



Right from the start.

A devotional commentary on the book of Genesis.

Mike Viccary

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

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The cover photograph was taken in January 2015 by the author. The location is the south coast of England at the edge of the New Forest.

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This work is dedicated to all those who are seeking the Lord and who want to know Him and to live for Him.

I give thanks to the Lord for a superb and wonderfully understanding wife, and an incredibly wonderful family (there are twenty four of us all in total). May the Lord open your eyes so that you can see Him in His wonderful word, and having seen Him may you live for Him until He calls you home.

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By way of beginning – an introduction.

There has been so much written about the book of Genesis that it would seem foolhardy and perhaps dangerous (even presumptuous) to add yet more! What more could be possibly added? Why should this treatment be any better than all the others? These are fair questions, and I will offer as reply two thoughts concerning my motivation. First I want to make it abundantly clear that I do not lay claim to any special expertise, nor to any academic position so as to present this work worthy of approbation and applause. My sole aim is to take God's word (in this case, Genesis) and seek to expound it to the glory of God, and to the blessing of the reader. The motivation is born out of some key Scriptural texts which have guided me all my life.¹ Essentially, though, I want to know God more, and I think such a desire is one worth passing on. In saying these things I do not think that my treatment is any better than the many who have gone before motivated by a similar aim. However, it is needful (if not essential) that each generation show forth the praises of God in their particular generation.² That is why I offer this work now.

A second motivation comes from the sad fact that so many in our day have written in flat opposition to the old view that Genesis is a book of history which declares to us the record of our origins and the history of the universe. It might be tempting to write on any other Biblical book where there is less controversy. Why get embroiled in the fierce debate over Genesis? Well the fact of the matter is that Genesis is the very beginning of the word of God! If we allow people to ride roughshod over this opening part of God's book what will they do with the rest of Scripture? No other response is truly possible except to object in the strongest possible terms. It will not do to let the world treat the opening section of the Bible in such an awful and reprehensible way. Now Genesis is a book of history which not only informs us concerning our origins, but it also does so in the most incredible way. The Lord, who cannot lie, has revealed to us the gospel from the very beginning, so that Genesis does a great deal more than any mere ordinary book of history might do, because it also comes with a spiritual message too. It is, perhaps, understandable why many unbelievers naturally reject Genesis as history. What they have been lead to believe as the truth through their upbringing and education, (evolution), cuts across the plain statements we find in this opening book. For such it is imperative that we approach them with patience. Much has to be undone in order to get across the truths we find in Genesis. But it is far more serious when those who claim to be true followers of Christ mangle its meaning with impunity.³ What then should we do? Well we

1 Micah 6:8; Matthew 6:33; Romans 5:8; 1Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 2:2,3,17,23 are some of these.

2 1Peter 2:9.

3 In: **“Evolution: A house of cards”** I document 17 authors who ride roughshod over the early chapters of Genesis. (PDF version available free on request from: thedoc.mike@gmail.com).

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must seek to oppose all error as graciously and firmly as we can, and to present the truth as faithfully as we have received it. This work is thus offered to bless all who may read it by pointing them to the Lord who has revealed Himself to us for our great blessing.

In this introductory chapter we will confine ourselves to a consideration of the following two points:

- Essential principles when coming to seek God in Scripture.
- The structure of Genesis and an overview of the book.

Before we can receive from the Lord the truth He readily reveals, we need to be prepared. In this work I offer some basic principles which I believe are essential.⁴ However, before we commence this task we must assert at the outset that it is no good coming to the Bible with a critical spirit as though we know best standing as arbiter or judge over whatever we find there. This type of approach might be successful if used for coming to anything written by man (whether it be science, history or whatever), but it is sheer folly to come to God's word with such an attitude. After having outlined some basis principles of approach to Scripture, I offer my assessment of the book's structure and provide a general overview as well. In saying these things we must remember at all times that our aim and purpose is not simply to accrue intellectual status, but rather we seek to know and experience God Himself.

Essential principles for seeking God in Scripture.

When we come to God's word we need to be clear about what we are doing. Since it is, (in one sense), merely a book with words just like any book, we often approach it ***just like any other*** piece of writing, but such an attitude simply will not do. We must recognise that we are coming to the ***very words of God***. If you received a letter from the Queen, I suspect you would be very careful in your reading of it. Or, if you received a message from some high authority, with various recognizable insignia emblazoned on the envelope, your approach to its contents would be appropriate to the dignity and honour such were due. Therefore, we need to be ready both to approach, and also to receive from the Lord God that which He has for our best interests.

Now at this point we run up against a serious problem. We have noted the need to be humble in our approach to Scripture, so that we may give it due respect, but we know that as ordinary people humility on its own is not enough. The Bible is a ***spiritual*** book, by which we mean that it is not just concerned with the physical, and so we will not understand it unless we too are spiritual.⁵ This means that

⁴ For more on how to read Scripture consult my book: **“Hearing what God has spoken.”** (PDF version available free on request – contact: thedoc.mike@gmail.com).

⁵ 1Corinthians 2:14.

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we need to be born again of the Spirit of God, and thus to be a member of His kingdom, because the natural man cannot receive the word of God.⁶ In a similar way, when an Israelite approached the Lord in the Old Testament he had to prepare himself for the occasion and come with a sacrifice. Our access to the Lord into the very presence of God today is not so difficult (physically speaking). The way has been made clear because of what Christ has done on the cross. However, even though we do not have to come to a priesthood with a sacrificial offering for him to offer on our behalf, and because we have the word of God in our hands rather than it being dispensed by priest and prophet, our attitude and heart is often not as prepared. Far too often the reader is simply exhorted by writers to come as a scholar, or as a serious student with a critical mind. However, with such an attitude the motivation switches to one of being judge and jury standing over the text, rather than being ready servant willing to receive and obey the Master. Such an attitude will not prevail because God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.⁷ Consequently we cannot approach Genesis unless we have the right heart – a humble heart. Such a heart is found when we consider the meaning of the phrase “*Genesis is **God's** word.*” We are thus approaching the words which have been provided by God the Creator of all things and the Redeemer of lost mankind, and these words are ones which have come from the **only** person capable of bringing truth to us, for He alone is objective, standing above and beyond all things. It is thus essential that we are born again and that we read His word in humility with a heart ready to act on what we hear.

Now apart from the essential need to be born again, to come with humility and obedience, I offer four further key principles to understand the Scriptures.

[1] Genesis is truly God's word.

The Scriptures are true. They are true because we understand, as the apostle Paul wrote, that they are God-breathed words, which thus come straight from the very heart and soul of the Lord.⁸ We do not have the time to demonstrate the fact that the entirety of Scripture is God's word, but it should suffice for our purpose that we take **every word** as that which God intended for us to read. This is what the Scriptures everywhere lay claim to.⁹ As a single example, consider the words that the apostle Peter wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in his first letter. The prophets, he tells us, not only foretold about salvation, but they also searched within their own prophecies to try and understand about the Messiah, and, then Peter tells us that:

6 John 3:3,7; 1Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 1:13.

7 James 4:6; 1Peter 5:5.

8 2Timothy 3:16.

9 Consider the following frequently occurring phrases: “*thus says the Lord,*” “*says God,*” “*and the word of the Lord came,*” found throughout the prophets. There are many other pointers to this truth.

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To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you ...¹⁰

What the prophets received was not just for them and the readers of their age, but for those of Peter's day, and (by implication), for us in our day. It is necessary to establish this fact that what we are reading is primarily ***God's word***, because of the current modern obsession with treating the text as (mainly) a human production. Sadly many have fallen for the lie that Genesis is simply an ancient Near Eastern text either derived from contemporary accounts, or drawn from the stream of yet more ancient civilisations of the Near East.¹¹ In stark contrast we affirm the ***plenary*** and ***verbal*** inspiration of Scripture.¹² Genesis has come to us from the very mind and mouth of God. God in no way bypasses the mind nor the personality of the humans who wrote the text, but since God is infinite and so far beyond our full understanding, it is not difficult to grasp the fact that God oversaw or superintended those who wrote the text so that the very words chosen and the way they were put together all come from God.

New Testament witness.

One very clear indication that Genesis is a truthful and historical account which God has revealed through human writers comes from the New Testament. To begin with we note that the Lord Jesus referred to Genesis and spoke of it as the very word of God. In fact we have in our Saviour's words testimony to the fact that the first section of Genesis was written, (or at least narrated), by the Lord Himself. There are a number of references which point to this truth. For our first example, we turn to the Lord's reply when He was quizzed about divorce. In Matthew 19:4-6 the Lord Jesus quotes from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. Apart from the fact that the Lord Jesus in quoting these verses was thereby verifying their truthfulness, the very interesting thing about our Saviour's use of these Genesis references, is that He appears to be stating that it was ***God*** who was the narrator in the first section of Genesis. Look carefully at Matthew 19:4-6:

4 And He answered and said to them, “have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ **5** and **said**, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? **6** So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”¹³

The opening part of verse 4 tells us that the Lord Jesus was going to answer them, and He does so with a

10 1Peter 1:12.

11 These are the Babylonian, Egyptian, Canaanite and other ancient civilisations and their records. I deal with this issue at some length in my book “**Evolution: A house of cards.**” For a free copy email: thedoc.mike@gmail.com

12 Plenary – indicating all of scripture. Verbal – indicating each and every word. See, for example, 2Timothy 3:16.

13 Matthew 19:4-6.

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question. He begins *“have you not read?”* and then He refers to God who made them male and female, quoting from Genesis 1:27. Then at the beginning of verse 5, the Lord Jesus states that God ***“said,”*** following which we have the quote from Genesis 2:24 (*“for this reason ..”*). It would follow logically from this, that God is the narrator.

A very similar situation is found in 1Corinthians 6:16. The apostle Paul remonstrates with the Corinthians in connection with union between male and female. Here is what Paul states:

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” ***He says***, “shall become one flesh.”¹⁴

Again there is a quote from Genesis 2:24, but note that the apostle comments that it was ***“He”*** who makes the statement! In other words, it is God who was making the statement about the two becoming one flesh in Genesis 2:24. God is, therefore, the narrator or writer of this part of Genesis.

As yet another example, consider the book of Hebrews where we find a reference to Genesis 2:2. The writer to the Hebrews refers to the narrator as ***“He”*** again:

For ***He*** has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: “and God rested on the seventh day from all His works.”¹⁵

These New Testament references give **powerful** indication that the text was written, (or, at least narrated), by God Himself.

Elsewhere in the New Testament we have further witness that God has spoken to us openly from the beginning of time. For example, in Zechariah's prophecy concerning the birth of his son John, we learn that Zechariah believed that God had spoken by the prophets. Here is how he puts it:

As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who *have been* since the world began.¹⁶

Or consider the apostle Peter who preached after the lame man was healed at the temple gate called ***“beautiful.”***¹⁷ Peter called the people not to marvel at what happened but to repent, and in the course of his speech he points out that God has spoken from the dawn of time:

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, **20** and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, **21** whom heaven must receive until the times of

14 1Corinthians 6:16.

15 Hebrews 4:4.

16 Luke 1:70.

17 Acts 3:2,10.

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restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.¹⁸

This is why the Christian Church ought to be a public assembly which openly declares the gospel! We ought to be about our Father's business. It is so very sad that many of our academics struggle with this wonderful (and clear) truth. There has been much argument over how Genesis came to be written, but here we note that God Himself has given us the opening section! It is good to study how the text has come to us, but always and ever we must remember that God is behind all things.

From the very beginning.

Now it has always been assumed by many in the Church that the Lord did not reveal Scriptural truth until the time of Moses.¹⁹ However this assumption implies that the Lord left men in the dark for some 2,500 years!²⁰ It doesn't really make sense to make such an assumption because the rise of idolatry did not take long both prior to the flood and subsequently in the post-flood world. But when you know the Lord, it is unthinkable that He would not openly reveal Himself from the very beginning.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read that God revealed His word through men at different times in diverse ways.²¹ But we need to make it very plain that He has done this right from the very start of creation. Logically this makes perfect sense. The God who would be known and has made the most amazing effort to be known amongst sinful men by coming down in person, would surely have made things plain from the beginning? Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, declared as much as He confronted various lawyers and scribes. He said this:

49 Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and persecute,' **50** that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, **51** from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.²²

In this part of His speech to the lawyers the Lord speaks of *"the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world."* and then mentions Abel who was killed by his brother Cain. Abel, the

18 Acts 3:19-21.

19 In fact in the nineteenth century it was commonly believed that the earliest writing did not come about until some time around 1000 BC. So it was common in those days to deny that Moses wrote the Pentateuch because he couldn't write! Nowadays the secular view is that the first writing came about in 3000 BC in Sumeria (Babylon). However these ideas are based on an evolutionary schema and not on the truth revealed in Scripture which declares that Adam himself could write (Genesis 5:1).

20 There were 1,656 years before the flood, 427 years from the flood to Abraham at 75 years old, and 430 years to the giving of the law – see Exodus 12:40,41; Galatians 3:16,17. Thus : 1656 + 427 + 430 = 2513 years.

21 Hebrews 1:1,2.

22 Luke 11:49-51.

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son of Adam, was thus a prophet of God. But even before this in Genesis chapters two and three we find that the Lord God was walking with the first human pair. It is not difficult to imagine the Lord declaring things openly and freely to Adam and Eve as they walked in the garden of Eden. However, to demonstrate the fact that God has spoken from the very beginning of creation, we shall look at the book of Isaiah. One of the remarkable things about what is recorded in Isaiah (and all the prophets for that matter) is the clear fact that we have the very words that God was speaking.²³

*The witness from Isaiah.*²⁴

In chapter 40 the prophet Isaiah announces comfort for the people of God. Then he prophesies the preparation that John the Baptist brought, followed by the appearance of the Lord of glory. To convince the people of his day that these things would certainly come to pass, the Lord (through Isaiah) points out that the alternative, namely idolatry, was hopeless. To whom could anyone liken God? After displaying the folly of idolatry we then hear these vital words:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?²⁵

The Lord's questions imply that the information has been readily available from the beginning, or, in other words, from day one of creation. Furthermore, these questions also teach us that the people have had this information **told** or **spoken** to them *“from the beginning.”* In other words, God has revealed Himself to people from the beginning of time.

Then in Isaiah 41, we find an even greater indication of God's revelation of Himself from the beginning. In this chapter the Lord is challenging the Gentiles of the coastlands. What can they do or say in comparison to the Lord? Who amongst these has arranged everything in this world in righteousness? Then we read these words:

Who has performed and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I *am* He.’²⁶

The Lord alone is the one who calls the *“generations from the beginning”*! There couldn't be a more clear connection to Genesis than this, even though the Hebrew word used for *“generations”* in Isaiah 41:4 is different from the one found throughout Genesis which acts as a divider of the text (about which we shall

23 Of course every word of Scripture is God-breathed, but then some of these are the words of men and others which God wanted us to know. They are the words of men but they are the words of God in a secondary reported sense.

24 Further references to Genesis in Isaiah can be seen in *Appendix 1*.

25 Isaiah 40:21.

26 Isaiah 41:4.

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say more shortly).²⁷ But then later on in the chapter we find that the Lord again challenges the Gentile idolaters and their idols, asking them to present their case to see if they could say what would happen in the future, or if they could retell what had happened in times past.²⁸ They couldn't of course, for only God has done this. The Lord concludes:

Who has declared from the beginning, that we may know? And former times, that we may say, '*He is righteous*'?²⁹

The challenge to ask "*who has declared from the beginning*" is one which has as its backdrop the clear fact that God has indeed declared from the beginning. It stands also as a continuing challenge for today, for the supposed ideas about origins of our time are all just intricate fabrications of mankind, which are very much like the carefully constructed and decorated idols of times past.

Next, in Isaiah chapter 46 we find this idea repeated, again in the context of a challenge to idols and idol-worshippers:

9 Remember the former things of old, for I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, **10** declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'³⁰

Here we read that God alone has declared "*the end from the beginning and from ancient times.*" In the Hebrew the word translated "*from the beginning*" comes first so that the force of the expression is that God has revealed truth and spoken openly right from the start.

In Isaiah 48 we have the repeated theme of the Lord's astonishment that the people still did not trust Him, despite the fact that He had revealed to them from the very beginning.³¹ Here is what He says in the third verse:

I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did *them*, and they came to pass.³²

Now one might object here that the Lord is simply claiming that He had revealed to the people from the

27 The Hebrew word **tôledôt** (generations, genealogy) is found in 39 places in the Old Testament. It is found in 13 places in Genesis and also in: Exodus 6:16,19; 28:10; Numbers 1:20,22,24,26,28,30,32,34,36,38,40,42; 3:1; Ruth 4:18; 1Chronicles 1:29; 5:7; 7:2,4,9; 8:28; 9:9,34; 26:31. The Hebrew word **dôr** is much more frequent (167x) and appears to be used as a synonym for **tôledôt** – see, for example, Genesis 6:9; 7:1; 9:12; 15:16; 17:7,9,12.

28 Isaiah 41:21-25.

29 Isaiah 41:26.

30 Isaiah 46:9,10.

31 Isaiah 48:1-3.

32 Isaiah 48:3.

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start of them being a nation. But then in verses 12 and 13 we note that the Lord appeals to His status as Creator:

12 Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I *am* He, I *am* the First, I *am* also the Last.

13 Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; *when* I call to them, they stand up together.³³

In passing, it is very significant that the Lord states clearly that creation (both the earth and the heavens) were made by His own “*hand*” and by His “*right hand*.” This is a clear reference to the Messiah – the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁴ Following this, the Lord questions the people. Who has declared these things about creation?³⁵ And then we have a statement that there is One who has been the object of God's great love who will do all His pleasure.³⁶ The Lord has called this One, and His way will succeed.³⁷ Then in Isaiah 48:16 we have this One whom the Lord loves, (the Messiah), making a declaration:

Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I *was* there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit Have sent Me.³⁸

In this glorious words we have the Messiah, (the Lord Jesus Christ), declaring openly that He has been revealing truth “*from the beginning*”!³⁹ God has been speaking from the very dawn of time! What could be more clear?

Trust and obey.

Our first principle, then, is that we must always recognise that what we have before us are the very words of God. But such a truth leads us further. Since the words of Scripture are the very words of God, we should be very careful about how we handle them. We ought to be faithful to them, and we ought also to be ready to hear what is said so that we can obey. Think how people revere the words of those they love or greatly respect! How much more should we honour that which the Lord has revealed!⁴⁰ I am always struck by the words we read about Noah when the Lord told him to build the ark. After Noah heard the general word from the Lord, he then received detailed instructions on what was to be done.⁴¹ But after all the revelation Noah received, the text tells us:

33 Isaiah 48:12,13.

34 See: Psalm 20:6; 92:4; 98:1; 110:1; 118:15,16.

35 Isaiah 48:14.

36 Isaiah 48:14.

37 Isaiah 48:15.

38 Isaiah 48:16.

39 Sadly we cannot dwell with the wonderful thought at the end of this verse which leads to a consideration of the incarnation!

40 Psalm 56:4,10; 138:2.

41 Genesis 6:3,7,13f.

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Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.⁴²

And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him.⁴³

We ought also to be willing to hear the Lord in order that we may fully love Him by doing all that He asks of us.

[2] Genesis is (primarily) all about Christ Jesus.

One of the key factors which makes studying the word of God so wonderful is, that whatever you read today will have a bearing on what you read elsewhere in Scripture tomorrow. The Scriptures are not disjointed, but form a wonderful unity. This unity was clearly demonstrated by the Lord Jesus after the resurrection when He taught the disciples that the Scriptures were in fact primarily speaking about Him.⁴⁴ That they also speak about us, who we are, and what we should do, amongst many other things, makes Scripture a wonder and a delight, but primarily, above all else, the Scriptures speak to us of Christ.⁴⁵ So we must always hold the Lord in view as we study Scripture. This is not limited to certain well-known passages which prophesy about our Saviour such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, but **all** Scripture. Nor is it limited to the many types we find in Scripture, such as the tabernacle, the temple, the sacrifices or the many characters and their lives (e.g. David, Solomon and so on).

For our second principle, then, we must make our study, ***Christ focused***. Unless we go to Scripture with the Lord Jesus Christ uppermost in our minds, we will not receive what the Lord wills to give us. A question we need to constantly ask ourselves as we read through each verse is: what does this tell me about the Lord Jesus, about His character, concerning His work, and about my response? The word of God, then, is God-breathed and it primarily speaks and teaches us about the Lord Jesus Christ and His glorious work.

[3] To hear is to obey!

A third principle we bring to the reader's attention is the motivation that energises us. We have already stated something of this by making the point that Genesis is God's word, and therefore we ought to reverently hear it, adjust our thinking to what we have heard, and then obey what it tells us to do. However I am always moved when I hear the apostle Paul instructing Timothy on how he was meant to teach and disciple his congregation. This is what the apostle wrote:

42 Genesis 6:22.

43 Genesis 7:5.

44 Luke 24:27,44-46.

45 See for example 1Corinthians 10:3,4 and John 12:41.

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Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith.⁴⁶

The word “*instruction*” can also be translated as “*commandment*” or “*teaching*.” The purpose, therefore, is “*love*.” Of course we do not need to go far to find what is meant by love, nor do we need to travel very deeply in Scripture to find whom the object of our love ought to be. Listen to these well-known Scriptures:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!⁴⁷

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.⁴⁸

9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.⁴⁹

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁵⁰

37 Jesus said to him, “‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ **38** This is *the* first and great commandment. **39** And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”⁵¹

Well, we could multiply examples which describe love, what it is and how we should respond, but the point is clear, I believe. We study Scripture in order first and foremost to know the Lord, to love Him and thence to love all people that we meet, and to do His will. We need to keep ourselves in the love of God, and above all love!⁵² Note, however, that Paul does not just say that the purpose of teaching is love. He makes the very important point that whilst his teaching and instruction must ***get*** to love, it must ***start*** from a specific point which he describes in three ways. Love must be generated:

- from a pure heart,
- from a good conscience, and
- from sincere faith.

46 1Timothy 1:5.

47 1John 3:1.

48 1John 3:16.

49 1John 4:9-11.

50 Romans 5:8.

51 Matthew 22:37-39.

52 Jude 1:21. See also Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; Micah 6:8.

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These three things are all aspects of the same source. The person who has a “*pure heart*” is one who also has a “*good conscience*,” and a “*sincere faith*.” These three things define or identify the person who has been born again of the Spirit of God, who has been translated out of the power of darkness, and who has been conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love.⁵³ It is no good whatsoever if we seek to generate love and devotion from any other source. So we seek in our teaching to bring the reader to true, or sincere, faith in the Lord. It is only out of such a new (pure) heart that a person can be truly instructed to love. All other appeals and all other grounds will flounder. Note that this principle is one which must be continually upheld, for there is always a danger of having once begun in the right way we then proceed in a carnal or worldly way.⁵⁴

There are many other things we could add here concerning the intention and aim of this study and the principles we need to uphold, but sufficient has been given for the reader to understand that we seek to encourage and bless them in their walk with the Lord. That is, that the reader may seek Christ, love Him, and obey His commands. As we go through the book of Genesis we will have occasion to comment on these aims or goals and perhaps add to them. This is the beauty of God's word – it always brings us further and deeper into the love of God. However there is one further principle we need to establish, and this concerns the pressure all feel from the prevailing culture, and, especially, from the influence of modern science.

[4] Modern science.⁵⁵

Our fourth and final principle concerns how we view the statements and beliefs which originate from within our secular culture. Given the society we live in, it is inevitable that we need to make some comments on modern science as we study Genesis, especially as it treats the subject of origins, man's composition, and what happened during the days of Noah. I have used the term “modern science” for a good reason. It is widely accepted that modern science arose from the sixteenth century which saw the beginnings of study in the “natural” world based on a mechanical view of the cosmos rather than an organic one held by earlier thinkers.⁵⁶ The influx of ancient Greek manuscripts, and the development of humanistic thinking were also influential at this time, along with the reformation. Early “scientists” such

53 John 3:3,7; Colossians 1:13; 1Peter 1:23.

54 Galatians 5:7.

55 For more on the nature of science, the interested reader can consult my works:

“**Sin, Science, and Salvation**” and “**Evolution: A house of cards.**”

PDF versions of which can be requested free by contacting: thedoc.mike@gmail.com.

56 I do not like this word “natural” in referring to the world nor the term “nature.” I would prefer to use the term “creation” because this term leads us to the idea that what is all around us is from the hand of the Creator and continuously upheld by Him. The term “nature,” however, is more widespread and so I have used it here in this work. When I do use these secular terms I would like the reader to understand that I am referring to what God has created and still upholds. The secular view of the “natural” world is very different! Such problems with this word “nature” has been dealt with of by the seventeenth century gentleman scientist Robert Boyle in his book “The Vulgar Notion of Nature.”

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as Johannes Kepler (famous for coming up with the idea that the planets orbited the sun elliptically), and Robert Boyle (famous as the “father” of chemistry), were motivated by their Christian faith. Other scientists of these early times worked *within* and *from* a Christian world view. However what we observe today is vastly different to what we can read of in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. All of this leads to the notion that science is not something that stays static. It changes. Thus modern science now has a range of assumptions (or pre-suppositions) which the early scientists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would be alarmed at. Where once the activity of science was seen as seeking truth within a Christian framework so that we could “*think God's thoughts after Him*,” today any question of allowing a supernatural element in the quest for knowledge is utterly rejected.⁵⁷ This fact alone is enough for the Christian to begin to consider that modern science must be dealt with sceptically. If one of the main premises of modern science is that God and supernatural existence must be denied, how can we take on board what the modern scientist may say? We cannot.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle we may have within our thinking comes from the vexed problem of interpretation. From the reformation onwards there were heated debates over the meaning of Scripture passages and different theologies which left many with the feeling that Scripture was too hard to understand. Much of this was made worse by the fact that these struggles were political rather than truly theological. At the same time the growing body of science seemed to be a straight forward uncovering of what “nature” could reveal. It was Isaac Newton who suggested that he was like the boy who was simply picking up pebbles from a beach and looking at them! Another favourite illustration used the concept of lifting the veil or skirt that “nature” was wearing to discover what was beneath! It all seemed so simple and easy. Scripture was considered hard to grasp, but “nature” was thought to be easy to read. Now this situation is far and wide of the mark. First we need to make it clear that Scripture is plain and easy to grasp in its *essential* details. There is no mistaking the main message of Scripture. It is summed up by Scriptures such as John 3:16, or Romans 5:8, for example. There are passages which are harder to grasp, of course, but many of these are not so difficult as we are lead to believe.⁵⁸ Of course the most important thing to note here is that whilst Scripture is straight forward, it will not be accepted or comprehended by those who are not believers.⁵⁹ Notwithstanding this, the Lord promises that He will guide His people into all truth.⁶⁰

Now in stark contrast we must bring the reader's attention to the difficulty of comprehending modern science. Whom really understands the esoteric and incomprehensible musings of the likes of Einstein or Hawking? Who understands the mathematics which undergirds modern science? The reality is

57 See: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Johannes_Kepler. It was Johannes Kepler who used the phrase “thinking God's thoughts after Him.”

58 2Peter 3:16.

59 1Corinthians 2:14.

60 Psalm 25:12,14; Jeremiah 33:3; John 16:13.

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that Scripture can be comprehended by all, from a little child to a university professor. Modern science can be grasped by a rapidly depleting elite. Is this enough to reject what modern science says? Of course not! But consider the following point. How are we to understand origins as revealed to us in Scripture? Is it necessary to first grasp what modern science says? To ask such a question is to answer it, for God has revealed all that we need, and He did not see it important to give us what modern science has declared.⁶¹

Modern science is not equivalent to 'general revelation.'

It is also vital to make it clear that what modern science states is not simply what creation and the universe displays. Sadly many Christians have assumed this and consider that modern science is equivalent to general revelation. They read the scientific journals and assume that what is found there is simply that which can be uncovered or discovered by anyone with a will (and the expertise) to do so. Now such a view is very wide of the mark. It is not possible for us to come to the universe without inbuilt presuppositions and assumptions. The modern scientist works within a naturalistic, materialistic and anti-supernatural framework when he does his work, so it is not surprising that he has nothing to say about God, and about what Scripture tells us. In short, general revelation (what the universe displays) needs to be interpreted. The keys to interpretation can be found in Scripture, not in the minds of men. In actual fact we must agree with what the Lord Himself declares in His word.⁶²

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.⁶³

If we looked into the universe (the heavens, the earth and the sea beneath) we ought to see God's work! The fact that the modern scientists ***do not see this*** should give us great cause for concern.

When it comes to considering what modern scientists tell us, we need to be extremely careful. What they report in their papers, journals, and books is a mixture of the factual findings and observations they have made, coupled with their theoretical notions and understandings. All facts and real data – observations made in the universe – must be accepted. However, much of what is often referred to as “fact” or “data” is often heavily infused with theoretical assumptions. For example you may read that a certain galaxy is several million light years from us. This may be presented to us as piece of data, but in actual fact it is a conclusion derived from manipulating real data, (the red shift), using the assumption that red shift indicates recessional velocity and distance.⁶⁴ Given these points, and the fact that the starting point of modern science is materialistic anti-supernaturalism, we need to be ***very*** sceptical indeed. When it comes to origins, the question is even more important because the Lord Himself has opened His single book on

61 2Peter 1.

62 See also: Acts 14:17; 17:24f; Romans 1:18-32.

63 Psalm 19:1.

64 See ***Appendix 2***.

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this subject. What He has to say must stand head and shoulders over all statements, views, pronouncements, and ideas proffered by mere men.

On the question of evolution (whether this be the idea that mankind has developed over millennia from simpler organisms, or any developmental idea connected with the universe), the Christian ought to be certain and settled in the view that such a notion is not only wrong, but also downright evil.⁶⁵ Considering just the biological theory of evolution, we point out that the essential ingredient for this false concoction is death. Without death there can be no evolution. Now such a viewpoint flies in the face of God's good creation. It also destroys the gospel. Death came in as a result of sin according to Scripture. The modern scientist would have us believe that death is part of the ordinary nature of things. However the Scriptures tell us that death is an enemy which entered after the fall of man and has been conquered by Christ! We shall have more to say on this as we go along in the text but it is essential that the Christian reader begin with a deep scepticism on all that modern science has to say.

Structure and overview of Genesis – an introduction.

We start by noting that Genesis forms a unique place in Scripture, being the beginning book in the first five, collectively known as the “Torah” (law – also called the “Pentateuch”). Many credit Moses with being the human author of the Torah and whilst that is certainly true for the four books after Genesis, it cannot be true for the Genesis text itself.⁶⁶ He may well have been the compiler or editor of what we have, but he was not the author in the human sense. Of course we assert that standing over and above whomever the human penman may be, is the Lord Himself whose word the Bible is. He alone is the true Author.

If you have read through the book of Genesis you may be familiar with a number of features which seem to set it apart from many other books of the Bible. First there is the matter of the genealogies. Genesis is not unique in having genealogies, for these can be found in many other books including the gospels of Matthew and Luke. What is especial about the Genesis genealogies is the way in which these are used, and the fact that on two occasions we are given some very detailed information, including dates and certain details of named characters.

Second you may have noticed that there is a change in narrative focus from the broad-sweep, to the narrow focus at chapter 12. Many have pointed out that whilst the first eleven chapters describe four great events (creation, fall, flood, tower of Babel), the remaining thirty-eight chapters outline the four

⁶⁵ I am not suggesting here that the observation of change over time within species is wrong (natural selection) but that any concept of an upward structural change from less complex to more complex, from molecules to man, for example, is definitely wrong.

⁶⁶ Evidence for Moses being the human author can be seen in the following instances. Commands to Moses to write can be found at: Exodus 17:14; 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:24. Places where God writes can be seen at: Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 34:1. The expression “*by the hand of Moses*” indicating at his instruction, which must have been written down, can be found at: Exodus 35:29; Leviticus 8:36; 10:11; 26:46; Numbers 4:37,45,49; 9:23; 10:13; 15:23; 36:13.

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great characters with whom God dealt (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph). Third, you might have recognised that there is one repeated word which occurs when the story line changes, namely, the word “*generations*,” (although in some translations this word appears as “*account*,” “*genealogy*” or “*history*”). It is this word which in Hebrew is, תּוֹלְדוֹת *tôledôt*, which forms the backbone of the book. Table I.1 shows where this word occurs in Genesis.

Table I.1: Tôledôt in Genesis.

Verse	Text ESV (*NKJV)
2:4	These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.
5:1	This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.
6:9	These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.
10:1	These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.
10:32*	These <i>were</i> the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations , in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.
11:10	These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.
11:27	Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot.
25:12	These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham.
25:13*	And these <i>were</i> the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations : The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam.
25:19	These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac,
36:1	These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom).
36:9	These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.
37:2	These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

The great problem for Bible students, however is to consider how this phrase “*these are the generations*” is being used. Are they acting as a heading or as a title, showing forth what was generated? Or are they acting as the concluding statement showing what has already been outlined? Whilst it is natural in our day to begin with a title, many cultures have their “title” page at the end.⁶⁷ In some situations the title served as a marker to show the end of one section and its link to the next. Now both of

67 **P. J. Wiseman.** *Clues to Creation in Genesis*. 1977. Marshall, Morgan and Scott. London. P37.

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these options have been defended by Bible students of all stripes and creeds. However there are excellent reasons why (in general) the word *tôledôt* should be taken as being a concluding title of what has gone before.

Tôledôt ending or beginning? A look at some cases.

Of the thirteen occurrences of the Hebrew word *tôledôt* in Genesis, two of these are not used in the form of a formula, (Genesis 10:32 and 25:13). However we cannot dismiss these from consideration because they have important information which links this book to the subsequent book, Exodus. In Genesis 10:32 we are informed of the “*families*” of Noah's sons separated by means of their “*generations.*” In Genesis 25:13 we have reference to the “*names*” of the sons of Ishmael in accordance with their “*generations.*” We shall consider these themes later on, but for now we need to consider the remaining eleven references to the *tôledôt* of Genesis.

The first two uses of tôledôt.

Taking the first two occurrences of the phrase *tôledôt* we can see what looks like a similar, natural break within each verse. In the case of Genesis 2:4 we have a break that comes after the words “*when they were created.*”

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth **when they were created**, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.⁶⁸

This verse seems to have two separate parts which we could render as follows:

[1] These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

[2] In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Significantly here we have in the second sentence, the first use of the title “*Lord,*” (*Yêhovah*). The full title used here is, in fact, “*Lord God.*”⁶⁹ In contrast, all the way through Genesis 1 we have the title “*God*” (*'elohiym*) only. This is one indication that there is a break in this verse. Secondly, it is noteworthy that whereas the first part of the sentence uses the phrase “*heavens and the earth,*” which also occurs at Genesis 1:1 and 2:1, in the second part of Genesis 2:4 we have the phrase reversed, that is, “*the earth and the heavens.*” The reason for this is most probably because the focus is going to narrow from the universe

⁶⁸ Genesis 2:4, ESV.

⁶⁹ Genesis 2:4,5,7,8,9,15,16,18,19,21,22; 3:1,8(x2),9,13,14,21,22,23. But significantly the next occurrence of the title “*Lord God*” is not until Genesis 14:22; 15:2,8; 24:7,12,27,48; 28:13; Exodus 3:15,16,18 and etc. The title “*God*” is most often used from Genesis 4:25; 5:1 and so on.

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(*“heavens and the earth”*) to the earth, and then further as we progress in Genesis.

In the second occurrence of the word *tôledôt* (Genesis 5:1), we have a similar break in thought as that seen in Genesis 2:4:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.⁷⁰

What is clearly different about this occasion of the use of *tôledôt* is that we also have reference to a *“book.”* However the similarity with Genesis 2:4 can be seen with reference to the same verse in the NASB:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.⁷¹

So just as we had *“in the day that the Lord God made”* in Genesis 2:4, we have *“in the day when God created man”* here in Genesis 5:1. Once again we have a new idea and it looks as though the *tôledôt* phrase acts as an ending, not as a title.

The case of Noah. *Tôledôt* in Genesis 6.

Looking a little more closely at *tôledôt* in Genesis 6 we can see some distinctive differences between the two sections surrounding it (i.e. comparing Genesis 5:1b-6:9a with Genesis 6:9b-10:1a). Now we must be careful about making distinctions based on the titles for the Lord God not least because of the false documentary hypothesis which ascribed different parts of Genesis to different authors and times based on these different titles.⁷² Nevertheless there seems to be some differences. In the Genesis 5:1b-6:9a section we find the title *“God”* is used five times in the narrative piece that comprises the genealogy of Genesis 5, and in the same chapter the title *“Lord”* is used only once in reported speech by Lamech.⁷³ In Genesis 6, apart from the reference to the *“sons of God”* we have the title *“Lord”* being used five times up until the end of the section and no occasions where *“God”* is used.⁷⁴ In the next section (Genesis 6:9b-10:1a) we find that the title *“God”* is used 17 times and the title *“Lord”* is used 8 times.⁷⁵

70 Genesis 5:1, ESV.

71 Genesis 5:1, NASB.

72 Various parts of the Pentateuch were assigned in the nineteenth century by theologians to various authors or sources. There were (supposedly) the Jehovist (J), the Elohist (E), the Priestly (P), and the Deuteronomist (D), each of which had a distinct theology and wrote at different times. This view has been thoroughly refuted. See, for example: <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/moses/documentary-hypothesis-moses-jedp/>

73 *“God”* at Genesis 5:1(x2),22,24(x2). *“Lord”* used by Lamech at Genesis 5:29.

74 *“Lord”* is used at Genesis 6:3,5,6,7,8. *“Sons of God”* used at Genesis 6:2,4.

75 *“God”* at Genesis 6:9,11,12,13,22; 7:9,16; 8:1(x2),15; 9:1,6,8,12,16,17,26. *“Lord”* at Genesis 7:1,5,16; 8:20,21(x2); 9:26,27.

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However in chapter 6 from the second part of verse 9 to the end of the chapter, we have only the title “*God*” being used, and particularly in the verses at the start of the second section. Thus at the crossover from one section to the next there seems to be a change from using “*Lord*” in the first part of chapter 6, to “*God*” from verse 9b following.

More importantly there is a distinct difference in the reported words from the Lord. In Genesis 6:3 and Genesis 6:7 we find that the Lord spoke in a general sense to the whole world, whilst in Genesis 6:13 we have God speaking *specifically* to Noah revealing details of the coming judgement.

The example of *tôledôt* in Genesis 6:9 has some definite features which allow us to make some headway on this issue of whether the word acts as the beginning or ending of each section. In verses 5 and 6 of Genesis 6, we have a series of descriptions concerning how the Lord saw the world and how He was sorry about making the earth. This is followed in verse 7 by a statement the Lord made concerning his intentions. Verses 8, 9 and 10 are the bridge which we shall look at in a moment. Then in verses 11 and 12 we again have a set of descriptions concerning the earth's state (although these are notably different from those in the earlier part of Genesis 6). This is followed in verse 13 with another statement by the Lord concerning his intentions. These details are shown in table I.2.

Table I.2: Structure of Genesis 6:5-13.

CONTENT	TEXT
Descriptions of the earth's wickedness.	5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man <i>was</i> great in the earth, and <i>that</i> every intent of the thoughts of his heart <i>was</i> only evil continually. 6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.
<i>Statement of the Lord's intentions.</i>	7 So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”
Bridge.	8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. 9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
Description of the corruption of the earth.	11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.
<i>Statement of the Lord's intentions.</i>	13 And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

Some people suggest that the content of verses 8 and 9 is mere repetition and indicative of poor copy. However, given that we are talking about the word of God here, it is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit would yield to such poor representation. Now in the middle of these two pieces on the state of the pre-

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flood world and God's intentions, can be found one of the **tôledôt** markers that divide up the book of Genesis (translated as “**genealogy**” and highlighted in **red** in table I.2). Verses 8 and 9 read as follows:

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. 9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.⁷⁶

Significantly most translations begin verse 8 with the contrasting conjunction “**but**” as the translation of the “waw” prefix.⁷⁷ This is clearly because of the content of verse 8 which indicates a contrast to that which God intended to do to all men on the earth for their great wickedness. Thus in contrast to the wickedness of all men on earth, Noah found the grace of the Lord. So that verse 8 serves as a fitting follow-on to verse 7 where God's intentions are spelt out. Next in verse 9 we read the **tôledôt** marker which reads as follows according to the ESV:

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.⁷⁸

In the NKJV the translators have supplied “**genealogy**” for the Hebrew **tôledôt** which is unhelpful because there is no genealogy given nearby except the mention of Noah's three sons in verse 10. What is noteworthy about verse 9 is the fact that Noah's name occurs **three** times, the first two of which are right next to each other! Literally translated the verse reads like this:

These (are) generations (of) **Noah** **Noah** a man (of) righteousness
complete he was in his generations with God walked **Noah**.

The Hebrew text looks like this:

← Hebrew reads from right to left.

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ

These (are) generations (of) Noah

נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק וְתָמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו

אֵת-הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ-נֹחַ

נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק

Noah a man (of) righteousness complete he was in his generations with God walked Noah.

76 Genesis 6:8,9.

77 The NKJV, NIV, AKJV, ESV and NASB all have “**but**” at the start of verse 8.

78 Genesis 6:9, ESV. The NKJV has “**genealogy**” instead of “**generations**” which is misleading because there is no genealogy in this part of the text.

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I have colour coded the words to show their rendition. Of course this is merely translating the words in sequence. However it is clear from the above that there are two different sentences which we could present as follows:

[1] These are the generations of Noah.

[2] Noah was a righteous man, complete in his generations, and he walked with God.

Presenting it like this shows that there is clearly an abrupt change from what appears to be a concluding sentence: *“these are the generations of Noah,”* and what follows starting with a new statement about Noah and his character. This second sentence in Hebrew begins and ends with Noah's name (highlighted in blue) whilst verse 10 begins with the verb “to beget” and then Noah's name:

← reading from right to left.

וַיֹּלֶד נֹחַ

and Noah begot

It would seem from these brief considerations that the phrase *“these are the generations of Noah”* is a concluding statement to what has preceded. If it was a title for what follows, it is hard to imagine the writer continuing with Noah's name **immediately** and then by giving it again at the end of the second sentence in verse 9. Given further that there is only a brief genealogy in verse 10 (Noah's sons) which is separated from the *tôledôt* phrase by the second part of verse 9, this further strengthens the case for the phrase here being an ending rather than a title. If we accept that Genesis 5:1b-6:9a was written (or, at least, collated) by Noah which we derive from the words *“this is the genealogy of Noah,”* then it would be quite normal for Noah to write the words preceding, that is, that *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”*⁷⁹ Turning to the words found at the start of Genesis 6:9b-10:1a, we must state that it would be **highly unlikely** for these words to have been given or written by Noah. It would have been the height of pride for Noah to have described himself as a *“just man, perfect in his generations,”* and for him to have stated that he *“walked with God.”*⁸⁰ It is far more likely that such descriptions of Noah would have been given by those who knew Noah, such as his sons. Thus Genesis 6:9b-10:1a starts with a description of Noah, which Noah's sons are more likely to have provided than Noah himself. The section ends with these words: *“this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth,”* which points us to the

79 Genesis 6:8.

80 Genesis 6:9.

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idea that Noah's sons were the writers of this section.⁸¹

If we look at the crossover of the previous two sections (i.e. comparing Genesis 2:4b-5:1a and Genesis 5:1b-6:9a) we will find similar overlaps and repetitions. Thus at the end of the line of Cain in Genesis 4 we have a statement telling us that Adam and Eve had a new son, Seth, then we are given the reason for his name, then we are informed of the fact that Seth's son was Enosh, and finally we are informed that men became to call on the Lord. In the next section (Genesis 5:1b-6:9a) we are brought right back to details we were informed of in Genesis 1. Here is how the section starts:

1 ... In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.⁸²

Following this retracing of creation information, we are told of Adam's son Seth again, and then we have the genealogy derived from this son, the first of whom is Enosh whom we were told of in the previous section. Such back tracking and repetition of information (Seth and Enosh) indicates that we have two separate accounts from two different sources. The first we assume was given by Adam as Genesis 5:1a seems to indicate: *“This is the book of the genealogy of Adam.”* The second we assume to have been from Noah as Genesis 6:9a seems to suggest: *“This is the genealogy of Noah.”*

Tôledôt in Genesis 10 and 11.

What about the other places where ***tôledôt*** is found? In Genesis 10:1 which follows immediately after we are told that Noah was 950 years old and then he died, we read these words:⁸³

These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.⁸⁴

Now here the break is not so clear, because the second part refers back to the first. By saying *“sons were born to them”* we must look back and note that this refers to *“the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth”* in the first half of the verse. However the next instance at Genesis 11:10 shows the idea of a break or a division more clearly:

81 Genesis 10:1.

82 Genesis 5:1b,2.

83 Genesis 9:28,29.

84 Genesis 10:1, ESV.

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These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.⁸⁵

The division is shown in the same way that we saw for Genesis 6:9 where Noah's name appeared twice side-by-side. Here we have Shem's name repeated, and again (in Hebrew) the name appears side-by-side. Literally we have:

[1] These (are) the generations of Shem.

[2] Shem was a hundred years old.

The Hebrew shows how the name of Shem comes twice:

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת שֵׁם--שֵׁם בֶּן-מֵאָת שָׁנָה

These (are) generations (of) Shem Shem was a hundred years old

The second part of Genesis 11:10 marks a new point of departure as indicated by the repeated use of the name, “*Shem*.” The same can be said for the next use of the Hebrew word *tôledôt* where we have the name “*Terah*” twice, again side-by-side:

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot.⁸⁶

Again the Hebrew shows how the name “*Terah*” appears twice side-by-side:

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת תְּרָח--תְּרָח הוֹלִיד

And these (are) generations (of) Terah Terah begot

These cases where the name is given twice are a strong indication that the *tôledôt* phrase is an ending rather than a beginning.

Tôledôt in Genesis 25,36 and 37.

The last five occasions where *tôledôt* is used occur in Genesis chapters 25, 36 and 37. We will look first at the second use in Genesis 25:19. This is similar to those we have studied at Genesis 6:9;

85 Genesis 11:10, ESV.

86 Genesis 11:27, ESV.

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11:10 and 11:27. This time we have Abraham's name side-by-side. The literal rendering of the Hebrew of Genesis 25:19 reads as follows:

And these are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham fathered Isaac.

Here is the Hebrew again:

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן-אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת-יִצְחָק

And these (are) generations (of) Isaac son of Abraham Abraham begot Isaac

The previous instance at Genesis 25:12 does not *seem* to fit the pattern of being a concluding statement. In order to understand this it will be necessary to consider the text following this verse to see how the Hebrew word *tôledôt* is actually used.

12 These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham. **13** These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, **14** Mishma, Dumah, Massa, **15** Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. **16** These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. **17** (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) **18** They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen.⁸⁷

It would seem at first glance that in this instance the reference to “*generations*” in verse 12 points forward, because verse 13 details the “*names*” of Ishmael's sons, “*named in order of their birth,*” and then verse 16 seems to round the reference off by telling us about the “*sons of Ishmael,*” concluding that “*these are their names*” which looks back to the names recorded in verses 13 to 15.

However, immediately prior to verse 12 we have recorded Abraham's second marriage after Sarah had died, to Keturah, ending with Abraham's death and burial. Three points are worthy of note in Genesis 25:1-11. First, we are told that, “*Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac,*” and then also that he “*gave gifts to the sons of the concubines ... and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.*”⁸⁸ Then, secondly, we are told that “*Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah ... the field which Abraham purchased.*”⁸⁹ Finally, we read immediately before

⁸⁷ Genesis 25:12-18, ESV.

⁸⁸ Genesis 25:6,7.

⁸⁹ Genesis 25:9,10.

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verse 12 that after Abraham's death *“God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.”*⁹⁰ Now Beer Lahai Roi was the location where Hagar met with God after Sarai had her thrown out following her disastrous plan to have a child by Abraham through surrogacy.⁹¹

Table I.3 shows the text and how we should view it in terms of organisation of the book of Genesis. It would seem from these facts that we have just highlighted, that the details we have been reading may well have come from the hand of Ishmael, (or, at the very least, from both Isaac and Ishmael). If from Ishmael, then the opening part of Genesis 25:12 (*“These are the generations of Ishmael”*) may well be an ending to that part of the story Ishmael recorded (i.e. Genesis 25:1-11). What follows in verse 13 then follows on logically as it tells us of Ishmael's sons.

Finally we have the instances in Genesis 36 and 37. Again we must look at the last instance found in Genesis 37:2:

These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.⁹²

This statement comes immediately after Genesis 36 which focuses attention on Esau. However the section from Genesis 25:19b to 37:2a is mainly concerned with Jacob. It begins with Jacob's birth along with his older twin Esau, and then follows the story of their rivalry. Genesis 26 describes the history of Isaac in the main and his dealings with Abimelech and arguments over wells, but it ends with a statement concerning Esau marrying Hittite wives. After this comes the whole history of Jacob with his deceitful action in grabbing Isaac's blessing, his fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, his meeting with God on the journey north, his being cheated by Laban, his prosperity and growing family with two wives and concubines, and then his return. In Genesis 32 Jacob is on the way back but fears meeting Esau, and along the way, he wrestles with God, has his hip joint dislocated, and gets a new name (Israel). Eventually he meets up with Esau and settles in Shechem. In Genesis 34 we have the history of Dinah's defilement by Shechem (prince of that land), and Simeon and Levi's revenge on the people. Jacob laments the trouble caused by Simeon and Levi, and is then told by the Lord to go to Bethel to live. Jacob meets with God and he is again given his new name, and then he departs from Bethel, and, as they approach Ephrath, Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin. Genesis 35 ends with a record of the twelve sons of Jacob, and then with Isaac's death and burial by both Jacob and Esau. Given this focus on the life of Jacob, it is reasonable to assume that the first part of Genesis 37:2 acts as the “title” ending to this section (Genesis 25:19b – 37:2a).

90 Genesis 25:11.

91 Genesis 16:2-4,7-14.

92 Genesis 37:2, ESV.

Table I.3 : The end of Isaac's account incorporating Ishmael's records.

<i>Scripture verses.</i>	<i>Text (ESV).</i>	<i>Discussion</i>
Genesis 24:1-67	#24 1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said to his servant 67 Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.	These events would have been known to Isaac alone who is the main focus.
Genesis 25:1-11	#25 1 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 6 But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country. 7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. 8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, 10 the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. 11 After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.	These details would have been known to both sons (Ishmael and Isaac) but presumably Ishmael was the main source.
Genesis 25:12	12 These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham.	This is the ending statement for this small section Genesis 25:1-12
Genesis 25:13-18	13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. 16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. 17 (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen.	This information follows on and includes more detail Ishmael would have provided.
Genesis 25:19a	19 These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son:	This is the concluding statement to the whole section from Genesis 11:27b which focuses in the main on Abraham.
Genesis 25:19b onwards	Abraham fathered Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. 21 And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.	This is a new account according to Jacob (Genesis 37:2a). The account begins with Isaac but very soon centres on Jacob and Esau.

