greater authority. We are to avoid slavery though, if we can avoid it, as God's free people.

Read Genesis 39:19-23. In what ways does this remind you of the previous scenario?

Joseph is still exercising responsibility, but overwhelmingly God is still carrying out blessing as part of His covenant promises. God again uses human sin to bless Joseph into just the right position at Pharaoh's court.

Read Genesis 40. What indications do you see that Joseph trusts God completely?

He trusts God to supply wisdom (v8) and is confident in the interpretation supplied (v12-14).

What indications do you see that God is completely in control of the whole situation, to keep His covenant promises to Israel, and even to carry out his control of the universe?

The dreams and interpretations from God prove true (vv20-22). Even the cupbearer's carelessness helps to supply an opportune word at just the right time for Joseph (ch 41).

How certain can we be that God is in control of our suffering and is using it for our good? (cf Romans 8:28ff)

Very certain indeed. God's word cannot be broken.

Summary: When we suffer for righteousness' sake, God is accomplishing his purposes to bless us, and to bless others through us. (Rom 8:28, 1 Peter 3:14) God is always faithful to his promises.

23. Joseph – Egypt's Prince and God's Prepared Saviour: Gen 41-42

Review: *How has Joseph suffered for righteousness so far in the story? (ch37)*

Joseph has suffered for believing God's promises in the dreams, in being sold as a slave to Egypt, suffered as a slave to Potiphar, suffered through false accusations rather than sin, and suffered in prison even while being faithful to God.

How has God used Joseph's suffering to fulfil His own good purposes to bless Israel?

God has manoeuvred Joseph to the edge of the Egyptian court: the most powerful nation in the ancient world, from where he will begin to bless the nations. From here, God will accomplish his promise of 400 years of multiplying Israel in Egypt, then an exodus to the Promised Land, with great possessions.

Study: *Read Genesis 41:1-32. Why is the time frame mentioned in verse 1? What should this show us about God's way of delivering us from suffering?*

God chooses if, when and how to deliver us from suffering. He chose exactly when Joseph's best moment would come. We can trust Him to do what is best for us and His glory, too. We must be patient in suffering, and stand the test. (1 Peter 5:6-11, Psalm 105:16-19)

How does God work to occasion Pharaoh to listen to Joseph?

God sends Pharaoh dreams, has engineered Joseph's prior faithfulness, and places the cupbearer in just the right place at the right time to speak up. A foreign jailed slave advising Pharaoh! How astonishing!

What is the content of Pharaoh's dreams? (vv. 25-31 and 32) How would this conflict with Egyptian paganism?

Egypt will have 7 years of abundance, then 7 years of extreme famine. God (Yahweh) has certainly determined this, and Pharaoh cannot alter it.

What stands out to you about the way that Joseph describes his abilities to interpret?

Joseph freely attributes his abilities to God's providence (41:16). In fact the word used in verse 16 for favourable answer is welfare or blessing 'shalom'. Israel is already blessing the nations!

Who is the dominant person in this narrative?

God!

In verses 31-41, whose wisdom is demonstrated? How?

Joseph's godly wisdom is demonstrated through wise advice and humility (Gen 31:33-37). Pharaoh's worldly wisdom is demonstrated by recognising God's sovereignty (vv. 37-41). God's paramount wisdom is the origin of it all! (v39)

Read vv.41-57. How has God begun fulfilling his promises to Abraham and Joseph? Abraham's descendants are multiplying (v50ff), are in Egypt, and are being a blessing to all nations! (vv53-57)

Who does Joseph remind us of as one who blesses all nations? Jesus!

Read Chapter 42. Through this chapter, what do you think Joseph is encouraging his brothers to reflect on during this long story? Why?

He wants them to reflect on what it means to endanger or abandon a brother, and to bring such sorrow to their father. He wants them to be honest in their dealings too! He wants them to repent and be a family!

How is Joseph a proto-type of Jesus in these two chapters? Discuss.

Joseph is born to humble circumstances, but is the inheritor of the promises. He humbles himself to God's will. He is full of integrity. God raises Him up at the right time and He trusts in God. He speaks the truth, and in His mouth is wisdom. He reigns. His reign builds God's kingdom and blesses all nations. His rule brings salvation. He convicts of sin, but shows abundant grace.

Summary: Joseph is a great example of how God sovereignly keeps his promises to bless the nations through Israel. Joseph suffers like Jesus for righteousness, and this is God's means to bring victory. So it is with us.

24. Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Gen 43:1-45:4

Review: *Joseph became Egypt's leader just as God had planned. If Joseph had accomplished this plan himself, it would have been very different. Why do you think God chose the way He did? (cf. Isa 55:8&9)* God's way made it clear that Joseph did not become a great leader by self-effort and drive, but through God's doing. God's way also caused Joseph to be humble, and to be in a place where God could use Him.

In what ways is the story of Joseph a picture of Jesus? (Gen 41:53-57)

Just as Joseph came from humble circumstances and was raised by God to become a great leader and to save the then known world from a severe famine, so in a far greater way, Jesus came from humble circumstances and was raised up to save all people groups from the consequences of our sins if we come to Him. Jesus has given us the bread of life, so that through Him we might live forever (John 6:35).

Study: *In Gen 42, we may conclude that when Joseph's brothers came to him in Egypt, that Joseph was encouraging his brothers to see their sin in selling him into slavery. On the other hand, Joseph may have been seeking to punish them for their sin against him (cf. Gen 42:7, 17). As a Christian, how are we to behave when people unjustly hurt and injure us? (cf. Matt 5:38-45; Rom 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:21-23)*

We are to act graciously, never taking vengeance, but entrusting ourselves to God's care and justice.

Read Gen 43:1-10. Why is it a surprise to see Judah behaving the way he does (cf. Gen 37:26-27)? What type of person is he becoming, and who does he remind us of?

It's a surprise to see Judah behaving the way he does, for he was the one who came up with the selfish and sinful plan to make money by selling Joseph. Instead of being selfish, he is now willing to be selfless, by becoming surety for Jacob's youngest son, Benjamin, so that they may return to Egypt and get grain. Judah's actions remind us of Jesus, who selflessly and sacrificially became our surety.

What do you notice about Jacob's response in Gen 43:11-15?

Jacob is willing to accept Judah's offer, but more importantly, He trusts God to go before them. He also seeks peace between his family and Egypt's leader. We ought to pursue peace too? (cf. Matt 5:9, 5:23-24)

Read Gen 43:16-25. How do Joseph's brothers behave as they go to Joseph's house?

They are afraid, but as they speak with Joseph's steward with honesty and openness, he allays their fears. How good it is to be honest with others – honesty leads to healing; dishonesty leads to distress.

How does Joseph behave toward his brothers (who still don't know it's Joseph)? (Gen 43:26-34)

Compared to Gen 42:7-14, Joseph behaves lovingly toward his brothers. He is concerned for his father's welfare, and he is moved at seeing Benjamin. It appears he had forgiven them. When we forgive another, then we can truly love them, rather than punish them.

Why do you think Joseph got his servant to put the silver cup in Benjamin's sack? (Gen 44:1-13)

Compared to what we possibly see in Gen 42, Joseph doesn't act vindictively against his brothers, but to test them to see what they would do for Benjamin. Would they just care for themselves (as they had done when they abandoned Joseph), or would they do whatever it takes to save their brother Benjamin?

Which brother stood up & what was he willing to do (Gen 44:14-34)? Who does he remind us of?

Judah stood up amongst his brothers to speak to Joseph. He spoke honestly with Joseph, explaining what would happen if Benjamin did not return safely. Indeed, Jacob offered himself to be taken in the place of Benjamin. What a sacrificial leader! Judah's actions remind us of the one who came from Judah's line, even the Lord Jesus, who willingly gave Himself up for us.

What did Judah's sacrificial and selfless response bring about in Joseph? (Gen 45:1-4)

It caused Joseph to be so moved, that he was no longer able to hold back his identity from his brothers. He knew they had changed. More than that, Judah's selfless love melted his heart.

Judah's actions resemble those of Jesus. What is our response to His sacrificial love for us?

Like Joseph, Christ's love for us should melt us and cause us to love Him with all our heart (Gal 2:20).

Joseph and his brothers were reconciled. How did this come about?

Reconciliation was only made possible when Joseph forgave his brothers, and forgiveness was made easier for Joseph when he saw Judah's selfless and sacrificial love for Benjamin.

What can we learn about reconciliation from this story?

We can only be reconciled to another when we forgive, and for us in Christ, we are enabled to forgive others when we consider Christ's selfless and sacrificial love and forgiveness for us (cf. Col 3:12-13).

Summary: Christ's love and forgiveness should motivate us to forgive and be reconciled to others.

