

GENESIS BIBLE STUDY

Maker of Heaven and Earth (Genesis 1:1-25)

'Genesis' means 'origin'. Here we have the origins of the world, of life, of mankind, of marriage, and of the entry of sin into a world that God had declared to be 'very good'. To dismantle Genesis is to dismantle the whole Christian view of the origins. Henry Morris has listed over 100 references to Genesis 1-11 in the New Testament. But since Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, public opinion has often been fed, and been all too ready to believe, that the hypothesis of evolution has disproved the book of Genesis. Sir Julian Huxley has said: 'The first point to make about Darwin's theory is that it is no longer a theory, but a fact.' Richard Dawkins is quite serious, and says that anyone who rejects evolution is 'ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked - but I'd rather not consider that)'.

1. How do the two Testaments fit together? (Luke 16:31; John 5:46-47) _____

2. What does creation tell us? (Ps.19:1-3; Rom.1:20; see Acts 17:24, 30-31) _____

3. Is it consistent to believe in One who rose from the dead (a new creation e.g. John 20-21) unless one also believes that He made the world (the old creation e.g. John 1:3)? _____

The God of the Bible is the God of nature. True science cannot contradict true theology.

4. What are created on day 1? (1:3-5) _____

5. What are created on day 2? (1:6-8) _____

6. What are created on day 3? (1:9-13) _____

7. What are created on day 4? (1:14-19; note Rev.21:22-23) _____

8. What are created on day 5? (1:20-23) _____

9. Finally, what are created on day 6? (1:24-31) _____

There have been many attempts to explain the six days:

- a. God took six days to reveal what happened at the creation (P. J. Wiseman).
- b. The days were not necessarily of 24 hours' duration (Edward Young, Francis Schaeffer). John Murray says that they were not necessarily six successive days. In Genesis 2:4 the day is not 24 hours, and some appeal to Psalm 90:4.

c. The Gap Theory (Thomas Chalmers, the Scofield Bible). This translates verse 2 as 'The earth became without form and void' i.e. there was a creation, a collapse, and then a re-creation.

d. The days are six literal and successive days. Note:

This fits in with Exodus 20:11.

This fits in with the recurring expression 'the evening and the morning' (e.g. 1:5,8,13).

According to the Bible, there was no death until there was sin i.e. all the fossils of dead animals must date from after Adam's fall. See Romans 5:12.

However, this would mean that conventional dating methods have provided the wrong answers. Radiometric dating assumes a constant half-life, an isolated system, and known boundary conditions i.e. an assumption of uniformitarianism. After the Flood, there was presumably an increase in the radiocarbon content of the atmosphere. Some have said that this may have come about with the disappearance of the water vapour canopy which had protected the atmosphere (Gen.7:11-12). The world would then seem to be older than it is.

Dr Stuart Piggott, a British archaeologist, reports that two radio-carbon tests on a sample of charcoal indicated a date of 2620-2630 B.C. for an ancient structure at Durrington Walls in England, but compelling archaeological evidence put the date approximately 1000 years later. Often numerous dates are discovered when using the different dating methods, and even the same method used a second and third time. Freshly killed seals have been carbon dated at 1,300 years old.

Gerhard von Rad (a liberal biblical scholar) does not believe in a literal six days but he asserts: 'The seven days are unquestionably to be understood as actual days and as a unique, unrepeatable lapse of time in the world.' Marcus Dods is another liberal who said that if the days of Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour days, then the interpretation of the Bible is 'hopeless'.

10. What expression do we find in verses 11, 12, 21, 24, 25? What does this mean?

According to the hypothesis of evolution, reproduction can lead to strange results. We started out with a single-celled creature, and millions of years later this has become a fish, then a reptile, then a bird, then a mammal, then a monkey, then Charles Darwin. Genesis 1, however, implies that there is a built-in stability. For example, there will be big horses (e.g. the Clydesdale) and small horses (the Shetland pony), but horses will only beget horses.

If Genesis is correct, one would expect to find no transition animals (this is not to say that Genesis' 'kind' is identical to the modern term 'species', but that there is a locking-in mechanism), Darwin himself was unable to point to any single instance of a definite graded evolutionary sequence of organisms in the paleontological record. In fact, he confessed that 'Nature may almost be said to have guarded against the frequent discovery of her transitional or linking forms.'¹ As Duane Gish has shown, the missing links between species

¹ C. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, reprinted 1985,

are still missing - and missing virtually everywhere.²

Stephen Jay Gould (who was an ardent evolutionist - indeed a Marxist - and Professor of Geology at Harvard University) wrote of the fossil record and transition animals: 'If evolution almost always occurs by rapid speciation in small, peripheral isolates - rather than by slow change in large, central populations - then what should the fossil record look like? We are not likely to detect the event of speciation itself. It happens too fast, in too small a group, isolated too far from the ancestral range.'³ Gould was passionately committed to the hypothesis of evolution, but he acknowledged that there was little evidence for slow evolutionary change: 'The fossil record does not support it; mass extinction and abrupt origination reign.'⁴ Hence he came up with the idea of quick evolution, what he called 'punctuated equilibria'.

Michael Denton is no creationist (as yet), but he calls evolution 'a theory in crisis', and writes of 'the virtual complete absence of intermediate and ancestral forms from the fossil record'.⁵ The fossil record supports Genesis 1, not Darwinian evolution. The missing links are missing everywhere.

11. What is said about the world in verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and in 31? Is that true now in the same way? What has happened to it? (note Gen.3) Comment on the double-sidedness of the world as it is now _____

Gerard Manley Hopkins: 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God'. Jesus appreciated nature (Matt.6:26, 28-29). Darwin confessed that the evolution of something as complex as the eye seems 'absurd in the highest degree'. We have every reason to agree. David appreciated the wonder of his own self (Ps.139:14).

What is Man? (Genesis 1:26-2:3)

In January of the year 2000 a woman who was eight months pregnant presented herself at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne, and asked for an abortion. She was distressed after having just learnt that her unborn baby was going to be born a dwarf. The woman got her wish, and the baby was terminated, as they say. There was some sort of controversy after it, but an ethics committee issued an interim report which assured us that the medical staff all acted in good faith. The rejection of the biblical view of God has led to the rejection of the biblical view of human beings.

1. Why does God speak in the plural in 1:26-27? (see too Isa.6:8) Who is

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² Cf. D. Gish, *Evolution: The Fossils Say No!* California: Creation-Life Publishers, 1980.

³ S. J. Gould, *Ever Since Darwin*, Victoria: Penguin, 1982, pp.61-62.

⁴ S. J. Gould, *Ever Since Darwin*, Victoria: Penguin, 1982, p.271.

⁵ Cf. Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Bethesda: Adler & Adler, 1985.

present at the creation of heaven and earth? (Gen. 1:2; Ps.104:30; John 1:3; Heb.1:10-12) _____

2. How are we human beings described? (1:26-27) Why do we have no images of God? Is this still true in some real way even after the Fall? (Gen.9:6; James 3:9) How does humanism both exalt and debase man? _____

A. C. Swinburne:

Glory to man in the highest!

For Man is the master of things.

Joseph Fletcher defends abortion on the grounds that 'a fetus is not a moral or personal being since it lacks freedom, self-determination, rationality, the ability to choose either means or ends, and knowledge of its circumstances.'

Luther said that we have an 'alien dignity' - something we have not from ourselves but from God.

Francis Schaeffer and Everett Koop: 'If man is not made in the image of God, nothing then stands in the way of inhumanity. There is no good reason why mankind should be perceived as special. Human life is cheapened.'

3. What is Christ doing for the believer? (Rom.8:29) _____

4. What does God tell Adam and Eve in 1:28a? (see Psalm 127:3, 5) What is this saying to us? _____

5. What does it mean for us to have dominion over the creation? (1:26b, 28b) How should we care for the earth? What did man eat before the Fall? (1:29-30) _____

Peter Singer says that this is 'speciesism', favouring one species over another.

6. What does God declare about the creation in 1:31? What does this mean for us today? _____

7. Where does the seven-day cycle come from? (2:1-3) _____

God ceased creating on the seventh day. In the Old Testament man celebrated the conclusion of the old creation; in the New Testament we celebrate the beginning of the new creation.

The French Revolutionaries brought in a ten-day week, but it collapsed.

Life in the Garden (Genesis 2:4-17)

A great many scholars today will tell you that there are two contradictory accounts in Genesis, with the second one beginning at Genesis 2:4. That is not so. There is the one account from two perspectives. In Genesis 1:1-2:3 we see a panorama of the creation of the world, but in Genesis 2:4-25 we see a close-up, which focuses on man.

1. What does 'day' mean in 2:4? Does this mean anything for the days of Genesis 1? _____

2. What were the atmospheric conditions at this time? (2:5-6) _____

It seems that there was no rainfall. Instead, there was a water canopy around the earth, and a mist (NKJV, ESV - not favoured by Edward Young) or streams (NIV) came up from the ground. This would have given a kind of greenhouse effect, and this was not radically changed until after the Flood. These different atmospheric conditions do two things:

(a) They throw out all dating methods used today (radiometric dating, potassium-argon dating, etc). This is because all dating methods assume that conditions today are much the same as what they were thousands of years ago. That is a reasonable assumption in and of itself, but Genesis tells us that conditions have drastically changed.

(b) They help to explain the longevity of people in Genesis 1-11 (e.g. Gen.5:5).

Note: Genesis 2:5 refers to their being no plant life whereas Genesis 1:11-13 says that plants were created on the third day. The plants referred to in Genesis 2:5 may only be edible plants.

3. How is man formed? (2:7) How did Abraham speak of himself? (Gen.18:27) What does Paul teach from this in 1 Cor.15:47-49? _____

Adam is created from the dust but the breath of God is also put into him. He is not just dust and he is not just spirit. Notice too that he was created a fully grown man. The chicken came before the egg.

4. Where did God plant the garden of Eden? (2:8) What was planted there (noting especially the two trees)? (2:9) _____

One often sees advertisements for features or exhibitions on the creation myths of various cultures, including the aboriginal creation myths (the Rainbow Serpent stories, etc) and the Genesis creation myth. I have read plenty of myths and poetry in my time, but Genesis is not myth or poetry. There is poetry in the Bible, but this is not poetry.

5. List the four rivers in the garden. Does this sound like a real place? _____

Two of these rivers are identifiable - the Tigris and the Euphrates. But their courses would have been greatly altered by the Great Flood.

6. What was Adam's first task given to him in the Garden? (2:15) Notice how this changes after the Fall (Gen.3:17-19a). What happens to work in redemption (Eph.6:5-8) and in the new heaven and new earth (Rev.22:3)? _____

7. What was the test of obedience imposed on Adam in verses 16-17? Is it likely that this is what is being referred to in Hosea 6:7? _____

Adam has a genuine free will because he has the power to obey or disobey. We are all free to swim to New Zealand but we lack the power to do it. We are free to be perfectly truthful and loving and faithful (Matt.5:48), but we lack the power to be those things (Rom.3:10).

Why God created Adam good with the possibility of evil, we do not know. Perhaps our experience of good is enhanced by a prior deprivation of it e.g. we particularly enjoy a meal if we are very hungry. It may be that Christians will enjoy heaven all the more for having experienced the reality of evil. That is only a suggestion.

The First Wedding (Genesis 2:18-25)

One in every two or three marriages end in divorce. Pat Conroy comments truly that 'Each divorce is the death of a small civilization.' We have personal development programmes in the schools which tell 12 and 13 year old girls about contraception and which present the homosexual lifestyle as a valid alternative. As C. S. Lewis put it: 'In a society where anything goes soon everything goes.'

1. Who instituted marriage as the first and most basic of all institutions? (1:18-25) _____

2. What is said not to be good even before the Fall? (2:18) What purpose for marriage is implied here? Is this a command (i.e. all men must get married) or a general statement? Are there reasons for remaining single? (Matt.19:12) _____

The woman is created to be 'like opposite him' (Gordon Wenham).

It was ridiculous for John R. Rice to say that 'A man is only half a man if he is not married.'

3. How was the woman created? (2:19-23) What is man's relationship with the animals and birds? What is his relationship with Eve? What does verse 23 teach about human relationships? _____

4. What does it mean for the man to leave his father and mother? (2:24) Do you think that, apart from health or extreme financial problems, it is a good idea for married couples to live with their parents or in-laws? _____

Normally, there should be a physical leaving (another house), an emotional leaving (a growing dependence on one's spouse, not mum or dad), and a financial leaving (parents should beware of subsidising children who have grown up and should be fending for themselves).

5. What does it mean to cleave or hold fast to one's wife? (2:24) _____

This is the KJV word for 'be united' (NIV) or 'be joined' (NKJV). At the end of the fourth century Jerome wrote of one woman who was marrying her 23rd husband, and she was his 21st wife. So the Hollywood view has considerable precedent.

6. What does it mean to become one flesh? (2:24) How is verse 25 true before the Fall and how is it applicable after? How is marriage meant to be heterosexual and monogamous? How does Paul use this notion in 1 Corinthians 6:16? _____

Alex Comfort died on 26 March 2000 after telling the world: 'I think we may come to the view that chastity is no more a virtue than malnutrition.' He suggested that adultery helped marriages, and his *The Joy of Sex* sold more than 12 million copies. When he died, the media praised him, but his own marriage ended in bitterness and divorce.

Temptation and Fall (Genesis 3:1-6)

Why did a man in March 1996 kill 16 children and a teacher in Dunblane in Scotland, then kill himself?

1. How is the serpent described? (3:1) Who is the serpent, or who is speaking through the serpent? (Rev.12:9) What must have happened before the fall of human beings? What did Satan ask Eve? What is Satan's tactic here - insinuation or full-on assault? Compare this to Matthew 4:5-7 and 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15. _____

That could mean 'any tree' (NIV) or 'every tree' (NKJV).

Satan speaks through the serpent just as in Numbers 22:28 God speaks through Balaam's donkey, and at Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit assumes the form of a dove.

2. Should Eve have been drawn into dialogue with Satan? (3:2-3) Does she misrepresent what God said? _____

3. What is Satan's second approach in verse 4? _____

4. How does Satan misrepresent God in verse 5? Do temptations always seem good to us? What do Ephesians 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 2:11 teach us about Satan and temptation? _____

5. What three things did Eve think would happen when she ate the fruit? (3:6; 1 John 2:15-16) _____

People who are not Christians never know how deceived they were until after they become Christians. Sin appealed to Eve in three ways - it appealed to her appetite ('good for food'); it appealed to her aesthetic sense ('pleasant to the eyes'); and it appealed to her desire for mental enrichment (it would make her wise).

People do not advocate pornography (that sounds cheap and nasty), they advocate the maturity to watch what one wants to watch; they never advocate promiscuity, they advocate freedom; they do not advocate killing babies, they call it being pro-choice. Are we ever selfish? No, we are standing up for our rights. We always cover evil with the appearance of good.

Augustine: 'O wretched free will which, while yet entire, had so little stability.' In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Adam acts with some chivalry - he did not want to desert Eve in her sin.

Our enemy is the master of the counterfeit good.

Adam, Where are You? (Genesis 3:7-13)

We all have a sense that this world is not what it ought to be, and that we are not what we ought to be.

1. How is man alienated from himself? (3:7; compare to 2:25) Why did Edward Young call this 'the first attempt at salvation by human works'? _____

Adam and Eve realised for the first time that there was something wrong with

themselves; they had harmed themselves.

2. How do Adam and Eve reveal their alienation from God? (3:8) Do we naturally seek after God? (Rom.3:11; Col.1:21) _____

There was a BBC documentary on religion some time back entitled *The Long Search*. That is a misnomer.

3. What is God’s response to Adam? (3:9) Why does He ask this question? (see Acts 9:4; Luke 19:10) _____

4. What does verse 10 reveal about Adam, and us? _____

5. Why does God confront Adam? (3:11) What should Adam have said? (Prov. 28:13) _____

6. What did Adam actually say? (3:12) How do we illustrate this in our own reactions to sin? How is verse 12 true yet an evasion of responsibility? _____

Why did I lose my temper? Because I am a selfish sinner? No, because I was tired and the children were misbehaving.

7. What is Eve’s reply? (3:13) Again, how is it that every word is true, but she is evading the main issue? What does the Bible say about responsibility for sin? (James 1:14-16) _____

Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and the serpent did not have a leg to stand on!

The Promised Redeemer (Gen.3:14-15, 21)

1. What is declared in verse 14? _____

Some say that this verse implies that snakes originally had legs, but it may only mean that the snake's slithering is now a sign of its being cursed.

2. What is the enmity between us and Satan? (3:15a) _____

Edward Young says that the seed of the serpent refers to evil spirits, but it is probably those who reject Christ (see John 8:44).

3. Who is the seed of the woman? How does Christ's victory point to the victory of His people? (Rom.16:20) _____

'Seed' or 'offspring' (NIV) can be singular or plural. This is deliberate (see 2 Samuel 7:12). This is fulfilled in David's sons or descendants (Solomon, Rehoboam, etc) and in David's Son (Jesus Christ). It is the same with Galatians 3:16, which was fulfilled in two ways - in Abraham's descendants (Isaac, Jacob, etc) and, as Paul says, in Christ.

3. How is the prophecy fulfilled that the Redeemer will suffer yet conquer? (3:15b) _____

The Vulgate version said: '*She* shall bruise Satan's head', and this was understood to be a reference to Mary. The Good News Bible refers to the plural only, and so says Satan will bite 'their heal'. Again, it obscures the reference to Christ.

