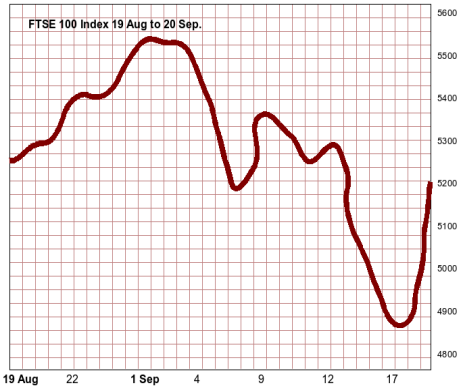
Welcome to the Genesis Roller-Coaster Bible Study Series

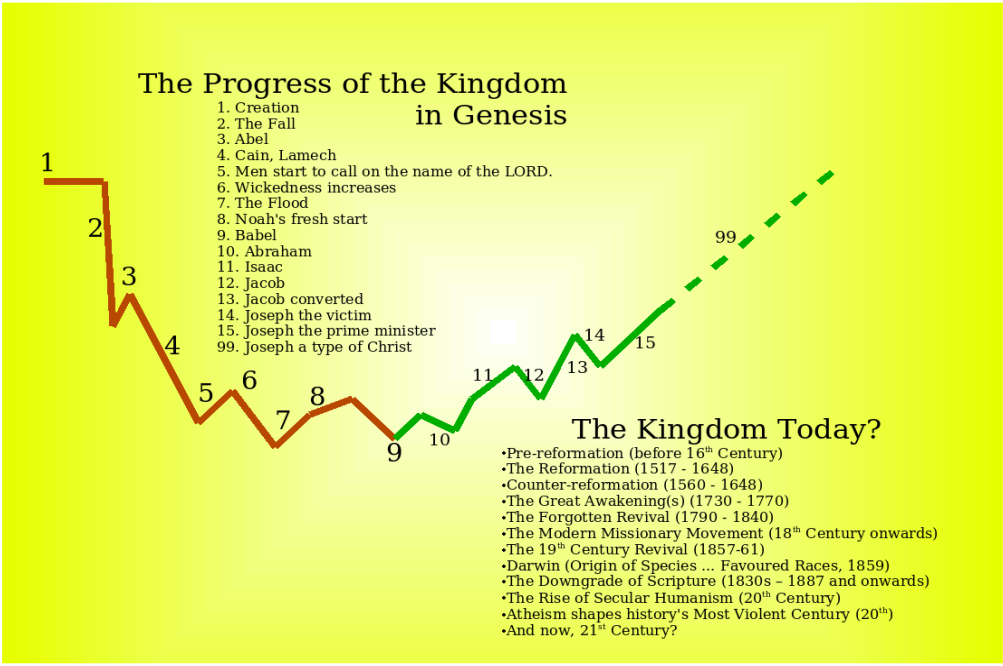
This manual has been prepared in order to cover the book of Genesis in just twelve Bible studies. It is for use by both Bible study leaders and participants. It is printed single-sided a) to give you plenty of room for notes, and b) so that the suggested answers to the study questions can be hidden just out of sight, but are easily referred to.

The manual is intended for use in small groups, but is also suitable for use by individuals.

This set of Bible studies has been written at the end of a month when the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE 100) index has been subjected to a roller-coaster ride due to the intrigues of "short-selling", greed and rumour. Human nature was also responsible for a much earlier roller-coaster ride through the book of Genesis. In Genesis, we see the progress of God's kingdom on earth. Initially, there is the opposite of progress, with the Fall of man from his state of goodness. However, when things appear to have reached rock bottom at the Tower of Babel, God starts to reverse the trend, and upward, sustained, progress can be seen again. But even on the way down there are short periods of progress. And on the way up there are periods of decline. This is the overall shape of the book of Genesis, a roller-coaster ride.



The question is "What would such a graph for nowadays look like?" Have we learned the lessons of Genesis, or are we on another roller-coaster? If we are on another roller-coaster, can God reverse the downward trends?



What applies to the people of God as a whole also applies to us as individuals and as churches. Whether you use this study in a group or on your own, may the God of Genesis bless you.

Suggestions for background reading and listening

1. Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, John Calvin, translated by Rev. John King, http://www.ccel.org, Original circa 1554.
2. According to Plan, G. Goldsworthy, IVP, 1991;
3. God's Big Picture, Vaughan Roberts, IVP, 2003. For an introduction, see: http://davidlegg.org.uk/home_group1.html
4. Some Perspectives on the Image of God in Man from Biblical Theology, Robert C. Newman, Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield, Pa, IBRI, 1984.
5. The Book of Origins (Welwyn Commentary Series), Philip Eveson, Evangelical Press, 2003.
6. Address by Dr. Dale Ralph Davis on 17th June 2007 at Woodland PCA, Hattiesburg http://www.woodlandpca.com/html/sermons.html
7. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is an epic poem from Ancient Mesopotamia and is among the earliest known works of literary fiction. Scholars believe that it originated as a series of Sumerian legends and poems about the mythological hero-king Gilgamesh. [Only really worth a quick look.] http://www.piney-2.com/Gilgamesh.html
8. A Few Good Men, Richard Coekin, Christian Conventions, 2007, The Good Book Company.
9. Covenant and Creation, William Dumbrell, Paternoster, 2002 paperback reprint.
10. Noah – A Type of Christ, A.W. Pink, from Gleanings in Genesis http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_12.htm
11. The Table of Nations (extended in the traditional way to include modern people) http://www.creationapologetics.org/table.html
12. Darwin, Charles (1859), On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life [not really recommended]
13. Darwin, Charles (1874), The Descent of Man (New York: A.L. Burt Co.), second edition. [not really recommended]
14. Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life, John Calvin, tr. By Henry J. Van Andel, Evangelical Press, 4th printing, June 1975.
15. Address by Dr. Dale Ralph Davis on 22nd July 2007 at Woodland PCA, Hattiesburg http://www.woodlandpca.com/html/sermons.html
16. C.L. Woolley and others, Ur Excavations, Vol. II: The Royal Cemetery. The British Museum Press, London (1934)
17. Aren't They Lovely When They're Asleep, Ann Benton, Christian Focus, 2004.
18. Age of Opportunity (A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens), Paul Tripp, P&R, 1997

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For the Ashford Congregational Church No. #1 Home Group, 20th September, 2008.

GENESIS ROLLER-COASTER BIBLE STUDY SERIES
STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

Each of the 12 studies has the same structure, as is shown in the table below. Most of the time should be spent answering the group questions, but leaders should ensure that time is allowed to discuss relevant practical applications and disciplines.

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<tr><td rowspan="3">Aims of This study</td><td>To understand ...</td></tr>
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Background ideas, concepts or problems being addressed.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"> Ice-breaker (intended to take just a minute or two)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Questions</td><td>Introduction to the question</td></tr>
<tr><td> The question</td></tr>
<tr><td>Explanation of exactly what is being asked</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="2"> Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="2"> A range of possible answers</td></tr>
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This study guide takes an approach called *Biblical Theology*. For more on this subject, see 'According to Plan, G. Goldsworthy, IVP, 1991' and “God's Big Picture”, Vaughan Roberts, IVP, 2003. See the reading list on page 2, which includes commentaries on Genesis.

BIBLE STUDY PASSAGES

For each study, there are a small number of passages to study, and then some extra passages to make sure that the subjects being studied are covered.

PART I – THE WAY DOWN

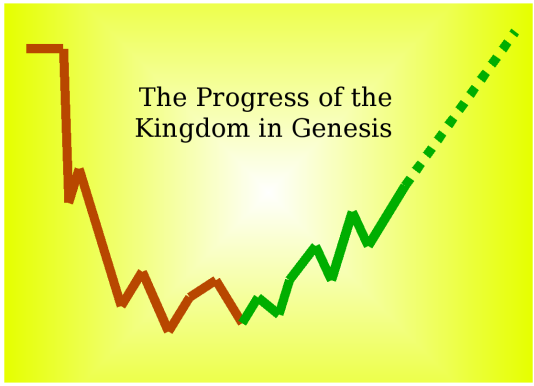
1. 1:1-2:3 God, Creation and Us

2. 2:4-2:25 God Provides; Man Images

3. 3:1-6:8 Sin, Death and Judgement

4. 6:9-9-29 Noah: A Fresh Start

5. 10:1-11:26 Nimrod, Humanism and God's Sovereignty



PART II – THE WAY UP

6. 12:1-14:24; Ch. 18,19 Abram and Lot

7. 15:1-17:27; 18:1-15; Ch. 21:1-20 Abraham, Sarah and Ishmael

8. 20; 21:22-34; 22:1-19; 23:1-20; 25:1-18 Abraham Tested: Threats to God's Promises

9. 24; 25:19-27:40 Isaac, Jacob and Esau: God's Blessings and God's Sovereignty

10. 27:41-35:15 Jacob: Blessed, Preserved, Chastised, Converted

11. 35:16-45:24; 49:1-28; 50:15-21 Joseph: His Brothers, and God's Sovereignty

12. 37:12-36; 45:25-50:26 Joseph, Jesus and the Resurrection.

STUDY 1: GENESIS 1:1-2:3 GOD, CREATION AND US

From John Calvin's dedication of his commentary on Genesis:
'*... they who ought to have stretched every nerve of their mind to attain a knowledge of The Creator of the world, have rather, by a malignant impiety, involved themselves in voluntary blindness.*' [1]

Background

We start at the top of the roller-coaster, wondering if studying Genesis is such a good idea after all. It is, after all, rather big and full of lots of thorny issues. Couldn't we just study Mark's Gospel?

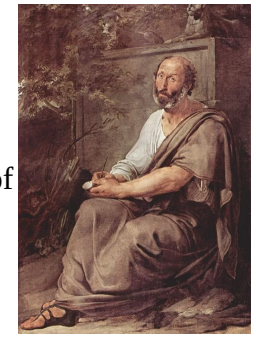


Illustration 1: Aristotle by Francesco Hayez

In the above quotation, Calvin accuses Aristotle and other ancient philosophers of failing to glorify the Creator of the world by deliberately choosing to ignore the book of Genesis, which he describes as '*an incomparable treasure*' [1].

This study aims to look at what ought to have been the first chapter of Genesis, but in fact runs from 1:1 to 2:3. The creation week, of course, has seven days in it, ending at 2:3. We will look at:

- how great God is,
- how the world was when God originally created it,
- and where we fit into God's creation.

Aims of This Study

- To understand what the Bible teaches about God and how he relates to our world.
- To understand how we fit into God's creation.
- To learn to have a very high view of God the Creator.
- To relate to creation in new, biblical, ways.

Study Guide

The first chapter of the Bible has been spoiled for us because it has been treated like a battleground. On one side are creationists asserting a set of truths; on the other are evolutionists and others asserting competing claims. All sides have their own agendas, and a common mistake in approaching Genesis 1 is to use it simply as evidence for whatever views we already hold.

A better approach to Genesis 1 is read it afresh and discover what God is telling us, without "reading into it" our cherished beliefs, agendas, hobby-horses etc. Then, we will not waste this *treasure;* instead we will grow as Christians.

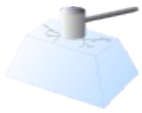
The human author of the book is Moses (see Acts 15:1), but ultimately it is God's book, with God's authority. This is especially obvious with chapters 1 and 2. These chapters are quoted many times in the New Testament, including by the Lord Jesus himself:

> Mat. 19 [4] "*Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,* [5] *and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?* [6] *So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate*."

In the above example, Jesus applies Genesis 1 to marriage and divorce. Let us do what Jesus did: He:-

a) took Genesis as the completely authoritative Word of God, and
b) applied it to life.

Ice-breaker



What preconceptions do people have about Genesis chapter 1? Include yourselves and others you know. Bear these in mind as we see what the chapter actually says.

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

Read Genesis 1 through to 2:3.

Question #1

What does the passage tell us about God?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Some religions imagine gods that are part of our universe. Some have a god that is unknowable. Others have many gods, some good, some evil. What does our God reveal himself to be like?

Illustration 2: Earth from Apollo 17

Briefly add more detail to your answer by referring to John 1:1.

Answers

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Introduction to Question #2

Question #2

What practical differences should it make to us that we believe in the God of Genesis 1?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

It may be helpful to revisit all your answers to Q.1 and think how each can be worked out practically in our lives.

Answers

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_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Introduction to Question #3

When we look around us and see "nature, red in tooth and claw", and when we are constantly reminded of the "survival of the fittest", it is easy to lose sight of what things used to be like when God created the earth.

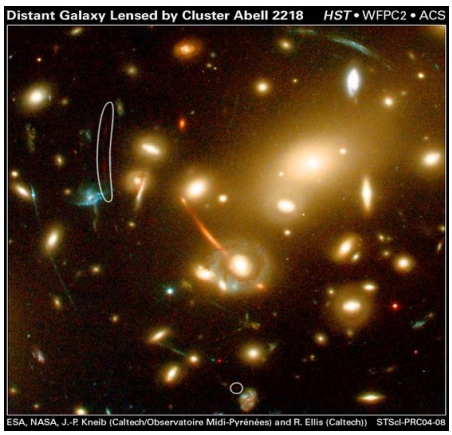

Illustration 3: Distant Galaxies

Question #3

What was the Creation like when God originally made it? How can we know that this is an important fact for us to believe?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

See 1:4. 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25; 1:31.

Answers

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_____
_____
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Introduction to Question #4

There are at least two extreme attitudes to Creation around at present:

#1: The "Dark Green" attitude: Afraid to step on a blade of grass for fear of being guilty of murder.

#2: The "Nuke it till it glows" attitude: Some powerful, well-known people and countries, who would just exploit the earth with no regard to its Creator.

However, John Calvin warns us: "*Let us avoid extremes.*" (Golden Booklet, Reference [14])

Question #4

How does 1:26, then 28-30 teach us to relate to the rest of Creation?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Verse 26 gives an antidote to the "nuke it till it glows" attitude to Creation.
Verses 28-30 give us antidotes to the "dark green" attitude.
Note that this is the first of the three major ways in which we are to '*image*' God: Dominion over creation in a balanced, caring and confident way. See the answers for more detail.

Answers

Introduction to Question #5

Genesis 1:26 teaches us that we have been made in God's '*image'*, i.e. like God in certain ways. However, a wrong way to view this is to think "like God, that's nice" and move on. Rather, we must ask "How shall we *image* God?" For more on this subject, see '*Some Perspectives on the Image of God in Man from Biblical Theology*' in the reading list on page 2.

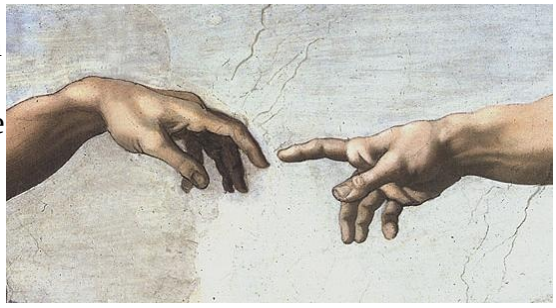

Illustration 4: From: The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo

Notice how, in v.26, the idea of mankind imaging God by ruling over the earth follows directly from mankind being created in God's *image*. Thus, the first way in which we are to image God is ruling, or dominion, over the earth (as we explored in Q.4 above.)

Question #5

What are the other major ways in which Genesis 1-2:3 teaches us that we are to image God.?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Think of the word '*image*' as a verb, not just as a noun. Then find the ways we are to image God in 1:27,28; 2:2,3. Think about how these ways are expanded and worked out later in the Bible too - N.T. References: Matt. 19:4; Eph. 3:14,15; Eph. 5:22-33. Also Exo. 31:17.

Answers

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- Possibly confess to God that we have had a low view of his power, majesty, transcendence?

- Review your answers to Q.2 and plan or pray about ways of putting your answers into practice.
- Try to avoid extreme attitudes to Creation.
- View imaging God as the major reason why we are here according to Genesis 1.
- Attach greater importance to our relationships, especially marriage, fatherhood, and sonship/daughtership.
- Be thankful to God for work to do and the blessing of a day's rest.
- Ensure that others around us also have a day off.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.
Psa. 24 makes an interesting connection between creation and God's holiness.
Psa. 104 gives a different angle on creation.

To think about: In Luke 6:5 and Mat. 12:8, what can we learn from the fact that Jesus described himself as the *Lord of the Sabbath*?

Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ refer to creation and the book of Genesis often, but John makes it clear in chapter 1 of his Gospel that Jesus is himself the Creator:
John 1:3 *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*.
Having just studied Genesis 1, how does this change your view of Jesus?

A	***God, Creation and Us - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	a) God is separate from, outside and independent of the world he created v.1. This is called God's transcendence. Aristotle theorised about God's transcendence, but as readers of Genesis, we have it taught to us simply, directly, and with authority. b) There is only one God. Nevertheless, even as early as v.2, we see a hint of the Trinity because God the Holy Spirit is referred to here. John 1:1 leads us to believe that the creation was an act performed by the Trinity, with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit involved. c) God's Word is so powerful that it created everything. This should lead us to reflect that God's Word is not just words, but also power: *And God said ...* d) God cares a lot about things being '*good*'. He also distinguishes between *light* and *darkness*, which clearly come to mean good and evil as we continue reading through the Bible. See John's Gospel and 1 John. e) The size, majesty and variety of all the things that God creates demonstrates God's glory. f) God revealed himself to his Creation. We see him to be a *personal* God (not *personal* in the sense of 'personal computer', but in the sense of being a *person*.) g) God is intimately involved with his Creation. This can be seen from his involvement in every creative act, on every day ("and God said ..."). This all-pervasive presence in his creation (Psa. 139) is called his 'immanence'. It is the very opposite of a deistic idea of God (deism being the idea that God wound the world up like a clock and then left it to tick away independently of himself.) h) In 1:28 to 2:3, we see how God is a God who blesses and provides for his creatures, providing not only life v.7 and food v.9, but even rest 2:2,3. i) God is a God who both commands and delegates v.26 "*let them rule*". j) God is a God who *works* and *rests* 2:2 (literally 'sabbaths'.) See also Exo. 31:17.
2	a) Because of God's transcendence, we should not merely give him grudging respect, but wholehearted worship. We must never think him as altogether like us. Psa. 86:8 *Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.* b) We should be careful only to worship the one true God, never substituting idols, images, or cars or people, food or comfort, for him. We should be clear that all three persons of the Trinity are God and never think of the Holy Spirit as an "it". c) We should rely not only upon the truth of God's Word, but on its power to save us too. Deu. 8:3 *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every <u>word</u> that comes from the mouth of the LORD.* d) We too should care about what is '*good*', being careful to live '*in the light*' 1 John 2:9. e) We should never be ashamed of our God.

A	***God, Creation and Us - A Range of Possible Answers***
	Mat. 6:9 "*This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ...*" f) Because God is person, we can pray to a loving father, rather than an impersonal "it". g) Because of his immanence, we should remember him wherever we are, whatever we are doing; a great antidote to sin. h) We should be a thankful people who are grateful to God for the life, food and rest that he provides for us. i) We should obey this God who commands v.26. Note the very direct logic of obedience to our creator in Psa. 119:73 *Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands*. See chapter 2 for more on how we are to obey, and why. j) Since God *works* and *rests*, we too should do both, being careful to be neither lazy nor workaholic.
3	• The Creation is described as "*good*" in 7 verses in chapter 1, and even as '*very good'* in v.31. In the Bible, we should always note carefully things like the structure of passages and features such as repetition; they usually indicate some important that the writer does not want us to miss. See, for example, Ps. 136 and spot the obvious repetition. In Genesis 1, there is an obvious structure (days adding up to a week), and obvious repetition of an important point: The Creation was '*good*' when originally made (even mankind). The good Creation reflects the character of the Creator. We should praise him for what he has made.
4	• v.26 teaches us that our rule over creation is only a delegated authority. We cannot just do as we wish, we must rule in the in the image of God, i.e. as he does, providing, caring and creatively, not abusing it. • v.28, however, teaches us that we should not be afraid to "*subdue*" the creation, even to the extent of exploiting creation to meet our needs v.29.
5	a) In Mat. 19:4, Jesus takes Gen. 1:27 as the foundation of marriage. We are to image God through marriage and other relationships. The fatherhood of God is to be imaged by godly fathers Eph. 3:14,15. We image Christ's submission to his Father Eph. 6:1. As godly husbands and wives, we image Christ's relationship to his people, the church Eph 5:22-33. b) It was probably a mistake to put a chapter division between Day 6 and Day 7 of the creation week. This artificial division hides the fact that God both *worked* and *rested* during his week. In the same way that man is set to *work* in the garden as part of imaging God 2:5, so the theme of *resting* is part of how man is to *image* God. One of the blessings God gave his creatures was the seventh day, when God is said to have 'sabbathed'. Indeed the whole point of the seven-fold structure of Gen 1-2:3 is to explain to us the origin of the Sabbath, as explained by Moses later in Exo. 31:17 *It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he*

A	***God, Creation and Us - A Range of Possible Answers***
	abstained from work and rested. c) The subject of the Sabbath, Sunday, the Lord's Day etc. is fraught, but it is clear from Gen 2:2,3 that a day off per week is one of God's many blessings to us his creatures. That is the least that can be argued from these verses. The concept of 'the Christian Sabbath' is explored briefly in Philip Eveson's commentary on Genesis [5] listed on page 2. d) Not only *rest*, but also *work* is part of how we should image God, not only paid work, but all kinds of work 2:2. Ideally work will be creative like God's, but since the Fall, this is not always the case.

END OF STUDY 1 ON 'GOD, CREATION AND US'

STUDY 2: GENESIS 2:4-2:25 GOD PROVIDES; MAN IMAGES

From an Address on part of Genesis by Dr. Dale Ralph Davis:

'*"But some-one says "Isn't this myth?"'*
"... Just literarily, this doesn't jive with what we know of other ancient near-eastern myths."
"Now if you want to, come into my study this week, ... I'll sit you down with some pagan myths and you can read 'em. And then you can see what you think about them beside Genesis 3."
"Pagan myths answer all kinds of questions ... They satisfy curiosities, they go all over the place. But you get into Genesis 3, and it's too sober; it's too restrained; it's too compact; it's too concise; it's too condensed; it doesn't have the qualities that ancient near-eastern myths have."
"It's what I call very severe in its style; it doesn't answer all your curious questions. And so I take it as report of what really happened, but done with both simplicity and depth."
.... Now what about talking reptiles ... [6]

Background

This study looks at how God provides for his creatures, but especially the human ones. Themes to do with man imaging God are picked up from the previous study section. Although man is like God, he is not a god; he is subject to God. They must believe and obey him; they are not morally independent of God, but they are sinless at first.

As God provides for mankind, so mankind is to look after creation and each other, thereby imaging God, but not being gods. The combination of God providing and man imaging God is the basis of the perfect and complete world that we find by the end of Genesis 2.