25. The Great God is at Work and is to be Worshipped: Gen 45-47

Review: *Judah was the brother who sinfully arranged for Joseph to be sold into slavery (Gen 37:26-27). What change do we see in Judah in regard to Benjamin? (Gen 44:25-34) Who does Judah remind us of? Judah was selfless, willing to give himself so that Benjamin might be set free. Judah reminds us of the Lord Jesus, who came from Judah's line. He selflessly and sacrificially gave Himself for us (Gal 2:20).*

What did Judah's sacrificial and selfless act bring about in Joseph? (Gen 45:1-4)

It caused Joseph to be so moved that he was no longer able to hold back his identity from his brothers; and it led to forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ's sacrificial love has also led to forgiveness and reconciliation with God, if we turn to Jesus and trust in Him.

Study: *Read Gen 45:1-8. Not only are the brothers reconciled, but Joseph, with spiritual insight, explains God's hand in all that had happened. What had God brought about? Why?*

God had used the sinful actions of Joseph's brothers to send Joseph to Egypt, and then God raised Joseph up to be the prime minister of the land, so that through him He might save the then known world from the famine, as well as Jacob's family, through whom Christ came. God used Joseph to preserve the holy line.

God, in His sovereignty, is able to use sinful actions to accomplish His purposes, as He did with Joseph. What great event in human history do we see the pinnacle of this? (Acts 2:23-24)

God used the wicked actions of the Jewish leaders to accomplish His eternal plan of allowing His Son to die as our atoning sacrifice. Their evil scheme God turned around to bring about the greatest good.

Since Joseph's brothers and Jesus' enemies accomplished God's purposes, does that mean what they did is justified? (cf. Acts 3:14-19)

No! The good outcome that God may bring from sinful actions does not justify sin. God calls all who sin to repent and find forgiveness for their sins, otherwise they will be judged and condemned.

Read Gen 45:9-15. Joseph urged his brothers to bring Jacob and their families to Egypt because of the famine. What prophecy would Joseph's actions begin to fulfill? (Gen 15:12-14)

God had promised to Abraham that his descendants would be in a foreign land for 400 years, where they would be enslaved and oppressed, before God brought them out. That foreign land was Egypt. Joseph's request to come to Egypt would bring about the fulfillment of that prophecy. God's word is always true.

Joseph requested his family to come to Egypt, but Pharaoh could have stopped it, as Egyptians didn't like Hebrews (Gen 43:32, 46:33-34). What happened? (Gen 45:16-23) Who brought this about? Pharaoh opened his arms to Joseph's family. He would give them wagons to bring them to his land, and give them the best of the land. Considering how Egyptians viewed Hebrews, this was God's doing.

Read Gen 45:24-46:7. Why did Jacob choose to take his family to Egypt? What can we learn? He chose to go because he believed that Joseph was alive, and he wanted to see him. But even beyond this human reason, God affirmed to him that he should go, and that he should go without fear. In our decision making we should always check with God that He is happy with our plans (cf. Pro 3:5-6).

Read Gen 46:26-28. Who does Jacob appoint to lead his family? What is significant about this? Judah is appointed by Jacob to lead his family into Egypt. In Jacob's eyes, he had become the leader. What's significant is that through Judah came the line of David the King, and Christ the King of Kings.

When Joseph and Jacob met it was a glorious reunion, especially since Jacob thought that Joseph had been killed. What does Joseph not bring up with his father? What does that show? (Gen 46:29-30) Joseph did not share what his brothers had done to him. This is because he had truly forgiven them. NB: If we really forgive someone, then the test of true forgiveness is that we will not mention it again.

Read Gen 46:31-47:6. How did Pharaoh respond to Joseph's family? Why?

Pharaoh accepted them, and was willing for them to even shepherd his own flocks. Again, God had gone before and made everything go well. God even works in the lives of those who don't know Him.

After Jacob blessed Pharaoh (47:7-10), what did Joseph do as the famine continued? (47:11-26) Joseph fully provided for his father and brothers, and their families. He also wisely dealt with the Egyptians, so that they survived and had hope, while Pharaoh also gained. He was wise, as well as caring.

Read Gen 47:27-31. Jacob (Israel) bowed down and worshipped the Lord. Why?

Jacob was so thankful for what God had done for him. He had been a deceiver, but the Lord had blessed him. God enabled Jacob to see Joseph again, and for his family to survive the famine. God be praised!

Summary: God is at work for His glory and our good (Rom 8:28). May we worship Him always.