4. How did Satan bruise the heal of Christ and how did Christ bruise the head of Satan? (Luke 11:20; Col.2:15) _____

In John Henry Newman's words:

*O loving wisdom of our God!
 When all was sin and shame,
 A second Adam to the fight
 And to the rescue came.
 O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
 Which did in Adam fail,
 Should strive afresh against the foe,
 Should strive and should prevail.*

5. Adam and Eve were already covered (3:7), but what did God do in verse 21? Why? (note Rom.13:14) How are animal skins better than fig leaves? (Lev.17:11; Heb.9:13-14; 10:11-14) How is the death - announced in Genesis 2:17 - paid in picture form? _____

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf:

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed;
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

Living under the Curse (Genesis 3:16-24)

1. What is the first curse placed on Eve? (3:16a; note 3:20; John 16:21) _____

2. What is the second curse on Eve? (3:16; the same expression is used in Genesis 4:7; see also 1 Tim.2:14) _____

Beatrice Webb wrote of her marriage to Sidney: 'When we marry, we have decided that Sidney should make the big decisions and I shall make the small ones. And I shall decide which are the big decisions.'

3. What is the first of the two curses on Adam? (3:17-19a) What is the difference between work before the Fall (2:15) and labour after it? How does the creation now have two sides? (Acts 14:17; Rom.8:20-22) _____

This is the same word ('toil' or 'labour') as in verse 16.

Actually, it is the ground which is cursed, but because the ground is cursed, Adam is cursed.

4. What is the second curse? (3:19b; see 2:17) _____

When Alexander the Great was dying at Babylon, he crawled out of his tent on all fours at midnight, intending to drown himself in the Euphrates River. He hoped his body would be lost, and that people would then believe that he was immortal. Instead, his wife dragged him back to die in his bed. Not accepting his limitations, pretending to be a god, he deludes himself and shows himself to be a fool.

Blaise Pascal: 'Imagine a number of men in chains, all under sentence of death, some of whom are each day butchered in the sight of the others; those

remaining see their own condition in that of their fellows, and looking at each other with grief and despair await their turn. This is an image of the human condition.'

5. How is there mercy in justice in 3:22-24? Why does God speak in the plural? _____

The Struldbruggs in *Gulliver's Travels* decayed but never died. I have met many non-Christians who have been so sick that they regard their death as a release. It is not, of course, but that is how they regard it.

6. What is said in the New Testament about these things? (Rev.2:7; 21:4-6; 22:2, 14, 18-19) _____

The curses lifted, and the free offer of life forever in paradise restored. On earth there is only ever mercy in justice, but in Christ justice is satisfied and mercy is extended to all who call upon His name in repentance and faith.

The First Murder (Genesis 4:1-15)

In many ways Genesis 4 echoes Genesis 3 - there is sin, God's confrontation of the sinner, man's evasion of responsibility, God's justice and God's mercy.

1. What happened after the Fall? (4:1-2) How were their births understood by Eve? What did the two brothers do for work? _____

2. What did the two brothers offer to God? (4:3-4) _____

3. Why was Cain's offering not accepted when Abel's was? (4:4-5; Heb.11:4; Prov.21:27) Is it significant that there was no blood sacrifice in Cain's offering? What would this indicate? _____

4. How did Cain respond to his rejection? (4:5b) What is God's warning to him? (4:6-7; note Rom.6:16; Eph.6:12) _____

God tells him of the great battle with sin - sin is like a deadly tiger crouching at our door.

John Owen: 'Be killing sin or it will be killing you.'

5. Did Cain heed God's warning? What did he do? Why? (4:8; 1 John 3:11-12) _____

6. How did God confront Cain? (4:9; recall 3:9, 11) What is Cain's reply? What two characteristics of Satan does Cain reveal here? (John 8:44) Are we our brother's keeper? (1 John 3:17; 1 Cor.8:13) _____

7. What does Cain's sin demand from God? (4:10) _____

Justice is blood for blood, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life.

8. Verses 11-12 are said to be an example of common grace. How is common grace different from saving grace? (4:11-12) _____

9. What is Cain's response to this? (4:13-14) _____

How our own words condemn us! Cain denied that he was his brother's keeper in verse 9; five verses later he expects God to be his keeper!

10. How does God show His longsuffering towards Cain? (4:15) _____

11. Where does Cain go then? (4:16) _____

He is without faith (vv.3-5a), angry (v.5b), murderous (v.8), false and callous (v.9), and self-centred (vv.13-14).

Derek Kidner says: 'It is the utmost that mercy can do for the unrepentant.'

12. What does this reveal about God? (Matt.5:43-45) _____

13. How does Hebrews 12:22-24 connect this to the blood of Christ? _____

Each one of us is under either God's unsatisfied justice and His common grace or His satisfied justice and His amazing grace.

Primitive Man (Genesis 4:16-26)

What do you think of when you hear someone refer to primitive man? Primitive man was not a little above the ape, but a civilised fellow in many ways. Technical prowess and moral failure went hand-in-hand.

1. What did Cain do? (4:16-17) Whom did he marry? (note Gen.20:12; later this was condemned under the Law of Moses in Lev.18) _____

2. What signs are there of technological prowess? (4:20, 21, 22) How is this an indication of common grace? _____

This means that every documentary you have ever watched on primitive man is astray.

Art and science go both ways - the novels of Dostoyevsky or the pornographic trash which abounds today; medicines to save lives or take them; weapons used to defend the helpless or to crush the helpless. Civilization is not a proof of Christianity.

3. Show the spread of sin from verses 19, 23-24. What does this show? _____

Almost certainly, Jesus had this text in mind when He spoke about forgiveness (Matt.18:21-22).

4. Comment on the preservation of a godly seed (4:25-26). _____

There are two cities, said Augustine of Hippo - the city of God and the city of the world, a people who belong to God and a people who love this world. Civilization expands, but it does not control sin.

The Godly Line of Seth (Genesis 5)

1. List the ages at which the following died.

Adam (5:5) _____

Seth (5:8) _____

Enosh (5:11) _____

There are 1656 years mentioned from Adam's age at the birth of Seth to the Flood.

All except three of these patriarchs live to over 900 years of age, and if we exclude Enoch for obvious reasons, the average age at death is 912 years. Clearly, these are literal years, as we are accustomed to them.

The climate was different then; the water canopy around the earth was not yet broken, and man was protected from the ageing process to some extent. There is some evidence of an earlier more salubrious climate - turtles, for example, have been found up to ten feet long.

2. When was writing invented? (5:1; 'written account' in the NIV; see Ex.24:4, 7) Is Genesis a collection of camp-fire stories and legends? _____

3. In whose image are we? (5:1-3) How is this double-sidedness shown in life here on earth? _____

4. What are we told about Enoch's life? (5:21-24a; see Jude 14-15) _____

Enoch was the 7th from Adam through Seth; in him godliness reached its highest point. Lamech was the 7th from Adam through Cain; in him ungodliness reached its lowest point. Enoch's name apparently means 'Dedication'.

J. C. Ryle said there was a 'holy violence' about George Whitefield's preaching, and that is what Jude is saying about Enoch.

5. Then what happened to Enoch? (5:24; see Heb.11:5) There are two men in the Old Testament who did not die, but who were taken straight to heaven - Enoch and Elijah. Why do you think God did this? What is the solemn expression through Genesis 5 in vv.5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, etc which Bonar calls 'the solemn toll of the patriarchal funeral bell'? _____

As D. L. Moody was dying, he asked his daughter to stop praying for his recovery. 'This is my coronation day,' he said.

Just as an addition, if Genesis 1-11 is poetry and not literal, the genealogy in Genesis 5 is a rather strange example of poetry.

The Coming Judgment (Genesis 6:1-8)

Both Testaments treat Noah and the Flood as straightforward history.

1. What takes place in 6:1-2? _____

There has been quite a debate over these verses. Some say that it means that angels married women (Gordon Wenham, James Montgomery Boice). 'Sons of God' are angels in Job 1:6, for example (although not in the NIV). Jude 6-7 seems also to refer to sexual sin. Meredith Kline says that it means that kings took many wives. But Augustine, Luther and Calvin said that it meant that believers (sons of God) married unbelievers (daughters of men). Both Testaments warn about this (Deut.7:3; 2 Cor.6:14).

2. How longsuffering is God? (6:3) _____

In the NIV it sounds like God is reducing man's lifespan to 120 years, but that is not what it means. What God says is that there will be 120 years till the Flood. God is longsuffering (2 Peter 3:9).

This is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). In special grace, the work of the Spirit is irresistible (John 17:2). But in common grace, the work of the Spirit can be resisted (Acts 7:51). When Noah was 480 years' old, God said to him: 'There are 120 years to go, then there will be judgment.'

3. What does verse 4 tell us about these times? What are the Nephilim? (NIV, ESV; see Num.13:33) _____

Giant footprints have been found - mammoths, beavers, and men. However, Luther translates the word as 'tyrants', and it does seem that the connotations are bad.

4. Contrast 6:5 with 1:31. What has happened? How depraved is total depravity? _____

5. How does sin grieve God? (6:6-7) How does He respond to it? _____

Most people hear the gospel a number of times before they finally believe it. God's Spirit strives with ours and He contends with us. We are convicted many times before we are claimed.

6. Who was different from the rest of the world? (6:8) How so? Was Noah popular and successful in the world? (2 Peter 2:5) _____

Noah was not a perfect man, but he trusted in the free mercy of God.

God Preserves Noah (Genesis 6:9-22)

1. In what way can it be said that history repeats itself? (Matt.24:37-39) _____

2. How is Noah described? (6:9) Of whom does this remind you? (5:24) _____

This does not mean that Noah was perfect (despite the NKJV).

3. Name Noah's sons (6:10). _____

4. How is the world described in contrast to Noah? (6:11-12) _____

5. What does God determine to do? (6:13) Does this seem like a world-wide flood? (see too 6:17) How does the New Testament confirm this? (2 Peter 3:6)

(a) If the Flood was confined to Mesopotamia, why spend 120 years building an ark? Why not just hitch a camel to Egypt, and escape there?

(b) Some geological features require a catastrophe e.g. the Grand Canyon, and the ocean sea bed.

(c) There are Flood traditions, where one man survives a great flood, in virtually every part of the world - from Finland to Mexico to central Australia. The New Hebrideans had a Flood story before the missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century. A perfectly reasonable explanation is that these other flood stories are distorted memories of the great Flood which actually happened.

There has been a judgment by water; there will be a judgment by fire.

6. What were God's instructions to Noah? (6:14-16) _____

The ark was only a barge built to float, not a luxury ship built to sail. The only other place in the Old Testament where this Hebrew word is used is in reference to Moses' little ark in the bulrushes. A cubit was about the length from a man's elbow to his fingertips. As such, it is usually taken to be about 18 inches. This would make the ark about 450 feet long. Only in the 19th century were ships begun to be built which were longer than this. Some say that the technology to build such a boat did not exist back then, but Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids show that there was an advanced technology in many ancient civilisations.

7. What did God establish with Noah and his family? (6:18; note too Gen.17:7; Acts 2:39) _____

A Christian cannot pass on salvation to his children, but covenant blessings do go to the believer and to his children.

This is the first time that the word 'covenant' is used in Scripture.

8. What else would happen to save the animals of the world? (6:19-21; there will be a modification of this command in 7:2) Did Noah collect all the animals with a butterfly net and a tranquilliser gun? (6:20) _____

John Whitcomb and Henry Morris estimate that about 35,000 vertebrate animals would have been required on the ark. It is hard to equate modern 'species' with the 'kinds' of Genesis, but let us accept that we have about 35,000 vertebrate animals. With the space available on the ark, it could have contained about 125,280 sheep-sized animals, so there was plenty of room. As for the big fellows, some of the dinosaurs, there is no reason why young ones could not have been taken onto the ark. Unlike mammals, reptiles grow all their lives, so in an age of longevity they would become huge.

9. How did Noah show his faith? (6:22; Heb.11:7) What biblical pattern is revealed here? (2 Peter 3:10-11) _____

Charles Wesley, John Cennick, and Martin Madan:

*Now redemption, long expected,
See in solemn pomp appear;
All His saints, by man rejected,
Now shall meet Him in the air;
Hallelujah!
See the day of God appear!*

The Great Flood (Genesis 7)

1. What does God tell Noah and his household to do, and why? (7:1) _____

2. What animals and birds is he to take with him? (7:2-3) What reason is given? _____

Only in Leviticus 11 did the Law set out what was clean (they chewed the cud and divided the hoof) and what was unclean, but apparently Noah already knew.

3. What did Noah know about the coming judgment by water, which we cannot know about the coming judgment by fire? (7:4; Luke 17:26-27; 1 Thess.5:1-4) _____

4. What did Noah do in response to this? (7:5) What does this tell us about the nature of faith? _____

5. How old was Noah when he went into the ark? (7:6) Who went with him? (7:7-9) What happened then? (7:10) _____

6. How devastating was the flood? (7:11-12) Where did the water come from?

I understand that it is now impossible for it to rain for forty days and forty nights.

7. What is reiterated in verses 13-16? What does the Lord do then? How does it remind you of Matthew 25:10-13? _____

That expression - 'the Lord shut him in' - is one of those haunting expressions in the Bible; it is both homely and terrible. When the door is shut, where will you be - shut in or shut out?

8. How is the flood described? (7:17-19) _____

That word translated as 'covered' in v.19 is twice translated as 'overwhelmed' - which gives us an idea of the extent of the Flood.

9. What was the height of the flood? (7:20) _____

That is about 22.5 feet or 7 metres. There have been great floods since then, but not a worldwide flood. In 1883 there was an undersea explosion on the Indonesian island volcano of Krakatoa which created a sea wave which inundated coastal areas of Java and Sumatra up to 130 feet above sea level. Over 36,000 people perished, and the waves were recorded on tide gauges in South Africa, Alaska, California and even the English Channel. The tsunami of Boxing Day 2004 should also be mentioned.

10. How was the flood an 'uncreation'? (7:21-24) For how long did the waters prevail on the earth? _____

A huge flood is quite ideal for fossils. Thousands of mammoths have been preserved in Siberia. The dinosaur graveyards in Utah may also date from the Flood. Not all fossils necessarily date from the Flood, but many probably do.

Deliverance (Genesis 8)

1. What happens in 8:1-2? What does it mean when it says that God remembered Noah? (see Ex.2:23-24) _____

2. What happened then? (8:3-4) After how long? Where did the ark come to rest? _____

The ark came to rest in Armenia which takes in eastern Turkey, southern Russia and north-western Iran. The mountains are high, up to 17,000 feet.

3. What happened then after many months? (8:5) What could be seen? _____

4. What did Noah do after forty days of the ark's coming to rest on Ararat? (8:6-7) Recount what took place with the dove (8:8-12). What does this whole account show about the magnitude of the flood? _____

5. What happened in Noah's 601st year? (8:13-16, 18-19; a contrast to Gen.7:1) _____

Out of the stuffy, smelly ark and into the sunlight. A year and ten days had been spent in the ark, and now the ordeal was over.

6. How does verse 17 tell of a kind of re-creation? (see Gen.1:22, 28) _____

7. What does Noah do first? (8:20) Why does he do this? How must he have known to do this? (remember that it is before the law of Moses) _____

8. How does God respond to this? (8:21a) What does this point to? (Eph.5:2)

This does not mean that God likes the smell of smoke, but that He is pleased with Noah's sacrifice.

9. What is the first thing God says in this covenant of common grace? (8:21) Do people have to believe this to benefit from it? Have people fundamentally changed after the flood? (see 8:21 and 6:5; see too Ex.33:3; 34:9) _____

Calvin says that if we were dealt with according to our deserts, there would be a daily deluge.

10. What else does God promise all humanity? (8:22) What would life be like if this were not true? _____

The atheist will go to bed tonight, and he will expect morning to follow night. He will expect summer to pass, to be followed by winter. He will

assume an orderly rhythm of life, continued providential blessings, but he says that it is all a result of blind chance. He assumes that there is law, but no law-giver; he assumes that there is order, but no one to design that order.

11. Do the benefits of the covenant with Noah go to everybody? What about the benefits of the covenant with Christ? (John 6:47) _____

A New Beginning (Genesis 9:1-7)

After the devastating flood, God made a covenant with Noah in order to re-establish life on earth. God promised never again to flood the world, and that He would keep nature going in an orderly sequence (Gen.8:21-22). This is a covenant of common grace, with all humanity, whether they believe the God of the Bible or not.

1. What is God's command in 9:1, 7? Note that it was originally given before the Fall (Gen.1:28) _____

'Swarm' over the earth is the idea. Whenever societies lose hope and coherence, this command falls by the wayside.

2. What is the new relationship between man and animal? (9:2) What does this indicate? _____

3. Contrast Genesis 9:3 and Genesis 1:29. What is the present command regarding what we can eat? (1 Tim.4:1-5) _____

4. What is not to be consumed? (9:4; see too Acts 15:1-2, 19-20) _____

Calvin says that Acts 15 refers to a temporary expedient, but we tend not to consume blood anyway.

The Jehovah's Witnesses use this verse to object to blood transfusions. But the text is about consuming blood, perhaps for idolatrous reasons, not transferring blood to save lives.

5. What is to be the punishment for murder? (9:5-6) On what principle is this based? Why are animals included? (see Ex.21:28) Does this still apply to us today? (for the law of Moses, Ex.21:12; in the New Testament, Acts 25:11; Rom.13:4) Why does justice need to be swift (Eccles.8:11) _____

Albert Schweitzer wrote a book called *Reverence for Life*, but it was more Buddhist than Christian. Schweitzer meant reverence for lizards, turtles, whales, everything. That sort of mentality is now rife in the West. In Australia white pointer sharks constitute a protected species.

God's Covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17)

1. With whom is this covenant made? (9:8-11) How is the covenant described in verses 13 and 17? Do people benefit from this even though they do not believe it? _____

2. How long is this covenant meant to last? (9:11-12; Isaiah 54:9-10) _____

Note: a covenant can be perpetual in its substance but not its outward forms (see Gen.17:7 and Gal.5:2-4 for circumcision; see Gal.3:17-18)

3. Is the covenant with Noah one of grace or works? Is it a covenant of saving grace or common grace? _____

4. What is the sign of this covenant? (9:12-16) Does the sign obtain the blessing? What is the relationship between the sign and the blessing? _____

It may be because of the different atmospheric conditions that there were no rainbows before the Flood, although Calvin says that God simply took something that was common and gave it a new purpose. Gerhard von Rad has suggested that the word is 'bow', and that God is laying aside the bow of war (it is the same Hebrew word).