Aims of This Study

- To understand the place of man and woman in creation.
- To explore how we should image God further.
- To pave the way for contrasting the results of the Fall in chapter 3 with the ideal state in chapter 2.
- To be thankful to God for companionship, marriage, other godly relationships, work and rest, beauty, earthly resources
- To aim to relate better to a husband, wife, or to creation or to work and rest.

Study Guide

Genesis chapter 2 appears at first sight to duplicate the creation account of chapter 1. However, the focus really shifts from God's power to the various relationships that he creates between man, woman, God and creation. The chapter covers

- the creation of man vv.4-7
- God's provision for man vv.8-14
- God's commands to man vv.15-17
- the creation of woman vv.18-24
- a summary of the 'state of innocence' v.25.

Whilst verse 25 sets the scene for the Fall in chapter 3, chapter 2 also contains some truths that are challenging to us as people living in the humanistic society of 21st Century. The perfect relationships of man to woman, humans to creation, and everything to God are clearly described

before there was any sin in the world. Any idea that such controversial relationships between man and woman only appeared after the Fall or as part of the curse in chapter 3 is incorrect. All relationships have been soured by the Fall, but they still existed before the Fall and are painted for us in Genesis 2 as the happy, ideal, sinless state of humanity and creation. Furthermore, these relationships are confirmed for us today when the New Testament cross-references are explored.

Ice-breaker

What things would you most like to "fix" in our broken world?

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

Read Genesis 2:4-2:25. Chapter 1 is a very beautiful account of the Creation based on 6 days of God's work and ending with him resting on Day 7. Whereas the beauty of the account is perhaps meant to help us appreciate God's creation, Chapter becomes ordinary prose and gives us lots of detailed information centred on the creation of humans.

Question #1

What themes from Chapter 1 of Genesis spill over into Chapter 2?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Make a list below of some of the subjects that were mentioned in Genesis 1:1-2:4 that also appear in 2:4-2:25.

Answers

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Introduction to Question #2

In the near-eastern myth, the Gilgamesh Epic[7], the pagan 'gods' grant immortality to Utnapishtim (that's Noah) because he restored animal sacrifices and they could all eat again. Apparently, all the gods had been starving during the flood because there were no humans to feed them!

In Genesis 2, we see the exact opposite of pagan myths as the LORD God provides for all his creatures, especially for Adam.

Question #2

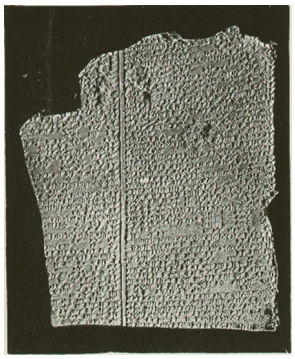

Illustration 5: Deluge Tablet from Gilgamesh Epic

How does God provide for his creatures?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look in at least verses 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16 and 18. Contrast with paganism.

Answers

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_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Introduction to Question #3

The main ways from the first study in which man is to 'image' God are:

- Dominion (over the rest of creation),
- Relationship (especially marriage), and
- Work and rest.

Question #3

In what ways do we see man imaging God in Chapter 2?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Compare 1:26-30 with 2:8,15 and 2:18-25. Also, look ahead a little by comparing 1:27 with 5:1,2.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #4

The end of Genesis 2 finds Adam and Eve in a perfectly happy and contented state. They are occupied together in a beautiful garden.

Question #4

What big problem is dealt with in Genesis 2:18-25?
By the end of the chapter, what do the relationships between the man, the woman, God and creation look like?

Illustration 6: John Dryden - Author of 'The State of Innocence' - an opera based on Milton's 'Paradise Lost'

Explanation of What is Being Asked

See 2:18a for the problem, then 1:31 and 2:18b-25.

Answers

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Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- Reflect on what an ideal set of relationships between man, God and creation looked like.
- Adopt a very high view of marriage, as taught by Jesus in Matt. 19:6 "*So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*"
- Discuss how men and women, especially husbands and wives, can have the kinds of attitudes to each other that God intended at creation.
- Thank God for how he is so much better than supposed pagan Gods, for his providence and love.
- Think of work, be it paid or unpaid, as a gift from God, and as a way that we can image him, especially as we attempt to be creative in what we do.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #3, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.
Matt. 19:1-12; 1 Cor. 6; 7; 2 Thess. 3:6-12

To think about #1: How do worldly attitudes to work, rest, marriage, husbands and wives compare with those revealed in Genesis 2?

To think about #2: What important attribute of God (that's something that is true of God) is not really being displayed in the ideal world of Genesis 2? This attribute only becomes apparent after the Fall. See 'Answers' below.

A	***God Provides; Man Images - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	a) God is seen to be in charge of the creation of humanity, just as much as when he created everything else, so v.7 The LORD formed the man; v.8 the LORD had planted a garden; v.15 The LORD God took the man and put him ... etc. b) vv.5,15 Man was made to *work* the ground. This is the work+rest theme from Ch. 1 and 2:1-3. c) vv.15 The theme of subduing the earth from 1:28 is expanded on a little with respect to the garden: '*work it and take care of it*'. d) vv.18-25 expands on the marriage theme from Ch. 1:26-28, including, presumably, the *be fruitful* theme from 1:28.
2	v.7 for life itself v.18 companionship v.9 beauty v.9 food v.9 tree of life(temporary immortality?) v.10 a well-watered garden v.12 resources v.15 work v.15 some-one to look after the garden v.16 clear instructions v.18 a helper.
3	a) <u>Dominion</u>: God first gives man an easy start with his job of ruling over creation: He starts him off working in the Garden of Eden v.8. It is his job to work it and take care of it vv.15,5. b) <u>Dominion</u>: Part of man's dominion was ruling over the animals. He shows that he is in charge by naming all of them vv.19,20. In the ancient world, to name something was to exercise authority over it. So, for example, conquered peoples and kings would receive new names from their conquerors, e.g. Dan. 1:7 *The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego*. Adam even exercises his headship over Eve by naming her '*woman*' in v.23. However, it is clear from 1:26 that man and woman are <u>together</u> to rule over the rest of creation. c) <u>Relationship</u>: In order for man to image the fact that God is relational, God starts him off with a wife v.22. He could not have imaged God without her; he needed a helper v.18. From the marriage relationship come all the other important relationships through which humans must image God: sonship, fatherhood etc., see Reference [4]. Ultimately, man and woman must together image God's relationship with his people, Christ's with the church. Eph. 5:32 '*This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church*'. d) <u>Work and Rest</u>: Rest is not shown in Genesis 2, but work features strongly in vv.5,8,15. e) <u>Work+Relationships</u>? The woman is also God's way of enabling man to create life, thus imaging God. This is explained to us in 5:1,2. Compare it with 1:27.
4	a) Before the end of Genesis 2,we see that things are not quite right v.18a: Adam is lonely and he is unable to image God alone. On his own, he may well have been

A	***God Provides; Man Images - A Range of Possible Answers***

able to look after the garden, but God requires much more from him if he is truly to be in the *image of God*.

a) From 1:31, we see that everything in creation was perfect: '*very good*'. This must be the same point in time as the end of Genesis 2.
b) In order to make everything '*very good*', God makes one last thing, a woman.
c) Adam expresses his delight in what God has made in v.23: Genesis 2:23 '*and the man exclaimed, "Here is someone like me!*"' (Contemporary English Version)
d) Contemporary English Version (CEV) Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society [American Bible Society].
e) The man and the woman are completely at home with each other and in perfect peace with each other v.25.
f) They are united legally, emotionally and biologically v.24 '*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be <u>united</u> to his wife, and they will become <u>one flesh</u>*' (and all that that implies).
g) The man and the woman are sinless v.25 '*they felt no shame*'. At this point, relationships with God were perfect.
h) Notice how man is morally dependent upon God. God gives him rules v.16, limits v.17 and tasks v.15, and man obeys. The woman also has a task vv.18, 20, to help her husband. Together, they perfectly *image* God.
i) Notice also how the man himself heard God's commands in vv.16,17, but that it seems to imply that the woman had not yet been made. He was given overall responsibility for obedience, not her.
j) The proper order in creation is established, as Paul alludes to in 1 Cor. 11:3 *Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God*.
See also 1 Tim. 2:13; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Cor. 15:22

God/Christ
Man
Woman
Rest of creation

- To think about #2: Although we see God's common grace displayed to all of his creation in Genesis 2, we do not see his special grace to sinners being displayed. In this sense, the creation was less than complete. God's plan for the universe continues way beyond Genesis 2, and ensures that his saving grace will be displayed. Eph 1:4 *For he chose us in him* [Christ] *before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love* [5] *he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-* [6] *<u>to the praise of his glorious grace</u>, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.* [7] *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of <u>sins</u>, in accordance with the riches of God's <u>grace</u>* [8] *that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding*.

END OF STUDY 2 ON 'GOD PROVIDES; MAN IMAGES'

STUDY 3: GENESIS 3:1-6:8 Sin, Death, Judgement and Hope

From the beginning of Milton's Poem 'Paradise Lost':

"*OF MAN'S first disobedience, and the fruit*
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,"

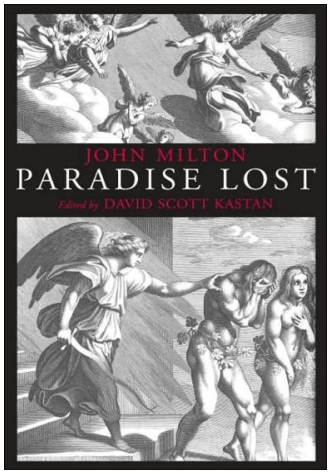


Illustration 7: The cover of the 2005 Hackett Edition, with illustrations from the 1688 edition.

Background

This study looks at why life is so hard. Although these chapters are the steepest part of the downward roller-coaster, notice how even the first verse of Milton's poem points forwards to the '*greater Man*' who will restore everything to its original glory and better.

The downward progress continues till near the end of chapter 11 – see the diagram on page 1. But as we read through chapters 3 to 6, every chapter contains rays of hope for the future. As man's sin takes us down the roller-coaster, so God's grace intervenes, promises better things, and prevents us from becoming gloomy.

Rom. 5:20 ... *But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ...*

Imaging God is hard because of the curse. We must be realistic about how serious and powerful our sin is. 6:5

God continues to bless us and one day will give us victory over the serpent. 3:15

Even in our fallen world, we can know God's favour, as did Abel and Noah. 4:4; 6:8

Aims of This Study

- To understand why life is so hard.
- To explore the power and seriousness of human sin.
- To learn not to underestimate our own sin
- To be thankful to God for his grace.
- To make sure that we know God's favour in this fallen world.

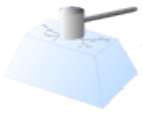
Study Guide

If this study is to be done as a group, it is important that the group read through all the chapters before the meeting.

In this study, we see mankind messing up the creation and also the created order with the help of a talking serpent. Unusual though talking animals are in the Bible (for example Balaam's donkey in Num. 22:30), it would seem as if Satan, a fallen angel, made use of a snake in this way to tempt the woman.

By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, humanity becomes morally independent of God, but all is not well by v.7 of the chapter. From v.8 to the end God sorts out the situation, but perhaps in rather unexpected ways. Try and read the account as if you'd never read it before, and had no idea what was going to happen next!

In amongst all the gloom of Genesis 3, there is v.15, which is the first hint of the Gospel in the Bible. 3:15 explains the shape of the rest of the book, i.e. the conflict between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman.



Ice-breaker

What popular ideas to people associate with the serpent tempting Eve, the forbidden fruit etc.? Do they seem to be biblical ideas?

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

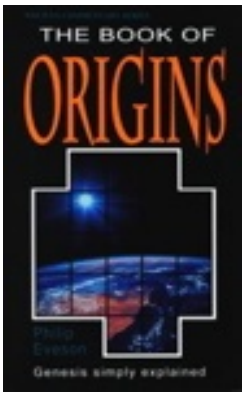


Illustration 8: Philip Eveson's Commentary on Genesis

Quickly scan Genesis 3 again. We see the man and the woman being tempted by the serpent's promise of '*knowing good and evil*' as God does v.5. To know good and evil does not mean being able to tell right from wrong. The man and the woman already knew that it was right to eat fruit from the trees in the garden and wrong to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In 3:5, the word '*knowing*' has the same sense it has in some other parts of the Old Testament, that of choosing. For example, see Jer. 1:5, God says to Jeremiah:

> *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you"*

Another example is Amos 3:2, where God says to Israel:

> *"You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth*

See also reference [5]. So what the man and woman wanted was moral independence from God. In short, they wanted to do their own thing. Instead of *imaging* God (as per Genesis 1+2), they wanted to *be* gods.

Thus God is disobeyed by man, who was led by woman, who was tempted by the serpent.

Question #1

In what ways do we see the created order of Genesis 2 being turned upside-down by mankind's sin in Chapter 3?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look at vv.1-6 and work out a) who was taking all the initiative, b) who should have been taking the lead, c) who wasn't, and d) who was being completely ignored or discredited. The table shows the created order as it was at the end of Genesis 2. Re-draw it for how it looked in practice after

Genesis 3:6.

A

At the end of Ch. 2:

God
Man
Woman
Rest of creation

B

By the end of chapter 2 verse 6 (fill table in):

Answers

Introduction to Question #2

In the same way that the serpent ruins God's perfect creation, so God acts quickly to remedy the situation. But interestingly, he does not:

a) kill the serpent and simply undo the humans' sin;

b) wipe out the whole universe and start again

In a strange way, God seems to make things even worse than they have already become, and yet we see the proper order of creation restored, with God at the top, as he should be (and always had been really.)

C

God
Man
Woman
Creation (now cursed)

Question #2

How do we now see the order of creation being restored, put the right way up again, by God?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look at verses 7 to 24 and work out what God did, and what Adam did, to restore the created order to what it was before (Table C), albeit now cursed and painful.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #3

We often think of Satan as being the enemy of God's people and of the human race in general. But v.15 shows that this state of enmity was created by God himself. Clearly we should have a much more positive attitude to overcoming Satan! In the same way, this miserable chapter of the Bible actually contains real signs of hope, a promise, plus God's mercy and grace.

Illustration 9: Satan as depicted in Dante Alighieri's Inferno, illustrated by Gustave Doré.

? Question #3

Where do we see God's mercy and grace in Genesis 3? And, who are the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

a) Note who are not actually explicitly cursed in vv.14-19.
b) Look at the significance of what Adam names his wife in a footnote of your Bible in v.20.
c) Look at who has the job of defeating the serpent, i.e. Satan, now v.15.
d) What exactly is promised in v.15?
e) Work out who are the offspring of the serpent 4:5,10,11; 6:4-7; 9:27; 21:10
f) Work out who <u>are</u> the offspring of the woman, and who <u>is</u> the offspring of the woman. 4:4; 6:8; 9:26; 17:1,2; 17:19; 33:20; Heb. 11; Gen. 21:10; 50:24,25; 1 John 3:10; Heb. 2:14! Gal. 4:4

A Answers

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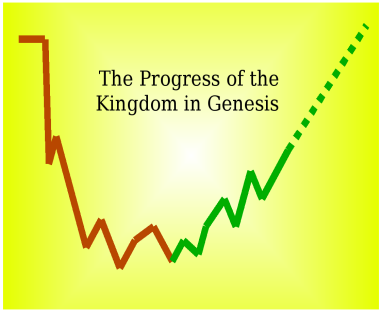
Introduction to Question #4

At this supremely sad point in human history, the roller-coaster accelerates steeply downwards and we cover chapters 4, 5 and 6 in one go.



Question #4

What are the ups and downs of world history and God's kingdom in Genesis 4, 5 and 6?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look at what happens with human sin in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, especially 6:5-7.

Spot the repeated phrase in Chapter 5.

Notice the rays of hope in (3:15, 21 already noted); 4:1, 4:4, 25; 5:3; Ch. 5; 6:7,8

Answers

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Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- Be clear about the creation order as explored in Question 1.
- Think of ways in which we can upset the created order in our relationships, not only with God, but also in the family.
- Be realistic about how relationships, such as marriage, have been spoiled by the Fall.
- Be optimistic about how God has promised to give us victory in the end.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #4, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

Gal. 4:4-6; 2 Pet. 3; Eph 5:21-6:9. Also, 1 Cor. 15:22 (Think about being 'in Adam and 'in Christ')

To think about: How does God's created order extend to children, animals and the environment? Should we be afraid to impose our will upon our children? Should we be afraid to make use of animals? Should we be afraid to exploit the environment?

To think about: Adam and Even 'fell' in a garden. Jesus is known as the last Adam, because he conquered Satan. However, he did it in a desert Matt. 4, Luke 4 and also in a garden Matt. 26:36-46.

A	***Sin, Death, Judgement and Hope - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	a) The man had been commanded by God to take care of the garden, but he allowed in an evil, talking(!) serpent v.1, v.6. b) Notice that the man was there in the garden with the woman v.6. Not only did he do nothing about the new threat in the form of the serpent, but he allowed the woman to be deceived by it v.6. He even allowed her to repeat incorrect information about what God had said "*you must not touch it or you will die*'. And when the serpent accuses God of lying and of being ungenerous(?) v.4, the man says absolutely nothing. So the man completely <u>fails</u> in his <u>leadership</u> of the family, through perhaps laziness and certainly lack of faith in what God had said previously 1:17. (1Tim 2:14) '*Adam was not the one deceived*', but he singularly failed in his headship of the human race, as husband, and as caretaker of paradise. c) The woman is not free from guilt either, as Paul explains in 1 Tim 2:14: ... *it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner*. d) But notice the role-reversal, instead of <u>helping</u> her husband (for which she was made), she starts to <u>lead</u> him: She negotiates with the serpent; she acts precipitously; she even ensures that he too sins v.6 (Table B). e) There is further role-reversal as the serpent (which is simply part of creation) takes control of the humans (Table B). f) The one who should have been at the top of the hierarchy was God, but he is the one who is ignored by the man, disbelieved by the woman, and discredited by the serpent "crafty creation", leaving the situation as shown in Table B. **A** God Man Woman Rest of creation **B** Serpent (part of creation) Woman Man God
2	a) Far from becoming gods v.5, the man and woman now realise that they are guilty of sin against God and so they make clothes v.7 and hide from him v.8. These are a tacit admission that they are still subject to God, but now with added fear and shame. b) God makes it clear that they have sinned against his express command v.11, and places himself back at the top of the hierarchy (Table C). c) As the man blames the woman and the woman blames the serpent, God re-asserts his own authority by dealing first with the serpent, then with the woman, the man and creation (in that order). d) God places the serpent at the bottom of the created order again v.14 '*you will eat dust*' etc. (Table C) e) Adam renames the woman "Eve" v.20, thereby asserting his headship once again. f) God reasserts himself as their provider by making Adam and Eve some decent clothes v.21. **C** God Man Woman Creation (now cursed)

A	***Sin, Death, Judgement and Hope - A Range of Possible Answers***
	g) But to make sure that they cannot simply live for ever by eating from the Tree of Life v.22 (and be gods), God banishes them from the garden, which anyway (presumably) gets destroyed by the flood later on. h) Thus the original order is reinstated as shown in Table C.
3	a) In vv.14-19, the ground is cursed, the serpent is cursed, but God does not curse humanity. We should be encouraged that God intends good for us despite our sin. b) In v.20, Adam rename his wife "Eve" which means "living". They should have expected to die, but shows them and us mercy. We experience that same mercy every day as God delays the Day of Judgement 2 Pet :3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* c) In v.15, the job of defeating the serpent, '*crushing*' his '*head*', i.e. Satan's head, is explicitly given to a son of Eve, i.e. to a human. It is our job to defeat Satan. 1 John 2:14 *I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.* d) In v.15, victory is promised; head-crushing is fatal. e) Gen. 4:5,10,11; 6:4-7; 9:27; 21:10 The offspring of the serpent are those who belong to Satan, the ungodly line which starts with Cain in Gen. 4:5,10,11. 1 John 3:10 calls the *offspring of the woman* '*the children of God*': *This is how we know who the <u>children of God</u> are and who the <u>children of the devil</u> are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.* f) Work out who <u>are</u> the offspring of the woman, and who <u>is</u> <u>the</u> offspring of the woman. 4:4; 6:8; 9:26; 17:1,2; 17:19; 33:20; Heb. 11; Gen. 21:10; 50:24,25; 1 John 3:10; Heb. 2:14! Ultimately, <u>the</u> offspring of the woman is Jesus, as explained in Heb. 2:14: *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too* [I.e. Jesus] *shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-that is, the <u>devil</u>* Gal. 4:4 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, <u>born of a woman</u>, ...* It might seem a bit obvious of Paul to write that Jesus was born of a woman. Isn't everyone? But he is alluding to Jesus being the *offspring of the woman* in Gen. 3:15. Not only has Jesus saved his people from Satan, but Satan will be destroyed. One day Jesus will say (Matt. 25:41) '*Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire*

A	***Sin, Death, Judgement and Hope - A Range of Possible Answers***

prepared for the devil ...'

The following table shows how these two themes in e) and f) above develop through the Bible and through world history:-

Offspring of the Woman/Children of God	**Offspring of the Serpent/Children of the Devil**
Abel	Cain
Seth and his line	Lamech and the rest of Cain's line
Noah	Everyone else
Shem and Japheth	Ham and Canaan
The line of Shem	Most others
Abraham, Job	Most others
Isaac and Jacob	Most others
Israelites (the faithful ones)	Most Gentiles
Tribes of Judah and Benjamin	The 10 tribes
Ezra, Nehemiah etc.	Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem
Jesus	Pharisees, Sadducees etc, the pagans
Jesus' true disciples	Judas Iscariot, 'the Jews'
Christians	'The World'

1 John 5:4 *for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome <u>the world</u>, even our faith.*

4

a) Chapter 4: Man's newly found moral freedom expresses itself with the first murder. This is especially significant because it strikes directly at God, since the murdered person (Abel) was created in the image of God. It is also the first example of the *offspring of the serpent* striking the *offspring of the woman*.
b) Chapter 5: God's promise of death feature at the end of every lifetime with the refrain "*and he died*".
c) Chapter 6: The full extent of what man had become like is revealed in 6:5,6: *The*

A	***Sin, Death, Judgement and Hope - A Range of Possible Answers***

LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. [6] *The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

d) Chapter 6: It looks, at this stage, as if the *offspring of the serpent* have taken over.

e) The rays of hope that appear every so often are, as follows:

4:1 Despite the curse on child-bearing, God enables Eve to start to *be fruitful and increase in number* (1:22).

4:4 Abel's sacrifice is accepted by God. '*The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering*.' Q. Why? A. See Heb. 11:4.

4:26 *Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.*
At the end of this chapter dominated by sin, nto only is Seth fruitful, but true religion at last begins.

4:25 Although the offspring of the woman (Abel) had been killed, the potential for a godly line of descent is restored with the birth of Seth.