26. God Alone Makes Known the Future & Makes it Happen: Gen 48-49

Review: *What Joseph's brothers did to him was very evil. But how did God use it? (Gen 45:4-8)*

God used their sinful actions to bring Joseph down to Egypt, so that He could raise up Joseph and use him to spare the nations from a severe famine, and to preserve Jacob's family and the line of Christ.

What greatest event do we see the pinnacle of God bringing good out of evil? (Acts 2:23-24)

God used the wicked actions of the Jewish leaders to accomplish His eternal plan of allowing His Son to die as our atoning sacrifice. Their evil scheme God turned around to bring about the greatest good.

Study: *Read Gen 48:1-7. What had Jacob never forgotten? (vv. 3-4) What should we never forget?*

Jacob had never forgotten how the Lord had revealed Himself to him, and blessed him at Luz. We ought to never forget the day or period of time when God saved us through Christ (cf. Paul in Acts 22:6-10).

Jacob had endured the consequences of being a deceitful man. He had endured much ill-treatment from Laban, and the heartbreak of losing Joseph. Yet, in his old age, what was he like? (Gen 48:8-16)

Jacob was not bitter and resentful. He blessed others (v.9), he was thankful (v.11), and he was full of praise for the way God had been his shepherd and had redeemed him from all evils. What a witness!

As we get older, how can we make sure that we become gracious and loving and a blessing to others, rather than becoming bitter, resentful and selfish?

We need to walk with the Lord, and allow His Spirit to transform and change our life. If we don't, then our sinful nature will cause us to become an "uglier" person, rather than a more "beautiful" person.

Read Gen 48:13-20. What did Joseph desire? What transpired? Why did this happen?

Joseph wanted Manasseh to receive the greater blessing for he was the firstborn, but Jacob crossed his hands to deliberately bless Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. This was because of God's choice, and somehow Jacob knew God's plan and choice. NB: When we walk with the Lord, we will also better know His will.

Read Gen 48:21-22. What did Jacob (Israel) affirm to Joseph before he died? Why?

Jacob affirmed that God would be with them and one day bring them back to Canaan to inherit the land. No matter how unlikely it may have appeared right then, Jacob knew it would happen. He believed God's word (Gen 28:13-15; 46:2-4). May we also hold fast to our promised hope in Christ (1 Peter 1:3-9).

In Gen 49 Jacob, the man of God, made known to his sons what would happen to them (vv. 1-2).

Were Jacob's words just a wish, or an educated guess, or something much more? Why?

Jacob's words were prophetic. He spoke accurately what would happen to each son. Even though the future is only known to God, it was disclosed to him by God before he died. Jacob was a prophet of God.

How did Reuben, Simeon and Levi fulfill Gen 49:3-7? Why did this happen to them?

Reuben, the first-born of Jacob, never became prominent in Israel. Simeon and Levi were dispersed; Simeon in Judah, Levi in Israel. The reason for these outcomes was because of their behaviour. Reuben slept with his father's wife (Gen 35:22). Simeon and Levi violently destroyed Shechem (Gen 34:25).

Judah committed great sin; laying with his daughter-in-law Tamar and selling Joseph into slavery. But what words of prophecy did Jacob proclaim for him and that were fulfilled? (Gen 49:8-12)

Judah would become Israel's leader, who would fight against Israel's enemies, and the other tribes would praise and honour him. This is what happened. From Judah came the royal line of David, who fought Israel's enemies. He was victorious and enjoyed the blessings of favour and affluence (vv. 11-12).

Read Gen 49:10. What do you think this word of prophecy is referring to?

This is referring to the Lord Jesus. He is "Shiloh" – the One of peace, or the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). He came from the line of Judah (Rev 5:5-6), and to Him came the rule over not only Israel, but over all peoples (v.10b). God has appointed Jesus to rule all peoples (cf. Psalm 2:1-12; Phil 2:8-11).

What do we know about the words that Jacob proclaimed for his sons in Gen 49:13-28?

It all came to pass. Every word proclaimed was fulfilled. Only the God of Jacob could do this.

In Isa 40-66 (read Isa 42:5-9 and 48:1-7), what does God want His people to understand?

God alone is omniscient (He knows all things, including the future) and besides proclaiming the future through His servants, He also fulfills all His words by His sovereign power. There is no one like the Lord.

Read Gen 49:28-33. What a way to go! What does Heb 11:21 confirm and say about Jacob?

Jacob was a man of faith. He went from being a schemer to being a man of spiritual sight; he went from being a wanton man to being a worshipper of God. Praise God for His grace and work in Jacob's life!