Edward Mote:

*His oath, His covenant and blood
Are my defence against the flood;*

*When earthly hopes are swept away
He will uphold me on that day.*

Sin and the Nations (Genesis 9:18-29)

Two of the many proofs of the truth of the Bible are:

- (a) The Bible is honest - it reveals the sins of Noah, David, Peter, and the rest.
- (b) The Bible predicts many things which have come to pass (Isa.44:6-7). So Noah's sin and Noah's prophecies are yet another indication of the veracity of Scripture.

1. What takes place in 9:18-20? _____

The RSV says that Noah was the first tiller of the soil, but that is not true - Cain tilled the ground back in Genesis 4:2. The original Hebrew simply says that Noah began to till the soil - he was a farmer.

2. What was Noah's sin? (9:21) Is this the same man as in Genesis 6:8-9? How did Noah take something good and misuse it? (Ps.104:14-15) What do we learn from this? _____

3. How does Ham make matters worse? (9:22; see 1 Cor.13:6; Prov.17:9; Lev.19:16a) _____

4. How did Shem and Japheth seek to salvage the situation and still honour their father? (9:23; Matt.18:15) _____

The first aim is always not the humiliation of the sinner but his reclamation.
5. What was Noah aware of when he woke up? (9:24) _____

6. What does Noah prophesy in 9:25 (note 10:6)? What does this mean? How was the prophecy fulfilled? (Joshua 9:23 for the Gibeonites, and 1 Kings 9:20-21) _____

This verse has been misused to justify slavery and apartheid, but that is a gross distortion of the biblical position (Col.3:11).

John Mackay has a photo of an English man with a part-Nigerian wife. They had twin boys - and one was white and the other black.

All the peoples of this earth are descended from Noah and his three sons. Black, white and everything in between, go back to this one man. If evolution is true, there is no reason to believe that all 'races' have evolved at the same rate. The rise of evolution in the late 19th century actually saw an increase in racist attitudes.

The curse falls on Canaan, not all the Hamites. Why? I do not know. Calvin did not know. Certainly not all of Ham's descendants became as debased as those descended from Canaan.

7. What was said to Shem? (9:26; Ps.147:19-20) _____

The blessing is actually on the Lord, not Shem, but clearly it is to flow through to Shem. Shem includes the Semitic peoples - Arabs, Assyrians, Babylonians, and, of course, the Jews. Canaan indeed became Shem's servant - the Canaanites were expelled from the Promised Land in order for the Israelites to take up residence there. The date of Noah's prophecy must be about 2400 B.C. or perhaps earlier. The date of Israel's entry into the Promised Land is about 1400 B.C. - a thousand years later.

8. What about Japheth? (9:27; see 10:2-5) _____

They were Gentiles, and included people like the Greeks and Romans. Japheth would become enlarged. There is a play on words there for it can also mean that Japheth will be persuaded. He will come to dwell in the tents of Shem. That is an Old Testament expression for fellowship (see Ps.84:10). 'To dwell in the tents of wickedness' means to participate in the activities of the wicked, to fellowship with them. Japheth would be enlarged and dwell in the tents of Shem. The prophecy is that the Gentiles would share in fellowship with the blessings enjoyed by the Semites. This came towards fulfilment 2500 years later (see Eph.2:13-14; 3:1-6).

The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9)

The Tower of Babel is referring to Babylon.

1. Who was behind Babel? (10:8-10) For what did it become known? (Rev.17:4-5) _____

2. How is the world described in 11:1-2? Where is the land of Shinar? _____

The New English Bible begins 'Once upon a time', like it was a fairy story. The RSV says that the earth had 'few words', like there were only cavemen who could grunt and point and not much else. The earliest languages are in fact the most complicated. Sanskrit had about 500 parts to each verb. Verse 1 says that the earth had 'one lip', meaning one language.

3. What were the people doing at Babel, and why? (11:3-4) What two things do they seem to have had in mind? What is the essence of sin? (Gen.3:5; Isa.14:12-15) _____

The tower seems to have been a ziggurat. It was to be built 'unto heaven', no doubt because of the Babylonian love for astrology. Francis Schaeffer calls this 'the first public declaration of humanism' - what man wants to achieve without God. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (d.1900) rejoiced: 'We have killed God.'

4. What did God do in response to this? (11:5-6; see Isa.40:22) _____

5. How is the punishment so appropriate? (11:7) Why does God speak in the plural? _____

6. What is the result of all this? (11:8-9) _____

The multiplicity of languages on the earth - there are over 700 in Papua New Guinea and about 150 in Vanuatu - is a monument not to human ingenuity, but to human sin. I can remember session meetings in Vanuatu when things became excited, instead of speaking in Bislama, the elders would switch to speaking in their local language (which I did not understand). I would be thinking in English, but speaking in Bislama. 'Mother tongue' is an expression which I came to appreciate.

Helmut Thielicke, a Lutheran theologian, once made a tour of Asia, and the only word that he understood in every language was *Coca Cola*.

7. What is the remedy to this? (Zeph.3:9; Acts 2:6-11) What happened at Pentecost? What does this point to? (Rev.7:9-10) _____

To babble away in a language which no one understands is not Pentecost.

The Call of Abram: God's Pilgrim (Genesis 11:27-12:9)

1. How is Abraham described in Isaiah 51:1-2 and Romans 4:11? _____

2. Who was Terah? (11:27-32) Whom did he father? Where did they live? What happened to the family? What was their religious affiliation? (Josh.24:2-3) _____

Ur of the Chaldeans is usually identified as the Ur of lower Mesopotamia, although some, like Victor Hamilton, think there might have been an Ur in upper Mesopotamia. Haran died, and the extended family made its way towards Canaan, to a place called Haran (spelt differently).

The year is about 2000 B.C.

Almost certainly they worshipped the moon god, Nanna.

3. What does God promise Abram? (12:1) What doesn't God tell Abram exactly? (Heb.11:8) _____

Ur of the Chaldeans in lower Mesopotamia was a highly developed city, which the renowned archaeologist W. F. Albright has described as 'the greatest commercial capital that the world had yet seen'.

4. What does God promise Abram in Genesis 12:2? What do we know about Sarai? (11:30) _____

God would create a people virtually out of nothing. Remember that Abram was 75 years of age, which admittedly is at a time when people lived longer than we can expect to, but still not young.

5. What else does God promise Abram? (12:3a) And how far will this blessing extend? (12:3b) What do John 8:56 and Galatians 3:8-9 tell us about this covenant with Abraham? _____

The RSV has 'shall bless themselves' which is possible grammatically but odd theologically. Abram is Mr Nobody, but God says that one day all the nations of the earth would find blessing through him. There are the covenant promises - a place, a people, and world-wide blessing.

6. How did Abram respond to God's call? (12:4-5) What does this show us about faith? Who went with him? How old was Abraham? Where did they go to? _____

Martin Luther preached on Abraham, and referred to 'the naked voice of God'. That is all that Abram had at this stage.

In Romans 4, Paul says that Abraham is an example of faith. In James 2, James says that Abraham is an example of works. There is no contradiction, because faith works. There is what Paul calls 'the obedience of faith' (Rom.1:5; 16:26).

Richard Cecil was once watching his daughter playing with her beads when he told her to throw them in the fire. She was upset but she obeyed. Later, Cecil bought her some better beads, and explained how this illustrated what faith means. He could be a tough father, but so can God.

7. Where did Abram arrive? (12:6) Who was still there? _____

The Canaanites were hardly likely to leave because God was giving the land to Abram. Haran to Canaan is a distance of about 640 kilometres.

8. What did God do at Shechem? (12:7) What was Abram's response? _____

9. Then where did Abram go? (12:8-9) What did he do there? Where did he end out? _____

'Bethel' means 'house of God'.

10. How does Jesus describe a Christian? (Luke 19:9-10) Why did He use those terms? _____

Thomas Olivers:

The God of Abraham praise!

*At whose supreme command
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At His right hand:
I all on earth forsake,
Its wisdom, fame, and power,
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.*

Backsliding in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20)

1. We might expect an inspiring story to illustrate faith here, but, instead, we find Abram tripping at the first hurdle. Why do you think this is recorded here? (recall Noah in Gen.9:20-21) What do we learn from the fact that Abram and then Isaac fall into the same sin later? (Gen.20:1-2; 26:6-7) _____

2. What did Abram find in the Promised Land, and what did he do in response to that? (12:10) _____

Philip Eveson says that it was no sin to travel down to Egypt. Famine in one place naturally was a problem (see Ruth 1:1-2). Was that a sin? There are Egyptian texts that tell of people coming to Egypt in times of famine in order to survive, so migration to escape famine was not uncommon.

We ought not to be too hard on Abram here, but it seems to have been the wrong move. God told Isaac not to go to Egypt but to remain in Gerar (Gen.26:2-3). Later still, Jacob is told to go down to Egypt because of the famine (Gen.46:3-4). Later still, Joseph is told to take Mary and baby Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod (Matt.2:13). That is missing here with Abram. So it seems that Abram is being tested.

3. What does Abram fear in Egypt? (12:11-12) What does he tell Sarai to do? How can fear lead us to sin? What do we learn about the appearance of Sarai? From Genesis 20:12, what do we learn about Sarai? _____

Sarai was about 65 years of age, but that is about mid-life so it would be the equivalent of a woman in her late thirties, perhaps forty.

4. Was Abram right about the moral state of Egypt? (12:14-15) What

happened there? _____

There is an Egyptian story called *The Two Brothers* which tells of a Pharaoh who took a married woman, conferred on her the title of Great Lady, and had her husband killed.

5. How did God treat Abram? (12:16; note 12:2-3; 30:27; 39:5) Why? _____

6. But how did Pharaoh treat Pharaoh and his house? (12:17) Why? _____

7. Was Pharaoh right to rebuke Abram? (12:18-20) How can God do this in our lives? Does it have to be that a pastor, Christian, Bible verse, or hymn is used to rebuke us? What did Pharaoh do with Abram? _____

Balaam's ass rebuked Balaam, the pagan sailors rebuked Jonah, and this pagan Pharaoh, who was regarded as a god, rebuked Abram. God can use any means He chooses.

Gordon Wenham and Victor Hamilton think that there was actual adultery with Sarai, but the NKJV is against that in verse 19: 'I *might* have taken her as my wife'. But God protected her in Gerar (20:3-4). So I assume that He did the same thing in Egypt.

Some scholars - like W. F. Albright - have objected to the camels, and said that they came from a later period, but that is to think too much of what limited evidence we have.

8. The Muslims believe that the prophets never sinned. Is that true? Why does the Bible record this episode in Abraham's life? (2 Tim.2:13) _____

The father of faith fails, but his God does not.

Abram the Meek (Genesis 13)

1. In what state did Abram return from Egypt? (13:1-2) _____

2. To where did the patriarchal family make its way? (13:3; cf. 12:8). What did Abram do there? (13:3-4) _____

This means that in Exodus 3:14 God reminded Moses that His name was 'Yahweh'; He did not tell him this for the first time (recall Genesis 4:26).

3. What problem soon emerged? (13:5-7) _____

In a fallen world, famine leads to problems, and blessing leads to problems. I remember speaking to a farmer on the Nambucca when a drought had just broken. I was amazed as he complained that the grass was too lush. Then he explained that this led to troubles in calving, and cows often died. Blessing in Egypt led to prosperity (12:16) but also to dissension.

4. What does 2 Peter 2:6-8 tell us about Lot? _____

5. What was Abram's solution to this strife? (13:8-9) What does this teach us? What motivates Abram? (see Rom.12:18; 1 Cor.6:7; Matt.16:24; Phil.2:19-21) _____

Lot was Abram's nephew. As the older man, Abram had rights. According to justice and custom, Abram should have had first choice. In Genesis 14 we will see that there is a time to be strong, but here in Genesis 13 we see the time to be meek and lowly, and not to press for our rights. Be strong and be meek - together!

6. What does Lot decide to choose and why? (13:10-13) By what was he deceived? (see Gen.3:6; 1 John 2:15-17) What did he leave out of his calculations? _____

Victor Hamilton tries to defend Lot here, and says: 'He can hardly be blamed for his choice.' But this is a disastrous effort for a believer.

Victor Hamilton also says that Lot did not know about the Sodomites, but surely he did, and in any case, when he went there, he settled in, and became too used to the place.

William Blake:

*They ever must believe a lie
Who see with, not through, the eye.*

Sodom was the San Francisco of the ancient world. On the surface it looks like a place with gentle people with flowers in their hair. But it is as Chuck McIlhenny said, a case of *When the Wicked Seize a City*. Temptations are like the claws of a cat - the danger lies hidden beneath a soft exterior.

John Bode's hymn has the lines:

*O let me feel You near me,
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear.*

Bode goes on to ask Jesus to draw near to him, and shield his soul from sin. Bode was a man who knew about human frailty. He actually wrote those words for his two sons and his daughter at their confirmation. Lot did not see what Bode saw.

7. What promise does God reaffirm in 13:14-15, 17-18? What promise is reaffirmed in 13:16? Abram dies to self while Lot covets whatever the world can offer. Who obtained the better deal? _____

Abram the Strong (Genesis 14)

Abraham Kuyper used to have a saying: 'Erect before men, prostrate before God'.

1. What do verses 1-12 tell us about? Who lined up against whom? What happened? _____

2. How did Abram find out about this? (14:13) How did he respond? (14:14) How many men did he take with him? _____

Abram did not give in to any grudges; he bore no resentment against one who had wronged him. He does what is right, despite what Lot had done.

3. What was the outcome? (4:15-16) What does this tell us about Abram? Can

believers ever go to war? Under what conditions? _____

When the Scottish Reformer, John Knox died in 1572, the Regent of Scotland commented: 'Here lies one who never feared the face of man.'

On 1 April 1933 the Nazis ordered a boycott of Jewish shops in Germany. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 91 year-old grandmother was not going to be told what to do by the Nazis, so she did her shopping as she had always done. She pushed her way through a cordon of Nazi thugs, bought her goods, pushed her way out again, and went home.

Faith gives strength and courage.

4. Who comes out to meet Abram then? (14:17-20) _____

Melchizedek means 'my king is righteous'. He was the priest and king of Salem ('Peace', the old name for Jerusalem). Henry Morris says that Melchizedek is actually Christ Himself, but he is a type or shadow of Christ.

5. What is said about Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4? How is this interpreted in Hebrews 7? _____

6. What does Melchizedek do to Abram? To what does this point? _____

7. How does Abram respond? What is this teaching us? (2 Cor.8:9; 9:5; Prov.11:24-25) _____

8. What does Jesus say about Abraham in John 8:56? _____

9. How does Abram respond to the king of Sodom in 14:21-24? What is this teaching us? _____

Abram would obviously not have anything with the Wells Stewardship Campaigns. The Church does not exist to extract money out of unbelievers. Beware of any situation where the people of God are indebted to unbelievers.

10. Does faith bind the conscience of others? (14:24) _____

Someone asked me at the General Assembly in 2004 whether I preached on the tithe, and he was surprised when I said 'No'. I believe tithing is right, but I would not bind the conscience of another on the issue.

The Covenant Confirmed (Genesis 15)

The Puritans were right - faith is linked to assurance is not exactly the same thing. Abram has faith but gropes for assurance that God's promises are true for him.

1. What did God do in 15:1? What was the command not to fear all about? Of what does God reassure Abram? (15:1) _____

Calvin says that Abram fears revenge, H. C. Leupold says that he fears being childless, Victor Hamilton says it refers to fearing God. In the context, Leupold's interpretation seems the best.

2. What concern does Abram raise? (15:2-3) _____

We know virtually nothing about this man Eliezer of Damascus, but evidently he is a servant whom Abram has adopted as his heir. It is almost like Abram has taken out some insurance policy. Eliezer is Plan B.

Frances Ridley Havergal:

*We may trust Him fully
All for us to do;
Those who trust Him wholly
Find Him wholly true.*

3. What does God reassure Abram about, and how does He illustrate His point? (15:4-5) How is this fulfilled in the New Testament? (Gal.3:6-9; Rev.7:9) _____

Johann Keppler thought that there were 1005 stars, but since the invention of the telescope we know that there are far more than that.

4. What Abram's response and what does this teach? (15:6; Galatians 3:6; Romans 4:3-5) _____

It does not refer to Abram's conversion; Abram is already converted. It refers to Abram's trust in God's Word. Not just at his conversion, but all through his life he was to stop thrashing around and trying to save himself by going down to Egypt to escape the famine, passing Sarai off as his sister to escape danger, or adopting a servant to escape childlessness. It is not that faith gets you into the kingdom and works keeps you there, but it is grace at the beginning, all through, and at the end. The Christian walk is a moment-by-moment walk of faith. To believe God's promises is to be accounted righteous before Him.

5. How does God describe Himself? (15:7) But how does Abram lack

assurance? (15:8; see also Luke 1:34) _____

6. What strange command does God give to Abram? (15:9-11) _____

7. How is the story concluded that night? (15:13-16) What is the prophecy given? What does it mean when it says that 'the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete'? (see Lev.18:24-28; note Lev.18:21-22) _____

8. What does God do then? (15:17-21) What is He doing there? What is this saying to us? _____

The expression is 'cutting a covenant'. Gordon Wenham says that verse 17 is only a visual reaffirmation of the covenant, but there are ancient near eastern covenants where passing between cut animals is to place oneself under the curse of the covenant. That is certainly what it means later in Jeremiah 34 where God condemns the leaders of Judah for cutting a covenant to free the slaves, and then renege on the covenant (Jer.34:18-19).

God is saying to Abram: 'I have given you promises of descendants and land, and if I do not deliver on these promises, may I be cut up like this heifer, this goat and this ram.' In Genesis 12, God gave His word to Abram; in Genesis 15 He calls down a covenant curse upon Himself if He does not keep that word; in Genesis 17 He adds a covenant sign (circumcision) to His word; and in Genesis 22 He adds an oath (Gen.22:16-18). God condescends to meet with us (Heb.6:18; Rom.3:4). His word is more than enough, but He knows what we are like.