5:3 Despite the fall, man is able to continue imaging God
Chapter 5: Man is fruitful and increases. Despite the curse, God allows them to live for a long time, up to 969 years in the case of Methuselah. Enoch 5:24 is also encouraging, because he shows that death can be conquered.

6:7 Although things look bad, God is going to deal with the problem. He sets a time limit of 120 years, 120 years of '*grace'* for Noah to build an ark, see 6:3.

6:8 Although everyone else is godless, Noah is godly and receives God's favour, literally '*grace*'. There is still hope, because one man and his family are the *offspring of the woman*.

END OF STUDY 3 ON 'SIN, DEATH, JUDGEMENT AND HOPE'

STUDY 4: GENESIS 6:9-9:29 NOAH: A FRESH START IS NOT ENOUGH

From 'A Few Good Men' by Richard Coekin (Chairman of the London Men's Convention):
At first it was just tangled debris. But soon it was bodies. Countless bodies. Initially horrified and sometimes sick, each of the family soon subsided into a cauterised shock. Noah was inwardly crushed by the severity of God's holiness. His incredulous wife and sons whispered tormented queries about God and the future. It was one thing to believe in God's judgement; it was quite another to watch it ... Noah talked with them ... They listened now. [8]

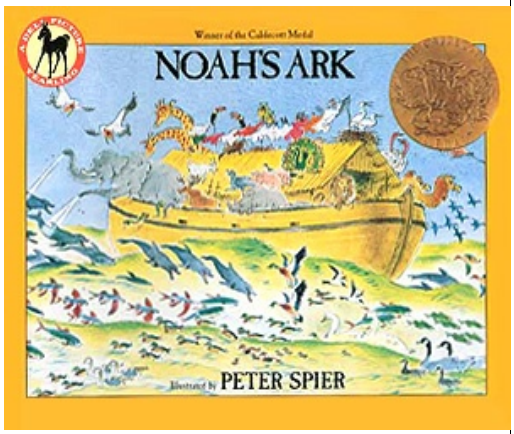

Illustration 10: A wholly inappropriate twee children's story book ark

Background
The story of Noah and his ark is often told as a fun piece of Sunday school to children, with a chubby Tonka toy boat, cute animals and, of course, a beautiful rainbow.

However the account is not a story, the historical event was not 'fun' as Coekin's quotation above shows. Furthermore, an ark is not a twee chubby boat, it is a box, and the rainbow only appeared much later, after all the dying, and after a blood sacrifice had been offered.

So, the Flood account suffers from the preconceptions and traditional ruination that afflict all of Genesis 1 to 11.

Aims of This Study

- To take the Flood account as history.
- To understand the seriousness of the Flood
- To be prepared for God's judgement in the future.
- To see Christ through seeing Noah and the ark.
- To understand that a fresh start is not enough; we also need new hearts.

Study Guide
The chapters cover:

- the certainty and horror of God's judgement 6:3,7,9-17; 7:11,12; 7:17-24
- why it happened 6:2,6 (part of the previous study)
- God's continued and repeated covenant faithfulness to his creation (people, animals and plants) 6:9,10,22, 6:18-7:10, 7:13-16; Ch. 8; Ch. 9:1-17
- Another 'curse', but this time by Noah 9:20-29

A fresh start is not enough: Sin must be judged; there must be a sacrifice and salvation, ultimately provided by Jesus.

Illustration 11: A bow, that is, a rainbow: Photo D.W. Legg 2002

Ice-breaker

Did the Genesis flood represent a decline in God's kingdom, or progress? Discuss. Perhaps refer to the chart on page 1.

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

Read Genesis 6. This chapter is one of the most shocking in the Bible. We must make sure that it is not wasted on us, or our generation.

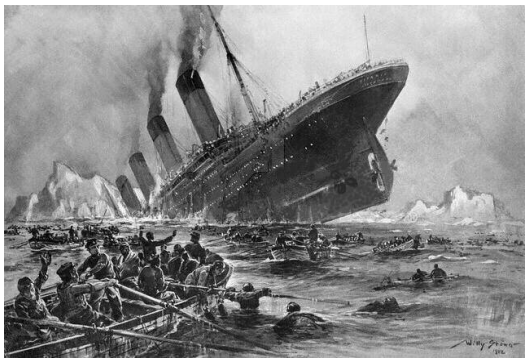

Illustration 12: Willy Stöwer: Untergang der Titanic (Sinking of the Titanic)

Question #1

What lessons are there in the Flood account for us today?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look at 6:3,7,9-17; 7:11,12; 7:17-24. Refer to 2 Pet. 3:1-13 for how to apply Genesis 6+7 nowadays.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #2

When studying Genesis 3 to 5, we noticed in amongst all the human sin that there were rays of hope in the form of God's blessings, promises and providences. There is a similar mingling of good and bad in Genesis 6 to 9.

Illustration 13: Survivors in a lifeboat from the Titanic

Question #2

What good things do we read about amongst all the sadness of these chapters?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Review 6:8,9,10,22; 6:18-7:10, 7:13-16; Ch. 8:1; 8:20-22

Answers

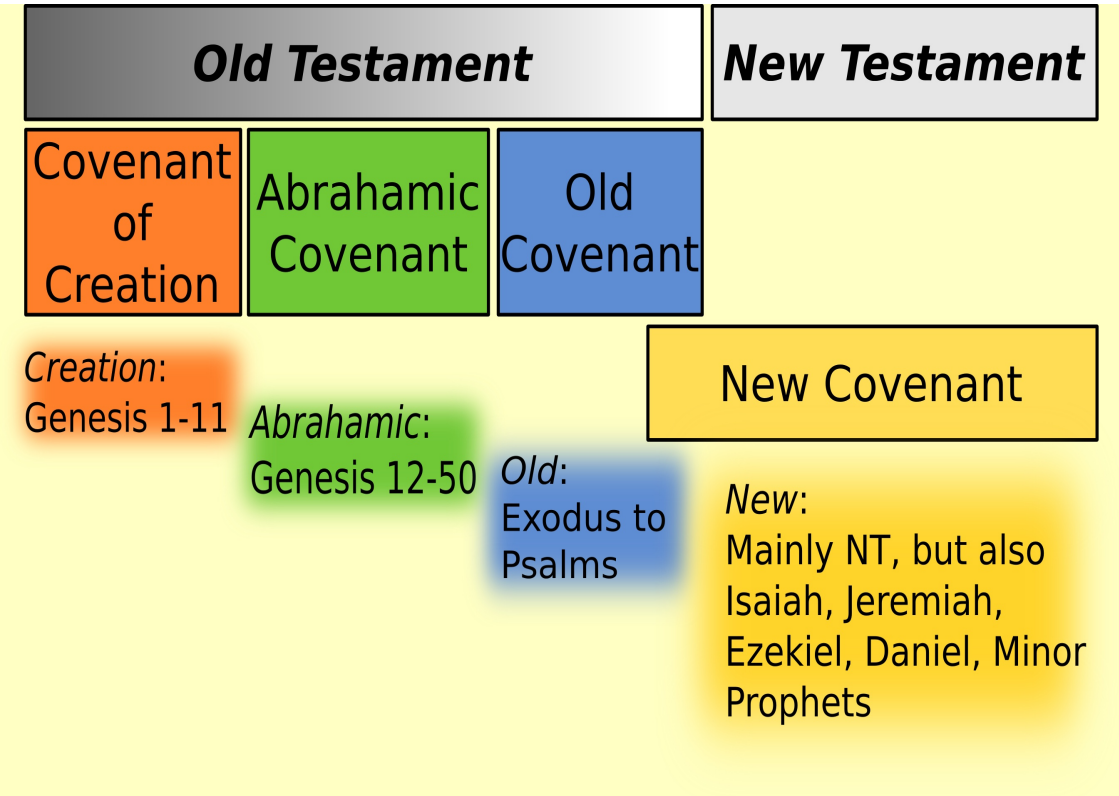


Illustration 14: The Major Covenants in the Bible: Where do we mainly read about each one? Note that Old Testament is not the same as Old Covenant, nor is even the New Testament quite the same as the New Covenant. This view shows how important an understanding of Genesis is as a basis for understanding the whole Bible.

Introduction to Question #3

After Noah's sacrifice is accepted by God (just as Abel's was), God makes a *covenant* with Noah. Covenants in the Bible have three main ideas in them:

- a promise
- obligations
- a sign (or seal)

? Question #3

What are the main ideas in God's covenant with Noah?
Was it a brand new covenant?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Review 9:1-17 and notice the various component parts.
Compare 9:1-27 with Genesis 1:28-30, noticing similarities and differences.

Answers

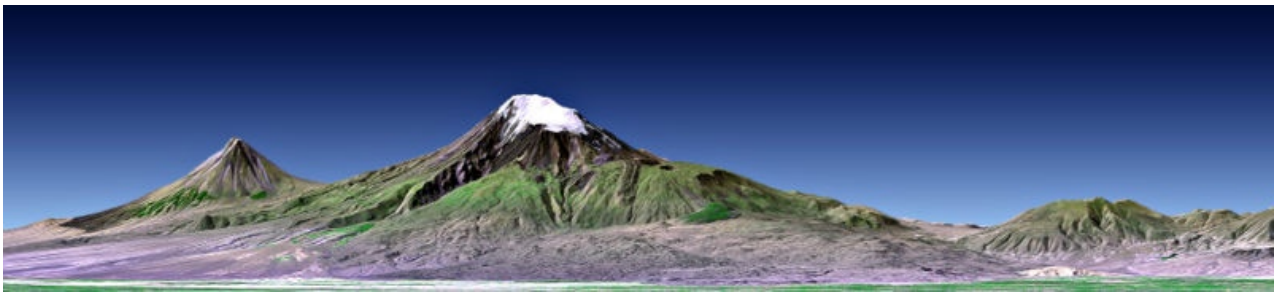


Illustration 15: For many centuries, people have been searching for the remains of the ark on Mt. Ararat, when really they should have been searching for a different "ark". - NASA photo

Introduction to Question #4

Genesis is a rich source of 'types'. Types are mainly pictures of Jesus Christ that we find in the Old Testament. God has so organised both history and the way in which it is described in the Old Testament, that when we read it we learn more than just history; we also learn about Jesus.

Question #4

What 'types' of Jesus Christ are there in Genesis 6 to 9?
What practical lessons are there for us?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

See Heb 11:7 and 1 Pet 3:20,21; 2 Pet. 2:4-9 for clues.

Answers

Introduction to Question #5

Genesis 6:5,6 show us how enormous the problem of human sin had become. God's solution appeared to be to send the Flood.

Question #5

To what extent did the flood deal with the problem of human sin?
What lesson do we learn from this?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Re-read Gen. 9:18-29 and see whether the problem had been dealt with. Compare with Rom . 13:13.

Answers

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- Perhaps stop thinking of the Flood as a children's story, but as a disaster greater than 9/11, 7/7, the sinking of the Titanic, even than Nagasaki, Hiroshima etc.
- Make sure our families are in Christ through believing the Gospel just as Noah's family was in the ark, and safe.
- Realise that deep heart-changes are needed for us to be godly, with repentance, conversion, the new birth and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

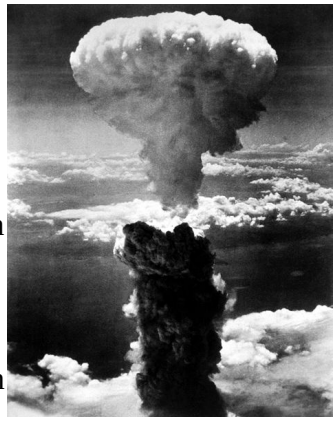


Illustration 16: The atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan on August 9, 1945

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #5, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

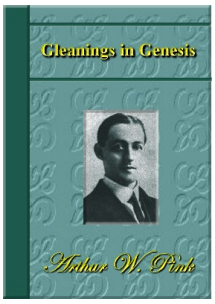
- 1 Cor. 10 explains how typology works in the Bible. The word '*example*' in the NIV is the same as the word 'type'.
- Another important covenant is the 'Davidic Covenant'. Explore it in 2 Sam. 7. See how it is

fulfilled by Christ.

To think about: What would the world be like now if God hadn't wiped out the godless and started all over again?

A	**Noah: A fresh start is not enough - A Range of Possible Answers**
1	a) 6:3 shows us that God will not put up with man's sin for ever. b) 6:7 shows us that God is not so sentimentally attached to his creation that he will not destroy it. c) 6:11 paints a picture of a world that is very similar to ours. d) 6:17 makes it clear that the Flood was not simply a natural disaster or the (pagan) gods in a rage. The Flood was clearly premeditated and planned by God. e) 6:9-17 also shows God having mercy on part of his creation, Noah and family. In wrath, he remembers mercy: Hab 3:2 *LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.* f) 7:11,12 tell us the specific date when the flood started. We should not think that it was just a story; it is history. g) 7:17-24 show how God did exactly as he said he would. Because of this, we should take the teaching in 2 Pet 3 equally seriously. h) Relevant verses from Peter's application of Genesis 6-9: 2 Pet 3:7 *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men.* [8] *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* [9] *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* [10] *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.* [11] *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, <u>what kind of people ought you to be</u>? You ought to live holy and godly lives* [12] *as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.*
2	a) 6:8 says that Noah found (literally) '*grace*' from God. Although he was a sinner (like we are, see Ch. 9), God showed him *grace*. What did this look like? Verse 9 expands on v.8. i) 6:9 He was *righteous*, i.e. he kept God's law. ii) 6:9 He was *blameless*, i.e. everyone else could see that he was righteous. iii) 6:9 '*among all the people of his time*': He stood out from the crowd by his godliness. iv) 6:9 '*He walked with God*': He had a living relationship with his God. b) b) We see that God always keep a remnant of people who love him Rom. 11:5 *So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.* c) 6:10 Noah had three married sons. As is always the case, we see God's grace

	Noah: A fresh start is not enough - A Range of Possible Answers
	extending to our families too (Gen. 7:1. Cf. Rahab (Jos. 2), Abraham, Jos. 24:15; Acts 2:39; 11:14; 16:31, Isaiah 49:25; Col. 3:18-22 etc.) d) Noah is rather like a second Adam, in that all of us are descended from him. e) However, his behaviour contrasts strongly with that of the first Adam. The first Adam failed to believe God. Noah believed God and followed his instructions to the letter Genesis 6:22: *Noah did everything just as God commanded him*. See also 6:18 – 7:10. f) 6:18 Although God is going to destroy his creation, he has not forgotten to be faithful to his covenant. This is the first time God's covenant is mentioned explicitly in Genesis. However, we see that it is a covenant with both humans and the rest of creation in 6:18 to 6:21. g) 8:1 God remembers his covenant (promise) to Noah's family. h) In 8:20-22, we see that God's anger is appeased by a sacrifice. This is one of the many pointers forwards to Jesus and his sacrifice in Genesis. Noah's sacrifice was a model or a type. Jesus' sacrifice was the real sacrifice that paid for sin.
3	a) The Promise: To *bless* humanity v.1 and never to *flood* the earth again vv.11,15. b) The Obligation: To be *fruitful* and fill the earth v.7 c) The Sign (or Seal): A *bow* in the sky. This is not a rainbow, although that is what we call it; rather it is God's weapon that he has put away because he will not use it again v.16. d) 9:1-17 When God's covenant with Noah is spelled out in chapter 9, we instantly recognise it as basically the same as Genesis 1:28-30. In his remarkable book 'Covenant and Creation' William Dumbrell shows beyond doubt that God's covenant with Noah is not a new one, but is a continuation of the basic 'Covenant of Creation'. He writes '*the evidence of Gen. 9:9-17 strongly implied that the covenant which was confirmed with Noah had been brought into existence by the act of creation itself*.' e) However, we also notice some profound differences: 9:2 Man still has 'dominion' over the animals, but now they dread us. 9:3 Man's right to exploit creation is now extended to the eating of animals. 9:4-6 Since the murder of Abel, to the original command about man *imaging* God is added an obligation: We are now to "police" the idea of man in the image of God; now man is responsible for dealing with murders himself, thereby upholding the importance of us being made in God's image v.6. The Tree of Life (2:9, which may have been the original sign of the Covenant of Creation) is no longer there. It has been superseded by the (rain)bow because of 3:22. Creation will continue for ever, but whether man will is in question. See Rev. 2:7 for the answer.

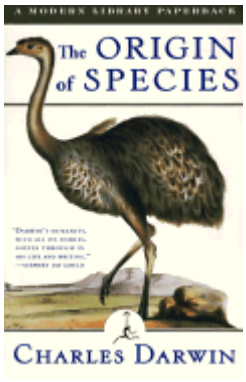
	Noah: A fresh start is not enough - A Range of Possible Answers
4	a) Heb 11:7 and 1 Pet 3:20,21, whilst not the easiest verses to understand, seem to imply that faith in Christ is pictured by Noah trusting God and building an ark. As Christ saves from judgement, so the ark saved from judgement. The ark is a type of Christ. Righteous Noah also seems to be a type of Christ. Heb 11:7 *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in* holy *fear built an ark to* save his family. 1 Pet. 3:20 ... *God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,* 21 *and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ...* b) The Flood itself is a type/picture of God's judgement, i.e. Hell: 2 Pet. 2:4 *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgement;* [5] *if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ...* [9] *if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgement, while continuing their punishment.* c) A.W. Pink lists 16 ways in which Noah and the ark are types of Christ in his 'Gleaning in Genesis'. Perhaps he is overenthusiastic, but overall his argument is convincing. See Reference [10] on page 2. d) The fate of Noah's family was entirely determined by whether they believed the Gospel, which for them was 7:1 "*Go into the ark, you and your whole family*". This determined whether they were <u>in</u> the ark when judgement came. In the same way, we must be <u>in</u> Christ, as must our families.  *Illustration 17: The cover of Pink's commentary on Genesis*
5	a) 9:20,21 show us that Noah, despite being called righteous, was actually a sinner just like the rest of us. He becomes drunk. Feel free to research NT verses about drunkenness. See Rom. 13:13: *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.* b) 9:22 show Ham thinking that he and his brothers could have a laugh at their father's expense. Compare this behaviour with Exo. 20:12 "Honour *your father and your mother ...* c) In 9:24-27, Noah appears to show that the behaviour of Ham compared with the behaviour of Shem and Japheth is symptomatic of a fundamental spiritual difference in the two parts of his family. Canaan is one of Ham's family. There is the godly part ("*the God of Shem*" v.26, Japheth) and the godless part (Ham, Canaan). So, already we see the offspring of the woman versus the offspring of the serpent 3:15. One is blessed v26, the other is cursed v25.

	Noah: A fresh start is not enough - A Range of Possible Answers
	d) 9:25 Ironically, there is now another curse, this time from Noah. The original one was God's in Gen. 3. Has any real progress been made? Not while human nature is unchanged, it would seem. e) Notice how family relationships are still soured, just as in Genesis 3 and 4. f) 9:29 The penalty of sin is death: Noah still died eventually, even though he lived 950 years. g) The main lesson we learn is that the selection of the godly and the destruction of the wicked (on its own) will not work. Spiritual eugenics will not work. We need new hearts. But God had already thought of that, of course: Eze. 36:26 *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you ...*

END OF STUDY 4 ON 'NOAH: A FRESH START IS NOT ENOUGH'

STUDY 5: GENESIS 10:1-11:26
NIMROD, HUMANISM AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

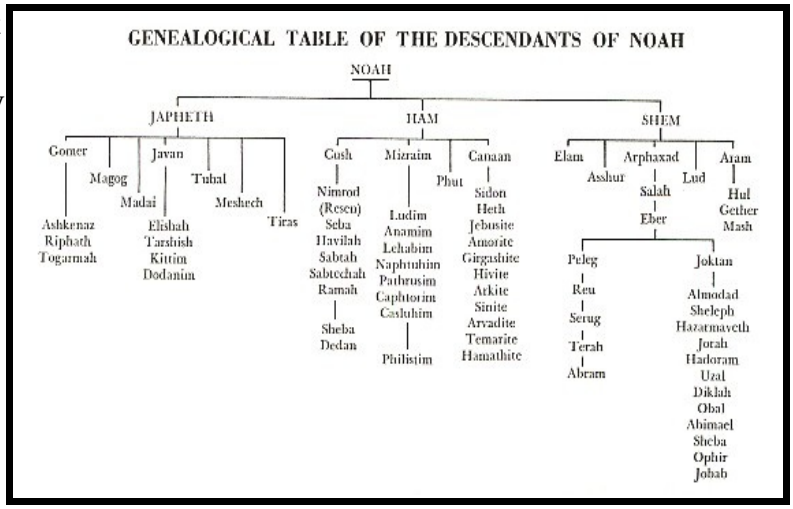
From the title page of the Origin of the Species:



Not many people know that the full title of Charles Darwin's infamous book the Origin of the Species is actually 'On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life'.

In his second book, *'The Descent of Man'*, Darwin writes:
'At some future period not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world. ... The break between man and his nearest Allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as the baboon, instead of as now between the Negro or Australian and the gorilla (1874, p. 178).
The links between Darwin's theory and Adolf Hitler's policies are obvious.

Background



Chapter 10 teaches us very clearly that the human race is all descended from the one man: Noah. This sweeps away any excuses for racism (see Darwin quotation above), or any idea that some people are inherently more or less godly than others. To see where you might (possibly) fit into Genesis 10 and what is known as 'The Table of Nations', visit reference [11] on page 2. Europeans are mainly descended from Gomer/Japheth; Jews and Arabs from Shem; Chinese and Africans from Ham. Nevertheless, we see God choosing (electing) the line of Shem; we see them being preserved as their enemies around them breed and flourish, spreading over the face of the earth.

Aims of This Study

- To appreciate how God's purposes are always worked out and fulfilled, even through the godless.
- To understand that we humans, if left to ourselves, will only become increasingly godless. This shows the need for God's grace towards us.
- To learn that we should be more concerned for God's name than with making a name for ourselves.
- To abandon any hope of human evolution being the answer to the world's problems.
- To exercise patience with God's plans, because they sometimes take a long time to mature.

Study Guide

Genesis chapters 10 and 11 contain mainly genealogies, but sandwiched in the middle is the fascinating account of what happened at the Tower of Babel (that is, Babylon). The word '*babel*' means confusion, and is even the same as the English word 'babel'. Once again, we see God judging humanity. Although less drastic than the previous judgements, the Curse in Genesis 3 and the Flood, this judgement has far-reaching consequences.

God could have destroyed humanity (again), but he chooses instead to show mercy and confuse our languages. From now on, a foreign language is the sign of God's displeasure, Ps. 114:1; Jer. 5:15, symbolically undone at Pentecost. Then, people speaking in tongues was also a sign of God's displeasure at the Jews through them not being able to understand the tongues in Acts 2.

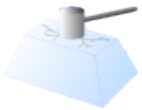
Once again, God's purposes are being worked out despite man's sin. We also see God's sovereignty in election again: Shem is not the eldest son (10:21), but his is God's chosen line. What would have happened to the godly line of Shem and Abram if the LORD had not intervened at Babel?