Summary: God is truly awesome; He makes known the future, and all that He declares He fulfills.

27. Great is Our God – Bringing Good out of Evil: Gen 50

Review: *Jacob had endured the consequences of being a deceitful man, ill-treatment from Laban, and the heartbreak of thinking Joseph had been killed. Yet, in his old age, what was he like? (Gen 48:8-16, 21)* Jacob was not bitter and resentful. He blessed others (48:9), he was thankful (48:11), he praised God for being his shepherd (48:15-16), and he trusted in God's promises (48:21). May we be the same as we age.

In Gen 49 Jacob prophesied through God's enabling what would happen to his sons and their tribes, and also tells of Jesus (49:10). What do we learn about God from this? (Isa 42:5-9; 43:11-13) God knows the future, and He reveals it to His servants. Not only does He know the future, but He has plans and purposes, which He is able to fore-tell, and then bring about. Our God is the sovereign Lord.

Study: *Straight after Jacob had prophesied to his sons, and given them instructions concerning his funeral, Jacob died. What impact did Jacob's death have on people? (Gen 50:1-11) Why?*

Not only did Joseph and his brothers weep over their father's passing, but even Egypt mourned his loss. This was because of how Jacob had become a highly respected man of God through God's grace.

Read Gen 50:12-14. What did Jacob's sons do for him? What was significant about this?

Joseph and his brothers obeyed their father and buried him in Canaan. This action would have reminded them that their true home was Canaan. Their stay in Egypt would only be for a time (Gen 15:13-16).

With Jacob's passing, Joseph's brothers became fearful that Joseph would punish them for the way they sold him into slavery. What did Joseph's brothers do due to their fear? (Gen 50:15-17)

It led them to make up a false story so that Joseph would not punish them.

Fear is something we all experience. Often it causes us to behave wrongly. As a Christian, how should we handle fear? (Matt 10:28-31; 1 Peter 3:14-15)

We should only fear the Lord. All other fear we should overcome through prayer and faith.

In Gen 50:18-21, Joseph assured his brothers that they did not need to fear him. He would not punish them for their sin. How are we to be toward those who sin against us? (Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30) Like Joseph, we are never to take vengeance. That is for God to do, if He chooses (cf. also 1 Pet 2:23).

In Gen 50:20, what did Joseph make clear to his brothers again (cf. Gen 45:5-8) so that they may be assured that he wouldn't harm them for their sin against him?

Joseph made clear that it was God who had brought him to Egypt. God had been the one who used the evil actions of his brothers, to bring about the saving of the world from the famine.

As Joseph came to the end of his life, what did he want the Israelites not to forget? (Gen 50:22-24)

They were not to forget that God would look after them in Egypt, and one day bring them out of Egypt to the land of Canaan that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Why would the Israelites be in the land of Egypt for a long time (400 Years)? (Gen 15:13-16)

God wouldn't bring the Israelites into the land of Canaan until it was time for the Canaanites to be punished for their sin and idolatry. God would use Israel to judge and punish them.

To confirm that God would be with the Israelites and bring them out of Egypt and into Canaan, what did Joseph request the Israelites to do? (Gen 50:25-26) Was it fulfilled? (Exod 13:19)

Joseph commanded that the Israelites were to carry his bones out of Egypt when God delivered them from Egypt. Indeed, this is what happened under the leadership of Moses.

As we come to the end of our study in Genesis, how has "God bringing good out of evil" (Gen 50:20) been a dominant theme throughout the book?

God promised us great good (Gen 3:15) after the Fall in Gen 3; God did great good to us by preserving the human race through Noah when He judged the world with a flood; God promised us great good through Abraham (Gen 22:18) despite mankind's continual rebellion; God did great good to Jacob by saving this despicable and deceitful man, and made him into a man of God; God used the evil of Joseph's brothers to bring Joseph into Egypt, so that he might do good through Joseph in preserving the world from the famine.

"You meant it for evil; God meant it for good". How does that statement tie into the Gospel story?

The things done to the Lord Jesus at the end of His earthly ministry were extremely evil. But God used men's evil deeds so that Jesus would die for us so that through His death and resurrection we might be saved– the greatest good has come from Christ's suffering at the hands of evil men (Acts 2:22-24). What an amazing God who, by His awesome power, is able to bring good out of evil. God be praised!

Summary: God is truly awesome; He brings good out of evil for His glory and our benefit.