*Jesus, I will trust Thee,
Trust without a doubt;
Whosoever cometh
Thou wilt not cast out.
Faithful is Thy promise;*

*Precious is Thy blood;
 These my soul's salvation,
 Thou my Saviour God!
 - Mary Jane Walker*

Forgetting the Promise (Genesis 16)

Martin Luther has a hymn which says:

*His Word upholds my fainting spirit:
 His promised mercy is my fort,
 My comfort and my sweet support;
 I wait for it with patience.*

If only Abram had done so!

1. What was Sarai's plan for children? (16:1-2) How has she reacted to the passing of these ten years? Was Sarai a true believer? (cf. Heb.11:11) What was Abram's response? _____

Back in Genesis 12, God had given Abram the promise of children. This was repeated later (13:16; 15:4-5).

In verse 2 Sarai is, in effect, saying: 'The God who has promised me a child has kept me from having a child. His word and His providence are contradicting one another.'

2. What happens as a result of this plan? (16:3) What dangers can come from the culture around us? _____

The Nuzi documents and the Code of Hammurabi (no.146) allow this sort of thing. Jacob fell for the same practice (Gen.30:3, 9). The result is a kind of surrogate motherhood.

F. W. Faber put it well:

*For right is right, since God is God,
 And right the day must win;
 To doubt would be disloyalty,
 To falter would be sin.*

3. After Hagar conceives, what is her response to Sarai? (16:4) Is this surprising? _____

4. What is Sarai's response? (16:5) Again, is this surprising? _____

5. Abram does the husbandly thing and abdicates (16:6) What is the result? _____

6. To where does Hagar flee, and who finds her? (16:7) Who is this angel of the Lord (Yahweh)? (see 16:13; note too Ex.3:2, 4; Judges 13:17-23; John 1:1)

7. What does the Angel of Yahweh tell Hagar to do? (16:8-9) Why do you think He questions her first in verse 8? _____

8. What mixed blessing is conferred on Hagar? (16:10-12) How was this fulfilled? _____

9. What does Hagar call God in verse 13, and why? _____

10. Where did this all take place? (16:14) _____

11. What was the name of the son born to Hagar and Abram? (16:15-16) How old was Abram when this took place? Why do you think God was waiting so long? _____

Martin Luther:

His Word upholds my fainting spirit:

His promised mercy is my fort,

My comfort and my sweet support;

I wait for it with patience.

Genesis 16 shows us what happens when we turn to self-help programmes instead of trusting God's word.

To You and to Your Children (Genesis 17)

1. How old is Abram now? (17:1-2) What does God do here? What does God command Abram, and what does He promise him? _____

God appears to him as El Shaddai ('God Almighty', say most; 'God mountain' says W. F. Albright; perhaps 'God blessing' says John Currid).

2. How did Abram respond to this? (17:3) _____

3. With whom does God make His covenant? (17:4) _____

4. To what is Abram's name changed, and why? (17:5) _____

5. What promise does God make to Abraham? (17:6-8) What is the nature of this covenant? Is there anything new here? _____

Dr Johnson used to say that 'People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.'

6. What is the sign and seal of this covenant? (17:9-14) Was Abraham already a believer? (Rom.4:9-12) Is circumcision compulsory or just a suggestion? (see too Ex.4:24-26) Is it a sign of the youngster's faith? Of what, then, is it a sign? Why is it called an everlasting covenant when Acts 15 and Galatians 5:2 show that the sign is no longer in operation? Does circumcision have a spiritual meaning? (Jer.4:4; Rom.2:28-29) How is it that females are in the covenant and members of Israel yet with no covenant sign - a contrast to Acts 8:12? _____

Shorter Catechism Question 95: 'To whom is baptism to be administered?' The answer is: 'Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.' Hence households are baptized - see Acts 2:38-39; 16:15, 33; 1 Cor.1:16; 7:14.

7. What is promised to Sarai? (17:15-16) What is her new name, and why is it given to her? _____

8. What is Abraham's response in v.17? What does this teach us? _____

9. What is Abraham's plea in v.18? _____

10. What is God's promise to Isaac? (17:19) Why is he called 'Isaac'? Contrast the promise to Isaac with the promise to Ishmael (17:19-21). _____

11. What did God do then? (17:22) _____

12. What did Abraham do? (17:23-27) How old was Abraham at this time? How old was Ishmael? Why was Ishmael circumcised when the covenant of grace did not go through him but through Isaac? _____

13. Why do we have times of testing? (e.g. 1 Peter) _____

mind? _____

'I have reached menopause. This sort of thing does not happen to old women. Biology is against it. Perhaps I can be led to a retirement home where I can tend the garden.'

7. What is the Lord's answer to Sarah's objection? (18:13-14) What do we say to those who believe that miracles cannot happen? (Jer.32:27; Luke 1:34-37) Is our salvation too hard for the Lord? (Mark 10:26-27) _____

That does not commit us to believing every miracle story we hear. In 1507 Pope Julius II sanctioned the story that angels had transported the house of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Loreto in Italy in two trips, ending in 1295. Do you believe that?

8. What does Sarah do when she is confronted? (18:15) How familiar is this response? _____

The word 'Isaac' means 'he laughed'. God would turn the laughter of bemused doubt into the laughter of joy and delight (21:6-7).

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom (Genesis 18:16-33)

To ponder: How does God respond to the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras? What is His attitude to Sydney right now?

1. What is the Lord about to do in verses 16-17? What does this show about God? (Amos 3:7) _____

2. What has God said to Abraham regarding his descendants (18:18-19) What was Abraham's practice regarding his children? What is this teaching us? _____

3. How is the message not simply one of endless blessing? (18:20-21) Of what is God's judgment here a picture? (Jude 7) _____

Verse 21 is what is called an anthropomorphism, where God speaks as we would speak, in this case, like a policeman who will thoroughly gather the evidence before charging anyone.

4. What are the sins of Sodom? (Ezek.16:49-50) _____

In 2003 an elderly Swedish Pentecostal pastor, Ake Green, preached on homosexuality to his small congregation. He referred to Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6, and concluded that homosexuality was 'abnormal' and 'a horrible cancerous tumour in the body of society'. He was arrested, put on trial, found guilty, and gaoled for a month. The prosecutor said that 'Collecting Bible citations on this topic as he does makes this hate speech.'

5. How did Abraham respond to this evil? (18:22-25) What is implied here about how God responds to Christians living in evil places? (note Jer.5:1) What does Abraham say about God in verse 25? How many righteous persons would save Sodom? (18:26) _____

6. How, then, does Abraham address God? (18:27) How does Abraham refer to himself? _____

7. What happens in verses 28-33? How many righteous persons now would save Sodom? How does the mystery of prayer work? What does this teach us about prayer for those in authority? (1 Tim. 2:1-2, written when mad Nero was emperor) _____

8. How can blessings come to unbelievers through the prayers and witness of believers? _____

Homophobia is now being outlawed, but God does a bit more than vilify

Sodom. He utterly destroys the place. But if there had been ten righteous ones, it would have been spared. Christ said that Christians were to operate as salt in society (Matt. 5:13). In the days before refrigerators, salt stopped food from going rotten.

*God the All-merciful! Earth hath forsaken
Meekness and mercy, and slighted Thy word;
Bid not Thy wrath in its terrors awaken;
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord.*

Lot the Backslider (Genesis 19)

Martin Luther said that he could not read this chapter without a feeling of deep revulsion.

1. What had Lot chosen to do? (13:10, 13) How are we to understand his spiritual state? (2 Peter 2:7-8) _____

Derek Kidner calls him 'the righteous man without the pilgrim spirit'.

2. Who came to Sodom? (19:1) How did Lot treat them? (19:2-3) _____

3. What happened that night, and how did Lot try to avert it? (19:4-8) _____

The NIV has 'have sex with' in verse 5. The word is 'to know', and it refers to sexual knowledge. Back in 1955 D. Sherwin Bailey argued that God was angry with the men of Sodom not because of their sexual depravity but because they failed to show hospitality to the angels. That is not explaining Scripture; that is explaining it away.

Bruce Vawter, a former president of the Catholic Biblical Association: 'The Bible did not know any of the facts that have been developed in our modern studies of sexual behaviour, which have revealed to us that the homosexual is most often what he or she is through no deliberate choice at all but instead by a decree of birth.' There are plenty of clerics taking that line these days.

But Chuck McIlhenny's experiences in San Francisco in *When the Wicked Seize the City* show us that this is not ancient history.

John Currid says that Lot may have been clever here, because if the Sodomites had ravished the two daughters of Lot, they would have been guilty of a capital crime. Actually, says Currid, Lot was trying to trap them. That does not seem at all likely. How was Lot going to arrest these men? Call a policeman? No, this is a debased culture, and Lot is fearful for his life. Calvin says: 'he should rather have endured a thousand deaths, than have

resorted to such a measure.'

4. How was the danger averted? (19:9-11) What do you notice about how the Sodomites vilified Lot in verse 9? _____

5. What did the men (angels) tell Lot to do? (19:12-13) What is the only remedy for those who would be saved? What is about to happen? _____

6. What did Lot tell his two daughters and his sons-in-law? (19:14) How did his sons-in-law respond? Is fleeing the wrath to come part of the gospel message? (1 Thess. 1:10) _____

7. Was Lot slow to see the danger? (19:15-16) What happened? What would have happened had Lot been left to his own free will? _____

8. What were Lot, his wife, and his two daughters told to do? (19:17) _____

9. How does Lot respond to this command? (19:18-20) What do the angels tell him that he can do? (19:21-22) What is the name of the place that he is to flee to? What does this episode reveal about Lot? _____

10. Does judgment fall on Sodom? (19:23-25) What is this teaching us? (Luke 17:28-30) _____

11. What did Lot's wife do and why? (19:26) What happened to her? Is this contrary to Jesus' teachings? (Luke 17:32) _____

To half-escape is to not escape. Josephus in the first century said that he had seen this pillar of salt. Today on the south-western side of the Dead Sea one can still see pillar-like lumps of salt.

12. What did Abraham see the next morning? (19:27-29) What is said about Lot's salvation in verse 29? What is Christ's warning here? (Matt.11:23-24) __

13. What tragic and revolting episode takes place next? (19:30-38) Why did his two daughters plot this? What was the result? _____

In 1847 Calvin's commentary on Genesis was translated into English by Rev. John King. When it came to this section, he omitted it, because he thought that it was unfit to print due to the subject matter.

Charles Wesley:

*Thou know'st the way to bring me back,
My fallen spirit to restore;
O, for Thy truth and mercy's sake,
Forgive, and bid me sin no more;
The ruins of my soul repair,
And make my heart a house of prayer.*

Faith or Fear? (Genesis 20)

Karl Marx wrote that 'The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, dejection.' But the Bible says that to be godly is to be strong and fearless before the world. In Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* Christian is fearful when he approaches a narrow pass where there are lions, but as he gets nearer, he finds that the lions are chained. We need to know that the lions are chained.

1. How is this chapter similar to chapter 12, to do with Abraham in Egypt, and chapter 26, to do with Isaac in Gerar? Can we ever repeat sins? Is it true that we are slow to learn? _____

Bruce Vawter: 'Obviously these stories refer to the same episode, and they have been mixed up.' Vawter seems to think that we could never repeat our sins.

Horatio Palmer's: *Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;/ Each victory will help you some other to win.* That is true in a general sense but not invariably so.

2. What does Abraham do? (20:1-2) _____

Gerar is south, very near the Philistine cities. Abimelech may be a title, not a name. He took a liking to Sarah, who was 90, but remember that she lived till she was 127 (and Abraham lived till he was 175). He may also have taken a liking to Sarah's wealth - remember that Abraham was a rich man. Here is Abraham at his worst. In the midst of the struggle against the Nazi Aryan clauses in the 1930s, Martin Niemöller used to cite:

One man will ask, "What comes of it?"

Another, "What is right?"

And this is what distinguishes

The vassal from the knight.

Here, Abraham is no knight.

3. What does God do to protect Sarah? (20:3) How strongly does He act? ____

4. What is Abimelech's reply to God? (20:4-5) What does this show about him? _____

5. What does God say in reply? (20:6) What did God do to protect Sarah and Abimelech? What does God tell Abraham to do? (20:7) How does He describe Abraham? What is God's final warning to Abimelech? What is said about this episode in Psalm 105:12-15? _____

6. How do Abimelech's servants respond to this news? (20:8) For what does Abimelech rebuke Abraham? (20:9) What does he then ask Abraham? (20:10)

7. What is Abraham's excuse? (20:11) _____

James Montgomery Boice and Victor Hamilton say that this is slander on the part of Abraham. He is so concerned to avoid being pinned for his own sins, that he finds someone to blame. That is true but the reasoning is still quite correct. The fear of God is the basis of morality.

8. How does Abraham rationalise his lie so that it does not seem so bad? (20:12-13) How can we often tell the truth while actually evading the issue? (see Gen.3:12; John 4:16-18) _____

Calvin conjectures that 'father' here means 'grandfather' but it is true that in these early chapters of Genesis, human genetics allowed for some things that were banned later. Abraham may well have married his half-sister, or, if Calvin is right, his cousin. Under the law, there are many more restrictions on this (Lev.18:9, 11; 20:17).

9. Why does Abimelech make restitution to Abraham? (20:14-16) _____

Notice that in verse 16 he refers to Abraham as Sarah's brother. That must have hurt. It was no doubt intended by Abimelech to be a barb aimed at Abraham. At the same time God meant it as a barb to Abraham's conscience.

10. What does Abraham do for Abimelech? (20:17-18) What does God then do for Abimelech? What had He done to Abimelech before this? _____

Isaac and Ishmael: Faith or Works? (Genesis 21:1-21)

1. What takes place in verses 1-5? Why the wait of 25 years from Genesis 12? What should we learn about the fulfilment of God's promises? (see 2 Pet.3:4, 8-9) _____

2. How has God turned incredulity into joy? (21:6-7; recall 17:17; 18:12-15) _____

This is a lovely picture of Sarah's joy at the safe arrival of Isaac. Sarah could not call out her son's name without being reminded of her own doubts, and

now of her great joy. Every time she called him for dinner, or to family worship, or to pick up his toys, she would be reminded that 'God has made me laugh'. The birth of the Messiah is the occasion for even greater joy (Luke 2:10-11).

3. What took place later? (21:8) _____

A child was often weaned at two or three, so this took place much later than what was described in the first seven verses.

4. What did Sarah see, and how did she respond? (21:9-10) _____

The word in verse 9 can mean 'playing' or 'laughing'. The NIV has 'mocking', but Paul quotes it in Galatians 4:29 as 'persecuting'. Ishmael was about 15 or 16, and Isaac about 3. Ishmael is giving young Isaac a hard time. Victor Hamilton even suggests sexual abuse, but there is nothing to justify that reading of it.

5. What was Abraham's initial response? (21:11) _____

6. How does God use Sarah's unkindness? (21:12) Can God use sin to achieve what is good? (see Gen.50:20; Acts 4:27-28) What does Romans 9:6-8 tell us about the promise of salvation? _____

7. List all the things in verses 13-21 which show God's common grace to Ishmael and Hagar. _____

8. What does Paul say about the Isaac principle and the Ishmael principle, if we can use those terms? (Gal.4:21-26, 28, 31) _____

For an example of the Ishmael principle, here is a quote from Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Smith taught: 'Very gladly would the Lord give to every one eternal life, but since that blessing can come only on merit - through the faithful performance of duty - only those who are worthy shall receive it.'

Contrast that with dependence on God's grace:

*Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
Mercy through Christ is all my suit;
Lord, let Thy mercy come.*

9. What do verses 22-34 reveal about Abraham's dealings with unbelievers? ___

The Substitute Lamb (Genesis 22:1-19)

Thomas Watson: 'God is to be trusted when his providences seem to run contrary to his promises.' I once knew a woman who started coming to public worship and reading her Bible, and she reached Genesis 22, and that was the end of it. Her attitude was: 'If that is what God is like, I do not want to know Him.' So there are risks in dealing with this chapter.

1. What test does God impose on Abraham? (22:1-2) How does God appear to mock Abraham? _____

The KJV has 'tempt' but the word is 'test'. Never has God imposed such a test on any man. This is the God who condemns child sacrifice in the severest possible terms (Lev.20:2-5). The prophets called Judah to account for her sins in this area (Jer.32:35).

Infant skeletons have been dug up in Canaan. In the worship of Molech, the idea was: sacrifice your child and the crops will grow - rather like the abortion mentality of 'kill the child, and you will be better off'.

3. What does Abraham do? (22:3-4) For how long does he live with this command? _____

Søren Kierkegaard has described this most graphically and movingly (albeit philosophically) in *Fear and Trembling* where he writes of 'the teleological suspension of the ethical'. God tortures Abraham for three days - Abraham will kill his son, and kill off God's promises.

4. What is the only thing that kept Abraham going? (Heb.11:17-19) _____

5. What is known about Mount Moriah? (22:2; 2 Chron.3:1) What can we learn from this? What question does Isaac ask? (22:5-7) _____

6. What was Abraham's answer? (22:8) What does Abraham know, and how would he be feeling? _____

'Jehovah Jireh' means 'God will provide' or 'God will see to it.'

7. What did Abraham go to do next? (22:9-10) _____

In October 1540 Calvin was asked to return to Geneva from where he had been expelled two years earlier. He wrote: 'I would prefer a hundred other deaths to that cross, on which I should have to die a thousand times a day.'

8. How does God intervene? (22:11-14) What does He say? What is provided for Abraham? What is all this teaching us, concerning the gospel, and concerning our response to God? (see Rom.8:32 and John 1:29 for the first point and Matt.10:37 for the second point) How does God provide what He demands from Abraham? _____

In Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian's family initially do not want him to begin his journey. He puts his fingers in his ears, and cries 'Life, Life, eternal Life!' as he presses on.