Nevertheless, the godly line (cf. Ch. 9) ends not with a bang but with a whimper with Terah being an idolater (Cf. Joshua 24:2).

In these chapters, we see fruitful domination and multiplication, the peak of humanism and God's merciful, very long-term, electing, sovereignty. There is no sign yet of the fulfilment of the positive aspects of Gen. 3:15, i.e. a serpent-slayer. However, the offspring of the serpent seem to be breeding like rabbits.

The chapters cover:

- the flourishing of both godly and godless humanity after the Flood.
- The greatness of Nimrod (possibly Sargon I of Akkad).
- the rise of secular humanism (well before 20th Century!)
- God confounding man's plans by confusing our languages
- the preservation of Shem's line (God's 'favoured race'?)



Ice-breaker

Using the Table of Nations, as summarised in the chart on page 37, to work out your roots. How many of Noah's sons are represented in the room?

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

Review Genesis 10. This chapter represents God starting the world all over again, so themes from earlier in Genesis are repeated.

Question #1

How does Genesis 10 show the fruitfulness of the Creation Covenant being fulfilled?
How is Nimrod similar to the godless line of Cain in Genesis 4?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Compare 1:28 with Genesis 10 overall.
Compare 4:21,22 with 10:8-12.

Answers

Illustration 18: Bust of an Akkadian ruler, Nineveh, c. 23rd - 22nd century BC. Nimrod may have been Sargon I.

Introduction to Question #2

Placed carefully between two sets of genealogies, the story of the Tower of Babel is the low point of the roller-coaster. This is rock bottom for man, the pinnacle of God's creation. But the passage is not explicit; we need to look at some important words in Genesis 11:1-9 and compare them with other parts of Genesis.

Question #2

How would you describe the sin of Genesis 11:1-9?

Illustration 19: The Tower of Babel by Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1563)

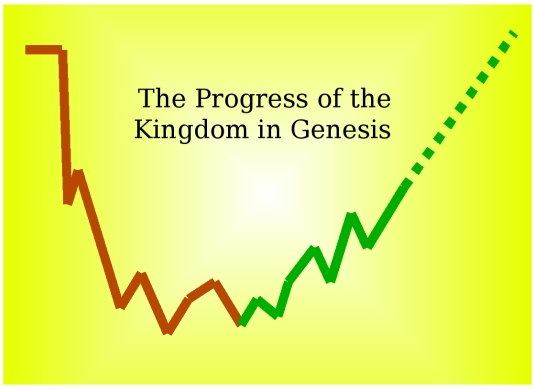
Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look carefully at the language used in v.4 as the men plan their project.
Who is markedly absent from their plans?
Who are they going to make a '*name*' for? Compare and contrast the use of '*name*' in 11:4 with 4:26 and 12:8;13:4, noting the difference between Abram and the sons of Ham in 11:4.

Answers

Introduction to Question #3

Genesis 1-11 is the first major section of the Bible.



Question #3

What major lessons do we learn from Genesis 1-11?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

What do we learn about humanity?
What do we learn about God and his plans?

Answers

For how long do humans live? In Genesis 1-11, and then looking further into the Bible, eventually up to the present day, there are a number of distinct lifespans (see chart below):

- The people before the Flood lived for nearly 1000 years (* apart from Enoch who did not die 5:24)
- The people who lived just after the Flood lived roughly half as long.
- There is a group from Peleg to Serug who lived over 200 years.
- The patriarchal group, including Abram, lived over 100 years.
- Thereafter, lifespans were under 100 years.
- During 20th Century, with good nutrition and health care in some parts of the world, lifespans are edging up towards 100 years again, but overall, lifespans are declining.

It is often supposed that conditions after the Flood were much harder than before, and that this accounts for the decline in lifespan after the Flood. However, the decline in lifespans has continued until the present day in most parts of the world. This is usually thought to be due to genetic mutation over long periods of time, in-breeding etc, i.e. *devolution*, if we can call it that. We certainly do not see anything like natural selection combining with beneficial mutations to increase lifespans. No doubt, Mr Darwin would be disappointed.

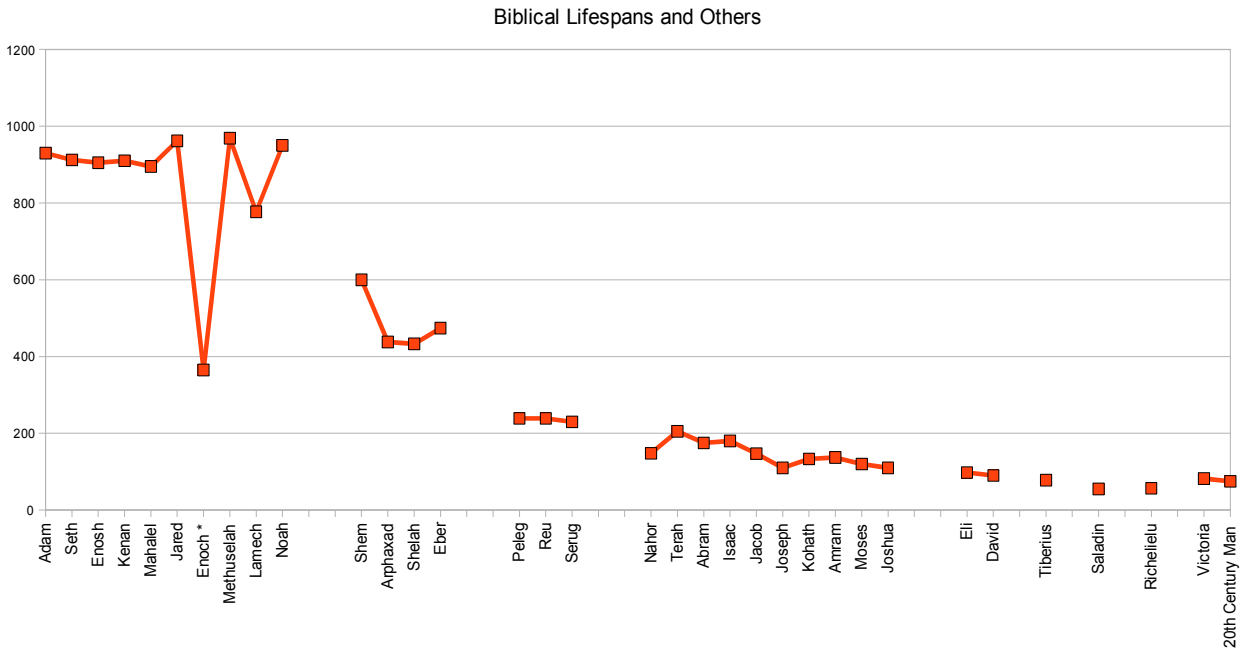


Illustration 20: Grouping of lifespans in Genesis and up to the present day

Many writers, including Philip Eveson in reference [5] (Chapter 17), explain how biblical genealogies are often abbreviated, i.e. they have people missing and so represent even longer periods of time than you get from adding up all the lifespans of the people listed. Something like this approach to sampling the available data by the writer of Genesis would explain why the lifespans appear to be grouped as shown (putatively) in the above chart.

Introduction to Question #4

Review Genesis 11:10-26. This is very much a bridging passage whose concern is to get from Shem to Abram (via Terah) as quickly as possible. The passage is quick to read, but covers a vast period of time (at least 3,000 years; see the chart below).

Question #4

What lessons do we learn about God's purposes and plans for his people from this fascinating passage?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look at whose line of descent is recorded, how long it took, and then compare with 2 Pet. 3:9 and Psa. 90:1-10 (which was also written by Moses.)

Answers

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To trust God to work his purposes out, even though his time-scales are often much longer than our patience.
- To appreciate greatness, gifts, culture, even though they are possessed by the 'offspring of the serpent'. They too are in God's *image*.
- To depend humbly upon God's grace, realising that we humans, if left to ourselves, only become increasingly godless.
- To be more concerned for God's name than with making a name for ourselves.
- To take opportunities to oppose secular humanism.
- To abandon any hope of human evolution being the answer to the world's problems.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #5, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

Explore the theme of Babel (Babylon) and what it is and represents in Jer. 52:4, Ps. 137, Rev. 18:2 and Zec. 2:7.

What might have happened to the relatively godly line of Shem and Abram if the LORD had not intervened at Babel?

A	***Nimrod, Humanism and God's Sovereignty- A Range of Possible Answers***
1	a) Collectively, the relatively godly lines of Shem and Japheth plus the ungodly line of Ham fruitfully start to fill the earth as God had commanded in his Creation Covenant: 1:28 *Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.* b) Nimrod in 10:9-12 is similar to ungodly Cain's descendants in with 4:21,22 where culture flourishes even amongst the offspring of the serpent, the evil descendent of Cain and Lamech. 4:21 *His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute.* 22 *Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron.* There are good things that we, as Christians, must not despise amongst the heathen. Nimrod teaches us a similar lesson. He is from the evil line of Ham whose descendants were the greatest enemies of God's people (Babylon, Assyria, Nineveh, Mizraim=Egypt etc.) Indeed Nimrod's name means 'We shall rebel'.

	Nimrod, Humanism and God's Sovereignty- A Range of Possible Answers
	Nevertheless, we discover that greatness is possible even among the godless. Nimrod is a greatly gifted hunter '*before the LORD*' 10:9.
2	a) The language used in v.4 shows complete man-centredness (humanism): "*Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.*" Note '*us*', '*ourselves*' etc. Note also the challenge to God '*a tower that reaches to the heavens*'. Note the challenge to God's command: 1:28 '*fill the earth*'. b) God is markedly absent from their plans. c) They want to make a '*name*' themselves, instead of lifting up God's *name*. 4:26 *Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD*. Here we see the right *name* and the right attitude. Also Abram's attitude in 12:8 and 13:4 is very different from the attitude of the sons of Ham in 11:4. d) So in v.10 when it says '*This is the account of Shem*', we are particularly interested to note that the name '*Shem*' actually means '*name*'. The account moves on to deal with those offspring of Noah who are associated with the name, the name of the LORD. e) 11:2 '*as men moved eastward*' seems to be coded language meaning that they were doing wrong and again moving towards God's judgement, according to Reference [5]. 'East' is used as a kind of leitmotif warning us of God's approaching judgement. f) The name of the sin is thus secular humanism: Secular = godless; humanism = man-centred.
3	a) What do we learn about humanity? That, if left to ourselves, we will simply get worse and worse. Even the relatively godly line of Shem ends chapter 11 in idolatry with Terah being an idolater: Joshua 24:2 *Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshipped other gods.* All the genealogies show us that *the wages of sin is death* (even 11:32). b) What do we learn about God and his plans? That God always responds to sin with judgement.

	Nimrod, Humanism and God's Sovereignty- A Range of Possible Answers
	That God preserves his people through all the sin and judgement. That God's people and purposes may sometimes appear very insignificant, but that there will always be at least a remnant: Rom. 11:5 *So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace*. The difference between the godly and ungodly is not survival of the fittest, but God's grace 4:4,5; 6:8 and God's electing sovereignty: 9:26 *He* [Noah] *also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem*.
4	What lessons do we learn about God's purposes and plans for his people from this fascinating passage? a) God chooses Shem even though he was not the eldest son of Noah and therefore the rightful heir in human thinking. This is common in Genesis. 10:21 *Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth* b) God, in his sovereignty, chooses to bless (9:26) the line of Shem and to preserve it despite the growth of all the powerful nations around. God's faithfulness lasts hundreds and thousands of years; so different from man's. c) There are long periods of time when very little appears to be happening in God's kingdom, but God is still working out his purposes. His time-scales are not ours – Psa. 90:1-10. Also:- 2 Pet. 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* d) God has not forgotten his promise in Gen. 3:15, but we will have to read on to find out who is going to be the offspring of the woman who will slay the serpent.

END OF STUDY 5 ON 'NIMROD, HUMANISM AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY'

STUDY 6: GENESIS 12:1-14:24; Ch. 18,19 ABRAM AND LOT

From an address on part of Genesis by Dr. Dale Ralph Davis:
Nothing can turn aside or dissolve God's blessing when he is determined bless his creature ...
There is an overall pattern … It breaks down into blessing, rebellion, judgement ...
The point being: You just can't stop God from blessing his creature when he is determined to do it. He's going to do it, no matter what! And that's a bit comforting for some of us to see that. [15]

Background
In chapters 1 to 11, there is a definite pattern of God's blessing, man rebellion, and God's judgement. This pattern may even continue as far as chapter 19 with the story of Abram and Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah as the table below shows.

Pattern of Blessing, Rebellion and Judgement in Genesis 1- 19

Pattern	Event	Chapter(s)
Blessing	Creation	1, 2
Rebellion	Fall	3
Judgement	Curse	3, 4
Blessing	Man Multiplies	5
Rebellion	Development of evil	6
Judgement	The Flood	6, 7, 8
Blessing	Noah	9
Rebellion	Tower of Babel	11
Judgement	Confusion of Languages	11
Blessing	Promises to Abram	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
Rebellion	Outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah	18
Judgement	Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah	19

Abram is rather like a third Adam. He is better than the second Adam (Noah) in that he obeys, trusts, produces godly descendants and ultimately brings blessing for the whole world (through Jesus). However, he is far from perfect and struggles with learning to trust God. But, after a while, he succeeds.

Abram and Lot, his nephew, furnish us with a pair of human examples: One good, and one bad. They share a number of experiences, Abram emerging with a strong faith. Lot, in contrast, and despite being a true believer seems to make very little progress in the spiritual life. But God is working in Lot's life too; he emerges chastened through the destruction of Sodom.

2 Pet. 2:7 ... *he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men*

We see God choosing and promising again, as he did with Adam and Noah. We see Abram believing and obeying.

There are also lessons in parenting when we compare what Abram is expected to do with what Lot achieves.

Aims of This Study

- To see how Abram sets us a good example by obeying God, by seeking and finding God's blessing.
- To see how Lot sets us a poor example by not obviously growing as a believer.
- To take warning from how Lot ended up severely chastised.
- To learn to trust God's promises as Abram did, growing in faith.
- To do the kind of parenting that Abram did rather than copying Lot.

Study Guide

You may decide to split this study into two parts, say after question 3, to avoid it becoming too long.

Genesis chapter 12 contains God's promises that are faithfully worked out during the remainder of the book, indeed during the rest of history.

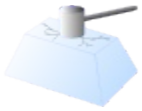
In Chapter 13, there is a great contrast between Lot and his choices and Abram and his choices. Lot's poor choices come home to roost in chapter 14, where Abram rescues him. Then God rescues him in chapter 19. In order to compare Abram and Lot, we skip over chapters 15, 16 and 17 for the time being.

Abram is tested by God in chapter 12, and fails, but Abram's supreme test in chapter 22 is saved for a later study.

The chapters cover:

- God's promises to Abram
- Abram's reaction to a famine.
- Abram's godly choice; Lot's worldly choice.
- Abram's rescue of Lot.
- Lot's rescue from Sodom, as God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah.
- The shocking origin of the Moabites and Ammonites.

Illustration 21: The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, John Martin, 1852.



Ice-breaker

Think of times when you have managed to trust God.
Think of other times when it has been too hard.

Questions for Group Discussion

12:1 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ
u·iamr ieue al - abrm lk - l·k m·artz·k
and·he-is-saying Yahweh to Abram go-you ! for·you from·land-of·you

וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ׃
u·m·muldth·k u·m·bith abi·k al - e·artz ashr ara·k :
and·from·kindred-of·you and·from·house-of father-of·you to the·land which I-shall-ⁱshow·you :

[1] . Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

Introduction to Question #1

Read 12:1-9. In chapters 12 to 22 of Genesis, God makes many, many, promises to Abram. Abram has the reputation of being a man of faith.

Question #1

Find some of the major promises that God makes to Abram.
Did Abram believe God's promises? How do we know?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look in 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 14:18,19; 18:18,19;
Abram's reaction is in 12:4-9; 13:4-9.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #2

In 12:10-13:13, both men sin.

Question #2

In what ways do Abram and Lot both sin? To what does the sin lead in each case?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Work out how Abram sinned from 12:10-20.
Work out how Lot sinned from 13:5-13.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #3

God keeps his promises to Abram despite his sin.

Question #3

In what ways do we see the promises to Abram being kept by God?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Work out how God keeps the promises in 12:2,3,7 to Abram (and others). Look at 13:1,2. 14:14 is significant. Melchizedech confirms what is going on too, in 14:18-20.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #4

Abram seems to grow in his faith as we proceed through Genesis, partly because of his scary trial at the end of chapter 12.

Question #4

What evidence do we see that Abram has taken note of his trial in 12:10-20 and is now growing in his faith?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Notice how Abram responds in 13:14-18.
Notice also his clear testimony in 14:22,23 and what he does in 14:20.
What about us? Does our faith affect our deeds, speech and wallets?

Answers

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Introduction to Question #5

Read chapters 18 and19. Both Abram and Mrs Lot look at the burning spectacle that had been Sodom and Gomorrah. However the LORD turns Mrs Lot into a pillar of salt in 19:26.

Question #5

What is the difference between Mrs Lot looking at Sodom 19:26 and Abraham doing the same thing 19:28?
How can we follow Luke's instructions in Luke 17:32 "*Remember Lot's wife!*"?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Think about the probable differences in attitude between Mrs Lot and Abraham.

Review what Jesus says in chapter Luke 17:28-33. Verse 33 gives a clue as to Mrs Lot's sin. When we lose worldly goods or family, is our attitude like that of Mrs Lot?

Answers

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Introduction to Question #6

God chose Abram partly because of his promise to Eve in Gen. 3:15 that one of her offspring would eventually crush the serpent's (Devil's) head. But God's covenant with Abram is very family oriented (especially in chapter 17 – not covered in this study); there are numerous references to his offspring, his family or household etc. Could there be other reasons why God, in his electing sovereignty, chose Abram as the basis for forming distinct people for himself?

Note how Lot and his daughters are the latest separation from the godly line 19:30-36. Previous separations including Cain's line, everyone but Noah's family, Ham, Canaan, everyone but Shem, everyone but Abram. This continues afterwards with Ishmael, Esau, everyone but Judah, and finally everyone who is not in Christ. Jesus' parables about the sheep and the goats reflect a similar theme in Scripture. In the future, the Moabites will often be at war with God's people (showing how the consequences of our parenting can affect future generations, see illustration).

Question #6

Why did God choose Abraham and what can we learn for ourselves? Contrast this with Lot's parenting skills as demonstrated in 19:8; 19:30-36

Explanation of What is Being Asked

After looking at 18:19, contrast this with Lot's parenting skills as demonstrated in 19:8; 19:30-36.

Answers

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Illustration 22: The Moabite Mesha stele from 9th Century BC. The stele describes King Mesha's wars against the Israelites.

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To trust God's promises.
- To appreciate his faithfulness to his promises.
- To determine to grow in our faith by making good use of the means of grace, including trials.
- To be aware of how fear can destroy our faith and then one sin leads to another.
- To be thankful that God's promise to bless all nations through Abram extended to us, in Christ.
- To learn from Mrs Lot not to be too attached to things in this world.
- To be clear about the importance of godly marriage and parenting decisions.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #7, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- Review Eph. 5:21-6:9 to see how Paul expects godly households to behave.
- Review Hebrews 11 to read a commentary on Abraham's faith.

A	***Abram and Lot - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	Some of the major promises that God makes to Abram are: a) In 12:1-9 we see God promising to bless Abram in every conceivable way and relationship vv.2,3. b) In 12:2, God promises to make Abram's name great. This contrasts starkly with the evil attitude of the Babel men in 11:4. Note the use of the word '*name*' in both verses. Abram cares about God's name 12:8, so God will make Abram's name great 12:2! c) In 12:7, the promised land is promised to his descendants, note, not actually to Abram himself – see Hebrews 11: 11[39] *These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.* [40] *God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.* d) In 13:14-17, we see the promise of the land repeated to encourage Abram that he had made a much better choice than Lot had done. e) In 14:18,19, a man called Melchizedech appears, who seems to be a type of Christ (see Hebrews 7). This representative of '*God Most High*' again blesses Abram, reminding him of God's promises to bless. f) In 18:18,19 we see the promises repeated again, this time emphasising that Abram (now called Abraham) will be a *powerful nation*, and implying blessings to his children and household in the area of godliness. Did Abram believe God's promises? How do we know? Abram did, we know it from: a) 12:4 where Abram believes God and so leaves Ur and goes to the promised land. Possibly unlike his father Terah, Abram arrives there v.5. Notice how closely obedience and faith are connected in the Christian life. b) In 12:6 Abram explores the land and goes right into the middle, clearly taking God's promises very seriously! c) In 12:9, Abram builds an altar to the LORD, thereby claiming the promised land for the LORD and for himself. d) In 13:14-18 Abram moves around the whole land, as God tells him, effectively claiming it all, claiming the promises as his own, and worshipping God there.
2	In what ways do Abram and Lot both sin? To what does the sin lead in each case? a) In 10:10-20, Abram seems to forget all God's promises in 12:1-3 and 12:7 and so he deserts the promised land. b) Forgetting God's promises means that faith is replaced by fear. c) This leads to further forgetting of God's promises to bless him, and so Abram lies to protect his life 12:13, albeit through Sarai's lips. More fear, even less faith. d) Notice how in 12:17, God protects and blesses him anyway! God is faithful even we are not. Lot also sins in 13:5-13 a) That Lot made a poor choice is spelled out for us in v.13.

A	***Abram and Lot - A Range of Possible Answers***
	b) Although Lot seems to have been attracted by city life, he stays away from Sodom at first in v.12. However, 14:12 finds him actually in Sodom, presumably having married one of the Sodomite women. c) Perhaps Lot's real sin was not to stay near Abram, when God had promised to bless everyone through Abram in 12:2,3. d) Lot's worldliness appears to have overcome his faith. e) Notice also how similar Lot's desire is to that of Eve, as described in the text. Compare 13:10 with 3:6
3	In addition to rescuing Abram and Sarai from Pharaoh in Egypt, God can be seen to be keeping the promises throughout the rest of Genesis, including in the passages referred to during this study: a) In 12:5, God looks after Abram and his possessions so that he actually arrives safely in the promised land. b) God arranges for Pharaoh to send them all back to the promised land in 12:20. c) In 13:1,2, we see Abram becoming very wealthy. d) 14:14 shows that Abram is so powerful that he could muster 318 men just from his own household. e) In 14:13-16 we see Abram being a blessing to others too, as per 12:2,3. f) In 14:18-20 Melchizedech confirms that his success is a result of God keeping his promises.
4	What evidence do we see that Abram has taken note of his trial in 12:10-20 and is now growing in his faith? a) Whilst Lot made a bad, worldly, choice, in 13:11, Abram shows that he is trusting in God rather than simply choosing the well-watered land for himself. b) After the LORD encourages Abram with more promises in 13:14-17, Abram responds in faith: This time he remains in the promised land v.18. c) In 14:21-24, Abram responds to the encourage provided him by Melchizedech by testifying clearly to God's faithfulness. He states that it is the LORD who has made him rich, not other men. d) Abram also shows in 14:22 that he is fully committed to ensuring that the LORD gets all the glory. He is definitely making progress! e) 14:20 is the first example of somebody tithing to God in the Bible. It is further evidence that Abram is really trusting God now. So what about us? Abram can be seen to be displaying his growing and genuine faith through his deeds a)b), his speech c)d) and even his “wallet”, so to speak.
5	What is the difference between Mrs Lot looking at Sodom 18:26 and Abraham doing the same thing 19:28?