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The use of ***tôledôt*** in Genesis 37:2a appears to be like the others we have come across where we have a break in thought. We are told first that “*these are the generations of Jacob*” in the first part of verse 2, and then we are informed about Joseph in the remainder of the verse and what follows afterwards. It may be thought that since Joseph was one of the offspring of Jacob, then this use of ***tôledôt*** acts as a heading. However Joseph is just one of Jacob's sons and we have been informed of Jacob's offspring since Genesis 29:32 where Leah bore to Jacob his first son Reuben. So to suggest that Genesis 37:2 acts as a heading from which we expect the genealogy and offspring of Jacob seems incorrect. Once again it seems better to consider the use of ***tôledôt*** here as a concluding statement rounding off all the history of Jacob from Genesis 25:19b.

Now returning to the use of ***tôledôt*** at Genesis 36:1 and 36:9 we have a similar situation to that which we found in Genesis 25:12 concerning Ishmael (details are shown in table I.4 – compare with table I.3). In Genesis 36:1 we have the generations of Esau (Edom), and then we have a detailed account of Esau's wives and the children he fathered. Genesis 35 ends with Isaac's death and his burial arranged by both Esau and Jacob.⁹³ Then in Genesis 36:9 we are again told of the generations of Esau, and then we read about the “*names*” of Esau's sons in verse 10 followed by a list of these. The chapter ends with a list of the names of the chiefs who reigned in their lands.⁹⁴ This whole chapter seems to be a record of Esau's clans inserted into the narrative as a whole. Esau (surely) could have provided this information and it seems as though Jacob included it along with his accounts of events.

Table I.5 sums these ideas up and shows how we ought to view the structure of the book of Genesis. Two points must be noted from table I.5. First we have made the assumption that the ***tôledôt*** marker indicates not just a division of the book, but suggests also the original writer of the section in question. Thus we note that from Genesis 2:4a to 5:1a we have the history ***according to Adam***, and the next section is the history of the pre-flood world ***according to Noah***. Except in the case of Adam where we are told of a “*book*,” we are ***assuming*** that the named person connected with the ***tôledôt*** marker was responsible for keeping the records for his age. Others have made the same assumption, and it is not an unreasonable one given the fact that we have shown that God has revealed himself and his actions from the beginning.

Furthermore a closer look at the details surrounding the ***tôledôt*** marker in Genesis 6 will help to enhance the strength of this assumption. After all, it is surely not unreasonable that the God who knows all things would have used people of that time to make records?

93 Genesis 35:29.

94 Genesis 36:40-43.

Table I.4 : The end of Jacob's account incorporating Esau's records.

Scripture verses.	Text (ESV).	Discussion
Genesis 35:27-29	27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.	Then we read of Isaac's death and his burial by Jacob and Esau. It is noteworthy that Esau's name comes first.
Genesis 36:1	#36 1 These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom).	This ends the above short section which was probably from Esau.
Genesis 36:2-8	2 Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, 3 and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. 4 And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; 5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. 6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. 7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. 8 So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)	This passage describes Esau's wives and children and the fact that he went off into " <i>a land away from his brother Jacob.</i> " Esau settles in the montians of Seir.
Genesis 36:9	9 These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.	This ends the short section according to Esau.
Genesis 36:10-37:1	10 These are the names of Esau's sons: ... 15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. ... 20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: ... 29 These are the chiefs of the Horites: ... 31 These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. ... 40 These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: ... these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. #37 1 Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.	In this section the sons of Esau are detailed again but then there are also details of those who dwelt in the land of Seir. This information could really only have been supplied by Esau.
Genesis 37:2a	2 These are the generations of Jacob.	This ends the section which began in Genesis 25:19b.
Genesis 37:2b onwards	Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.	This is a section which focuses on Joseph and his brothers.

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The Lord is able to do anything He pleases, but He shows time and time again that He is pleased to use those in every age. We conclude that the Lord raised up the godly eye witnesses of each age to record the details we have at our disposal.

Table I.5: *Tôledôt* taken as a concluding statement in Genesis.

	Section	Beginning and ending texts to section (NKJV)
[1]	The history of creation.	In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (1:1). This <i>is</i> the history ⁹⁵ of the heavens and the earth when they were created. (2:4a).
[2]	The history of the pre-flood world according to Adam.	in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. (2:4b). This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. (5:1a).
[3]	The history of the pre-flood world according to Noah.	In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. (5:1b). This is the genealogy of Noah. (6:9a).
[4]	The history of the flood according to Noah's sons.	Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. (6:9b). Now this <i>is</i> the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (10:1a).
[5]	The history of the post-flood world including the Tower of Babel according to Shem.	And sons were born to them after the flood. (10.1b). This <i>is</i> the genealogy of Shem. (11:10a).
[6]	The history of the descendants of Shem according to Terah.	Shem <i>was</i> one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood. (11:10b). This <i>is</i> the genealogy of Terah. (11:27a).
[7]	The history of Abraham according to Isaac. (Includes records from Ishmael 25:12-18).	Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. (11:27b). This <i>is</i> the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. (25:19a)
[8]	The history of Isaac and Jacob according to Jacob. (Includes the records of Esau 36:1-43).	Abraham begot Isaac. (25:19b). This <i>is</i> the history of Jacob. (37:2a).
[9]	The history of Joseph (?)	Joseph, <i>being</i> seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad <i>was</i> with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. (37:2b) So Joseph died, <i>being</i> one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. (50:26).

95 Words in **bold** indicate translations of *tôledôt*.

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There is just one problem with what we have discussed so far, and that is that there is no ***tôledôt*** marker at the end of the book of Genesis. Some suggest that because this is so, the ***tôledôt*** marker must act as a heading – otherwise what are we to do with Genesis 37:2b-50:26? Well I hope that our discussion of the structure of the text surrounding each ***tôledôt*** marker is sufficient to prove that it acts as an ending not as a heading. But to answer the objection that we have no ***tôledôt*** marker at the end of the book we shall consider the connection between Genesis and Exodus. However, please note that table I.5 shows that we are assuming at this point that Joseph was responsible for collating the last chapters of the book of Genesis.

The connection between Genesis and Exodus.

It is to be noted that the latter chapters of Genesis featuring the story of Joseph in Egypt and the interaction of Jacob's other sons with Joseph in Egypt, are infused with Egyptian references and words. This indicates that this latter section may have been written by the sons of Jacob (and most probably by Joseph) in Egypt. When Jacob finally leaves Canaan for Egypt we have a description of those who went down with him. The section describing this includes the following words:

Now these were the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob's firstborn.⁹⁶

This sentence has a close counterpart at the start of the next book, Exodus:

Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob.⁹⁷

In fact, the first part of each of these verses is identical in the Hebrew comprising just six Hebrew words. They both read literally as follows:

וְאֵלֶּה	שְׁמוֹת	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	הַבָּאִים	מִצְרָיִמָּה
and these	names of	sons	of Israel	they went	Egypt

We would render this as follows:

And these are the names of the sons of Israel that went into Egypt

96 Genesis 46:8.

97 Exodus 1:1.

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What appears to have happened is that the writer of Exodus homed in on the descent of Jacob into Egypt as recorded in Genesis 46:8 as a starting point. The next important marker or divisor occurs in Exodus chapter 6 where we are told of the sons of Levi.

16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their **generations**: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi were one hundred and thirty-seven. **17** The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimi according to their families. **18** And the sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath were one hundred and thirty-three. **19** The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of Levi according to their **generations**.⁹⁸

In this passage the Hebrew word ***tôledôt*** occurs twice (emboldened in the quote above). There is thus a continuation of the idea of a ***history*** recorded by the sons of Israel (Jacob), and then further in the book of Exodus by the sons of Levi. However, if we examine Exodus 6 a little more closely, we discover that there appears to be a close connection in thought with Genesis 46. In Genesis 46 we have a list of the twelve tribes and their sons (***“the sons of ...”***) alive at the time Jacob was about to descend into Egypt. We next find reference to the twelve tribes in a similar fashion in Numbers 1, although Levi is by this time clearly set apart. But between Genesis 46 and Numbers 1 there is only one place where three of the twelve tribes are referenced as ***“sons of ...”*** and that is in Exodus 6. The very interesting thing about this is that it appears to follow the outline of Genesis 46 but stops when the tribe of Levi is reached. It will be worth showing how the two texts compare. First let us look at Genesis 46 where we show in table I.6 the pattern only as far as Issachar (but note that all twelve tribes are featured in Genesis 46). It is readily apparent that the first two tribes are listed in a very similar way. However when we reach Levi, the third in both texts, we are given much more detail. First we recall that we have the Hebrew word ***tôledôt*** rendered ***“generations”*** in two verses.⁹⁹ This is the first occurrence of this word since Genesis 37:2a and the next occurrence is in Numbers 1. Clearly the writer wants us to understand this genealogy in Exodus 6 as similar to those in Genesis (i.e. as history). It is also noteworthy that we are given the ages at death for Levi, Kohath and Amram. This enhances the link to the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 which are intact and capable of giving us dates for the history of those times.¹⁰⁰

98 Exodus 6:16-19.

99 Exodus 6:16,19.

100 We shall examine the dates and a timeline shortly.

Table I.6: Genesis 46:8-13 compared with Exodus 6:14-20.

<u>Genesis 46:8-13:</u> 8 Now these <i>were</i> the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben <i>was</i> Jacob's firstborn. 9 The sons of Reuben <i>were</i> Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 10 The sons of Simeon <i>were</i> Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. 11 The sons of Levi <i>were</i> Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12 The sons of Judah <i>were</i> Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 13 The sons of Issachar <i>were</i> Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron. ¹⁰¹	<u>Exodus 6:14-20:</u> 14 These <i>are</i> the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, <i>were</i> Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. These are the families of Reuben. 15 And the sons of Simeon <i>were</i> Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These <i>are</i> the families of Simeon. 16 These <i>are</i> the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi <i>were</i> one hundred and thirty-seven. 17 The sons of Gershon <i>were</i> Libni and Shimi according to their families. 18 And the sons of Kohath <i>were</i> Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath <i>were</i> one hundred and thirty-three. 19 The sons of Merari <i>were</i> Mahli and Mushi. These <i>are</i> the families of Levi according to their generations. 20 Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram <i>were</i> one hundred and thirty-seven. ¹⁰²

A review of the details at the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus.

Clearly the writer of Exodus (under inspiration) has used the words of Genesis 46:8 to begin the second book of the Pentateuch. Genesis 46:8 does not in itself signal a precise point concluding a particular human penman's version of events. It is merely that this text is used by the writer of Exodus as a beginning point. What we need to ascertain, however, is whom is most likely to have written down the information that forms the last part of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus. Jacob was responsible

¹⁰¹ Genesis 46:8-20.

¹⁰² Exodus 6:14-27.

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for Genesis 25:19b-37:2a, so it is reasonable to assume that the sons of Jacob bore the responsibility for continuing to keep the records, and in particular the sons of Levi. But is this supposition fair?

The journey down to Egypt by Jacob and all his family seems to be a fitting start to the book of Exodus. In that the main focus is their rescue we need to understand why they were there in the first place. What follows Genesis 46:8 is (essentially) the story of Jacob in Egypt. Immediately after Genesis 46:8 we have a list of the names of Jacob's living descendants who would go with him to Egypt. Sixty-six travelled down in all, and four (Joseph, his wife and their two sons) were already in Egypt so that there seventy people in total.¹⁰³ Genesis 46:28-34 describes the journey, Genesis 47:1-12 describes Jacob meeting Pharaoh, Genesis 47:13-26 describes Joseph taking possession of the land of Egypt for Pharaoh as the famine worsens, and Genesis 47:27-31 describes Jacob's final years in summary. Chapters 48 and 49 describe Jacob's blessing of Joseph, his prophecy over his sons, and his final days and words. Genesis 50 deals with Jacob's death, his burial in the cave at Machpelah in Canaan, and ends with Joseph reassuring his brothers and then a record of Joseph's death in Egypt. This last section of Genesis then, focuses on Jacob (and his descendants) in Egypt, culminating with the death of Joseph in Egypt at the age of one hundred and ten.¹⁰⁴

It is rather poignant that the last words of the book record the embalmed body of Joseph being *“put in a coffin in Egypt.”* With this sad ending we might be left in a state of despair. However, there is one glimmer of hope shown by two details recorded in Genesis 50. First we note that Jacob was not buried in Egypt but in Canaan in the burial spot purchased by Abraham. Second we have Joseph's dying words (an emphatic prophecy) in which he states twice that *“God will surely visit you”* to bring the people of God back to the promised land.¹⁰⁵ Joseph also gets the children of Israel to promise on oath that they would take his remains from Egypt into the promised land.¹⁰⁶ So the last section of Genesis features Jacob's descent into Egypt where he spent the last seventeen years of his life.

Now the first part of the book of Exodus goes back to the descent into Egypt by Jacob and his family. In fact Exodus 1:1-5 simply starts with the words of Genesis 46:8 and then summarises the essence of Genesis 46:8-27 which list in detail the people who left with Jacob to go to Egypt. All we are given in the opening words of Exodus is the names of the eleven sons of Jacob who would travel with Jacob and the fact that that each would travel with *“his household.”* This brief introduction also tells us that there were *“seventy”* people in all, because *“Joseph was in Egypt already.”*¹⁰⁷ Exodus then leaps to the death of Joseph, his brothers and *“all that generation.”*¹⁰⁸ What follows next is the history that

103 Genesis 46:8-27.

104 Genesis 50:26.

105 Genesis 50:24,25.

106 Genesis 50:25.

107 Exodus 1:1-5.

108 Exodus 1:6.

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connects Joseph with Moses. We learn that the Israelites increase in number miraculously, and that a new king presided over Egypt who “*did not know Joseph*” and what he had done.¹⁰⁹ This most probably suggests that the new king was born after the death of Joseph. Exodus 1:8-22 documents the increasing persecution of the children of Israel. It is noteworthy that despite this, the children of Israel “*multiplied and grew.*”¹¹⁰ Within this section there is no mention of time markers but clearly significant time must have elapsed for the building of cities and the increase in population. But how much time has passed it is impossible to say at this point.

Moving from the general story of the increasing Israelite population under increasing persecution in Exodus 1, we are brought to consider the history concerning Moses in Exodus 2. It is surely significant that the chapter opens with reference to the tribe of Levi:

And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi.¹¹¹

Thus Exodus 2:1 tells us that a Levite man took a “*daughter of Levi*” as wife and they had a son whom would be later called Moses. Now from Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59 we learn that this Levite was Amram, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and that he marries Jochebed who was daughter of Levi and Kohath's sister. (In other words Amram marries his aunt – see figure 1).

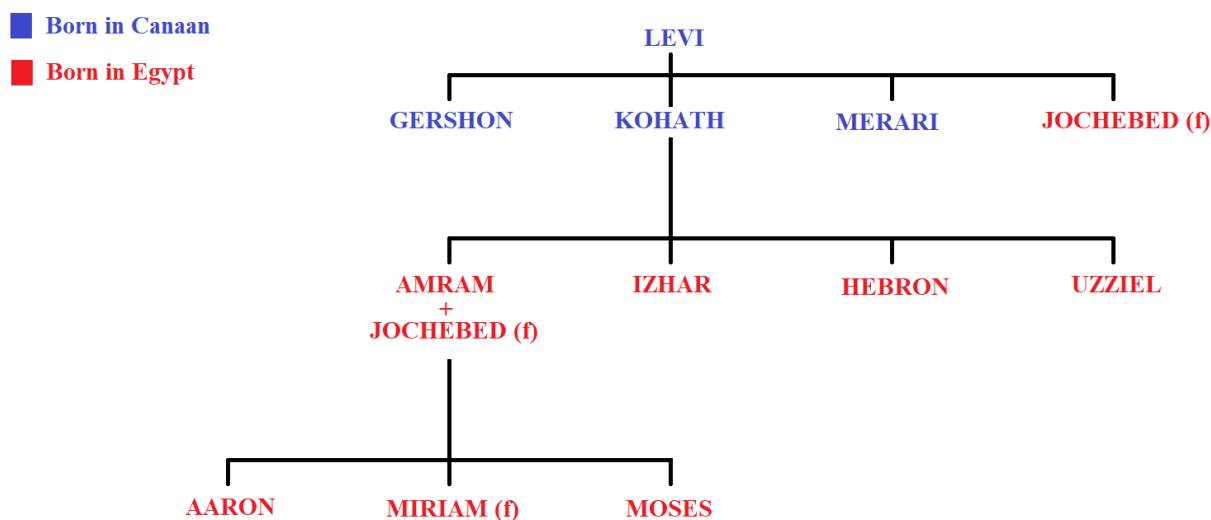


Figure 1. From Levi to Moses.

109 Exodus 1:7,8.

110 Exodus 1:12,20.

111 Exodus 2:1.

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In Exodus 2:1-10 we read of the events surrounding Moses' early life born under extreme persecution when Hebrew male children were to be *“cast into the river.”*¹¹² Moses would be rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in Pharaoh's household. At Exodus 2:11 the story moves to the time when Moses is much older. It is from this point that Moses himself could make records of what went on, but prior to this point Moses must have relied (humanly speaking) on others for information. Since we are introduced to the tribe of Levi in Exodus 2:1, and since Levi were the tribe responsible for the ark of the covenant, for guarding the law, and for teaching the Israelites from the law, it is reasonable to assume that much of what we have been reading thus far at the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus was penned by chosen men of this tribe (see table I.7). This overlap is merely showing how the last few events of Genesis form the first few of Exodus. The details are also shown in figure 2.

Table I.7: Overlap between Genesis and Exodus.

Event.	After creation.	Before Christ.	Information and Scriptures.	
Abraham goes to Canaan	2083	1876	430 years begins. See: Galatians 3:16,17 and Genesis 12:1f.	G E N E S I S
Isaac born	2108	1851	Abraham is 100 years old.	
Isaac weaned	2113	1846	400 years of oppression starts. See: Galatians 4:28-31 and Genesis 21:9.	
Jacob born	2168	1791	Isaac is 60 years old.	
Joseph born	2259	1700	Rachel's first son and Jacob's favourite.	
Joseph taken to Egypt	2276	1683	Joseph sold into slavery in Egypt at age 17. See: Genesis 37:2f.	
Joseph organises the land.	2289	1670	Genesis 41:46.	
Jacob goes to Egypt	2298	1661	215 year period of Egyptian “captivity” begins. See: Genesis 46 and Exodus 1:1-5.	
Jacob dies	2315	1644	Jacob's bones buried in Canaan. See: Genesis 50:12.	
Joseph dies	2369	1590	End of Genesis. 71 years into “captivity.” See: Genesis 50:26 and Exodus 1:6.	
Persecution worsens.			64 years between Joseph's death and Moses' birth.	E X O D U S
Moses born	2433	1526	135 years into “captivity.” See: Exodus 2:1f.	
Moses leads Exodus	2513	1446	End of 430 years. 4 th generation returns. See: Genesis 15:16 and Exodus 12:40,41.	

112 Exodus 1:22.

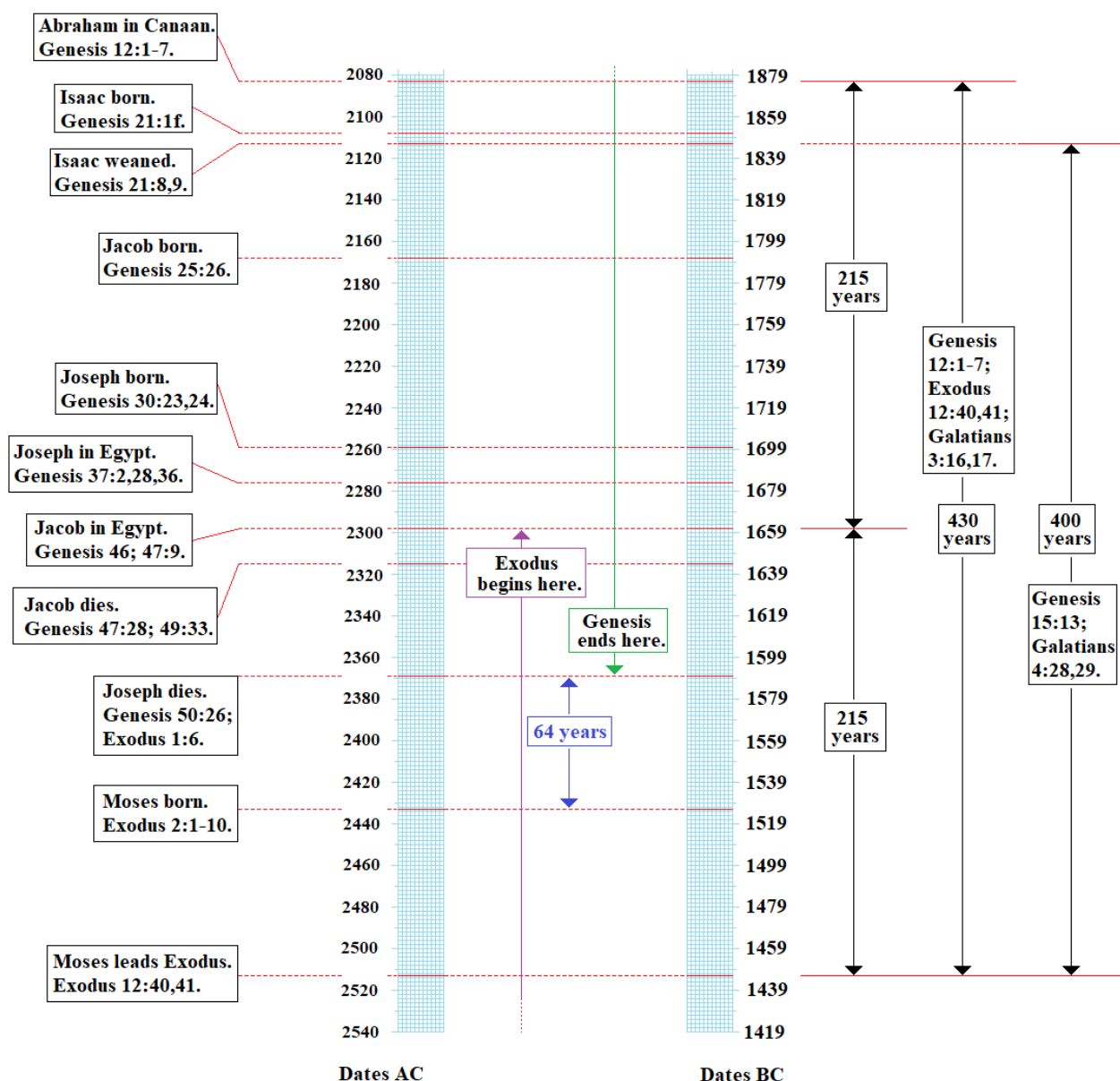


Figure 2. Historical overlap between Genesis and Exodus.

The first part of the book of Genesis (chapters 1 to 11) covers 2083 years, culminating at the point when Abraham leaves Ur in Mesopotamia to enter Canaan when he was 75 years old.¹¹³ The second part of Genesis (chapters 12 to 50) covers the years from Abraham's entrance into Canaan aged 75, and ends with the death of Joseph aged 110. Thus Genesis 12 to 50 goes from the year 2083 AC until the year 2369 AC – a span of 286 years. The book of Exodus begins with the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt in the year 2298 AC. We arrive at the birth of Moses in Exodus 2:1f, which was the year 2433 AC. Thus

113 1656 years from creation to flood and 427 years from flood to Abraham's 75th year.

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Exodus chapter 1 covers a period of 135 years, whilst much of the rest of the book concerns the year of the Exodus and the year that followed that.¹¹⁴

Now both Genesis and Exodus form single complete units. Therefore it would be helpful to attempt to understand how the ending of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus were formed. Who may have been responsible for collating and writing the details we have? Of course, ultimately, we acknowledge (and rejoice in) the fact that God has given us His word, pure and beautifully fit for the purpose He has set. Nevertheless we can see that these two ancient works were not the product of careless thought. From what we have observed about the connection between Genesis and Exodus, it seems apparent that Jacob's sons, and in particular Levi, were mostly responsible for the last chapters of Genesis and the early parts of Exodus. Since the genealogy of Moses from Levi is given in Exodus 6, and due to the expanded reference to Levi in Exodus 6:16-20, we may assume that the tribe of Levi was probably responsible for the early chapters of Exodus. Since Moses features early on in the book this seems to make sense. As for Genesis 37:2b to 50:26 it is apparent that several of the sons of Israel must have been involved in making and keeping the records. Only Joseph could supply the details of his incarceration and experiences in Egypt, of course, whilst the other sons of Israel were all cognizant of the details in Canaan and the trips to Egypt. More than this we cannot say. So it seems best to conclude that Genesis 37:2b-50:26 was written (humanly speaking) by the sons of Israel, and the early parts of Exodus were probably recorded by Levi and his descendants. We can now adjust table I.5 to accommodate the idea that Jacob's sons probably compiled Genesis 37:2b-50:26, (see table I.8).

Table I.8: The sections of Genesis with their original authors.

	The history of...	Text
[1]	Creation (according to the Lord).	Genesis 1:1-2:4a
[2]	The pre-flood world according to Adam.	Genesis 2:4b-5:1a
[3]	The pre-flood world according to Noah.	Genesis 5:1b-6:9a
[4]	The flood according to Noah's sons.	Genesis 6:9b-10:1a
[5]	The post-flood world according to Shem.	Genesis 10:1b-11:10a
[6]	The descendants of Shem according to Terah.	Genesis 11:10b-27a
[7]	Abraham according to Isaac. (Includes records from Ishmael 25:12-18).	Genesis 11:27b-25:19a
[8]	Isaac and Jacob according to Jacob. (Includes the records of Esau 36:1-43).	Genesis 25:19b-37:2a
[9]	Joseph according to Jacob's sons.	Genesis 37:2b-50:26

114 Exodus 40:17.

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Given that the end of Genesis records the death of Joseph, it may be that Levi's sons were also part compilers of the later records of Genesis. The overall structure of Genesis as detailed in table I.8 has come from a consideration of the main characters who have given us this work, (Adam, Noah, Noah's sons and so on). This will form the basis for subsequent chapters of this work, but since the last three of these are rather long it will be necessary to break them down into smaller units. The subject matter dealt with within each section will guide us as to how we shall organise this division.

A question of dates.

Given its structure and the type of writing, (historical narrative), we have already been able to make use of Genesis as a source for historical data to establish a timeline of events at the end of Genesis. In this section I want to address the issue of the genealogies found in Genesis 5 and 11, and some other connections with the rest of Scripture.

Genesis 5 & 11.

Before we launch into the texts of Genesis 5 and 11 it is important to note a few salient points. Many writers have failed to observe the clear fact that Scripture presents us with **two** types of genealogy and both are represented in the book of Genesis. In one type we are simply given a list of names with descendants and no other added information. The list of Esau's sons and "**chiefs**" in Genesis 36 is a case in point. The other kind of genealogy is one which has added information chiefly concerning dates and ages, and this, we remind ourselves, has been provided by the Holy Spirit.

Apart from three specific details at the beginning, then some information concerning Enoch in the middle, and some details at the end, the genealogy of Genesis 5 follows a simple repeated formula:

X lived A years, and begot Y. After he begot Y, X lived B years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of X were A+B years; and he died.

We shall consider the text in detail when we come to make comments later on. For now the formula above needs to be understood. Unfortunately many commentators simply jump to the conclusion that there must be gaps in this list. They make such assertions usually because they are committed either to modern science and evolution, or to secular archaeology and anthropology. Sometimes it is asserted that the word "**begot**" does not require a literal father-to-son relationship and could equally apply to a grandfather-to-grandson relationship. In this way, it is argued, the genealogies could be stretched to greater ages. It will be shown shortly, however, that such is actually irrelevant to the case. Others make some quite ridiculous arguments. One of these concerns an apparent discrepancy between the statement that four generations would span the time in Egypt (see Genesis 15:16) compared with the eleven generations from Joseph to

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Joshua the contemporary of Moses, as recorded in 1Chronicles 7. Rosevear, for example, makes this type of observation and argues that the genealogy of Moses from Levi that spans just four generations cannot possibly be put alongside that of Joseph to Joshua covering eleven. He also argues this on a false reading of Exodus 12:40,41 making the length of stay in Egypt 430 years.¹¹⁵ In refutation of this we need to grasp the fact that Paul tells us that the 430 years stretches from Genesis 12 to Exodus 12, and that Jacob and his progeny were only in Egypt for 215 years.¹¹⁶ Further, it must be appreciated that the textual details of Exodus 6:16f and Numbers 26:58,59 indicate a ***perfect fulfilment*** of the prophecy of Genesis 15:16. It was in the fourth generation (Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses) that the people of God would leave Egypt (which we shall discuss shortly). Eleven generations across 215 years equates to just under 20 years per generation, whilst four generations over the same period results in a figure of nearly 54 years per generation, both of which are eminently feasible.

What is often missed in much interpretation of the genealogical records is a close inspection of the Biblical text. So let us look at the basic formula of Genesis 5 a little more closely.

X lived A years, and begot **Y**. After he begot **Y**, **X** lived B years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of **X** were A+B years; and he died.

It may not be immediately apparent from this that the relationship between **X** and **Y** is actually irrelevant to the time frame. Let us suppose that **Y** is actually the grandchild of **X**. What difference would this make? **X** lives for a number of years (A) and then **Y** is born. **Y** may be the child, the grand-child or even the great-grand-child of **X** but that information is irrelevant. All we are told is that **X** lived for A years and that at that point in time (A years after the birth of **X**), **Y** is born. The details are depicted in figure 3.¹¹⁷

It is clear from this that the relationship between each person in the genealogy is irrelevant. At a certain point in the life of **X** the next person in the list, **Y**, is born. **X** could be **Y**'s father, grand-father or great-grand-father. Given this structure in the formula it is therefore possible to compute the length of time from Adam's creation on day 6 until the end of the genealogy. The results of such a calculation are shown in table I.9. Since the flood came in Noah's 600th year, the date of the flood is the same year in which Methuselah dies, that is, 1656 AC.¹¹⁸ Noah lived for 350 years after the flood.¹¹⁹

115 **David T. Rosevear.** *The genealogies in Scripture*. 1986. Chapter 3 of Concepts in Creationism. Edited by E. H. Andrews, W. Gitt and W. J. Ouwenel. Evangelical Press. P70.

116 Exodus 12:40,41 does not tell us that Israel ***lived in*** Egypt for 430 years. What it does tell us is that Israel sojourned for 430 years. Some of this occurred prior to the departure into Egypt.

117 For more on this subject see ***Appendix 3***.

118 Genesis 7:6,11.

119 Genesis 9:28,29.

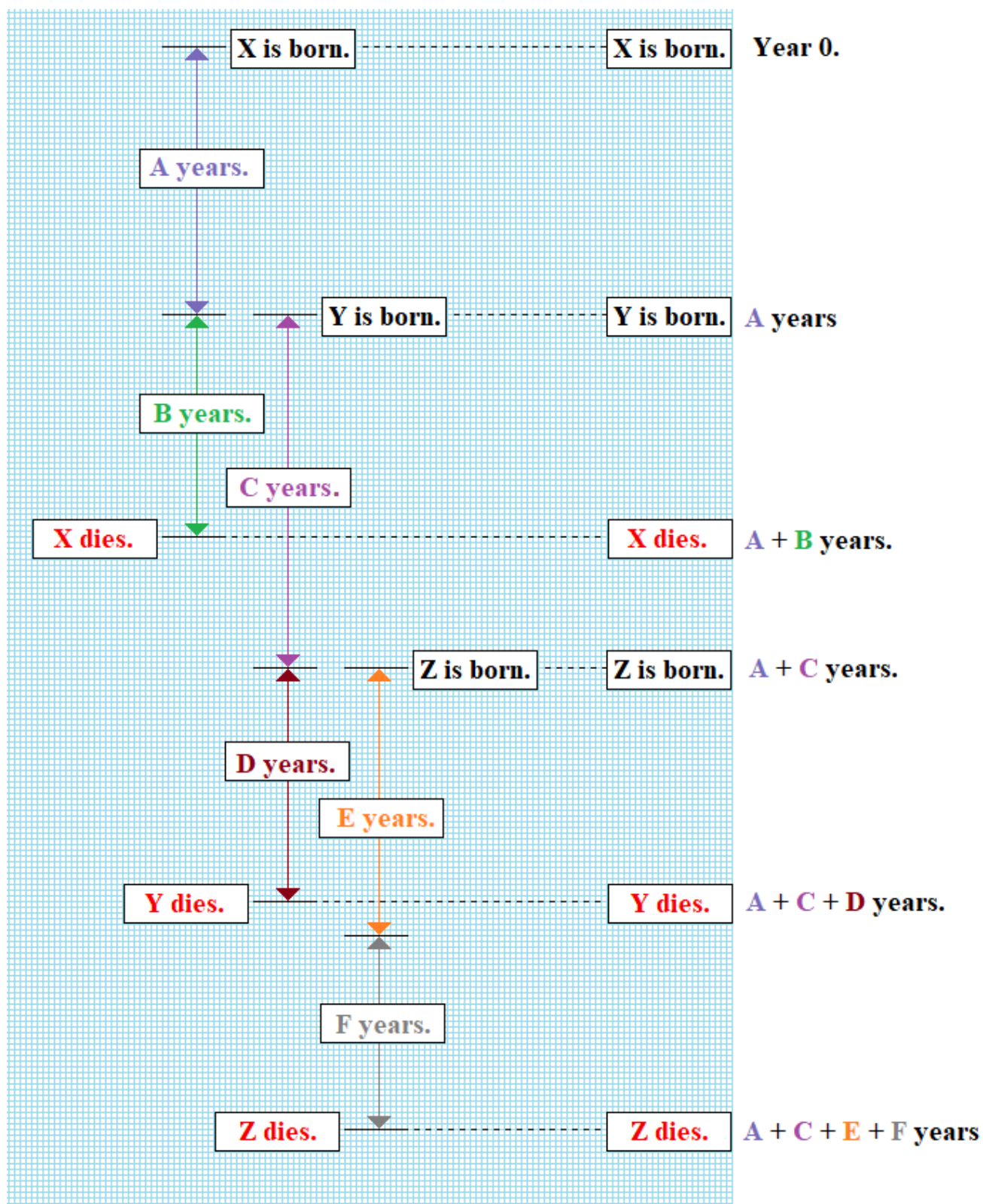


Figure 3. No gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.

Table I.9: From creation to the flood (Genesis 5:3-32).

Name	Date of birth (AC)	Age at death	Date of death (AC)
Adam	0	930	930
Seth	130	912	1042
Enosh	235	905	1140
Cainan	325	910	1235
Mahalalel	395	895	1290
Jared	460	962	1422
Enoch ¹²⁰	622	365	987
Methuselah	687	969	1656
Lamech	874	777	1651
Noah	1056	950	2006

Turning to Genesis 11 we note that the formula in this case is not exactly the same as that found in Genesis 5. The opening words tell us that the first person born two years after the flood was Arphaxad when Shem was 100 years old. This would be the year 1658, and so Shem was born in the year 1558. The formula for the genealogy in Genesis 11 is:

P lived L years, and begot **Q**. After he begot **Q**, **P** lived M years, and begot sons and daughters.

It can be seen that this is essentially the same as that found in Genesis 5 except that the last part where the total age at death of the named person is not calculated (i.e. it omits the phrase: “*So all the days of were years; and he died*”). From this we learn that whilst the Holy Spirit makes sure we understand the basic principles to be found in Genesis 5 (i.e. that each patriarch lived for a time made up from the age at birth and the age after birth of the named descendant), this information is not given in Genesis 11 but is easily calculated following the example shown in Genesis 5.

Since the basic formula is the same, we are justified in holding that the genealogy is intact and we can compute dates after the flood. The results are shown in table I.10. Also included are the dates for Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph which have been computed from data found throughout the second half of Genesis.¹²¹ Genesis 12 begins when Abram is 75 years old and when Terah dies at the age of 205. This would be the year 2083 AC, which is 427 years from the flood (1656 AC).

¹²⁰ Enoch did not die but was taken up to heaven by God.

¹²¹ For information about Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph see: Genesis 11:26,32; 12:4; 21:5; 25:7,26; 41:46; 45:6,11; 47:9,28; 50:26.

Table I.10: After the flood (Genesis 11:10b-27).

Name	Date of birth (AC)	Age at death	Date of death (AC)
Shem	1558	600	2158
Arphaxad	1658	438	2096
Salah	1693	433	2126
Eber	1723	464	2187
Peleg	1757	239	1996
Reu	1787	239	2026
Serug	1819	230	2049
Nahor	1849	148	1997
Terah	1878	205	2083
Abram	2008	175	2183
Isaac	2108	180	2288
Jacob	2168	147	2315
Joseph	2259	110	2369

Genesis 15.

Genesis 15 records an important event in the life of Abram. For our purposes at this stage it is useful for helping with the dates that concern the second half of Genesis. We shall not spend a great deal of time on the text as it stands, suffice to say that what we find comes at a time when Abram was quite low in heart, and in consequence the Lord brings His blessing. There are two distinct times mentioned in the text as follows:

13 Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. **14** And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterwards they shall come out with great possessions. **15** Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. **16** But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”¹²²

So we have a period of four hundred years of persecution for Abram's descendants, and we have an unspecified time spanning four generations.

122 Genesis 15:13-16.

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Four hundred years of oppression.

Much confusion has been spread concerning Genesis 15:13-16 with some commentators making wild suggestions that the 400 years is simply a round number and equates with the four generations and the later 430 years found at Exodus 12:40,41 and Galatians 3:16,17.¹²³ I am wholly unsatisfied with such poor understanding because I do not think it gives credit to the Holy Spirit who has gone to such trouble in giving us clear information. The key to understanding is to let the words and phrases speak for themselves. We are not justified in making 400 years the same as four generations or 430 years simply to make things cohere in our understanding. When the Lord says that Abram's offspring will be afflicted four hundred years we ought to accept that at face value.

Perhaps a good starting point is to consider what Paul understood when he spoke of the 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40. Here is what he wrote to the Galatians:

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. **17** And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.¹²⁴

In the first part of this message Paul is referencing Genesis 12:7:

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

In the second part he is referring to Exodus 12:40,41:

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.¹²⁵

From these verses we can see that the apostle Paul understood the time period of 430 years found in Exodus 12:40,41 began at Genesis 12:7. I think that is quite straightforward from what Paul says in Galatians. What people usually have difficulty with is the text of Exodus 12:40,41, or more precisely many English renderings of these verses. I have chosen the Authorised King James Version rendering

123 **Derek Kidner.** *Genesis. (An introduction and Commentary).* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Inter-Varsity press. Leicester. 1967. P125. **Alan R. Cole** “Exodus.” *(An Introduction and Commentary).* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Inter-Varsity Press. Leicester. 1973. P113. **Henry M. Morris.** “*The Genesis Record.*” *(A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings).* Baker Book House. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA. 1976. P327. **David T. Rosevear.** “*The genealogies in Scripture.*” Chapter 3 of “Concepts in Creationism.” Edited by E. H. Andrew, W. Gitt and W. j. Ouweneel. Evangelical Press. Welwyn, Hertfordshire. 1986. P70.

124 Galatians 3:16,17.

125 Exodus 12:40,41 AKJV.

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because it is much closer to the original Hebrew. Specifically it does not say that the children of Israel *lived* in Egypt for 430 years as do some modern translations.¹²⁶ What it actually says is something very interesting. It states that the “*sojourning of the children of Israel*” was 430 years. This is not the same as saying that they dwelt and lived in the confines of Egypt proper for all that time. It is interesting because this word “*sojourning*” is one that is used throughout Genesis to describe the life style of Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.¹²⁷ It indicates a *temporary* staying somewhere rather than a *settled* dwelling. Thus the mention of this word in Exodus 12:40,41 is used to signify that such temporary dwelling would be coming to an end. It is worth noting that the Holy Spirit saw it necessary to impress upon the reader that the date given in Exodus 12:40,41 was a precise and accurate one. We can see this by the expression “*even the selfsame day*” used in verse 41 of Exodus 12.

Given that the 430 years spanned the time from Abram entering Canaan in Genesis 12 to the children of Israel departing Egypt, how then are we to consider the 400 years? First we remember that these are 400 years of affliction. Most people may have in mind the harsh oppression Israel experienced towards the end of their time in Egypt, but we must remember that they had a blessed period during Joseph's tenure as second in power and for some years following this. However we must also note that Abram and his offspring were never treated well all the time they sojourned in Canaan, and more importantly, a shift in attitude occurred when Isaac the son of promise was weaned. We read that Abraham made a great feast on the occasion of Isaac's weaning, and that during the festivities Ishmael was scoffing at him. This word “*scoffing*” has a nastiness to it. It isn't just playful banter, but a derisory scorn and laughing out loud at someone. As a consequence of Ishmael's taunt Sarah insists that Hagar and Ishmael be cast out:

So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.” And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son.¹²⁸

Now Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Ishmael begins to mock Isaac at his weaning party but precisely when this occurs is not immediately apparent. I am going to make a suggestion here and I want the reader to be aware that this is merely a suggestion. I propose then, that Isaac was weaned when he was five years old, in other words, when Abraham was 105 years old. This would therefore be 30 years after Abram entered Canaan, (when he was 75 years old), and 400 years before the Exodus as

126 The NIV has: “*Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years*” which is a very poor translation, whilst the ESV is equally bad with: “*The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years*” and the NASB is no better with: “*Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.*”

127 See, for example, Genesis 19:9; 20:1; 21:23,24; 23:4; 26:3; 32:4; 35:27; 47:4.

128 Genesis 21:8-11.

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recorded in Exodus 12:40,41.

My suggestion that the 400 years of affliction or oppression began when Ishmael mocked or scoffed Isaac at his weaning party has support from the apostle Paul in Galatians:

Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.¹²⁹

Paul quotes from Genesis 21:10 which follows Sarah's discovery of Ishmael's persecution of Isaac at his weaning party. Paul refers to the “*scoffing*” that Sarah observed of Ishmael for Isaac as “*persecution*” in his letter to the Galatians. Thus from this moment on, the four hundred years of oppression has begun.¹³⁰

We can establish the fact that this period of affliction and oppression began from Isaac's weaning by looking a little more closely at Genesis 15:13. In the NKJV the text reads as follows:

Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.”¹³¹

However the Hebrew text is characterised by a shift in number with reference to persons that is masked in modern English translations. Happily the Authorised King James Version preserves this shift:

And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that **thy seed** shall be a stranger in a land that is not **theirs**, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.¹³²

Notice that the Lord tells Abram first about his “*seed*” which is singular. We are told that he shall be a stranger in a land, and then there is a shift from the singular “*seed*” to the plural “*theirs*” when he speaks of the land. By this shift Abram would recognise that the opposition would come more or less immediately that the son of promise was born, and this would stretch for a period of 400 years, at which point there would be a great deliverance. The time of four hundred years is a time of affliction and service in a strange land. The land is not specified. All through Genesis we discover that Abram and his descendants were strangers who sojourned rather than being permanent dwellers in the land.¹³³ In verse 14 the reference is to the end of the period. Abram's descendants will be serving a nation which the Lord would judge and they would leave with “*great possessions*.”¹³⁴

129 Galatians 4:28-31.

130 Genesis 21:9,10; Galatians 4:29.

131 Genesis 15:13, NKJV.

132 Genesis 15:13, AKJV.

133 Genesis 17:8; 28:4; 37:1.

134 Genesis 15:14.

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Seen in this way we can see a wonderful picture of the gospel age. Christ, the true son of promise, came and although he lived for a time on earth in peace, it was not long before mocking scoffers came and dealt with him cruelly. His followers have ever been persecuted and oppressed by the world, but one day redemption will come, and the nation (or nations) these followers live under will be judged and God's people will be given a permanent home with much reward!

The fourth generation.

The other time frame mentioned in Genesis 15 is the phrase *“fourth generation.”*¹³⁵ Those who try and make it out as a four hundred year period or equivalent roughly to the 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40,41 have erred badly.¹³⁶ The phrase simply means what it says. It clearly cannot be given any set number of years at present, but must indicate a series of father-to-son cycles. Four generations will pass. So where should we look? Well, Abraham bore Isaac, Isaac bore Jacob and Jacob bore Joseph. If Abraham is the first then Joseph would be the fourth, but how would that relate to any form of return as Genesis 15:16 indicates? Genesis ends with Joseph still in Egypt. The last words of Genesis are worth quoting here:

And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.¹³⁷

Joseph is still looking forward to the promise given to Abram of a return to the promised land. However, the end of the book of Genesis concludes rather poignantly with Joseph embalmed and laying in an Egyptian coffin.

Instead of looking to Abram as the start, perhaps we should look at the end of this period for a clue? Genesis is undoubtedly the book that deals with genealogies but it isn't the only one. In the book of Exodus we are given a prominent genealogy with Moses as the end product. Significantly this genealogy contains not just names, but ages too. It is not identical in form to Genesis 5:1b-32 and 11:10b-27a but it has similar characteristics. We find this genealogy in Exodus chapter 6:

135 Genesis 15:16.

136 **Derek Kidner** in his commentary on Genesis is a case in point (P125). His comments on Genesis 15 are as follows: *“There is no conflict between the round figure four hundred years (v13) and the fourth generation (v16) since generation (dor) could mean “lifetime”. In the patriarchal context a century is a conservative equivalent of this. Exodus 12v40 makes the period 430 years.”*

137 Genesis 50:24-26.

These *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi *were* one hundred and thirty-seven. The sons of Gershon *were* Libni and Shimi according to their families. And the sons of Kohath *were* Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath *were* one hundred and thirty-three. The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the families of Levi according to their generations. Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram *were* one hundred and thirty-seven.¹³⁸

Before we go any further we must make it plain that some genealogies are not complete. That is, they have gaps and omissions in them. What we are given here in Exodus chapter 6, however, is one which is demonstrably intact and complete as we hope to show. The genealogy is represented below in figure 4, but note here the length of each main person's life. Levi lived until he was 137, Kohath lived until he was 133, and Amram lived until he was 137. We are not told at what age each bore their son as we are in the Genesis genealogies, but the fact we are given these ages at death is a strong indicator that we have a complete genealogy here in Exodus chapter 6. Now the promise of a return *“in the fourth generation”* has been wonderfully fulfilled as shown by Exodus 6:16f and Numbers 26:58,59, which describe four generations between Jacob and Moses (see figures 1 and 4).

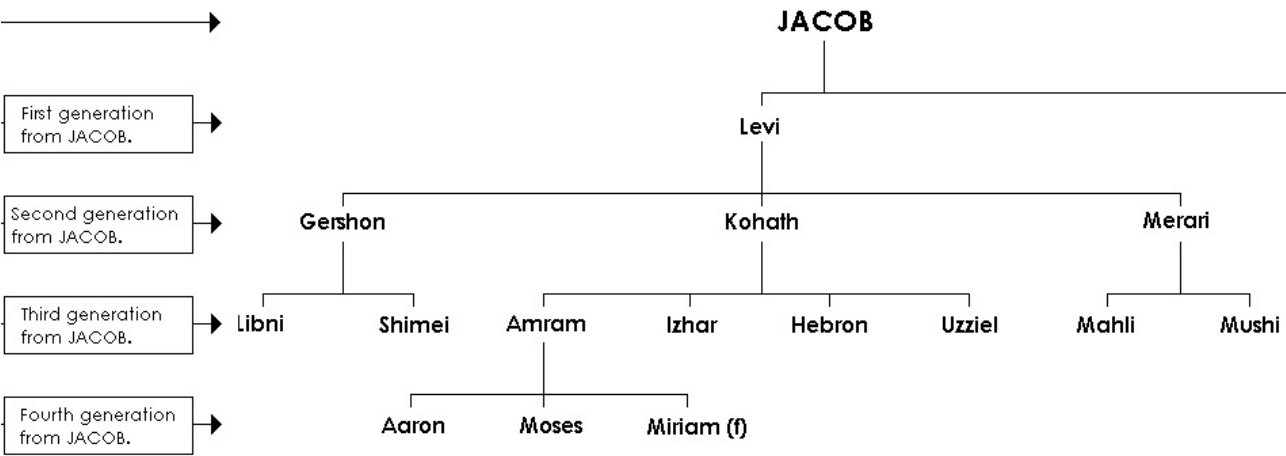


Figure 4: Four generations from Jacob to Moses.

Although we discussed these facts earlier, the reader should pay particular attention to the detail of these Scriptures for the Holy Spirit does not waste ink! The key for our discussions is the relationships connected with Amram. Both Exodus 6:20 and Number 26:59 tell us that Amram's wife was called *“Jochebed,”* but in each verse we are told something more.

138 Exodus 6:16-20.

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Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his **father's sister**, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram *were* one hundred and thirty-seven.¹³⁹

And Kohath begot Amram. The name of Amram's wife *was* Jochebed **the daughter of Levi**, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam.¹⁴⁰

Exodus 6:20 tells us that Jochebed was Amram's "*father's sister*," or, in other words, Amram's aunt. So Amram married his aunt Jochebed, who was Kohath's sister. Numbers 26:59 tells us that Jochebed was "*the daughter of Levi*," and importantly that she "*was born to Levi in Egypt*." Thus, we are being informed that Jochebed was an actual daughter of Levi. Since she was the sister of Kohath, this means that Kohath was an actual son of Levi. We also know the latter point is true because Kohath was one of those who travelled down with Jacob.¹⁴¹ Finally in both verses we read that Jochebed bore Amram two sons, Moses and Aaron, and so it is **abundantly clear** that Amram was the actual father of Moses. Nothing could be clearer from these verses than that this genealogy from Jacob down to Moses is complete and comprises four generations, and only four generations (i.e. there are no gaps). It is this genealogy which is the fulfilment of the prophecy in Genesis 15. Jacob took Levi down into Egypt and four generations from Jacob, Moses brings the people of Israel back to the promised land.

We have observed that Abram was 75 years old when he entered Canaan after the death of his father Terah in the year 2083 AC. Isaac was born when Abram was 100 years old. Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old and he descended into Egypt 130 years later. So from Abram's entrance into Canaan until Jacob and his family leave for Egypt a span of 215 years has elapsed.¹⁴² Exodus 12:40,41 tells us that there was a 430 year period of sojourning which Paul interprets as spanning the time from Genesis 12:7 until Exodus 12:40,41. Since there was 215 years from Abram's entrance in to Canaan until Jacob's descent into Egypt aged 130, there must be 215 years from this time until the Exodus of Exodus 12:40,41.

A timeline.

Putting all the above information together we can construct a time line of dates. Figure 5 shows selected dates from creation up to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Table I.11 shows the dates gleaned from Genesis 5 and 11. It can be seen from this data that Adam's death comes 57 years before Enoch's translation into heaven, and 126 years before Noah's birth.

There is thus a considerable overlap in the lives of the pre-flood patriarchs. In fact at Noah's birth

139 Exodus 6:20.

140 Numbers 26:58b,59.

141 Genesis 46:11.

142 From 2083 AC to 2298 AC. Thus 25 + 60 + 130 = 215 years. See Genesis 21:5; 25:26; 47:9.

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only Seth, Adam and Enoch would not still be alive or on earth. Amongst other interesting features concerning the pre-flood patriarchs is the fact that Methuselah (the longest recorded life) dies in the same year as the flood. The whole of Old Testament history is bisected by the flood. There are 1656 years from the creation to the flood, and 1717 years from the flood to the fall of Jerusalem. Although the return from exile and the last few minor prophets push us to around 400 BC, this still amounts to around 1900 years. In Old Testament terms, the flood acts as central and pivotal moment in world history.