9. Why does God put Himself on oath? (22:15-18) Why does He repeat His promises? _____

As a matter of interest, Henry Morris has estimated that the number of stars and the number of sand grains adds up to approximately 10^{25} , which I think is 10 million million million million, give or take a few. God says: 'You have not withheld your son. On oath I tell you that your descendants will be so many that no one will be able to count them.' There shall be in heaven a multitude which no man can number.

10. What did Abraham do after this? (22:19) What else is told us? (22:20-23) Why? _____

The Death of Sarah (Genesis 23)

Sir Walter Scott: 'And come he slow, or come he fast, it is but death who comes at last'.

Sarah died at 127. Abraham and Sarah may have been married for nearly 100 years.

1. What happens in 23:1-2? How does Abraham respond? What are we meant to make of this? (Eccles.3:4; Deut.34:8; 2 Sam.1:11-12; Job 1:20; Phil.2:27; John 11:35) _____

Don Howard wrote a helpful little booklet called *Christians Grieve Too*.

When Joy Davidman died, C. S. Lewis records that he was filled with self-pity, he could not settle down to work, he felt guilty if he was not miserable, and his memory was faulty. He wrote: 'Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything.' This can be a real struggle, but it is distinct from despair, and eventually Lewis was able to regain a right perspective. When Mary Newton died in 1790, John Newton was grieved: 'the world seemed to die with her.'

2. What does Abraham seek to negotiate with Ephron the son of Heth or Zohar (NIV - 'the Hittite)? What characterises these negotiations? (23:4-7) Why is Abraham so keen on a burial? _____

3. For what does Abraham ask Ephron? (23:8-9) Who was Ephron? (23:10) _____

4. What was Ephron's reply? (23:11) _____

That might not be meant to be taken at face value; it might only be a polite way of bargaining.

6. What is Abraham's response to this offer? (23:12-13) _____

Finally, he buys it for 400 shekels of silver, which, from all we know, is a very high price. So Abraham buys the cave in which he will bury Sarah, and in which he would later be buried, as would Isaac in Genesis 35 and Jacob in Genesis 50.

7. What can we learn from Abraham in verses 7, 12? _____

Later, a man called Araunah offered his threshing floor to King David for nothing, together with oxen, but David refused (2 Sam.24:24; note Rom. 13:8).

8. What takes place next? (23:14-20) _____

9. So far, the only land that Abraham actually possesses is a burial plot for his wife. What kept Abraham going? (Heb.11:13-16) How is Abraham described in Genesis 23:4, 6? _____

The Septuagint translates verse 6 as 'a king'. The chapter only appears to be about a sad man looking to bury his wife, but there is more to it than that.

A Bride for Isaac (Genesis 24)

This is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. Abraham sends his senior servant back to Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac.

1. What is the presupposition to the whole 67 verses in the chapter in terms of whom should a believer marry? (24:1-4; Deut.7:1-4; 1 Cor.7:39) What did Abraham send his servant to do? How seriously was this taken? What if a believer is married to an unbeliever? (1 Cor. 7:12-13; 1 Pet. 3:1-2) _____

The Canaanites were idolaters, who had descended into rampant homosexuality and child sacrifice. Abraham was concerned that Isaac not get caught up with such practices by marrying a Canaanite.

2. Did Rebekah have a choice in whom she would marry? (24:5, 57-58) _____

3. What motivates Abraham in verses 6-9? What does he tell his servant? _____

4. Where does the servant go? (24:10) What does he take with him? _____

5. Where does he arrive? (24:11-14) What does verse 12 reveal about the servant? What is the point of the 'test' he looks for in the woman? Is something like this meant for us today? _____

6. Who arrived then, and how is she described? (24:15-16) What is this saying to us? _____

7. What does she do next? (24:17-21) What does the servant do? _____

Camels can apparently lose up to 25 gallons of water during a long journey, so looking after 10 thirsty camels was quite a job.

8. What do verses 22-28 tell us about Rebekah and about Abraham's servant?

The servant is not looking for the coolest chick on the dance floor, but one who is kind and hospitable. The lesson is not 'See how she waters the camels', but 'Look at the day-to-day expressions of faith.'

9. Who is Laban? (24:29) What did he do for the servant? (24:30-33) How does he address him? But what is the servant's priority? (24:33) _____

10. What is the servant's account? (24:34-49) What does he emphasise? _____

11. How does Laban respond to the servant's story? (24:50-51) _____

12. What does the servant do in verses 52-54? What does Laban say? (24:55-59) What is the servant's attitude? To what extent is the marriage arranged? Does Rebekah have a choice? (24:58) _____

13. What blessing is conferred on Rebekah? (24:60) _____

Feminists today would regard that as a great curse! In China there is the one-child policy, and the second child is killed by abortion or infanticide. Many parts of China have great distortions in their population, with far more males than females. But the family of Nahor are also referring to God's promises revealed earlier (Gen.22:17). Who are the children of Abraham? All Jews and

Gentiles who have repented of sin, and put their trust in Christ alone for salvation. May there be millions and millions of such people!

14. What happens next? (24:61) _____

15. Where was Isaac? (24:62) What was he doing? (24:63) What was Rebekah's response when she saw him? (24:64-65) _____

This is about 2000 B.C., and we are not exactly sure of the customs. But Rebekah seems not to have worn the veil when she went with Abraham's servant, but she did wear it as she came to meet her future husband.

16. Then what took place? (24:66-67) _____

Rebekah seems to have lived in Sarah's tent until the marriage. This whole chapter shows us faith operating in this world - in prayerfulness, trust, kindness, chastity, and faithfulness.

Abraham's Death and His Family (Genesis 25:1-18)

1. What did Abraham do after Sarah's death? (25:1) How many children did Keturah bear him, and how did Abraham treat them compared to Isaac? (25:2-6) Why? _____

2. How long did Abraham live? (25:7-8) Then what happened? Where was he buried? (25:9-11) _____

3. What do we learn about Ishmael? (25:12-18) _____

Jacob Chosen by God (Genesis 25:19-28)

Jacob becomes the father of the twelve patriarchs of Israel, but he is not one who immediately arouses our sympathy or admiration. God chooses a deceiver to achieve His purposes.

1. Who was Isaac? Whom did he marry? What was the problem for a time? (25:19-21) For how long was this a problem? (see 25:20, 26) What did Isaac do in response to it? _____

There are often exceptional difficulties before an exceptional work. In 1722 the novelist Daniel Defoe declared that 'no age, since the founding and forming of the Christian Church in the world, was ever like, (in open avowed atheism, blasphemies and heresies), to the age ne now live in.' Yet in a few years Wesley, Whitefield and other evangelists would be used to transform Britain.

2. Who was in Rebekah's womb? (25:22-23) What does the Lord say about them? What does God say about life in the womb? What does God say about these two boys? (Rom.9:10-13) _____

3. How is Esau described, and how is Jacob described? (25:24-26) Why does Jacob receive the name that he is given? How old was Isaac at this time? _____

4. How were Jacob and Esau different? (25:27-28) How is it that Rebekah's favouring of Jacob is wrong but God's choice of him is not? _____

A woman told John Newton: 'The Lord must have loved me before I was born or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards.'

Esau Sells His Birthright (Genesis 25:29-34)

Here and in Genesis 27:1-40 Jacob comes across as a very flawed human being. So he is - God's election is God's election; He does not necessarily choose the best.

1. How does the New Testament view Esau? (Heb.12:16) Is Esau answerable for his own sins? _____

2. What was Jacob doing, and what had Esau been doing? (Gen.25:29) _____

3. What did Esau ask for, and what was Jacob's reply? (25:30-31) What does this reveal about Jacob? _____

The birthright refers to the headship of the family.

4. What was Esau's estimation of his birthright? (25:32) _____

5. What was the result of all this? (25:33-34) How do God's sovereignty and our responsibility fit together? (recall Gen.25:22-23) How can this help us in day-to-day life? _____

Like Father, Like Son: Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 26)

1. Where did Isaac go, and why? (26:1) _____

2. What did God tell him not to do, and of what did He assure him? (26:2-4) To what did God draw Isaac's attention? (26:5) What does this mean? _____

3. What did Isaac tell Rebekah to do? (26:6-7) Do we invariably learn from history? (recall Genesis 12 & 20) _____

4. How does Abimelech come to realise that Rebekah is not Isaac's sister? (26:8) What is his response to this? (26:9-11) _____

5. What does Isaac experience in Gerar, and what does Abimelech do in

response? (26:12-16) What do we learn about what drives and motivates the Philistines? _____

6. What did Isaac then do? (26:17-18) What happened after that, and what does it show us about the herdsmen of Gerar and about Isaac? (26:19-22) _____

Martyn Lloyd-Jones gave a wonderful series of six sermons on Genesis 26:17-18 along the lines that rubbish needs to be removed before revival can flow. It is all good but probably did not have much to do with the text.

7. What happened at Beersheba? (26:23-25) _____

8. What did Abimelech come to realise about Isaac, and what results from that? (26:26-33) What is associated with this covenant? _____

9. What do we learn about Esau in verses 34-35? How did this affect Isaac and Rebekah? What do we learn from this episode? _____

Blessing Through Deception (Genesis 27:1-46)

God uses the deception practised by Rebekah and Jacob to achieve His godly purposes. God could have achieved this more peacefully as He did later with Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen.48:15-20), but He chose not to. Note the interplay between human sin and divine sovereignty.

1. How is Isaac described? (27:1) What does he say to Esau, and what does he intend will follow that? (27:2-4) _____

2. What does Rebekah overhear? (27:5) What is her alternate plan? (27:6-10)

Calvin refers to Rebekah's 'hasty zeal'.

3. What do you notice about Jacob's objection to his mother's plan? (27:11-13) What is wrong with his answer? Because of this, how is Rebekah able to allay his fears? (27:13) _____

4. What did Rebekah and Jacob do? (27:14-17) _____

5. What does Jacob do then? (27:18-19) _____

6. Why was Isaac suspicious at first? (27:20) How does Jacob allay his suspicions? How is this worse? _____

7. What does verse 21 tell us about Isaac? (27:21) What evidence does he ask for? _____

Luther said that if he had been Jacob, he would have dropped the dish and run away. Whatever else we know about Jacob, he could certainly keep his nerve.

8. What is the third aspect of Isaac's suspicions? (27:22-23) _____

9. What takes place in verse 24? _____

10. How is the deception kept up? (27:25-29) Note the features such as the kiss, the blessing, and the echo of the blessing to Abraham. _____

11. What takes place next? (27:30-38; see Heb.12:17) _____

12. What blessing is given to Esau? (27:39-40) _____

Reaping What He Sows (Genesis 27:41-28:9)

Jacob was sent away and did not return for twenty years. At Haran the deceiver was deceived, by his uncle, Laban (see Galatians 6:7).

1. What was Esau's response to all this? (27:41) What does this reveal about Esau? How far is he from the outworking of the gospel in Romans 12:19-21?

2. What is Rebekah's solution to this? (27:42-45) _____

Rebekah never saw Jacob again in this life. She underestimates the devastation that sin causes.

3. What is Rebekah's last complaint? (27:46) What is her greatest fear? What do we learn about Rebekah's life? How is this not quite the issue at stake here? _____

4. What does Isaac do with Jacob in 28:1-5? (note 12:1-3; 17:2, 8; 26:24) Where did Jacob go to, and whom did he stay with? _____

5. How does Esau manage to miss the point entirely? (28:6-9) What does this reveal about his spiritual state? _____

Jacob Meets God (Genesis 28:10-22)

1. How difficult is prayer? (Luke 11:1; Rom.8:26) _____

Thomas Chalmers wrote in his diary: 'Make me sensible of real answers to actual requests, as evidence of an interchange between myself on earth and my Saviour in heaven.'

2. Where was Jacob going from and where was he going to? (28:10) Why? ____

This home-boy was leaving his doting mother, fleeing his angry brother, leaving the promised land behind, and sleeping out in the open air. No doubt, he felt lonely and isolated, although he had brought it all upon himself. At this point, Jacob is under God's grace, but perhaps not yet a true believer.

3. After a trip of about 45 miles (perhaps two days), Jacob had an extraordinary experience at Bethel. What was it? (28:11-12) How does Jesus refer to this vision in John 1:51? What does this mean for Jacob, and to what does it point? _____

Elizabeth Clephane:

*As to the holy patriarch
That wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Saviour's cross to me -
A ladder up to heaven.*

4. What is reaffirmed to Jacob? (28:13-15) How does God identify Himself? ____

5. What does God say about:

(a) the land (28:13b) _____

(b) many descendants (28:14a) _____

(c) world-wide blessing (28:14b) _____

6. What is said about God's promises? (28:15) _____

Jacob has God's presence, His protection, and His promise.

7. What overcomes Jacob as a result of this encounter? (28:16-17) What does this reveal about God? _____

8. What does he do next? (28:18-19) _____

Bethel means 'House of God' - out in the open air, God made Himself known to this sinful, selfish man.

9. What is Jacob's prayer and vow? (28:20-22) _____

Victor Hamilton, Robert Candlish and H. C. Leupold have tried to interpret it along the lines of 'If or since God will do all these things for me, I must respond with obedience and faith.' Victor Hamilton says: 'Jacob is throwing himself on God's mercy, not calculating whether to accept God.' J. Douglas MacMillan thinks that this is Jacob's conversion. All that may be right, but it rather looks like Jacob is bargaining with God: 'If You do Your part, I will do mine. Look after me, and I will pay my tithes.'

In 1505 Martin Luther, a law student, was walking to the Saxon village of Stotternheim when a terrible storm broke. A bolt of lightning knocked Luther to the ground. He was terrified, and he cried out: 'St Anne, help me. I will become a monk.' He was bargaining with God; he was not yet a Christian. When C. S. Lewis' mother was dying, Lewis prayed for her recovery, but she died. Later, he reflected on that, and said that he had not wanted God. He only wanted his mother to recover. Luther and Lewis were praying to God and believed in His existence before they were Christians.

Jacob's prayer here is not one of the great prayers of the Bible. God is not a means to an end. He is our end.

The Deceiver Deceived (Genesis 29:1-30)

In the School of Hard Knocks, Jacob would learn something about doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. God chastens those whom He loves (Prov.3:11-12).

1. To where does the fleeing Jacob make his way? (29:1-4) Whom does he meet? Where exactly? _____

2. Where does the conversation lead? (29:5-6) What does Jacob suggest in verse 7, presumably to get rid of the shepherds? What is their reply? (29:8) _____

3. Who arrives on the scene? (29:9-12) List what Jacob does. What is his state of mind? _____

Jacob seems quite agitated. He shows off, kisses Rachel, then introduces himself! Rachel is his cousin.

4. What takes place next? (29:13-14) For how long does Jacob stay? _____

5. What does Laban offer Jacob? (29:15) Who are Laban's two daughters? (29:16-20) How are they described? For whom does Jacob ask? _____

Verse 17 may mean that Leah was cross-eyed, or that she did not have the dark eyes that are usual in Middle Eastern women.

One might have expected the time to drag, but it flew.

6. But what happens at the wedding? (29:21-25) What did Jacob find?! What is ironic about his complaint in verse 25? (recall 27:36) _____

The hour was late, it was very dark, and Josephus says that they all had too much to drink.

Calvin says that Jacob should have dismissed Leah because there was no mutual consent.

7. What is Laban’s excuse, and what is his remedy? (29:26-30) What is the result? _____

Under the law this was later forbidden (Lev.18:18).

Jacob cheated his father, and then is cheated by his father-in-law; Jacob took the rights of the firstborn, then suffers because of similar rights regarding Leah; Jacob sided with his mother against his brother and father, then has divisions in his own household.

Family Troubles (Genesis 29:31-30:24)

Dr Johnson once commented that to be happy at home is the end of all human endeavour. Not quite, but we know what he meant, and why he said it.

William Blake:

*Man was made for joy and woe,
And when this we rightly know
Thro’ the World we safely go.
Joy and woe are woven fine,
A Clothing for the Soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.*

1. What was the Lord’s compensation to Leah, and what did He do with Rachel? (29:31) _____

2. List the four sons of Leah, and why they were given their names (29:32-35) What happened then? _____

Later, Leah gives birth to two more sons.

3. How did Rachel react to this? (30:1) Is this unexpected? What do we learn from this? _____

4. What is Jacob's sharp response to her? (30:2) Again, what does this reveal about human nature? _____

5. What does Rachel do next? (30:3-8) Do we necessarily learn from history? (recall Genesis 16:1-2) What are we meant to make of Jacob's attitude and behaviour? _____

6. How does Leah make matters worse? (30:9-13) Yet how does God overrule in all this? When does a reasonable desire become an inordinate one? _____

7. How does Issachar come to be born? (30:14-18) _____

Mandrakes were a small orange-coloured fruit, often called 'love-apples', and were believed to be an aphrodisiac.

8. Who arrives next? (30:19-20) What is the name of Leah's daughter? (30:21)

9. What are the circumstances surrounding the birth of Joseph? (30:22-24) Who is behind all that takes place? _____

Rachel must have been praying for about seven years for this.

Resolving Matters with Laban (Genesis 30:25-31:55)

1. What is teaching Romans 12:18 teaching us? _____

2. What does Jacob ask for after Joseph's birth? (30:25) To what does Jacob appeal? (30:25-26) _____

3. Why is Laban reluctant for Jacob to go? (30:27) What offer does he make to Jacob? (30:28) _____

The ESV and the NIV say that Laban learnt this 'by divination'.

4. What is the offer that Jacob makes to Laban? (30:29-33) Why do you think he does this? _____

5. What is Laban's response? (30:34) Then what does he do? (30:35-36) _____

6. What is Jacob's response to that? (30:37-43) Whom does God prosper? (30:43) _____

Nobody is exactly sure what Jacob is doing here. Some have said that the concoction was designed to bring the animals on heat. Some have thought that Jacob had some understanding of Gregor Mendel's 19th century experiments in genetics which explain how recessive genes can be carried by heterozygous animals. Calvin says that it was a miracle, and the sticks or branches were just a sign of Jacob's faith. Derek Kidner thinks that the idea was that a vivid sight during pregnancy or conception would leave its mark on the embryo (play music and you might get a musical child!).