A	***Abram and Lot - A Range of Possible Answers***
	Mrs Lot seems to be looking back at Sodom with longing, in perhaps the same way that Eve looked at the Tree of Knowledge and Lot looked at the plain of the Jordan in 13:10. In contrast, Abram is presumably looking at Sodom and Gomorrah wondering if God has saved Lot, thankful that the fire and brimstone had missed him v.29. How can we follow Luke's instructions in Luke 17:32 "*Remember Lot's wife!*"? Luke 17:33 contains the shocking statement by Jesus that: "*Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.* Mrs Lot's sin was clearly that she wanted to keep her life, her old sinful life in Sodom. *Illustration 23: The Sodom and Gomorrah motif from the Nuremberg Chronicle by Hartmann Schedel, 1493. Note Lot's wife, already transformed into a salt pillar, in the centre.* This is a good example of how the Old Testament narrative is often understated, but the New Testament explains it clearly for us.
6	Why did God choose Abraham and what can we learn for ourselves from 18:19? 18:19 *For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.*" a) God chose Abraham in order that he would produce godly descendants. b) Note how v.19 implies that whether God will fulfil all his promises will depend upon Abraham bringing up his children well. c) 18:19 is the equivalent of Eph. 6:4: 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* d) So, if we want to claim God's promises for us and oru children, we must *bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*. Contrast this with Lot's parenting skills as demonstrated in 19:8; 19:30-36 a) Lot's parenting skills are immediately hampered by his choice, presumably, to marry an ungodly Sodomite woman, as was implied by Luke 17:32 (see previous question.) How important it is that believers marry believers: 1 Cor. 7:39 ... *But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.* b) The way he is prepared to surrender his daughters to sexual abuse in 19:8 does not

A	***Abram and Lot - A Range of Possible Answers***
	suggest that he has taken his role as father very seriously to date. c) The behaviour of Lot's daughters in 19:30-36 would seem to show that they are living their lives according to the standards of Sodom, not according the standards of God. d) 19:37 shows how poor parenting or marriage decisions can have ramifications for generation to come. The Moabites come from Lot and his daughters. 'Moab' means something like the word incest. That the Moabites are the offspring of the serpent is clear from their behaviour from this generation onwards.

END OF STUDY 6 ON 'ABRAM AND LOT'

STUDY 7: GENESIS 15:1-17:27; 18:1-15; 21:1-21
ABRAHAM, SARAH AND ISHMAEL

From Creation and Covenant by William Dumbrell, pp47,48
The circumstances which surround the first mention of a covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15:18 are remarkable, and quite without parallel in the rest of the Old Testament … the bizarre rites by which the covenant is concluded are narrated … though they bear the marks of great antiquity about them, would have presented no difficulties to the ancient readers ..[9]

Background

In Gen. 15:18, the Hebrew phrase 'cut a covenant' is translated '*made a covenant*'. Although the idea of 'cutting' a covenant may sound bizarre to people of Anglo-Saxon descent, it fits in very well with Gen. 15-17 where there is a lot cutting that happens. In chapter 15, Abram cuts into two pieces each a heifer (a cow), a goat and a ram, and the LORD cuts a covenant with him. In chapter 17, there is more cutting with the invention of the rite of circumcision, which was to continue for thousands of years. And yet, amidst all the cutting, blood and mystery there are down to earth spiritual lessons being taught about believing God and his promises.

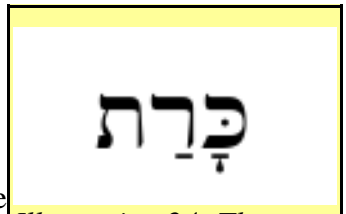
כָּרַת

Illustration 24: The Hebrew word for 'cut' (krth or kārat) used for formalising a covenant in the Old Testament

Aims of This Study

- To see that God keeps his promises.
- To learn to believe in God as Abraham did (even when it seems impossible)
- To appreciate that the elements in the Abrahamic Covenant affect us today.
- To take warning not to copy Sarah.
- To explore the evils of polygamy, briefly.

Study Guide

Chapters 15 and 17 contain the solemn formalisation of God's covenant with Abram.

In between 15 and 17, in chapter 16, we see Abram and Sarai failing to trust God and taking matters into their own hands.

In 16 and 21 we see the sad results of polygamy and Abram and Sarai's failure to trust God.

Illustration 25: A circumcision party of one of Abraham's descendants thousands of years later (Sultan Ahmed III's three sons in 1720)

The chapters cover:

- Abram and Sarai's struggle to trust God.
- The bad results of not trusting God.
- The Abrahamic Covenant.

Ice-breaker Think of an event in your life that helped you to grow as a Christian, perhaps to trust God better.

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

The exact promises that God's people are required to believe vary from age to age. We do not necessarily have to trust God for the same things that Abram and Sarai did. Remind yourself of some of the difficult promises that Abram and Sarai had to believe in 15:4,5,7; 17:1-8,15-18; 22:15-18.

Question #1

How did Abram do at believing God's promises?
How did Sarai do?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Abram's attitude is shown straightaway, in 15:6.

Sarai's/Sarah's attitude to God's promises is very different from Abram's 16:1,2; 18:9-15. At a great age, Sarah gives birth to the promised son. Does Sarah's unbelieving attitude seem to have changed 21:6:7?

Illustration 26: Engraving of Sarai/Sarah by Hans Collaert from c. 1581.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #2

Read 15:7-21 to see how the LORD formalises, i.e. cuts, his covenant with Abram. Note that we have now left behind chapters 1-11 which contain God's Covenant with Creation; we are now in the second part of the book of Genesis which could be titled 'The Covenant with Abraham'.

Question #2

What was the central message (the crux) of the covenant ceremony in 15:7-21?
What might it have to do with Jesus.

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look particularly in verses 9, 10, 17 and 18.
Work out what God is saying to Abram.
Reflect on what this might all have to do with Jesus, and with us.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #3

Read Gen. 17:1-8. In these verses, we read, spelled out for the first time, what we might refer to as the Church Covenant. Although we know it as the Abrahamic Covenant, it contains the basic promises that God has made not just to Abraham, but to his chosen people.

Question #3

What is the central promise in the Abrahamic Covenant?
Does it still apply to us today?
How can we be sure?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Look in Gen. 17:1-8 to see the promises that the LORD makes to Abraham, then review the following verses to see how the same promise is made throughout the Bible:

Exo. 29:45; Lev.26:45; Deu. 29:13; Rut.1:16; Jer. 24:7; Jer. 32:38,39; Eze. 37:23; Zec. 8:8; Acts 2:39; 2 Cor. 6:16; Col. 3:12; Heb. 8:10; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 21:3

Answers

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Introduction to Question #4

Read Gen. 16. A repeat of something uncomfortably familiar occurs. We do not see Sarai and Abram their best in this chapter, but we still see God's faithfulness to his promises as he remembers Gen. 12:2,3 and blesses Hagar and Ishmael despite all the sin and unbelief within the covenant family.

Question #4

How does Gen. 16 replay Gen. 3?
What are the results?
What can we learn about polygamy from Gen. 16 and elsewhere?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Look in 16:1-4 and see the shameful action replay.
- See something similar in 30:1-4.
- 16:5-16 show the results.
- 21:8-20 shows the final situation.
- 4:19,23 show the origin of polygamy.
- 1 Sam. 1 gives another example of the results of polygamy.
- The Apostle Paul instructs us clearly in 1 Tim. 3:2.

Q. What would you say to a Mormon in the light of all these passages?

Answers

Illustration 27: "The dismissal of Hagar", 1612 by Pieter Pietersz Lastman

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To trust God even though we may have to wait a long time sometimes for his promises.
- To appreciate God's everlasting covenant to be the God of all who will trust him.
- To be thankful that God keeps his promises despite our sin (even though some blessings may be forfeit, e.g. Ishmael only received limited blessings.)
- To learn from Sarai's sin how it is possible for a wife to lead her husband into sin too.
- To be clear about polygamy being wrong and destructive.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #8, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

To think about: Was the missionary to the new Hebrides, John G. Paton, right to insist that polygamous marriages be split up to make more wives available to those who men who did not have a wife?

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- Review Matt. 19:1-12: A further passage on the sanctity of biblical marriage.

A	***Abraham, Sarah and Ishmael - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	How did Abram do at believing God's promises? a) In 15:6, Abram immediately believes in God and his promises, even though he is an old man. Rom. 4:22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 [23] *The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone,* [24] *but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.* When we trust God as Abram did, we too receive the gift of righteousness. How did Sarai do? a) In 16:1,2, Sarai loses patience with the LORD and takes matters into her own hands. If God won't give her a son, she will get Hagar to do it. b) Even after the Hagar/Ishmael experiment has gone all wrong, she is laughing at the LORD in 18:9-15, and lies to cover up her sin 18:15. c) Eventually, however, in 21:6,7, she seems to recognise that the joke is on her. Now she is not laughing at God, but with him. This suggests that she has learned to trust him. Thus, in 1 Pet 3:5, she is described as a '*holy woman*'.

A	***Abraham, Sarah and Ishmael - A Range of Possible Answers***
2	What was the central message (the crux) of the covenant ceremony in 15:7-21? a) In 15:8, Abram wants to know that he can be sure about God's promises. Perhaps he is worried that his sin might cause God to change his mind? b) So, in 15:9, the LORD tells Abram that he is going solemnise his promises by making, i.e. cutting, a formal covenant with him. c) In 15:17,18, the LORD promises solemnly that he will keep his promises to Abram on pain of death. The torch represents God. It is as if he is saying "If I do not keep my covenant, may I become as dead as these sacrificial animals that were cut in half." d) In the end, it is not the LORD who is guilty of covenant-breaking, but God's people, and yet the death penalty enacted in 15:10,17 is taken by Jesus as he, the LORD, dies, shedding the '*blood of the covenant*': Mar.14:24 "*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many*".
3	Gen. 17:7 *I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.* [8] *The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.*" What is the basic promise in the Abrahamic Covenant? a) 17:7 to be the God of his people. b) 17:8 to keep being our God in future generations. Does it still apply to us today? How can we be sure? a) Obviously. b) 17:7 calls the covenant "*everlasting*". c) Verses (below) repeat the same basic promises all the way through the Bible. d) In particular, Jer 24 and 32 are talking about the New Covenant times in which we live. e) The NT verses below explicitly repeat the basic promises for us nowadays. The following verse trace the basic elements of the Abrahamic Covenant through the OT and then on into the NT. Exo. 29:45 *Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.* Lev. 26:45 *But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.*"' Deu. 29:13 … *to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

A	***Abraham, Sarah and Ishmael - A Range of Possible Answers***
	Rut. 1:16 *But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.* Jer. 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.* Jer. 32:38 *They will be my people, and I will be their God.* 39 *I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them.* Eze. 37:23 *They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offences, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.* Zec. 8:8 *I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."* Acts 2:39 *The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-for all whom the Lord our God will call."* 2 Cor. 6:16 *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."* Col. 3:12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, ...* Heb. 8:10 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.* 1 Pet. 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* Rev. 21:3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*
4	Q. How does Gen. 16 replay Gen. 3? In Gen. 16:1-4, Abram and Sarai replay what happened in the Garden of Eden in Gen. 3:1-7:

A	***Abraham, Sarah and Ishmael - A Range of Possible Answers***

a) Sarai has doubts about what God has promised.
b) Rather than trusting God, she takes matters into her own hands.
c) Once again, she usurps her husband's place and calls the shots.
d) Not only does she sin, but she leads her husband into sin.
e) Abram is weak, just as Adam was, and is willingly lead into sin.

Q. What are the results?

a) They both regret it through the rest of the chapter.
b) The product of Abram and Hagar's union is the Arab people who have been at loggerheads with the Jews for thousands of years. So, as with Adam and Eve and their sin, Abram and Sarai's sin has repercussions for thousands of years, affecting millions of people.

Q. What can we learn about polygamy from Gen. 16 and elsewhere?

a) 16:4b and 16:5 show immediate results of the polygamy with instant strife in the holy family.
b) In 21:8-20, the family rows turn into actual family break-up. Notice though how God cares for and blesses Hagar and Ishmael. His covenant of 12:2,3 overflows to them, as eventually it overflows to bring blessing to '*all peoples*'. So, in Gen. 17:20 Go also promises blessing to Ishmael, which we see starting to be fulfilled in 21:20.
c) Although God blesses despite polygamy, it is Lamech-like behaviour Gen. 4:23, and represents the morality of the offspring of the serpent, not that of God's people.
d) Polygamy causes trouble in otherwise godly families later in the Bible, for example, for Hannah in 1 Sam. 1, Rachel and Leah in Gen. 30:1-4 where Sarai and Abram's sin is repeated.
e) Polygamy is condemned by Paul in 1 Tim:
3:2 *Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, ...*

END OF STUDY 7 ON 'ABRAHAM, SARAH AND ISHMAEL'

STUDY 8: GENESIS 20; 21:22-34; 22:1-19; 23:1-20; 25:1-18
ABRAHAM TESTED: THREATS TO GOD'S PROMISES

Derived from Wikipedia (Ram_in_a_Thicket)

The figure is from Ur, southern Iraq, about 2600-2400 BC. This is one of a pair discovered by Leonard Woolley in the 'Great Death Pit', one of the graves in the Royal Cemetery at Ur during the excavation season 1928-29 [16]. The other is now in the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia. It was named the 'Ram in a Thicket' by the excavator Leonard Woolley, who recognised the similarity to Gen. 22, but may well be a goat, and the estimated dates may be too early to have coincided with Abraham, but nobody actually knows when exactly Abraham lived ...

Illustration 28: Photo: D.W. Legg 2004 British Museum

Background

Although it not known exactly when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived, we must be clear that they were real, historical, people – God's people. Therefore, there is a lot that we can learn from them and their dealings with the LORD. In particular, the chapters to be studied show a lot about growing in faith.

Aims of This Study

- To see how Abraham grows in faith.
- To see a *type* of Christ in the near sacrificing of Isaac
- To see the extent and magnitude of Abraham's faith.
- To see how faith and obedience relate.
- To compare and contrast Abraham with various others.

Study Guide

In chapter 20 Abraham has learned to stay in the promised land, but is still deceiving people and struggling to believe God's promises to him. But God remembers, and protects Abraham and Sarah.

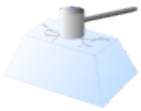
In 21:22-34 Abimelech has learned that God is with Abraham and wants to be on Abraham's side.

Chapter 22 demonstrates that Abraham is now trusting God for even the impossible (Heb. 11:19) and he passes the test with flying colours. Chapter 22 also tells us a lot about the LORD: He is the provider (as Ch. 2); sin requires a blood sacrifice; a clear pointer to God sacrificing his only son. Chapter 22 also demonstrates the relationship between faith and obedience, fearing God and

trusting God.

In chapters 23 and 25, the burial accounts, Abraham shows that he believes in God's promise of the land. There is a strong contrast between Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Ishmael.

Abraham comes out strong, believing God's promises even to the point of death and the Resurrection, a great example to us nowadays.



Ice-breaker

Have you ever been to the British Museum? Discuss what exhibits you were particularly taken with, and which intersect with Biblical history.

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

In Ch. 20 Abraham has learned to stay in the promised land, so he has clearly made progress with trusting God to look after him since chapter 12. However, he is still struggling to believe. Chapters 20 and 21 contrast God's faithfulness and Abimelech's attitude with that of Abraham.

Question #1

Compare and contrast Abraham, as follows:-

- How well does Abraham do at believing God's promises from back in chapter 12?
- How does God's faithfulness compare with Abraham's?
- How does Abimelech seem to put Abraham to shame?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- By comparing 12:2,3 with 20:1-13, identify Abraham's sin, and the root of his sin.
- How do we see God's faithfulness to his promises in 20:3-7?
- In 21:22-31, what is Abimelech quick to believe, where Abraham had been rather slow?

Answers

Introduction to Question #2

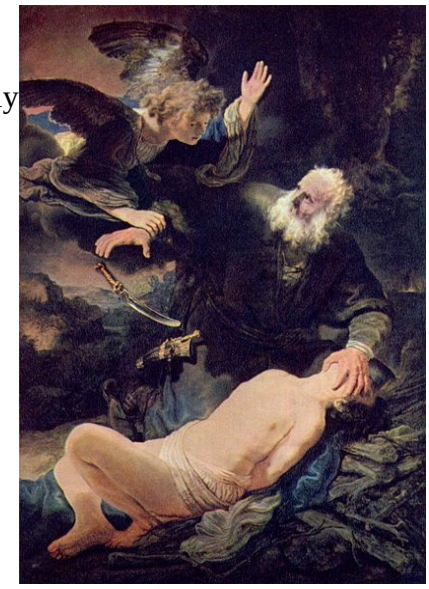


Illustration 29: An angel prevents the sacrifice of Isaac.

Abraham continues to make progress in faith. So, in chapter 22, God gives him the ultimate test, that of sacrificing his only son. This is the son through whom God has promised to bless all nations on earth, Abraham's whole hope for the future.

Question #2

What progress has Abraham made by chapter 22?

In particular, how does he relate faith to obedience?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

Make a note of Abraham's statements in Gen. 22.

Interpret Abraham's words and deeds using Heb. 11:17-19. Note how interesting Heb. 11:17 is, i.e. what it says actually happened. How would you explain the wording of Heb. 11:17?

See how Jam. 2:18 helps to explain Abraham's behaviour in Gen. 22.

Answers

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Illustration 30: A lamb being led to the slaughter: 6th Century BC, Corinthian

Introduction to Question #3

Genesis 22 not only tells us about Abraham; it also tells us about God.

Question #3

- How is Abraham's sacrificing of his son like God's sacrificing of his son?
- How is Abraham's sacrificing of his son unlike God's sacrificing of his son?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Look for clues in 22:2, 6, 8, 12, 18,
- then in 22:7, 11, 12.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #4

In chapters 23 and 25, Sarah and Abraham face not just the death of loved ones, but their own deaths. In 23:5, we see how God has been blessing Abraham by making wealthy and great, but we also see that even the great die, in this case Sarah. It is the continuation of Gen. 3 and Gen. 5 '*and then he died*'.

In chapter 25, Abraham himself faces death, but many of God's promises to him have been fulfilled, wealth, a son, dying before his descendants go down to Egypt etc. The main remaining, as yet completely unfulfilled, promise is the one to do with him inheriting the promised land. How was he going to inherit the promised land if was dead?

Question #4

- How is the fact that Abraham buries Sarah in Hebron, and the burial of Abraham in the same cave very significant?

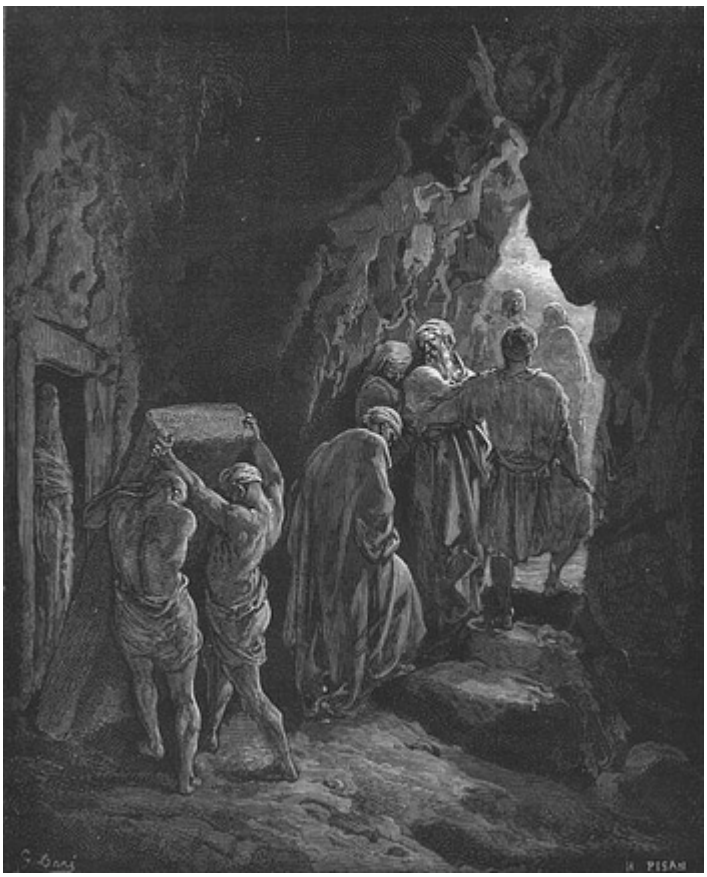

Illustration 31: Burial of Sarah by Gustave Doré

- How do their burials compare with those of Jacob and Joseph?

- What about Ishmael?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Look in 23:19,20 and then 25:9,10 and work out what Abraham and Sarah must have believed.
- Confirm this by looking in Heb. 11:10,14.
- See how it is significant for us in Mat. 5:5.
- Look in 49:29-32 to see what Jacob considered important.
- Look in 50:24,25, to see what Joseph believed.
- What is missing from the account of Ishmael in 25:12-18?

Answers

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Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To grow in our trust in God, as Abraham did.
- To appreciate God's love in not sparing his only son.
- To understand how true faith also produces deeds.
- To learn from Abraham, Jacob and Joseph about trusting God in the face of death.
- To be clear that we will inherit the Earth after the Resurrection.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #9, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

To think about: Do we struggle to believe for ourselves the promises that God gave to Abraham. etc.