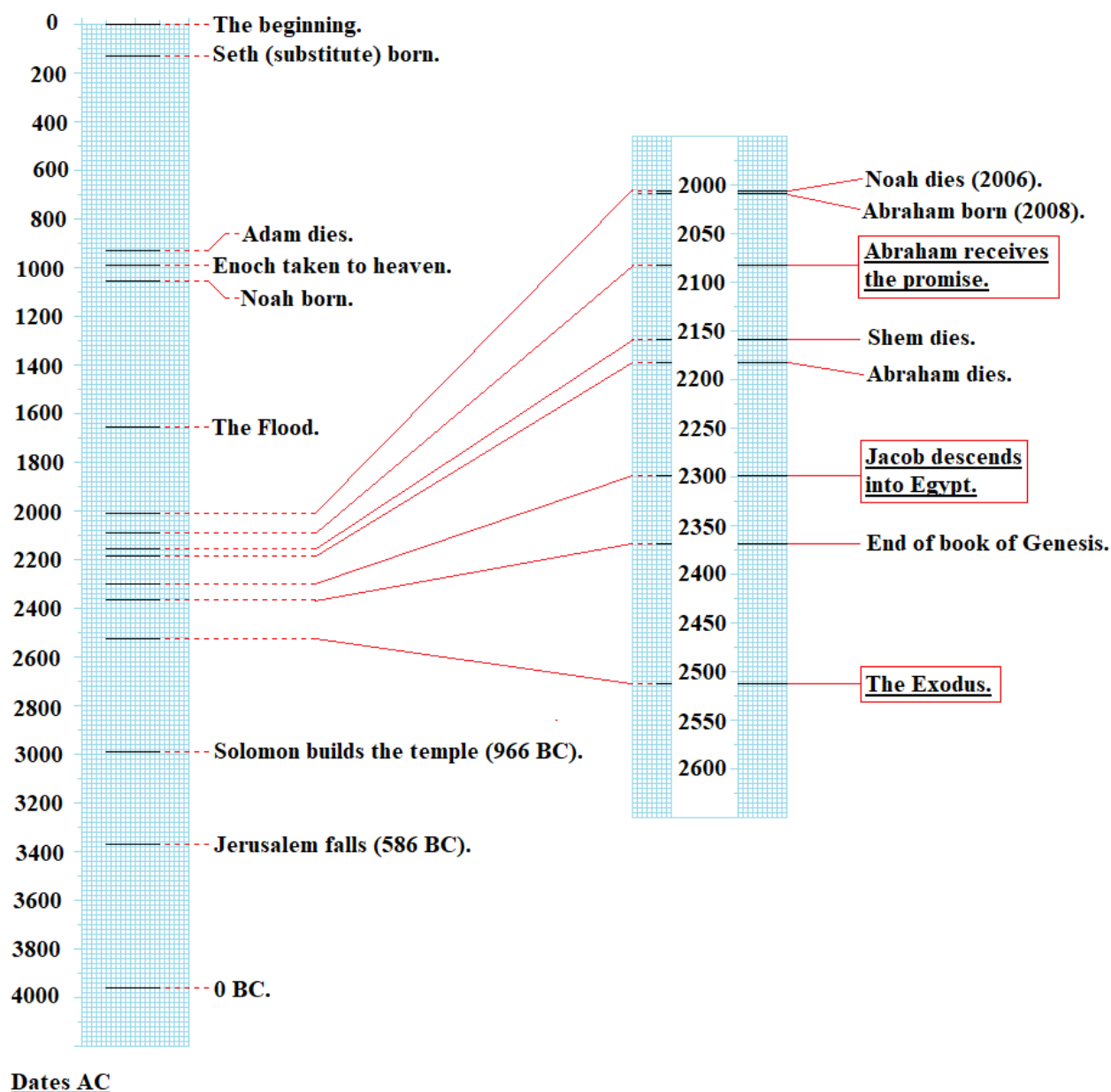


Figure 5: Significant dates in Genesis and the beginning of Exodus.

Table I.11: The Genesis Timetable (according to Genesis 5:1-32 & 11:10-32).

NAME (NASB)	BORN (years after creation or AC).	DIED (years after creation or AC).	AGE AT DEATH	AGE AT BIRTH OF SON
ADAM	0	930	930	130
SETH	130	1042	912	105
ENOS	235	1140	905	90
CAINAN	325	1235	910	70
MAHALALEEL	395	1290	895	65
JARED	460	1422	962	162
ENOC ¹⁴³	622	987 ¹⁴³	365	65
METHUSELAH	687	1656 ¹⁴⁴	969	187
LAMECH	874	1651	777	182
NOAH ¹⁴⁵	1056	2006	950	502
SHEM	1558	2158	600	100
ARPHAXAD	1658	2096	438	35
SALAH	1693	2126	433	30
EBER	1723	2187	464	34
PELEG	1757	1996	239	30
REU	1787	2026	239	32
SERUG	1819	2049	230	30
NAHOR	1849	1997	148	29
TERAH ¹⁴⁶	1878	2083	205	130
ABRAM ¹⁴⁷	2008	2183	175	100
ISAAC	2108	2288	180	60
JACOB ¹⁴⁸	2168	2315	147	91
JOSPEH	2259	2369	110	--

After the flood we discover that Noah dies only two years before Abraham was born. Shem dies in the year 2158 AC, which is 75 years after Abraham received the promise and entered Canaan (2083 AC). The book of Genesis ends at the death of Joseph (2369 AC) which is 713 years after the flood. Thus 70% of the time that Genesis covers concerns the pre-flood world. On account of the decreasing ages of people after the flood, some of the earlier patriarchs live well into the times of the later patriarchs. Salah, Shem's

¹⁴³ Enoch did not die.

¹⁴⁴ Methuselah died in the year of the flood (1656 AC).

¹⁴⁵ See also Genesis 7:6,11; 9:28,29:10:21.

¹⁴⁶ See also Genesis 12:4.

¹⁴⁷ Later called "*Abraham*." For more on Abram and Isaac, see Genesis 11:26,32; 12:4; 21:5; 25:7,26; 35:28; Acts 7:4.

¹⁴⁸ Jacob descended into Egypt in the year 2298 AC (1661 BC) Genesis 47:9. For more details on Jacob and Joseph, see also Genesis 25:26; 41:46; 45:6,11; 47:9,28; 50:26.

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grandson, dies eighteen years after Isaac was born. Eber outlived Abraham by four years. Yet Nahor, Abraham's grandfather dies eleven years before Abraham was born.

Sacrifice, altars, covenants and priests.

The secular world speaks a lot about the origin of religious rites and practices. But the origin of sacrifice and offering actually comes from God, and is first recorded in Scripture. In this brief section we shall focus only on the concept of sacrifice, the idea of an altar, and the office of priest.

Sacrifice.

In the secular world animal sacrifice is thought to have originated as a step in the cultural evolution of mankind. Some suggest that it began in Egypt, whilst others say it has its origins in the caves of palaeolithic France and Spain.¹⁴⁹ Many suggest that the Biblical expression of the idea is an adaptation from the ancient Near Eastern cultures. Now given the Biblical time line we have established as the revelation from God Himself, we can state with ***absolute certainty*** that the origin of sacrifice comes from the mind and heart of God. Perhaps the most well known Biblical text of all gives us a flavour of this thought:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.¹⁵⁰

Before we progress to far we must remember that the concept of sacrifice is, in fact, one which pre-dates creation. We can say this on the authority of what God has revealed to us in His word, for our Saviour is recorded as:

... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.¹⁵¹

This concept of 'before creation' is referred to elsewhere. For example, we have the fact that the Lord's Kingdom has been prepared "*from the foundation of the world,*" that believers in Christ have been chosen in Him "*before the foundation of the world,*" and that Christ Himself was foreordained as a our sacrifice "*before the foundation of the world.*"¹⁵² When Christ entered our world through the incarnation He was not responding to the situation that had developed over time. He had planned to come all along with a definite purpose and mission which He referred to on several occasions.

149 <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/legal-and-political-magazines/animal-sacrifice>
<https://www.nature.com/articles/132587b0>

150 John 3:16.

151 Revelation 13:8.

152 Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4; 1Peter 1:20.

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For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.¹⁵³

In his Pentecost Sermon Peter declared that although Christ was taken by the wicked hands of men and put to death on the cross, in truth He was:

... delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God. ...¹⁵⁴

Sacrifice, then, is no invention of man. When it comes to the book of Genesis we see this idea of sacrifice in veiled form in the first mention of the gospel in Genesis 3:15. The promised “*Seed*” will bruise the serpent's head but in doing so will suffer the bruising of His “*heel*.” Even before this we note that the concept is embedded in the very form of Woman's creation from Adam's rib. We shall discuss this later in the commentary, but simply mention here the plain fact that sacrifice was something initiated by the Lord. Then after the curse on creation is pronounced, we have the beginnings of the temporal solution as depicted by Adam and Eve being clothed by animal skins to cover their nakedness, and then also, the distinction between the offering of Cain and that of Abel. Thus, from the human perspective, sacrifice began the moment sin entered the world. Adam and Eve taught Cain and Abel in this way as is clear from Genesis 4:1f.

Altars.

Altars built for the purpose of offering sacrifice are first ***mentioned*** in Genesis 8:20. We are not told the details of Cain and Abel's sacrifices, but it is reasonable to assume that what was revealed to them by their parents (and by the Lord Himself) was then handed down to their children and grand children. Thus in Genesis 8:20 the very first thing Noah did when he departed from the ark was to offer a sacrifice on an altar to God. It is noteworthy that in His instructions the Lord told Noah to bring on board seven of “*every clean animal*.”¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, this occasion is the first time we read of a “*burnt*” offering. The next occurrence comes in Genesis 22 where Abraham offers Isaac. This is deeply significant because it points to Christ as the burnt offering. Thus from Adam and Eve through Abel and Cain down to Noah, the concepts of sacrifice, altar, and burnt offering were already in vogue and operation. These are not new ideas borrowed from other cultures or baptised for use by God accommodating to pagan practices as many who have been deceived by a trust in ancient Near East studies believe. Rather the various pagan versions of sacrifice, altar, and offerings (wherever they may be found), are the adulterations and corruptions of the true means of (temporal) worship as revealed by God in Scripture.

153 Mark 10:45.

154 Acts 2:23.

155 Genesis 7:20.

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Covenant.

The first mention of the idea of a covenant comes in Genesis 6:18 where the Lord says to Noah: *“I will establish My covenant with you.”* This was before the flood so prior to 1656 AC or 2303 BC. Note that the idea is initiated by the Lord, that it is God's covenant and not man's, and that the Lord stipulates what He is going to do concerning it. All of this pre-dates any concept of covenants suggested by the so-called ancient Near East cultures, which must be dated some time after the Tower of Babel incident, that is, some time after the flood. Any idea of a covenant in the ancient Near East must be ***derivative*** from the biblical idea, and not the other way around. It is to be noted that many of the elements of the Sinai covenant are in fact evident within the Genesis text. The concept of a Sabbath is, of course, embedded in creation week, and the elements of sacrifice and offering of clean animals we have already seen in the experience of Noah.

Priests.

The first mention of a *“priest”* is found in Genesis 14. Abraham had rescued Lot from captivity amidst a war of various kings in the region, and then the king of Sodom came out to meet Abraham. At this same point we are introduced to a character who appears, as the writer of Hebrews has it, *“without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.”*¹⁵⁶ This person, known by the name *“Melchizedek,”* was king of Salem (later called Jerusalem), and came with *“bread and wine”* for *“he was the priest of God Most High.”*¹⁵⁷ Melchizedek blesses Abraham, and Abraham offers a tenth of all recovered to Melchizedek. It is, of course, pointless to speculate about whether Melchizedek was the only priest at that time, or whether there had been a line of priests from the beginning. However what we do know from Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5 is that Christ is priest *“according to the order of Melchizedek.”*¹⁵⁸ The priests of Israel were from the tribe of Levi, whilst Christ descended from the tribe of Judah. Thus Christ's priesthood is in the likeness of Melchizedek's and not of the Levitical order. Since Christ was foreordained to come and act on our behalf by offering Himself in sacrifice, the concept of priesthood must, of necessity, be not only an idea initiated by God, but also pre-dates all ancient Near East cultures and other pretenders to its origins.

Family and pastoral themes.

Genesis is a collection of historical accounts constructed under inspiration of God by early eye-witnesses. As such there are two main focal points to these accounts. First we can see the importance of family as indicated by the use familial terms but especially in connection with women (*“daughter,”*

156 Hebrews 7:3.

157 Genesis 14:18.

158 Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6,10; 6:20. See also Hebrews 7:1f.

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“wife,” “wives,” “bare,” and “conceive”). Data for these words are shown in table I.12 where the data has been gleaned from a look at the AKJV.

A second important theme concerns the pastoral, for although the term *“shepherd”* only occurs four times in Genesis compared to twelve in Jeremiah, nine in Ezekiel and Zechariah, and seven in Isaiah, other terms are more frequently found in Genesis than elsewhere. The data for these terms, which has also been gathered from the AKJV, is shown in table I.13.

It is to be noted that Genesis occurs in the first column showing the highest frequency in all but one instance in table I.12, and the same obtains for table I.13 below. The data shown in these two tables is by no means comprehensive for terms such as *“goat,” “crop”* and *“vineyard,”* for example, have not been included, but it does serve to show that 'family' and 'pastoral' concerns are features of the book of Genesis.

There appears to be no pattern to the frequency of occurrence in other books. Whereas Genesis features in the first column of table I.12 except one for all eleven words cited, 1Chronicles features in connection with five terms, Isaiah with three, and Deuteronomy, Judges, 2Samuel, 2Chronicles, Jeremiah and Ezekiel feature for two words. The combination of higher frequency and greater breadth occurring in Genesis is surely an indication that the theme of family is of prime importance in the first book of Scripture. Turning to table I.13 where we have five terms, only Deuteronomy features three times, whilst Jeremiah and Ezekiel occur next to two terms.

Now such analysis coheres with the events recorded in this book of beginnings, for we are brought into the very lives of the patriarchs both from pre-flood and post-flood eras. After creation we have the record of the fall and then the first family. Even through the first eleven chapters of Genesis there is a family-focus in much of what is recorded. For example, we see the family of Lamech from Cain, the family of Noah in the building of the ark, and the record of the dispersion after the Tower of Babel according to families and languages as recorded in Genesis 10. The second half of the book is arranged around four main characters (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph) and the promise of God for a *“Seed,”* so clearly the family theme is at the front of our minds. Such a focus will help the reader in his devotions and application of the text. Where should we go for help with regard to family life and pastoral ministry? Perhaps Genesis is not usually the first place that comes to mind but, given the emphasis on family and the life of a nomadic owner of flocks, it ought to be.

Table I.12: Family terms in Genesis compared with the OT.¹⁵⁹

<i>Term.</i>	<i>Frequency in OT.</i>	<i>Frequency</i>					
		<i>Highest</i>		<i>Next highest</i>		<i>Third highest.</i>	
Son	2371	391	1Chronicles	257	Genesis	208	Numbers
Father	1130	172	Genesis	109	2Chronicles	87	1Chronicles
Daughter	476	92	Genesis	39	Jeremiah	30	Ezekiel
Wife	295	95	Genesis	25	Judges	23	Deuteronomy
Brother	253	82	Genesis	26	Deuteronomy & 2Samuel	19	1Chronicles
Mother	212	23	Genesis	22	2Kings	17	1Kings
Seed	203	48	Genesis	23	Isaiah	20	Leviticus
Bare	163	52	Genesis	23	1Chronicles	12	Isaiah
Wives	109	22	Genesis	11	Jeremiah	9	Ezra & 2Chronicles
Sister	99	23	Genesis	17	Ezekiel	10	2Samuel & 1Chronicles
Conceive	49	23	Genesis	4	Isaiah & Hosea	3	Judges

Table I.13: Pastoral terms in Genesis compared to OT.¹⁶⁰

<i>Term.</i>	<i>Frequency in OT.</i>	<i>Frequency</i>		
		<i>Highest</i>	<i>Next highest</i>	<i>Third highest.</i>
Field	295	41 Genesis	30 Jeremiah	25 Ezekiel
Well	191	45 Genesis	20 Deuteronomy	12 2Samuel
Flock(s)	164	33 Genesis	21 Jeremiah	18 Ezekiel
Sheep	148	21 1Samuel	18 Genesis	13 Deuteronomy
Cattle	131	43 Genesis	13 Exodus	12 Deuteronomy

¹⁵⁹ Data gathered from AKJV.

¹⁶⁰ Data gathered from AKJV.

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Structure of this work.

Our study will make use of the divisions that Genesis provides us with, but clearly some are much longer than others. Consequently it will be necessary to split the longer sections up into further sub-divisions.

Division in Genesis.	Chapter.	Text.	Page.
1:1 – 2:4a	1: Creation and rest in 7 days.	1:1-2:4a	58
2:4b – 5:1a	2: Creation of man examined.	2:4b-25	119
	3: Creation cursed but redemption supplied.	3:1-24	147
	4: The line of Cain – the son of Adam	4:1-5:1a	181
5:1b – 6:9a	5: The line of Seth the substitute – the story of grace.	5:1b-6:9a	208
6:9b – 10:1a	6: Prepare for judgement.	6:9-22	233
	7: Judgement comes.	7:1-24	250
	8: A new world.	8:1-22	268
	9: Covenant and curse.	9:1-10:1a	282
10:1b – 11:10a	10: Rebellion fails again.	10:1b-11:10a	300
11:10b – 27a	11: A short delay.	11:10b-27a	318
11:27b – 25:19a	12: The father of many is called.	11:27b-12:9	325
	13: Protection despite failure.	12:10-20	335
	14: Gracious choice from separation.	13:1-8	339
	15: A rescue blessed.	14:1-24	346
	16: The covenant confirmed.	15:1-21	356
	17: Jumping the gun – a tale of two women.	16:1-16	365
	18: The covenant signified.	17:1-27	373
	19: The promise announced.	18:1-15	383
	20: What the Lord was about to do.	18:16-33	388
	21: Judgement confirmed.	19:1-26	394
	22: Lot's descendants.	19:27-38	404
	23: A second failure.	20:1-18	408
	24: Isaac born – Ishmael thrown out.	21:1-21	414
	25: Trouble with Abimelech.	21:22-34	423
	26: Isaac offered.	22:1-23	429
	27: Sarah dies.	23:1-20	445
	28: A wife for Isaac.	24:1-47	451
	29: The end for Abraham and Ishmael.	25:1-19a	474

Division in Genesis.	Chapter.	Text.	Page.
25:19b – 37:2a	30: Two natures.	25:19b-34	483
	31: Like father like son.	26:1-16	491
	32: A tale of wells.	26:17-33	500
	33: A problem of deception.	26:34-27:46	507
	34: Jacob goes away.	28:1-22	523
	35: A love affair.	29:1-15	536
	36: A deceiver deceived.	29:16-30	544
	37: Sons of Jacob.	29:31-30:24	550
	38: Let me go!	30:25-43	561
	39: The Lord tells Jacob to return.	31:1-16	569
	40: Jacob is pursued by Laban.	31:17-55.	577
	41: Jacob prepares to return to Esau.	32:1-23	593
	42: Jacob meets Esau.	32:24-33:20	607
	43: Dinah.	34:1-31	622
	44: Consecration and loss.	35:1-29	642
	45: The end of Jacob's history.	36:1-37:2a	657
37:2b – 50:26	46: Joseph the dreamer.	37:2b-11	674
	47: Joseph sold into slavery.	37:12-36	689
	48: Judah and Tamar.	38:1-30	705
	49: Joseph and Potiphar.	39:1-23	719
	50: Joseph, the butler and the baker.	40:1-23	732
	51: Joseph and Pharaoh.	41:1-36	740
	52: Joseph takes the lead.	41:37-57	752
	53: Jacob sends his sons for food.	42:1-38	768
	54: Journey number two.	43:1-34	786
	55: Return to disaster?	44:1-34	799
	56: Joseph revealed.	45:1-28	812
	57: Israel takes his journey.	46:1-27	825
	58: Arrival at Goshen.	46:28-47:12	836
	59: Famine intensifies.	47:13-26	845
	60: Jacob blesses Joseph's sons.	47:27-48:22	849
	61: Jacob's prophecy.	49:1-33	860
	62: Jacob buried in Machpelah.	50:1-13	878
	63: Joseph dies.	50:13-26	884

Chapter 1.

Creation and rest in 7 days. (1:1-2:4a).

Introduction.

There can be no more important and equally no more controversial passage of Scripture than this first section of Genesis. Volumes have been written, ink has been spilled, and battles have been fought. This in itself is not surprising for two reasons. First of all, it is clearly obvious that he who can muddy and muddle thinking on the opening page of a work, is sure to prevent people reading through to the end. Second, the pride of man is so high and lofty that he cannot accede to what is contained in these words, and, in an effort to blot the words out, has constructed the most elaborate of myth and legend to soothe his own foolish and false independence. Because so much has been written on this first chapter I shall spend some time in analysing its structure and refuting those who suggest that it is not to be taken at face value, (i.e. literally), before making some comments on the text. It will be observed in later sections of the book of Genesis that I provide a grammatical analysis of the text. I will do that for Genesis 1 shortly, but we need to make some comments on what we are about to study to ensure we come to it in the right frame of mind and heart.

God's words!

We begin our study by remembering one vital point to help us on our way, namely, that we are studying God's **very words**. Although we have mentioned this in the introduction, it is worth repeating this idea here. We are coming to what God wants us to hear. These are not words that have their origin in the minds of men, unlike the modern myth of origins, namely evolution, or the ancient myths of the pagan cultures.¹⁶¹ These words were given by the Lord. Now I hasten to state that we do not find an *explicit* statement in our text to this effect. What we do have at the end of the section is these words:

This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created.¹⁶²

Other endings to sections have the names from which we may infer that these were the human means through which the Lord has written his word. Thus Adam was the human agent through whom God inspired Genesis 2:4b-5:1a and so on. In the remainder of Genesis 2:4 we have the name of the Lord God

161 We write in opposition to the modern obsession with ancient Near East cultures as the source for Genesis.
162 Genesis 2:4a.

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put in such a way as to signal the start of a new section. However we could infer from this that it was the Lord God alone who was the agent through whom the first section came. We noted in the introduction that the New Testament gives us warrant to believe that God was responsible for the first section of Genesis.¹⁶³ Given that the New Testament tells us that the agent of creation was the second person of the Holy Trinity, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, might we be permitted to conclude that the pre-incarnate Christ wrote these words and provided them for Adam?¹⁶⁴ This is a suggestion only, but it is one I am strongly inclined to believe, especially in view of our Lord's words in response to those who questioned Him on divorce. The Saviour joins two verses, one from Genesis 1:27 and another from Genesis 2:24 in which He states that the Lord Himself was the speaker concerning the words from Genesis 2:24.

4 And He answered and said to them, “have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ **5** and **said**, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? **6** So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”¹⁶⁵

In fact Genesis 2 gives us clear warrant to hold that the pre-incarnate Christ was active and in the garden with Adam.¹⁶⁶ However, it is also noteworthy that of the few times where we do read that God Himself wrote some words, one of these includes a commentary on this first section of Genesis. I am referring, of course, to the ten commandments written by the very *“finger”* of God, and, in particular, the fourth commandment which reads as follows:¹⁶⁷

8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9** Six days you shall labour and do all your work, **10** but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. **11** For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.¹⁶⁸

Given that God ***actually penned*** these words in Exodus, we are warranted to hold that he also penned the first section of Genesis. We have already mentioned the fact that throughout Isaiah the Lord reminds the people of God (Israel) that He is God alone, and that He has revealed from the very beginning, and further, that the Lord Jesus endorsed this first section.¹⁶⁹ But these points are worth repeating!

163 See: Matthew 19:4-6; 1Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 4:4.

164 See, for example: John 1:1-4,10; Colossians 1:15-18.

165 Matthew 19:4-6.

166 We shall consider this when we come to Genesis 2.

167 Exodus 31:18.

168 Exodus 20:8-11.

169 Matthew 19:4.

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Alternative views.

In this commentary we take the Genesis record to be historical, and hold to a literal 6 day creation followed by another day of rest. All of this occurred some 6,000 years ago. This is the standard view and has been for a very long time. As Noel Weeks points out:

“In the absence of any Biblical evidence to the contrary, and the presence of frequent references to the narrative as historical narrative, the obvious way to read the text of Genesis 1 is the obvious way. It is impossible for God to use a misleading form of description ... If Genesis 1 was not meant to be taken as a literal account, why was it written that way?”¹⁷⁰

It will be instructive, however, to make a note of the various alternative views that have been suggested with a few brief comments.¹⁷¹ These can be found in table 1.1 below.¹⁷²

Table 1.1: Alternative views of Genesis.

Alternative view.	Details.	Examples.
No absolute creation.	By removing the opening verse, or by limiting its force, the creation story is thereby limited to what God did with pre-existing material within time.	Genesis 1:1 is a dependent clause, not an independent one signalling absolute creation.
		Genesis 1:1 acts merely as a title summarising what occurred in Genesis 1:2f.
Gap theory.	By introducing a time gap somewhere in the text, the supposed long ages suggested by modern science may be accommodated.	The word “beginning” of Genesis 1:1 indicates an unspecified but long period of time.
		A time gap exists between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.
		Genesis 1:2 itself covers a vast and unspecified period of time.
		A time gap exists between Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 1:3.
Non-historical genre.	By suggesting that the Genesis stories are not historical accounts but were written in another form, the implications of an apparent literal nature of the text may be avoided.	Each day is to be taken as an “age” not as a 24 hour period. (Day-Age view).
		The creation stories were written in the cultural setting of the ancient Near East and so were not literal but polemic. (Polemic view).
		The creation stories are poetic not literal history. (Poetic view).
		The creation stories are written in a literary manner following a framework so are not chronological (Framework hypothesis).

¹⁷⁰ Noel Weeks. *The Sufficiency of Scripture*. 1988. The Banner of Truth Trust. Edinburgh. P108,115.

¹⁷¹ We shall have occasion to deal with many of these as we go through the text.

¹⁷² I have discussed these views in some depth in my work **“Evolution: A house of cards.”**

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One of the key features that unites all of these views is the plain fact that they are generated from the idea that modern science cannot be wrong. Proponents of the various ideas are all motivated by a trust in modern science and its belief in either evolution, or in the millions or billions of years. The table is not exhaustive and some may well express views which fit within more than one example. Further, writers who espouse one or other of these views have a penchant for accepting the priority of the ancient Near East cultures. Thus rather than holding Genesis as the most ancient document we have in our possession (dating from creation), these writers adopt a modern view which sees history in an evolutionary sense. For these folk Genesis is interpreted from the perspective of the ancient Near East cultures. The creation stories are not held as original, but are seen as the Hebrew attempts at correcting the older cultures by promoting a monotheistic outlook.¹⁷³

Structural details.

Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a is a highly structured passage and it is vital for our understanding that we see the various features and characteristics it displays so that we can learn about how God operates – how He created. The overall structure to this first section of Genesis is shown in table 1.2 on the next two pages.

The opening verse (Genesis 1:1) describes the creation of “*the heavens and the earth,*” whilst in comparison the concluding verse (Genesis 2:4a) describes the generations (or history) of “*the heavens and the earth.*” This phrase identifies the text as a complete unit, for we do not come across it again in the book of Genesis.¹⁷⁴

Significantly, the second half of Genesis 2:4 reverses the order, (i.e. “*earth and heavens*”), indicating a new emphasis. To confirm the fact that the text is a single unit, it is noteworthy that the verb “to create” (בָּרָא *bārā*) is used in both verses. Another feature that identifies this section as a complete unit is the name of God (אֱלֹהִים *'ēlohîm*). In the second half of Genesis 2:4 we find not just God, (אֱלֹהִים *'ēlohîm*), but the Lord God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים *yᵉhwāh 'ēlohîm*).

173 I have dealt with the issue of evolution, theistic evolution, and 17 alternative views expressed by various writers who claim the badge “evangelical.” See my book: “**Evolution: A house of cards.**” 2020.

174 The phrase in Genesis 2:4 does not employ the sign of the definite direct object (את) but this makes no difference to the translation. It merely indicates which is the direct object which is usually given by context.

Table 1.2: The overall grammatical structure of Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

DAY	TEXT
Day 1	1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness <i>was</i> on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.
Day 2	6 Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” 7 Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which <i>were</i> under the firmament from the waters which <i>were</i> above the firmament; and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.
Day 3	9 Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry <i>land</i> appear”; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry <i>land</i> Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb <i>that</i> yields seed, <i>and</i> the fruit tree <i>that</i> yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed <i>is</i> in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb <i>that</i> yields seed according to its kind, and the tree <i>that</i> yields fruit, whose seed <i>is</i> in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day.
Day 4	14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. 16 Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. <i>He made</i> the stars also. 17 God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
Day 5	20 Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.” 21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

DAY	TEXT
Day 6	24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, <i>each</i> according to its kind”; and it was so. 25 And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His <i>own</i> image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “See, I have given you every herb <i>that</i> yields seed which <i>is</i> on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which <i>there is</i> life, <i>I have given</i> every green herb for food”; and it was so. 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
Day 7	#2 1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. 4 This <i>is</i> the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Historical narrative.

The form of writing in this opening section is narrative or historical. This is clear even from an English translation, and can be identified by the use of the conjunction words like “*then*,” “*and*,” “*thus*,” and “*so*” which start each sentence.¹⁷⁵ These conjunctions are seen very clearly in the AKJV because the word “*and*” is used to translate them most frequently.

- 2 **And** the earth was ...
- 3 **And** God said ...
- 4 **And** God saw ...
- 4 ... **and** God divided ...
- 5 **And** God called ...
- 5 ... **And** the evening and the morning were the first day.
- 6 **And** God said ...
- 7 **And** God made ...
- 8 **And** God called ...

¹⁷⁵ In Hebrew these conjunctions are translations of the Hebrew prefix “waw” which serves a number of functions. The waw-consecutive formation, which is apparent throughout this section of Genesis, is a clear indication that we are reading narrative, historical text.

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8 ... **And** the evening and the morning were the second day.
9 **And** God said ...
10 **And** God called ...
10 ... **and** God saw ...
11 **And** God said ...
12 **And** the earth brought forth ...
12 ... **and** God saw ...
13 **And** the evening and the morning were the third day.
14 **And** God said ...
16 **And** God made ...
17 **And** God set ...
18 ... **and** God saw ...
19 **And** the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
20 **And** God said ...
21 **And** God created ...
21 ... **and** God saw ...
22 **And** God blessed them ...
23 **And** the evening and the morning were the fifth day.
24 **And** God said ...
25 **And** God made ...
25 ... **and** God saw ...
26 **And** God said ...
27 **So** God created man ...
28 **And** God blessed them ...
28 ... **and** God said ...
29 **And** God said ...
31 **And** God saw ...
31 ... **And** the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
#2 1 **Thus** the heavens and the earth were finished ...
2 **And** on the seventh day God ended his work ...
3 **And** God blessed ...

There are many who want to write off the first two chapters of Genesis in terms of it being history, because of their worry over what modern science lays claim to.¹⁷⁶ A suggestion that the first chapter is poetic is often used to deflect any discussion with respect to modern science. The NIV translation and many commentators opt for this idea for this very reason.¹⁷⁷ However the text itself shows us that it is an historical narrative and not poetry, and so this option is not open.

When we look at Hebrew poetry we find that it takes on a very different form. Hebrew poetic

176 For example: **B. Ramm**. *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. 1954. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. **Henri Blocher**. *In the Beginning*. 1984. IVP.

177 The NIV puts the first chapter in indented text which is explained in the preface as signifying poetry. The preface reads:

“Poetical passages are printed as poetry, that is, with indentation of lines and with separate stanzas. These are generally designed to reflect the structure of Hebrew poetry. This poetry is normally characterised by parallelism in balanced lines. Most of the poetry in the Bible is in the Old Testament, and scholars differ regarding the scansion of Hebrew lines. The translators determined the stanza divisions for the most part by analysis of the subject matter. The stanzas therefore serve as poetic paragraphs.”

The Holy Bible, New International Version published by Hodder & Stoughton. I have checked a variety of editions from Thompson Chain reference works to Study and Pew Bible editions and all have the same preface produced by “The Committee on Bible Translation” June 1978 (Revised August 1983).

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writing, which can be seen in the Proverbs for example, has an absence of the Hebrew connecting or linking conjunctions, and is instead characterised by couplets. Sometimes the couplets are two ways of saying the same thing. Sometimes they are contrasting and at other times there is a reinforcing or emphasis of the first idea. As some examples, consider the following verses from Proverbs:

Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge,
But he who hates correction *is* stupid.¹⁷⁸

The eyes of the Lord *are* in every place,
Keeping watch on the evil and the good.¹⁷⁹

The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination;
How much more *when* he brings it with wicked intent!¹⁸⁰

In the first example we are given a contrast between the one who “*loves instruction*” and the one who “*hates correction.*” In the second we get two statements about what the Lord does with His “*eyes,*” the first being reinforced by the second. The last has the second statement as an emphasis of the first expressed in the English translation by the phrase “*How much more.*” Now none of these characteristics are displayed in the first section of Genesis. Thus the first part of the book of Genesis is not poetry.

Repeated phrases and words.

It will also be apparent on reading through the passage (and from the AKJV outline given above), that there are a number of repeated phrases, thoughts and themes. The first of these, is the name of God which is found 35 times. It is most often the second word to be found in each verse indicating that God is the main subject here. Thus what we are reading about is what God has done. Why then do so many take the liberty of suggesting that this text is not sufficient for us to understand how God created all things? Table 1.3 shows the main repeated phrases and words with their references and frequencies.

Perhaps the most significant phrase to be found in our text, which occurs six times, is the ***only*** time-marker present in the text (apart from that at Genesis 1:1 – the beginning), namely “*so the evening and the morning were the ... day.*” This helps us break the passage up into seven sections each of which constitutes a 24 hour day. We can say that each day is a literal day for at least three reasons. First each “*day*” is defined as a period of “*evening*” followed by “*morning,*” which notion describe periods of daylight and night, or, in other words one 24 hour period. Second we note that wherever the Hebrew word for day (***yom***) is used with a number (either ordinal or cardinal) the meaning is always a literal 24 hour

178 Proverbs 12:1.

179 Proverbs 15:3.

180 Proverbs 21:27.

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day.¹⁸¹ Third we find that expressions similar to these are found throughout Scripture and always in these cases a literal 24 hour day is meant.¹⁸²

Table 1.3: Repeated phrases in Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

Repeated word or phrase.	Reference.	Frequency.
God	1:1,2,3,4(x2),5,6,7,8,9,10(x2),11,12,14,16,17,18,20,21(x2),22,24,25(x2),26,27(x2),28(x2),29,32; 2:2,3(x2).	35
created	1:1,21,27(x3); 2:3,4.	7
God said	1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,28,29.	10
Let	1:3,6(x2),9(x2),11,14(x2),15,20(x2),24,26(x2).	14
And God saw that <i>it was</i> good	1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31. ¹⁸³	7
called	1:5(x2),8,10(x2).	5
So the evening and the morning were the ... day.	1:5,8,13,19,23,31.	6
Made	1:7,16, ¹⁸⁴ 25,31; 2:3. ¹⁸⁵	5
it was so	1:7,9,11,15,24,30.	6
blessed	1:22,28; 2:3.	3
Earth	1:1,2,10,11(x2),12,15,17,20,22,24(x2),25(x2),26(x2),28(x2),29,30(x2); 2:1,4.	23
Heaven(s)	1:1,8,9,14,15,17,20; 2:1,4.	9

Some have made much of the fact that the seventh day does not end with the repeated phrase given for the other six days. From this they suggest that, since the seventh day does not seem to end, we ought not to take the other days in a literal way. This is strange reasoning and owes more to the fear of man and an attitude that seeks to fit in with modern science, than proper exegesis. The seventh day is no less literal than the others, even if it does not conclude with the repeated phrase. We are entitled to ask the question, what purpose would this repeated phrase serve at the end of a section which is clearly seeking to establish that God rested and finished his work of creation on this seventh day?

A second very important repeated phrase is: “... *God said.*” This phrase comes ten times which is why in Exodus the Lord spoke ten words or commandments. The Lord is always consistent! There are a number of other important words and phrases which recur. Thus, seven times we read that what God had created and made was “*good.*” Next, the word “*created*” is also given to us seven times. The phrase

181 See, for example, Genesis 40:20; Exodus 19:11; Numbers 7:18.

182 See, for example, Exodus 13:18; 1Samuel 17:16; Acts 28:23.

183 The last occurrence is a superlative (“*very good*”).

184 There is a second occurrence of this word, but it appears in italics so is not actually in the Hebrew.

185 “*Make*” is found at Genesis: 1:26.

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“and it was so” comes six times. Then, we note that the word *“made”* is found five times, and the word *“make”* comes just once. The word *“called”* is found five times, but only in the first three days of creation week. Three times we read that God *“blessed”* what He had made, but only in the second period of creation week on days 5, 6 and 7. Finally the word *“earth”* is found 23 times, and the word *“heavens”* (or *“heaven”*) is found 9 times, so that the main domain we are being informed about is the earth.

Sun before light?

Unfortunately, many misguided commentators want to suggest that whilst days 4 to 6 could be literal 24 hour days, days 1 to 3 cannot be so because the sun had not been created until the fourth day.¹⁸⁶ This type of reasoning illustrates a reliance on modern science and man's way of thinking. But just because at this present time we define a day being 24 hours due to the earth's rotation, does not mean that it has always been defined in this way. We are so wedded and welded to naturalistic and mechanical ways of thinking, that we automatically assume that the cycle of day and night in 24 hours is **only** due to the earth's rotation on its axis, as the earth revolves around the sun in its yearly orbit.¹⁸⁷ Because of such naturalistic thinking – holding that only natural or physical explanations we adhere to today are acceptable – these misguided commentators have proposed an ingenious series of solutions. Some suggest that the days spoken of here in this first section are “days of God” and not really earthly days at all.¹⁸⁸ This is hopeless. What is meant by a “day of God” in this context? We know what the term “day of God” means in later Scriptures. It is the time period when God is judging, but here we are in a time period when no man walked the earth (at least on days 1 to 5) so what point is there in talking of a “day of God”? God does not need time! Furthermore these Scriptures are not for God's benefit, but for ours. We shall examine other views derived from such naturalistic thinking as we proceed.

Forming and filling.

Then further, it is important to recognise a clear distinction between what the Lord was doing on days 1 to 3, in comparison to what He was doing on days 4 to 6. We have already noted one distinction, by pointing out that on the first three days God calls (or names) certain things He has made, whilst on the last three days of creation week God blesses the things He has made. However the main difference between the two halves of the week stems from the first clause found in Genesis 1:2. In this verse we read that *“the earth was without form, and void.”* Now the first three days answer the situation that the earth

¹⁸⁶ Genesis 1:14-19. See, for example: **Howard Van Till**. *The Fourth Day*. 1986. William B. Eerdmans. P3. **Henri Blocher**. *In the Beginning*. 1984. IVP. P52. Many writers fall into this particular trap.

¹⁸⁷ But God can make light without the sun and stars because He is the source of all things, and He can make it without its physical source just as easily as with it.

¹⁸⁸ **C. John Collins**. *Genesis 1-4. A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*. 2000. P & R Publishing. Phillipsburg NJ. P78,124,161. **Vern S. Poythress**, *Redeeming Science: A God-centred Approach*. 2006. Crossway Books. Wheaton ILL. P220.

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was “*without form,*” because the Lord was **forming** the earth. The heavens and the earth and light were created on day 1. The firmament was made and the waters were divided on day 2. The land and vegetation were made on day 3. Then, the second part of the week answers the situation that the earth was “*void,*” because the Lord was **filling** the earth. On day 4 the Lord fills the heavens with the light bearers (sun, moon and stars). On day 5 the Lord fills the seas and the air with an abundance of life. On day 6 the Lord fills the land with land dwelling animals and finally with man. The details of the Lord's forming and filling activities are shown in table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Details of the 7 days of God's creative activity and rest.

Days 1 to 3. FORMING (Genesis 1:3-13).	Days 4 to 6. FILLING (Genesis 1:14-31).
Day 1 – LIGHT (1:1-5). In the beginning God created (1:1) Earth described (1:2) God said (1:3). <i>God saw it was good (1:4).</i> God acts (dividing) (1:4). <u>God names (1:5).</u> Evening and morning – Day 1 (1:5).	Day 4 – LIGHTS (1:14-19). God said (1:14). <i>It was so (1:15).</i> God made (2 great lights & stars) (1:16) God set (1:17,18). <i>God saw it was good (1:18).</i> Evening and morning – Day 4 (1:19).
Day 2 – FIRMAMENT (1:6-8). God said (1:6). God made and acts (dividing) (1:7). <i>It was so (1:7).</i> <u>God names (1:8).</u> Evening and morning – Day 2 (1:8).	Day 5 – FISH & BIRDS (1:20-23). God said (1:20). God created (1:21). <i>God saw it was good (1:21).</i> God blessed (1:22). Evening and morning – Day 5 (1:23).
Day 3 – LAND, SEA PLANTS (1:9-13). God said (1:9). <i>It was so (1:9).</i> <u>God names (1:10).</u> God said (1:11). <i>It was so (1:11).</i> <i>God saw it was good (1:12).</i> Evening and morning – Day 3 (1:13).	Day 6 – ANIMALS & MAN (v24-31). God said (1:24). <i>It was so (1:24).</i> God made (animals) (1:25). <i>God saw that it was good (1:25).</i> God said (1:26). God created (man) (1:27). God blessed (1:28). God said to them (instructed) (1:28). God said (1:29,30). <i>It was so (1:30).</i> <i>God saw it was very good (1:31).</i> Evening and morning – Day 6 (1:31).
Day 7 – GOD RESTS FROM HIS WORK OF CREATION. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were <i>finished.</i> (2:1). And on the seventh day God <i>ended His work</i> which <i>He had done,</i> (2:2a) and He <i>rested</i> on the seventh day <i>from all His work</i> which <i>He had done.</i> (2:2b). <i>Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, (2:3a)</i> because in it He <i>rested from all His work</i> which God <i>had created and made.</i> (2:3) This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they <i>were created.</i> (2:4)	

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It can be readily seen from table 1.4 that there is a general pattern within each day's activity, but this is not followed precisely or in any slavish manner. Thus God only names things on the first three days and he blesses things only on days 5, 6, and 7, for example. Although we can separate the six days into two parts with the first three days centred on forming and the second three on filling, again this division is not exact. For example, the sun, moon and stars are created on day 4 and these may well be thought of as part of the forming work of God, although here they serve to act as a filling by virtue of giving light through day and night. Then also we see that the Lord filled the land with plant life on the third day rather than within the second set of three days.

Sadly some suggest that such structure is indicative of a literary framework to the passage which is then taken as an indication that we should not take this first section of Genesis in a literal way. We have concluded, however, that the Hebrew text is historical narrative in form and so any idea of a poetic form or a just some literary structure devoid of any historical intent is untenable. There are many other historical narrative passages which are also structured in Scripture.¹⁸⁹ Those who hold to a poetic view, or a literary framework view, and who thereby deny the historicity of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, are misreading this most important section of Scripture. I do not want to be misunderstood here. The gospel of our Saviour and Lord is the central theme of the Bible and nothing beats that. But if we dismiss the historicity of Genesis 1:1-2:4a we are sowing the seeds of destruction for the gospel. There are those who hold to a mixture of evolution and Christian doctrine because of their fear and respect for modern science. These folk misguidedly hold to a contradiction. Evolution requires a 'creation' procured by means of death. The gospel speaks of a rescue from death brought about by the death of Christ. In the former, death is the main engine driving the progress and development of things, but in the gospel, death is an enemy which must be conquered. Death is the wages of sin brought in through Adam's disobedience.

Now those who favour theistic evolution have another great problem which they do not want to face. Paul links a literal Adam to the second and last Adam, which is Christ.¹⁹⁰ How can these folk deny the reality of Adam (for evolution cannot accommodate a real or literal Adam), and hold to a real Christ who is the second Adam? At least one author claiming an evangelical heritage has come to the conclusion from his theistic evolutionary views that Paul was misguided in his theology and needs to be corrected!¹⁹¹ Such a conclusion is hopeless, without any substance and extremely damaging to the faithful.

One final point to add is that there appears to be a progression towards the pinnacle of creation as depicted by the depth of information increasing as we reach the sixth day. There are twice as many words used to describe what happens on day six compared to what occurs on the other days. We shall look at each of the seven days in turn.

189 Numbers 7 and Nehemiah 3 are two examples among many others.

190 See 1Corinthians 15:45,47; Romans 5:12,14.

191 **Peter Enns**. *The Evolution of Adam*. 2012. Brazos Press.

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Comments on day 1 (1:1-5).

General considerations.

There has been much argument concerning the first three verses of Genesis chapter 1. Chiefly these points of discussion centre on how they should be connected and construed grammatically. In the analysis shown above we have suggested that verse 1 indicates the initial creative act of God, verse 2 describes the condition that the earth was in when it was created in verse 1, and verses 3-5 describe God's continued creative acts on day 1. In making this suggestion I want to affirm the notion that there are **no time gaps** to be found either between verses, or within them in this brief section. The **only** time markers present in the text apart from the initial one in Genesis 1:1 (the beginning) are the day markers in verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.

And yet a number of different gap theories have been suggested which seek to interpose time somewhere within these first three verses. In **all** cases the main driver or motivation has been to accommodate the modern science of geology's view of long ages.¹⁹² Thomas Chalmers, (1780 – 1847) a nineteenth century Scottish minister and theologian who was interested in the geology of his day, was the first to hold to a gap idea.¹⁹³ Rather than accept the work and views of the Scriptural geologists who worked in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Chalmers chose to follow the secular science and its protagonists such as James Hutton (1726-1797) and Charles Lyell (1797-1875).¹⁹⁴ It is incredibly sad, and not a little annoying, that the Scriptural geologists have been overlooked. It rather looks like they have been written out of history simply because they took Genesis as literal and historical so that their geological work was motivated by Scripture and not by any independent or secular ideas.¹⁹⁵

Now Chalmers suggested that there was a vast time gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. To argue the case he suggested that Genesis 1:2 ought to be translated:

Now the earth **became** formless and void

The millions of years demanded by secular geology could then be squeezed into this conveniently constructed gap. However, there are a number of problems with this view. Whilst the translation may be grammatically possible, it is not one **demanded** by the text. The natural way of reading these verses is to

¹⁹² See: “**Evolution: A house of cards.**”

¹⁹³ The Works of **Thomas Chalmers**, D.D & LL.D. Professor of Theology in the University of Edinburgh. Third Uniform Edition. Volume First. New York: Robert Carter, 56 Canal Street. 1841. **John E. Webster**. *Science and the Scottish Evangelical Movement in Early Nineteenth Century Scotland: a study in the interactions of science and theology in the work of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Chalmers D.D., LL.D., 1780-1847*. M.A. Thesis. Department of Science and Technology Studies, University of Wollongong. 1989.

¹⁹⁴ A look at Genesis chapters 1, 5 and 11 and Exodus 6, amongst other important references should leave the interested reader in no doubt that the universe (the heavens and the earth) is only about 6,000 years old (see introduction).

¹⁹⁵ For Scriptural Geologists see: **T. J. Mortenson**. *The Great Turning Point: The Church's Catastrophic Mistake on Geology—Before Darwin*. 2004. Master Books. Green Forest, AR.

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take it that what is described in verse 2 has come directly from God's action in verse 1. Given the fact that later on we find that God's creative acts produced an immediate effect, (i.e. *“and God said ...”* and then *“and it was so”*), we must assume that the same is true here. God created the heavens and the earth in verse 1, and verse 2 tells us the condition of the earth **immediately** as it had been created.

A second serious problem with this view of a gap between the first two verses is that it leaves an awful lot of time for which we have no revelation at all. There is no clear indication of this time gap in the text as we may have expected. If, for example, the text had said something like: “now a long time later ...” that would have lead us to ask the question: what happened in that time? The situation we find in Genesis 1:2 is nothing like this. In short the idea of a time gap is not at all *obvious*, and the suggestion of it coming from a need to accommodate modern geological ideas leads us to suspect that it is in fact a fabrication.

Yet another problem comes from the imagined 'history' that has been supplied by those who favour this view. The fall of Satan, the existence of a pre-Adamite race, a judgement by God and so on, have been supplied by many to fill this gap! And yet we have no information about this at all. It has all been invented.

But perhaps the most important difficulty that this gap theory has is a theological one.¹⁹⁶ By providing room for the long ages demanded by modern geology, those who favour this gap view have put sin, judgement and death *before* the entrance of sin! The geological record is a record of death and destruction. Fossil remains show evidence not just of death, but of violent death, (fish fossilised in the process of eating smaller fish, creatures with teeth embedded in bones and so on), and disease (examples of animals with cancer) as well. In stark contrast the Scriptures insist that sin, and thence judgement, only came in as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience which does not happen until Genesis 3. There is a sharp discontinuity as we come to Genesis 3. The New Testament also makes it plain, *very plain*, that sin came in through Adam, and, as a consequence of this, death was the inevitable result, and all this was just as the Lord had promised to Adam in the garden of Eden.¹⁹⁷

Gaps have been wedged into other words and phrases across the opening three verses of the Bible. One, for example, suggests that the word *“beginning”* actually indicates a long period of time.¹⁹⁸ Such a view is desperate. The Hebrew word translated *“beginning”* stems from a root word which means “head,” signifying the top or most important aspect of the thing. Creatures only have one head and given this root idea, the word really leads us to the concept of a distinct point in time. To stretch its meaning to include a long period of time is disingenuous.

One other suggestion is that the details of verse 2 may be interpreted as to include an indefinite period of time, because there is no indication of what time frame is being covered within the verse! Of

196 In fact **all** gap theories flounder on this issue.

197 Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12; 6:23.

198 **John Sailhamer**. *Genesis Unbound*. 1996. Second Edition 2011. Book Villages. P33.

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course we can say this about any verse where there is no reference to time if we wish, but I doubt many would listen to us! Take as one random example the following verse from 1 Samuel:

Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.¹⁹⁹

There is no reference to time within this verse. It is just like Genesis 1:2 giving us descriptive details concerning Eli the high priest at a given point in time. To suggest a time frame for this verse is to engage in speculation.

1:1.

The First verse in Hebrew reads as follows:²⁰⁰

בְּרֵאשִׁית	בָּרָא	אֱלֹהִים	אֶת	הַשָּׁמַיִם	וְאֶת	הָאָרֶץ
in the beginning	(He) created	God		the heavens	and the earth	

← read from here

In the beginning (בְּרֵאשִׁית).

The very first verse of Scripture is wonderful in both succinctness and depth. There are just seven Hebrew words, but two of these are not translatable, acting merely as signposts indicating which is the definite direct object.²⁰¹ If we ignore these two Hebrew words (highlighted in yellow: **אֶת** and **וְאֶת**), we are left with five Hebrew words, and at the very heart or centre of the verse (the third of these words) we have the name of God (highlighted in blue: **אֱלֹהִים** 'ēlohîm). God is Creator and God is our subject. Let us never tire of delving into this most glorious of Beings from whom we all derive our very existence. We perhaps long to consider aspects of our faith which bring us comfort, like salvation, faith, heaven and so on, but truly the very best place to start is with God. Who is He? What is He like? Hopefully in our studies we will learn more and as we do we will worship Him with hearts full of joy!