7. What is Laban's response when he sees that God is prospering Jacob? (31:1-2) _____

8. What does God tell Jacob to do? (31:3) _____

9. What did Jacob tell Rachel and Leah? (31:4-7) Where does he say this? Why? _____

10. What does he recount to Rachel and Leah? (31:8-13) What does Jacob know about God? Read carefully verses 11 and 13 and note what they say about the angel of the Lord. _____

11. What do Rachel and Leah say to Jacob about their father, Laban? (31:14-16) _____

Laban has kept the dowry which was meant for the bride if she were ever left on her own.

12. What did Jacob do in preparation for flight? (31:17-18) Where was Laban? (31:19) What had Rachel stolen? (31:19) What does this reveal about Laban and about Rachel? _____

13. What happens next? (31:20-21) _____

14. What does Laban do when he hears what Jacob has done? (31:22-23) What is God's warning to him? (31:24) _____

15. For what does Laban upbraid Jacob? (31:25-28) How convincing is this tirade and hurt indignation? Does Laban know himself? _____

16. What does Laban seem especially upset about? (31:29-30) What are we meant to make of him? _____

He knows God but hardly in a saving way. He knows enough to be half-afraid of Him.

17. What is Jacob's hasty response? (31:31-32) Why did he say this? Should he have said it? _____

18. What did Laban do next? (33-35) Why did he not find the idols? What do you make of Rachel's lie? _____

19. Full of indignation, Jacob lets fly at Laban. What does he say? (31:36-42) How does he describe his life for the last twenty years? _____

20. What does Laban claim and what does he suggest? (31:43-44)

21. What is the content of this covenant? (31:45-54) Who is the 'witness'? _____

22. What is the Mizpah benediction in verse 49? In the context, is it a benediction or a calling on God to watch and witness that they do not mistreat each other because they do not trust one another? _____

23. Then what did Laban do? (31:55) _____

Facing Esau Again (Genesis 32:1-21)

Jacob had waited for years for a word from his mother, Rebekah, telling him that he could return (Gen.27:43-45). It never came so finally Jacob decided to return home (Gen.30:25). God endorsed that decision (Gen.31:3). Jacob then fled his crafty uncle Laban, but wondered how Esau would receive him. Time does not heal all wounds.

1. How does God reassure Jacob in verses 1-2? (note Heb.1:14; 2 Kings 6:15-17) _____

This is an army expression, and the idea seems to be that God has an army of angels to protect Jacob.

2. What does Jacob do next? (32:3-5) What is it that makes Jacob anxious, and how does he go about trying to settle his fears? _____

3. What do the messengers tell Jacob? (32:6) What effect would this have on him? _____

4. What is Jacob's Plan B? (32:7-8) _____

5. How does Jacob address God? (32:9) Of what does he remind God? (recall 31:3) _____

6. How does Jacob think of himself before God? (32:10) How has God blessed Jacob? _____

7. What does Jacob ask for from God? (32:11) Again, of what does he remind God? (32:12) _____

There is a similar use of praying God's promises back to Him by Moses in Exodus 32:9-14.

8. What does Jacob go to give to Esau? (32:13-15) How do you view this, as a bribe or a token of goodwill? (cf. Prov.17:8; 18:16) _____

If each milk camel in verse 15 had one colt, the total number of animals would have been 580, which is quite an offering.

9. Why did Jacob think to send his party on in successive droves? (32:16-21) What does this indicate about Jacob's state of mind at this time? _____

After he wrestles with the angel-God-man, Jacob actually goes out to meet Esau first.

A New Creature Wrestles in Prayer (Genesis 32:22-32)

1. What was Jacob expecting at this time? (32:6-8) _____

2. What is new in Jacob? (32:10-11) _____

Charles Simeon: 'I would have a conscious unworthiness to pervade every act and habit of my soul.'

3. With whom does Jacob wrestle? (32:24, 28, 30) _____

Over a thousand years later, Hosea refers to this episode (Hos.12:3-4) This is a pre-incarnation appearance of the Son of God.

4. What does Jacob do, and where does he go? (32:22-23) _____

5. Whom does he meet, and what takes place? (32:24) _____

6. What 'thorn in the flesh' is Jacob left with? (32:25) _____

His hip was dislocated. Douglas MacMillan was a shepherd and a wrestler at one stage in his life, before he entered the ministry, and taught Church History. He points out that a wrestler is utterly dependent upon his thigh. When his thigh is gone, he is gone, and he can only cling to his opponent for support.

7. What does Jacob do in this wrestle? What is this teaching us? (32:26) _____

Calvin says that God fights against us with His left hand and for us with His right hand. Luther says: 'God has a tough mind and a tender heart.'

Jeremy Taylor: 'We beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die.'

It is said that George Mueller prayed every day for 52 years for two sons of a friend of his. Mueller then died, without seeing either of the boys converted. At Mueller's funeral one of the sons was so moved that he became a Christian, and the other followed soon after.

8. Why is Jacob's name changed? (32:27-28) How is it that Jacob succeeds in his weakness? (2 Cor.12:9-10) _____

'Jacob' means 'he supplants' or 'he deceives'. Alas, there is some argument over the exact meaning of 'Israel'. W. F. Albright says that it means 'God heals', while Derek Kidner thinks it means 'May God strive (for him)'. But the more usual translation is 'the prince with God'. The idea is obviously that God has taken a deceiver and turned him into a prince.

9. What answer does Jacob get when he asks the name of the wrestler? (32:29) Why is this not revealed as yet? _____

10. What does Jacob call the name of the place and why? (32:30) _____

11. With what is Jacob afflicted from this time on, and how is this remembered? (32:31-32) _____

Douglas MacMillan and Roger Ellsworth say that Jacob was converted back at Bethel in Genesis 28, but Martyn Lloyd-Jones is surely right - this is where Jacob is given new life. The deceiver would become the father of the twelve tribes. Though he does not know the name of the one who blesses him, he does know the blessing.

*There comes a time, we know not when,
A place, we know not where,
That seals the destiny of men
For glory or despair.*

Burying the Hatchet (Genesis 33)

1. What does Jacob see, and how does he respond? (33:1) How threatening does it look? _____

2. How does he arrange his group? (33:2) _____

3. Then what does Jacob do, and in what spirit? (33:3) How had he changed his mind from Genesis 32:16-21? How does Jacob combine gentleness and fearlessness in a new way? What does this teach us? (Prov.15:1) _____

Bowing seven times is mentioned in the El-Amarna tablets, and seems to have been the custom of the day. See too 1 Samuel 26:18-20 for David with Saul.

4. How does Esau respond to Jacob after all these years? (33:4) Can the unregenerate show kindness and warm human feeling? (see Acts 28:1-10) _____

Luther was so moved by this that he thought that Esau had been converted, but there is no evidence of this.

5. What does Esau ask? (33:5-10) Is Esau after anything from Jacob? How does Jacob describes seeing Esau? (33:10) _____

6. What does Jacob insist upon in verse 11? _____

7. What does Esau suggest, and how does Jacob reply to this? (33:12-13) _____

8. What are we meant to make of verses 14-17? Is Jacob still a deceiver? If so (and that is what it looks like), what does this tell us about the nature of sin in the believer? (Rom.7:15) _____

Jacob says that he will head south, but he actually goes north. Succoth is in the north, as is Shechem.

9. Where does Jacob end out? (33:18) _____

This presumably is Jacob's well, from John 4:5-6.

So far as we know, Jacob and Esau did not meet again until their father Isaac died in Genesis 35:29.

10. What two things did Jacob do in verses 19-20? What do we learn from this? _____

Handling the Hotheads (Genesis 34)

This happened about ten years after Jacob and Esau were reconciled.

1. Who was Dinah and where did she go? (34:1) _____

2. How does it all go horribly wrong? (34:2) Who is Dinah's violator? _____

It is almost certainly a rape, but it is possibly a seduction.

3. What is Shechem's reaction afterwards? (34:3-4) What does he ask for? Contrast him with Amnon in 2 Samuel 13:1-2, 14-15. _____

4. When did Jacob find out about this outrage? (34:5) What about his sons? What did Shechem's father, Hamor, come to see Jacob about? (34:6) What, then, was the response of the eleven brothers? (34:7) Do you think that extremes often feed off one another (i.e. Jacob's mildness and his sons' anger)? _____

5. What was Hamor's plea? (34:8-10) What is his wide-ranging proposal? _____

6. What does Shechem say to Jacob and to the eleven brothers? (34:11-12) How motivated is he? _____

7. What is the condition set by Jacob's sons? (34:13-17) What do you make of this misuse of God's covenant sign? _____

On 2 February 1779 the porter at Cambridge University brought a note from the Provost, Dr William Cooke, informing Charles Simeon that Holy Communion would be celebrated in three weeks' time, and attendance was compulsory. Simeon was mortified: 'Satan himself was as fit to attend as I.'

He later saw the spiritual folly of such a practice: 'I am far from considering it a good thing that young men in the university should be compelled to go to the table of the Lord: for it has an evident tendency to lower in their estimation that sacred ordinance, and to harden them in their iniquities.' However, God used it to lead Simeon to saving faith in Christ.

8. How do Hamor and Shechem respond to the proposal by Jacob's sons? (34:18-19) What motivates Shechem? _____

9. What did Hamor and Shechem tell their colleagues? (34:20-24) How did they get them to agree to be circumcised? What happened then? _____

10. What did Simeon and Levi do then? (34:25-29) How did Jacob remember this later? (Gen.49:5-7) _____

11. What are Jacob's objections to all this? (34:30) What do his sons say in response? (34:31) Who gets it right - the hotheads or the peace at any price people? Or neither? _____

Before and After Bethel (Genesis 35)

1. What did God say to Jacob? (35:1; note 28:12, 19) _____

Through each perplexing path of life

Our wandering footsteps guide (Philip Doddridge).

2. What did Jacob tell his household to do? (35:2-3) How did they respond? (35:4; recall 31:19) What did Jacob do with these idols? (note Joshua 24:23-26) _____

No wonder Calvin said that the human mind was a factory constantly manufacturing idols.

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee* (William Cowper).

3. How did God protect them in this journey? (35:5) _____

4. What did Jacob do at Bethel (Luz) and why? (35:6-7) _____

'Bethel' means 'house of God'.

5. Who died there, and where was she buried? (35:8) _____

6. What does God do again to Jacob? (35:9-15) Where did this take place? What did God tell Jacob? What do you make of the extra material in verse 11 which refers to kings? What did Jacob do in response? _____

7. Then what happened to Rachel? (35:16-18) Who was born as a result? Why does Jacob change his name from 'son of my sorrow' to 'son of my right hand'? _____

8. Where was Rachel buried, and what is said about her tomb? (35:19-20) _____

9. Where did Jacob go next? (35:21) _____

10. What did Reuben do there? (35:22; see 49:3-4) _____

This may be a power play as much as a sexual sin (see 2 Samuel 16:21-22).

11. List the twelve sons of Jacob (35:22b-26) _____

12. Whom did Isaac meet and where? (35:27-29) What happened there? How old was Isaac? What did Jacob and Esau do? _____

13. Looking over the chapter, what happens in Jacob's life? What can we expect in this earthly pilgrimage? What do we learn about Jacob as a man chosen by God? (Gen.25:23; Mal.1:2-3; Rom.9:10-13) A deceiver? (Gen.27) A man who meets God? (Gen.28:12; 31:3; 32:24, 30) One who did not always learn from his earlier sins? (e.g. Gen.37:3; 42:4, 36-38) One who was prone to self-pity? (47:8-9) Yet a man of faith? (46:1-4; 48:14-16, 21; 49:8-12) A man who died and is in glory? (Gen.49:33; Matt.8:11) _____

Hence Philip Doddridge's hymn:

*O God of Bethel! by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led.*

The Descendants of Esau (Genesis 36)

1. Of what nation is Esau the father? (36:1) _____

2. Whom did Esau marry? (36:2-3; note the names given in 26:34; 28:9) What are we to make of this? _____

3. Where did Esau and his family go, and why? (36:6-8) _____

4. Do you have any comments to make on any of Esau's descendants? What is said in verse 31? _____

Joseph the Dreamer (Genesis 37:1-11)

Apart from anything else, the story of Joseph is a rattling good yarn - there is family intrigue and jealousy, Joseph is sold as slave into Egypt, he makes good there and becomes Prime Minister of the country, and finally the family is reunited. There is surely a movie to be made from this!

Joseph is one of the few believers in either Testament with no great blot on his life and witness - the other might be Daniel.

1. What prophecy will come to be fulfilled through the story of Joseph? (Gen. 15:12-13) _____

2. Where did Jacob live? (37:1) _____

3. Describe Joseph from Genesis 37:2. What do you make of him? _____

John Currid says that Joseph reported 'their slander against him', but I will take it as it stands. James Montgomery Boice and George Lawson do their best to defend Joseph, but he seems to be naïve and to lack a certain sensitivity. There is a time to keep your mouth shut (Prov.11:13; Eccles.3:7). Part of wisdom is knowing what to say, and another part of wisdom is knowing when not to say anything (Psalm 141:3).

4. What sin did Jacob maintain in his relationship with Joseph? (37:3; note 25:27-28) What prompted him in this regard? What did he do as a result? _____

George Santayana said that the only thing that we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.

By favouring Joseph, Jacob helps to fracture his own family. That is a warning for all of us. In raising children, treat all of them equally. Love them all.

5. How does one sin tend to promote another? (37:4) _____

It is the people who are closest to us who can hurt us the most, and it is the people that we are closest to whom we can hurt most.

6. What are the details and the meaning of Joseph's two dreams? (37:5-8 and 37:9-11; for verse 10, Rachel is dead by this time; he must mean Leah) _____

7. How did Joseph's brothers go wrong in responding to these dreams? (37:5, 8, 11; Heb.12:14-15) What should they have done? (Rom.12:18-21) _____

8. Were these dreams fulfilled? (42:6; 43:26; 44:14) What does this show? _____

Derek Kidner says of the story of Joseph: 'it is not a tale of human success but of divine sovereignty.'

Hated without Cause (Genesis 37:12-36)

Fractured families are not a modern invention. They go back to the Fall, to the entry of sin into the world. In all this, one sin leads to another, as sin piles upon sin in order to hide the first sin.

1. What sort of lifestyle did Jacob's family live? (37:12-17) What was Joseph sent to do? _____

From Hebron to Shechem was about 80 kilometres, then there was another 20 kilometres or more further north to Dothan. So Joseph was initially sent on a journey of over 100 kilometres to see his brothers. Jacob was worried about his sons in Shechem possibly because of the revenge killings undertaken there by Simeon and Levi after the Shechemites had violated their sister Dinah (Gen.34).

2. What did Joseph's brothers conspire to do? (37:18) _____

3. What does their mocking of Joseph indicate? (37:19-20) What do they plan to do, and how do they plan to hide their crime? _____

4. Who speaks up for Joseph in a limited way, and so puts some kind of brake on their plans? (37:22) _____

5. What did the brothers end out doing to Joseph? (37:23-24) What did they remember later? (see Gen.42:21) Why is it easier to be heartless in a group?

6. What did the brothers do next? (37:25) What does that indicate? What did they see next? _____

7. What did Judah then suggest? (37:26-27) What two motives does he appeal to? _____

This is so true to human nature, appealing to all kinds of motives.

8. What did the brothers then do? (37:28) What was the price for Joseph? Where was Joseph taken? _____

Notice how the Ishmaelites and the Midianites are one and the same group.

9. What is Reuben's response? (37:29-30) _____

10. What did the brothers then do to cover their tracks? (37:31-33) _____

11. What was Jacob's response? (37:34) What is the height of hypocrisy in verse 35a? See James 3:16. _____

Their father grieves, and they let him grieve, knowing all the time that it was they who had sold Joseph as a slave into Egypt.

Jacob is deceived as he once deceived his father (Gen.27:9-30).

12. What do you make of Jacob's grieving? (37:35; see 1 Thess.4:13; Lev.19:28) How does a Christian grieve? (2 Sam. 12:23, 16, 18) _____

13. Where did Joseph end up? (37:36) _____

Remember what Stephen says so wonderfully about Joseph (Acts 7:9).

Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38)

Of all the grisly and decadent episodes recorded in Scripture, this is right up there with the worst of them.

1. Where did Judah go? (38:1) _____

2. Whom did he meet there and what happened? (38:2-3) Then what happened? (38:4) And then what was next? (38:5) _____

3. Then what happened after Er grew up? (38:6-7) Is suffering ever a punishment from God? _____

4. What did Judah tell his second son, Onan, to do? What is his reasoning? (38:8; later this becomes part of Israel's law in Deut.25:5-7; Ruth 4:10) _____

5. What did Onan do and why? (38:9) What was God's response to this? (38:10) Given that there is a choice in Deuteronomy 25 and Ruth 4, for what was Onan punished so severely? _____

The English translation of Calvin's commentary on Genesis gets embarrassed here, and omits most of what Calvin said on verses 8-10.

6. What did Judah tell Tamar, his widowed daughter-in-law, to do? (25:11) What did he promise her? _____

7. After a lengthy period of time, what happened to Judah's wife, and what

did Judah do? (38:12) _____

8. How did Tamar respond to this, and why? (38:13-14) _____

9. What did Judah think when he saw her? (38:15) _____

Notice that at this time, a woman wearing a covering was thought to be a prostitute, unlike the situation in Genesis 24:65!