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- These passages contain a selection of promises for use to believe:
  Mt. 5:5; Phil. 4:19; 2 Cor. 9:6-8; Rom. 8:28; Acts 20:35; 2:38,39

A	***Abraham Tested - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	How well does Abraham do at believing 12:2,3? a) As per chapter 12, once again Abraham is reacting out of fear rather than out of faith 20:11. b) He appears to have forgotten God's promises in 12:2,3. c) The roots of his sin, of deception, are thus fear and unbelief – just like us really. If we feared less and trusted more, we would sin less. How does God's faithfulness compare with Abraham's? a) Although Abraham has forgotten or disbelieved 12:2,3, the LORD has remembered his promise to look after Abraham and those around him. How does Abimelech seem to put Abraham to shame? a) In 12:3, God promises Abraham that '*all peoples on earth will be blessed through him*'. Abimelech seems to understand that if God is on Abraham's side, so he too wants to be on Abraham's side, to share in the blessings of God. b) Abimelech understands, in 21:22, that '*God is with you* [Abraham] *in everything you do'*. This is something that Abraham himself is struggling to believe sometimes. How do we compare with Abimelech?
2	Q. What progress has Abraham made by chapter 22? a) v.5 "*We will worship .. then come back*" - Abraham is clearly trusting God to do something special, even though he does not know what. b) v.8 "*God himself will provide*" - Abraham is not relying on Abimelech, Egypt etc. He is simply trusting the LORD who made him promises to bless him. A. Chapter 22 demonstrates that Abraham is now trusting God for even the impossible (Heb. 11:17-19) and passes the test with flying colours: Heb. 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,* [18] *even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."* [19] *Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.* What is very interesting about Heb. 11:17 is how the writer (perhaps Timothy) writes as if Abraham actually did sacrifice Isaac. He is reflecting Abraham's attitude of total obedience. This is the new Abraham. Q. In particular, how does Abraham relate faith to obedience? Jam. 2:18 helps to explain Abraham's behaviour in Gen. 22: *'But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*'

A	***Abraham Tested - A Range of Possible Answers***
	Abraham wastes no time in getting on with obeying this most difficult command from God: a) v.3 "*Early the next morning ...*" b) v.10 '*he reached out his hand and took hold of the knife to slay his son ...*'
3	How is Abraham's sacrificing of his son like God's sacrificing of his son? a) In 22:2, the words that God uses for Isaac, Abraham's son, clearly match those he chooses to describe his own son, Jesus – see 2 Pet. 1:17; Luk. 3:22; Mar. 9:7; Mat. 3:17; Mat.17:5 *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!*" b) In 22:6, Isaac carries his own firewood. It is difficult to be sure of this, but it bears a striking resemblance to Jesus carrying own cross. Joh. 19:17 *Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull.* c) In 22:8, Abraham expresses confidence that God will provide the sacrificial victim, which ultimately he did, in Jesus. d) In 22:12, the LORD commends Abraham for not withholding his son, his only son, as he himself would later do. e) In 22:18, God again promises blessings to all nations through Abraham's offspring, that is, through Isaac, and ultimately through Jesus. f) If we had ever thought that Jesus' death might simply have been a tragic accident, this chapter alone would convince us that it had been planned for a long time, indeed outside time. How is Abraham's sacrificing of his son unlike God's sacrificing of his son? a) In 22:7, Isaac raises the question of where the lamb was going to come from. Does he know, or doesn't he? Jesus knew. Luk. 22:20. b) 22:11: Isaac is spared by the LORD. Jesus was not. c) In 22:12, we see that Abraham gave his son in terms of his attitude. God however did it not only in attitude, but in fact. John 3:16. d) It is always the case with types of Christ that they are shown to be less than the real thing (i.e. inferior to Christ). The antitype always fails in some way, e.g. David and his sin, the blood of bulls and goats that fails to take away sin, the temple being destroyed etc.
4	How is the fact that Abraham buries Sarah in Hebron, and the burial of Abraham himself in the same cave very significant? a) In 23:19,20, Abraham is very careful to bury Sarah in a part of the promised land that legally belongs to him. b) 25:9 tells us not only that Abraham wanted to be buried with Sarah (which may have been purely sentimental), but gives us the exact location in the promised land. c) The only sensible conclusion to draw is that Abraham believed that they would

A	***Abraham Tested - A Range of Possible Answers***

one day be resurrected and inherit the promised land, so that was where they wanted to wake-up.

d) This is confirmed in Heb. 11:
Heb. 11:10 *For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. …* [14] *People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.*

e) Are you looking forward to inheriting your share of the new Earth?
Mat. 5:5 *Blessed are the meek, for they <u>will</u> inherit the earth.*

How do their burials compare with those of Jacob and Joseph?

a) In 49:29-32, when Jacob is about to die, God's people are all in Egypt. It is very inconvenient for Jacob to want to be buried in the promised land, but he insists.
b) In 50:24,25, Joseph explains why they are so attached to the promised land:
50:24 … *But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*
c) Joseph, Jacob and Abraham are full of faith about God's promises.
d) Does our faith God affect what we put in our wills and legacies?

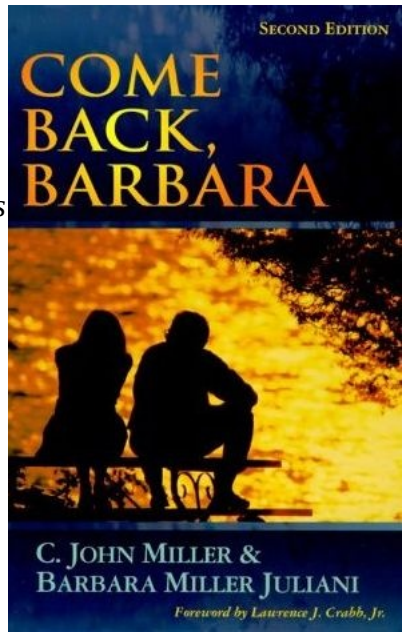
What about Ishmael?

a) In 25:12-18, Ishmael does not appear to be trusting God, his promises, or even wanting to have anything to do with God's people v.18.
b) There is no mention of him wanting to be buried in the promised land, no implied hope of the Resurrection, no sign of real faith.
c) Interestingly, Ishmael is not really mentioned anywhere by name in the NT.

In the end, Abraham comes out strong, believing God's promises even to the point of death and the Resurrection. He is a good example of growth in faith for us too.

END OF STUDY 8 ON 'ABRAHAM TESTED'

STUDY 9: GENESIS 24; 25:19-27:40 - ISAAC, JACOB AND ESAU: GOD'S BLESSINGS AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY



Review of "Come Back, Barbara" by C. Jack Miller
'"I am not ignorant of human depravity, but I had long denied that it could exist in our family."

However, when human depravity became an undeniable reality in his own family, Jack Miller was forced to confront not only the obvious issues surrounding the departure of a prodigal daughter, "Barbara Catherine, come back, come back ...", but also the more subtle ones to do with his own sin, God's sovereignty, and many others.

Buy it, read it, and buy spare copies to give to your friends with prodigal children.' Perhaps Isaac and his family should have read 'Come Back, Barbara'? - see Question 4.

Background
The themes of God's sovereignty and faithfulness to all his promises together with human failure to believe and obey continue in these chapters. But we also see Abraham mature in his faith, wanting a godly wife for Isaac so that God will continue to bless the covenant family down through the generations. We also see Isaac, the son of promise, growing up to be a godly man; he is presented with a new wife while he is having his quiet time 24:63!

As before with the human family, we see a split between the godly line and the godless line. As with Cain and Seth, Noah and everyone else, Shem and Ham, Abraham and everyone else, so we see Jacob being chosen and Esau being rejected, and this despite the fact that Jacob is far from being a godly man as yet (see Study 10).

Jacob finds favour with God, not because of his good behaviour, but *in order that God's purpose in election might stand* (Rom. 9:11). As before with the Fall and the Flood, we meet a scary God, a God who chooses without apology, a God that we ourselves might not at first choose ...

Aims of This Study
- To learn practical lessons about marriage, parenting and sin.
- To explore Genesis' teaching about God's sovereignty.
- To take warning from the behaviour of Abraham, Isaac and Esau.
- To broaden our appreciation of God's promises and believe more of them.

Study Guide
In chapter 24, Abraham makes elaborate plans to find a godly wife for Isaac. We see God's sovereignty in his remarkable provision of Rebekah for Isaac.

In 25:19-27, God reveals what he is planning for Jacob and Esau, Isaac's twin sons. Esau begins to display his attitude to God's promises.

In chapter 26, we see Isaac repeating many of Abraham's experiences. This repetition serves to emphasise important themes in Genesis to us.

Chapter 27 sees God's sovereignty triumphing over the covenant family's sin, but particularly displays Esau reaping what he sowed in chapter 25. The juxtapositioning of human sin and God's sovereignty despite the maximum possible manipulation by Rebekah so that Jacob ends up with God's/Isaac's blessing as God had always intended is astonishing.

Ice-breaker

Have you ever realised that something you are doing was just like what one of your parents did, or heard yourself saying something to your children that you suddenly remember your parents used to say to you?

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

In chapter 24, Abraham notices that, although God has *blessed him in every way* v.1, there is a further important avenue of God's blessing that has not been explored. He makes an elaborate plan with his chief servant, puts him under oath, and sends him off on a very specific errand.

Illustration 32: "Eliezer and Rebecca" by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo at National Gallery Athens

Question #1

Why is Abraham so very concerned to find the right wife for Isaac?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Compare 24:1-4 with 18:18,19.
- See how it all works out in the rest of chapter 24.
- To confirm your understanding, looking at 28:1-4 and then look back at how Lot and his descendants fared after he had married a Canaanite 19:26,30-38.

Answers

Introduction to Question #2

In chapter 25, we move down another generation of the covenant family to Jacob and Esau, Isaac's sons. As we watch the behaviour of Jacob and Esau, we do not see much godliness (Heb. 12:16) yet, but we do see God's sovereignty. We see God's will coming about despite man's (mis-)behaviour. A familiar pattern is now becoming obvious throughout Genesis.

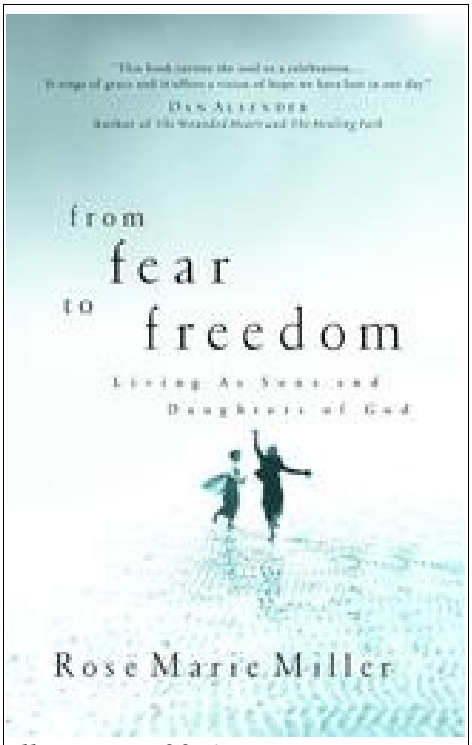


Illustration 33: 'From Fear to Freedom' by Rose Marie Miller - Jack Miller's widow. In chapter 3 she describes the problem of sins that are repeated down the generations.

Question #2

What pattern do we notice with Jacob and Esau that is repeated elsewhere?

What should our attitude to God be when we see this pattern emerging?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Compare 25:23 with what happens in the cases of Cain/Seth(Gen. 4:25; 9:26; 11:10-26), Shem/Japheth 10:21, Reuben/Judah(49:4,8)/Joseph(49:26).
- Compare 25:23 with some tough verses to believe in Mal. 1:2,3; Rom. 9:10-13.
- Reflect on what heart attitudes in ourselves are uncovered by these passages.

Answers

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Introduction to Question #3

Chapter 26 is a fascinating repeat of Abraham's sins and God's faithfulness in the life of Abraham's son, Isaac. Even Abimelech seems to be repeated, from chapter 21, although it is probably not the same Abimelech; it is probably his son or grandson having the same name.

Question #3

In what ways does history repeat itself in chapter 26?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Compare what happens in chapter 26 to Isaac with what happened previously with Abraham.
- Note what Isaac does, what God does, and even what Abimelech does.

Answers

Introduction to Question #4

In chapter 27, we see God working his sovereign purposes out, but we also see the humans trying to work their own purposes out, even if they are at odds with God's purposes. We see the evils of favouritism in family life, and sin everywhere throughout the supposedly godly covenant family! The sin that seems to be highlighted by both this chapter and the NT is that of Esau (also called Edom elsewhere in the Bible).

Illustration 34: Govert Flinck. Isaac Blessing Jacob. 1638. Oil on canvas. Amsterdam, Rijskmuseum

Question #4

What exactly was Esau's sin, and why was it so very serious, and what has it got to do with us?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Compare what happens eventually in 27:38-40 with what Esau did in 25:32-34.
- See the exact nature of Esau's sin in 25:34 and Heb. 12:16.
- See the seriousness of his sin in Jer. 49:10.
- Challenge your own attitude to your own (new-)birthright by checking 2 Cor. 1:20.

Answers

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To be aware that our sins can affect future generations and even have eternal effects.
- To marry well, or teach our children to marry well, in the Lord.
- To cultivate a submissive and accepting attitude to God's sovereignty.
- To beware of committing the sins of our ancestors, perhaps without even realising.
- To value God's promises wherever we find them in the Bible.
- To start to work on believing all God's promises to us his people.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #10, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

To think about: When we find a subject in the Bible that is uncomfortable or difficult to believe, do we just avoid it and move on to something familiar and easy? Or do we pray about it, allow it to challenge us and transform our minds: Rom 12:2 '*be transformed by the renewing of your minds*'.

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- What warning can we take from Gen. 26:34,35; 27:46?

A	***Isaac, Jacob and Esau- A Range of Possible Answers***
1	Why is Abraham so very concerned to find the right wife for Isaac? a) In 24:1, Abraham realises that the son of promise needs a wife if any of the promises are to come true. If Abraham is old, Isaac must also now be getting to an age at which he ought to be married. If our children appear to need assistance from their parents to find a suitable husband or wife, are we prepared to go through the embarrassment barrier and help, if it seems wise? b) Abraham is concerned that, not only Isaac, but all his descendants should be godly, as the LORD describes in 18:19: 18:19 *For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.*" c) In 18:19, it is also apparent that the LORD's promises to Abraham are conditional: If his descendants are to experience all God's blessing on them as Abraham himself did, they must be godly people '*keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just*' 18:19.

A	***Isaac, Jacob and Esau- A Range of Possible Answers***
	d) In 24:3, Abraham shows that he understands that if Isaac were to marry a Canaanite woman, there would be little hope of him producing godly descendants. e) The whole of chapter 24 shows how Abraham is trusting God to provide a godly spouse for Isaac and, indeed, how the LORD remarkably provides. This should encourage is to pray and trust God in the area of godly spouses for our believing children. f) To confirm your understanding, looking at 28:1-4, where Isaac shows the same concern for his son Jacob to marry a godly woman, and thereby to continue to receive God's covenant blessings down the generations. g) Look back at how Lot and his descendants fared after he had married a Canaanite 19:26,30-38. Lot's descendants end up entirely godless and the enemies of God's people in later times, i.e. the Moabites and Ammonites of Moses' time. h) "Whom shall I marry" is the second most important life decision that we make. It has repercussions for many generations to come, and for eternity.
2	What pattern do we notice with Jacob and Esau that is repeated elsewhere? a) The pattern is that of God choosing (electing) who he is going to bless. In 25:23, God clearly chooses Jacob over Esau. This is confirmed by Rom. 9:10-12: '*Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.* [11] *Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-in order that God's purpose in election might stand:* [12] *not by works but by him who calls-she was told, "The older will serve the younger.*"' b) In particular, God deliberately avoids choosing the older son again, as if to make it clear that he does not bow to human tradition or parental wishes. c) The pattern of God choosing a younger son, and rejecting the first-born, can be seen elsewhere, e.g. Cain/Seth(Gen. 4:25; 9:26; 11:10-26), Shem/Japheth(10:21), Reuben/Judah(49:4,8)/Joseph(49:26). d) It is important to realise that God does not normally reveal his will to us in advance, as he did to Rebekah 25:23. Normally, we just see the results of God's sovereignty against a background of the spiritual dynamics of life: faith, sin, blessing, rejection etc. Ours is to trust and obey; God's is to keep his promises. What should our attitude to God be when we see this pattern emerging? a) In Gen 25:19-34, we clearly see God choosing, so we have no choice but to accept that God has the right to choose one and reject another. b) However, we tend not to like the idea of God choosing. In our consumer-society, we like the idea of us choosing, though. We even accept the need for certain people, for example doctors, politicians, generals, to choose who will live and who will die. c) However, there is something inside us that wants to deny the Creator-God the right to choose. Is it perhaps the spirit of secular humanism that we identified in Gen. 11, or the desire to choose for ourselves that Eve showed in chapter 3?

A	***Isaac, Jacob and Esau- A Range of Possible Answers***
	d) We must bow to God's sovereignty, or we will have great trouble understanding many parts of the Bible, e.g. Mal 1:2,3, and find ourselves fighting against God's will. Mal. 1:1 '*An oracle: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.* [2] *"I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob,* [3] *but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals*.'" Rom. 9:13 '*Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*' e) At the same time, we must remember that just because God has been choosing a people for himself, this does not mean that we are not responsible for our decisions. In particular, we are still responsible for bringing up our children in godliness: Eph. 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*
3	In what ways does history repeat itself in chapter 26? a) In 26:1, Isaac is tested with another famine in the promised land. One supposes that this is a warning to the Canaanites of God's displeasure at their sin. b) Once again, Isaac takes refuge in Gerar, as his father had in chapter 20. c) Gerar is just inside the promised land (10:19) so, although Isaac is perhaps practising brinkmanship (as Abraham did), he nevertheless seems to have learned from Abraham to trust God by remaining in the promised land, where God will bless him. d) In 26:2, the LORD tells Isaac not to repeat Abraham's sin by taking refuge in Egypt. Was Isaac maybe considering it? e) Have we inherited any of our parents' sins? It is easy to do so without even noticing. f) God remembers the promises of 12:1-3;17:7 and reminds Isaac of them in 26:3-6. g) Nevertheless, Isaac repeats the "She is my sister" sin in 26:7, as Abraham had done. h) Isaac seems to be motivated by fear in 26:9 (as per Abraham). i) God protects Isaac in v.8. By arranging for Abimelech to see Isaac and Rebekah engaged in non-sister-brother behaviour. j) God continues to bless Isaac despite his sin in vv.12,13. This is a pattern that was not only true for Abraham and Isaac, but for all God's people: God blesses despite our sin. k) Although Isaac and Abraham both struggled to believe 12:3, both Abimelechs seem to understand it vv.10,11,28,29!

A	***Isaac, Jacob and Esau- A Range of Possible Answers***
4	What exactly was Esau's sin, and why was it so very serious, and what has it got to do with us? a) Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob in 25:32. b) He '*despised*' God's blessing and promises 25:34. c) Esau stood to inherit all God's promises and blessings from Isaac, just as Isaac had from Abraham, but failed to understand the significance of his birthright in 25:32. d) Abraham, Isaac and the other patriarchs all understood that God's blessings transcended death and had to do with inheriting the Earth. Rom. 4:13 … *Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, ... through the righteousness that comes by faith.* e) In contrast, Esau says in 25:32 *"Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?*". f) It is clear that Esau is not focussed on believing God's promises to their family. g) In fact, Hebrews, 12:16 makes it clear what Esau's attitude is: 12:16 *See that no one ... <u>godless</u> like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.* h) In question #2, we learned (hopefully) to submit to God's sovereignty. In this question (#4), we also see that we must accept the teaching of man's responsibility for his own sin. Something that Christians have struggled with is to believe <u>both</u> doctrines: • God sovereignty in election (choosing) • Man's responsibility for his own sin. Both doctrines are clearly taught in Genesis (and elsewhere in the Bible). They are both tough doctrines to understand and believe, but we must accept them even if we cannot understand them fully. Do not expect God necessarily to be "nice". i) How these two doctrines relate is fully explained by the story of Joseph in Genesis 50. See Study #12. j) In the mean-time, we must be clear about God's promises to us (unlike Esau: "*What good is the birthright to me?"* 25:32). k) Do we believe God's promises to us, or are we being 'godless' or 'unbelieving'? (Studies 3, 4, 5 and 6 contain lots of God's promises for us to believe.) l) The penalty for Esau of being unbelieving was severe: Jer. 49:10 '*But I will strip Esau bare; I will uncover his hiding places, so that he cannot conceal himself. His children, relatives and neighbours will perish, and he will be no more.*' m) But, we can claim <u>all</u> of God's promises for ourselves today, in Christ, not just those made to Abraham and Isaac: 2 Cor. 1:20 *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "<u>Yes</u>" in Christ.* In other words, any promises to God's people that we can find in the Bible also belong to us in some way ...

END OF STUDY 9 ON 'ISAAC, JACOB AND ESAU'

STUDY 10: GENESIS 27:41-35:15: JACOB: BLESSED, PRESERVED, CHASTISED, CONVERTED

From Augustine of Hippo "Confessions", Chapter 7/17 (translation by Albert C. Outler)

'But, wretched youth that I was—supremely wretched even in the very outset of my youth--I had entreated chastity of thee and had prayed, "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet." For I was afraid lest thou shouldst hear me too soon, and too soon cure me of my disease of lust which I desired to have satisfied rather than extinguished.'

Illustration 35: Augustine of Hippo by Botticelli. This Augustine (354 - 430AD) started badly but ended well, rather like Jacob.

Background

Isaac's son, Jacob, leaves home unconverted and rests overnight at a place called 'Bethel', the house of God. Many years later he returns to Bethel 35:15, but as a true believer.

Jacob begins life rather as Augustine did, and ends rather as Augustine did. All the time, God is faithful to his promises, blessing and chastising Jacob, until eventually he claims him for his own. However, it is not completely obvious when exactly Jacob is converted; some careful Bible study is required.

We can learn from God's dealings with Jacob and Jacob's dealings with God profound spiritual lessons about the reality of our own Christian experience.

Aims of This Study

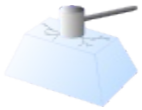
- To learn more of God's faithfulness despite our sin.
- To locate the point of Jacob's conversion.
- To understand Jacob's conversion.
- To check our own experience against what the Bible tells us through Jacob's life.

Study Guide

Chapters 27 and 28 see God preserving and blessing Jacob despite all sort of bad behaviour, not only by Jacob, but also by his family. Jacob's relationship problems are charted continually through chapters 27 to 35, involving his brother, his wives (plural), his uncle, some Canaanites, his sons.

But, the main problem is Jacob's spiritual state: unconverted. God deals with him from Bethel, all the way back to Bethel and, by the time we reach chapters 33 to 35, there is evidence that he has finally been converted. He is now often called 'Israel' in Genesis.

Then, in chapter 35, the older generations die off and Israel's 12 sons are listed. This sets the scene for the account of Joseph which is covered by the final studies. Notice how the Genesis Roller-Coaster (Page 1) is now definitely heading upwards. Things are getting better in God's kingdom.



Ice-breaker

Can you think of people who appeared to have become Christians but, sadly, later turned out only to have had a very superficial experience of God? Perhaps they talked the talk for a while but, long term, failed to walk the walk.

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

In chapters 27 to 35, God rescues, preserves and continues to bless Jacob, as he runs away from his angry brother Esau. When he eventually returns to Esau in chapter 32, he owns vast herds and flocks from which to select gifts for his brother. God has clearly been blessing him, but the blessing is not given against a background of godly living, ideal family life, and happy relationships.