The phrase at the head of the verse, translated *“in the beginning”* is the subject of great controversy at the present time. The debates concern two points of translation. First it is to be noted that the first word does not, in fact, have the definite article, (“the”), and second, there is disagreement over whether the word should be in the construct or absolute form.²⁰² Some argue that the first word looks more like a construct form than an absolute. However this is by no means certain because both construct

199 1 Samuel 2:22.

200 The reader is reminded that Hebrew is read from right to left.

201 When read aloud all seven Hebrew words are sounded.

202 These are parts of Hebrew grammar. The construct state is effectively the genitive or possessive case.

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and absolute forms are known to have exactly the same Hebrew pointing.²⁰³ The two options for a literal translation are then:

in beginning	(absolute form).
in beginning of (or, in beginning when)	(construct form).

The second option begs the question: in beginning of **what**? This is where the problems begin! Some opt for a translation which takes the word “*created*” as the closely connected word so that the translation would read something like this: “in (the) beginning of creation,” or, “in (the) beginning when God created.” However it has been pointed out that the Hebrew word rendered “*created*” would have a different form, similar to that found in Genesis 5:1:

אָדָם	אֱלֹהִים	בָּרָא	בַּיּוֹם
Adam	God	he created	in the day

“in the day of God's creation of Adam” OR “in the day that God created Adam”

The Hebrew in this phrase of Genesis 5:1 is: *bʿr’ō* (בָּרָא).²⁰⁴ Compare this with Genesis 1:1 where the Hebrew is *bara’* (בָּרָא).

Thus some have suggested that the only way to answer this issue is to construe the first verse as a dependent clause, and not as an independent one as is usually assumed. The result of this is another two options. Either we make verse 1 dependent upon verse 2, or we make it dependent on verse 3 and have verse 2 as a parenthesis. The resulting translations would then be as shown in table 1.5.

The reader should notice that, in both options as suggested, we do not as a result have any statement of an **absolute** creation. The idea expressed in both cases is that God **began** to create on an earth which was **already** in existence. Should we accept this type of translation rather than the traditional one where Genesis 1:1 is an independent statement of initial creation? Well the answer to the question is a decided no we should not.

203 Jeremiah 26:1; 27:1, 28:1 have the same word used in construct form “*in the beginning of*,” בְּרֵאשִׁית whereas Isaiah 46:10 has the same word used in absolute form “*from the beginning*” מֵרֵאשִׁית. Note although the prepositions (in and from) are different the main words are identical in form, i.e. רֵאשִׁית.

204 Jiri Moskala. *Interpretation of Bere'sit in the Context of Genesis 1:1-3*. Faculty Publications. Paper 3. P40. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/old-testament-pubs/3>. Frank Luke. *Can Genesis 1:1 be translated “When God began to create the heavens and the earth”?* <https://www.rae.org/essay-links/gengrammar/>.

Table 1.5: Suggested translations for “beginning” as a construct form

Option for verse 1:	Translation:
Dependent on verse 2	In (the)* beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. Then God said, “let there be light”; and there was light.
Dependent on verse 3 (verse 2 as parenthetical).	In (the)* beginning when God created the heavens and the earth (the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters) God said, “let there be light”; and there was light.

* the definite article is included to make sense in English.

Considering the second option first, where verse 1 is made to be dependent on verse 3, we are lead effectively to ignore verse 2. One wonders why verse 2 wasn't placed at the beginning, if such a translation were what was originally intended? In other words what we ought to have is the following:

The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. In (the) beginning when God created the heavens and the earth God said, “let there be light”; and there was light.

Of course this isn't what we have, and so forcing it into such a mould seems pointless. Furthermore, by doing this we have a needless repetition of the name of God. It would have been simpler if verse 3 had the pronoun “He.” But then also, such a stretch of dependence, leaping from the start of verse 1 over verse 2 to verse 3 really is too much. I am unaware of any other case like this anywhere in Scripture and its forced nature seems totally out of keeping with what we have.

The other option (verse 1 dependent on verse 2) might seem possible, but for one important sticking point (which actually affects both options). The fact is that verse 2 does not begin simply as the NKJV translates it (i.e. “*the earth was ...*”). It should read with a conjunction at the start. Thus it should be either: “**Now** the earth was ...” or “**And** the earth was ...” The effect of this is to put a serious break on the connection between verses 1 and 2. This serves to disconnect rather than connect them as required by taking the first word of the text in the construct state.

To cap it all when we look at the systems of cantillation marks or accents (also called “tropes”) that are found written above and beneath the text to guide the reading or chanting of Scripture, we find that there is a strong indication that the first word should be taken in its absolute form.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

Beneath the first word (בְּרֵאשִׁית) is the symbol or accent known as “tiphchah,” (ֿ under the letter שׁ). This

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serves as a disjunctive accent or slight pause causing the reader to hesitate before sounding the next phrase. This accent indicates that the Masoretes, who were responsible for the vowel pointing and accenting of the text, considered the word to be an absolute.²⁰⁵ Apparently it also indicates that the reader should look back to what was before, but we shall return to this thought later. One other indicator that the word is in the absolute form is suggested by ancient translations. Victor Hamilton in his commentary on Genesis states (with respect to בְּרֵאשִׁית) that:

“All the ancient versions translate the word as an absolute and the whole verse as an independent clause. ... the Masoretes understood the word to be absolute, for they accented the word with the disjunctive accent called a *ṭiphâ*, which is normal for words in the absolute state, rather than with a conjunctive accent, which is normal for words in the construct state.”²⁰⁶

We conclude, therefore, that the opening verse is an independent clause, and not dependent on anything else. This leads to an opening statement which gives us an **absolute** creation event. It is not, however, a title phrase summing up the contents of the chapter. We have already mentioned the fact that the last sentence in this section (*“this is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created”*), served as the ending “title,” so to suggest another at the start seems to be inaccurate. What we have in this opening statement is the very first creative act of God.

Definitely!

What then about the missing definite article in the first word בְּרֵאשִׁית? Well let us consider this for a moment. Could we translate the first verse like this: *“In a beginning God created the heavens and the earth”*? To ask such a question is really to answer it. How many beginnings are there? Such a thought really is nonsense! Now Hebrew does not have an indefinite article (like our English “a”), so we might be allowed to translate it simply as: *“In beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* This doesn't read well in English and it is natural to supply the definite article. We could be justified in this because some nouns (like proper nouns) are always definite. What about the noun *“beginning”*? Is this definite? Of course there can really only be a single beginning. The root for our word means essentially “head,” as we have already pointed out, and this cannot be taken in any other sense than a singular one. So the case for including the definite article in an English translation is strong. We should also bear in mind the fact that in John 1:1, which is a direct allusion to Genesis 1:1, there is no definite article either, and yet this too is translated with the definite article in English.

205 **Walter C. Kaiser Jr.** *Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament*. 2015. Kregel Publications. P60.

206 **Victor Hamilton.** *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*. 1990. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. P107.

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However I believe there is a very important reason why the article is missing in the first word of Scripture. As we have stated, what we have in Genesis 1:1 is the first word which strictly speaking ought to be translated: *“in beginning.”* Following this we have the phrase: *“God created”* but the verb (he) *“created”* comes before the name of *“God”* (אֱלֹהִים).

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים

← read from here

The words in this opening phrase, which reads literally: *“in beginning (He) created,”* are very closely connected in sound, leading to the thought that it is God alone who created. We shall return to this thought in a moment. However, taking account of the cantillation marks, the very first word of Scripture (*“in (the) beginning”*), is *slightly* disconnected from the next phrase *“God created.”* The tiphchah accent leads the reader to pause and look backwards to what went before. Of course there was nothing before this first word, so either we are being lead to consider what went before *“in the beginning”* as the apostle John does in John 1:1, or perhaps, we are meant to focus on the first word again. In short we are being forced to look closely at this opening word. What is it telling us? We cannot leave the concept that *“God created,”* but at this point we are to focus on *“in beginning.”* It was *“in beginning”* that *“God created.”* Well I need hardly add that we are being led to consider the very source and origin of God's creation. To take this thought a little further, we need to look at what the New Testament has to say on the issue of the agent of creation who is sometimes referred to as the *“beginning.”*

We begin by noting that Christ is often designated as existing before time. Thus, that Christ was *“from the beginning”* is a theme made explicit by the apostle John both in his gospel and in his first letter.²⁰⁷ Christ is also designated as the agent of creation. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, for example, states concerning the Lord Jesus Christ that:

through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.²⁰⁸

Writing to the Ephesians the apostle Paul makes this plainer still:

... God who created all things through Jesus Christ.²⁰⁹

Or take the apostle John's statements in the opening chapter of his gospel:

²⁰⁷ John 1:1f; 1John 1:1; 2:13,14.

²⁰⁸ 1Corinthians 8:6.

²⁰⁹ Ephesians 3:9.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ... **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.²¹⁰

All things were made *“through Him”*! John points this definite fact out also in a negative way: *“and without Him nothing was made that was made,”* so that there are no exceptions, anywhere, or at any time. Later in this opening chapter we note that ten times the Genesis text tells us that God created through His spoken word, (*“and God said”*), so this confirms our understanding that creation comes through, or by means of, the Lord Jesus Christ. But the thing that makes the first word of Genesis 1:1 so important is that what we have here is a direct reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at what the apostle Paul writes to the Colossians:

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. **17** And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. **18** And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. **19** For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, **20** and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.²¹¹

Apart from the reiteration that everything was created *“through Him”* in verse 16, we also have the amazing statement in verse 18 that the Saviour is not just *“the head of the body, the church,”* but also, that He is *“the beginning.”* Now although this is followed in verse 18 with the statement that He is also *“the firstborn from the dead,”* we cannot conclude that these two statements are simply explanations of one another. In other words, Christ is not just the first (*“the beginning”*) because He is *“the firstborn from the dead.”* To argue this would, in effect, make the statement that Christ is *“the beginning”* redundant. The inescapable conclusion here is that Christ is *“the beginning.”* It is to be noted that the Saviour is also referred to as *“the Beginning,”* in the book of Revelation:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”²¹²

And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

210 John 1:1-3,10.

211 Colossians 1:15-20.

212 Revelation 1:8.

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I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.”²¹³

In fact we have an even more wonderful statement given to one of the churches where we find that the Lord Jesus is described as:

... the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.²¹⁴

The Lord is thus *“the beginning of the creation of God.”* Now clearly the Lord Jesus Christ is not a created being.²¹⁵ The statement in Revelation 3:14 is not claiming that. What it is stating is that Christ is the One ***through whom*** creation originates. It is God the Father who created through God the Son. So in Genesis 1:1 where we read *“in beginning – [pause and look back] – God created,”* we are being told that it is through the second person of the blessed Trinity that all things came to be. Now Paul's concern in Colossians, and the Lord's indication in the letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation, is that the believers would know that in Christ's resurrection we have a new creation. But this stupendous fact illustrates and illuminates the *prior fact* that the first creation was also brought about through Christ.

To conclude, the very first word of Scripture, which we are told should be translated *“in beginning,”* points us to Christ! Christ is the first. Christ has the pre-eminence. Christ is the beginning. I wonder if people who study these words recognise that this begins with the Saviour? In fact we also need to point out that in both the Greek and the Hebrew the word *“beginning”* also has the meaning of “ruler” or “head.” Thus we have here a reference to the Lord who is ruler or sovereign over all.

But this is not all there is to say on the matter. We must also combine these thoughts of Christ being the *“beginning”* with the statements in Revelation where we note that Christ is also the *“end”* (the *telos*) which can be rendered as “purpose” or “goal.” Hence Christ truly is the sum and the substance, or as Paul puts it the letter to the Colossians concerning Christ that He alone is the One:

in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.²¹⁶

Moreover, we must further note that the last day, day 7, is all about Christ too. In this seventh day the Lord rested and completed all His work of creation and blessed that day as a Sabbath rest. Hebrews 4 has much to say about this, but for our purpose we simply want to state that Christ is both beginning and end, the agent of creation. We might make mention here of the call that the Lord Jesus made in Matthew 11:

28 Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take

213 Revelation 21:6.

214 Revelation 3:14.

215 There are numerous texts which indicate Christ's eternal nature, among which are John 1:1f and all those in John's gospel where He claims deity (the *“I am”* statements), to name just a few.

216 Colossians 2:3.

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My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.²¹⁷

Only Christ can make such a call! Since God created by a word, which we shall examine shortly, we note that the second person of the trinity is woven throughout the narrative. Given also that the Holy Spirit is present at verse 2 in what appears to be a generating, or birthing role, (hovering over the waters awaiting the creation to be born so-to-speak), we come to the conclusion that the three persons of the holy trinity are all present in creation.

God created (בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים).

We have spent some time on the opening word of Scripture and have pointed out that although it does not stand alone and is not totally disconnected from what follows, it does force us to consider it on its own before we move on. Now, we need to adjust our thinking slightly when considering the next phrase which forms the title of this section. Grammatically the phrase “*God created*” is a unit because the verb is in the third person masculine singular form which connects it to the name of God.²¹⁸ Remember that in the Hebrew the word order is like this (reading from left to right):

In (the) beginning (he) created God the heavens and the earth

However there is some alliteration between the first and the second words in the Hebrew which serves to connect them. Have a look closely at these two Hebrew words:

← read from here

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא

Transliterating into English these we have: *b^ere'shîṭ bārā'*. Looking only at the consonants we have:

בראש ברא

It can be seen that the first three consonants of the first word (*b^ere'shîṭ*) are identical to the three consonants of the second word (*bārā'*). Thus there is an alliterative connection in thought. It was, as we discussed earlier, “*in the beginning*” from which God created (i.e. through Christ the agent of creation). But further, it was indeed “*in the beginning*” when God created. That is, the beginning of creation marks

²¹⁷ Matthew 11:28-30.

²¹⁸ Even though אֱלֹהִים is a plural noun, it is always connected with singular verbs.

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also the beginning of time. God created time at the start of His creative activity.

God created. We note here that this title for God is a plural noun which takes the verb in the singular and masculine form. At this point we cannot elaborate to any depth about the Holy Trinity but we shall have occasion to discuss this most sublime of wonders before the end of this first chapter!

God **created**. The Hebrew word for created is בָּרָא (*bārā'*).²¹⁹ This word is only ever used with God as the subject. Only God can create (בָּרָא). Our human creativity is an action which requires something with which to create, but for God He needs nothing to create. Hence we are justified in declaring that what we have here is creation “ex nihilo,” or creation “from nothing.” Strictly speaking when we speak of “nothing” we are speaking more about an absence of something. This is not really what is meant by creation ex nihilo. What is meant is that God has created all things (the heavens and the earth) without anything or any prior substance, existence or being. Before creation, before Genesis 1:1, all that was, was God. We need to look elsewhere in Scripture to discover what that was like. We are given glimpses of this, but we know enough to state that God was supremely and perfectly at ease and in perfect communion with Himself. There was no need, nor requirement for Him to create all things. If He had continued without creating, He would be perfect and still be God. The fact that He has created has not altered who He is. He is still God who changes not. But wonder of wonders He has created, and here we are discussing this wonderful Being who has done wonders we cannot begin to list, let alone discuss! Glory to His name!

We conclude this section by noting that without exception the word “*created*” is given in English translations as a past tense. Now we must remember that Hebrew does not have past, present and future tenses. It has the perfect and imperfect tenses which can be expressed in a passive, active, causal or reflexive mood. In Genesis 1:1 the verb is in the perfect form which signifies completed action. Thus what we have in the opening verse is not a summary statement of what will come later from verse 3 onwards, but a statement of God's creative power that has ushered in the heavens and the earth from nothing (ex nihilo).

The heavens and the earth (אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ).

We noted earlier that the first word in the Bible does not have the definite article, although this is inconsequential because the noun itself really is a definite noun. There can only be one beginning. Here at the end of the first verse we have two words both with the definite article, and so we have הַשָּׁמַיִם “*the heavens,*” and we have הָאָרֶץ “*the earth.*” The definite article is indicated by the prefixed letter ה. Very

219 This word is most frequent in Isaiah (it is found 19 times compared to 8 times in Genesis). It is found in the following places in Scripture translated as “*create,*” “*created,*” “*creator*”: Genesis 1:1,21,27(x3); 2:3,4; 5:1,2; 6:7; Deuteronomy 4:32; Psalm 51:10; 89:12; 102:18; 104:30; 148:5; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 4:5 40:26,28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1,7,15; 45:7,8,12,18; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17,18; Jeremiah 31:22; Ezekiel 21:30; 28:13,15; Amos 4:13; Malachi 2:10.

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sadly there are some who try and limit these words to Israel's experience.²²⁰ They claim that all that is meant by these words is the promised land and the sky above it. Now those who do this are guilty of a great error. Effectively they are limiting God and designating Him as simply any territorial god that the nations surrounding Israel worshipped. This is the kind of attitude the Rabshakeh expressed when he taunted Judah and king Hezekiah.²²¹ However reading the Scriptures in their entirety, we see otherwise. Here the Lord has spoken and told us that Christ (the beginning), is the One through whom God has created the heavens and the earth. What is meant by these two words is, simply, everything that exists and that has been created. We can be sure that this is so because of John's testimony in John chapter 1. It is worth repeating the first few verses of that chapter here:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.²²²

There is no doubt whatsoever that John is following Genesis 1 in his prologue, and by doing so endorses its truthfulness and reliability. We note that John makes the statement that *“all things”* were created through Christ, and then this is emphasised by the statement that, *“without Him nothing was made that was made.”* In other words, there are no exceptions. *“All things”* means everything, the entire universe including the visible and the invisible. I have included verse 4 to show the connection to Genesis, but also to indicate that those who claim a limited scope for Genesis 1 are in fact blind. They are in darkness and they cannot comprehend the fact that they are.

So we have in Genesis 1:1 the fact that God created all things which in the first verse is divided into the *“earth”* and the *“heavens.”* It is so divided, of course, because mankind inhabits the earth. It is only in the twentieth century that mankind has made it to the moon, which is about a quarter of a million miles from the earth, so we are still pretty much earth-bound. Now in our text there are two words which have been left untranslated (אֵת and וְאֵת). They are in fact both the same word but the second of these has the prefixed waw which is most often translated *“and.”* So why are they untranslated? Well the answer lies in what they serve to indicate. The essential word אֵת is known as the 'sign of the definite direct object.' In many ways this word is rather redundant in Genesis 1:1. We already know which are the definite direct objects because of the order of the words, and we know that they are definite because they both have the definite article prefixed to them. So why do we have the sign of the definite direct object given as well? The answer, I believe, is that the Lord wanted us to be in no doubt that He created **both** the

220 John Sailhamer. *Genesis Unbound*. 1996. Second Edition 2011. Book Villages.

221 2Kings 18:17f; Isaiah 36-37

222 John 1:1-4.

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earth, **and** the heavens. These are two separate realms.

Some have suggested that the phrase “*the heavens and the earth*” should be merely taken as a title and it does not specifically relate to each particular entity. This is wrong. In a short moment our thinking will be directed to the earth in particular. Here, however, the Lord has made plain the idea that all things, and in particular the earth, **and** the heavens have come directly from His hand. Thus in the second part of Genesis 1:1 we have reinforced the idea that God is the Creator.

I want to end this discussion by making an appeal. We ought never speak any more about “nature.” This is a horrible word because it suggests that what God has made is an independent and separate autonomous entity separating God from what He has made, and it thereby divorces God from mankind's thinking. Instead we ought to speak about “creation” for right from the very start God has created all things through Christ. We ought therefore to speak of “creation” and we ought to speak of “Christ” the Creator.

1:2.

In verse 2 we are given a wonderful threefold description of the earth. Sadly the New King James Version has omitted to translate the “*waw*” at the start of verse 2. It should read: “*Now the earth...*” rather than simply: “*The earth...*” Some would use the grammatical break between verses 1 and 2 to insert a time gap, but as we have laboured at length there are no time markers present in these verses.

The construction of verse 2 has been masterfully done to ensure that we have an absolute statement of creation in verse 1. There is a (grammatical) break to show this but no time marker is implied. The threefold description is shown below:

The earth was without form, and void.

Darkness *was* on the face of the deep.

The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Before we start to consider these statements a little, it is pertinent to reiterate the fact that this first section of Genesis is bathed in that word “*good*.” All was good and very good.²²³ The fall that introduced the curse as a result of Adam's sin is yet to come. In these opening two chapters of Genesis we are in an age of purity and sinlessness. We mention these things because many have jumped to conclusions concerning this threefold condition as though some terrible thing had happened. Now it is true that in Scripture darkness often serves to indicate an evil of some kind. But here we are at the very start of all things when no sin had yet been committed and no death reigned. Consequently we cannot interpret the darkness as

223 Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31.

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indicative of an evil presence as a matter of absolute historical fact.²²⁴ So what do these three statements tell us?

The earth was without form, and void.

The first statement tells us the condition of the earth as it came from God *“in the beginning.”* We learn that it was *“without form and void,”* or formless and empty. Just as a square block of marble is unformed prior to the sculptor wielding his chisel, and the blank word document is empty prior to the flow of an author's thoughts, so too the earth was in a state of being not-yet-formed and not-yet-filled. This does not indicate anything other than what we may call a ***primal*** state of being. God has made the raw materials of the universe which He will use to make the world.

It is important to consider the use of the key words of this first statement (translated *“without form and void”*) as they occur in other places of Scriptures. For example, both Hebrew words are found in Jeremiah 4:23:

I beheld the earth, and indeed *it was* without form, and void; and the heavens, they *had* no light.²²⁵

In this passage Jeremiah is speaking about a judgement in which the result would be *“without form and void.”* Now many assume that this result of a judgement leading to the earth being *“without form and void”* is a ***necessary*** condition. In other words, whenever we read this phrase *“without form and void,”* we should ***assume*** that it has come through judgement. But this is a mistaken conclusion. The words in Genesis 1:2 come first, and we should interpret them within their context, that is, God's ***good*** creation, prior to evil entering the universe. The words in Jeremiah are later and these must be interpreted in the light of what is found in Genesis 1:2.

The two Hebrew words are also found in Isaiah 34:11 and again the signification is one of judgement. However as we have sought to show, the first use has no element of judgement within the context at all. The prime meaning is unformed and unfilled. In Genesis 1:2 this unformed and unfilled state arises because of a raw or primal state. In the prophetic passages the same state of being unformed and unfilled has come as a result of judgement. Let us return, for a moment, to our two illustrations of the sculptor and the writer. Imagine that both had created their masterpieces and then some terrible disaster happens. The sculptor having finished his statue is nonplussed as he sees a wrecking ball swinging down shattering his creation into a million pieces! The block of marble was first unformed, then the statue was formed perfectly, and now the crumbled dust is again unformed. The writer has finished his great work

224 Even though the historical nature of the text is clear and uppermost here, we are justified in seeing spiritual indications which we shall examine in some detail towards the end of our examination of Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

225 Jeremiah 4:23.

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but as he types the last word his little child puts his finger on the delete button and now he stares at a blank page.²²⁶ He started with a blank page and now he is back to square one. But in both illustrations we can see that the unformed and the unfilled states can arise either from a primal raw state, or from some judgement (disaster).

Darkness was on the face of the deep.

This second statement tells us that all was dark, and that this unformed and unfilled place was composed of water (the deep). Nothing sinister can be inferred from these facts as we have noted since all is good and very good in this section. Why was water the starting point? From a chemical point of view it does not contain all that is necessary for life, or for all the variety of things we now see in Creation, (rocks of various compositions and so on). But we remind ourselves that our Lord and Saviour created the best of wine from mere water, and so this is not in any way a hindrance to the Lord. In fact the very miracle of creating wine from pure water at the wedding at Cana is a clear pointer towards understanding that the Lord Jesus was Creator. For just as God created all things from the watery mass in Genesis 1:2f, so Jesus our Saviour made wine (with all its parts) from pure water, thereby demonstrating His divine nature.²²⁷

Water is the raw material from which the Lord makes the world. It is impossible to avoid the great significance of water throughout Scripture. Animate life is dependent upon water, and water is also vital for many processes in our world. Without water there can be no life at all. Hence we see that life – human and animate life – is the very essence of the created world. We are not suggesting any form of evolutionary development here. We are merely commenting on the condition of the earth as it was first created in an instant, and before the first 24 hour period had concluded. Unless the Lord was to do something more, this raw material, this deep (water), would remain as such. It signals the coming of life but it is just water at this stage.

Those who see “chaos” here in Genesis 1:2 have been influenced by a secular mindset. Seeing the account of Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a as a polemic written to counter ancient Near East myths, some have seen the mythical ***Tiamat*** reflected in the Biblical word ***tehom*** which is translated as the “*deep*” in our text. However the connection between the pagan false deity (***Tiamat***) and this Hebrew word is non-existent. It is better to see the Ancient Near East countries borrowing from the far more ancient Biblical account.²²⁸ We cannot stress enough the fact that what we have here in Genesis 1:2 is not a chaos. That word usually

226 I am well aware of all the backups that now exist but when I first used a word processor it had none of those luxuries so I beg the reader's indulgence for my weak illustration.

227 John 2:1-12.

228 The Bible, and in particular Genesis, recounts the true history of the world. The truths of God and His salvation were given right at the start and handed down both in written form and by word of mouth. After many years the truths were distorted or added to forming the many pagan myths and ideas we find in the ancient near east. This is why there are so many correspondences between the Bible and ancient myths, but the fore runner and the original is Scripture and Genesis. All other myths are derived from the true source but distorted by the vain fancies of mankind.

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brings to mind a teenager's bedroom, or the result of a toddler rummaging through all their toys! What we do have is that which is unformed and unfilled. It awaits preparation. Imagine, for example, you were about to make a cake. You first gather the ingredients. These gathered ingredients are not yet the cake, but equally they cannot be described as a chaos. They are ordered and structured things (eggs, flour, butter, sugar). Talk of chaos has naturally confused people who struggle to make sense of our now chaotic world. But our chaotic world is in such a state because of sin, evil and wickedness. The original world created by God and described in Genesis 1:2 is not evil, nor is it chaotic. It is simply unformed and unfilled, in a primal state. It is the ingredients God chose to make from nothing, out of which He was going to make the world. The darkness and the deep of Genesis 1:2 are, therefore, not indicative of evil, but are unformed states which God will alter in preparation for man. It is noteworthy that the darkness is named later on, and so forms part of the good order that God intended. Darkness in this way is seen as a benefit to man which provides time for his sleep and recuperation. It only becomes a symbol for evil when man has fallen and evil things are done in secret or under the cover of darkness.

The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The last statement informs us that the Spirit was over the waters hovering like a bird in attendance over its nest. The same word is used in Deuteronomy 32:11 and translated as “*hovers*”:

10 He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. **11** As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, **12** So the Lord alone led him, and *there* was no foreign god with him.²²⁹

In Jeremiah 23:9 a different sense of the word is employed. Here it is translated as “*shake*” and it is used to convey the idea of Jeremiah's bones shaking because of the false prophets around, and because of God's holy word. The essential idea is of this word, then, is “to move quickly,” or “to be affected or moved” in some way, hence the shaking or trembling or fluttering of wings. In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit of God is moving in an affected way over the surface of the waters of the deep, hence the idea of a bird hovering.

This is the first time we come across the Holy Spirit in the Bible, and the image we are given is of a bird in flight brooding over the objects of affection. Now we also read of the Holy Spirit being likened to a dove in Luke's account at Christ's baptism:

And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came

229 Deuteronomy 32:10-12.

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from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”²³⁰

The other gospel writers also mention this fact.²³¹ Given that the Second Person of the trinity is the agent of creation, and given that He is also styled as “*the beginning*” by the New Testament writers, we note also from various Scriptures that the Lord is the source of life and in Him are to be found rivers of living waters.²³² It is particularly noteworthy to see that there is a close connection between Christ's provision, and the action and work of the Holy Spirit. On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, Christ pointed out that whoever believed in Him would experience “*rivers of living water*” flowing from their heart, but in this statement it is clear that the Lord intended us to understand a reference to the Holy Spirit.²³³ These images of water and the Holy Spirit as a bird all seem to connect and are found in these opening verses of Genesis. Thus in Genesis 1:2 we have the Holy Spirit represented as a bird hovering over the waters of initial creation.

Right at the very start the presence of the Lord is seen. God is no mere spectator like those who favour a distant and deist-like god, but is intimately involved in creation always. Then also, with the Spirit of God ***hovering***, we are in anticipation that something is about to happen. All is prepared ready to be made into a final formed and filled state. Such care and consideration as evinced by this figure is meant to make us see that the world is not just a physical object as we are pressed to think about it by modern science. The intimate relation of God to his world is a running theme throughout the Scriptures. From the idea that in Christ all things consist and that he alone upholds all things, to the picture of God's care evoked in the Psalms as He provides for creatures and guides the weather and systems of the oceans, we are brought to a much more inter-connected view of creation, which is not really appreciated nor even understood by materialistically minded modern man.²³⁴

1:3-5.

After the initial threefold condition of the world which has come from the initial creative activity of God in Genesis 1:1, we then see God's activity carried out through the agency of the word. As we have already noted in table 1.2, the Lord speaks on ten occasions and in this first instance we find the Lord creating light. As soon as God speaks, the action He willed comes to pass. The Psalmist describes this immediate action for us in these words:

230 Luke 3:22.

231 Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; John 1:32.

232 John 1:4; 4:10; 7:37,38.

233 John 7:37,38.

234 Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:1-3; Psalm 104:3f.

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By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. ... For He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and it stood fast.²³⁵

What the Lord “*spoke*” is that which is “*done*” immediately. It will be seen that the word “*done*” is in italics signifying that the word is not in the original Hebrew but has been added to make sense in English. The text literally reads: “*He spoke and it was,*” which is reminiscent of what we find in Genesis 1.²³⁶ It is this instantaneous action which marks the action as divine and supernatural. When in the New Testament we see Christ perform miracles it is no wonder that those who saw him do such mighty acts were quick to recognise that it must have been from the hand of the Lord. i.e. the Creator God. His control over the wind and the sea, his turning water into wine, the feeding of a multitude, the healing miracles, and the raising from the dead, all demonstrated his divine creative nature. Those who would twist this first section of Genesis to accommodate an evolutionary narrative have thereby removed the connection between God's speaking action which creates, and the Word of God made flesh showing forth His glory through the many wonders he performed.

And thus light is made. We shall consider the spiritual application of this later but for now we note that the ability to see is made for mankind who is yet to be made. Visible light forms only a very small part of the spectrum of waves which scientists call the “electromagnetic spectrum.” The Genesis text does not tell us any of this detail, for that is something we have been able to work out as we investigate God's world. For those who may have forgotten their school science, the electromagnetic spectrum (as modern scientists describe it anyway), stretches from the extremely short wavelength-high frequency waves found in radioactive nuclei of some atoms that emit gamma rays, all the way to the very long wavelength-low frequency waves we use to send radio signals. In between, on a continuous spectrum are found, X-rays, Infra Red, visible light, ultra-violet and microwaves. All of these electromagnetic waves have their own especial uses and dangers, but all are part of the same family of light waves known as the “electromagnetic spectrum.” At once we ought to see how limited we are, for visible light (displayed in the continuous variety of colours from red to violet shown in a rainbow) is only a tiny fraction of the whole. Some animals can see outside the visible spectrum. We now make use of many other electromagnetic waves outside those we can actually see, but we can only *see* a very small portion of the whole spectrum of information that streams throughout the universe. Of course there may be all sorts of other things, events, and information for which we not only do not have the apparatus (i.e. human senses to detect), but also have no means physically of probing using machines. Although the text only refers to the visible part of the spectrum – that which we can see – it is clear that God would have made the whole electromagnetic spectrum at this time.

235 Psalm 33:6,9

236 The phrase: “*and it was so*” occurs at: Genesis 1:7,9,11,15,24,30.

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Now God declares the light that he has made to be “*good.*” When we consider the amazing use we have been able to make of light, and of all the other electromagnetic waves as well, we ought to give thanks and praise for God's great provision. But we must offer a word of caution here because we are operating at this point in time within a world that has fallen, and this world has been placed under a curse. This means that many things that were once beneficial and good have now come to be detrimental to us. For example, the high frequency-short wavelength end of the spectrum carry large amounts of energy which are damaging to humans. Gamma rays are used to destroy tumours and cancers but they also destroy healthy tissue. X-rays are useful as an investigative tool, but we monitor carefully how many X-rays a person may be exposed to as these harm living cells. Was the “*good*” world that God created before the fall one in which gamma rays from the sun rained down on human life? Has the electromagnetic spectrum always been as it is now, or is it operating in a fallen (more harmful) way, that now contributes to the ageing and decay process we are all suffering? These questions cannot be comprehensively answered because we have scant information about the perfection of the initial world. All we know is that it was “*good,*” and now the world is subject to the curse and so cannot be described as good.

We next read that God's creation of physical light (and by implication the whole electromagnetic spectrum), was subjected to some form of control. Here we are only taught about dividing the light from the darkness so that the former is now called “*day*” and the latter “*night.*” We have already mentioned the fact that some people have a problem with light being created before the sun, which was made on day four. Consequently these folk either abandon the text altogether and limit it to teaching homely truths, or they add to the text by making it accord with current scientific thinking. Those who follow the latter course believe that light must *always* come from a star like our sun, and so they then assume that the sun must have been created earlier but only *appeared* on day 4. Such thinking is hopeless because we are then holding our science (human knowledge) as arbiter over Scripture. If we want to follow modern science and its theories and ideas we ought to abandon exegesis altogether! However the better way is to let the text speak for itself and then adjust the modern scientific ideas to fit in with the Bible. I know this is frowned upon by many in the Christian world, but it is hopeless folly to try and meld and mix Scripture with science (or any other human philosophy). Let me make it quite clear, however, that I am not advocating any abandonment of what we may call observed or experimental data. We have just spoken of the wonders of the electromagnetic spectrum of which we all make much use daily. Now the theory underlying our understanding of the electromagnetic spectrum does not cut across the theology of Scripture in any way. This is primarily because the theory is based on empirical findings, the things we observe and experience either directly or through the use of probes. As such the theory formulated does not have to be taken as a real thing or as displaying a reality. It may merely be instrumental or useful. But

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many theories formulated by scientists are ideas and schemes which do cut across the theology that comes out of Scripture. It is not always easy to see this. One of the great problems is that modern science has usurped observational and experimental data and has claimed the right to determine its meaning or significance. If you take the data that comes from science and build a theory that the scientific community does not generally accept, you will be considered foolish. You may be wholly consistent in your treatment of the data and experimental findings, but if it goes against the accepted norm it will be rejected by the scientific world. As Christians we must live with this paradox. Our task is to honour God and declare His goodness.

And so the light is separated from the darkness in such a way that we have an evening and then a morning to complete the first day of 24 hours. From this we may assume that somehow the earth (still in its unformed state) is now spinning on its axis completing one revolution every 24 hours. There may, however, be some other explanation that accords with the data we have at hand. Given that we *now* have an earth which rotates once every 24 hours, and this revolution causes the day-night cycle because of exposure to the sun's rays, our assumption may well be justified. But there may be another explanation of which we have no knowledge. All we are told is that the earth is a watery deep, and that day and night exist with the former being a period of light, and the latter a period of dark. Perhaps it is best to leave it there. As to having light in existence before the sun or any stars were made, it is clearly the intention of the Lord to tell us that stars like our sun are certainly not the *first* cause of light. Light came first, and the fact that stars like our sun radiate light is derivative.

We must conclude this part with a word on God's naming the light and the dark as “*day*” and “*night*.” Naming something indicates ownership and authority. It also indicates superior knowledge and understanding. Modern science seeks to do this today by determining the precise definitions of things. Sadly, long gone are the days when scientists considered in their exploration of things that they were thinking God's thoughts after him, or, in other words, were naming things in accord with his glory.²³⁷ The scientist of today has no thought of God whatsoever. The fact that on occasion their work or their efforts do display God's glory owes much to the Lord and his creation, and little to the ingenuity of man. More often than not scientists define things to suit their ideas and schemes. Let us realise, though, that God alone has the right to name things and to characterise them. Just as an artist or designer can name their creation, the Lord who owns all and has power over all, has the right to name his created things.

These thoughts lead us to consider the name (character and reputation) that you and I have. What has God named us? The Bible talks about those who have returned to the Lord as having a new name.²³⁸ It also speaks about those whom the Lord knows as his especial people and it also mentions those whom he

237 **Johannes Kepler** (1571 – 1630) was the first to use this expression “thinking God's thoughts after Him.”
238 Revelation 2:17.

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never knew.²³⁹ I wonder if you are known by the Lord and have been given a new name, a new character?

Day 2 (1:6-8).

On the second day we have the second of God's spoken actions. This time the *"firmament"* is created. Much needless ink has been spilled on this term, especially by those who want to belittle the Scriptures. These benighted ones consider that Scripture is merely aping the likes of the Babylonian or the Egyptian cosmologies which have the sky as a solid dome above the earth. However the Hebrew term translated *"firmament"* merely means "something spread out" hence should be translated as "expanse." The expanse is then named *"heaven."*

In this part we are told that there is an expanse called *"heaven,"* above which are the waters above it, and below which are the waters below it. It may be natural to consider this in a simplistic two dimensional way but if we assume a spherical shape for the earth to begin with, we arrive at a ball of deep waters surrounded by a global expanse (heaven) and then a canopy of water surrounding the entire globe. What are we to make of this arrangement? Well perhaps the best place to start is to leave the physical arrangement for the moment and consider what the intention of these words might be. I am not suggesting that the physical arrangement is unimportant, but rather that the intention here is deeper.²⁴⁰

The Lord is concerned on day 2 to make an expanse, a region of space or existence which separates two bodies of water. Immediately our attention is drawn to the story of the flood where these two sources would form the basis for God's judgement on the first world.²⁴¹ Of course this was for later on when judgement was necessary, but what of now in the original *"good,"* world? God has two bodies of water separated by a great gulf, and expanse. There are waters which are under the expanse, or heaven. Then there are the waters which are above the expanse, or above heaven. Two separated bodies of water. What do these teach us?

Well it is safe to say that life requires water. I do not mean to imply that life arises from water as modern science continuously claims, but that water is essential for life to continue. Could it be here that we have two separate realms of life? There is life under heaven, that is, on the earth, which would be created on days 4, 5 and 6.²⁴² Then there is life above heaven, (the expanse), which would include the angelic beings. Between these two there is an unbridgeable gap which could only be spanned by the Lord Himself. In these few verses then, we have the division of the heavenly realm from the earthly realm.

239 John 10:27; Matthew 7:23.

240 Many creation scientists have used various mathematical models to imagine what effect an ocean above and encircling the earth may have had on the inhabitants of our globe. My problem with these is that no one really knows all the parameters and we do not know what systems operated prior to the fall. See, for example:

<https://www.icr.org/article/what-were-waters-above-firmament>

<https://answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/state-of-canopy-model/>

241 Genesis 7:11.

242 Vegetation is not considered "life" in the Bible because it does not have *"nephesh."*

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Day 3 (1:9-13).

In this section the solid land is formed and this is surrounded by the seas. It would appear from the text that there was only one land mass and only one sea. We cannot say more than this but what we must note is that the shape of land and sea of this newly created world would be altered beyond recognition after the flood of Genesis 6 to 9. It is therefore hopeless for anyone to attempt to locate pre-flood sites in today's landscape. We shall return to this when we come to discuss the flood later on.

The opening idea is that the waters would be gathered or collected into one place and that dryness would be seen. Translators add the word *“land”* so that it reads that the *“dry land”* would appear, but essentially it is just the concept of dryness that is meant to appear. This is the opposite of the wetness of the water. So once again we have a separation and a distinction between water and its opposite *“dry land.”* Whereas water is necessary for life, dry land is necessary for stability and firmness. And so the Lord establishes a solid and stable platform for the next actions to be carried out. Again the Lord names these two things He has made by His spoken word, indicating His ownership and authority over each one. The dryness (*“dry land”*) is called *“earth”* signifying its solidity and firmness. The gathered waters are to be known as *“seas,”* which indicates fluidity and variation.

Next we find the Lord speaking a variety of vegetation into being. Here we find that the ability to reproduce is contained within these new forms of existence. The whole variety of vegetation is encompassed by the terms, *“grass,” “herb,”* and *“fruit tree.”* Verse 11 can be rendered thus (my translation):

Let the earth sprout forth grass,
herb producing seed,
fruit tree which produces fruit according to its kind within which its seed is in it upon the earth

The earth – the firmness – will bring forth vegetation which will be *“upon the earth,”* that is, covering it. The phrase which I have translated *“according to its kind within which its seed is in it,”* seems to be a statement which applies to all types of vegetation and not just to the fruit trees. Verse 12 supports this, as we have the idea expressed there that the herb will also produce *“seed according to its kind.”* The idea of each type of vegetation forming fruit which is *“according to its kind”* previews the idea that God will make mankind *“in His image.”* There is a clear pattern here. What the Lord makes needs no alteration or variation. Each type of vegetation is fine as it is, but will be perpetuated through the seeds it produces. Even though *“grass”* does not have the word *“seed”* directly connected with it, we can assume that each type of vegetation produces seeds.

In our text we have three different types of vegetation, (עֵץ פֶּרִי *“fruit tree,”* עֶשֶׂב *“herb,”* דְּשָׁא *“grass,”* and עֵץ פֶּרִי

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“fruit tree”). Grass indicates first growth or tender grass. Herb suggests a plant that is full grown and in full seed ready for food. Fruit tree is self explanatory. The three suggest a progression both in appearance from the young and tender grass to the full grown herbs used for food, and also indicate an increase in size, from the lowly grasses to the large trees. These would provide not just food, but also cover and habitats for the creatures which will be made.

The key concepts here are: the seed which is like its parent (after its kind), the idea of producing fruit, and growth. Perpetuation, food sources and development are all expressed in the concept of vegetation.

Day 4 (1:14-19).

On day 1 God made *“light,”* indicating His intention to communicate and help us understand. But now He makes *“lights.”* The light had to come first because the Lord did not want us to worship that which we take for the source of light (sun, moon and stars). The lights were *“in the firmament of heaven,”* which places them beneath the waters above the heavens. The word rendered *“lights”* is plural and indicates luminaries. We next read about the functional purpose of these luminaries. Their main purpose is to make a distinction between the day and the night. We are not informed how this will occur, although we know from our experience now that daylight is governed by the sun and night by the moon. We are then informed of further purposes for these luminaries. They are to indicate three different things. First they are for *“signs.”* This is significant. We often think of these heavenly bodies merely in terms of them marking time and dispensing light, but their first purpose is to indicate something, to act as a signpost. Signs point to something other than themselves. This means that they are not in themselves to be considered, but we should look to what they point. They are also given to mark *“seasons,”* by which is meant the idea of appointed or set times. These luminaries mark time periods and specifically for *“days,”* and for *“years.”* It is interesting that “months” are not mentioned. We understand a day as being the revolution of the earth on its axis so that we face the sun and then away from the sun, and a year as the passage of time marked by the orbit of the earth around the sun. Verse 15 ends with a statement of the main function of the luminaries, which was *“to give light on the earth.”* Of course whilst the sun gives its own light, the moon would only give out a reflected light. This is significant. Just as the Son of God radiates life and light as He is the source of light, His body, the church, acts to reflect the light that He shines, just as the moon reflects the sun's light.

After introducing the idea of heavenly bodies in a general sense, we are then brought to consider the sun and moon, although here they are simply referred to as the *“two great lights,”* one of which is called the *“greater light,”* and the other is termed the *“lesser light.”* It is interesting that the apparent sizes of the sun and the moon are close, so the idea that the sun is the larger of the two must have come

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from revelation. The stars are given an incidental mention as being those heavenly bodies which govern the night. Verse 17 tells us that the Lord “*set*” these heavenly bodies in the expanse of the heavens in order to illuminate the earth. Light was necessary to help that which was growing on the earth. We gain growth and fruit from the sun, in the main, but also from the light reflected by the moon and even the limited light from the stars. The word “*set*” is the word which is frequently rendered as “gift.” These lights are thus given by the grace of God. This word “*set*” may also indicate that whilst the sun, moon and stars are situated in the distant space beyond the waters which were above the expanse, their light is “*set*” or given within the firmament.

Day 5 (1:10-23).

On day 5 we have the first life made. It is life in the sea and air. First we are introduced to the sea creatures. The significant thing here is the rich abundance and variety that has been made. The waters were to be filled to abundance and were to teem with an abundance of life. This is how the Lord creates. He does not just make a few things but an immense variety, and He fills the seas with life. Another way of translating the first clause is “*let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures.*” The emphasis is clearly on abundance!

We note that here also we have the first use of the word ***nephesh***, or the “breathing creature” or one which has animate life (a soul). As far as the birds and other flying creatures are concerned we read that they are to fly “*above the earth*” and (literally) “*above the surface of the expanse of the heavens.*” That is, they are to fly over the earth and on the surface of the heavens, that is, just above the earth.

In verse 21 we learn that all of these creatures of the sea and the air were “*created.*” That is they were made directly by God from nothing, just as the heavens and the earth were in Genesis 1:1. In this verse we have three distinct types, “*great sea creatures,*” “*every living thing that moves,*” and “*every winged bird.*” These are very wide ranging in extent suggesting from the very largest to the most tiny, and all of these are described as being distinct in “*kind.*” We understand that this term is not always equivalent to our modern term “species,” but the point is clear. There are distinct types of creatures. A whale is different in kind to a shark, and a squid is also different in kind to an octopus.

Having outlined the great variety and abundance of created life we come to a series of questions. Why did God create such creatures? Why did He create some to live in the seas, some to live on the land, and some to take to the air? A number of ideas and thoughts have come to me on the question as to why God created the fish, the birds and the animals. These are presented here simply as I have thought of them. You should not treat these as perfect or as definitive. Try all things by Scripture and hold fast to what is good.

First of all, it may simply be to show us that life can indeed occupy different spaces or arenas,

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from water, to air to land. In other words there is much more to life than the merely human. This may lead to the thought of the angelic host who live in a very different realm to the one we inhabit. If there are creatures that can live in water as we humans cannot, why not creatures in a very different realm? Then further, it may also serve to highlight that man is limited. Man may be the pinnacle of creation – being made in the image of God – but he can only live and dwell on the land, not in the waters, and he cannot fly (at least not without some machines). Third, it must also be to teach us about the great extent and range of creatures (that is, creation's diversity). From the smallest microbe and the weirdest insect, to the mightiest ocean dweller and high flying bird. The extent and range is simply stupendous. Such a broad range amongst the variety of creatures points us to the fact that within humanity (all one type of creature because all human) we have a great range and diversity of talents, gifting, personality, interests and outlooks. Every human being is created by God and their inner beings have been made individually.²⁴³ The New Testament also tells us that the Spirit of God distributes gifts to His people as He wills, and also that believers are given talents according to their ability.²⁴⁴ Whilst we have only One Gospel, there are multitudes of reflectors. Just as a diamond has many facets radiating the light incident upon it, so each believer radiates the goodness and glory of God (the gospel) in a unique way and in a unique setting.

Yet another reason for such a great variety of creatures is simply to show the greatness of God and His delight in creating. Considering the creation of birds, these were probably to help draw out attention heavenwards. There are many references in Scripture to birds soaring in the heavens, for example.²⁴⁵ Turning towards the creatures of the sea we cannot help but ponder whether these have some connection with death, or perhaps spiritual death. When Jonah was swallowed by the great fish his experience is likened to death.²⁴⁶ It is also interesting that evangelism is spoken of in terms of fishing, so that the disciples were termed *“fishers of men.”*²⁴⁷ The sea is often indicative of evil in a spiritual sense.²⁴⁸ Further we discover that there is no sea in the new heaven and earth to come, because all will be right, good and true and there will be no evil nor sin present.²⁴⁹ It is to be remembered that where the angels are described they have features of the created world (wings, ox, eagle, lion, man) but no connection with creatures of the seas.²⁵⁰ Perhaps in another light we ought to remember that the fish and sea creatures make their homes in the waters, but that we are in need of such water for our very lives.

Considering the three different regions of the earth, under the seas, on the land, and in the air we are brought to consider the three states of man. First we consider the sea and the depths which signifies a

243 Psalm 33:15.

244 Matthew 25:15; 1Corinthians 12:11.

245 Job 39:27; Isaiah 40:31.

246 Jonah 2:1f.

247 Matthew 4:19.

248 Psalm 65:9. I remind the reader that looking at Genesis 1 in *historical* terms the sea is good and does not indicate evil, but here we are thinking of the spiritual reference point

249 Revelation 21:1.

250 See Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1 etc.

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maelstrom of existence indicative of wickedness and evil.²⁵¹ Then the land is the centre of life where eating, drinking, marrying and the normal activities of life are played out. Finally we have the skies which signify freedom, flight, and the idea of raising up. Thus man was dead in trespasses and sins (in the turmoil of the raging seas), but was then raised to new life onto the rock and stability of the land, and awaits his final redemption in heaven above.

I offer these thoughts merely as beginning points. The reader is encouraged to think through these and discard them as fanciful if he (or she) so wills. We have not time to look at any of the details of these creatures. But it would pay immense dividends if the reader examined several creatures asking the question, what does this tell me about God, the one who designed and made each creature? Why, for example, are the digestive systems so similar and yet different between each kind in the mammal kingdom? It would be heartening to see Christians producing documentary films which not only describe such beautiful beasts but also gives something of the reason and purpose for their existence in relation to the Creator.

For the first time in creation week we read that the Lord *“blessed”* these creatures. They are to be numerous and cover the earth. The Lord wanted them to fill the earth so that their presence was everywhere to be seen.

Day 6 (1:24-31).

At the start of day 6 the Lord creates all the land creatures, from the smallest creepy crawlies to the largest mammals. These were to come forth at the Lord's command from the earth itself. At once we note that there is no mention of a relationship between the various animals as supposed by modern science. The only connection all creatures have is their origin from the *“earth.”* Why was it that the Lord created all the various and differing creatures from the same source, the earth? Well we may, of course, note that all the constituent elements of all living things are those we can find within the earth. The substances we are all made from, including the animals, are the elements that are found in the earth's crust. Now these elements were called to become arranged into the variety of living things, each with its own set of organs, tissues and systems. Many of these overlap, of course, but they are not related in any ancestral sense. God has used certain designs repeatedly, has modified designs for different species or kinds, and used novel designs for many too. This line of study of the animal kingdom is sorely needed in our day to counter the godless nonsense that comes from a secular view of the world. The Lord brought forth all the animals from the raw materials in the earth, and whilst they all are made up of the same basic elements (carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, sulphur, phosphorus and so on), they are all different in kind. Wonderful truths!

251 Again I remind the reader that there was no evil at this time. However all things God has made are for our instruction.

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After making the amazing variety of animals that cover the land surface, there is a marked change in the way in which the Lord works. Up to now the Lord has spoken a word, the will of God is performed, and the created thing has come forth. But now we have something very different. We are brought to hear a conversation. This conversation is one within the Godhead:

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁵²

God (אֱלֹהִים *'ēlohîm*), is a plural noun which usually takes verbs in the singular masculine form. This is highly significant and leads us towards a doctrine of the Trinity. We cannot develop this in any detail at this point but the general teaching throughout the Scriptures is that we have three distinct persons in a single Godhead. But in this verse we must consider the use of the third person plurals, “*us*” and “*our*.” Here is the first indication that God comprises more than one personality. Up to this point we have only had two explicit names mentioned, namely “*God*,” (throughout the text), and the “*Spirit of God*,” in Genesis 1:2. We have mentioned the fact that God spoke creation into being so that the “*Word*” is also present but this is not explicit in the text.²⁵³ Here in verse 26 we have the idea of a plurality of beings within the Godhead.

God, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), commune within the Godhead and decide to man mankind. There are two major points of interest within verse 26. First we find that God was to make mankind with direct reference, and in close connection to, Himself. Second mankind are given a specific purpose and function which outweighs and over-shines any other purposes thus far stated (to multiply, fill and so on). Thus mankind was:

[1] Created by God in His image and likeness.

*Let Us make man
in Our image,
according to Our likeness;*

[2] Created to have dominion, (rule), over all of that created on earth.

*let them have dominion
over the fish of the sea,
over the birds of the air, and
over the cattle,
over all the earth and
over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth*

252 Genesis 1:26.

253 John 1:1f.

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We must take some thought as to what was intended by God's creating man in His *“image”* and *“likeness.”* Is there a distinction between these two words?

The word *“image”* (צֶלֶם *tselem*) comes from the idea of casting a shadow. It thus depicts an object in shadow form. It is used elsewhere to describe Adam's sons. They were made in Adam's image because they resembled him in appearance and form.²⁵⁴ The word is also used to represent moulded idols which were made to represent either man or beast.²⁵⁵ The Philistines, for example, made images of the tumours and mice that plagued them.²⁵⁶ The word has also been used to describe a picture, or mural, painted on a wall and used as an object of worship.²⁵⁷ In one place we find that the word is used to show that God despises the image of the wicked.²⁵⁸

The word *“likeness”* (דְּמוּת *děmuwth*), is used to suggest or describe resemblance or equivalence between two things.²⁵⁹ The word is used extensively by Ezekiel when he is labouring to describe the vision of God he saw. The vision he had was described using everyday objects which people may recognise. The faces of the *“living creatures”* he later calls *“Cherubim,”* resembled or had the appearance of a *“lion,”* a *“man,”* an *“ox,”* and an *“eagle.”* Other terms such as *“burning coals of fire,”* *“torches going back and forth,”* *“beryl,”* *“a wheel in the middle of a wheel,”* *“an awesome crystal,”* *“a throne,”* and *“sapphire stone,”* are used as analogies.²⁶⁰

Thus in these two terms we have the idea of a shadow formed which is an image of the object cast by light, and then also the idea of analogy or a description using familiar everyday objects (this is like that). Although the two terms are not identical in meaning as we have discussed, they have been used interchangeably on occasion. *“Likeness”* is the weaker and broader term. An animal may bear the *“likeness”* of man in certain features, but is not the *“image”* of man. There are two key points we need to remember when we discuss this subject of image and likeness. First we note that man is made *“male and female.”*²⁶¹ In the second place man is made in the image of *“God,”* that is, not just of one Person in the Godhead. In other words, the Trinity is in view. This means that there is something about the image which is relational. Man (male and female) is made in the image of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). We cannot consider this idea of the image or likeness without conceiving of the idea of relationships, and specifically of these in the Godhead. We note further, that Adam is referred to in Luke's gospel as the *“son of God,”* and so the idea of the image and likeness involving relationship is confirmed.²⁶²

One other important aspect of this whole subject is to understand that the whole of man is

254 Genesis 5:3.

255 Numbers 33:52; 2Kings 11:18; 2Chronicles 23:17; Ezekiel 7:20; 16:17; Amos 5:26.

256 1Samuel 6:5,11.

257 Ezekiel 23:14

258 Psalm 73:20.

259 Genesis 5:1,3; Isaiah 40:18; Ezekiel 1:5,10,13,16,22,26,28; 8:2; 10:1,10,21,22.

260 Ezekiel 1:10,13,16,22,26.

261 Genesis 1:27.

262 Luke 3:38.

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described as being made in the image of God, so we are not warranted to limit this identity to certain features or aspects of what man is. Somehow this image-bearing nature is to be seen in man's body, soul and spirit. Some consider man as a tripartite being with the spirit and soul being separate entities.²⁶³ However the relationship between the spirit of a man and his soul is complex. Sometimes the two are used interchangeably. At other times they are distinct. It seems that we will never fathom the full sense or meaning of our basic composition, but enough is known from Scripture for us to conclude that we have a physical and a spiritual component. How these connect and interact is a mystery. The spiritual part is complex and includes what Scripture refers to as “*spirit,*” “*soul,*” “*mind,*” “*heart,*” “*bowels,*” and “*reins.*”²⁶⁴ Our human faculties, such as emotions, passions, desires, thoughts, knowing, will, intellect and so on are also to be included in a discussion of the image. All of these are aspects of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God. Just as God is three personalities in perfect union and harmony, so man is a union of separate personalities in a loving relationship. The emphasis here is the idea of personality. We think, we love, we consider, we have desire, we have compassion and so on because we are made in the image of God.

A third and final aspect to the image and likeness comes from a consideration of Adam and Woman being made “*good,*” that is, before their fall into sin. Adam was created sinless, so that knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness were also components of the image bearing capacity man had. As Solomon made plain, God made man “*upright*” but altogether we have sought out alternative world views and schemes in departing from God.²⁶⁵

We learn something of this nature of the image when we consider the new creation. The apostle Paul refers to the nature of the image in connection with new birth on two separate occasions:

... and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.²⁶⁶

... and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.²⁶⁷

The new man was created in “*true righteousness and holiness*” according to Ephesians 4:24, and is “*renewed in knowledge*” according to Colossians 3:10. From these it is safe to assume that knowledge, righteousness, and holiness are all a part of what is meant by the terms “*image*” and “*likeness.*”

263 Hebrews 4:12 and 1Thessalonians 5:23 give this impression.

264 An examination of the places where such words as: “*spirit,*” “*soul,*” “*mind,*” “*heart,*” “*bowels,*” “*reins,*” and so on which speak of the inner being would show this complexity.

265 Ecclesiastes 7:29.

266 Ephesians 4:24.

267 Colossians 3:10.

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To conclude. The concept of being made in the image and likeness of God is seen first in the relationships between male and female as a reflection of those within the Godhead. Second we note that our very constitution reflects aspects of God's being. Just as He is the ultimate personality, we too are persons able to relate both to God and to one another. We have the ability to think, to plan, and to have compassion just like God does. We have a spirit, soul, and body which all derive their being from the Being of God. Third we understand that righteousness, holiness and true knowledge are all features contained within the idea of being made in God's image and likeness. One outcome of being created in the image and likeness of God is that man was given dominion. For just as God rules over all things, so man is given a similar responsibility. Thus man (male and female) were given the charge of ruling and having dominion over all creatures on the earth, and over all the earth as well. Stewardship is our job description. Thus God blessed man (male and female) and charged them with being fruitful and of subduing the earth and ruling over all the animals. Man and the animals were given plants and vegetation as food, and the conclusion when all was finished was that it was *“very good.”* The dominion and rule that mankind was to exercise was, of course, in subjection to God. There is no thought here that man is given autonomy or independence as though they could rule from their own means. The whole concept of being made in the image and likeness of God retains that relational feature. Mankind is thus to rule and have dominion in subordination to God. We can conclude from these thoughts that our very constitution has within it the desire to be accountable or given to something. Obviously in the beginning it was to be accountability to God. Man was to have dominion and be in relationship with God. Today, sadly, we observe that the relationship between man and God has been broken, but that does not mean that our constitutional make-up is destroyed, for we give ourselves to something or someone and we feel ourselves accountable to them too. In such we fail and fall. Our allegiance to things or people other than God yields sorrow and sadness, because it is not to God, the perfect and beautiful One who made us. As Augustine bishop of Hippo once said (354 – 430):

*“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”*²⁶⁸

Day 7 (2:1-4a).

The last day of the first week was the seventh. On the seventh day God finished His work of creation, and He rested from that particular work. It is for this reason that the number seven is used to indicate completion. It is instructive to take note of how often the Lord indicates both these two ideas of completion and of rest. We remember that there is no past, present or future tense in Hebrew, but there is a perfect tense indicating completed action. We read that:

268 **Augustine.** *Confessions.*

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- [1] The heavens and the earth “*were finished*” (2:1).
- [2] On the seventh day God “*ended His work*” (2:2).
- [3] The work was that “*which He had done*” (2:2).
- [4] God “*rested on the seventh day*” (from all His work) (2:2).
- [5] The work was that “*which He had done*” (2:2) [repeated phrase – see [3]]
- [6] God “*rested from all His work*” (2:3).
- [7] The work was that “*which God had created and made*” (2:3).
- [8] The heavens and the earth “*were created*” (2:4).

It is thus extremely clear that God finished all the work of creation because He stopped this work and rested from it. What could be clearer than that? Why then do so many Christians get duped into believing that modern science may be correct when it demands that humans have evolved over millions of years and are still in a state of flux? How can this be in light of what we read in Genesis 2:1-4a? It is impossible. When God states in 8 separate ways that creation is a finished event why would we ever think otherwise?

God created all things in the space of six literal days and then rested. This time frame of six work days and a day of rest serves as the pattern for mankind. In the same way we are to work for six days and then rest on the seventh. We see this enshrined in the law by the Lord Himself.²⁶⁹ The seven-day week is not something derived from astronomical observations as a day, a month and a year are. The origin for a seven-day week only comes from the fact that God created all things in such a time. Furthermore, we deny that this text is derived from ancient Near East sources and affirm that it is primary and from which other versions (such as the *Enuma Elish*, or the *Gilgamesh Epic* for example), are derivative. All who argue otherwise demonstrate a fear of man and a desire for reputation. Tremper Longman III is a case in point. Referring to the flood story in a work purporting to aid believers in their reading of Genesis he wrote:

*“... it is highly unlikely that the Gilgamesh Epic borrowed from the written account of the flood in the Bible. In the first place, the Mesopotamian tradition has its roots in Mesopotamian literature long before the written account in Genesis. Furthermore, rarely does an advanced culture borrow from an inferior culture.”*²⁷⁰

We may ask: by what standard does Tremper Longman III measure the status of any culture? Surely the culture whose origin is God's revelation ought to be seen as more advanced? Even more significantly, the idea that the greater Mesopotamian cultures are superior and that they were the ones from which Biblical

269 Exodus 20:8-11.

270 Tremper Longman III. *How to read Genesis*. 2005. IVP Academic. P86.

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writers borrowed information pours scorn and opprobrium upon God Himself. We answer Mr. Longman by replying that it is extremely unlikely that the Lord God would merely baptise the mythological accounts of ancient Mesopotamia to reveal the truths of the flood (and of creation).

Perhaps the most wonderful thing about this last day is that the Lord *“blessed”* this day and *“sanctified it,”* or set it apart as especial. There is something of a celebration here. This day is special because God has finished all He intended to do. Do we not have the same joy and celebration when we complete some tasks? The Sabbath day of rest is therefore a day of joy and celebration! It points to heaven's wonders and glory. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews has much to say about entering God's rest which requires us to cease our works. How we need to put all our trust in Him! God has created, and His work of creation, which involved all three persons in the Godhead, is finished to perfection. This whole account gives us an immense sense of security and peace. The God of the universe (all heaven and earth) has done this work and is satisfied with it to pronounce it *“very good.”*²⁷¹ This is God's nature. The works He does are always good and complete. Such thoughts give us great confidence in Him. If He made things like this, then what is there to worry about?

Once again we observe that our current culture operates with a very different view. According to modern man things are in a state of flux, or a state of evolution. Can God have used such a means? Having looked at this opening section of Genesis such a thought is unthinkable. God made all things in the space of six literal days and then rested from His work on the seventh day. This gives us great confidence that God knows what He is doing and can complete the work He intends. Evolution is a very different story (actually a myth). It requires struggle, death, disease and disaster as mechanisms to spur new developments. Those who attempt to meld evolution with the text of Genesis end up destroying the message of Genesis. Could we have confidence in a Being who used the cruelties of death, disease and disaster as required by evolution to bring about humankind? What sort of “god” engineers things such as parasitism? Atheists rightly argue that a “god” who planned the horrible death of one creature that another may thrive as morally indefensible.²⁷² But what we have in the first part of Genesis is very different to the story of evolution. God has made all things, and all creatures exist in harmony with one another. They have been provided with vegetation for food. There is no predation, no struggle and no “survival of the fittest,” for all has been made complete and very good.

271 Genesis 1:31.

272 When God subjected creation to futility (Romans 8:20) then predation and parasitism result because of a break-down of the good and ordered relationships which God has made. We shall consider this when we come to Genesis 3.

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A note on creation being “good” and “very good.”

We have learned from Scripture that the heavens and the earth (by which we understand the entire universe) has been created in six literal days and was described by God as being “good” on six occasions.²⁷³ But what is meant by this term “good”? The word has a wide range of meanings and has been translated in the following ways:

Good, kind, upright.

Beautiful, pleasant, agreeable.

Well-favoured, prosperous, happy, cheerful.

Welfare, distinguished, excelling.

At the end of creation God declared all things to be “very good.”²⁷⁴ The modifier “very” signifies “with strength” or “with force” and indicates that all was really good in its entirety – a wholehearted goodness with nothing amiss. We shall consider the fall of mankind when we come to Genesis 3 but we need to understand at this juncture that we inhabit a fallen world within which things cannot be described as being “good.” In the initial creation all was pristine and perfect, but now we experience a creation that has been subjected to futility.²⁷⁵

To understand what the term “good” means we must begin by considering its opposite. The polar opposite of “good” is, of course, “evil.” Therefore, in describing all things as “good” we understand that there is in consequence no taint, nor hint of evil or wickedness anywhere in God's initial creation. Another way of considering the meaning of creation as being “good” comes from the fact that the Lord God who made all things is also described by the same term.²⁷⁶ God is “good” and does “good” the Psalmist tells us.²⁷⁷ As a result when He created all things it is necessarily inevitable that what He created must equally be good. We discover elsewhere in Scripture that God's goodness is continual and is great.²⁷⁸ The concept of goodness is understandably linked with righteousness and holiness as the following Scriptures clearly demonstrate:

He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.²⁷⁹

So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness.²⁸⁰

273 Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25.

274 Genesis 1:31.

275 Romans 8:20.

276 Psalm 34:8; 73:1; 100:5; 135:3; 145:9; Jeremiah 33:11; Lamentations 3:25; Nahum 1:7.

277 Psalm 119:68.

278 Psalm 31:19; 52:1.

279 Psalm 33:5.

280 Proverbs

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We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.²⁸¹

Goodness is also wonderfully linked with abundance, a theme we picked up when considering God's creation of the great diversity of animate life:

You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip *with* abundance.²⁸²

We really ought to have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the term “*good*,” especially when we consider the statement the Lord God Himself made through the prophet Micah:

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?²⁸³

Taking all of these thoughts together we come to recognise that goodness is that which is able to cohere and cohabit with God, for He is good, and so as a result, must be holy, righteous, just, bountiful (abundant) and having no scent or inkling of evil or wickedness. Sin, rebellion, iniquity, transgression and all things associated with evil are totally absent from a universe which is described as “*good*.” It is therefore inconceivable that the “good God” would ever make anything that was awkward, twisted, crooked, broken, dishevelled or bad. All things fitted together perfectly and operated in harmony. Nothing came up as less than expected, all was efficient, and nothing jarred or gave cause for concern.²⁸⁴

Given these thoughts it is quite remarkable that many commentators want to qualify the term “*good*” as it is found in Genesis 1. It is claimed, for example by some, that when the Lord God said to Adam that it was “*not good*” that man was alone, this was indicative of things not being absolutely perfect.²⁸⁵ We shall consider this in detail when we come to Genesis 2. Others imagine situations within the initial created order as necessarily being less than absolute perfection because of the nature of how things appear to work now. Thus many commentators suggest that animal predation must have been part of the original created order, because otherwise populations of producers and lower order creatures would spiral out of control. These thoughts are desperate and owe nothing to Biblical exegesis and everything to the prevailing views espoused by modern science. When God created all things in the beginning all was in perfect harmony, *because* God is by very nature good, and all He ever does is good. It may be beyond our imagination and surely outside our experience when we try and picture such initial harmony and bliss, but

281 Psalm 65:4.

282 Psalm 65:11.

283 Micah 6:8.

284 This is not to assert that anyone born with physical disability is of any less value than those born without such disability. All born of Adam are born in sin (“*I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*” Psalm 51:5) and so are distorted and alienated from God. It is just that some also suffer physical disabilities too.

285 Genesis 2:18.

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we are not justified in extrapolating what we know now, as being that which was experienced at the beginning. Predation was not the experience of the animal world prior to the fall. As one proof for this consider the fact that when all things will be made new on that final day, then the animal kingdom will exist without predation in perfect harmony:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.
11:6²⁸⁶

“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust *shall be* the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” says the Lord.²⁸⁷

When were the angels created?

In Genesis 2:1 we read the following:

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished

The Hebrew term “*host*” (צְבָאָה *ṣābā’*) comes from the verb “to go forth” and indicates a large company (and most frequently an army).²⁸⁸ In this verse the term “*host*” refers to both heaven and earth so we can assume that the angelic heavenly beings are signified as well as all the creatures of the earth. Exodus 20:11 confirms the comprehensive nature of creation, which would include the invisible angelic host as well as the visible creatures found exclusively on earth, but the inclusion of angels in God's creative action is also very clear in the New Testament.²⁸⁹

In the NKJV the phrase “*host of heaven*” occurs 19 times in Scripture.²⁹⁰ The term serves to indicate both the sun, moon and stars of the night sky, but also those who stand by the Lord in glory, that is the angels.²⁹¹ The heavenly host are those created by the very word of God and were created as God's ministers to do all “*His pleasure*.”²⁹² This intimate connection between the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars) and God's angels is something which cannot really be missed as you read Scripture.²⁹³ One Scripture which gives us further information comes in the book of Job where the Lord questions Job on

286 Isaiah 11:6.

287 Isaiah 65:25.

288 Examples where the term represents armies come at: Genesis 21:22,32; Judges 4:2; 1Samuel 12:9; 14:50; 2Samuel 2:8; 3:23. Places where the Israelite camps are mentioned and described as “*armies*” in the NKJV occur at: Numbers 1:52; 2:4,6,8 etc.

289 John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1,2.

290 Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 1Kings 22:19; 2Kings 17:16; 21:3,5; 23:4,5; 2Chronicles 18:18; 33:3,5; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 34:4; Jeremiah 8:2; 19:13; 33:22; Daniel 8:10; Zephaniah 1:5; Acts 7:42.

291 Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 1Kings 22:19; 2Chronicles 18:18.

292 Psalm 103:20,21.

293 Job 38:7; Psalm 148:2,3; Revelation 6:13; 8:10-12; 9:1; 12:4.

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the nature of true wisdom:

4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?²⁹⁴

The first word given as *“foundations”* indicates the founding or establishing of something, so we might render this as: “where were you when I built the earth?” The second word given as *“foundations”* actually means a base or a pedestal. Now the question which is important here is: when precisely did the Lord build the earth and set it on a foundation? The answer would seem to be when the Lord *“called the dry land Earth”* in Genesis 1:10. It might be suggested that the reference in Job speaks of the initial creation of the earth *“in the beginning,”* the condition of which is described in Genesis 1:2. However, because of the reference to founding and foundations it seems best to take the reference in Job to Genesis 1:9,10 when the dry land was made by the gathering of the seas and named *“Earth”* by the Lord. Now at this juncture the Lord informs us that *“the morning stars”* began to sing, and that *“the sons of God shouted for joy”* as they witnessed what God was doing. Earlier in the book of Job it is clear that the phrase *“sons of God”* signifies the angelic host among whom was Satan the adversary accuser.²⁹⁵ Thus the angels were present at least as early as the beginning of day three. Of course we are not told the precise details concerning the creation of the angels, but we are told about the details of our creation. We remind ourselves that all through creation week everything was *“good”* so we can assume that the fall of Satan had not yet occurred. Genesis 2 records the details of the creation of Adam and Woman on day 6, but the details given concerning Eden and the rivers that flowed might have been gathered in subsequent days following Adam and Woman's marriage. When we come to Genesis 3:1f, we then discover that Satan had fallen, but how much time had elapsed from Genesis 2 to Genesis 3 is unclear.

Thus it would seem that the angelic host were created somewhere between the beginning (Genesis 1:1) and day three of creation week, and the fall of Satan and his host must have occurred some time after creation week, after day seven.

Some spiritual applications of the first section. Or, a gospel history.

The vital teaching of the first section of Genesis is not so much that we would have an answer against the modern viewpoints which all deny God as Creator, but rather is given to us to show forth the Lord's great mercy and grace.²⁹⁶ We start here by mentioning that all Scripture is not just God's word as

294 Job 38:4-7.

295 Job 1:6.

296 Nevertheless the first chapter does answer the errors of our modern age concerning origins.

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we have already made plain, but it also has just one main subject, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, (His very person and work). Consider the following testimonies from Scripture that Scripture is primarily about the Lord Jesus:

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. ²⁹⁷

44 Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” **45** And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. **46** Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, **47** and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” ²⁹⁸

... the Scriptures ... testify of Me. ²⁹⁹

Thus we are exhorted from these statements to consider that the essential message of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is that it teaches us about the Lord Jesus. Now we have already pointed out that ten times we read that “*God said,*” so that the Word of God, the very agent of creation is here present in the text, but is there any more? Well I believe that the very purpose of the history we have here is meant to teach us about our very salvation. We shall look at the key words and themes we find in this opening section of Genesis.

Clues to salvation in creation week.

The great problem with creation week is not that it describes creation in such a short space of time compared to modern science, but that it took so long. If you examine what God did on each day (I say this reverently) it doesn't amount to a great deal, especially when you remember that what God speaks comes to pass instantaneously. ³⁰⁰ Now we have already mentioned one clear purpose as to why the Lord took six days to create all things and then rest on the seventh. The book of Exodus makes this very clear. ³⁰¹ The Lord took this length of time to serve as a pattern for man's life. Six days we should do our work, and then on the seventh we should rest from our work. However this purpose alone seems to be somewhat thin. It is important, but it does not seem to be all that could be said. Is there another purpose to the way in which the Lord created all things?

Now I would argue very strongly that the Genesis account records history. We have established this both from the use of the Hebrew word, *tôledôt*, and from the fact that the Hebrew writing is cast in

297 Luke 24:27.

298 Luke 24:44-47.

299 John 5:39.

300 Psalm 33:6,9. What God “*spoke*” is “*done*” immediately. See also Isaiah 55:10,11.

301 Exodus 20:8-11.

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narrative historical form. Further we must re-emphasise the fact that all of creation was initially “good” and “very good,” by which we mean that there was no sin, death or evil present. These things only came in from Genesis 3 at the fall of man.

But there is one other thing that must point out here, and that is, that the very concept of salvation and deliverance were no afterthought. These things were all planned in eternity. We read that Christ as Saviour was “foreordained before the foundation of the world,” and that He is described not just as “the Lamb of God,” but “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”³⁰² The kingdom, which will be given for those blessed of the Father, is described as “the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”³⁰³ Those to be saved were chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world,” and their names were written in the Book of Life “from the foundation of the world.”³⁰⁴ These Scriptures indicate that salvation was no after-thought. Salvation was planned from eternity. It is this fact which helps us to unpick the intention of the Lord in making creation the way He did.

And so given that creation was initially “good” and “very good,” so that there is no hint of evil, sin, sickness, error, failing, falseness, futility and so on to be found within it at all, we must not allow any thought of death, disaster, decay or disease to seep into the historical account. And yet in all the good creation that God has carried out, He also teaches us about the salvation we enjoy! Since salvation was planned in eternity we are enabled to draw spiritual insights on this great subject from the whole history of creation (see table 1.6).

Raw and empty.

After the initial instantaneous creation of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 we are told of the threefold condition of the earth in Genesis 1:2. It was in an unformed raw-material state, and it was empty. It was also dark and made of just water. We thus have a dark watery mass which is in a raw or primitive state and in need of filling. But then significantly we note that the Spirit of God was hovering above this primal earth. And so to start with, we have our lost state perfectly described. We are a watery mass, a fluid and ever-changing and unstable body. I repeat that from the historical point of view sin has yet to enter the world, but here in the pre-fall world the nature of God's rescue plan is being set forth. We are depicted as this watery mass. We oscillate from this view to that, from this whim to another, tossed about on the sea and wave of variations that characterise this present fallen world. We are unformed and not yet made into what the Lord wants us to be. We are unfilled because we are empty and lost. We are in darkness and have no understanding about the Lord and our condition. But the Spirit of God is hovering above all of this waiting to act!

302 1Peter 1:20; John 1:29; Revelation 13:8.

303 Matthew 25:34.

304 Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 17:8.

Table 1.6: Main themes in Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

DAY	Main theme or idea	Text
1	The initial condition of the earth is described by three clauses The earth was without form, and void (unformed and unfilled) Darkness <i>was</i> on the face of the deep The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters .	1:2
	Light created and described as “good.”	1:3,4
	Light separated from darkness and both named (day and night).	1:4,5
2	A firmament – expanse – created in the midst of the waters which separated waters above from waters below.	1:6,7
	The firmament is named heaven.	1:8
3	Waters beneath the expanse gathered together into a single place.	1:9
	Dry (land) becomes visible.	1:9
	Dry (land) named earth and gathered waters named seas and this was “good.”	1:10
	Grass, herb yielding seed and fruit trees with fruit bearing seeds created and this was “good.”	1:11,12
4	Light bearers , specifically the greater (sun) and lesser (moon) created in the expanse of the heavens along with stars to separate day from night and to be for signs, seasons, days and years, and to give light on earth and this was “good.”	1:14-18
5	An abundance of living creatures including great sea creatures and every living thing , created in the waters and an abundance of flying creatures created to fly above the earth across the face of the expanse – all of this was “good” and God blessed them all.	1:20-22
6	The earth commanded to bring forth a variety of living creatures each according to its kind and this was “good.”	1:24,25
	Man created in the Image of God and made male and female to have dominion over creation and to be fruitful and multiply, and all living beings (including man) given all vegetation as food in verses.	1:26-30
	God pronounced all creation as “very good.”	1:31
7	Creation completed and God rests from His work of creation and blesses the seventh day.	2:1-3

Now, although the apostle John speaks of those who have been converted in his first epistle, we find that such as are called “*children of God*,” are yet to be fully formed:

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has **not yet been revealed what we shall be**, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.³⁰⁵

Elsewhere in John's first epistle he addresses Christians at different stages of life calling them “*little*

305 1John 3:2.

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*children,” “young men,” and “fathers.”*³⁰⁶ Furthermore, the apostle Paul spoke to the Galatian Christians about Christ being *“formed”* in them.³⁰⁷ This highlights the unformed state of unbelievers. They are a watery mass.

Light.

So what is the very first thing that the Lord does? He says: *“let there be light”* and immediately there was light. Now when we consult the New Testament we find that our Saviour is described as the *“light of the world.”* This title is one that is not just given to Him, but is one which He makes plain Himself.³⁰⁸ To be clear, the apostle John describes Christ as the source of life and that this life was for the light of men.³⁰⁹ Christ is then described as the *“True Light”* which illumines all mankind.³¹⁰ This is further explained by Christ's incarnation, and a statement following in which the apostle John states that:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.³¹¹

This Christ, the very light of the world, comes and makes plain exactly whom the Father is.

This is what God does to a person who is lost and who is being saved. He opens their eyes with a word. We remember how often the Lord opened the eyes of the blind, and this follows from how He began His ministry when He quoted Isaiah 61:³¹²

17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: **18** “The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to *the* poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to *the* captives and recovery of sight to *the* blind, *to* set at liberty those who are oppressed; **19** to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”³¹³

But it is not just a physical thing, for these occasions of healing were signposts to the spiritual idea of receiving sight and understanding. When the apostle Paul had to give an account of himself to king Agrippa, he describes the charge given him by the Lord:

306 1John 2:12-14.

307 Galatians 4:19.

308 John 8:12; 9:5.

309 John 1:4,5.

310 John 1:9.

311 John 1:18.

312 Matthew 9:27-31; Mark 8:22f; 10:49f; Luke 18:35f; John 9:1f.

313 Luke 4:17-19.

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17 I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.³¹⁴

He was sent to preach the message so that people's eyes would be opened so that they could turn from the darkness to the light and receive forgiveness of sins. And so here in Genesis 1:3,4 we note that the Lord brings light in order that the unformed and raw watery mass may “see.” We find a clear connection between God's action in creating light and our new birth which brings understanding in Paul's words to the Corinthian believers:

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.³¹⁵

Just as God commanded the light on day one, so the same Lord has given bright illuminating light and understanding to the believer. How wonderful this is. The first thing the Lord does is to open our eyes so that we can see things as they truly are. We realise what is right and true, and what is wrong and false. It is staggering! The Lord Himself is the light which illumines all, but His word also acts as a light to us:³¹⁶

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.³¹⁷

Discernment.

But the word of God does much more than simply illuminate us, because it helps us make distinctions between things, and helps us see what is the right path and the wrong one:

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.³¹⁸

So in Genesis 1:4,5 we note that the Lord separates light from darkness and He names the former “*day*,” and the later “*night*.” All through Scripture we find that “day” is used to depict what is done in righteousness, open for all to see, whilst “night” is used to illustrate what is evil, or done in shame at the dead of night.³¹⁹

314 Acts 26:17,18.

315 2Coritnhians 4:6.

316 John 8:12; 9:5.

317 Psalm 119:105.

318 Hebrews 4:12.

319 Proverbs 2:13; 7:6-9; John 3:19; Ephesians 5:11; 6:12.

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You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.³²⁰

Again let me repeat that at the point of time we are considering (before the fall of Genesis 3) the darkness and light do not signify or indicate a state of evil or judgement existing at that time. But looking at the creation narrative as prophetic we can see that they point to what is to come.

This theme of separation continues with the work of day 2. Initially there is just a mass of water but now we have two bodies of water separated by an *“firmament”* (really an expanse), or a spread-out region. Thus there is a mass of water above the expanse and one below it. Here the main focus of the verse is in the separation. The expanse operates as a large gulf between the two bodies. And so we are taught to make a distinction between that which is heavenly (above the expanse), and that which is of the earth (below the expanse). In a physical sense there is nothing different about the two masses of water, but from a spiritual point-of-view, the believer must distinguish between what is from above, and what is from below. Only the Lord of glory, our Saviour Jesus Christ could bridge this gap. John the Baptist speaks of Christ in this way:

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.³²¹

And the Lord Himself reiterated this point in His discussion with the Jews:

And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”³²²

The new believer whose eyes are now opened begins to make distinctions and comes to understand that this world's systems are diametrically opposed to the Kingdom of God.

Dry (land) – the rock.

It is quite curious how the appearance of land is described in Genesis 1:9. The waters beneath the expanse are *“gathered together”* and this enables the dry land to appear or to be seen. Thus the work God does is mainly to limit the fluid motion of the waters. They naturally flow outwards but they are being restrained or *“gathered together.”* Physically this may have happened by a raising of the mass of rock and earth, but we are not told this and so ought not to speculate. However the key point to note is that the waters are restrained and limited into *“one place.”* Perhaps what is more curious is the fact that we do not have the word “land” in the text. The word used is simply *“dry.”* The Hebrew word is most often used to

320 1Thessalonians 5:5.

321 John 3:31.

322 John 8:23.

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signify dry ground or land but essentially the word means “*dry*” or the “absence of water.” The waters are gathered to a single area and dryness is left in the place vacated. Clearly because the dry (land) is named “*Earth*” in Genesis 1:10 we are entitled to see this as solid ground, (rocks, earth and so on).

What is the significance of this? Well I think the obvious point is that now we have somewhere where a foot may be planted in safety. The variable and altering waters have been gathered away to allow the dry land to appear. Of course there are no feet as yet for the animals and man are not yet created. However we have a firm ground and a firm resting place. This signals a new stage in the development of a Christian's life. Their eyes have been opened, they begin to discern what is right and wrong, what is earthly and what is heavenly, and now they rest on solid ground. There are foundations being laid for their walk of faith. The apostle Paul speaks of being “*grounded and rooted in love*” by which he intimates that love is the firm foundation for the Christian's walk.³²³ To know the love of Christ for us and to experience the love of brothers and sisters, and to express such love too is the beginning of the life of faith. We read in many places in the Scriptures about having good foundations. We are exhorted to build on solid ground and not on sand by the Lord, and the best foundation is, of course, Christ Himself for He is “*The Rock*.”³²⁴ Then also we note that what the apostles and prophets bring to us, that is, the very word of God, is also our foundation.³²⁵ Further, looked at from another point of view, we should note that repentance from dead works, and faith toward God are twin foundational actions.³²⁶ How important it is to have good and solid foundations!

Fruitfulness and growth.

After the dry ground and the waters have been separated and named, we find next that the Lord causes the earth to sprout forth vegetation and plant-life. The order of plants described in Genesis 1:11,12 moves from the youngest and smallest (fresh new-formed grass), to the largest and longest lived (trees that bear fruit). Furthermore we are introduced to the concept of a seed, or something which enables the reproduction of an original by growth. The spiritual application is clear. Once grounded and rooted, the new believer can now grow and bear fruit. Remember that it was the Spirit of God who hovered over the raw watery unformed mass, so we take it that the action of God here is by His Spirit. We are thus reminded of the wonderful fruit of the Spirit which Paul spoke of to the Galatians:

323 Ephesians 3:17. Paul mixes his metaphors here using the idea of a ground or foundation which points towards a building, and then also of being “*rooted*” signifying the idea of a plant which grows in good soil, watered and bathed in sunlight. See also Colossians 1:23.

324 Matthew 7:24-27; 1Corinthians 3:11. The Lord our Rock can be seen at: Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8; Deuteronomy 32:4,18,30,31; Psalm 18:2,31,46; 28:1; 31:3; 42:9; 62:7; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; 144:1; 1Corinthians 10:4.

325 Ephesians 2:20.

326 Hebrews 6:1.

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22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.³²⁷

We are commanded to bear fruit and, in fact, as branches of the True Vine which is Christ, the Father will prune us and cut off all that is a waste and of no consequence in order that we will bear fruit.³²⁸ These fruits will be evident, but, as Peter points out, we must do our part too:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, **3** as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, **4** by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. **5** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, **6** to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, **7** to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. **8** For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these things is short sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; **11** for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.³²⁹

We have been given everything we need to live a godly life on planet earth (verse 3). This provision comes to us through our knowledge of Christ, which comes through the precious promises (i.e. Scripture – verse 4). But then we must be diligent to work these things out. Verses 5 to 7 teach us that we need to work out our faith by “adding” to it. This is not a brilliant translation for the word translated “*add to*” really means “supply in.” Thus our faith needs to be unpacked. We have had faith to repent of sin and believe in Christ. We need to work this faith out and supply from it the various virtues expressed in verses 5 to 7. Thus growth and fruit-bearing are the next vital stage in the development of a new Christian.

Light bearers.

The work of day 4 brings us to consider light again. Many people are perplexed that light was created before the sun and the moon. Further, many are equally disturbed by the fact that neither the sun nor the moon are named as such here. We simply have “*the greater light,*” and “*the lesser light.*” The stars are an added afterthought.³³⁰ These 'troubles' are trifling. The supreme and almighty God has the perfect right to create things in whatever order He chooses fit. How we understand the sun as being a light

327 Galatians 5:22,23.

328 John 15:1-8.

329 2Peter 1:2-11.

330 Genesis 1:16.

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source whilst the moon is not in our day through modern science means nothing at all.³³¹ God is great and He has revealed to us the history of how He has created all things. Light was made first because that is vital for lost sinners to come to life! At this point in the text we learn that there are two special light-bearers (or luminaries), The “*greater light*” is the most majestic one, whilst the “*lesser light*” is the smaller or less worthy one. We learn by these things that there is one source of light, (the “*greater*”), and this source of light speaks of Christ Himself. We are not to consider the sun as something to be worshipped in any way at all. But just as the sun shines light from its very core to the earth, so also the Lord Jesus illuminates us and radiates truth and beauty to needy souls.

After stating and then explaining that the heavens declare God's glory, Psalm 19 continues by describing the course of the sun as it traverses the skies.³³² Its heat radiates and reaches all on earth. The sun is described both as a “*bridegroom*” and as a “*strong man*.”³³³ Both of these designations are ones which describe the Lord Jesus Christ.³³⁴ Christ is also described as the radiance of God or the “*brightness of His glory*” which is like the sunbeams emanating from the sun, and as “*The Sun of Righteousness*.”³³⁵ In the opening chapter of Revelation we read that Christ's “*countenance was like the sun shining in its strength*.”³³⁶ And so the sun radiates light and heat to the earth and this is a picture of Christ's illuminating the world.

Then we move to the “*lesser light*.” This is the moon. It merely reflects light from the sun. However at some full moons we get such light that it is light enough to read by! Well the church is meant by this figure or simile. We as the people of God are also described as the light of the world by our Saviour, but the light we emanate is the reflected light that comes from Christ!³³⁷

What do these light-bearers do along with the stars? They mark times and seasons, and they separate night from day. The sun shines in the day. Its light is limited to that period, but the moon can continue reflecting light through the night. As believers we are to continue reflecting the light of Christ as night draws. The Lord Jesus was here on earth for a short period of time. Now, as long as there is still a day we can call “today,” it is the church of Jesus Christ which continues His mission, and whilst the world lies in darkness, they can see the light of Christ reflected in the lives of the saints:

331 I do not mean to belittle the right investigation of things today using our God-given faculties. What I intend is that our understanding of things as they now are bears little import to what we find in Genesis 1. This is because God made all things good to start with and they are now fallen, and also because the Lord in structuring things in the way He shows in Genesis 1, has lessons He wants us to learn.

332 Psalm 19:1-6.

333 Psalm 19:5.

334 Psalm 80:17; Matthew 9:15; 12:29f; Mark 2:19,20; 3:27f; Luke 11:21; John 3:29; Revelation 18:8

335 Hebrews 1:3; Malachi 4:2.

336 Revelation 1:16.

337 Matthew 5:14.

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For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.³³⁸

What an amazing privilege! To be the ambassador of Christ and to reflect the beauty of the Lord.

Life abundant.

On days 5 and 6 the Lord created all kinds of creatures. These are described as *“living”* creatures because they have what the plants and vegetation lack, namely ***nephesh***, or animate life. The wonderful thing about this life is its *“abundance.”* The waters were to *“abound with an abundance”* of different life forms. The multiplication of terms indicates a super-abundance. Another way of translating verse 20 is: *“let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures.”* These phrases remind us of why Christ came. He states:

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.³³⁹

We learn a number of key lessons here. First we note that life is that which only God supplies. It is something which He has, and which He gives in no short measure. As the apostle John puts it *“in Him was life,”* and He has come to give not just life, but eternal life.³⁴⁰ When the Lord created the animals that would swarm in the sea, air and on the land, He made such a variety that it can only be described with superlatives – abounding with abundance. Our God is no mean Creator, and He is no mean giver. The grace He showers on the world is stupendous! Now second, we observe that there are three main regions where this abundance of life is made and placed, the sky, the land, and in the seas. Some living things can dwell in the waters where all is turbulence and motion. Other creatures are enabled to fly, and some reach incredible heights, whilst others can fly for long periods of time. But many dwell on the land. We learn from these facts that only certain types of life can exist in each of the different regions. To be specific, fish cannot fly, and bats cannot dive and dwell under the sea. Each creature has its own place, and each creature lives within the confines and limits suited to its design. In the same way each Christian has their own sphere of service and operation. To change the metaphor to a more widely known New Testament one, we could think of the body of Christ.³⁴¹ Each member is a part of the body, just as each animal is part of the whole of creation. There is as much variety in the body of Christ, the church, as there is in the created animal world. Each person created in the image of God is unique. We note that God actually fashions the hearts of each individually, and that it is the Spirit of God who gives and dispenses His gifts

338 2Corinthians 4:6.

339 John 10:10.

340 John 1:4; 3:15,16,36; 4:14,36; 5:21,26 etc.

341 1Corinthians 12:12f.

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as He sees fit.³⁴² Each Christian also has talents given of God by which he or she must do business. Thus the entire church is like the entire animal creation, with each doing what it was designed for and each reflecting the glory and goodness of God.

Man.

The pinnacle of creation is man. Man was made male and female, in the image of God. We pause to remind ourselves that there are only these two genders and together they reflect God in image. Now here we are brought immediately to consider the greater image bearer, Christ Himself. But note that Christ is not *made* in the image of God, but rather we read that:

... the glory of Christ, ... is the image of God.³⁴³

Christ is:

... the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.³⁴⁴

Christ is also:

... the express image of His [God's] person ...³⁴⁵

Whereas Adam and Woman were to have dominion over all creation, Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords!³⁴⁶ He is the true King over the entire universe. This was prophesied in Daniel:

13 I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. **14** Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.³⁴⁷

And we see this same theme described in the New Testament:

And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church.³⁴⁸

342 Psalm 33:15; 1Corinthians 12:7.

343 2Corinthians 4:4.

344 Colossians 1:15.

345 Hebrews 1:3.

346 Revelation 17:14; 19:16.

347 Daniel 7:13,14.

348 Ephesians 1:22.

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... Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. ...³⁴⁹

That which the first Adam would lose from Genesis 3, the second and last Adam would not just regain, but would be given even more by being elevated to even greater rule.

Now the rule of Christ is not like the rule of earthly kings. These earthly rulers are despotic and tyrannical. The King over all rules with the rod of His mouth, and with the countenance of His eyes. This is the rule of love, although it is not a sentimental love. This love is one which does not diminish truth or justice. We are brought back to the gospel again:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.³⁵⁰

Final rest.

The first part of the history of the world ends on day 7 when God rested from all His work of creation. We hesitate to add that God does not need to rest, nor does He stop working.³⁵¹ However that He rested ***from His work of creation*** tells us not just that evolution is hopelessly wrong and should never be countenanced even for one nanosecond, but also that there is an end in sight. Here we are brought to consider the final rest, heaven's wonders.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews spent some time exhorting his readers to make sure that they enter the rest of God. Many were barred from entry because of their unbelief.³⁵² We are to enter this rest of God by ceasing from our works:

9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. **10** For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.³⁵³

Now the writer of the letter to the Hebrews exhorts his readers to make sure that they enter God's rest. He states: ***“let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest.”***³⁵⁴ Then the writer reminds his readers that God's word is like a surgical knife which penetrates our deepest thoughts and motives. He urges them, on account of the great High Priest Jesus the Son of God, ***“who has passed through the heavens,”*** to hold fast to their confession and trust, and concludes with these amazing words:³⁵⁵

349 Revelation 1:5.

350 John 3:16,17.

351 John 5:17; Psalm 121:4.

352 Hebrews 3:18,19.

353 Hebrews 4:9,10.

354 Hebrews 4:11.

355 Hebrews 4:14.

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Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.³⁵⁶

The apostle Peter exhorts us in a similar way:

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.³⁵⁷

The final rest awaits us in heaven's glory. David the Psalmist also suggests that our rest will come in heaven's glory:

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. **10** For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. **11** You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forever more.³⁵⁸

But until then, a day we anticipate with joy and earnest expectation, we are called upon to receive the rest which Christ brings for weary and troubled souls on a daily basis.³⁵⁹

356 Hebrews 4:16.

357 1Peter 1:13.

358 Psalm 16:9-11.

359 Matthew 11:28-30. See also, for example, Isaiah 26:3 and Philippians 4:6,7.

Chapter 2.

Creation of man examined. (2:4b-25).

Analysis.

In the day that the Lord God

made the earth and the heavens,

5 before any plant of the field was in the earth
and before any herb of the field had grown.

For the Lord God

had not caused it to rain on the earth,
and *there was* no man to till the ground;

6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the Lord God

formed man *of* the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living being.

8 The Lord God

planted a garden eastward in Eden, and
there He put the man whom He had formed.

9 And out of the ground the Lord God

made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.
The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and
the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 Now a river

went out of Eden to water the garden, and
from there it parted and became four riverheads.

11 The name of the first *is* Pishon;

it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold. 12 And the gold of that land
is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone *are* there.

13 The name of the second river *is* Gihon;

it *is* the one which goes around the whole land of Cush.

14 The name of the third river *is* Hiddekel;

it *is* the one which goes toward the east of Assyria.

The fourth river *is* the Euphrates.

15 Then the Lord God

took the man
and put him in the garden of Eden
to tend and keep it.

16 And the Lord God

commanded the man, saying,

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,
for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

18 And the Lord God said,

“*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

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- 19** Out of the ground the Lord God formed
every beast of the field and
every bird of the air, and
brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them.
And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name.
- 20** So Adam gave names
to all cattle,
to the birds of the air, and
to every beast of the field.
But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.
- 21** And the Lord God
caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept;
and He
took one of his ribs,
and closed up the flesh in its place.
- 22** Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He
made into a woman,
and He
brought her to the man.
- 23** And Adam said:
“this *is* now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”
- 24** Therefore a man shall
leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,
and they shall become one flesh.
- 25** And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The second part of the book of Genesis runs from Genesis 2:4b to Genesis 5:1a. This is the book that we consider was written by Adam and handed down through the ages. It falls into three main parts as follows:

- [1] The creation of Adam and Woman. (Genesis 2:4b-25).
- [2] The fall of Adam and Woman. (Genesis 3:1-24).
- [3] The offspring of Adam and Eve, the mother of all living. (Genesis 4:1-5:1a).

We shall examine the first section in this chapter, and the other two sections in the following two chapters. Before doing this we begin with a few general comments. First it is to be noted that from Genesis 2:4b right through to Genesis 5:1a we have deity designated by the two titles “*Lord God*.” In the first section we were introduced simply to “*God*,” (*Elohim*), but now it is the “*Lord God*” (*Yēhovah Elohim*). The frequency of use is shown below:

“*Lord God*” [20 times]: Genesis 2:4,5,7,8,9,15,16,18,19,21,22; 3:1,8(x2),9,13,14,21,22,23.

“*Lord*” [10 times]: Genesis 4:1,3,4,6,9,13,15(x2),16,26.

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“God” (spoken by the serpent) [5 times]: Genesis 3:1(x2),3,5(x2).

A second important point to note is that the narrative sometimes appears to be retrospective. For example in Genesis 2:4a-24 the narrative describes lands and places. These could have been named by the Lord God prior to Adam being created. Or, alternatively, Adam may have named these areas some time afterwards and then included them in his narrative (all under the inspiration of God).

[1] The creation of Adam and Woman. (Genesis 2:4b-25).

In the first section we are brought face-to-face with ***exactly*** how the Lord God made Adam and Woman. Remember Genesis is historical truth. Genesis 2:4b-25 can be divided into two parts:

[a] The creation of Adam and the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:4b-17).

[b] The creation of Woman. (Genesis 2:18-25).

[a] The creation of Adam and the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:4b-17).

This text falls into three parts. First (Genesis 2:4b-9), we are given the account of God's creation of Adam and the garden of Eden. Second (Genesis 2:10-14), we read about the river that watered the garden in Eden and its four tributaries. In the third (Genesis 2:15-17), we read about Adam's commission.

[i] The creation of Adam. (Genesis 2:4b-9).

Whilst 2:7 is the main focus, it is set within a context. We can view the text structurally as follows:

In the day that the **Lord God**

made the earth and the heavens,

5 before any plant of the field was in the earth
and before any herb of the field had grown.

For the **Lord God**

had not caused it to rain on the earth,
and *there was* no man to till the ground;

6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the **Lord God**

formed man *of* the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living being.

8 The **Lord God**

planted a garden eastward in Eden, and
there He put the man whom He had formed.

9 And **out of the ground** the **Lord God**

made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and
the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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This arrangement serves to highlight the focal point of this passage which is the creation of man in Genesis 2:7. Viewing the above structure we see first that we are given the setting and the time frame for what we are going to be told. This covers 2:4b and 2:5a. Next in 2:5b and 2:6 we are informed of the conditions on the earth and how the land was watered. At the centre of this section is the creation of man in 2:7. Finally we read of the creation of the garden in 2:8, and then some specifics within the garden in 2:9. In each of these separate sections we find the name of the “*Lord God*” placed prominently (highlighted in blue). This is again all about what the **Lord God** was doing. In what follows I have included the text to aid the reader,

2:4b,5a.

In the day that the Lord God
made the earth and the heavens,
5 before any plant of the field was in the earth
and before any herb of the field had grown.

Much has been made of the fact that this account of the creation of man and woman is very different here to the record of creation recorded in Genesis 1:26-30. Not least of these differences is the way the word “*day*” is used in Genesis 2:4b. We note that there is no ordinal or cardinal number connected, and there is no reference to “*evening and morning*” in this case. Thus the term “*day*” here can easily be understood as meaning an unspecified time-period. In other words we might translate this as “*at the time that the Lord*” Given that this is the second section of the book of Genesis, which ends at Genesis 5:1a and would appear to be the record provided (under inspiration) by Adam, the differences noted are easily understood. Slightly different is the record provided in Genesis 5:1b,2:

In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.³⁶⁰

It would seem that the use of “*day*” here, whilst again not having the ordinal or cardinal number, would point to day 6 which was the day the Lord actually created mankind, (Adam and Woman).

In our passage, however, we are being reminded of God's creation of the earth and heavens which encompasses the entire six days. This is an introductory statement which then leads us to the words of verse 5 which pinpoint another period of time.

We have two statements both beginning with the word “*before*” in the NKJV. Other translations render this rather differently using the phrase “*not ... yet.*”³⁶¹ Either way, we are brought to consider a

360 Genesis 51b,2.

361 The NASB has: “*Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.*” (Genesis 2:5, NASB).

The ESV has: “*When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for*

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time before the plants and vegetation were created. This would bring us to day 2 or the beginning of day 3 when the plants and vegetation would be created.

2:5b,6.

For the Lord God

had not caused it to rain on the earth,
and *there was* no man to till the ground;
6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

In this second part we have three statements informing us about what things were like at that time. There was no rain. There was no man to work the ground. Then in contrast, at this early stage, there was a rising mist that watered the ground.

Rain.

First we note that the Lord had not caused rain to fall on the earth. What are we to make of this statement? To begin with, this is a direct statement that tells us that rain is caused by God. Such a thought is one repeated throughout Scripture.³⁶² We are so used to thinking of rain being the product of the water cycle, and we are so indoctrinated with the modern scientific ideas that we cannot easily move back into an understanding that rain is *caused* by God. Now I am aware that many theologians make a distinction between first and secondary causes. The trouble with some of these ideas is that we are lead into a type of deism. Deism, essentially, was the idea that God created the universe as a great mechanism and endowed it with its own programme and operations. Once created, God left creation to continue working. Newton favoured this idea. When modern science tried to “read” the book of nature to see how this great machine was operating they constantly came up against hurdles and problems. Johannes Kepler, for example, in seeking to understand how the planets orbited the sun wrestled with all types of models before hitting on the ideas of elliptical paths. To the early astronomers it seemed odd that ellipses were being followed. Why not the more perfect circles? Surely the infinite and good God would have used circles for orbits as these seem more in keeping with a well ordered creation? Then later when there were oddities discovered about some of the planets' orbits, Newton went so far as to state that the universe was like a clock that needed adjusting or correcting from time to time. When we talk of “nature” we are in fact guilty of this type of thinking. What we must do is always credit God with bringing about rain, snow, wind, and so on. Now I hasten to add that in His works of providence, God is not capricious or random. We can track and monitor and understand things like the weather (to a degree), because God is ordered and all things work according to His plan. It is not that God works to an external law such as the laws of science. Not at all! God is God. All things occur at His will and command. The rain is caused by God. However because God

the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.” (Genesis 2:5 ESV).