10. What did Judah do then? (38:16; note Lev.18:15 although Judah lived before the law was given and did not know who Tamar was) _____

11. What did Judah offer, and what did Tamar say in response? (38:17) _____

12. What did Judah leave with her, and what happened to Tamar? (38:18) _____

13. What did Tamar do after that? (38:19) _____

14. What did Judah then attempt to do, but was unsuccessful in the attempt? (38:20-22) _____

15. What did Judah then think? (38:23) How is sin a tangled web? _____

16. What did Judah find out about three months later? (38:24) What was his vehement response? What does indicate about the nature of sin? (see e.g. Matt.7:1; Rom.2:1) _____

17. What did Tamar do? (38:25) What effect did this have on Judah? (38:26) What do you make of his response? _____

18. What took place in the birth of the twins? (38:27-30) Through whom did the promise go? (see Gen.46:12; Ruth 4:18) _____

Fleeing Temptation (Genesis 39)

When Joseph was 17, he was sold by his brothers as a slave to Egypt. About 10 or 11 years later, he was tempted by Potiphar's wife. Joseph resisted her advances, was falsely accused of sexual harassment, reported to the appropriate government department, and unjustly thrown into prison. In Genesis 38 Judah showed great ungodliness with Tamar, and is brought to repentance. Genesis 39 is a contrast - Joseph is falsely accused of immorality, and is at first unable to clear himself.

1. Who buys Joseph as his slave? (39:1) _____

2. What is said about Joseph in verse 2? How is this less than straightforward? _____

3. What did God do for Potiphar for the sake of Joseph? (39:3-6; see 12:3; 18:26) What did Potiphar do for Joseph in response? _____

Potiphar may have worshipped crocodiles, scarab beetles, the Nile, and Pharaoh, but he had enough nous to recognise blessing when it stared him in the face.

4. What do we learn about God's being with Joseph in 39:2, 3, 21, 23? See too Psalm 105:17-18. Is God's blessing always shown in favourable circumstances? _____

5. How is Joseph described? (39:6b) _____

The actual description is 'fair of form and fair of sight' - the same words used of Rachel his mother in Genesis 29:17. It is quite possible that Potiphar was a eunuch.

6. What is the invitation of Potiphar's wife to Joseph? (39:7) _____

7. What three motives does Joseph mention in 39:8-9?

(a) 39:8; 1 Thess.4:1-6 _____

(b) 39:9a; Gen.2:24 _____

(c) 39:9b; Gen.2:24 _____

Samson was to fall, and David too, but not Joseph.

8. What can we learn from the following verses: Heb.4:13; Num.32:23? _____

9. What eventually happened? (39:10-12) What do we learn from Joseph's response? (39:12; 1 Cor.6:18; 2 Tim.2:22) How should we respond to the approach of sin? (Prov.8:13; 16:6; 24:5) _____

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;

Each victory will help you some other to win (H. R. Palmer).

10. How does Potiphar's wife add to her sin in 39:13-18? How does she portray herself? And how does she portray Joseph? What 'proof' does she produce? _____

11. What happens to Joseph next, and what does Potiphar's wife do about it? (39:19-20) What is the difference between love and lust? (see 2 Sam.13:1-2, 14-15) _____

She was prepared to let him suffer in prison, literally 'the round house'.

O let me feel Thee near me:

The world is ever near;

I see the sights that dazzle,

The tempting sounds I hear;

My foes are ever near me,

Around me and within;

But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,

And shield my soul from sin.

- John Ernest Bode

12. What is said about God's view of Joseph in prison? (39:21-23) How is this shown? _____

Lessons in Adversity (Genesis 40)

One of the greatest trials in life for the Christian is handling disappointments. Joseph spent over two years in prison for something where he had shown godly integrity, not evil.

1. What happened some time after Joseph's imprisonment? (40:1) What did Pharaoh do? (40:2-3) What was the relationship between the cupbearer, the baker and Joseph? (40:4) _____

The cupbearer held a high position in the ancient world. He did drink the king's wine first in case it was poisoned, but he also tended to become more like an adviser to the king, as Nehemiah was much later in the Persian court.

2. What happened one night? (40:5-7) Why were they troubled? _____

3. What did Joseph tell them? (40:8) What was Daniel's testimony much later? (Dan.2:27-28) What does the Bible tell us about God? (Dan.5:22-23; Isa.41:21-24) _____

4. What was the cupbearer's dream? (40:9-11) _____

5. What was Joseph's interpretation? (40:12-15) What favour did he ask of the cupbearer? To what motives does he appeal? _____

6. Why did the baker become excited? (40:16) What was his dream? (40:16b-17) _____

7. But what was Joseph's interpretation? (40:18-19) How hard would it have been to tell this interpretation? _____

8. What happened after this? (40:20-22) _____

Are dreams the means whereby God communicates to us? By and large, no. We have God's Word in full. It is complete. But in exceptional circumstances, God might use exceptional means. The only case that I have been personally involved in concerned a man, Silvis, who lived in inland Santo in Vanuatu. I went on a number of treks into inland Santo in 1981 and 1982 in the aftermath of a rebellion in 1980. It was a heathen area, and we met with Silvis, who had broken from heathenism (animism, a fear of the spirits) and set up his own village. When I asked him why, he told me that he had had a dream some years earlier, and in this dream God told him to break with the heathen, and wait for someone - he said a white man - to come to tell him about God. I did not comment much at the time, as I did not want to make much of it. You make of that what you will, but in my view, as I pondered what he had said, I came to the view that God may well communicate in a dream to an illiterate man without a Bible.

9. But what about the cupbearer's response to Joseph's request? (40:23) How true to life is this? What does it reveal about human nature?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent two years in Nazi prisons before he was hanged in 1945. On one occasion he wrote: 'Yesterday I heard someone say he felt that the last years have been completely wasted as far as he was concerned. I have never felt like that, not even for a moment.'

God chips away at the rough edges in our life to fashion us in the likeness of Christ.

From Prison to Premier (Genesis 41)

In the days before democracy meant something more than rule by the media, Americans were very fond of 'log cabin to the White House' stories, such as we find in the biography of Abraham Lincoln. But few could rival the life of Joseph who was for 13 years a slave, then a prisoner in a foreign prison before being made second in command of all Egypt.

1. How much later did Pharaoh have his two dreams? (41:1) What were his

two dreams? (41:1-7) _____

The cow was the emblem of Isis, the goddess of fertility. It was common for cows to stand in the Nile to escape the heat and the flies.

2. How was Pharaoh in the morning, and what did he do as a result? (41:8) _____

3. What did the cupbearer suddenly remember, and what did he tell Pharaoh? (41:9-13) _____

4. So what happened to Joseph next? (41:14) _____

Herodotus and ancient Egyptian reliefs tell us that the Egyptians were in the habit of shaving, so Joseph was given a razor.

5. What does Pharaoh ask, and what does Joseph say in reply? (41:15-16) What does this reveal about Joseph? (see too verses 25, 28, 32; remember that Pharaoh was considered to be the incarnation of the sun god, Re) _____

Joseph deflects all glory from himself. There was an occasion when Charles Spurgeon was preaching, and at the end of the service, a man approached him at the door and gushed that it was the greatest sermon that he had ever heard. Spurgeon replied: 'Yes, the devil told me that ten minutes ago.'

6. What does Pharaoh tell Joseph in verses 17-24? _____

7. What is Joseph's explanation of the two dreams? (41:25-31) _____

8. Why were two dreams given? (41:32) Compare that to Jonah 3:4 _____

*Leave God to order all your ways,
And hope in Him whate'er betide;
You'll find Him in the evil days
Your all-sufficient strength and guide:
Who trusts in God's unchanging love*

Builds on the rock that nought can move (Georg Christian Neumark)

9. What is Joseph's solution to the coming problem? (41:33-36) Is it ever lawful for a Christian to serve a pagan state? How can he do so? (think of Daniel e.g. Daniel 6:1-5, and also Obadiah in King Ahab's day in 1 Kings 18:1-19) _____

A 20% levy each year would get them through the lean times. Government intervention can lead to an inert bureaucracy or to welfarism, but at times it is necessary. Milton Friedman's economic views are not divinely inspired.

10. How does Pharaoh respond to this? (41:37) What did he ask? (41:38; this should probably be translated 'spirit of the gods') To what did Pharaoh then appoint Joseph? (41:39-40) _____

Simone Weil: 'The good deputy is not the man who tries to convince people to make him one, but the man who is sought out by the people.'

11. What did Pharaoh do to show that Joseph had real power in Egypt? (41:41-44) _____

12. What does Pharaoh do next with Joseph? (41:45) What do you make of this? Why do believers not seem to object in Scripture to pagan names? _____

'On' is Heliopolis, about seven miles north-east of present day Cairo. It was where the sun god Re was worshipped. Here, Joseph married the daughter of the priest, perhaps after their marriage preparation classes turned into evangelistic classes first.

13. How old was Joseph when he became premier of Egypt? (41:46) What did he do over the seven years of plenty? (41:47-49) _____

14. What are the names of Joseph's two sons? Why does he call them such? (41:50-52) What does this indicate about Joseph? _____

The New England Puritans often gave their children biblical names or names like More Fruit, Faint Not, Perseverance, Sufficient, and Deliverance.

15. What happens after the seven years of plenty? (41:53-55) What does Pharaoh tell the people? How extensive was the famine? (41:56-57) _____

The extent of the famine leads naturally into the next chapter.

The Beginnings of Repentance (Genesis 42:1-24)

1. What does the Bible tell us about God? (Rom. 11:22) Can you see that in the Joseph story? _____

It is over 20 years since his brothers last laid eyes on Joseph. Throughout Genesis 42-44 he takes on a new role, not so much as the Minister for the Interior in Egypt as a physician of souls with regard to his brothers.

2. Summarise the character of the brothers (Gen.34:1-2, 25-26, 30; 35:22; 37:4, 28; 38:15-16) _____

3. What did Jacob learn? (42:1) What does he tell his sons, and in what tone? (42:1-2) _____

4. Who went down to Egypt and why? (42:3) Who was kept behind in Canaan? (42:4) Why? _____

5. So what happens in verse 5? _____

6. What was Joseph's position in Egypt? (42:6) What did the brothers do? _____

7. What is said about Joseph and his brothers? (42:7-11) What tone of voice does he adopt? Of what does Joseph accuse his brothers? _____

Joseph was dressed as an Egyptian, he was clean-shaven, he spoke through an interpreter (42:23), and they were certainly not expecting to see him at all, let alone see him as second in command over all Egypt.

8. Why does Joseph accuse them three times of being spies who had come to spy out the nakedness of the land? (42:9, 12, 14) _____

9. How is verse 13 so full of irony? _____

10. What does Joseph demand of them, and what does he do with them? (42:14-17) Is Joseph taking revenge on his brothers? What, then, is he doing? When do sinners often come to their senses? (Jonah 1:17-2:1; Luke 15:15-19) _

11. What offer and what demand does Joseph make in verses 18-20? _____

12. How do the ten brothers interpret events? (42:21) What does this teach us? _____

Often we half-repent. James Montgomery Boice tells of one man who wrote to the government: 'I have cheated on my income tax. I can't sleep. Here is a cheque for 75 dollars. If I still can't sleep, I'll send you the balance.'

13. What does Reuben say? (42:22) How is this characteristic of human nature? _____

14. What did the brothers not know at this stage? (42:23) _____

15. What does verse 24a reveal about Joseph? What does he do then with Simeon? (42:24b) _____

From Isaiah 28:21, the Puritans used to refer to Christ's 'strange' work as opposed to His work of mercy. The strange work was the work of severity; the work of mercy was what He delights in.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust Him for His grace;

Behind a frowning providence

He hides a smiling face (William Cowper).

Martin Luther: 'When God begins to justify a person, He first condemns him; when He wants to build up, He first tears down; whom He wants to heal, He first batters to pieces; whom He wants to bring to life, He first kills.'

God Closes in on the Brothers (Genesis 42:25-43:14)

1. What does Jeremiah tell us about how God deals with sin? (Jer.6:14) _____

2. Recall how the brothers remembered their sin of over twenty years before this (42:21-22). What did Joseph do next? (42:25-26) Why did Joseph give the money back to the nine brothers returning to Canaan? _____

Joyce Baldwin calls it 'a loving gesture'. The trouble is that it upset the family, and surely it was designed to upset the family. Joseph is softening them up. On the trip from Memphis to Hebron - a three-week journey - they found that one lot of money had been returned.

3. What did the brothers find when they stopped for the night? (42:27-28) How did they respond? Whom did they think had done this to them? _____

The key verse in all this is verse 28. Here we have the sovereignty of God linked to an uneasy conscience.

Isaac Watts:

Jesus, my great High Priest

Offered His blood and died;

My guilty conscience seeks

No sacrifice beside:

His powerful blood did once atone,

And now it pleads before the throne.

4. What did the brothers then tell Jacob when they returned home? (42:29-34)

5. What did they find out when they emptied their sacks? (42:35) How did they respond? _____

6. How did Jacob respond to this? (42:36) What do you make of him? _____

7. What is Reuben's 'solution'? (42:37) _____

8. What is Jacob's answer? (42:38) _____

That surely is understandable but sinful. Here is a father who is willing to leave his son Simeon to rot in an Egyptian prison because he does not want to risk losing Benjamin, who is now his favourite.

9. What happens after a while? (43:1-2) _____

10. What is Judah's reply to this? (43:3-5) Who is being realistic - Jacob or Judah? _____

11. Whom does Jacob blame? (43:6) _____

Wallowing in self-pity makes a person unreasonable. Jacob is looking for someone to blame.

12. What do the brothers then point out? (43:7) _____

13. What does Judah then offer, and also point out? (43:8-10) _____

Back in Genesis 38 Judah had been dreadfully immoral. Now he stands surety for the one in prison, and so points to his greater descendant, the lion of Judah who goes surety for His people (Heb.7:22).

14. What does Jacob do when he comes to his senses? (43:11-14) How is he sensible, realistic, and faithful here? (see Esther 4:16) _____

God is El Shaddai, God Almighty.

Tenderness Behind Toughness (Genesis 43:15-44:17)

Finally, Jacob bowed to the inevitable, and agreed that his now favourite son Benjamin could go down to Egypt with his nine brothers to obtain food and to retrieve Simeon who was being held there as a prisoner. Now we see the story unfold further. The eleven brothers are entertained at a banquet, and then sent on their way back to Canaan, only to be accused of stealing a silver cup, which has been planted in Benjamin's sack. It is all part of a brilliant plot carried out by Joseph.

1. What happened after Jacob finally relented concerning their return to Egypt? (43:15) _____

2. How did Joseph overawe them (43:15-18) What did the brothers think about what was happening? _____

Remember that these are country hicks - shepherds from Canaan - being shown hospitality in the big foreign city of Memphis by the premier of Egypt!

3. What was their frame of mind as they spoke to the steward of Joseph's house? (43:19-22) Why are they defensive, and quick to try to explain what happened? _____

4. What did Joseph's steward say and do to reassure them? (43:23) _____

George Lawson: 'Your comfort is very precarious when outward circumstances are most prosperous, if you have reason to think that God has a quarrel with you.'

5. What else takes place in preparation for eating at noon with Joseph? (43:24-25) _____

6. What did the brothers do when they met Joseph? (43:26) _____

Recall the dreams in Genesis 37.

7. What did Joseph ask them? (43:27) What was their response, and what did they do then? (43:28) _____

Joseph must still be speaking in Egyptian, and working through an interpreter. Joseph is almost bursting here, asking about his father without giving his identity away.

8. What did Joseph ask when he saw Benjamin? (43:29) What did he say to him? What does this indicate about Joseph? _____

9. Describe Joseph's emotions in verse 30. What does this reveal about him?

A thousand memories flooded into Joseph's mind - of his father, of his mother Rachel who died when he was only young, of his childhood in Canaan. Joseph struggles to control himself.

10. What did Joseph do then, and what did he order his servants to do? (43:31) _____

11. What did he do in verse 32 and why? _____

This is confirmed by Herodotus, because other people groups ate animals that were sacred to the Egyptians, rather similar to how a Hindu would respond to eating cows.

12. How does Joseph 'spook' them? (43:33) _____

If all the brothers looked alike - which they would not - the odds of picking their chronological order would be one over factor 11 i.e. one over 11 times 10 times 9 times 8 ... and so on. This gives one chance in over 39 million. Realistically, the odds are better than that, but the point is Joseph got it right, and that made the brothers uneasy.

11. What did Joseph have done in 43:34? Why? _____

Over twenty years before this, the brothers had been jealous of Joseph, and this is surely a test as to whether they will be jealous of Benjamin.

12. What did Joseph command to be done? (44:1-2) _____

13. What did Joseph do the next day? (44:3-5) _____

14. What was the response of the brothers to the charge? (44:6-12) What did they say about whoever was guilty? What did they do at the end? (44:13) _____

The silver cup was probably more like a bowl or a dish. Pagan Egyptians

used to look into a dish of liquid in order to divine the future - something like reading the tea leaves.

Augustine: 'The fire which makes gold shine makes chaff smoke'.

Joseph's heart is soft while some of his actions seem hard. In 1521 Martin Luther was called to appear before the emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms. He was condemned as a heretic and an outlaw. As he left, he was kidnapped and taken to Wartburg castle. Most people thought that he had been killed, but his kidnapper turned out to be his prince, Frederick the Wise of Saxony. Frederick's intention was to protect Luther.

William Cowper: 'Behind a frowning providence, [God] hides a smiling face.'

15. What did the brothers do when they returned to Joseph? (44:14) _____

16. What is Joseph's response to them? (44:15-17) What does he tell them to do? What is he doing here? What does Judah mean in verse 16? What is the evidence that the brothers are now changed men? (Acts 20:20-21; 26:19-20) __

They had two options - they could go back to Canaan and leave Benjamin in Egypt, or they could stand by Benjamin in his hour of need.

'I am Joseph' (Genesis 44:18-45:4)

It is true that one can cross from death to life in a short time. The criminal on the cross started out his last day on earth in the kingdom of darkness. In looking to Christ in faith, he entered the kingdom of heaven, and in dying he was received that day into paradise. Paul spoke clearly to the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:30-32). It can happen between the stirrup and the ground, as William Camden put it in his *Remains*:

*Betwixt the stirrup and the ground,
Mercy I ask'd; mercy I found.*

But David Kingdon says: 'the hardened conscience is seldom made tender overnight'.