Question #1

In what ways do we see God blessing Jacob despite Jacob's behaviour and despite his family's behaviour?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- See how God preserves Jacob from Esau in 27:41-28:8.
- Note how Isaac repeats what Abraham did for him in 28:1-8.
- Note the repeat of God's covenant blessings in 28:1-8.
- Look up the following key verses which show Jacob being looked after by God: 27:41; 30:1; 31:29; 32:6; 34:30; 35:5; 35:22; 35:16-29.
- Although we should not use God's grace as an excuse for sin, we should be clear that God can and does bless us despite our sin Rom. 5:20 and Rom. 6:1.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #2

In chapters 29 and 32, God blesses Jacob still further, but it did not feel like blessing.
Heb. 12:11 *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*
God is clearly chastising Jacob in order to bring him to himself.

Question #2

In what ways do we see God chastising Jacob?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Observe Jacob getting his just deserts in 29:25. Notice the play on Jacob's name.
- Note evidence of how Jacob is taking his chastisement in 32:1-21.

Answers

Introduction to Question #3

By the end of the story of Jacob, he is clearly trusting God for himself and not simply receiving second hand blessings from Abraham and Isaac (see Q.4 in Study 4). However, when was Jacob actually converted? There is a range of possibilities, but the answer is important, because we should not to think of conversion as a superficial thing, a mere decision, or something borne purely out of fear.

Illustration 36: Jacob Wrestling with the Angel – Gustave Doré, 1855 (Granger Collection, New York). Note how Doré does not reveal the true identity of the 'man' in 32:22 and just settles for a generic representation of an angel!

Question #3

Q3 List all the possible occasions on which Jacob may have been converted. Choose one.

In amongst all the troubles, Jacob receives not only God's protection and blessing, but also a set of profound spiritual experiences.

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Look at 28:10-22 and 31:53,54.
- Look for evidence in 32:9-12.
- Work out what is going on in 32:22-32. Warning: Be careful not to read ideas into this passage that are not actually there!

Answers

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Introduction to Question #4

Having decided in Q.3 at what stage Jacob was actually converted, we should look for fruit in his life. Jesus in Luke 3:8:

> *"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham."*

In Jacob's case,the fruit starts to grow immediately.

Question #4

What evidence is there that Jacob is now a true believer?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Compare Jacob's behaviour in 33:3 with 32:16.
- Put together 32:28 and 33:22. Look in the NIV margin if appropriate.

Illustration 37: El Elohe Israel in Hebrew (words L-R), as in Genesis 33:20

Answers

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Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To be clear that there is the need for a personal relationship with God, a one-to-one trust in him.
- To understand that there was a point in every Christian's life when he was converted.
- To concede that it is not always obvious when that point was!
- Not to rely simply upon having had Christian parents.

IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #11, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to

have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

To think about: Does our concept of 'discipling' end as soon as people have heard something of the Gospel? Or, do we plan to help them progress until they are definitely converted, and then onwards, growing in godliness?

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- Establish the true identity of the man/angel in 32:24 from reading Hosea 12:2-6. Notice also how Jacob's conversion is paralleled by Hosea's invitation to repent to Judah.
- Notice how the final Jacobite deception turns out in 45:26. In God's mercy (and perhaps humour?) the deception of Jacob by his sons actually turns out happily.

	Jacob - A Range of Possible Answers
1	In what ways do we see God blessing Jacob despite Jacob's behaviour and despite his family's behaviour? a) In 27:41-28:8, Jacob is preserved from his brother's murderous threats by being sent away from Esau. b) Isaac does for Jacob, what Abraham had done for him: He sends Jacob to get a relatively godly wife from his mother's family 28:1. This is to stop him from marrying a godless Canaanite woman, so that God's blessing will continue down the family line. c) In 28:3-5, Jacob is clearly inheriting God's covenant promises to Abraham. d) In 29:31, we are again reminded that fertility belongs to the LORD (Cf. 4:1,25), as God increases the fruitfulness of Jacob's family still further. e) In chapter 27 through to the end of the book (especially to the end of chapter 34), we see God preserving Jacob through endless trouble and strife with other people: • Esau 27:41, • the quarrel between Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah 30:1, • Laban 31:29, • Esau 32:6 again (but this time with 400 men), • Simeon and Levi 34:30 killing the Shechemites, • the fall-out from the rape of Dinah by the Shechemites 35:5, • Reuben's immorality 35:22, and • multiple bereavement 35:16-29. Jacob has continual trouble in his relationships with other people, but God just keeps preserving and blessing him, being faithful to him. Although we should not use God's grace as an excuse for sin, we should be clear that God can and does bless us despite our sin Rom. 5:20 and Rom. 6:1.
2	Q2. In what ways do we see God chastising Jacob? a) Notice how he gets his just deserts from Laban 29:25! The deceiver (chapter 27)

A	***Jacob - A Range of Possible Answers***
	gets deceived (also 27:36; 31:26). The irony of this deception being so like what he himself did to Isaac leads us to wonder whether Jacob's many people-problems are all examples of God chastising him and drawing him to himself. b) However, by Ch. 32, God brings him to the point of desperate fear of Esau and his 400 men in 32:7 "*great fear and distress*". c) His fear is so desperate that he prays in 32:11 "*Save me, … for I am afraid*". d) Towards the end of chapter 32, he appears to be hiding in craven fear behind the herds, flocks, women and children 32:21.
3	Q3 List all the possible occasions on which Jacob <u>may</u> have been converted. Choose <u>one</u>. In amongst all the troubles, Jacob receives not only God's protection and blessing, but also a set of profound spiritual experiences. a) In Ch. 28, Jacob encounters the 'God of Bethel' 28:10-22. Here, God become real to him, and he makes a very conditional vow to God 20-22. b) In 31:53,54, we see some rather impersonal evidence of tentative "faith". Jacob takes an oath in the name of his father's God (perhaps not really his own God yet?) c) By Ch. 32, God brings him to the point of desperate fear (of Esau and his 400 men) and Jacob cries out to God in a much more personal way to "save" him. He still cannot say "my God". He still appears unconverted at this second possible point of conversion. d) In 32:22-32, Jacob meets the God of *Peniel 'face of God'*. The centre of Jacob's spiritual experience is when he wrestles with an angel who turns out to be God (Hos. 12:2-6). The meaning? God is teaching him that he is spending his whole life wrestling with men; he is wholly concerned with his relationship problems, especially with Esau, of whom he is petrified 32:7. By dislocating his hip, God teaches him that he could overpower him any time he liked. God seems to say that, all through his life, Jacob may have thought he was struggling with men(i.e. in merely human relationships), but actually he was struggling with God, resisting God, holding out and refusing to trust him completely. Notice how God '*could not overpower him'* in 32:25. Well, obviously, God could have overpowered him easily, so he must have been holding back to make a point to Jacob: The one relationship that he now had to sort out was his relationship with God; he had not yet let God take control of his life. So Jacob finally decides to trust God wholeheartedly. During the struggle, Jacob realises that the one thing he must have is God's blessing and he refuses to let him go 32:26. This must surely be the point of his conversion. It is as though this is Jacob's last chance to trust God, and he seizes it: "*I will not let you go until you bless me*". e) And God does bless him, but only if he will take a new *name* 32:27,28. The fact that Jacob allows God to name him shows that he recognises God's authority over him. Think of the other instances of things and people being named in Genesis: God naming everything in chapter 1; Adam naming the animals; Adam even

A	***Jacob - A Range of Possible Answers***
	names the woman 'Eve'. God renames Abram in 17:5 etc, etc. f) The traditional view that the Peniel episode has to do with "wrestling in prayer" seems unhelpful, and clouds the single most important event in Jacob's life, his conversion. g) Nevertheless, God gives him what he desires – to be reconciled to Esau. This is explained in 33:10 "*seeing your face is like seeing the face of God*". h) Jacob's conversion is a challenge to us to make sure that we have personally made God our own God. Have you let him give you a new name, as it were?
4	Q4. What evidence is there that Jacob is now a true believer? a) Now, instead of cowering behind the women, children and animals, he goes out in front to meet Esau and his 400 men 33:3. b) Finally, the altar '*El Elohe*': In 28, God had covenanted with Jacob and he had responded in a rather cagey way. He says "*the LORD <u>will</u> be my God*", but it all sounds rather conditional and in the distant future; echoes of Augustine "*Lord, make me holy, ... but not yet*". But now, in 33:20 Jacob sets up an altar to the LORD, combining God's name with his own new name 32:28 of 'Israel'. The name of the altar, '*El Elohe Israel*', explicitly means 'God, the God of Israel', that is: God is now Jacob's God; Jacob is now definitely a Christian as we might say nowadays.

END OF STUDY 10 ON 'JACOB: BLESSED, PRESERVED, CHASTISED, CONVERTED'

STUDY 11: GENESIS 35:16 - 45:24; 49:1-28; 50:15-21: JOSEPH: HIS BROTHERS, AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

From the English Standard Version of the Bible: Romans 8:28,29
'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brothers.'

Background and Study Guide
Romans 8:28 may be an allusion to the life of Joseph who eventually became the *first-born* (i.e. the chief or prince) *among many brothers* (Gen. 49:26), but not until after he had seen God working all things working together for his good - especially the bad things, mainly received at the hands of those same brothers.

Illustration 38: Pharaoh Rameses II (1279-1213BC)- a much later king of Egypt, but perhaps this is how Joseph would have seemed to his bewildered brothers? Photo: D.W. Legg, 2004, British Museum

Chapter 34 and then 35:22-26 introduce Jacob's 12 sons, but does so in such a way as to highlight their bad behaviour (all of)34 and 35:22. This is not just a celebration of their sire's prolificness; it is introducing the baddies in the story of Joseph. Not only is Reuben's sin recorded in 35:22 (just in case we should imagine that Reuben was good because of 37:21), but so is that of Judah in the sordid chapter 38.

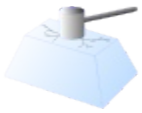
Isaac's other son, Esau, has not been forgotten, even though his was not the chosen line. Chapter 36 shows God blessing Esau (Edom); The Edomites receive the fulfilment Isaac's "blessing" in 27:40 and gain both independent and prolific existence. They do their fair share of fulfilling the commands in 9:1 and 1:22.

But, the main story from Ch. 37 to the end of the book is that of Joseph. This chapter highlights the sins of Jacob, Joseph and the twelve brothers: Favouritism, arrogance and hatred, slave-trading and deceit (like father, like son).

The story ends with the astonishing verse, 50:20, which seems to explain life, the universe and everything, and easily accounts for what God has been doing in and through Joseph and his brothers. This verse is the Genesis equivalent of Romans 8:28.

Aims of This Study

- To learn spiritual lessons from Joseph's example.
- For parents to take warning from how Jacob's family turned out.
- To understand (a least a bit) how human responsibility and God's sovereignty relate.
- To see how God and man can both plan things, but man plans evil things and is guilty of sin, whereas God plans the same sad events but intends good and is thus not guilty of sin.



Ice-breaker

Did your brothers or sisters ever do anything really mean to you?
[Do not answer if the rest of the group know them!]

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

In chapters 34 to 38, we read mainly about the misbehaviour of Jacob's children, especially his sons. Even though Jacob is now a believer, his children do not automatically turn out well. Even though the LORD has promised to be their God (chapter 17), Jacob's parenting skills are clearly called into question ...

Illustration 39: Kaitep and his wife Hetepheres ~2300BC from Egypt. A pair of worried-looking parents perhaps? Photo D.W. Legg 2004, British Museum

Question #1

How does Jacob live to regret the poor upbringing of his children?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Locate Jacob's 'deceit' theme again in 37:31,32. Who was deceived? 37:34
- Note the absence of a particular parenting skill in 35:22, 34:5 and 34:30,31.
- Refer to 1 Tim. 3:4 for a modern application to us.
- Note another parenting pitfall in 37:4.
- A parenting blunder in 37:9-11.

Answers

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Introduction to Question #2

Although he might make some mistakes, Joseph sets us a good example for Christian living in chapters 37 to 40, despite the fact that lived over 3,000 years ago. We see complex interactions between Joseph, God and other people.

Illustration 40: Joseph interprets the dream of the Pharaoh. Painting by Peter von Cornelius.

Question #2

What lessons about the Christian life do we learn from Joseph 37-41?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- To start-off, keep God in the picture by noting what happens in 37:21,22.
- Then add other people into the mixture that is Joseph's life: 37:4,8; 37:36; chapter 39. See if John 15:18 throws any light on what is happening.
- Against all the above, look at Joseph himself in 39:9.
- Note the differing speeds with which God is dealing with Joseph in chapters 40 and 41.
- Look again at how Joseph behaves in 37:2,5,9; 40:18 and 41:27. Be careful with how you understand Joseph's forthrightness. See Study 12 for why!

Answers

Introduction to Question #3

Despite the bad press so far, there is evidence that God is at work even in the hearts of Joseph's brothers.

Question #3

What evidence is there of spiritual progress in the lives of Joseph's brothers?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Work out how Joseph is testing the brothers in chapter 42.
- See how they react in 42:21,22,28 and compare with Psalm 51:4.
- Look at Reuben's progress from 35:22, then 37:21,22; 42:22; 42:37.
- Look at Judah's progress since 37:26 and chapter 38, in 44:30-34; 49:8-12.

Answers

Introduction to Question #4

In chapters 37 to 50, we can see two main forces at work, God's sovereignty and man's sin. However, there is only a single series of events.

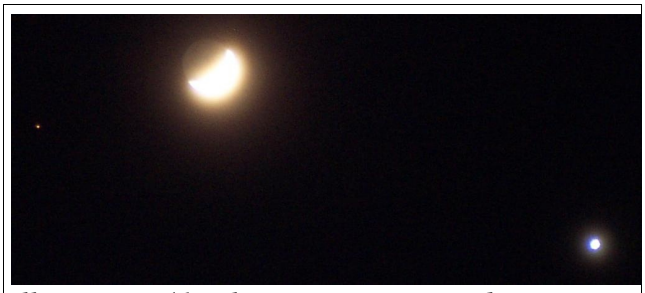


Illustration 41: The Moon, Venus and Mars over Ashford (Mx.); Photo D.W. Legg 2004. The ancients worshipped all sorts of gods, including heavenly bodies, and thought them to be in control of some aspects of life, but not of everything. Such gods were not sovereign.

Question #4

How does 50:20 help us to understand God's sovereignty and man's sin in relation to each other?

Gen. 50:20 "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*."

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Establish what events are being described in 50:20.
- Work out how God and humans relate to the same set of events.
- Think about how it is that God is not guilty of sin because of all the evil that happened to Joseph.
- Could Joseph's brothers claim that they were only doing God's will?
- Compare Gen. 50:20 with 8:28. Were these verses intended to explain happy events in our lives?
- Do 50:20 and Rom. 8:28 also perhaps help us to forgive those who sin against us?

Answers

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- To learn from the repeated theme in Genesis that we must bring up our children to be godly.
- To expect Jesus to work in our lives to produce spiritual fruit, even traumatically sometimes.
- To pursue holiness and avoid temptation, as Joseph did.
- To speak the uncomfortable truth, but tactfully, when it is our responsibility to do so.
- Humbly to accept the doctrine of God's sovereignty, without allowing it to be an excuse for sin.
- To believe that God is working all things together for our good, even the tough things. This

should help us to be more forgiving towards our enemies.

- To be clear that sometimes God works slowly (be patient), but sometimes quickly (be thankful?)

> IMPORTANT: If the following study, Study #12, is to be done as group, make sure the group members know that they will need to have read the next chapters beforehand.

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

To think about: What repeated themes and patterns are we noticing many times throughout Genesis?

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- Romans 8:1 to 9:21 explains God's sovereignty systematically.
- Acts 7:9,10 describe how God was working in Joseph's life.

A	***Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	How does Jacob live to regret the poor upbringing of his children? Jacob pays at various points for his poor upbringing of his children. a) In chapter 37, they have obviously learned from their father's deceitful example. In 37:31,32, they perform an elaborate deception, just the sort of thing that Jacob might have done (e.g. chapter 27). But Jacob was on the receiving end this time 37:34. As Isaac copied Abram's sins, so Jacob's sons copied Jacob's sins. b) In 35:22, they have learned that Jacob is unwilling to correct them. Verse 22 says that Jacob '*heard of it*' (Reuben's sin), but just where you would expect the text to describe how Jacob (Israel) reacted, there is nothing! Although Jacob's sons were now all responsible adults (well, adults, anyway), the writer appears to point out Jacob's failure to correct his sons on several occasions, leading us to suppose that he also failed to discipline them as children. c) That Jacob does not act to right wrongs is also obvious in 34:5. He seems content to let his sons take the law into their own hands (Ch.34). d) When Jacob finally speaks on the issue of rape of Dinah and his sons' revenge on the Shechemites, it is all too late 34:30,31. His sons are out of control. e) How well qualified would Jacob have been to be an elder or deacon in your church? 1 Tim. 3:4 *He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.* [5] *(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)* f) At this stage of biblical history, Jacob was actually the leader of "*God's church*"! g) And in Ch. 37, Jacob shows blatant favouritism towards Joseph 37:4. h) When Jacob manages to rebuke one of his sons, curiously, he chooses the wrong

A	***Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers***
	one and rebukes Joseph for having a dream which was actually from God 37:9,10,11. Joseph may have been unwise or at least tactless, but Jacob does not rebuke him for his lack of sensitivity, but for the content of the dream. i) We must learn from Jacob. Poor upbringing of our children will not only affect us, but it will affect God's work, and generations to come. This theme runs throughout the book of Genesis from chapter 3 to 50. See 50:15 for example. j) There are a couple of useful parenting books, References 17 and 18 on page 2.
2	What lessons about the Christian life do we learn from Joseph 37-41? a) We see God preserving Joseph from 10 of his brothers through Reuben in chapter 37:21,22. The theme of God providing for his people runs all the way through Genesis. b) Nevertheless, Joseph has many enemies: His brothers who hated him in 37:4,8; the Midianites(=Ishmaelites) who were his cousins but were now enemies of God's people; Mrs Potiphar, whose trial Joseph handles admirably in chapter 39. We see John 15:18 being modelled for us by Joseph: 15:18 "*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.*" (Jesus) If we are friends with God, the world will hate us. c) From here on Joseph begins to display distinctly godly character 39:9. Avoiding temptation and fornication is as important post 1960s as it was 3,000 years ago. d) In chapter 40, Joseph's imprisonment lasts over 2 years. During that time he has to keep trusting God. How good are we with the long trials he sends? e) Nevertheless, during the 2 years, God is at work sending dreams and interpretations 40:8. f) And this eventually gets Joseph out of prison in Ch. 41, but not just out of prison. In God's amazing providence Joseph is instantly made prime minister. We see that God can do 'slow' and God can also do 'fast'! g) In all the dreams and interpretations, we see Joseph declaring God's messages fearlessly, although tactlessly at first 37:2,5,9. How fearless are we when God wants us to tell people something difficult 40:18 or risky 41:27? Gen. 40:19 "*Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh.*" - Joseph to the poor baker. h) As will become clear in Study 12, Joseph is a type of Christ, so we should not be too quick to criticise his forthrightness. Compare Joseph's hard statement in 40:19 above with that of the Lord Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, for example: 23:27 "*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.* [28] *In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*"
3	What evidence is there of spiritual progress in the lives of Joseph's brothers? a) In chapter 42, Joseph seems to be testing his brothers to see if they are just the

A	***Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers***
	same evil characters. So, in 42:15 he wants to see evidence that they have not killed Benjamin (the remaining favourite son, 42:4) in the same way as they had treated him (Joseph). They haven't, so at least they have withdrawn from their previous depths of sin! b) Joseph's apparently harsh treatment of his brothers seems to cause a conversation that shows genuine awareness of their own sin in 42:21,22. c) In 42:28, when they discover that they have been tricked, it is clear that they know their sin is against God. Seeing our sin as against God is vital to progress in holiness. See Psalm 51:4. d) Having previously been guilty of gross sin 35:22, Reuben seems to have made some spiritual progress: In 37:21,22, he attempts to rescue Joseph; in 42:37 he takes full responsibility for the safety of Simeon and Benjamin, and it was Reuben who really had a clear view of their sin in 42:22. e) Reuben, however, never really regains his position as chief son. It is Judah who offers himself as a ransom for Benjamin in 44:33, although it is Joseph who is really in charge: 44:18 "... *though you are equal to Pharaoh himself*". As a kind of ransom sacrifice, Judah seems to typify Christ. f) Perhaps this is why the Messiah is prophesied to come from Judah's line in Ch. 49:10? Although Joseph is effectively kind at present (in Genesis, that is), one day one of Judah's descendants will be king. g) It is Judah who shows that he cares for his father (Ex. 20:12) Jacob too, in 44:30-34 – quite a contrast with the sneaky deception they performed when they sold Joseph off as a slave in chapter 37. Note how in 37:26, although he is mostly interested in money, Judah at least seems to have a conscience: 37:26 *Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? … he is our brother, our own flesh and blood …* h) When Jacob blesses his sons in chapter 49, it is Judah who receives the best blessing and the promise of siring the kingly line 49:8-12. Such blessing (which after all was God's blessing, not just Jacob's) is evidence of true repentance and a close walk with God, especially as it appears that Judah has displaced Reuben as chief son. i) In chapters 42 – 44, we see a model of some aspects of the way in which Jesus is at work in the lives and hearts of his people. He exposes our sin, tests and scares us, but also forgives us and grows us.
4	How does 50:20 help us to understand God's sovereignty and man's sin in relation to each other? Gen. 50:20 "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*." a) Notice first of all that 50:20 is talking about a single series of events, namely Joseph's ill-treatment at the hands of his brothers.

A	***Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers***

b) At one level, Joseph's brothers were in control of events and intend harm to Joseph. This was clearly sinful.
c) On another level, God was in control of events and only intended good – the saving of many Israelite and Egyptian lives through Joseph being becoming prime minister of Egypt.
d) The difference between God's control and man's control, between God's providence and man's sin, is the intention in each case: God intended good; man intended evil.
e) It is the same as the difference between a knife wound and a scalpel incision: The knife wound is intended to harm, the scalpel is intended to heal – but the same act is common to both scenarios.
f) Thus we can understand a little of how God is in control of evil events, and yet remains sinless.
g) We also see, how man can be doing God's will, but also be responsible for his own sin, as Joseph's brothers were.
h) Rom. 9:19-21 makes the same point, but in a way that keeps us humble!
i) Thus Gen. 50:20 explains life, the universe and everything. People often say that God's sovereignty is beyond human comprehension, and this is true, but actually we <u>can</u> understand quite a lot simply because the much-neglected book of Genesis explains it to us lucidly.
j) Stepping back a little from 50:20, in chapters 46 to 50 we see God providing for Israel during a famine through the incredible providences surrounding Joseph.
k) We also see the blessing promised in 12:1-3 overflowing to the Egyptians: Gen. 12:3 "*all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*"
l) The key to the whole Joseph story, and the test of whether we really believe in the sovereignty of God as revealed in Genesis is provided in 50:20, one of the most important verses in the Bible. It explains how the same events, including sinful ones, can be intended both by humans and by God. The difference is that the humans intended evil, but God intended the same events for good. Rom. 8:28 bears immediate comparison, because it was not written for happy, holiday, times, but for times of trial.
m) Do you believe in a demigod? I.e. Half a God, one who only gives us nice things. Or, do you believe in a sovereign God who rules over all, and can therefore be trusted in all circumstances when easy or tough? It is impossible to trust a god who is only in control when things are going well. We have to believe that '*in all things God works for the good of those who love him*' Rom 8:28, not just the nice, easy things, '*all things*'.
n) Pagans worship gods who are just in control of some aspects of life, e.g. Venus the god of love, St. Christopher the traveller's god etc. The true God, however, is in charge of everything, the good, the bad, the inexplicable, the future; this is real sovereignty.