362 See, for example: Deuteronomy 11:14; 1Samuel 12:18; Job 5:10; 37:6; Psalm 68:9; 135:7; 147:8; Isaiah 30:23.

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is so ordered and good, we can track (to a limited degree) the operation of the rain, its evaporation from seas, its condensing into rain and so on. We must never suggest that the laws of science we discern and gather from our careful observations are truth absolute. God alone is absolute. Our discovery of the regularity of the course of things is a tentative and partial grasp of God's operations within His creation. We add just one rider or caveat to this discussion. We currently live in the fallen world after Genesis 3. This means our grasp of the operations of God are stilted both by our own defect of sin and rebellion, and also by the fact that creation is subjected to the curse imposed by God. Such was not the case at the time we are currently considering.

Thus God had not yet caused rain. We must conclude that there was no rain at this time on the earth. The next time we read that it did rain is in Genesis 7:4:

For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.³⁶³

Understand from the above text, that it was God who caused the rain for the flood. Between the time we are considering in Genesis 2:4bf and the time of the flood, (i.e. a period of 1656 years), it had not rained on the earth. I am well aware that many would argue against this. They do so, however, on the assumption that what we know in our modern science today, has always occurred in all times. I also recognise that the Scriptures are not extremely clear here. We find in Genesis 2:5 that God *“had not caused it to rain on the earth,”* and then from Genesis 7:4 where God says *“I will cause it to rain on the earth.”* Some may suggest that these bookend statements at the beginning of creation and at the time of the flood are just two statements and they tell us nothing about what occurred in between. God may well have caused it to rain at various times in between creation and the flood. The point is we have no data about this. If we assume that it would have rained because of the conditions that prevailed, such as the temperature rising to cause evaporation and then lowering to bring condensation and so, we are making assumptions. God causes the rain. In our day He causes the temperature fluctuations, the humidity and so, and we observe these changes and see rain or mists and clouds and so on. However if we conclude that what we observe today has always occurred and that it must have rained during the 1656 years of the pre-flood era, we are making a huge assumption which may not be justified. What we do have, however, is the two statements we have already mentioned stating that God is the cause of rain. From this I am inclined to believe that it did not, in fact, rain at all until the time of the flood.

363 Genesis 7:4.

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No man to till the ground.

There was no “Adam” to work the ground.³⁶⁴ Such a statement indicates that God was preparing things not just for mankind's dwelling place, but as a place where man could work. The word used translated “*till*” is used both for work and for service, (in the temple).³⁶⁵ There is no reason to suggest that the language of priesthood is meant as many suggest. There are some who reckon that this story was constructed whilst the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon. These folk suggest that the Genesis account is not historical but an attempt at “correcting” the prevailing (supposedly more ancient) views of the day (of the ancient Near East). Consequently it is currently in vogue to see all sorts of priestly and temple-type language within the creation of man in Genesis 2.³⁶⁶ Now it seems far better to take the Genesis text as the earliest of writings. In this study we hold that Adam was, in fact, responsible for this section of Genesis. The temple and tabernacle references that come later in Scripture, are then looking back to the starting point – Eden.

God wants mankind to work. Work is not something that came with the fall of man, but is something in-built within man's constitution. We have already seen in Genesis 1 and verses 26 to 28 that man was given responsibility, dominion, over the the rest of the created order, and, in particular, the animals. In this chapter we find that Adam was to work the ground. At this point we do not yet know exactly what “work” Adam was to do.

Mist.

There was no rain because God had not yet caused rain, but there was a mist. The mist is mentioned first in this sentence. It was designed simply to rise from the ground, not rising too far but with the intention of watering it. Thus the mist hovered over the surface providing the water needed by the plants and shrubs on the land.

2:7.

7 And the Lord God
formed man *of* the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living being.

The scene has been set, and now we move to the detail of the creation of Adam. Once again we pause to remind ourselves that we are reading **God's** words here, and we are being shown the historical detail of what the Lord God was actually doing. The titles for God are significant. We have the name of

364 The term given in the NKJV is “*man.*”

365 Genesis 2:5.

366 See: **J. V. Fesko.** *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology.* 2007. Mentor, Christian Focus.

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Almighty deity (God) and the name of self-existence (the “*I AM*”).³⁶⁷ It is important to add also that this is a Christophany, or a pre-incarnate appearance of the Saviour, the second person of the holy trinity.³⁶⁸

Taking the whole verse we have three statements each beginning with the conjunction translated in the NKJV as “*and*” (the Hebrew text is included – remember to read from right to left).

וַיִּצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,

וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נֶשֶׁמַת חַיִּים

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;

וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

and man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7 has the “*Lord God*” as the subject and we are given three statements in connection with the creation of man (Adam).

Man from dust.

The Lord God made man from the dust of the ground. From the word used translated “*formed*” it would appear that the Lord wants us to understand that He acted something like a potter. The idea behind the word is that of moulding or squeezing into shape. This concept of God being a potter is a theme we find repeated later in Scripture.³⁶⁹ For example Job offers the following description:

8 Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me. 9 Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again? 10 Did You not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese, 11 clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews? 12 You have granted me life and favour, and Your care has preserved my spirit.³⁷⁰

Although this is a poetic account, Job speaks of God as a potter whose “*hands*” both “*made*” and “*fashioned*” him. Job also notes that he was made “*like clay*” and that the Lord could return him “*into*

367 It might appear that the deep meaning of the title “*Lord*” (*Yēhovah*) would not be revealed until Exodus 3:14 when Moses met the Lord at the burning bush. However the sound of the name was known from the beginning, and it is likely that the meaning was known.

368 Many prefer the term “theophany” indicating a pre-incarnate appearance of God. However we know from Scripture that no one can see God (the Father) and that God the Son is the one who reveals to us the nature and Being of God. See: John 1:18.

369 Isaiah 29:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 18:6; Romans 9:21.

370 Job 10:8-12.

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dust.” All of these references indicate that Job probably knew of the Genesis 2:7 account. Job and other writers of Scripture knew, of course, that after Adam people were formed and fashioned within the womb of a woman. But the essential thing that is often highlighted in these references is the fact that it was God who formed us.

Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One **fashion us in the womb?**³⁷¹

He **fashions their hearts** individually; He considers all their works.³⁷²

He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who **formed the eye**, shall He not see?³⁷³

13 For You **formed my inward parts**; You covered me in my mother’s womb. **14** I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and *that* my soul knows very well. **15** My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, *and* skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. **16** Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them.³⁷⁴

Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have **formed** him, yes, I have made him.³⁷⁵

Thus says the Lord who made you and **formed you from the womb**, *who* will help you: ‘fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.’³⁷⁶

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who **formed you from the womb**: “*I am* the Lord, who makes all *things*, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself.”³⁷⁷

Before I **formed you in the womb** I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.³⁷⁸

The burden of the word of the Lord against Israel. Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and **forms the spirit of man within him.**³⁷⁹

It would seem, then, from the above references that there is a continuity of thought. Whilst the Lord God made Adam from the clay of the ground and moulded him into a human shape, all others have been formed of the same substance by God but in a different way. The first woman was made from Adam's rib

371 Job 31:15.
372 Psalm 33:15.
373 Psalm 94:9.
374 Psalm 139:13-16.
375 Isaiah 43:7.
376 Isaiah 44:2.
377 Isaiah 44:24.
378 Jeremiah 1:5.
379 Zechariah 12:1.

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as we shall discuss shortly, and all others have been made in their mother's womb. But all of us are made from the same substance that Adam was made, and all of us were fashioned and formed by the Potter, i.e. God.

The dust seems to be fine clay powder, or pulverised ore. It would seem that the Lord has processed the material of the earth into fine powder and then moulded this into Adam. Adam's name has the basic meaning “red.” Many suggest the meaning comes from the colour of blood seen at the skin surface. However it may equally have come from the colour of the “dust” used, i.e. red earth or clay. In our day we understand that the human body is made from many constituent parts that we know can be found in the earth's rocks and crust (see table 2.1 and figure 6). The way in which God used these constituents, (elements and compounds), to form Adam is passed over.

Table 2.1: Elements in the body compared to earth's crust.

Element.		Body (%).	Crust (%).
Name.	Symbol.		
Oxygen.	O	64.87	46.75
Carbon.	C	18.46	0.02
Hydrogen.	H	9.48	0.14
Nitrogen.	N	3.49	0.002
Calcium.	Ca	1.50	3.64
Phosphorus.	P	1.00	0.11
Potassium.	K	0.40	2.60
Sulphur.	S	0.30	0.03
Sodium.	Na	0.20	2.84
Chlorine.	Cl	0.20	0.01
Magnesium.	Mg	0.10	2.10
Silicon.	Si	0.01 ³⁸⁰	27.81
Iron.	Fe	0.006 ³⁸¹	5.02
Manganese.	Mn	0.00002 ³⁸²	0.10
Aluminium.	Al	zero	8.16
Titanium.	Ti	zero	0.10
		100.00	99.43

However just by looking at the data of table 2.1 it is surely obvious that there is no way any concept of

380 The average person has 7g.

381 The average person has 4g.

382 The average person has 15mg.

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evolution can be supported. The bar chart of figure 6 shows the difference more graphically. In some remarkable (miraculous) way the Lord took the various elements as needed to form the various cells, tissues, organs, systems as He determined. Now, of course, we do not know if the composition of the clay or earth the Lord used was the same as in our data, but still it is quite remarkable to think of the human body of Adam being made instantaneously by the Lord from it. We may have an image of the Master Craftsman selecting sufficient oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and so on, to make the various biopolymers needed for each individual cell, but that is simply to show us the incredible precision and skill of the Lord. In reality we assume that such was in the mind or thinking of God and as He spoke it was done. And yet the image of a Potter is here to the fore in Genesis 2:7 so we conclude by admiring the second Person of the Holy Trinity making the first man.

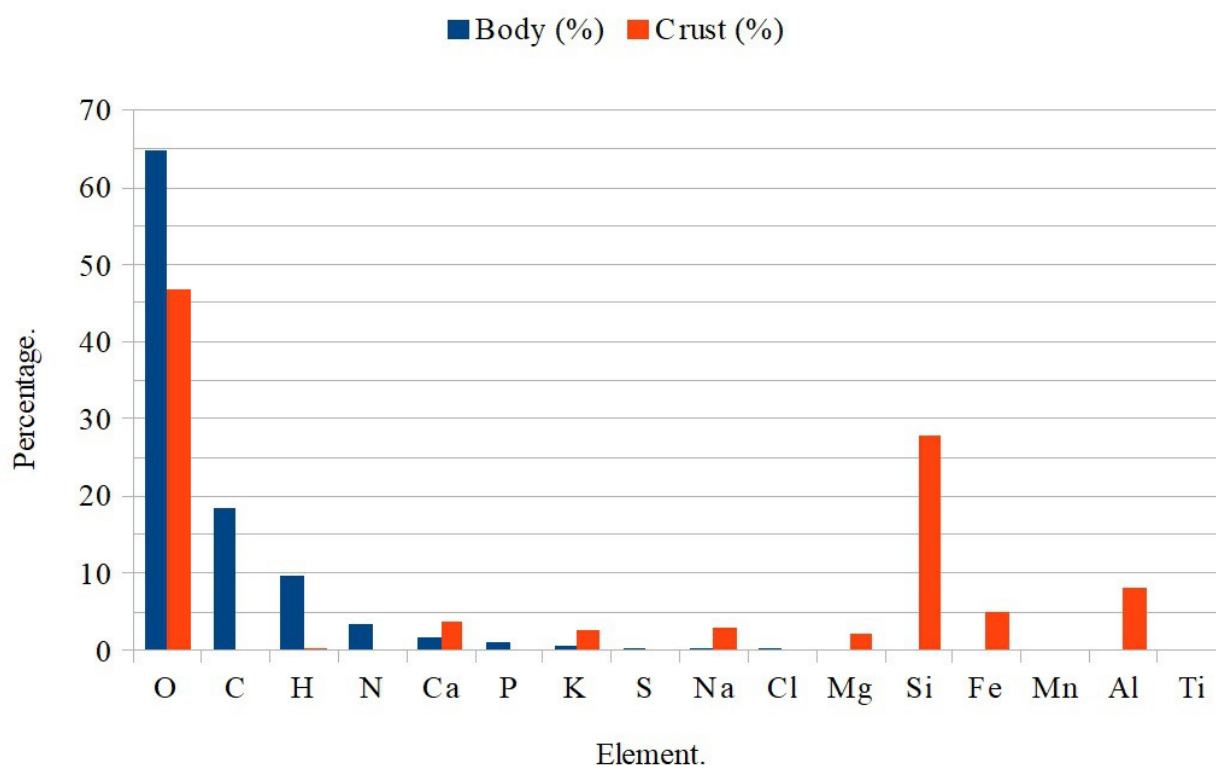


Figure 6: Elements in the human body and the crust of the earth.

The breath of life.

The Lord God having formed Adam into the shape of a human body, now breathes into the formed nostrils, the breath of life. The word for “*breath*” can also be translated as “*spirit*.”³⁸³ However it is most often used to speak of vital breath, the essential breath required for life and existence. It stems from the

383 Job 26:4; Proverbs 20:27.

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root meaning “to pant,” and is used of a woman in child-birth.³⁸⁴ We thus have the essence of life coming from the very breath of God. God ***inspired*** the physical form of Adam with life (that is, He breathed into it life). Life can only come from life. So at once we have another refutation of the modern idea of evolution which does not have any understanding of true life. For the average materialist, life is merely the organisation of matter, (biochemicals), but this verse indicates that life always comes from the One Source of life, namely, God Himself.

A living being.

Adam thus becomes a living being or soul. Only animals and humans have life in the sense expressed here, (***nephesh***), but no animal is described as being created in the same sense as Adam was. Hence “life” is restricted in Biblical usage to all animate life, but what is expressed here in this verse is more than simply animate life.

Putting these three statements together we have the physical aspect brought about by the forming action of the Lord God likened to the potter, coupled with a life-giving *inspiration* action from the Lord God that confers life onto the physical form, and finally a complete or an entire description of Adam as a living being. We thus have a threefold nature described. The physical, (intricate dust), the spiritual, (breath/spirit from the Lord God), and the composite whole, (living being – ***nephesh***).

2:8.

8 The Lord God

planted a garden eastward in Eden, and
there He put the man whom He had formed.

In this next verse we are introduced to a garden. We note from the previous verses that the Lord God (the pre-incarnate appearance of Christ) formed man from the dust of the earth before there is any reference to this garden. Adam was thus a witness to the Lord God's creation of this idyll. We are told two things about it. First we are told that the Lord God ***“planted”*** this garden. This would suggest that the Lord God brought it about by an action of work, planting, rather than by miracle as in His other creative works. It is clearly intended as a process of learning for Adam. God had formed Adam, and now shows Him His next most important action, the creation (by planting) of the garden. The immediate question arises: why did God make a garden? Well we learn later on that it is a fruit garden and so was meant as a source of food for Adam. But it was also a place of beauty as we will find when Eve was tempted to take of the forbidden fruit. Thus the Lord God creates a beautiful place of provision for Adam. Many see temple or tabernacle references here but it is vital to note the order in which these different places have come. The garden came first before any need for a tabernacle or temple. The tabernacle and temple were

384 Isaiah 42:14.

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introduced because mankind had lost all connection with God. These places were temporary and looked ***backwards*** to the garden that the Lord God had originally created for Adam, as well as forwards to the new heavens and earth.

Second we are informed of the garden's location, namely, ***“eastward in Eden.”*** Now at first sight this seems awkward. We have no immediate reference point to identify where “east” would be. However if we understand that this whole text was written by Adam under the inspiration of God, we recognise that Adam was writing for people who would understand these references and locations within their world. Later we are given some place and river names. These may have been named by the Lord God, but it seems better to consider these as places which were named by Adam and his family at some time later on. Adam's writing of this section would then have been undertaken when these places were well known. The garden, then, was eastwards from where most people were now found (at the time of Adam's writing this section). The garden was in the land called ***“Eden.”*** This name means “delight,” “pleasure,” or “luxury.” Once again we note how wonderful God really is, for He does all things so beautifully well. We have all experienced the great beauty of crafted gardens, with their flower arrangements, their trees, streams and so on, but this garden must have been incredible because the Lord God ***“planted”*** it!

Lest anyone think such a place can be discovered, we must remind the reader at once that the entire pre-flood world was totally destroyed by the flood at the time of Noah. There is no point whatsoever, therefore, anyone seeking to look for Eden in our current day. Many have foolishly thought of doing so, and some have even claimed to have found the location. Please do not be deluded by these claims for they are all false as we shall make clear when we come to study the events of Genesis 6 to 9.

Into this garden that the Lord God had planted, He placed Adam whom He had moulded and formed. At this point no instructions are given – these come later – but it would appear from the rest of this verse that God was still in the process of planting this garden.

2:9.

9 And out of the ground the Lord God
made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.
The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and
the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God had planted the garden (or at least started to plant it), then He placed Adam in the midst of this garden, and finally He appears to have completed His planting. This verse highlights both the completion, and the purpose of the garden. The Lord God made, or caused to sprout, all types of trees from ***“out of the ground.”*** In 2:8 we noted that the word used was ***“planted”*** suggesting a type of work, but here there is an indication of a miraculous growth. The variety of trees sprout from out of the ground all at once.

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The phrase “*every tree*” signifies all known trees and suggests a wide variety. At this time all the trees were both “*pleasant*” to the eye, and also were “*good for food.*” This twin purpose of beauty and sustenance is wonderful. Even in this fallen world trees are extremely attractive both in colours and forms, as well as providing a huge range of delicious and beneficial foods. From the fruit, to the oils and edible leaves, all are rich in all the foods required by man.

However two trees are mentioned specifically. There are a great many others all good for food and delightful to behold, but these two are singled out. Both were in the heart of the garden. One named the “*tree of life,*” and the other the “*tree of knowledge of good and evil.*” What is meant by these terms? Are we meant to understand that these trees conferred either life or knowledge of good and evil? I think not. Instead I think it clear that there are two different routes expressed by these two trees. First there is the tree of life. God created Adam and inspired the breath of life into him. But Adam was meant to eat continually of the tree of life so that he showed by this his dependence upon the Lord God. The tree of knowledge of good and evil, on the other hand, signifies a life of independence. Adam would be enabled to discern for himself what course of action to take. We shall learn more on this when we consider Genesis 3:1-7.

Notice that in these verses (8 & 9) we see the Lord God acting and performing in such a way that Adam is witness to all that was done. By doing this work the Lord was revealing to Adam two essential things. First He was showing Adam the way to work. In planting the garden in Eden Adam saw what work meant. But second the Lord God also showed to Adam His nature as the Creator, for the trees that sprouted would have come up miraculously (as will the animals a little later on). Thus to Adam is revealed the fact that this pre-incarnate Christ is none other than the Creator God who has formed him out of the dust of the ground and placed him in a garden.

[ii] The river from Eden and its tributaries. (Genesis 2:10-14).

In the second part of this first half of Genesis 2 we have what appears at first sight to be an interlude. We are suddenly told about the way in which this beautiful garden was watered. The detail seems to agree with what we already know about the earth at this time. There was no rain but watering was caused by a mist rising. Here we are told that the rivers and their divisions were for watering the garden.

We start by noting that there is actually only one river here (“*a river went out of Eden*”). Eden being pleasant, and the river coming out of this pleasant place was sent and allowed to flow so that it could “*water the garden.*” After watering the garden it divided into four separate rivers. Each of the four is named and some details are given about some of these (see table 2.2).

Table 2.2: The rivers in Eden.

River	Meaning of name	Extra details
Pishon	“Increase,” “water poured forth,” or “spreading.”	Skirts (“encircles”) the whole land of Havilah (“circle”). Havilah has good gold, bdellium and onyx.
Gihon	“bursting forth,” “gushing,” or “springing forth (as a fountain).”	This goes around the whole land of Cush.
Hiddekel	“Rapid.”	This goes toward the east of Assyria.
Euphrates	“Fruitfulness.”	No extra detail.

The first thing we need to understand is that the names are all original. These names were probably given by Adam and his family some time after the events recorded in Genesis 2 occurred. The fact that many of these names were also used at a time much later after the flood, has caused many to leap to the conclusion that these names were derived from the later ones. In other words, it is often thought that the human writer of Genesis, (often assumed to be either Moses or a much later redactor), was using details he knew about the ancient world, and made this the setting for his creation story. Now I cannot state strongly enough that such thinking is muddled. The creation story, which we assume was penned by Adam at some time during his life, came first. This means that the places and names were all ones that the ancient pre-flood peoples knew and used originally. The post-flood copies were used perhaps in commemoration of these pre-flood places, rather like the use by colonial settlers in America and Australia for example.³⁸⁵

Now the Pishon is that river which spreads out and increases as it goes. It encircles the land where there are rich deposits. Bdellium is probably some form of gum resin. Its name comes from the root “to separate” indicating that it is derived from another source (e.g. a plant). The onyx is undoubtedly a coloured gemstone of some kind. Thus we have precious metals, precious stones, and precious oils and resins. These three precious things are encompassed and encircled by the river Pishon. The next river (the Gihon) is more like a gushing fountain. It encircles the land know as “*Cush*” which name means “black,” or possibly “terror.” The third river is the Hiddekel which signifies a rapid, and it travels forward advancing towards the land of Assyria, which name means “a step” and again signifies going forward. The east depicts the place where the sun rises. The last river, the Euphrates is simply mentioned and its name means “fruitfulness.”

The question arises immediately as to why the Holy Spirit mentions these rivers, lands and places? What are they telling us apart from the fact that Adam and his descendants lived in real places with describable features? Well other Scriptures tell us that the river was a type for God Himself. I realise that

³⁸⁵ In Alabama, America you can visit: Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Oxford, and Chelsea. In South Australia you can visit: Brighton, Darlington, Harrogate, Hyde Park, Peterborough and Salisbury! There are many, many more examples than these few chosen to illustrate the point.

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we are using the remainder of Scripture to aid in our interpretation of the details given in Genesis 2, but I can see no other reason as to why the Lord would have given these details. I do believe that they are historically and geographically accurate and true, but I believe also that the Lord intended to teach us something about how He will work, especially in the area of witness and salvation.

The first thing we note in Scripture is that there is a river which shall water the city of God which comes from the throne of God.

*There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.*³⁸⁶

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.³⁸⁷

That river is, in fact, representative of the Lord Himself:

You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, for so You have prepared it.³⁸⁸

But there the majestic Lord *will be* for us a place of broad rivers *and* streams ...³⁸⁹

It would seem that the main river which parts four ways is, thus, indicative of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, whose work encompasses the entire earth. In the first place the Spirit is typified as the river Pishon which spreads far and wide, encompassing all that is valuable and precious within the earth. The Holy Spirit knows no boundaries and seeks out and searches in all the earth. There is not a place on earth where the influence and the work of the Holy Spirit is not felt or seen. True there have been, and are still, some very dark places on earth, but the Holy Spirit has ever, since the very creation of the world, hovered expectantly over all that the Lord created through Christ waiting to bring His influence and life. How this encourages us! God does not leave the world without witness. Yes, indeed, He uses His servants to spread the gospel, but He is not reliant or dependent upon us. Not a bit of it. The Holy Spirit has gone abroad, spread far and wide, and has taken the message of God's great peace and reconciliation throughout the entire globe from the day when Adam fell, and will continue until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

The second river is more like a spring or source as it bursts forth. It is interesting to note that it encircles the land of “*Cush*” which signifies blackness. Here we are directed to the work of the Holy

386 Psalm 46:4.

387 Revelation 22:1.

388 Psalm 65:9.

389 Isaiah 33:21.

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Spirit in individuals. The heart of man is dark because of sin.³⁹⁰ The Lord Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in John 7:

37 On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. **38** He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” **39** But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.³⁹¹

Those who believe would experience the Holy Spirit as rivers of living waters flowing out of them! We see this aspect of the Lord's work in Jeremiah where the prophet speaks of God as, “*the fountain of living waters*.”³⁹² The last two rivers, the Hiddekel and the Euphrates, signify the on-going work of sanctification. In the Hiddekel we see the pushing forward and continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer as they move onwards pressing towards holiness and heaven. The Euphrates signifies the effects that would be experienced. Here we see the Holy Spirit's action to bear and bring fruit as pointed out by Paul in Galatians:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.³⁹³

Thus, the “interlude” on geography and resources is placed precisely to show us the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing needy ones to faith and leading them in holiness and purity.

[iii] The commission of Adam. (Genesis 2:15-17).

In this part of the first half of Genesis 2 we learn of Adam's commission. We are informed in verse 15 that he was placed “*in the garden of Eden*.”³⁹⁴ This brings us back to verse 8 where we read the same thing, (“*and there He put the man whom He had formed*”), so that verses 10 to 14 act as a parenthetical interlude. But here we find that Adam is given a specific job to carry out. He is to “*tend and keep it*.”³⁹⁵ Once again, much has been made of this by modern writers who assert that such commands are similar to the tasks given to priests. However the words have a wide semantic range and signify labour, the guarding of a thing, or the taking care of something in a wide range of applications. The obvious reference is to gardening as this seems to be the central focus. The fact that many temple and tabernacle references seem to hark back to the themes found here indicates that the meeting with God has a creation focus. It is not

390 Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:21; Ephesians 4:18.

391 John 7:37-39.

392 Jeremiah 2:13; 7:13.

393 Galatians 5:22,23.

394 Genesis 2:15.

395 Genesis 2:15.

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that the writer of Genesis couched his story of creation in priestly terms as many modern commentators suggest, but that the temples and tabernacles were recreating the creation references found here in the garden of Eden. Adam was commissioned to oversee this garden and to work it. This action indicates that Adam was not an independent being but one owned by the Lord God. God had the right to take Adam, to place him, and to give him the task or job of work that the Lord wanted him to do. The same is true of us today. For the believer there is great rejoicing in this because it is just like the experience that our Saviour spoke of. He was about His Father's business, He did what the Father told Him, and He always did what pleased the Father.³⁹⁶

Now verses 16 and 17 form a unit as evidenced by the introductory words *“and the Lord God.”* We note that the same word structure is found at verse 15 and then also at verse 18.³⁹⁷ Then also we have a direct quote of the Lord stated as a command. We tend to think of commands negatively as directives which we must obey. However the sense here is more of an appointment, charge or delegation. Adam is given a command as the Lord God's vice regent.

Now Adam is given freedom to eat of any and all trees with a single exception, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In that only one other tree is named, (*“the tree of life”*), it would appear that it was one which the Lord God desired Adam to partake of.³⁹⁸ Was this a test? It would indeed seem to be such, because Adam is told very clearly that if he failed the test the consequences would be dire. The expression *“you shall surely die,”* is emphatic. Literally it reads “dying you shall die.” This doubling of terms (dying ... die), suggests the superlative, however the sense is that Adam would have two deaths. Death signifies separation. Thus Adam would be separated from God the moment he partook of the tree – spiritual death – and would then suffer the separation of body from soul some time later as a result – physical death.

Notice here that the Lord shows His bounteous nature because Adam was *“free”* to eat of *“every tree”* in the garden. This is an important point because later we will find that such detail is omitted.³⁹⁹ Nevertheless, God has reserved one tree which is prohibited. We make a terrible mistake by thinking that Adam is like us who when told we cannot do something feel almost compelled to do the very thing prohibited. We are all born under and in sin, but Adam was not. The Lord wanted him to partake of the tree of life showing his trust and dependence upon God. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was the choice of independence. This was forbidden because by taking of it, it would suggest that God's provision, His fellowship, and His love were not desired, or were something of no account.

396 Luke 2:49; John 5:19; 8:29,38.

397 Such a structure highlights the historical narrative form of the text. See also Genesis 2:7,21.

398 Genesis 2:9.

399 Genesis 3:1-3.

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[b] The creation of Woman. (Genesis 2:18-25).

We now move from the creation of man and his commission and charge, to the creation of Woman. Note that we cannot yet name the first woman as “*Eve*,” as this name has a significance which comes later. The account comes in two parts. The first, from verses 18 to 20, is preparatory, designed to show Adam that he was distinct within creation. The second, from verses 21 to 24, give the detail of how woman was created.

In preparation. (Genesis 2:18-20).

2:18.

This first section begins with a word from God (“*and the Lord God said*”), which serves to prepare us for something new. What we read is curious in the context of the whole of creation week, for the whole is described as “*good*,” and “*very good*.” Here the “*not good*” is jarring. Of course this statement in no way depicts the Lord God having made a mistake or an error. All that God does is perfect. Rather we are privileged to be given a peak into God's creative process. In the first chapter we read that God made man in His own image, and He made them male and female, and this was very good. In this narrative the Lord has made Adam, but not yet Woman, and so the work of making mankind is not yet complete, and hence “*not good*.” But it is only so because the Lord made mankind in a two stage process. The two accounts do not conflict, for the second is more detailed than the first. He needn't have made mankind in such a way as we find here in Genesis 2, and we are thus lead to ask why in fact He did indeed do so. Once again we are brought to realise that God in making all things is involving mankind in the process in order for them to learn something about the creative nature of God. Remarkable!

Now the Lord had said that it wasn't good for Adam to be made “*alone*.” The opening statement God makes in verse 18 is (literally): “not good that Adam (is) alone.” It is as though we are in the workshop of God. He decides to make mankind, and having made Adam from the dust and placing him in the garden with a charge, adds these words that it is not good for him to be alone. Of course the Lord had every intention of making woman, but we are brought into the thought process that shows that Adam on his own is incomplete. How wonderful these thoughts are! Men and women are complimentary. Adam needs woman!

The next sentence is often missed out by many. God has determined to make Woman as “*a helper*” that will be “*comparable to*” Adam. How the world muddies the thinking on these wonderful words. Woman is made as a “*helper*.” We find that this word is often used of God Himself as our helper.⁴⁰⁰ The basic idea of this word is to give aid, to succour and to surround, hence encourage.

400 Psalm 33:20; 70:5; 115:9; 121:2; 124:8; 146:5; Hosea 13:9.

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Here is the Hebrew:

כְּנֶגְדּוֹ עֹזֵר לוֹ-אֶעֱשֶׂה
as a counterpart helper to him I will make

Woman was to be someone who was opposite to Adam and who faced him, as a counterpart or, as a mirror to reflect him.

2:19,20.

Now the next two verses are put here to teach the very distinct difference between mankind and the animate world. To think that modern man with his theories of evolution has blurred the distinctions is to fly in the face of this evidence given of God. But there we have it!

Many baulk at the first statement made in verse 19 because we are in day 6 and here we find that the Lord is forming from the ground birds and beasts of the ground. How, many ask, does this fit in with Genesis 1? Well of course, the Lord God revealed to us the order and overall structure of creation week as shown in Genesis 1, but He is not bound to this order at all! Here the main point is the distinct creation of mankind (male and female). And so the Lord God brings every beast of the field and bird of the air by forming them from the ground. These are miraculous creations brought about for a specific purpose.

Each in turn is brought forth from the ground and brought to Adam, so that Adam could name them. This is a beautiful situation. The Lord God was involving Adam in the naming of the creatures. Note that Adam did not simply think of an arbitrary name for each, but gave them a name fitting to their character. For example in English we know of one mammal found in Africa as the “hippopotamus.” This animal's name means “river-horse.” The person who so named the hippopotamus thought they looked like a horse who wallowed in the river because they often are found wallowing in waters. And so Adam gave names which depicted the characters of each creature that the Lord God formed from the ground. This is a beautiful (historical) picture of involvement and love.

Then in verse 20 we find that Adam named all the different types of “*cattle*,” (large quadrupeds), all the different “*birds*,” (anything that flew including insects and bats), and all the great variety of the “*beasts*,” (living things), that lived in the fields. After such a wonderful time where the Lord God made these great variety of animals before Adam to see what he would call each, we find that none were suitable. This is obvious from our point of view, but at the time when Adam was alive before Woman was made it wasn't at all clear. The point, though, is that Adam is given the position of ruler and has dominion over the animals. The naming indicates ownership and superiority. Parents name their children. A king

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gives titles to his subjects. Adam named the animals. But further, this is also a teaching experience. Adam is shown how these creatures were formed and how they lived, the habitat they dwelt in and so on, to show him that these were all subordinate to him. That last sentence in verse 20 is a sharp contrast. The *“but”* indicates a kind of suspenseful expectation. Notice its parallel with the initial statement in verse 18:

I will make him **a helper comparable to him** (v18).

But for Adam there was not found a **helper comparable to him** (v20).

After each animal was brought, named and found not suitable as a helper, eventually they came to the last one and still there was no helper found (*“But for Adam there was not found ...”*⁴⁰¹ After all the activity in naming the animals the Lord God had shown to Adam, the conclusion leaves us with expectation; what will happen now?

Woman from man. (Genesis 2:21-25).

And so we come to the creation of Woman. Again we note that God could easily have done this act of creation instantaneously. However He chose to make Woman using a series of stages because He wanted to teach Adam, and consequently all those who read these words, several important lessons. As we noted a moment ago, verse 21 is similar in form to verse 18: *“and the Lord God ...”* Adam had named many animals and there was no helper found and now the Lord causes Adam to experience a *“deep sleep.”* The intention is clear. The Lord God was clearly intending to create Woman from Adam. What did Adam know of this? Did the Lord God tell him beforehand or afterwards? It would seem clear if this section was written by Adam, (as I believe), that the Lord God would have told Adam exactly what He did, but we do not know if it was prior or after the event. God is sovereign and He is perfectly righteous in creating just exactly as He determines for He does all things well and good.

The procedure was simple enough in outline (although the precise details of God's actions are not given). There appears to be eight steps in all as follows:

[1] God puts Adam into a deep sleep (2:21).	[5] God brings Woman to Adam (2:22).
[2] God removes a rib from Adam's side (2:21).	[6] Adam declares his love (2:23).
[3] God closes the wound (2:21).	[7] An explanation and precedent for marriage is given (2:24).
[4] God makes Woman from Adam's rib (2:22).	[8] A concluding statement: the two were naked and innocent (2:25).

401 Genesis 2:20.

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Remember that this is the Lord God here. He does not need to do these things using this procedure, but has chosen to do it this way to teach both Adam and all of us something especial.

There are three things in this particular text which we need to consider. First of all we have a prophecy or type of Christ's death and resurrection.⁴⁰² Second we come to understand that man and Woman are equal before God but do not share the same roles. Third we have here teaching concerning Christ and His relationship with the church.

2:21,22. The death and resurrection of Christ.

There are three specific indications that the way God made Woman signifies aspects of Christ's experiences in dying and being raised. First we are told that Adam was put under a *“deep sleep”* by the Lord.⁴⁰³ Now sleep is often employed in Scripture to signify death. For example, the ruler's little girl who had just died is described by Jesus as *“sleeping,”* even though He was well aware that she had died,⁴⁰⁴ Then also, we note that Jesus once said to His disciples that *“Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I might wake him up.”*⁴⁰⁵ The disciples completely misunderstood what the Lord was saying, and thought that He meant actual sleep, and so the Lord told them plainly, *“Lazarus is dead.”*⁴⁰⁶ Thus Adam's deep sleep is meant to indicate death. Remember that we are still at a time when all was *“good,”* and the fall resulting from sin had not yet occurred, so these things are prophetic.

Second we note the fact that the rib was removed from Adam's side.⁴⁰⁷ Now in John's account of Christ's death we are told that Christ's side was pierced.⁴⁰⁸ The reason for this was to check that the Lord had in fact died. The death of Christ was proved by the fact that blood and water flowed out of His side indicating that the heart had ruptured and that there was a separation of the red blood cells from the (watery) plasma. John makes a great deal about this fact both in his gospel and in his first epistle.⁴⁰⁹ Now the correspondence between Adam's experience, when the Lord God made Woman, and Christ's death, is only through mention of the *side* of Adam and Christ, and the fact that something was *removed*. In the case of Adam a rib was removed, whilst in the case of Christ, the spear thrust into His side lead to the removal of blood and water.⁴¹⁰

Finally we note that Woman was created by the Lord God from Adam's rib.⁴¹¹ Thus out of Adam's rib, the Woman was made. By analogy, out of Christ's side came water and blood. The church was formed

402 Genesis 2:21.

403 Genesis 2:21.

404 Matthew 9:24.

405 John 11:11.

406 John 11:14.

407 Genesis 2:22.

408 John 19:31-37.

409 1John 5:6-8.

410 Presumably the spear was thrust between the ribs – although the spear thrust was not the cause of the ruptured heart as Christ had already died.

411 Genesis 2:22.

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as a result of the blood of atonement and the water which signifies regeneration and the new birth.⁴¹² This is not merely my suggestion, for the seventeenth century commentator and pastor **Matthew Henry** wrote the following:

*“In this (as in many other things) Adam was a figure of him that was to come; for out of the side of Christ, the second Adam, his spouse the church was formed, when he slept the sleep, the deep sleep, of death upon the cross, in order to which his side was opened, and there came out blood and water; blood to purchase his church and water to purify it to himself.”*⁴¹³

As an incidental note, we must state that we have in these events a further reason for insisting that a literal interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis is necessary. The creation of both Adam and Woman are displayed as having happened through the very **hands** of God. We do not admit that God has hands, but the pre-incarnate Christ most certainly did. In this creation of Woman, the Lord has been at pains to indicate, albeit in hidden form, central features of His fore-ordained death and resurrection – even before Adam and Eve’s fall into sin!

2:23. The relationship between men and women.

The oft quoted words of **Matthew Henry** are worth repeating here:

*“That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Adam lost a rib, and without any diminution to his strength or comeliness (for, doubtless, the flesh was closed without a scar); but in lieu thereof he had a help meet for him, which abundantly made up his loss: what God takes away from his people he will, one way or other, restore with advantage. In this (as in many other things) Adam was a figure of him that was to come; for out of the side of Christ, the second Adam, his spouse the church was formed, when he slept the sleep, the deep sleep, of death upon the cross, in order to which his side was opened, and there came out blood and water; blood to purchase his church and water to purify it to himself.”*⁴¹⁴

With these words we heartily agree! Man and woman are both created by the very hand of God and are therefore equal before Him. In verse 23 we see this equality expressed by Adam clearly. To be bone of bone and flesh of flesh indicates a perfect unity of being, and yet there are differences. Adam calls his help-meet **“Woman”** (אִשָּׁה *’iššāh*) because she was taken out of man (אִישׁ *’iš*). The New Testament reminds us of the different roles of men and women, but under God as created beings, men and women stand as equals. I sometimes wonder why there is so much debate and discussion about the fairness or

412 1John 1:7,9; Titus 3:5.

413 **Matthew Henry**. *Commentary on the Whole Bible. Volume 1*. P20. Hereafter as **M. Henry**.

414 **M. Henry**. *Volume 1*. P20.

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unfairness felt by women because they are barred from preaching or teaching.⁴¹⁵ In the Godhead the three persons are all co-eternal and each fully God, and yet their roles are not identical. The Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit and never the other way around. Being equal in being and status does not imply an equality of role or purpose.

2:24,25. Marriage.

In verse 24 we get a narrative statement made by the Lord which indicates how man and woman should co-exist. A man will leave his father and mother, and will be united to his new wife and in doing so the two will become *“one flesh.”* It is important also that we pay attention to the apostle Paul's words which are a commentary on the creation of woman in Genesis 2:24:

31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **32** This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.⁴¹⁶

We are more than warranted to go along with **Matthew Henry** and to see in these verses not only types of the Saviour, but direct intentions of the Lord to show forth aspects of His great plan. The Lord always intended from before the creation of the world to save His people from their sins and to be united to them, and this figure of husband and wife is a chief vehicle to depict that union. The whole created concept of marriage was brought about to reflect the wonderful thing the Lord had planned before time with regard to His eternally begotten Son and His rescued people. Marriage is under attack today. This is hardly surprising since it is a union and a truth which not only provides for stability in the world, but (more importantly) stands as a visible reminder of God's promise in Christ concerning His church. It is vitally important that we see marriage as a blessing that was instituted as a prophetic or pictorial illustration of how Christ would be related to the church. Now of course there are many other reasons for marriage, such as procreation, for fulfilment, for nurture, for stability and so on, but the main point is that Christ is “husband” to the church (all truly born again believers).⁴¹⁷ Marriage therefore is so very important and we should do all we can to reflect God's wisdom in our marriages.

The chapter ends in verse 25 with a statement which has bearing mainly in connection with the next chapter. Adam and Woman were both naked and were unashamed of this. It was completely natural. In our day it is not, of course, because of sin.

415 1Timothy 2:12.

416 Ephesians 5:31,32.

417 The union of Christ and the church is a theme that runs throughout scripture seen for example in The Song of Solomon, John 17, and in the book of Revelation.

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Supplemental thoughts on Genesis 2:21-25.

Recently there has been an attempt to suggest that Genesis 2:24,25 ought not to be used as the standard and basis for marriage. At a conference at UNION Bible college, one paper was presented from a PhD student who argued that divorce ought to be considered a social construct because the Genesis text was culturally distinct and separate from the creation of woman.⁴¹⁸ I will argue here that the connection between the creation of woman and marriage is inseparable. To begin this brief discussion I offer my own translation of the relevant text followed by a new textual analysis.

My translation:

21 And the Lord God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and he slept and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh. **22** And the Lord God made from the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman and He brought her to Adam. **23** And Adam said 'this unique one is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh and this one shall be called woman because she was taken from a man this one.' **24** For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and shall be welded to his woman and they shall become (belonging to) one flesh. **25** And the two of them were naked, Adam and woman, and they were not ashamed.

Analysis.

21 And the Lord God
caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and he slept
and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh.
22 And the Lord God
made from the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman
and He brought her to Adam.
23 And Adam said
'this unique one
is bone from my bones and
flesh from my flesh
and this one
shall be called woman
because she was taken
from a man
this one.'
24 For this reason
a man
will leave his father and his mother
and shall be welded to his woman
and they shall become (belonging to) one flesh.
25 And the two of them were naked,
Adam and woman,
and they were not ashamed.

⁴¹⁸ This lecture was held at UNION (formerly Wales Evangelical School of Theology) in January 2019. This new idea attempts to divorce Adam and Woman's creation from all other human marriage (separating verse 23 from verse 24). There are those who advocate a 'social contract' model for marriage rather than the union/bond sacramental idea.

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From this we will next establish a number of interesting points in connection between the concept of marriage and the creation of Woman. These are as follows:

Points of interest:

1. The opening word of 2:24 is 'therefore' or 'for this reason.' This indicates **a close connection in thought** with 2:23.
2. During the creation and naming of woman, man is referred to as 'man' (אִישׁ) in 2:23,24 but then before this (2:21,22,23), and after this (2:25), as 'Adam' (אָדָם).
3. The idea of unity by virtue of identical flesh/bones in 2:23 is linked to the idea of being welded or joined together so that the two belong to one flesh in 2:24.
4. The one created from Adam is called 'woman' and we see this noun throughout the narrative. The Hebrew word for 'woman' (אִשָּׁה) is closely related to the Hebrew word for 'man' (אִישׁ).
5. In Genesis 1:27 the terms male (זָכָר) and female (נְקֵמָה) are used.

From these points we shall next make some comments on the unity of the passage to refute the idea that Genesis 2:24 should be separated from the main body of the text.

The unity of this passage.

1. Adam recognises that woman was made from a rib of his body and so eulogises that woman is *“bone from his bones,”* and *“flesh from his flesh”* in 2:23. The Hebrew word *“woman”* is the same as the Hebrew word *“man”* except that *“woman”* has the feminine ending. In other words, from these statements, we discover that she is one in substance with him. This is an important theological point.
2. Now because *“woman”* was taken from man (2:23), the writer continues to explain that it is *“for this reason”* that a man must leave his mother and father, in order that he could then be welded, joined, or adhere to his woman (wife) (2:24). I have translated the Hebrew term as *“welded”*

because there is a sense in which the union is intended to be a **strong** bond. The two shall stick close and adhere to one another. This shows clearly that 2:23 cannot be disconnected from 2:24. Such reasoning is supported by, for example, the repeated use of the word “*man*” (אִישׁ) at the end of 2:23 and the beginning of 2:24.

3. Furthermore, leaving aside for one moment the question of why we have parents mentioned at this point, we should not miss the clear teaching that what the Lord took out of man, (אִישׁ but earlier referred to as “*Adam*”), to make into woman and which the Lord then brings to Adam to re-unite them, is paralleled by a man leaving his parents or being removed from them, to be joined and united to his own woman (wife), so that these two will become one flesh in the sense of belonging together. Parents a son, then have this son removed from them in order to be united to a woman who also has been taken from another set of parents, so that the couple will become a new unit. We could put it thus:

Woman comes out of Man (Adam) (2:22).	Man and Woman brought together (2:22).	Bone of bones/flesh of flesh (2:23).
Man comes out of Mother and Father (2:24).	Man and Woman joined/welded together (2:24).	One flesh (2:24).

4. The expression of 2:24, which I have translated “*shall be welded to*” indicates more than a mere association. There is a profound change. The man is no longer a single unit and neither is the woman. The two now become a new unified whole. This action does not obliterate either the man's nor the woman's identities, but the two are no longer single units, they together for a bi-unit.
5. Woman made from Adam was unique. We can see this by the thrice repeated use of the phrase “*this one*” in 2:23. No other woman can compare. In one sense this indicates the singular and perfect choice for Adam. Woman was only for Adam. And this thought highlights not just the idea of monogamy but further that the woman a man marries is the only and the best one for them. However 2:24 also shows this monogamy and singularity in choice through the expression: “*a man shall be welded to his woman ..*” (my translation). The man (any man) is to be united irrevocably to “*his*” woman. We are not talking about possession in any consumerist and materialist way, but in the sense of love and devotion. The idea of possessing is reciprocal. A man may take and penetrate a woman in the physical sense, but the woman takes and receives the man. The sexual union is descriptive of a deeper sharing and connection.

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To conclude this supplemental note, we shall draw some theological points from all that we have discussed thus far.

Some theological considerations.

[1] Substance and personality.

Genesis 1:27 tells us that God decided to make man (Adam) in His likeness and in His image. Consequently He made man (Adam) male and female. Genesis 2, of course, describes how this was done. But remembering the general statement of Genesis 1:27 helps us to consider the significance of mankind's creation. God is trinity in unity. We worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one undivided essence.⁴¹⁹ Consequently mankind is made into separate persons but of the same substance. Adam declared that Woman was *“bone of his bones,”* and *“flesh of his flesh”* indicating this unity of substance. Now notwithstanding the differences between male and female, the essence of both is the same because of how Woman was created by God from Adam.

[2] Taken from and brought to.

However it is not just this fact of identity and connection that is reflected in mankind from the trinity, but the very fact of being taken out of, and of re-uniting. Woman was taken out of man, and so we could say that she ***proceeds*** from man. Following on from this, all subsequent humans are ***generated*** from woman. Thus mankind forms a unit. The first woman proceeded from man, and all subsequent man has been generated from woman. Clearly these thoughts are not identical to the trinity but are derivative. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son.

[3] Sending and returning.

This idea is very close in thought to point [2]. There is also the thought of departing from and then being re-united to. The rib was taken from Adam, formed into Woman, who was re-united to Adam. In some sense Adam is a type of Christ as the agent through which creation has been made. Woman was made through Adam. In the same way all creation has been made through Christ.⁴²⁰ Supremely, of course, this concerns the church and its creation. Then also a man must leave his father and mother and must cleave or be joined to his own woman. In the same way we see the Son of God leaving the Father in heaven to be joined to His wife, the church.

⁴¹⁹ Consider the Nicene and Athanasian creeds as shown in ***Appendix 4.***

⁴²⁰ We must avoid at all costs the notion of creation being formed out of the substance or essence of God here. It is simply the connection between the very nature of God and His mission being reflected in the way man has been created and how each party relates in the marriage bond.

Chapter 3.

Creation cursed, but redemption supplied. (3:1-24).

We begin in this chapter by reminding the reader of two important points. First we are still reading God's inspired word. We believe that this second section was compiled by Adam under inspiration, so that all that the first man wrote was none other than that which God Himself wanted us to read today. Second we reaffirm that the style of writing is still narrative historical. We assert this on the basis of the Hebrew construction which uses the waw-consecutive form. These are necessary statements because there are many who would reduce this section to myth, allegory, poem, or simply an ancient Near Eastern construction, and thereby eliminate any need to take the story as historical. We assert that Genesis chapter three, then, must be taken as an *historical* record of the events which explain above and beyond all other considerations why the world is as it is today in such a fallen state.

Although it is best to consider the narrative as one connected whole, we shall consider the chapter in four parts as follows:

- [1] The temptation of Woman and the silence of Adam. (Genesis 3:1-7).
- [2] Four questions posed by the Lord God to Adam and Woman. (Genesis 3:8-13).
- [3] God's word to the serpent, the Woman and Adam. (Genesis 3:14-19).
- [4] Out of Eden but clothed by God. (Genesis 3:20-24).

In this chapter, analysis of the text will be provided at the start of each section.

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[1] The temptation of Woman and the silence of Adam. (Genesis 3:1-7).

#3 1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.

And he said to the woman,

“Has God indeed said,

‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

2 And the woman said to the serpent,

“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3** but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said,

‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

4 Then the serpent said to the woman,

“You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 So when the woman saw

that the tree *was*

good for food,

that it *was*

pleasant to the eyes, and

a tree

desirable to make *one* wise,

she took of its fruit and ate.

She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened,

and they knew that they *were* naked;

and they sewed fig leaves together

and made themselves coverings.

In what follows I shall draw the reader's attention to a number of themes important for grasping the essence of this passage. We begin by considering the nature of the “*serpent*” and some modern ways of understanding this creature from the perspective of the ancient Near East. These are important preliminary considerations because there is much in modern writing which serves to diminish the impact of Genesis 3. We will then focus attention on the text itself using a series of headings to draw attention to the main characters and events in these first seven verses.

The serpent.

The chapter opens with a surprise. We have just been reading of the creation of Adam and Woman and their union, and our thoughts have been amongst the wonders of God's great goodness! But now we are brought in verse 1 to consider the “*serpent*” who “*was more cunning*” than any other creature, and, what-is-more, we find quite early on that this serpent speaks! What are we to make of these things? The Hebrew word for serpent is *nachash* and it comes from the root which means “to whisper.” It is probable that the term derives from this experience in Genesis 3. The serpent whispered into the Woman's ear. Consequently the serpent will later on be associated with enchanters and soothsayers who whisper hidden tales and secrets.

Well, as we have already laboured, Genesis is an historical book. In Genesis 3 we are still in the realms of narrative historical writing. The story in Genesis 3 runs seamlessly from Genesis 2, which depicts geographical details, and then continues neatly into Genesis 4, which tells us of the sons of Adam.

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The story cannot be considered as poetic, because there are no couplets (contrasting or parallel). We can rule out parable because the account has the Lord God actually speaking to the three characters, and there is no concluding lesson or point made. Equally it cannot be allegorical for the characters are simply ordinary and are not depicted in any fantastical or mythical way. If we compare this to the ancient Near East and other mythological versions, the comparison would be stark.