1. Comment on Judah's appeal for Benjamin to Joseph. For whom is Judah especially concerned? (44:18-31) _____

This is almost funny - Judah unwittingly tells Joseph that he is dead!

2. What is Judah's extraordinary offer? (44:32-34; Matt.10:39) What evidence do we have that Judah is now a changed man? _____

Judah had promised this back in Canaan (43:9).

George Lawson: 'Liberty was dear to Judah, but his father's comfort was dearer.'

3. With what might this be compared? (Ex.32:1, 4, 9-14, 31-32; Rom.9:3; 1 John 3:16) _____

4. To what does this point? (Matt.1:1-2; 1 Peter 3:18) _____

5. Finally, what does Joseph do? (45:1-2) _____

Joseph wept so loudly that the Egyptians outside the room heard him. They must have wondered what was going on. And Joseph's brothers must have wondered what was going on - here was the premier of Egypt, who had thrown them in prison, weeping before them. This is an indescribable scene.

6. What does Joseph say in verse 3? How do his brothers respond? _____

In verse 3 Joseph must have switched to the Hebrew language (recall 42:23). The brothers were dismayed (NKJV, ESV) or terrified (NIV). They were utterly unable to respond to him. For quite a while, they had felt that God was chasing them - 42:21 (in prison); 42:28 (money in the sack); 43:33 (right order for the brothers); 44:16 (cup in Benjamin's sack). Now they are stunned. This is Joseph - only he would know about his being sold as a slave down to Egypt. Joseph might now exact a terrible revenge upon them.

7. What does Joseph do and say in 45:4? In what frame of mind is Joseph? (Rom.12:19-21) _____

What a moment this was!

All Things for Good (Genesis 45:5-15)

In 1663, a year after Thomas Watson was expelled from his living in the Great Ejection, he wrote *A Divine Cordial* (recently reprinted as *All Things for Good*). It deals with Romans 8:28. Its conclusion is this: 'Our graces are imperfect, our comforts ebb and flow, but God's foundation standeth sure.' In 1981 Rabbi Harold Kushner published his best seller, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Its message is that God is good but not sovereign, so things can get out of control. His conclusion is radically different to Watson's: 'learn to love [God] and forgive him despite his limitations.'

1. What does Joseph emphasise four times in Genesis 45:5, 7, 8, 9? How does this perspective change Joseph's attitude? _____

As Matthew Henry says, God's providence has 'a long reach'.

2. What does the Bible teach about God's sovereign rule over all the world? (Ps.115:3; Prov.16:4; Dan.4:34-35) _____

3. How does Joseph comfort his brothers, and what does he tell them to do? (45:5-9) _____

4. How does Joseph interpret the past 22 years? (45:5, 7) How can this help us in times of adversity and injustice? _____

Augustine: 'through the bad wills of evil men God fulfils what He righteously wills'.

In 1812 a fire broke out at Serampore in India. It destroyed the printing house, with presses, paper, books, and manuscripts of William Carey and his fellow missionaries. It seems to have been an accident and not a case of arson. Carey was naturally shattered, but he responded: 'The Lord has laid me low, that I might look more simply to him.'

William Gurnall: 'God put his eggs under the devil for him to hatch!'

5. Where does Joseph propose that his family live in Egypt? (45:10) _____

Goshen was a fertile area of about 900 square miles in what later became known as the land of Rameses (Gen.47:11).

6. What does Joseph promise will happen? (45:11-13) _____

7. What takes place next? (45:14-15) How does theology relate to life? (Titus 2:9-10) _____

Here we see fractured human relationships put back together, not by 50 hours of counselling at \$75 an hour, but by the application of true theology.

Amy Carmichael: 'If I take offence easily, if I am content to continue in a cool unfriendliness, though friendship be possible, then I know nothing of Calvary love.'

The chorus in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* says: 'Even now in sordid particulars/ The eternal design may appear.'

*Father, although I cannot see
The future You have planned,
And though the path is sometimes dark
And hard to understand;
Yet give me faith, through joy and pain
To trace Your loving hand* (John Eddison).

Holding to the Promises (Genesis 45:16-46:7)

1. How did Pharaoh respond to the news of the arrival of Joseph's brothers? (45:16) _____

2. What does Pharaoh promise the family of Joseph? (45:17-20) How do we explain Pharaoh's kindness? (Prov.21:1) _____

At one level, it is strange for a Pharaoh, who is regarded as a god, to treat foreign shepherds, whom Egyptians normally despised, with such kindness, especially during a famine. Humanly speaking, the Pharaoh was grateful for all that Joseph had done for Egypt.

Spurgeon commented about divine sovereignty and human responsibility: 'I never reconcile friends.' In Genesis 45:16-20 the Pharaoh is kindly, and God achieves His purposes; in Exodus 1:8-16 Pharaoh is tyrannical, and God achieves His purposes.

3. What does Joseph send back with them as they return to Canaan? (45:21-24) Why does he utter the warning at the end of verse 24? _____

Joseph feared that on the return trip the brothers would find plenty of time to engage in mutual recrimination. The brothers know that they will have to admit to their father Jacob that they lied to him 22 years before this, and that they had maintained that lie for all those years. That surely was something that was a foreboding for them. Any human reconciliation is likely to be fragile, and Joseph knows that it could all fall apart on the way home.

4. What was Jacob's first response to the news that Joseph was still alive? (45:25-26) What is his response after that? (45:27-28) What convinces him? __

5. How does God reassure Jacob? (46:1-4) How is fear an enemy of faith? __

Remember what God had told Abram back in Genesis 15:13.

6. What did Jacob do in response? (46:1, 5-7) On what basis? (Tit.1:1-2) Who went down to Egypt? _____

Jacob's Joy (Genesis 46:8-47:12)

1. Without listing all of them, who went down into Egypt? (46:8-27) How many altogether? _____

The Hebrew text says that there were 70 of them; Acts 7:14 cites the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) which says seventy-five, which may include Jacob's daughters-in-law or, more likely, Joseph's grandsons.

2. Describe the reunion of Jacob and Joseph (46:28-30) _____

3. How will the Hebrews be kept separate from the Egyptians? (46:31-34; 47:1-6; note Deut.7:1-5) How does Joseph reflect Matthew 10:16? _____

Joseph knows the system; he knows how the Egyptians think. The Hebrews were shepherds, and the Egyptians were prejudiced against shepherds. Nobody is sure why.

Note too that living in the north-east of the delta region in Goshen meant that ultimately it would be easier for the Israelites to escape from Egypt. That is precisely where we are heading with the book of Exodus.

4. How does Jacob describe his life to Pharaoh? (47:7-9; Heb.11:13-16; Ps.90:10) _____

I came across a series of sermons by an American pastor on the life of Joseph, which said that the main point of the narrative was that God did great things in Joseph's life and, this pastor hoped, 'you will begin to see how God is preparing you for great things as well.'

Jacob was not invited to give the address at School Speech Nights very often.

5. What does Jacob do to Pharaoh? (47:7, 10) What do we make of that? (Heb.7:7) _____

6. What took place next? (47:11-12) _____

Joseph in Public and in Private (Genesis 47:13-31)

1. List how Joseph's policy increased the power of Pharaoh:

(a) Pharaoh acquired the nation's money (47:13-14) _____

(b) Pharaoh acquired the nation's livestock (47:15-17) _____

(c) Pharaoh acquired the nation's land (47:18-20) _____

(d) Pharaoh acquired the nation's people (47:21) _____

The NKJV and the Hebrew text say that the people were moved to the cities, but the ESV and the NIV follow the Septuagint in saying that the people were made slaves. Either way, Pharaoh acquired great power over the people.

2. Who were excluded from this process, and why? (47:22) _____

3. What was the result of all this? (47:23-24, 26) _____

The result was a kind of feudalism, with Pharaoh owning everything, and in effect leasing his land for 20% of the harvest. The long-term effect was surely to consolidate power in Egypt into the hands of Pharaoh. Long after Joseph was dead, the Pharaohs revelled in greater power because of what Joseph had done.

Lord Acton: 'All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'

4. Why did Joseph do what he did? (47:15, 19, 25) How did the people respond (47:25) _____

If Israel obeyed God's law this could never happen in Israel. Under the law given to Moses, there was debt release every seven years and every fifty years in the Year of Jubilee (Lev.25; Deut.15:1-18).

5. How is there blessing even in adversity? (47:27) _____

6. How long did Jacob live in Egypt? (47:28) How old was he when he died?

7. What is the point of what takes place in 47:29-31? (recall 24:2-3) What is in Jacob's mind? (see 28:12-15; 46:4) _____

Jacob's burial in Canaan was a testimony of his belief that God's greater purposes for Israel were not living as aliens in Egypt, but living in the Promised Land. Jacob is close to death, but with his dying breath, he worships God and believes His word. Hence he is mentioned in the honour roll of faith in Hebrews 11 (Heb.11:21; the Hebrew text has 'bed'; the LXX has 'staff').

Jacob's Blessing (Genesis 48)

It is not surprising that one so often hears today that the best way to die is quickly. When someone dies suddenly, say of a heart attack, people frequently comment that it is a wonderful way to go. All my experience in the ministry tells me the opposite. Modern man fears death, and even more, he fears thinking about death. When John Wesley and George Whitefield were criticised for introducing novel doctrines into the Church in the 18th century, John Wesley replied: 'Our people die well! The world may find fault with our opinions, but the world cannot deny that our people die well.'

1. What takes place at Jacob's deathbed? (48:1-4) What does Jacob pass on to Joseph's two sons? What does Jacob believe about God's word? (48:21) _____

Jacob recalls what God said to him at Luz (Bethel) (Gen.35:12).

2. What does Jacob tell Joseph? (48:5-7) _____

3. What is Jacob's attitude to his life as he comes to die? (48:8-11) _____

Grace makes us wonder at the goodness of God. Instead of bemoaning the 22 years that he had not seen Joseph, Jacob is thankful that God had spared him to see Joseph's two sons.

William Cowper:

*Have you no words? Ah think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.
Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be -
Hear what the Lord has done for me!*

4. What took place next? (48:12-20) Why did Joseph try to intervene? What was Jacob's attitude? _____

5. Why is Jacob so thankful to God? (48:15-16) Who is the angel? How has the God-angel been his shepherd and his redeemer? What can be said about Jacob's death? (Ps.116:15) _____

6. What does Jacob say to the generation left behind? (48:16, 21) _____

On his death bed, Fedor Dostoevsky asked that the parable of the prodigal son be read to his children.

7. How does Jacob create an extra tribe? (48:5-6) _____

That meant that there were thirteen tribes as Joseph's became two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. Later in Canaan only twelve tribes received land, as the tribe of Levi became the priestly tribe that received tithes and offerings, not land.

8. How does he put Ephraim over Manasseh? (48:8-14, 17-20) _____

Hundreds of years later Ephraim was often used as the name for the ten northern tribes while the two southern tribes were referred to as Judah (e.g. Hos.11:12-12:1, 8).

Last Words (Genesis 49:1-28)

1. How authoritative is what Jacob says? (49:1-2) _____

Jacob gives us something of a general snapshot of what will take place amongst the twelve tribes. He makes much use of images: Judah is called a lion, Naphtali is called a doe, Issachar a donkey, Dan a serpent, and Benjamin a wolf. James Montgomery Boice did not understand the reference to Benjamin as a wolf in verse 27 to be pejorative. That may be true but Benjamin's terrible behaviour in Judges 19-20 may indicate that 'wolf' should retain its unfavourable connotations.

2. What do we learn about God from this section? How is God described? (see Eph.1:11; Gen. 49:16-18, 24, 25) _____

3. What did God decree about where Zebulun would live? (49:13; Acts 17:26) What does He give to Asher? (49:20) What about Naphtali? (49:21) And Joseph? (49:22-26) _____

Joshua, Deborah, and Samuel came from Ephraim.

4. What are the consequences of sin for Reuben? (49:3-4; see 35:22) _____

Reuben's instability meant that he would contribute little to the life of Israel.

In the day of crisis, for example, under Deborah and Barak, Reuben appears to have done nothing (Judges 5:15-16).

5. What are the consequences of sin for Simeon and Levi? (49:5-7; remember 34:1-2, 7-8, 13-17, 18, 24, 25-27, 30) _____

Much of Simeon was absorbed into Judah (Josh.19:9). The Levites were scattered throughout the 48 Levitical cities of Israel (Joshua 21). That, of course, had its good side in spreading the priests throughout Israel, but it also kept Simeon and Levi from banding together again.

6. How does Issachar's laziness go against it? (49:14-15) _____

Issachar was strong but had it too easy, and ending out submitting to the Canaanites.

7. What do we learn about God from 49:24-25? _____

8. What is said about Judah in 49:8? (note the word play which goes back to when Leah named her baby boy in Genesis 29:35) _____

By New Testament times only Judah was left standing, with a small contribution from Benjamin. So at that level this prophecy was fulfilled.

9. How does Jacob go further in 49:9-10? Why would Judah would be a lion, the king of beasts? What does the sceptre indicate, and what is said about it? How was this fulfilled? What does it mean that the kingship will not depart from Judah 'until he comes to whom it belongs' (NIV, RSV) or 'until Shiloh comes' (NKJV) or 'until tribute comes to him' (ESV)? _____

Shiloh was a town where the ark of the covenant stayed for a time, but here it is obviously a person. It has been said to come from the word for 'sent' (Jerome), or 'son' (Calvin), or 'peace' (George Lawson). It indicates ownership, and is referred to by Ezekiel where he deals with the coming true king of Jerusalem (Ezek.21:27) The lion of Judah is not Haile Selassie who was deposed as emperor of Ethiopia in 1974, but the Messiah (Rev.5:5).

The Davidic kingship will have fallen over, then it shall be renewed through the coming of the Son of David who is also the Lord of David (Amos 9:11-12). What is the scope of Messiah's rule? (Psalm 72:8-11; Isa.11:10)

Isaac Watts:

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

10. What picture is given of the Messianic kingdom in 49:11-12? _____

One does not usually tie one's donkey next to the vine where the animal can eat the crop. Nor does one wash one's garments in wine, the blood of grapes. Canaan was the land flowing with milk and honey, but this points even beyond that. What we have here is a picture of great prosperity, blessing, festivity and joy.

Blaise Pascal wrote of the prophecies of Scripture: 'There is enough light to enlighten the elect and enough obscurity to humble them. There is enough obscurity to blind the reprobate and enough light to condemn them and deprive them of excuse.'

A Time to Weep (Genesis 49:29-50:14)

1. What is Jacob's command to his sons regarding his burial? (49:29-33) _____

In the list of people that Jacob mentions, the one that is missing is Rachel. Rachel died in Genesis 35, and was buried on the way to Bethlehem. I think that we can safely assume that, left to himself, Jacob would have preferred to have been buried beside Rachel. But he gives instructions that he be buried beside Leah because God had given this burial cave to the patriarchs.

2. Is it wrong to mourn? (50:1; Eccles.3:1, 4) _____

When Joy Davidman died, C. S. Lewis wanted people around him, but he did not want them to talk to him. The Christian faith does not immediately and magically take away grief and sorrow. It gives it boundaries, and one day will completely overcome it. The pain is not wiped away at once, but God's grace is greater than our pain, and in the resurrection that truth will be revealed in all its glory.

3. How does Joseph get the body ready for the journey back to Machpelah in Canaan? (50:2-3) _____

For a pharaoh, the period of mourning was 72 days, so this is an indication

of the esteem with which Joseph and Jacob were held in Egypt. Jacob's body was embalmed, according to Egyptian custom. Herodotus tells us how this was done: the brain was removed by using a hooked instrument inserted through the nose, the entrails were cut out with a knife, the cranium and the abdominal cavity were filled with spices, and then the body was washed with palm wine, daubed with pitch, and wrapped in white cloth. Calvin gives Joseph a hard time over this, and says that Joseph stooped more than he ought to have done with regard to Egyptian manners. But how else could Joseph have taken the body to Canaan?

4. What had Joseph promised Jacob? (50:4-6; recall 47:29-31) What did he promise Pharaoh? (50:5) _____

5. What else took place? (50:7-9) _____

The Canaanites must have marvelled at this unusual sight! All these Egyptian dignitaries paying their respects to a wandering shepherd from Canaan. In 1965 some 300,000 people filed past Winston Churchill's body in Westminster Hall as it lay in state for three days.

6. What did Joseph do then? (50:7-14) What does this show about Joseph? What are our obligations to others? _____

Living under the Good Sovereignty of God (Genesis 50:15-26)

What difference does it make in life if you believe that God is both good and sovereign?

1. What did the brothers fear after their father's death? (50:15) _____

That had been on their conscience for 39 years.

2. What did they do as a result? (Gen.50:16-18) What was Joseph's response? Why? _____

'Time heals all wounds' is a cliché. It would be truer to say 'Time covers many wounds to some extent' - but that is not very catchy.

3. How does he reassure them in verses 19-20? How does Joseph hold the brothers accountable for sin, yet he is able to be soft towards them? What does this teach us when we are hurt and/or sinned against? _____

This is rather like the Old Testament version of Romans 8:28. This is what John Flavel called 'the mystery of providence'. Matthew Henry says that God's providence 'looks a great way forward and has a long reach.'

4. How is he then able to comfort them? (50:21; Prov.15:23; 25:11) _____

He is overcoming evil with good (Rom.12:17, 21).

George Neumark:

*Leave God to order all thy ways
And hope in Him whate'er betide;
Thou'lt find Him in the evil days
Thy all-sufficient strength and guide.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the Rock that nought can move.*

Or Paul Gerhardt:

*Thou everywhere hast sway
And all things serve Thy might;
Thy every act pure blessing is,
Thy path unsullied light.*

5. What is the final end of Joseph? (50:22-26) Again, why is all this done? ___