END OF STUDY 11 ON 'JOSEPH: HIS BROTHERS, AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY'

STUDY 12: GENESIS 37:12-36; 45:25 - 50:26
JOSEPH, JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION

From A.W. Pink, Gleanings in Genesis

'As we read thoughtfully the books of the Old Testament our study of them is but superficial if they fail to show us that ... God was preparing the way for the coming of His Son. The central purpose in the Divine Incarnation, the great outstanding object in the life and death of the Lord Jesus, were prefigured beforehand, and ought to have been rendered familiar to the minds of men. Among the means thus used of God was the history of different persons through whom the life and character of Christ were to a remarkable degree made manifest beforehand. Thus Adam represented His Headship, Abel His Death, Noah His Work in providing a refuge for His people, Melchizedech pointed to Him as priest, Moses as prophet, David as King. But the fullest and most striking of all these typical personages was Joseph, for between his history and that of Christ we may trace fully a hundred points of analogy!' [10]

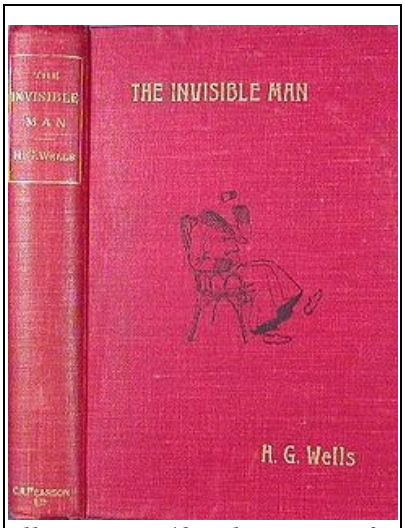


Illustration 42: The cover of 'The Invisible Man' by H.G. Wells.

Background

We might decide that Mr Pink is overenthusiastic when he finds no fewer than 100 ways in which Joseph is a type of Christ, a picture of Jesus. But it would probably be better to err on the side of enthusiasm than to fail to see Jesus in Genesis and in the life of Joseph. The Lord Jesus himself criticises his disciples twice in Luke 24 for not seeing him in their Old Testaments:

> Luke 24:27 *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.* [and also 24:44]

So once again, we see the sovereignty of God in Genesis: Not only do the words of Scripture show God's sovereignty, but we even see him controlling the events of history and the progress of a man's life in such a way that that man models what will happen hundreds of years later in the life of the Lord Jesus. This should hurt our brains as we try to understand it, but who would ever worship a god he could understand?

Study Guide

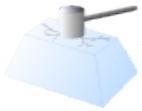
Chapter 37 describes how Joseph came to be hated, envied, and then sold as a slave to a man called Potiphar in Egypt. The next chapters, up to 44, were covered in Study 11, but will be referred to again in this study. The sordid tale of Judah and Tamar in chapter 38 is also vital to understanding God's dealings with Joseph and his brothers, and so, the story of Joseph occupies an enormous chunk of Genesis, running from chapter 37 to the end of the book. Hence the need to tackle it in more than one study.

We have already observed that the structure of the whole of Genesis is a kind of roller-coaster where the height of the ride tracks the health of God's kingdom. But, too Joseph has his very own roller-coaster ride down to the depths when he is in prison 39:20, then up to the heights when he is second only to Pharaoh himself 44:18.

Though there is no explicit NT support, virtually all agree that Joseph is to be seen as a type of Christ. Yet even Joseph dies in 50:26, but not before he himself expresses his faith in the Resurrection in the same way that his ancestors had done: He makes his brothers (ironically) promise to take his bones to the Promised Land. All biblical types prove to be inadequate in the end. Joseph now waits with us for the Resurrection which one day Jesus will command.

Aims of This Study

- To learn how Joseph is a type (model, picture) of Jesus Christ.
- To appreciate even more what Jesus has achieved for his people.
- To remind ourselves of the main themes and applications of Genesis.



Ice-breaker

Which is your favourite book of the Bible?

Questions for Group Discussion

Introduction to Question #1

In chapters 37 to 50, Joseph clearly models the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Illustration 43: Joseph sold by his brothers, by Anna Bilińska-Bohdanowiczowa, 1883.

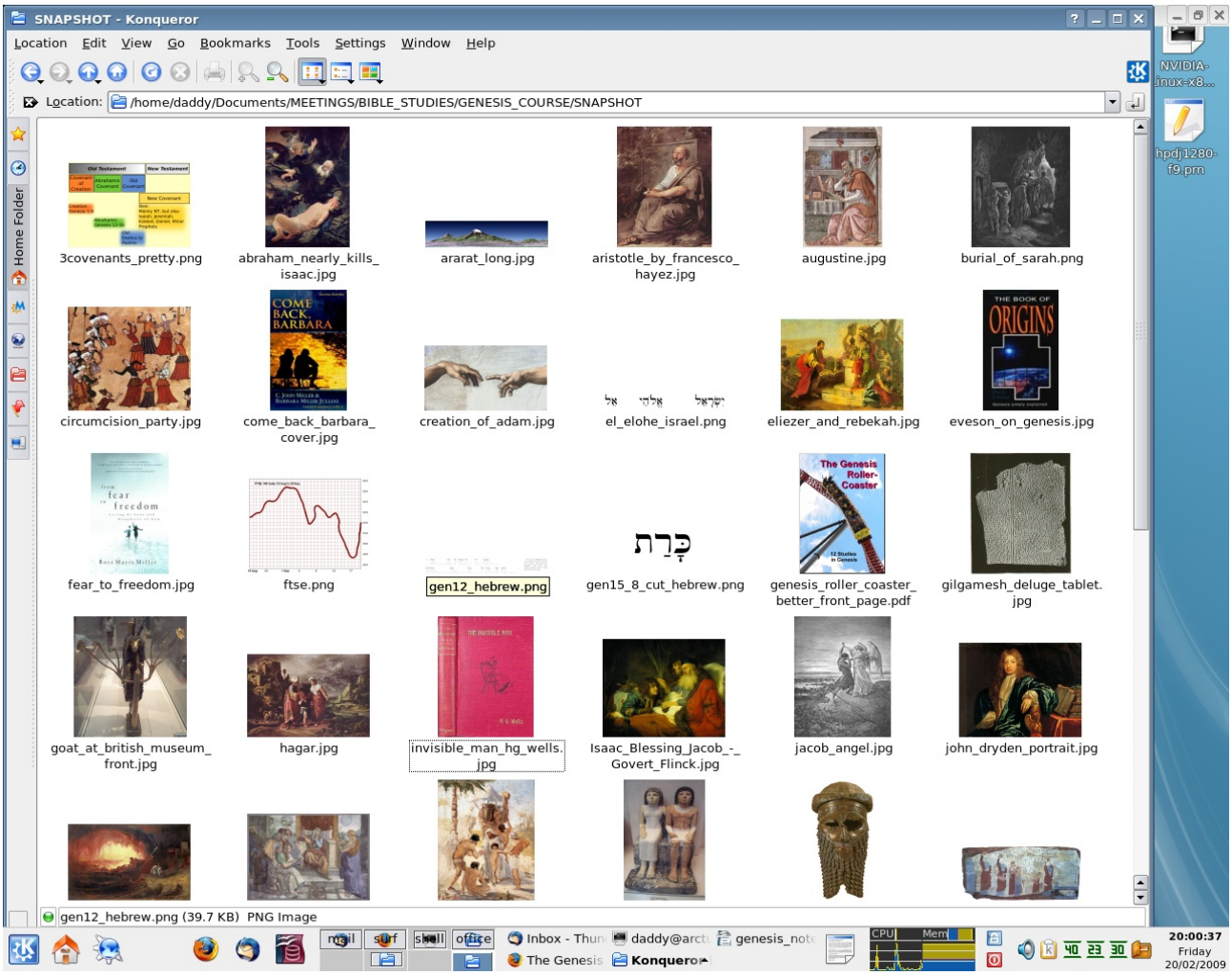
Question #1

What are the main ways in which Joseph is a type (a picture, a model) of Jesus Christ?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- Note the overall 'shape' of Joseph's life by comparing it with that of Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11. What should our attitude be?
- Compare Israel's attitude to Joseph in 37:3 with Matt. 17:5.
- Look at the attitudes to Joseph of his brothers and compare these to how Jesus was received (John 1:11).
- How does what happens in 37:35; 45:28 look from Jacob's perspective?
- What Christlikenesses do we see in chapter 40?
- Check out Acts 5:31. How does Joseph achieve similar things?
- Most importantly, see how Joseph provided salvation, and to whom, in 47:12; 47:13,14, 25; 50:20b.

Answers



Introduction to Question #2

Having 50 chapters, Genesis is quite a long book, and we have covered it in just 12 studies. There are lots of details that we have missed out, but hopefully we have picked up all the major themes.

Question #2

What are the major themes of Genesis?

How should we put into practice what we learned from the major themes in Genesis?

Explanation of What is Being Asked

- For each of the major themes from Genesis in the table below, work out where we see them in the book (i.e. be like the noble Bereans):Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*
- Depending upon how your brain works, you may find it more comfortable to recall themes from Genesis, and then locate them in the table below, rather than the other way round. Or try remembering major events and people first; whatever ...
- Fill in the column headed '**Where in Genesis?**'.
- Fill in the column headed '**Application**'. i.e. What should we now do?

Answers

Please use the table below:-

Major Themes in Genesis			
	Theme	**Where in Genesis?** [i.e. who or what event]	**Application**
1	The sovereignty of God		
2	Types of Christ		
3	Man 'imaging' God well		
4	Man 'imaging' God badly		

Major Themes in Genesis				
	Theme	**Where in Genesis?** [i.e. who or what event]		**Application**
5	God choosing and rejecting	*Chosen*	*Rejected*	
6	God bringing good even out of the heathen?			
7	God giving fresh starts			
8	God's providence and faithfulness to his creation, people and his promises			

Major Themes in Genesis			
	Theme	**Where in Genesis?** [i.e. who or what event]	**Application**
9	The cycle of God's blessing, man's rebellion, God's judgement		
10	The way down		
11	The way up		
12	The contrast between trusting (faith in) and not trusting God (unbelief)		
13	Conversion and progress in godliness		

Major Themes in Genesis			
	Theme	**Where in Genesis?** [i.e. who or what event]	**Application**
14	The trials of God's people		
15	Opposition to God's commands, people and promises		
16	The origin of everything		
17	How (not) to mess up relationships		
18	Parenting (badly)		
19	God's involvement in everything		

Major Themes in Genesis			
	Theme	**Where in Genesis?** [i.e. who or what event]	**Application**
20	Who is the seed of the woman who will slay the serpent 3:15?		
21	"All peoples on earth will be blessed" 12:3		
22	The reign of death		
23			
24			

Practical Applications/Disciplines etc.

- Simply to put into practice what we have learned from Genesis: new understanding, new attitudes, new desires, new behaviour, new repentance, stronger faith, ...

Questions/Ideas/Thoughts for further study or meditation

To think about: What things have you, personally, learned from studying Genesis? How can you now put these into practice?

Which is the most important verse in Genesis? I would choose 50:20, because it juxtaposes God's plan for good on man's every attempt to do evil, and shows God's sovereignty prevailing. It not only summarises all of the Genesis roller-coaster, but life, the universe and everything!

Further passages to study at home or if you run out of questions.

- Quickly read through the book of Revelation. Identify many, many, ideas that came originally from Genesis, e.g. the Tree of Life, the 12 Tribes, etc.

A	***Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers***
1	What are the main ways in which Joseph is a type (a picture, a model) of Jesus Christ? a) Joseph has his very own roller-coaster ride down to the depths when he is in prison 39:20, then up to the heights when he is second only to Pharaoh himself 44:18. This is the same shape as Jesus' life, as explained in Phil. 2:5: *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: [6] Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross! [9] Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, [10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. Thus he is an example of humility to us as commanded by Paul. b) Joseph starts off as the son whom Israel (Jacob) loved most out of all his sons. Although Israel sinned in his favouritism, Matthew tells us something similar, btu greater about Jesus: Matt. 17:5 ... *a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!*" c) But although, Joseph spoke the truth to his brothers, they hated him, especially when he spoke the truth about their sin. In 37:2; 5-7; 9; and after the various dreams, although tactlessly at first, Joseph speaks the truth to people. In 37:4,8, because he spoke the truth to them, he was hated by his brothers. In 37:26, Joseph is handed over to gentiles. Similarly, the Jews did not deal with Jesus themselves but handed him over to some Gentiles, the Romans. d) 37:35; 45:28: In Jacob's experience, Joseph dies and is resurrected. e) In chapter 40, Joseph is the only one who knows the mind of God, like Jesus. Rom. 11:34 f) All Joseph's dreams and predictions came true. John 10:41; Rom. 3:4 g) Joseph is greatly humbled in many ways, even suffering for sin that he did not commit, but in the end is highly exalted (with the result that the sons of Israel repent and are forgiven.) In Acts 5:31 *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel*. h) Joseph tests and chastises his brothers in chapter 42. Be warned: Jesus often does this to his disciples.

<table>
<tr><td> </td><td>Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>i) Joseph becomes the saviour, not only of the Jews, but also of the many peoples – the Egyptians and all who came to him for food, including even the Canaanites 47:13,14. Indeed there was no-one else to go to for the 'bread of life'. Once again 50:20b shows itself to be a very important verse. The 'saving of many lives' includes both Jews and Gentiles.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>For each of the following major themes in Genesis, work out where we see them in the book.
<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Major Themes in Genesis</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th>Theme</th><th>Where in Genesis?</th><th>Application</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>The sovereignty of God</td><td>Everywhere, from Creation, through Providence, to personal dealings with his people. God is always shown to be unique and in every way superior to the pagan gods. God is the one who plans, initiates, rescues, and eventually does what he said he would. Sometimes he moves quickly (chapter 41), sometimes it takes thousands of years (chapters 5 and 40).</td><td>We should never mistake the true God for a mere pagan god who is only sovereign over one aspect of life. The true God reigns over everything, therefore he can always be trusted, must be feared, and will prove faithful.

Be more concerned for God's name than with making a name for ourselves (chapter 11).</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Types of Christ</td><td>Adam, Noah, Isaac, Joseph, Judah and others</td><td>When we see Christ typified by others, his roles are illustrated colourfully; our understanding and worship should be enhanced.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Man 'imaging' God well</td><td>Adam 5:3, Everyone 9:6, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph</td><td>It is possible for us to 'image' God well or badly in different areas of life (fatherhood, husbands, children, leaders, friends, brothers, workers, creators, etc.) When we image God well, we bring him pleasure and glory. Attach greater importance to our relationships, especially marriage, fatherhood, and sonship/daughtership.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Man 'imaging' God badly</td><td>Adam, Cain, Ham, Canaan, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Reuben</td><td>Let us learn from the sins and mistakes of our predecessors, and thereby image God better.</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>God choosing and rejecting</td><td>Chosen / Rejected
Abel / Cain
Seth's line / Everyone else
Noah / Everyone else</td><td>If we are God's people, we should be humbly grateful, realising that he did not have to choose us, but thankful that he did. We should make sure that we, and those around us, are not</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers

Major Themes in Genesis

	Theme	Where in Genesis?		Application
		Shem	Nearly everyone else	rejected by God because of unbelief.
		Abraham	Nearly everyone else	
		Isaac	Ishmael	
		Jacob	Esau	
		Israel	Everyone else	
		Judah	Reuben	
6	God bringing good even out of the heathen (godless)?	Cain's culture in chapter 4, multiplication in chapters 5 and 10, justice in 9:6, Abimelech, Nimrod 10:9.		We should not despise culture or even be too suspicious of it. For example, some Christians only listen to Christian music. Let us recognise the good things that the heathen do. This is part of God's so-called common grace.
7	God giving fresh starts	After the Fall, after the flood, Abraham, Israel in Egypt		Recognise God's mercy and his willingness to forgive and grant a fresh start. Be quick to repent, keeping "short accounts" with God.
8	God's providence and faithfulness to his creation, people and his promises	Everywhere, but especially provision in Creation in chapter 2, remembering Noah, preserving Abram and Lot, pursuing and preserving Jacob, making Joseph's dreams come true, the patriarch's confidence in the promised land and ultimately the Resurrection. God's covenants summarised in Genesis 9 and 17, the Creation Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant are constantly under threat, but God remains faithful. Eventually, the Lord Jesus Christ will prove himself faithful to his creation and his people by recreating it and resurrecting them Rev. 21:1,2.		Depend on God to care for us his people. Allow this knowledge to affect our feelings and decisions, worry far less, trust him in a more detailed way. As things go wrong in our lives, bodies, families, property etc, learn to hope increasingly in the Resurrection and life on the new earth.

A *Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers*

Major Themes in Genesis

	Theme	Where in Genesis?	Application
9	The cycle of God's blessing, man's rebellion, God's judgement	See table at start of Study 6.	Despite God's many blessings, man does sin and God will judge. This gives a certain edge and urgency to all our dealings with those who are not yet Christians.
10	The way down	From the Fall to the Tower of Babel: Things got worse and worse in God's creation, his kingdom, before they eventually started to get better. But that did not mean that God had lost control. He brought great good out of the evil and, even during the evil times, there were many tastes of his blessing and protection of his people.	The rise of secular humanism should not surprise or worry us. God dealt with it in Genesis 11; he will deal with it in 21st Century too. We too should take opportunities to oppose it. Since man left to himself, only becomes more evil, we should give up any idea that human evolution will solve the world's problems.
11	The way up	From Abraham onwards, with Joseph ultimately prefiguring Christ.	We should value God's people, his church and see continuity from Abraham to nowadays. We should work to build God's kingdom; it is at the centre-stage of world history.
12	The contrast between trusting (faith in) and not trusting God (unbelief)	Adam and Eve, Abel vs. Cain, Noah, Abram and Sarai vs. Abraham and Sarah, Jacob vs. Israel (note how God changed their names as a commentary on their spiritual experience.)	We should repent of our unbelief and learn to trust God much more. Start work on finding and believing all God's promises to us his people. Impress God's commands on our children, especially the command to trust him: Gen.15:6 *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness*.
13	Conversion and progress in godliness	Jacob, Abram, Joseph, Judah	We must be clear that people need to be converted and that, having been converted, all Christians are to grow and make progress in the Christian life.
14	The trials of God's people	Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph	The godly also face many trials, but God will work everything out for our good and his own glory.

Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers

Major Themes in Genesis

	Theme	Where in Genesis?	Application
15	Opposition to God's commands, people and promises	The Fall, Cain and his line, the Tower of Babel (secular humanism), Sarai's and Eve's unbelief, Adam's and Abram's weakness, Joseph's brothers	There will always be opposition to God's work, people and plans. Sometimes, things will look gloomy. We must be realistic about Satan and how bad things can appear.
16	The origin of everything	Everywhere. The universe, man, the Sabbath, marriage, work, sin, death, culture, worship, the nations, languages, God's covenants, God's people, the Serpent's (Satan's) people, and salvation typified in Isaac (chapter 22) and Joseph, promised in 3:15.	Remember that Genesis explains the origin of everything important. Rely on it, study it, believe it far more. Make sure those for whom we are responsible have a day off each week (including yourself). That we are all descended from Noah is an antidote to all kinds of racism.
17	How (not) to mess up relationships	Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham's and Jacob's polygamy, Lot's daughters (incest), Sodom and homosexuality, Dinah and rape, Judah, levirate marriage and prostitution, Reuben and more incest, the danger of marrying Canaanites.	There are many practical lessons for godly living in Genesis. These lessons, if learned, will also save much grief and many regrets. In particular we need to think carefully about making godly marriages and bringing up godly children. There are many books to help. Let us also maintain a high view of marriage.
18	Parenting (badly)	Jacob's favouritism, Lot's poor marriage and parenting, Jacob's failure to discipline	Our decisions in the areas of marriage, family and parenting can have either good or bad consequences for many generations to come. Be warned by Genesis.
19	God's involvement in everything	Creation, good and evil 50:20, history, people's lives, fertility (from Eve onwards)	We should be aware of how God interacts with us in every part of life. This should make us more circumspect, more trusting, more prayerful, quick to repent, eager to serve ...

Joseph: His brothers, and God's sovereignty - A Range of Possible Answers

Major Themes in Genesis

	Theme	Where in Genesis?	Application
20	Who is the seed of the woman who will slay the serpent 3:15?	Not Cain, nor Abel. Not Seth, not even Noah or Abraham. However Joseph typifies Christ. It looked as if the covenant family was going to die of starvation in the famine, but God sent his saviour on ahead in the the form of Joseph who accomplished '"*the saving of many lives*" 50:20.	Always remember that the single focus of all history is when Jesus comes, dies, rises and saves his people. All of history either looked forwards to Jesus, or looks back to it. Nothing is more important than seeing God's provision of his Saviour. The whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation relates to Christ.
21	All peoples on earth will be blessed 12:3	The hint of eventual victory in 3:15 remains obscure until 12:2,3 where God promises to bless all peoples through Abram, a promise that is fulfilled in Christ and eventually through the Gospel reaching the whole world. In the mean-time, many people find blessing by being associated with Abraham's descendants: Lot, Abimelech, Laban, the Egyptians.	As Abraham's children (Gal. 3:7), make sure that what we do and say is a blessing to all the people around us. Matt. 28:18-20, the Great Commission, is the working out of Gen. 12:3.
22	The reign of death	The deaths of all the main characters are described, according to Gods' threat in 2:17. Death is particularly emphasised in chapter 5. Enoch was the only exception 5:24. The fact that Enoch did not die guaranteed that one day death would be conquered.	Sooner or later, death will demonstrate to us the truth of what we read in Genesis. We must be clear what the antidote to death is. We must see the Gospel clearly spelled out through the book of Genesis. Be clear that we will inherit the Earth after the (bodily) Resurrection.
23			
24			

How should we put into practice what we learned from the major themes in Genesis? See the third column of the above table.

END OF STUDY 12 ON 'JOSEPH, JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION'

END OF STUDIES IN GENESIS – I hope you both enjoyed and profited. DWL 7/2/2009