However, because we have an animal speaking, and we have confessed openly that this is extraordinary, some have designated the story as a fable. This is a false notion because the serpent is the only animal character, and it is clear that there is something else going on from the way that the Lord speaks in judgement. We might also add that in Numbers 22:21-34 we read of Balaam's ass being moved to speak out against the false prophet. Are we to assign this to the category of fable? Clearly not. Whilst the serpent and the ass speaking is out of the ordinary, it is, nevertheless, in both cases, presented to us as an ***actual*** occurrence. A fable is usually clearly delineated as such by all the characters being animals, and with the story ending with a moral point. But in the case of Genesis three we do not have a story with fabled elements in which we suspend belief. We are merely presented with the two created people in the garden of Eden, which has been described previously with a precise location (i.e. geographically real), who are then accosted by the serpent who speaks to the Woman.⁴²¹

The fact that the serpent speaks is strange and unexpected, of course, but all of the details in this story are things which are real and have location in space and time. Instead of a concluding point and lesson, we have God actually speaking to the serpent!

E. J. Young makes these points well:

*“Genesis Three, however, strikes one immediately in that it differs so markedly from the ordinary fable. For one thing, it has no moral attached to it, as in the case with the fables of Propertius or Aesop or Lokman. Evidently Genesis is not teaching us a moral as the classical fables seek to do. Then too, whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, we cannot help but be somewhat struck by the fact that in Genesis a serpent speaks. This is unusual; it is not what we expect. We read of speaking animals in the fables and are not disturbed thereby. We read Genesis, however, and are disturbed. The speaking serpent is out of order. It is something we had not expected.”*⁴²²

The paradise of Genesis 2 is a recognizable place, and has none of the magical or fantastical elements, such as beasts and strange events, as found in fables and legends. The introduction of the speaking serpent is meant to make us sit up and take note. It is, as Young says, ***“a jarring discordant note”*** and, although it catches our attention, it is so couched in narrative prose that we recognise it as a literal event.⁴²³ A similar but positive parallel would be furnished by the time when Christ appeared to the disciples walking on the

421 Even though we cannot now locate it because it was washed away in the flood.

422 E. J. Young, *Genesis 3. A devotional and expository study*. 1966, Banner of Truth Trust. P11,12.

423 E. J. Young, *Genesis 3. A devotional and expository study*. 1966, Banner of Truth Trust. P13.

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water, or when He made His appearances after He rose from the dead.⁴²⁴ These events surprise us, but they are related as real historical occurrences. Such is the case with the serpent speaking.

The ancient Near East.

Some suggest that what we have in Genesis three is a story concocted from more ancient legends involving the serpents of the sea and the great deep which were all in rebellion against the Creator. It is then conjectured that the Israelites took these legends and denuded them of the fantastical elements to produce this story. Some others suggest that the Israelites simply lived within an ancient Near East culture and so were culturally constrained to write their accounts with a similar form. We find such notions hopelessly flawed. First they render us subservient to secular thought and texts and documents external to Scripture, and second they reduce the impact and effect of God's wonderful word.

Thus, for example, it is held by some that the serpent merely represents ***the power of evil***. It was not a real creature but merely something that Eve imagined. This may be a *nice* and *easy* means of removing what may be seen as a problem (the serpent speaking), but it raises far more problems than it solves. If this scenario were true, what are we then to do with the Lord's curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:14 and His statement in Genesis 3:15?:

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.⁴²⁵

It is surely much wiser to consider the accounts of Genesis as the originals, and that all the ancient Near East mythological legends (Babylonian, Assyrian, Greek, Egyptian and so on) are nothing more than the distorted, embellished concoctions derived from the pure word of God.⁴²⁶

Now, in fact, the suggestion that the serpent was just a *symbol* of evil, and that what was going on here was all in her mind, actually destroys the main intention of Genesis three in the first place. This is because it removes the very cause of sin making its entrance. The question which has to be asked is why did Eve suddenly become tempted in her mind if she was created ***“good”***? By removing the literal serpent, we would remove the cause of the entrance of sin. Furthermore if the serpent was just something of Eve's imagination, what are we to make of our Lord's temptation recorded in Matthew 4? Is that merely something going on in His mind too? The text makes it plain that the devil was there actively tempting

424 Matthew 14:25,26; Luke 24; John 20 etc.

425 Genesis 3:14,15, AKJV.

426 Taking this view enables us to understand how the various mythologies of the world may be understood, and how they arose.

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Christ, and this event recorded in Matthew 4 is clearly the success story for the second Adam that corrects the failure in Genesis three of the first Adam.

However one clinching argument which establishes the text of Genesis three as historical is the fact that the New Testament writers themselves consider the story to be true history. Paul contrasts the first Adam with Christ in Romans 5:12f and 1Corinthians 15:45. Paul's reasoning in Romans chapter five hinges on the contrast between the uniqueness of Adam (who brought all into sin), and the uniqueness of Christ (who brought many into life). If we deny the historicity of Adam and of his failure in Genesis three, we end up by casting serious doubt on the historicity of Christ as well. E. J. Young comments:

*“All that Paul says about the saving work of Christ is lost if there was no first Adam to bring the world into sin. Indeed, it follows that if Adam is not an historical character, what Paul writes concerning Christ must be rejected. If Adam is unreal, the contrast which Paul makes is false, and Paul's statements concerning the work of Christ must be rejected. None of them are then true. If there was no first Adam, then Christ is not the second Adam. And this leads us to the heart of the matter. If Paul was so profoundly mistaken about Adam, how do we know that he was not equally mistaken about Christ? If Adam is not an historical character, how do we know that Christ was an historical character? And further, if we do not need to believe that Adam was a real individual, why do we have to believe that Christ was a real individual?”*⁴²⁷

It is sad to note that in recent years there have been those who are questioning Paul's connection between the first and second Adam. Some have even suggested that Paul's use was simply a literary device, and that he did not really hold that Adam and the serpent were real!⁴²⁸ Such a slide into rank liberalism is hopeless and utterly needless! In fact the machinations of such writers is often so torturous that it becomes far more difficult to believe than that a real serpent actually spoke!

The tree in the midst of the garden.

In Genesis 3:3 the Woman does not name the tree whose fruit was forbidden by God. However, in Genesis 2:9 we are told explicitly about two trees but she only mentions one. The Hebrew for the second part of Genesis 2:9 reads literally like this:

and the tree of life in the centre of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The prohibition given to Adam in Genesis 2:17 concerned only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus it was this tree to which the Woman was referring. But what are we to make of these two trees?

⁴²⁷ E. J. Young, *Genesis 3. A devotional and expository study*. 1966, Banner of Truth Trust. P61,62.

⁴²⁸ See, for example: **Peter Enns**. *The Evolution of Adam*. 2012. Brazos Press.

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Later we learn that the Lord would prevent the first human pair from eating of the tree of life.⁴²⁹ Now it would seem to me that these two trees represent the two ways that mankind could take. There is obedience to God and reliance upon Him who made mankind “*good*,” and then there is the independent way of making choices from one's own mind in separation from God. Taking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil represents this independent and self-determining route.

In taking of the forbidden fruit, the Woman was thus not only disobeying God, but was also setting out on a voyage of independent, and self-motivated discovery. E. J. Young puts it nicely;

*“Eve was no neutral ... She did not look equally upon the commands of God and those of the evil one, for she was very definitely upon the side of the evil one, and her actions flowed from a heart that had fallen from God and was in bondage to sin. Eve followed what is sometimes called the “scientific method.” She believed herself capable of evaluating all the facts of reality, including the fact of God and His commands, and passing upon them an impartial judgment. It was knowledge that she sought, and what higher aim could there be than that of comprehensive knowledge? She would know all things, and in the pursuit of that “noble” aim she proceeded in a thoroughly careful manner. God had laid down certain commands, but these commands she must weigh in the light of the serpent's commentary. After all, it would be a foolish thing to claim that she knew the truth, to assert that because God had prohibited something, she should therefore obey. That would be tantamount to saying that the truth lay in what God had commanded, and that would be dogmatic indeed. Far better, far more thrilling would it be to engage in the pursuit of truth, to search for it wherever it might show itself. The commands of God had their place in the scheme of things, but Eve was a searcher after all truth, she desired to obtain comprehensive knowledge of the scheme of things, and hence, must consider seriously every suggestion that presented itself. Here was an avenue of fruitful research which she must not allow to remain uninvestigated.”*⁴³⁰

Thus the Woman wanted this all encompassing knowledge and a self-determined independent way. The book of Ecclesiastes is a treatise which serves to show how such a procedure is still doomed today. The pursuit of knowledge “*under the sun*,” or, in other words, without bringing God into the picture and viewing things from His perspective, is a vain and futile endeavour. This is why I claim that “modern science” is also vain and futile.⁴³¹ But the Woman started from a position of innocence and perfection made without sin and given all paradise to enjoy. Her temptation by the serpent and her subsequent fall into sin has yielded a life of separation from God. Solomon sums up the situation succinctly:

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.⁴³²

429 Genesis 3:22-24.

430 E. J. Young, *Genesis 3. A devotional and expository study*. 1966, Banner of Truth Trust. P39,40.

431 See: “**Evolution: A house of cards**,” and “**Sin, Science and Salvation**.”

432 Ecclesiastes 7:29, AKJV.

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The cunning serpent.

The serpent is described for us in verse 1 by comparison with the other creatures that roamed the field. He was: “*was more cunning than any beast of the field.*” Now this translation is not the best. The Hebrew suggests more a superlative sense than a simple comparison.⁴³³

וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

of the field living things from all crafty was now the serpent

My translation: Now the serpent was the most crafty living thing in the field.

It would seem then, that there is a sharp distinction being made. It is not that there is a gradation of subtlety amongst the creatures and the serpent is at the apex or pinnacle. Rather what we have here is a sharp distinction. The serpent stands alone and is different to all the beasts of the field. He is set apart in this chapter by virtue of the fact that he displays human characteristics. It appears that he can speak and is subtle or crafty.

The word “*cunning*” is taken in a negative sense by most translators, so that it indicates crafty, subtle or devious. However the Hebrew word is also used in a positive sense where it is often rendered “*prudence.*”⁴³⁴ The essential idea at the root of the word is shrewdness or to lay things bare or naked. It suggests cleverness and skill. Now the translation of the word in Genesis three must be made on the basis of the story that unfolds. Clearly what has happened is not good as we understand by the Lord God's reaction. So the serpent does, in fact, act in a crafty or devious manner. We are therefore left immediately with a conundrum. The text tells us that the Lord God had made the serpent. However how, we must ask, did the serpent become more cunning (crafty) than all other beasts? Furthermore, we must ask, how is it that the serpent can speak?

We are given instruction about this creature in later books. A word of caution is needed. It is sometimes wrong and disingenuous to use later texts to interpret earlier ones, unless there is a specific reason or need to do so. A case in point is the prophets' use of the phrase “*without form and void*” indicating a state resulting from judgment, being taken as binding in all cases so that Genesis 1:2 must indicate that a judgement had occurred in some ancient past.⁴³⁵ We laboured earlier to show why this is a false way of looking at Genesis 1:2.⁴³⁶ Here however we have no information about the identity or appearance of the serpent except that he was made by the Lord God. But we are informed in later books more detailed information about this serpent, particularly in Revelation chapter 12:

433 Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*. 2nd edition 2007. Zondervan. P54.

434 Proverbs 12:16,23; 13:16; 14:8,15,18; 22:3; 27:12.

435 Jeremiah 4:23; Isaiah 34:11; 45:18.

436 See chapter 1 and comments on Genesis 1:2.

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So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.⁴³⁷

The serpent, then, is a manifestation of the Devil or Satan – the deceiver, murderer, adversary and accuser. We do not know how it was that this creature fell from goodness.⁴³⁸ There are hints in the prophets.⁴³⁹ But in truth we are in the dark about how this created being who was once described as *“the seal of perfection,” “perfect in beauty,”* and *“the anointed cherub who covers,”* then came to be the one in whom *“iniquity was found.”*⁴⁴⁰

3:1. A single strategy.

And so the serpent, energised by the devil, comes to speak to the woman.⁴⁴¹ This ought to have been a signal to the woman that something was wrong. No other creatures corresponded to Adam we learnt in Genesis 2, so that, in other words, they were not of the same type or kind and could not relate on an equal footing. Thus it was that the Lord made Woman. Given Adam's eulogy over his new wife it is clear that she too would have known of the difference between her and the other creatures. But now a serpent speaks. This ought to have been signal enough to her that something was wrong. However, surprisingly, the Woman does not recoil from this strange occurrence, and she does not seek the Lord. Instead she listens to what the serpent says. His first recourse is to sow doubt in the Woman's mind.

Has God indeed said, ‘you shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?⁴⁴²

This question was designed to call into question the woman's understanding of the word of God. God had said:

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”⁴⁴³

But the serpent turns this word around. God had given Adam and the Woman freedom to eat of all the abundance that He had made and provided in the garden! There was just one single exception. They were not to eat of one tree because in eating of it they would be disobeying God's command and thence as a

437 Revelation 12:9.

438 The problem of where evil originated is not solvable. All we do know for certain is that God is always good and always does good, so that evil does not originate in God.

439 See Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

440 Ezekiel 28:12-15.

441 Genesis 3:1.

442 Genesis 3:1.

443 Genesis 2:16,17.

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result would die. But the serpent asks the question in such a way as to suggest that God is being unfair. This twisting of God's word is something we see time and again. What God brings to us as truth and beauty is twisted and made to be ugly and distorting. It is vital we learn to recognise this approach of the enemy. To do that we need always to read and study Scripture as it is revealed to us.

3:2,3.

Now the Woman made the mistake of listening to the serpent and she compounds the problem by answering the serpent's question.⁴⁴⁴ In this we see another stage in the process of falling from what God intends. Notice that she does two things in her response. She adds something to God's word, and she also takes something away from it as well. Look carefully at what she says:

“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3** but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴⁴⁵

She skates over the provision of God in saying “*we may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden.*” Compare this with the Lord's words: “*of every tree of the garden you may freely eat.*”⁴⁴⁶ When it comes to the single prohibition this is where the woman slips up. Compare what she says with what the Lord told Adam:

Woman's words:

but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, ...‘you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

God's command:

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

She does not name the tree but merely gives its location. Then she reports that they were prohibited not just from eating it, but from ***touching*** it too. And so she adds to God's word, for God never said anything about touching the tree. Furthermore, when it comes to the consequences of the prohibition the woman leaves out some vital information which the Lord revealed. The Lord said that if they ate of the tree then they would “*surely die.*” There was no doubt at all as to the consequences of disobedience. We have already noted that the expression is a Hebrew superlative in which the word “die” is doubled (literally:

444 Genesis 3:2,3.

445 Genesis 3:2,3.

446 Genesis 2:16 compare with Genesis 3:2.

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“dying you shall die”). But the woman merely reports with these less forceful words: *“lest you die.”* That word *“lest”* leaves room for doubt. The word signifies the great possibility of death being the outcome but there is some wriggle room. The Cambridge Dictionary suggests the phrase “at the risk of” as a synonym. Thus the Woman, knowing what she has heard concerning the prohibition, has, in responding to the serpent, suggested that really there ought to be an exception to the rule.⁴⁴⁷

3:4.

At this juncture the serpent seizes upon her departures from truth. He has sowed doubt and has made the woman alter the word of God. Seeing that the bait has been swallowed he declares boldly a flat negation of what God had actually said. He takes the word of God and places a big fat no! right in front of it (לא) as can be seen by comparing the two phrases:⁴⁴⁸

תָּמוּת מוֹת

Genesis 2:17

תָּמוּתוֹן לֹא-מוֹת

Genesis 3:4

no/not

The second word (highlighted in slightly different shades of green) is exactly the same word but with different number referents. In Genesis 2:17 it is 2nd person singular, whilst in Genesis 3:4 it is 2nd person plural. Thus from sowing doubt, to altering or adjusting Scripture, the end result is a straight denial of what God says.

3:5.

The serpent then introduces a “reason” which is sheer invention. It illustrates the devil's utterly false view of God. He attempts to convince the Woman that if she ate of this tree which was forbidden then she will be *“like God”*!⁴⁴⁹ There is something deeply sinister about the serpent's lies. God made man and woman to be in fellowship with Him. But He also made mankind to bear His image and likeness. We are not identical to God, but we reflect something of His Being because He has made us so. Why then did the Woman fall for this lie? Well, of course, as we have seen, she was softened up to it and duped by a manipulation of the truth. Had God said? Surely not! Then when this subterfuge had been laid, the

447 There are dire warnings in Scripture for those who add or subtract from God's word. See: Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18,19.

448 Genesis 3:4.

449 Genesis 3:5.

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Woman devalues what the Lord said by not reporting it faithfully. When the serpent saw that she distorted the word of God he pounced to twist the truth by half a revolution. The serpent's lie in verse 5 is one which drives the wedge between the Woman and God deeper still. God is painted as less than God. One who would withhold things from the Woman is not to be trusted! The serpent effectively declares that God is jealous of His position and wants no one to be equal to Him. Well, of course, the Lord is jealous of His position, because He alone occupies such a place, and none other can come anywhere near His elevated, beautiful and glorious status! God is also perfectly good and the thought that He would withhold anything that might bless and benefit another is unthinkable. Pause and meditate on the following verses:

You *are* good, and do good.⁴⁵⁰

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.⁴⁵¹

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.⁴⁵²
I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.⁴⁵³

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.⁴⁵⁴

For the Lord God *is* a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good *thing* will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.⁴⁵⁵

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!⁴⁵⁶

These are but a selection. We ought never to fall for the lie that God withholds good, for He is good and does good. But the Woman has succumbed to the lie and now her thinking has been subverted. Whereas before she understood the goodness of God and His abundant provision, now she thinks differently, having been coached by the serpent's wicked thoughts.

3:6a.

So in verse 6 we read that it was “*when the woman saw.*” In other words, her view point had altered. She had allowed the serpent to guide her away from the truth and down some dark hole of error.

450 Psalm 119:68a.

451 John 3:16.

452 1John 4:9.

453 John 10:10b.

454 Ephesians 1:3.

455 Psalm 84:11.

456 Matthew 7:11.

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What was it that she “*saw*”? How had her thinking changed? Well the first two observations are nothing especial. She simply observed that the forbidden tree “*was good for food,*” and that it “*was pleasant to the eyes.*” And yet all the trees of the garden had these characteristics, so the fact that this forbidden tree (of the knowledge of good and evil) had the same is hardly worth mentioning. If this tree was the only one that provided a pleasing appearance and good food, maybe that might have been something to make note of. But the fact is that the serpent has convinced the Woman that this tree was just like all the others and so ought not to be singled out by God. How twisted! It was as if the serpent was saying: this tree is drawing you to take of it because it has good food and a pleasing appearance.

One other thing we ought to draw attention to is that the Woman appears to be looking at this forbidden tree with merely *earthly* eyes. We ought to recall the apostle John's instruction warning us against a worldly view:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. **17** And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.⁴⁵⁷

It is wonderfully true that the Lord has given us much to enjoy in this world, but the way in which we view these things and how we enjoy them is of paramount importance. We need to look upon the blessings and gifts of God with heavenly eyes. So in some way the Woman had looked at this forbidden tree and had desired its food and pleasing aspect in opposition to the command she knew from God. She ought to have recognised that the desire for these things was wrong. There were alternatives just as good (if not better) but she ignored these.

The final nail in the coffin of her fall expressed in verse 6 was that she was sold the lie that she would become “*wise.*” The tree of knowledge of good and evil was presented to the Woman by the serpent as a tree that would make her wise. This was a falsehood. It would give her experience of good and evil, but it would also separate her from God, because it was the way of independence rather than the way of trust and reliance upon God.

At the end of verse 6 we find the final act in the fall of the Woman described thus: “*she took of its fruit and ate.*” Having been lead down a different path by the serpent she is now fully engaged in the new way and so ingests it whole heartedly. We pause to reflect that we as believers who live after the fall are called to do the same with respect to Christ who referred to Himself as “*the bread of life.*”⁴⁵⁸ The Lord Jesus declared:

457 1John 2:15-17.

458 John 6:48.

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53 ... “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”⁴⁵⁹

Of course we cannot eat and drink the Lord Jesus in a physical sense. That would be absurd, and later on in this event the Lord told His disciples, who were puzzled but still trusting, that what He was saying was spiritual.⁴⁶⁰ He made it plain by saying:

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life.⁴⁶¹

Thus as believers we should do all we can to imbibe and ingest the Lord Jesus. We want to eat Him and drink Him and assimilate Him so that our lives will be truly His. He is the tree of life to us.

3:6b. The silent husband and the tragic result.

Then right at the end of verse 6 we are told simply that “*she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*” All along the narrative has focused on a conversation between the serpent (the devil) and the Woman. Now we discover that Adam had been “*with her*” all the time. The startling thing is that we have had no word nor any action from Adam all this time. What does happen instead is that having picked the fruit the Woman passes some to Adam and then he eats of it too. What is going on? Adam was the one who received the command from the Lord concerning the forbidden tree and he must have passed this information onto the Woman. But here he makes not a sound! This is reprehensible. Thus whilst Paul taught that Adam was not deceived but the woman was, he has no hesitation in laying the responsibility for death at the feet of Adam.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—⁴⁶²

21 For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.⁴⁶³

459 John 6:53-58.

460 John 6:60,61.

461 John 6:63.

462 Romans 5:12.

463 1Corinthians 15:21,22.

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And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.⁴⁶⁴

How immensely sad and tragic! Thus, the apostle Paul taught all men who were married to make sure that they never stay silent again. He exhorts men to action and to word. Husbands are not just to love their wives but to love them *“as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”*⁴⁶⁵ Adam certainly did not do that in the garden of Eden. But do Christian men copy Adam or Christ? Further, husbands are to wash their wives by means of the *“word,”* to sanctify, cleanse and purify her.⁴⁶⁶ This is what Adam ought to have done. He should have pointed out to the Woman that her view of God and His command was wrong. He ought to have pulled her away from the serpent's lies. This is what Christ did. He came declaring the truth, showing us the Father, and revealing the nature of our own wicked hearts. Do we Christian men do the same as Adam or as Christ? I fear many are silent. Of course the task is immense! The task is impossible without God's help through the Holy Spirit. But, nevertheless, Christian husbands ought to seek the Lord in such a way so as to provide cleansing for their wives.

3:7.

Adam was silent. He listened to the conversation and simply accepted the forbidden fruit. He knew full well what he was doing. The end result is described in verse 7 where we discover that their eyes were now *“opened.”* This new sight is not that of truth and beauty. It is, rather, a new view. Their world view has changed from one of dependence and reliance upon the Lord God, to a new one of self reliance and independence. Consequently they see things from their own independent perspective. They see things in a very different light. Their first observation was that they were *“naked.”* It was not that they suddenly saw that their flesh was exposed to the elements, they already new this, but rather that being naked they somehow thought this awkward and wrong. They experienced shame for what they had done and sought desperately to cover it up. And so they sewed fig leaves to cover their exposed flesh. Such an attempt to cover their shame is pathetic, but it is what all mankind continues to do. Rather than come to the Lord in open repentance confessing our lost and helpless condition, we try every which way we can to present ourselves in the best possible light. It is, I think, significant that there are only two occasions in the New Testament where fig leaves are mentioned, one of which appears instructive. Thus, on the day after the Lord Jesus made His *Triumphal Entry* into Jerusalem, which would eventually lead to His death on the cross, He travelled from Bethany to Jerusalem. As He was journeying He observed a fig tree in full leaf but when He found no fruit on it He cursed it so that it would die.⁴⁶⁷ The implication would seem to be

464 1 Timothy 2:14.

465 Ephesians 5:25.

466 Ephesians 5:26.

467 Matthew 21:18,19; Mark 11:12-14. The second occasion where fig leaves are mentioned was when the Lord Jesus used the fig tree as a parable to show that things are near at hand. See: Matthew 24:32; Mark 13:28.

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that fig leaves ought to indicate the presence of fruitfulness but are found wanting. In the case of Adam and the Woman the fig leaves did not do the intended job. They provided scant cover. We learn later that the Lord would remedy this, but here we are left with quite a sorry picture. Like the child who tries to put the broken items back together with sticky tape and paste, the result is less than satisfying.

[2] Four questions posed by the Lord God to Adam and Woman. (Genesis 3:8-13).

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,
and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him,
“Where *are* you?”

10 So he said,
“I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

11 And He said,
“Who told you that you *were* naked?
Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

12 Then the man said,
“The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

13 And the Lord God said to the woman,
“What *is* this you have done?”

The woman said,
“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The forbidden act has been done and the consequences have begun to play out. But thankfully we discover that the Lord is in charge and knows all things.

3:8.

Our passage begins with a statement which although it appears incidental is actually quite significant. Verse 8 tells us that the “*Lord God*” was simply “*walking in the garden in the cool of the day.*” Such an incidental statement could easily be rushed over but we do well to pause and consider the importance of what it tells us. By stating that the Lord was “*walking in the garden*” we can see immediately that we have here a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ once again, for only the Lord Jesus is able to declare in bodily form whom God is.⁴⁶⁸ Further, the way in which this activity (a walk in the park) is mentioned, it would appear to be a normal and regular occurrence. From this we derive the fact that Adam and the Woman enjoyed close personal fellowship with the pre-incarnate Lord! How often the Lord came by is impossible to say. From the opening verses of Genesis 3 it would appear that the Lord was not present at this time. He may have been elsewhere, or He may have not been present on Earth at that period. Perhaps it was that He came at set times, or maybe on request? We cannot say precisely, but we can note that conversation and fellowship with the pre-incarnate Christ was a frequent occurrence.

At the sound of the Lord's footsteps Adam and the Woman seek a hiding place. This is not normal. We can imagine that prior to the events of the first seven verses of Genesis 3, on hearing the sound of the

468 John 1:18.

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Lord approaching the first human pair would normally have been delighted at His coming. Now they are afraid and so they *“hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.”*⁴⁶⁹

In what follows we have the Lord asking Adam and the Woman four separate questions. We could call this an investigation or an enquiry, but note that the lead investigator knows all the answers! The first three are addressed to Adam, and the last to the Woman as a consequence of Adam's responses. We shall consider each in turn.

3:9,10. *Where are you?*

This opening question is addressed to Adam, for he is primarily responsible. Consider first the great grace of the Lord God here. He could justifiably have consigned Adam to damnation for his disobedience, but He does not! Instead He asks Adam this searching question. Now since it is the Lord God asking, we know at once that He does not need an answer, for in His omniscience He already knows. The question is asked for Adam's benefit. We could paraphrase this by saying: Adam consider where you are! Or we might say: Adam think about your situation! Adam responds by answering the question literally. This is not really what the Lord was asking for, because He knew that Adam was hiding. What the Lord required was a confession of Adam's transgression. Adam is not yet ready to give this and this indicates the depth of sin. Confronted by the Lord who asks graciously what condition and state he is in, Adam merely tells the Lord the series of events that occurred. He heard the Lord approach, he was afraid, and so he hid. It is rather like the case of several naughty boys at school who have been engaged in a fight that has ended up destroying a priceless vase. When the head master comes in demanding to know what happened, the boys stop in fear and simply re-tell the events as they transpired: “Max hit Ben because Ben made a hurtful remark and that is why the vase got broken sir!” But the head master does not want a story of how the vase got broken, he wants to know why the vase got broken! What was going on in their minds to result in a fight? It is the same here. Why Adam did you break my commandment? That is the force of the question *“where are you?”* How have you got into such a state Adam?

This question is a very important one for us to consider. Not just when we first come to know God, but all through our lives. Where am I now? In what state am I in? Am I walking in fellowship with the Lord in the cool of the day? Or am I walking in the way of the Gentiles in the darkness of the mind?

3:11a. *Who told you that you were naked?*

Still there is no immediate condemnation from the Lord. We might have expected the Lord to pour out His wrath, but instead He asks this second question. Again the sovereign omniscient Lord knows the answer, so seeking information is not the purpose of the question. Adam has not yet come to repentance

469 Genesis 3:8.

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and so this is offered to help him consider why things have come to such a sorry pass. Adam did not know that he was naked in the sense of it being shameful. He did know, however that he was naked, for at the end of Genesis 2 we read:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.⁴⁷⁰

We might paraphrase the question in the following way: so Adam how did you come to consider your nakedness as shameful? What has changed? Again the Lord knows the answers but He asks these searching questions to probe Adam's heart and to get him to recognise the state he is in and the help he urgently needs. E. J. Young again is helpful here:

*“The knowledge which they now have is one which judges everything from a false standpoint. It sees all from a perverted position. Basically it is mistaken about all that it would interpret. And so nakedness becomes a matter of shame. As un-fallen creatures the man and his wife had rejoiced in all things. Now, because of sin, they can really rejoice in nothing.”*⁴⁷¹

Once they were naked and unashamed, now they are still naked but it gives rise to shame because their perspective had changed. They were no longer in communion with God but were in opposition to Him viewing things from the perspective offered by the serpent. It is no wonder that the apostle John can state truthfully:

... and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*.⁴⁷²

3:11b. Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?

This third question follows rapidly on from the second so that Adam's response is delayed until both questions have been asked. We considered the first of these two on its own because even though Adam does not address it specifically, the Holy Spirit does not waste words and there is an intention behind both asking the question and in adding the next in quick succession. Asking: “who told you that you were naked?” points Adam to consider whom he had been listening to. That Adam is not given the chance to respond to this indicates that the Lord did not want any attention drawn to the serpent at this point. Thus the third question concerning the breaking of the commandment is pressed. The Lord knew, of course, that the Woman was deceived, that she took of the tree, ate of it, and then gave to Adam to eat as well. The Lord asks plainly: have you transgressed my commandment? Here is an opportunity for

470 Genesis 2:25.

471 E. J. Young, *Genesis 3. A devotional and expository study*. 1966, Banner of Truth Trust. P69.

472 1John 5:19b.

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Adam to confess. How gracious is the Lord! And how stubborn is sinful man, for Adam does not break down and confess what he had done. He was not deceived. He did wrong knowingly. And here the Lord offers Adam the chance to own up to what he had done.

3:12.

Instead of a confession, Adam not only passes blame but effectively locates blame upon the Lord. He begins his response by pointing to the Woman. Yes it was true that the Woman gave to Adam to eat, but Adam had been aware of what was going on (he was “*with her*”) and so entered into the sinful act willingly.⁴⁷³ Yes it was the woman who gave of the tree to Adam, but at no time did she coerce or force him! He could have rejected the offer at any time. He ought to have remonstrated with the Woman but he did not.

Most disturbingly we note in his response that Adam actually lays blame at the Lord's feet. He states that the Woman was the one that the Lord “*gave*” to be with Adam. Implied in this is the idea that if the Lord had not given him Woman, none of this would have happened. Now in this question and Adam's response we learn that blame passing is always folly. There may well be causal connections. It is true that the Lord made Woman for Adam, but this was a good thing. It is also true that she was deceived by the serpent, but suggesting that the former act necessarily lead to the second is folly in the extreme. How often we do this! We try and shift blame by dissecting the causal connections as though the train of events is enough to resolve the issue and salve the conscience. Why do we do this? Because we cannot (in our pride) face the consequence that we are liable and we are at fault.

3:13. *What is this you have done?*

Having asked Adam three questions the Lord now moves to the Woman. We learn in this that there comes a time when questions reach their limit. The Lord has not finished with Adam but pursuing him with questions may not be what is needful at this time. In this we note that wisdom knows how to question and when to stop questions. Sometimes in our experiences we either do not ask sufficient questions or we may ask far too many. Oh that we would learn the wisdom of God! The key point is to know the purpose of questions. We ought to ask questions in order to bring the light of the gospel to bear. Ours is not to condemn but to bring life and light through the grace of Christ. Where there is refusal to heed the call of grace and mercy (which requires repentance and faith) there will be need for justice. The child who point blank refuses to own up to wrongdoing and simply ignores the chance of turning for forgiveness, may well need to be restrained or punished in some way. But essentially the aim of our questioning ought to be to bring about repentance and faith in God.

473 Genesis 3:6.

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And so the Lord asks the Woman what she had done. Her response seems matter-of-fact. However it shows the essence of repentance. The Woman recognised that she was *“deceived.”* Further she owned up to the fact that she had sinned by breaking the Lord's commandment. However there is also an element of blame shifting. She did not simply say: I was deceived and I ate. She said: *“the serpent deceived me and I ate.”* Thus she passes the blame onto the serpent. Of course the serpent was culpable, but then so was the Woman too. Each must own their part. What we see in both Adam and the Woman is this desire to pass the blame. Thus with four questions the Lord has demonstrated that both Adam and the Woman were at fault. Both have confessed to wrongdoing – both admit that they ate of the forbidden tree (they both said: *“and I ate”*) – but this has not come easily to them. The Lord's intention in questioning was merely to bring them to confession and to reveal the ultimate origin and source for their fall, namely the serpent. At this point in the enquiry or investigation the Lord switches tactics. In the next passage we hear the Lord's judgement as a result of transgression.

[3] God's word to the serpent, the Woman and Adam. (Genesis 3:14-19).

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent:

“because you have done this, you *are* cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

16 To the woman He said:

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire *shall be* for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

17 Then to Adam He said,

“Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. **18** Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. **19** In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.”

This section describes what the Lord God said. It is effectively statements issued by the Judge. We learnt in Genesis 1 that when God speaks there is an immediate effect. When God says something then it was so. Adam and the Woman have already lost their close fellowship with the Lord. Their relationship with the Lord has been broken, as evidenced by their attempt at covering their shame and hiding from the voice of the Lord. They are now dead in trespasses and sins, they had died spiritually. But here we can see further consequences of their sinful disobedience. Their spiritual death as a result of their disobedience was addressed and illuminated by the four questions we noted in the previous section. But now we find that the Lord addresses the three protagonists in the reverse order starting with the serpent and ending with Adam. This time comes the judgement.

3:14. To the serpent.

In the Lord's address to the serpent there is no hint of grace or mercy offered to the creature.

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Instead the serpent is simply cursed. The serpent is not given any opportunity to respond and no questions are put to him. As a result of what the serpent has done in deceiving the Woman to disobey the Lord God, he is to be cursed, and to be cursed *“more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field.”* This statement tells us two important things. First the curse affects not just the serpent but all creatures. We will learn later from the Lord's words to Adam that all of creation is under God's curse. The New Testament also attests to this fact. We cannot suppose that the creatures of the sea and the air are outside of this general curse, but rather that the land creatures are featured as examples. We suggest this because the curse would appear from texts such as Isaiah 24 and Romans 8 to apply to all created things. The second point to note is that the serpent is singled out to be cursed *“more than”* all other land creatures.

The word *“curse”* has the sense of evil and of loathing.⁴⁷⁴ Immediately we ask how can the Lord bring about evil? I think we ought to recognise this in the negative sense. What I mean is that by withdrawing and by withholding His presence and love the only thing left is evil – the absence of God. A curse, then is a withdrawing of blessings and benefits of God. In Deuteronomy the blessings of God for obedience are set in opposition to the curses for disobedience.⁴⁷⁵ To be cursed is also to be rendered a slave and to lose freedom.⁴⁷⁶ A curse then is something which holds in bondage and is devoid of the blessing and bountiful presence of God.⁴⁷⁷

The serpent is cursed in the extreme, above and beyond all others. In the actual experience of the serpent as a created being this is manifested by dwelling and eating of the dust for the rest of their lives. In the case of the devil, we observe that his abode is the bottomless pit and the depths of the lake of fire and brimstone.⁴⁷⁸ Nothing else is fit for such a vile opponent to the Lord God who seeks to destroy and ruin His creation. The New Testament accords the devil with three key characteristics. He is a liar, a thief and a murderer.⁴⁷⁹

3:15. The gospel announced!

And then we have a remarkable piece of Scripture which, although is addressed to the serpent, has great and immense blessings for Adam, the Woman and all mankind. It will be worthwhile pausing here and considering the text in detail.

Here is further analysis of the text:

474 Compare Exodus 22:28 with Acts 23:5. Paul refers to Exodus 22:28 and uses the word *“evil”* in place of *“curse.”*

475 Deuteronomy 27:15f; 28:1f.

476 Joshua 9:23.

477 Note that God is present everywhere at all times fully even in hell. Those who occupy such a place do not benefit from God's presence for they are determined against Him.

478 Revelation 20:3,10.

479 John 8:44; 10:10.

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman, and
between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head, and
you shall bruise His heel.⁴⁸⁰

The essence of this text is straightforward. The word “*enmity*” comes first so we discover that there will be war between two opposing entities. One side is the serpent and his offspring or descendants. In that the serpent stands for the devil we are not to imagine the devil having children. Rather we are to think of all those he has adopted to his forlorn cause. That includes all those fallen angels and demons whose intent is, like that of their “father,” to deceive, murder and destroy. Then on the opposing side is the Woman and her “*Seed*.” At once we can see a contrast. The woman and her “*Seed*” are all those born from the woman. Now the phrase “*her Seed*” probably points to the Woman's offspring and descendants. However, the capitalising of the word points us to the one offspring who is the main subject of this verse, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. That the Lord Jesus is intended by the next phrase: “*He shall bruise ...*” is certain because the reference is to a singular person.

This promised “*Seed*” (Christ) is thus to “*bruise*” the head of the serpent. This indicates that the serpent will be destroyed, for the word “*bruise*” has the force of “to break” or “to smite in pieces.” Bruising the head is fatal. We can see this thought echoed in the decapitation of Goliath by David.⁴⁸¹ In return the “*Seed*” will suffer the bruising of His “*heel*.” Since the same word “*bruise*” is used, the effect is serious. However the serpent can only afflict at the “*heel*.” This suggests a ruination of the walk, a tripping up, if you will. Such then is a very serious, but only a temporary effect which we know from the New Testament is fulfilled in the death and then resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the bruising of the heel of the promised Seed of the Woman is, I believe, put in contrast to His bruising the head of the serpent. We could picture this as the Seed levelling blows at the serpent's very head and centre rendering him knocked down and defeated utterly. Whilst the serpent is on the floor he grabs the heel of the Seed and afflicts a bruising too, but this is temporary. Now here in this first promise of the gospel the precise details of the defeat of the serpent and the victory of the Seed is not spelt out. Nevertheless, victory is assured. The serpent will be defeated and, although the Seed will suffer the bruising of “*His heel*,” He will come though and stand in victory.

480 Genesis 3:15.

481 1Samuel 17:51.

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3:16. To the Woman.

Having cursed the serpent and announcing the good news for mankind against him, the Lord now turns to deal with the Woman. There are four things that He says to her as follows:

I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
in pain you shall bring forth children;
your desire *shall be* for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.

These four statements actually occur in pairs. The first two concern child bearing and the first statement is enlarged upon by the second one. The third and fourth concern the Woman's relationship with Adam. The first thing to say by way of reminder is that prior to the fall into sin and the resultant curse, everything was “*good*,” and all was “*very good*.” We need to remember this because so often we bring our current experience which is bathed in the fruits of the curse into the picture.

In the first of the four things the Lord mentions, we discover that there will be a marked increase in two things, “*sorrow*,” and in “*conception*.”⁴⁸² The first of these words indicates labour, the experience of child-birth.⁴⁸³ The second word signifies becoming pregnant, hence conception.⁴⁸⁴ Thus the Lord will increase both labour and conception to a great extent. From this we can infer that prior to the fall labour would have been shorter and conception much rarer. From now on, however, both getting pregnant (conceiving) and the length and experience of child-bearing (labour) will be increased.

The second of the four things the Lord pronounces continues the theme of child-bearing but emphasises one aspect of this experience. Now, after the fall, women will give birth “*in pain*.” The distinction between normal sensation and when that becomes unbearable pain is not an easy one to fathom. The move from a tickle of the skin, to the scratch of an itch, to a scratch that causes a mark, to an action that leads to severe pain in the skin, is a progression in application of force. But when we move from sensation to pain is not clearly defined. Some have greater tolerance to pain than others, for example. However in this second statement of the Lord's the implication is clear. Child-bearing will now hurt!

Given the foregoing two statements this might have lead the Woman to steer well clear of Adam! Who wants pain? But the third thing that the Lord does is to ensure that such evasion does not happen.

482 The phrase “*greatly multiply*” is the superlative translation where the Hebrew supplies the same word twice, which might be rendered literally as “multiplying I will multiply.”

483 **Benjamin Davidson.** *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon.* Hendriksen Publishers. P609. Hereafter as **Davidson.** P609 states that עֲצֻבוּתָּהּ is a singular masculine noun with second person feminine suffix. The masculine noun is to be translated as “labour,” primarily.

484 **Davidson.** P221 & 219 states that יִהְיֶה לְךָ is a singular masculine noun with second person feminine suffix. The masculine noun is to be translated as “conception” signifying becoming pregnant.

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Consequently, the Woman will experience “*desire*” for her husband. She will not be able to resist his approach. She will long and even crave for her husband's affections and attention. The Hebrew of this part of verse 16 reads thus:

וְאֵל-אִישׁוֹ תִּשְׁקָתִי
your desire/longing your husband and to/towards

As may be observed this clause has no verb and so the verb “to be” is most often supplied to make sense in English giving us: “and towards your husband will be your desire.”

The last thing we read of that was said to the Woman was that her husband will “*rule over*” her. The Hebrew for this last sentence is as follows:

וְהָיָא יִמְשֵׁל-בָּךְ
over you he will have dominion/rule and he

The word rendered “*dominion*” is described by **Wilson** as:

“To be superior in power, authority, and dominion, as a governor.”⁴⁸⁵

We shall learn shortly that Adam's silence was inexcusable. He ought to have spoken to the Woman during (or even before) the conversation with the serpent. Now, because of his weakness, the Lord has made it so that men will most certainly rule over their husbands. Is this a new thing or is it a reinforcement of the way in which God created mankind? The Lord made Adam first and then the Woman. She was made from Adam's rib to be cherished and loved, not to be dominated nor to dominate. Now we learn that the husband will rule over his wife. It cannot be at all that this will give carte blanche to the husband. He cannot merely do as he pleases. I think the main point is that responsibility to lead and govern lies with the man. This was how he was created. Domineering, dictatorship, and tyrannical behaviour are by no means endorsed by this stipulation. Rather the Lord is ensuring that there is order and harmony in the relationships among people. In the same way that the Father exercises authority and the Son and the Spirit obey, and yet the three are co-equal, so too the Woman must learn submission to her husband even though both stand as equals constitutionally before God. I emphasise the fact that ruling

485 **William Wilson**. *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*. MacDonald Publishing. P394. Hereafter as **Wilson**. P132.

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does not mean lording it over, demanding, or domineering at all. These types of expressions of rule are as a result of sinful and selfish hearts. Nevertheless it remains the case that the husband is responsible to lead and thereby rule. But this does not mean he does so with no help nor consultation with his helper who is equal in standing before God.

There has been some suggestion that we ought to consider this statement of the Woman's desire for her husband, as a desire expressed by her to rule or dominate. Is there any merit in this suggestion? To elucidate, it is suggested that the curse placed upon the Woman was not just that she would have pain in childbirth and a greater number of children, but that she would be in constant conflict with her husband. She will desire to rule him. To help unpick this idea, it should be noted that the Hebrew words used for *“desire”* and *“rule”* in Genesis 3:16 are also to be found in a verse that describes God's appeal to Cain when his offering was not accepted. We shall comment on the detail of this event later on, of course, but it is worth showing the relevant part here:

6 So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its **desire** is for you, but you should **rule** over it.”⁴⁸⁶

Sin was desiring or longing for Cain if he would not change his will, but the Lord tells him that he ought to rule over it and allow it no space. This connection between these two words is interesting. We have the desire or longing on one hand, and the rule or dominion on the other. The two concepts are not synonymous. To desire or to long for something is primarily emotional, whereas rule and dominion are engaged in with the will and the intellect to the fore (although not without emotion playing some part). The word *“desire”* is also used in Song of Songs chapter 7:

I *am* my beloved's, and his desire *is* toward me.⁴⁸⁷

It is not obvious here that the beloved *rules* over the object of His love, even though we know that the Lord does indeed rule over His church. Surely the implication in this verse of Song of Songs is that He desires her just as any husband desires their wife? It would seem from the foregoing that the Woman's desire for her husband was for affection and attention rather than that she wanted to rule or govern him.

3:17. To Adam.

Lastly the Lord speaks to Adam. The Lord begins by stating plainly exactly what Adam was guilty of and what he had done. He had simply *“heeded the voice”* of the Woman (his wife). This is not meant

486 Genesis 4:6,7.

487 Song of Songs 7:10.

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to imply that from now on he ignores his wife! By no means! What is being stated here is that Adam failed to engage with his wife and point out to her the folly of what the serpent was saying. Adam was silent when he should have taken a lead. Instead of appealing to the Woman in love he remained silent and simply went along with whatever the Woman was saying. Such lilly-livered behaviour is reprehensible. Our trouble is that we oscillate between extremes. Perhaps the indignant husband seeing the folly of the Woman might have forcibly removed her and given her an ear-full into the bargain! Such is monstrous dominance and ought never to be displayed. But the response Adam offers, in polar extreme, is equally foolish. What Adam ought to have done is remonstrated with his wife in love. How this is actually expressed is dependant on the situation and the characters involved. But doing nothing, as Adam did, amounts merely to heeding the voice of one's wife.

The Lord makes it clear that Adam directly contravened His clear command. He ate of the tree which had been forbidden to them. There were no extenuating circumstances. Adam just disobeyed. I am reminded that there are very clear laws in our land which are daily contravened. Shame on us. But to continue with Adam, his problem was not being deceived, but in **not** doing as he had been made to do, and in **not** doing what he was commanded. Likewise men today fail to do what they were made to do – to lead and rule in love – and they deliberately transgress. We have no legs to stand on before the good and holy God. Adam stood condemned and therefore the Lord pronounces the curse on creation. This curse brings forth unnatural (distorted) plants and reaches to the very constituents of the ground (dust).

The text is intricate and forms a single thread of interconnected thoughts, but we shall examine it by looking at each sentence as translated in the NKJV. The end of verse 17 reads thus:

17 ... cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life.

We have already discussed the meaning of the term “*cursed*” but we note in passing that the curse upon the serpent through to the curse here on the ground forms a continuous all-embracing curse upon creation. The word “*ground*” is close in sound to the name of Adam. This highlights the fact that Adam was created from the dust of the ground.⁴⁸⁸ But note here that the ground is cursed for Adam's “*sake*.” How can this be? Surely making things so hard is not actually for mankind's benefit? Well in fact this is a principle we need to grasp. When we go astray, the Lord makes the way difficult by placing stumbling blocks in the way, to prevent further departure.⁴⁸⁹ When we see the fruits of sin ending in disease and difficulty (such as broken homes and HIV through promiscuity and depraved behaviour) it is clearly a principle in action.⁴⁹⁰ The next part of this opening sentence informs us that eating from the ground will require labour or toilsome work. This is the same word used when the Lord spoke of the Woman's

488 Genesis 2:7.

489 Jeremiah 6:21. See also Genesis 11:1f.

490 Romans 1:24f.

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pregnancy being extended and made harder. Work of the ground will become much more labour intensive. Work to get food from the ground will be something that does not change and is a life-long experience.

3:18.

Verse 18 forms the next main sentence as follows:

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

In this verse we begin to see why the ground will be so hard to work. There will be thorns, or a plant with sharp thorns or prickles, and then another plant which appears to be somewhat obscure. **Davidson** suggests it comes from a root word which means “to radiate,” or “to flow freely.” From this derive words for 'mother of pearl,' 'the swallow,' 'spontaneous flowing,' or 'liberty.' **Davidson** then suggests the idea of some luxuriant freely growing plant.⁴⁹¹ According to **Blue Letter Bible**, **Gesenius** agrees with this suggesting that it signifies a “a luxuriously growing but useless plant.”⁴⁹² Thus the “*thorns and thistles*” indicate all those plants which sport thorns and sharp spines and which run rampant with little productive use. These renegade plants grow in amongst the useful “*herbs*” which were edible and useful. Now whether this is a modification of plants that existed in the original creation, or a new form of vegetation is unclear. I am inclined to believe that it was a modification of pre-existing plants but do not want to be dogmatic on this issue. The clear teaching is that these are plants which are troublesome and which were not present before this fall.

3:19.

Lastly verse 19 reads thus:

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.

The opening words of this sentence are interesting. The second word, rendered “*face*” in our version, may more naturally be translated as “nostril.” The import is that to gain food from the ground will require not just “*sweat*,” but also some heavy breathing! Such sweat-inducing toil will continue throughout life. In fact it will persist until the worker of the ground dies and becomes part of the ground he has so laboriously toiled over. There is then, a reminder of Adam's origin from the dust of the ground, and by

⁴⁹¹ **Davidson**. P154,155.

⁴⁹² <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=H1863&t=KJV>

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asserting that he will return to such a place signifies his unmaking or destruction (i.e. death). A literal rendering of this last part of verse 19 shows the emphasis of Adam being made from the dust of the ground:

...eat bread until you return to the ground, because from out of it you were taken, because dust you [are] and to dust you shall return.

Thus we discover that the whole of creation has been put under the curse. The very ground from which Adam was made is cursed. Now Adam who was made from the dust will become dust. He is now subject to physical death. By such simple means we learn that the very fabric of our world is under the curse. Two key examples are given in that the land animals were cursed (the serpent was cursed above all other land animals), and the Woman's experience of pregnancy and childbirth are now much harder. But these two examples are by no means exclusive, and we can assert this on the basis of other Scriptures which we will merely quote here without comment:

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; **21** because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.⁴⁹³

1 Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. **2** And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. **3** The land* shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the Lord has spoken this word. **4** The earth mourns *and* fades away, the world languishes *and* fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish. **5** The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. **6** Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men *are* left. ... **18** And it shall be *that* he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. **19** The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. **20** The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again.⁴⁹⁴

*literally “earth” as it is the same Hebrew word used at verse 1,4,5,6,19 and 20.

Perhaps the most devastating thing about the curse on the ground is that all now is subject to decay and death. God warned Adam that disobedience would result in death, and that is precisely what happened.⁴⁹⁵

493 Romans 8:20-22.

494 Isaiah 24:1-6,18-20.

495 Genesis 2:17.

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Adam died spiritually the moment he sinned, and this set in operation the principle of decay resulting in his physical death at the age of 930 years.⁴⁹⁶ We are taught clearly in Genesis 3 that Adam will return to the dust of the ground by physical death. But physical death is not limited to Adam. Woman too would die as would all the creatures that God had made. We know this by virtue of the fact that the ground is cursed, but also through Scriptures such as Romans 8:20,21 where all of creation has been subjected to futility and corruption. There is a general decay and disruption in the universe which was not present when God originally created all things. Although it is often taught that Adam merely introduced death to the human race, this is not exactly what Paul teaches us in Romans:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—⁴⁹⁷

It might be thought that the above statement limits us to saying that death came to all mankind as a result of Adam's sin. However, if you read this statement carefully you will learn that through Adam sin came into the world and this resulted in death.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, the very principle of death, that is separation, came into the world through Adam's transgression. Paul then goes on to explain that as a consequence *“death spread to all men,”* but this is because death was now at work within the created world, which thought is confirmed by Paul's statements in Romans 8.⁴⁹⁹

The implications of the fall are tremendous. We can view the whole fall in terms of broken relationships. We have

God and Mankind	Mankind is spiritually dead.
Within Mankind	Family break-ups, division in society, wars between nations.
Mankind and creation	No longer lord of creation but out of harmony.
Within creation	Parasitism, disasters, volcanoes, crater forming impacts.

But we should not overlook the effect on creation as a whole. The very fabric of the universe has become distorted. This has serious implications for seeking understanding within creation by modern science. What exactly are modern scientists investigating? Well, they are not viewing creation in its ***good original*** form but in its distorted and broken form. That does not stop investigation, of course, we should still

496 Genesis 5:5.

497 Romans 5:12.

498 A Literal rendering of Romans 5:12 in Greek shows this: *“Because of this just as through one man sin into the world entered and through sin death, also thus to all men death passed for that all sinned.”* Note that the last clause starting with *“also thus”* adds a further thought derived from the general principle stated in the opening part where we are taught that through one man came sin and through sin came death.

499 Also confirmed by Isaiah 24.

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explore. But what is essential for true or proper science is that we have an understanding of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. God created all things good and in harmonious relationship. Adam sinned and introduced the principle of death (which brings decay, disease and disaster), and now things are in steady and continual decline. Modern scientists who ignore these three chapters (and the general teaching of Scripture) are headed down the wrong path.⁵⁰⁰ The Lord still upholds all things and in Him all things consist, but there is a twist to His hold making things different to when they were created. Now, in its fallen state, the world can be summed up by these four words: decay, disaster, disease, death.

[4] Out of Eden but clothed by God. (Genesis 3:20-24).

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the Lord God said,

“Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—

23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

24 So

He drove out the man; and

He placed

cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and

a flaming sword which turned every way,

to guard the way to the tree of life.

And so judgement has been passed on sin. The world is now a very different place. The ground is cursed and will produce harsh and useless vegetation that runs rampant making it difficult to grow food. Pregnancies will be increased in number and they will be painful. The very fabric of the entire universe is distorted and mankind and all creatures must now suffer death. The lion no longer lies down with the lamb. What will happen next? The amazing thing is that God has not finished with mankind. Even in the midst of uttering the curse on the serpent and the ground the Lord issues the great gospel promise!

3:20.

At the end of the Lord God's declaration to Adam about the curse on the ground, we move on to a statement in verse 20 which demands some thought. The Lord ends with an emphatic conclusion that Adam will die physically and will revert to the powder (dust) of the earth, but then we have this rather interesting statement in verse 20:

And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

At first sight such a statement seems redundant or perhaps tautological. We only have Adam and the Woman present at this time so it is an obvious truism that all who would be born subsequently would be

⁵⁰⁰ It is also necessary to consider that creation was not just made through Christ as agent, but for Him too.

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from this first pair. Why then does the Holy Spirit inspire these words from Adam?⁵⁰¹ There must be something more to the meaning here surely?

Well I think there is much more to these words in Genesis 3:20! In the first place we have Adam giving the Woman a new name, “*Eve*.” We have been referring to Adam's wife as “*Woman*” up to this point because that was her original name.⁵⁰² Now she is to be called “*Eve*,” which name means “life.” Remember that in verse 19 the Lord concluded His judgement by speaking of physical death (“*for dust you are, and to dust you shall return*”). Now we have Adam declaring that his wife was to be called “Life”! The second part of this verse expresses an emphatic statement. Literally it reads thus:

... because she, she was/is the mother of all who live

The third person singular pronoun is supplied along with the third person singular form of the verb “to be.” This makes the sentence emphatic. We might paraphrase it thus:

... because **this one** was/is the mother of all who live

It would seem then that Adam is signalling some aspect of faith here. Most likely Adam is thinking of Genesis 3:15 where the “*Seed*” of the Woman is the offspring who would bring back life. Thus despite all, there is hope.⁵⁰³ Through Eve would come the promised Seed who would undo all the serpent's deceit and destruction.

And thinking on this truth that through the Woman (Eve) will come the promised Messiah who would conquer the serpent, are we not moved by this to praise the name of God eternally for His grace and mercy? The Woman was deceived by the serpent and lead her husband to make the most monumental mistake of the entire history of the world. And yet the Lord God promises that through a woman will come the Messiah! How gracious! How wonderful! We now know with the benefit of hindsight that the chosen woman was Mary. Thus womanhood is to be celebrated as the portal through which the remedy for sin would come about. It was through one man that sin entered and thence death by sin, and it is through one man's righteous act that life is restored. But the entrance of that second man (Christ) would be by means of the chosen woman, Mary. What symmetry! Adam from whom came Eve who was deceived and lead Adam to bring in sin and death. Mary, the descendent of Eve, through whom Christ entered the world and through whom righteousness and life would be brought freely to all who trust, including Mary! Is womanhood devalued by the gospel? By no means!

501 I remind the reader that we are still in the section we believe was written (humanly speaking) by Adam.

502 Genesis 2:23.

503 See, for example: **Henry M. Morris**. *The Genesis Record. (A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings)*. 1976. Baker Book House. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA. P129. **E. J. Young**, *Genesis 3. A devotional and expository study*. 1966, Banner of Truth Trust. P142.

3:21.

This verse is a beautiful description of grace. The Lord God, the pre-incarnate Christ, is with the first human pair after the announcement of the curse due to sin. Adam had declared faith in the promise of Genesis 3:15 but needed to see the full extent of this. It is one thing to be told that an offspring of Eve's would prove the undoing of the serpent's deceit, but quite another with respect to how this would occur. Thus the Lord God's first action comes here in verse 21 and it is startling. Adam and Eve deserved to die. Not just physically but eternally. However the Lord God had issued the great promise and now the details concerning this pre-ordained plan need explaining. From our perspective the details are not spelled out in any great way here. This is because the Holy Spirit has seen fit to work out for us the plan of salvation throughout the entirety of Scripture. We have all the details we need in the book of Exodus at the Passover, for example, and in all the teaching in the New Testament (as well as many other places in the Old Testament too). The bare minimum is stated here to show us the origins. This is the first time we read of actual sacrifice in the Bible and it is veiled.

Note first that the Lord God takes the initiative. Adam and Eve had made fig-leaf coverings but these were to no avail. The Lord God takes into His hands some of the animals that He had made, and He skins them. To do this the animals' lives were sacrificed and their blood was shed. Such would serve to point in prophetic type to the *“Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* who was yet to come.⁵⁰⁴ Having killed the animals the Lord God made *“tunics”* or clothes for Adam and Eve that would properly cover their naked bodies. But what happened to the carcasses? It is more than likely that the skinned carcasses of the animals were burnt. They would not have been consumed or eaten, because prior to the flood no flesh was to be eaten, only fruit, nuts and vegetation.⁵⁰⁵ Meat eating only commenced as a practical measure because of lack of food after the flood.⁵⁰⁶ It is also unthinkable that the skinned animals would be left to decay, because it would pose a health problem, and so the only thing left was to burn them. Now, of course, we are not told these details here, but we discover later that Noah made burnt offerings and we wonder what moved him to make such offerings unless the idea was passed down through the generations?⁵⁰⁷ In making these *“tunics of skin”* the Lord God was showing how to utilise sacrificial animals both as offerings for sin and for clothing. The Lord God is a true Teacher.

The last three words of the verse in our version ought really to read like this: *“and **He** clothed them.”* The Lord God dressed the first human pair. In this we note that the sacrifice and offering were the Lord God's to make, *and also* the application of the fruit of such an offering was His to carry out too. When we talk of grace we sometimes cheapen it by adding self-effort. That is not to say we must be

504 Revelation 13:8.

505 Compare Genesis 1:29f. with Genesis 9:1f.

506 Genesis 9:3.

507 Recall that Noah offered burnt sacrifices (Genesis 8:20), and the offering of Isaac was to be as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:2).

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utterly passive. But we are to, by faith, acquire what God has done on our behalf. There is no sense in trusting God for salvation (accepting the sacrifice of His Son typified here) and then working out how to make use of these things on our own and by our own ingenuity. We need to be clothed. That is why we need the Holy Spirit who clothes us with Christ. Our active involvement is one of trust and reliance, acting on what we have heard. We must never engage in anything through self-will and self-effort.

Here then is the beginning proper (in experience) of the way of sacrifice. As I mentioned earlier the details are not given. What we do know from this beginning is as follows:

[1] There is need for sacrifice – the shedding of (innocent) blood.⁵⁰⁸

[2] This must be done by God alone.⁵⁰⁹

[3] The sacrifice must be sufficient to make coverings for sin (shame).

[4] The application of the sacrifice is to be made by God and not by self.

[5] This measure was temporary as it did not fulfil the criteria of Genesis 3:15 (requiring the seed of the woman).

This atonement is a temporal measure. Its fulfilment will only come when the promise of Genesis 3:15 is fulfilled. The purpose, then, of this sacrifice and clothing was practical and prophetic. It was practical because it showed Adam and Eve how to clothe themselves, and it provided a visual means to show them what they had done and how it must be remedied. An innocent animal had to die and coverings had to be made from their skin. Their carcasses were (most probably) burnt.

3:22-24.

Having provided a temporal means of atonement, the Lord moves on to deal with another consequence of Adam's sin. It would not now be possible for Adam and Eve to remain in the garden of Eden. Although there has been a temporal measure to atone, Adam and Eve were not fit in their state to inhabit paradise. Adam's new fallen experience was to *“know good and evil.”* It was not that he knew about such things, rather it was that he experienced them. In such a state and condition, even though he is redeemed and brought back into fellowship with God through sacrifice and atonement, this redemption is not yet completed. Thus he must not yet be enabled to take of the tree of life to be perpetually living in such an unfinished condition. In order to see why the first pair could not remain in Eden, it will be helpful to outline the various stages which have occurred.

508 Hebrews 9:22.

509 See: John 3:16; Hebrews 10:9,10.

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[1] Adam was originally righteous and without sin.

[2] When he took of the forbidden tree and ate he fell and was then dead in trespasses and sins (spiritually dead). As a consequence he would die a physical death some time later.

[3] Adam heard the gospel of Genesis 3:15 and declared his faith in it in Genesis 3:20.

[4] The Lord provided a temporal atonement which prophesied of the atonement to come by sacrificing animals and making clothes (Genesis 3:21).

[5] Faith in what God would provide in the future is sufficient to redeem, but such redemption is not yet complete.

[6] Thus Adam is “saved” but awaits the completion of what was promised. In such a condition Adam, like us, can still sin.

To put it theologically, Adam was saved the moment he trusted in the Lord, (Genesis 3:20), he will be saved when the promised Messiah (the seed of the woman) comes and effects salvation, (at the cross of Calvary), and he will be saved (finally) when the Lord comes in glory (His second coming). The only difference between Adam's experience of salvation and ours is the place in time of Christ's death and resurrection. We look back to this whereas Adam looked forward. Well even though Adam was “saved” he was still not fit to remain in Eden. The Lord has a better plan which He had made before the beginning of all things, a *“kingdom prepared ... from the foundation of the world.”*⁵¹⁰

Consequently the Lord God removes Adam and sends him to *“till the ground from which he was taken.”*⁵¹¹ We note from this that the need for work is still present, although this will (sadly) be much harder under the curse. The removal of Adam (and Eve) is actually described here in two ways. We read that the Lord God both *“sent him out”* and also He *“drove out the man.”*⁵¹² It may be thought that these two statements are saying exactly the same thing. However I believe that whilst the Lord God needed to ensure that Adam could not go back to Eden and therefore forced him out, there is also a sense in which Adam is sent – mission style. Adam's fall into sin was not a surprise to the Lord God. We know that God had planned all along to come into this world to bring about redemption. Adam (even fallen Adam) had a part to play in this wonderful story. Thus Adam is not just cast out as Satan was cast out of heaven.⁵¹³ He was sent out on a new commission. That task is stated here as we have already mentioned, as *“to till the ground from which he was taken.”* Tilling the ground to grow crops and reap fruit. In the New Testament this picture is used to speak of reaping a harvest amongst men.⁵¹⁴

To effect the removal and to prevent a return the Lord God stations *“cherubim”* as guards along

510 Matthew 25:34.

511 Genesis 3:23.

512 Genesis 3:23,24.

513 Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:12.

514 See, for example, Matthew 13:1f; John 4:35.

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with “*a flaming sword.*”⁵¹⁵ The word “*cherubim*” signifies angels (i.e. more than just one). More than this we cannot say until later revelation. Here we simply have angelic beings charged with guarding the way to Eden and the tree of life. We note in passing that cherubim were to be part of the mercy seat which sat on top of the ark of the covenant, and that cherubim figured in the veil of both the tabernacle and the temple.⁵¹⁶ How marvellous it is now that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom as Christ died on the cross signalling that entry into the courts of heaven is granted once again.⁵¹⁷

On the location we must note that the word rendered “*east*” actually signifies the front. Thus the cherubim were stationed in front of the garden of Eden blocking any way in. The “*flaming sword*” which “*turned every way*” was probably revolving, or rotating. Fire and sword are both symbols of judgement. Thus this image is used clearly to represent the idea that the way back to Eden means judgement. To enter you must die. This shows the great problem of sin. In order for us to be reunited with God we cannot enter His presence in a state of sin. The all-consuming fire of God would snuff us out in an instant. Sin cannot enter paradise. And so Adam (and Eve) are now consigned to live in the fallen cursed world with a new task. The only way back was to be by means of the sacrifice of an innocent victim. This sacrifice would undo all that the serpent had done and provide the means for return.

515 Genesis 3:24.

516 Exodus 25:18f; 26:31f; 36:35; 2Chronicles 3:14.

517 Matthew 27:51; Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 4:16; 10:19,22.

Chapter 4.

The line of Cain – the son of Adam. (4:1-5:1a).

Analysis.

#4 1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said,
“I have acquired a man from the Lord.”

2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel.

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep,
but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that
Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.

And the Lord respected Abel and his offering,

5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering.

And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6 So the Lord said to Cain,

“Why are you angry?

And why has your countenance fallen?

7 If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.”

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

9 Then the Lord said to Cain,

“Where *is* Abel your brother?”

He said,

“I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?”

10 And He said,

“What have you done?

The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.

11 So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.

12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you.

A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

13 And Cain said to the Lord,

“My punishment *is* greater than I can bear!

14 Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground;

I shall be hidden from Your face;

I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.”

15 And the Lord said to him,

“Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.”

And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

17 And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.

18 To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.

19 Then Lamech took for himself two wives:

the name of one *was* Adah, and

the name of the second *was* Zillah.

20 And Adah bore Jabal.

He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

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21 His brother's name *was* Jubal.

He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.

22 And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain,

an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron.

And the sister of Tubal-Cain *was* Naamah.

23 Then Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech!

For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me.

24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth,

“For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”

26 And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh.

Then *men* began to call on the name of the Lord.

#5 1 This is the book of the genealogy of Adam.

We have provided an analysis for the text at the outset as shown above. Genesis 4 can be split into three sections. The first deals with the first two children born to Adam and Eve (Genesis 4:1-15). The second discusses the line of Cain over six generations to the children of Lamech by two wives (Genesis 4:16-24). The last ends Adam's story with a pointer towards the hope of a substitute (Genesis 4:25-5:1a). The first two divisions admit of further subdivisions as follows:

[1] The story of Adam and Eve and their children. (Genesis 4:1-15).

[a] Eve bears the first “man.” (Genesis 4:1,2a).

[b] A tale of two offerings. (Genesis 4:2b-7).

[c] The first murder. (Genesis 4:8-15).

[2] The line of Cain. (Genesis 4:16-24).

[a] Cain builds a city and forges his line. (Genesis 4:16-18).

[b] Lamech's boast and the fruit of man. (Genesis 4:19-24).

[3] The end of Adam's story. (Genesis 4:25-5:1a).

[1] The story of Adam and Eve and their children. (Genesis 4:1-15).

This first section really focuses out attention on the family and its hopes and failures. We begin by looking at the first child to be born in the fallen world.

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[a] Eve bears the first “man.” (Genesis 4:1,2a).

4:1,2a.

Chapter 4 opens with the birth of the first ever person and it appears to be significant. We can assume that the normal period of time elapsed between conception and birth, but what is a little unclear here in these opening verses is whether Eve bore twins, or had two boys in quick succession. We note from Genesis 5:4 that Adam (and Eve) had other sons and daughters but the details of these are not given. What leads me to conclude that Cain and Abel were twins is simply the statement in verse 2 which informs us that *“she bore again”* with no mention of conception (i.e. of Adam laying with Eve), leading to the impression that boy two (Abel) was simply born following boy one (Cain). We cannot be dogmatic here but the Hebrew lends itself to the idea that she gave birth to twins.

What is much more interesting is her exclamation when Cain was born. We present below a selection of translations starting with the translation we follow mainly in this work:

I have acquired a man from the Lord. [NKJV].⁵¹⁸

I have gotten a man with the Lord. [EHV].⁵¹⁹

I have gotten a manchild with *the help of* the Lord. [NASB].⁵²⁰

I have gotten a man by Jehovah. [YLT].⁵²¹

I have gotten a man through God. [DRA].⁵²²

I have created a man just as the Lord did! [NET]⁵²³

I have gotten the man that the Lord promised. [GW].⁵²⁴

I have given birth to a male child—the Lord. [ISV].⁵²⁵

Of the 38 translations consulted, 63% opt for a translation like that of the NASB which uses the preposition *“with”* but also adds the word *“help”* to make sense of the Hebrew. Other translations opt for

518 Versions (4) which use the preposition *“from”* include: NKJV (New King James Version), AKJV (Authorized King James Version), BRG (BRG Bible), CJB (Complete Jewish Bible),

519 Versions (3) which use the preposition *“with”* include: EHV (English Heritage Version), DT (Darby Translation), TLV (Tree of Life Version).

520 Versions (24) which use the word *“help”* in their translations include: NASB (New American Standard Bible), NABRE (New American Bible Revised Edition), ASV (American Standard Version), RSV, (Revised Standard Version), CSB (Christian Standard Bible), CEB (Common English Bible), CEV (Contemporary English Version), ERV (Easy to Read Version), ESV (English Standard Version), EXB (Expanded Bible), GNT (Good News Translation), HCSB, (Holman Christian Standard Bible), ICB (International Children's Bible), LEB (Lexham English Bible), TLB (The Living Bible), MSG (The Message), MEV (Modern English Version), NCV (New Century Version), NIV (New International Version), NLV (New Life Version), NLT (New Living Translation), VOICE (The Voice), WEB (World English Bible), WYC (Wycliffe Bible),

521 Versions (2) which use the preposition *“by”* include: YLT (Young's Literal Translation), GNV (1599 Geneva Bible)

522 DRA (Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition),

523 NET (New English Translation),

524 GW, (God's Word to the Nations), NOG (Names of God Bible),

525 ISV (International Standard Version).

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using prepositions such as “*from,*” “*with,*” “*by,*” or “*through.*” We shall discuss these in a moment. The NET suggestion is novel, whilst the GW offering has merit, and the ISV translation is probably nearest the Hebrew. Given such variety of translations it may be thought best to opt for the majority. Often it is necessary to introduce extra words in English to make sense of the Hebrew. A common example of this is to supply the verb “to be” which doesn't appear always in Hebrew, but is just understood to be there. However before we make our assessment of this issue it will be helpful to consult the Hebrew.⁵²⁶

The Hebrew for what Eve said is as follows:

קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת- יְהוָה
I have acquired a man (namely) the Lord

The first word is the verb קָנָה which has the meaning: “to acquire,” “to get,” or “to obtain.” It is in the first person singular, perfect (completed action) Qal stem and so should be translated: “*I have acquired.*” The verb is close in sound to Cain's name.⁵²⁷ The second word אִישׁ is the word for “*a man.*” The last two words are connected by a dash line. This is known as the “Maqqef,” (the binder) and acts like a hyphen joining words together. The last word in the sentence is the name of the Lord (Yaweh). The word linked to the name of the Lord by the Maqqef (אֶת) has two uses. It can indicate the preposition “*with*” and it is also used as the sign of the definite direct object (which is left untranslated). But which of these two is signified in this verse? To help decide on this issue we should first consider the whole verse in Hebrew which is shown below.

← read from right to left

אִשְׁתּוֹ his wife	אֶת-חַוָּה Eve	יָדָעַ (he) knew	וְהָאָדָם and Adam
וַתֹּאמֶר and she said	אֶת-קַיִן Cain	וַתֵּלֶד and she bore	וַתִּהַר and she conceived
	אֶת-יְהוָה from/with/by/ through (?) the Lord	אִישׁ a man	קָנִיתִי I have acquired

⁵²⁶ The reader is reminded that in Hebrew we read from right to left.

⁵²⁷ Cain is קַיִן “*qayin*” whilst the opening verb is קָנִיתִי “*qānītī*.”

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It can be seen from this translation that the names “*Eve*” (highlighted pink) and “*Cain*” (highlighted blue) also have the Hebrew word **אִשָּׁה** with a Maqqef. In both cases all translators suggest that the sign of the definite direct object is meant, as using the preposition “*with*” would not really make sense.⁵²⁸ The last use of this Hebrew particle **אִשָּׁה** comes in connection with the Lord's name (highlighted green) as we have already mentioned. But should we translate this last clause: “*I have acquired a man with the Lord.*” In what sense has Eve acquired Cain “*with the Lord*”? What part has the Lord played here? The same question can be asked for the other prepositions chosen by translators (from/by/through). Obviously all things are done under God's watch and we do all things through the Lord. I cannot breathe unless the Lord grant me air and life. But is that the meaning here? I rather think not and for two reasons. First I think that the struggles translators have had with this (by opting for different prepositions) indicates that **אִשָּׁה** cannot really be a preposition. Second I would like to suggest that the linking of this Hebrew particle **אִשָּׁה** with all three names (Eve, Cain and the Lord) indicates that the same basic meaning is intended throughout, that is, it is the sign of the definite direct object. This particle can be rendered by the term “*namely,*” indicating the definite direct object. This yields a translation similar to ISV:

I have acquired a man, (namely) the Lord.

In other words, Eve is exclaiming that the child she has just born is a man, the Lord! The GW translation (“*I have gotten the man that the Lord promised*”) would fit in with this idea too as an acceptable paraphrase.

In essence then, Eve has jumped to the conclusion that the promise in Genesis 3:15, (which was typified by the sacrifices to provide clothes), has been fulfilled in the birth of Cain. Cain's name means “possession” or “acquired,” and Eve in naming him thus indicates that she believes that she has acquired the promised “*Seed*” spoken of in Genesis 3:15. We will see shortly that such an assessment would be way off the mark. But this incident shows us the mixture of true faith and carnal impatience. Eve was demonstrating her faith in what the Lord God had promised in Genesis 3:15, but she was presumptuous in drawing the conclusion that her firstborn son was in fact the subject of that promise. How often do we as believers fall into this trap? It is good to demonstrate faith in the Lord but never good to run ahead and act presumptuously. Rather we need the assurance of God's witness, and this was something Eve did not do. She should have asked the question of the Lord: is this the promised one? We dare not point the finger to sharply though, for Eve soon comes to realise her mistake.

From the way the Hebrew reads it does appear that Abel was born at the same time, but we cannot be dogmatic on this. Abel's name means “breath” and indicates the transitoriness or fleeting aspect of life.

⁵²⁸ If the preposition “*with*” is used for example we would end up with the following sentence: “*and Adam knew with his wife and she conceived and she bore with Cain ...*”

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It is very close in form to the word translated “*vanity*” throughout Ecclesiastes. The question arises however, why did she call him this? As yet there had been no physical death and this would not come for some time. Was he weak and poorly so that his life hung in the balance? We cannot be certain on this.

[b] A tale of two offerings. (Genesis 4:2b-7).

4:2b-7.

After some time, the two boys grow up and we next hear about their main occupations. Bear in mind that Adam was called by the Lord God to “*till the ground from which he was taken,*” in order to produce crops and fruit.⁵²⁹ Now because of the fall and the unnatural growth of thorns and thistles, this would require constant and labour-intensive attention. It is obvious that Adam and Eve would have trained and taught their two sons in the whole process of farming and the tilling of the ground. However, all we are informed about in the Genesis account according to Adam is that the ground was to be worked, and clothing could be had via sacrifice of some animals. Presumably the Lord God showed Adam how to kill the animals and prepare their skins, and presumably He also taught them about sacrifice too. Thus we discover that Cain was the “*tiller*” of the land, whereas Abel was in charge of the sheep.⁵³⁰ Remember also that at this time food consisted only of that which could be grown or grew naturally, (fruit, nuts, berries, crops). Meat was not eaten until after the flood. So the purpose of keeping sheep was not for meat, but for clothing and sacrifice. At this point (verse 2b) there is nothing sinister about either occupation. Both were needed. Both were admirable. Both had their purpose. But things change when we reach verse 3.

The opening words of verse 3 signal a time interval. Literally the Hebrew reads: “*and it was from the end of days.*” The phrase seems to indicate the terminus of a period of time. The most natural implication is that it signals the day of rest, after six days of labour. On this special day of rest both men bring an offering to the Lord who appears from verses 3 and 6 to be present with them. Cain brings his offering from the produce of the ground whilst Abel brought his from the best of the flock. Abel's offering is accepted whilst Cain's is not.

Before we unpack these verses it is very important that we consider the New Testament commentary on this passage. Many commentators seem to think that we ought to interpret an Old Testament book from the perspective of an ancient culture, or we should view Genesis simply on its own without interference from elsewhere. The trouble with such an approach is that there is a tendency to view Genesis through the eyes of the surrounding cultures and literature. Such a method of analysis is flawed because these were pagan peoples and thus have their own agendas which are diametrically opposed to

529 Genesis 3:23.

530 Genesis 4:2.

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the ways of God. In contrast, the New Testament writers provide us with *godly, divinely-inspired* words from the Lord. In other words, we have the Lord's further insight and view on the passage before us in the New Testament.

There are two New Testament passages which help us with regard to the events recorded here. First we must view what the writer of the letter to the Hebrews had to say:

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.⁵³¹

The writer describes Abel's offering as being *"better"* than Cain's, and further, he shows us that it was not just the heart attitude, but that the Lord testified *"about his gifts."* Thus Abel's offering was better and his gifts (that which he offered) showed that he was *"righteous."* Remember here that the universal teaching of Scripture is that true righteousness can only come from faith in the Lord. Abel believed what the Lord had said, and what his parents had taught him about sin and sacrifice. This is why the writer of the letter to the Hebrews begins his assessment of Abel with the words *"By faith."*

Then also we read about what Cain did in John's first epistle:

... Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.⁵³²

John tells us that Cain slew his brother because *"his deeds were evil."* The question we must ask is: what were these deeds? What deeds did Cain carry out? The only deeds that we read of in Genesis 4 are the offerings that were made. Consequently John is telling us that Cain's offerings were not righteous. We have noted that both occupations (tilling the ground and keeping sheep) were good occupations, but that is not the issue here. What is at stake is the *offerings* being made by both men, the only deeds we read of in the text. Therefore, the teaching of the New Testament (God's comments on His former writing) is that Abel's offerings were *"better"* (or *"more excellent"* according to the NKJV) and that Cain's offerings were *"evil."* Why is this the case?

Returning to Genesis 4 we must take careful note concerning two things that were spoken of in connection with the *"ground"* prior to the offerings that the two brothers make. First we recall that the ground was *"cursed"* by the Lord because of Adam's transgressions.⁵³³ Second we read that because of Adam's sin he would toil over the ground in sweat and labour to gain bread until that time when he would

531 Hebrews 11:4, NASB. The NKJV reads: *"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."*

532 1John 3:12, NASB. The NKJV reads: *"... Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."*

533 Genesis 3:17.

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physically die and then *“return to the ground”* because he was made from the *“dust”* of the ground.⁵³⁴ The ground then speaks of the curse and of death. Now this does not demean Cain's occupation in the slightest. However it does have implications for worship and making offerings.

Let us stop to consider the two differing occupations in connection with offerings. Abel was the keeper of flocks and so acted as a shepherd. Such a task required effort and knowledge, of course, however it also relied strongly upon God and His providential care. Abel relied on good vegetation, adequate watering facilities, and the continuing health of his animals. In contrast, Cain was an arable farmer. He had to put in a lot of effort to cultivate the ground, clear it of thorns and thistles, and tend to the growth of his crops. There was no rain at this time so he must have used some form of irrigation to ensure adequate water. There is less reliance upon God and more evidence of self-reliance and effort. However all of that aside, what really clinches the difference is that the Lord God had already shown Adam and Eve what to do and how to worship by making them clothes from animal skins.⁵³⁵ The fact that the Lord accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's reinforces this. We learn also from Hebrews that *“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”*⁵³⁶ Thus, in order to approach the Lord in worship, there must be a sacrifice of blood. Cain ignores this and offers from his own self-efforts borne from a cursed ground.

Furthermore, we can see a difference in attitudes of the two men. The text tells us merely that *“Cain brought an offering”* from the produce of the ground.⁵³⁷ There was nothing special about such an offering. In contrast, Abel heeded the Lord and followed the instructions that we assume Adam and Eve had given to both boys. Note that Abel offered not just from the flock any whom he might choose, but rather he *“brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.”*⁵³⁸ These words are very significant. By the term *“fat”* we understand that the very best was being offered.⁵³⁹ Later we discover that the fat was to be burned in the offerings.⁵⁴⁰ Further, this is the first time we read of the *“firstborn”* and its significance cannot be missed on reading the rest of Scripture. It speaks of the strength of what is produced.⁵⁴¹ The firstborn was especial in the eyes of the people of God, because it belonged to the Lord.⁵⁴² Thus Abel's offering was the best and it indicated a reliance on God's demands and requirements. We only see the bare minimum details here in Genesis, but the fuller picture is revealed in Exodus and later Scriptures. All that God showed Moses on the mountain after the Exodus at Sinai was no different in essence to what the Lord revealed to Adam and Eve. It is just that we are not given the full picture straight away. We are,

534 Genesis 3:19.

535 Genesis 3:21.

536 Hebrews 9:22.

537 Genesis 4:3.

538 Genesis 4:4.

539 See: Genesis 45:18; Numbers 18:12.

540 See: Exodus 29:13-22; Leviticus 3:3-5, 9-11, 4:8; 7:3; 8:25; Numbers 18:17.

541 Genesis 49:3; Deuteronomy 21:17; Psalm 78:51; 105:36.

542 Genesis 27:19; Exodus 13:2.

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however, given enough to know that what was revealed to Adam and Eve (and then passed on to Cain and Abel) was the same as that which the Lord spoke to Moses many years later. We can assert this too on the basis that God does not change and God does not lie. The writer A. W. Pink has made the following helpful observation in connection with Cain and Abel's offerings:

*“In bringing the offering he did, Cain denied that he was a fallen creature – the fallen child of fallen parents – and as such under the sentence of Divine condemnation. He denied that he was a guilty sinner, morally and penally separated from God. He deliberately ignored God's demand for expiation by the death of a sacrificial substitute. He insisted upon approaching God on the ground of personal worthiness. Instead of accepting God's way, he audaciously went his own way and selected an offering which commended itself to his own tastes. He offered to God the fruits of the ground which God had cursed. He presented the product of his own toil, the work of his own hands, and God refused to receive it.”*⁵⁴³

Such an assessment is clear, Abel brought the offering that God expected, whilst Cain made an offering he wanted to bring. These thoughts give us pause to reflect. Is the worship we offer that which God requires? Or is the worship we give that which we want to give? I fear that far too often in modern Christian circles the worship we bring is more like that of Cain's than Abel's.

Now the Lord clearly accepted Abel's gift but not Cain's. There is an interesting symmetry to verses 4b and 5a which we could put like this:

And the Lord
looked with favour
unto Abel and his gift
But unto Cain and his gift
He did not look with favour.⁵⁴⁴

The verb which I have translated *“look with favour,”* and which the NKJV renders as *“respected,”* really has the force of *“to turn the eyes towards or away from.”* Thus the Lord turned His eyes towards Abel's offering but He turned His eyes away from Cain's offering. In doing such the Lord indicated an acceptance of Abel but a rejection of Cain.

In response, Cain got very angry, in fact, excessively so.⁵⁴⁵ His face fell, by which we understand that the anger of his soul was clearly evident for all to see. In reply, the Lord God, (who is actually

543 A. W. Pink. *Gleanings in Genesis*. The Moody Bible Institute. Chicago, USA. P65.

544 My translation.

545 The Hebrew word: **רַב־רַב** indicates an excess of something. **Wilson** suggests: “mightily, vehemently, excessively.”

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present in this event), asks Cain why he has responded with such vehemence.⁵⁴⁶ We have already seen that the Lord graciously uses this questioning technique with Adam and the Woman to bring about a change in thinking, not for finding out information. The Lord seeks to check Cain's heart and bring him to a right view of the situation. Cain had offered amiss and had not obeyed the Lord's directives concerning how to approach Him. But rather than reconsider his own motives and heart, he simply reacts in a petulant and angry manner. In verse 7 the Lord continues with His questions. Literally the opening question is:

Surely, if you do good, *[there will be]* a lifting up?

The right thing to be done is to make the right offering. If Cain offered (in faith and trust) of the firstborn of Abel's flock, then he would experience a *“lifting up”* or *“elevation.”* The thought here is that if Cain humbled himself before the Lord, then the Lord would effect a raising up (or resurrection which speaks of new birth):

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.⁵⁴⁷

If, on the other hand, Cain refused to acknowledge the Lord God's request for Him to follow the procedure wholeheartedly as Abel had done, then *“sin lies at the door.”*⁵⁴⁸ What is suggested by such a phrase? Well in that Cain had not done the good, (that is, he had not offered the right sacrifice), he had sinned. Now sin would be attendant upon him, or at his door. It would appear that he had opened the door and sin was beckoning to enter. Isn't it the case that if we sin once, perhaps at first in great fear and trepidation, then the next time it is easier to transgress? How this teaches us to flee the opportunity to sin. It is like spilt milk, very difficult to remove. And once spilt the stink remains, so there is less harm done in our estimation the second time around, for what more stink could be made than that which was made at first? By going in the wrong way we lay ourselves open to further sin. Sin at the door is easy to accommodate. However here was an opportunity for Cain to master it because the Lord was offering him the right way. Effectively the Lord was saying to Cain: trust Me, do what I request (by offering a blood sacrifice) and believe in the sacrificial offering which points to My sacrifice of the future. Here was an opening for Cain to repent and to shut the door on sin. Very sadly this narrative stops here. The Lord had made an appeal to Cain, but Cain offers no response.

We should note here that with regard to sacrifice and worship there are four possible ways we may come, but only one of these is acceptable to the Lord God. We might come:

546 Genesis 4:6.

547 James 4:10.

548 Genesis 4:7.

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With the **right form of sacrifice** but with **a wrong heart** (without faith).

With the **right form of sacrifice** but with **a right heart** (possessing faith).

With the **wrong form of sacrifice** but with **a right heart** (possessing faith).

With the **wrong form of sacrifice** but with **a wrong heart** (without faith).

The only acceptable way is the second. Never think that it does not matter about the details. If we worship any old how but think we have a right heart before the Lord, we delude ourselves. If our hearts were right we would want to do the right. Consider David who wanted to bring up the ark of the covenant into its rightful place. He had a right heart but the method he adopted at first was wrong and it caused severe grief and anguish until he realised that there was a right way.⁵⁴⁹

[c] The first murder. (Genesis 4:8-15).

4:8.

We cannot be sure how much time elapsed between verse 7 where the Lord appeals to Cain and verse 8 where Cain speaks to Abel. However by verse 8 they are in the field away from their parents and others who may interfere.⁵⁵⁰ It would appear that Cain was seeking an opportunity to kill Abel, for he first speaks to Abel and then when they are alone in the field he seizes the moment and kills his brother.

4:9.

In verse 9 we discover that the Lord is actually on hand and again the Lord asks a question. We remind ourselves that the purpose of asking such a question is not to seek an answer for the Lord knows all things. The purpose is to draw a person to consider their own actions and ways and to lead them to repentance. And so the Lord asks Cain *“where is Abel your brother?”* Once again the Lord offers Cain an opportunity to come clean and to call out to the Lord, but once again Cain refuses to repent. His response is both a lie, and an indication of how far Cain had drifted. The Lord points Cain to his relationship – Abel was his brother. In contrast Cain states falsely that he did not know where Abel was, but he knew fine well where he was because he had killed him in the field and he would be still there. Then Cain compounds his felony by adding these acidic words: *“Am I my brother's keeper?”* Is it my responsibility to watch out for Abel? Am I to take care of my brother? The implication of such a rhetorical question posed by Cain is that he is an independent person and should look after himself. Cain has continued in the way that Eve pursued in Genesis 3 – a life of wilful independence. The New Testament teaches

⁵⁴⁹ 2Samuel 6: 1Chronicles 13.

⁵⁵⁰ Bear in mind that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4) so there may well have been quite a growing family by this time.

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unequivocally that we are indeed to keep our neighbour whomever that may be. It ought to be unthinkable that we would ever pass by a person in need. We may not be able to do anything at all to help them, but to walk on by is the way of Cain.

4:10-12.

In verse 10 the Lord then changes approach. He knew full well what had happened, of course, and He had given Cain a chance to confess and repent, but since that opportunity was wasted by Cain, He must now move to judgement. We get this judgement in verses 10 to 12. First there is the final question which declares Cain's sin. Cain denied having done anything and feigned ignorance concerning Abel, but the Lord brings home the truth by asking a rhetorical question Himself: *“what have you done?”* The Lord asked Eve a similar question in Genesis 3, but here Cain is not given the chance to respond.⁵⁵¹ That Cain had acted wickedly was obvious to the Lord and He continues by declaring precisely what the situation was. Abel's blood had been spilt and was now crying out to the Lord *“from the ground.”* The Lord is fully aware of what was going on. Not an inch of creation is outside His knowledge. The murderous act was witnessed by creation and by God who upholds that very creation. If all things are upheld by the Lord and in Him all things consist, then there cannot be anywhere where God is not actively present and observing what we do (or think).⁵⁵² In asking His questions the Lord has been incredibly gracious to Cain. Cain has rejected this grace and pursued his own course, and so as a result of Cain's act and his refusal to repent, the Lord moves to judgement. There are three aspects to Cain's judgement.

[1] He is to be cursed from the earth (v11).

[2] He will find that the ground will no longer yield to his efforts as it had done to this point (v12).

[3] He will be a vagabond and a fugitive on the earth (v12).

First, then, we note that the ground had been cursed because of Adam's sin, and now Cain is to be *“cursed from the earth.”*⁵⁵³ This indicates the opposite of blessing so that nowhere on earth would Cain receive rest. Cain is not forcibly removed nor banished from the earth, but rather he is cursed from it so that he is doomed to dwell in a place which will never be home, nor will it receive him in peace. When we wilfully step out of the Lord God's ways, we put ourselves in a hopeless place. What alternative could the Lord offer Cain? He had refused to listen. The Lord could have sent Cain to hell at this point but he doesn't. Instead he leaves Cain on the earth from which he is now cursed. Could there still be a repentance

551 Genesis 3:13.

552 Psalm 139.

553 Genesis 4:11.

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for Cain? This is not a complete end of Cain. And yet such a position as Cain finds himself in would, it seems, be unbearable. The blood of his brother would speak to Cain from the earth and he would never be able to escape it. The only hope was to run to the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing, but Cain refused to do this. Consequently he must experience that on-going guilt for his murder of his brother. Now this is the condition that all mankind finds themselves in at this time. There is only the rescue provided by the Lord through the atonement offered in Christ Jesus. If we reject this there can be no peace nor rest for the wicked.⁵⁵⁴ Second, because of this curse, Cain would find it that much more difficult to work the ground. The ground was already hard to work because it had been cursed. Now Cain's curse meant that there would be added difficulty. He would experience loss in himself with regard to his work. Third we discover that Cain is to be a *“fugitive and a vagabond,”* so that he would find no rest anywhere on earth.⁵⁵⁵ The import of these two descriptions is that Cain would wander to and fro unable to gain a foothold anywhere on earth. He would have agitation and heartache wherever he walked.

4:13-15.

Following this judgement we get Cain's response in verse 13. Remember that Cain has refused all the approaches that the Lord has made through His questions. So Cain has put himself outside of God's will and therefore outside of His blessing. And then we discover that Cain is not happy about this judgment! In fact we say that he is indignant and affronted. **Matthew Henry** expresses this idea well:

*“But Cain seems rather to speak the language of indignation: My punishment is greater than I can bear; and so what he says is a reproach and affront to the justice of God, and a complaint, not of the greatness of his sin, but of the extremity of his punishment, as if this were disproportionable to his merits.”*⁵⁵⁶

Viewed at in another way we can assert that he states something which is true. He, like all mankind, has been created in the image of God and to be in relationship with Him. Thus to be banished from His presence is not something Cain ought to be able to cope with. But Cain does not argue in such a manner. There is no repentance nor thought of affront to God by his actions. Cain is merely declaiming that the punishment he has been delivered is unjust and unfair. He is wrong, of course. But Cain is only concerned about himself. The verdict of the Lord God to curse Cain from the earth to make the land not yield its strength and to cause him to be a wanderer in the earth is fully justified because it has been delivered by the Lord God who made all things good, and who has promised redemption, and has even provided the temporal measure to help the eyes of faith by instituting the blood sacrifices. Cain ignored these things.

554 Isaiah 48:22; 57:21.

555 Genesis 4:12.

556 **M. Henry.** Genesis 4.

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What should a holy and perfect God do to one who rejects not only the best (Abel's was the *"better"* sacrifice) but to declare that the judgement was unfair?⁵⁵⁷ Cain seems to lament the fact that he will be *"driven out"* from the ground and *"hidden"* from the Lord's presence, but he is only lamenting his loss, not the effect it has on the Lord.

He is also afraid that someone might kill him in revenge for what he had done.⁵⁵⁸ In this we note that Cain recognises that such a possibility (that others may take his life) is understandable. He does not want this to happen, of course, but he realises that it is a real possibility. And so in response the Lord ensures that revenge cannot be exacted. The taking of life is reprehensible. Life is extremely precious. Life begins at conception, not at birth as the Scriptures clearly teach.⁵⁵⁹ When a life is lost the only thing left for such who die is to face judgment.⁵⁶⁰ In order to ensure Cain's survival a mark was placed on him. We have no idea what this was and to speculate concerning it is a waste of time. Clearly Cain could be identified by this mark so that none would dare take vengeance on him because of what the Lord had declared. In saying this we thus come to understand that the Lord's statements were public. It would make little sense to limit this exchange to Cain and the Lord. Perhaps once the verdict had been issued to Cain the outcome was then published for all those who were alive at this time.

[2] The line of Cain. (Genesis 4:16-24).

The rest of most of Genesis 4 deals with Cain's descendants. First we have his line from Enoch down to Lamech in Genesis 4:16-18, and then we have a rather more extended piece on Lamech's children in Genesis 4:19-24.

[a] Cain builds a city and forges his line. (Genesis 4:16-18).

4:16-18.

Cain departs from the Lord's presence and comes to the *"land of Nod,"* which is a place *"east of Eden."*⁵⁶¹ The name of the place indicates wandering or a place of exile. The phrase *"east of Eden"* would perhaps be better rendered as "in front of Eden." In this region of wandering and exile, away from the Lord's presence, Cain comes to dwell. Verse 17 introduces Cain's wife. Many have trouble over this statement. Where did Cain get his wife from? The simple answer is that she must have been a daughter of Adam and Eve. At this point in time it was perfectly normal for siblings to marry and there would be no problems arising genetically speaking as fewer genetic mutations would have been present amongst the

557 Hebrews 11:4.

558 Genesis 4:14.

559 Psalm 51:5; 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5.

560 Hebrews 9:27.

561 Genesis 4:16.

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early populations.⁵⁶² In Genesis 5:4 we learn that Adam had other *“sons and daughters,”* because the main purpose of the text is to show the line towards the promised Messiah. If the Holy Spirit had allowed the early writers (Adam, Noah etc.) to detail all of their family history then, to use the apostle John's words: *“I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”*⁵⁶³

Thus Cain and his wife begin their family. Their family line down to Lamech's four children is shown in figure 7 below.

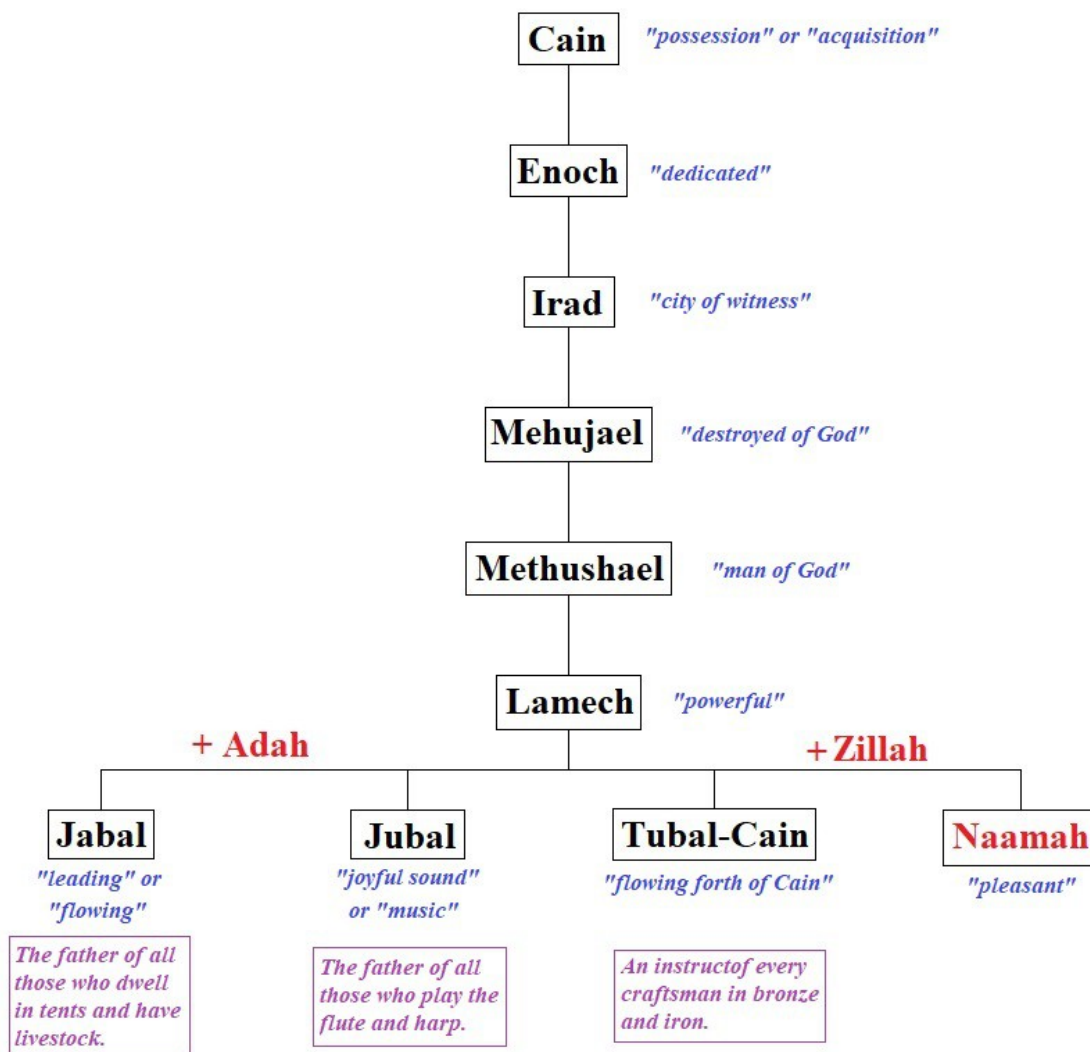


Figure 7: The line of Cain.

The first thing to mention here is that we have no indication of ages nor of dates. We might imagine that

⁵⁶² For further discussion on this see: **Ken Ham**. *Cain's Wife*. online at: <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/cain/cains-wife-who-was-she/> **Georgia Purdom**. *Where did Cain get his wife*. Online at: <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/cain/creation-basics/>

⁵⁶³ John 21:25.

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Cain was born shortly after Adam and Eve left Eden possibly in the first year of creation. It might have been later but certainly not very much later. The four children of Lamech are the seventh generation from Adam, and the sixth from Cain. The genealogy of Seth by comparison lists ten generations in a tightly bound and dated listing, with Noah (the tenth from Adam) being born in the year 1056 AC. This would amount to about one hundred years per generation. If such reasoning is valid (and I agree it is extremely tentative) that would make Cain's line reach only down to around the year 700 AC.⁵⁶⁴ This means that we do not have a complete listing in the line of Cain. It is probable (but not certain) that the list is intact from Cain down to Lamech, but then we have no further information from Lamech's children onwards. We can assume that the people in this line had lives similar in length to those in Genesis 5. We can also assume that none of the people in this line survived the flood. Only eight people entered the ark and only those eight survived to enter the new world post-flood.⁵⁶⁵ Thus all in the line of Cain perished in the flood.

A second point to note is that apart from Enoch most of the names are skipped over and it would appear that the writer's main purpose was to end up with the details of Lamech and his story. We shall look at this in more detail in the next section. For now we simply note in passing that one of the names has a meaning which may indicate some trust in the Lord. We refer to *“Methushael,”* whose name means “man of God.”

There are two names in this genealogy which also occur in Genesis 5, namely, *“Enoch,”* and *“Lamech.”* However the Holy Spirit has provided details of these four folk to make it very plain that the two genealogies are distinct and separate. An awful lot of claptrap and nonsense appears in the academic literature claiming that the two lists are corrupted versions of a more ancient original. The claim is made on the basis of preferring ancient Near East versions and the fact that other names in Genesis 5 are similar (Mahalalel and Methuselah are supposed to be similar to Mehujael and Methushael).

Genesis 4:	Mehujael	מְחֻיָּאֵל	Methushael	מֶתוּשָׁאֵל
Genesis 5:	Mahalalel	מַהֲלָלֵל	Methuselah	מֶתוּשֶׁלַח

However, it can be seen by comparing these names that there is only a very passing resemblance. Who would claim that the English names: Michael and Malachi are just variants of the same name, or that Marshall and Marcel depict just one person? Such liberalism is folly and is simple to refute by a further appeal to the obvious fact that the two Enochs (עֲנוֹךְ) and the two Lamechs (לֶמֶךְ) are four distinct people and not two, on the basis of the differing information concerning these fellows. We shall examine these

⁵⁶⁴ If, on the other hand, we assume a generation lasts 30 years, then the length of time covered by the genealogy here amounts to only 210 years which would bring us near to the date of Enosh's birth in the year 235 AC.

⁵⁶⁵ Genesis 7:13; 2Peter 2:5.

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facts a little more closely when we consider Genesis 5.

The only other information we have in this opening genealogy is that Cain built a city and named it after his first son “*Enoch*.”⁵⁶⁶ This is very significant. Recall that when Eve gave birth to Cain she declared her belief that this was the promised Messiah. The focus of her heart was on God's promise. Later on in Scripture we learn that the firstborn was to hold an important place in the family. Jacob, for example, declared of Reuben, “*you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength*.”⁵⁶⁷ There was something special about the firstborn. Now Cain, having been judged by God, has his first child and what does he do? He names him “dedicated” and celebrates by building the first city. This may seem an incidental fact but it hides an important truth. Why build a city? What is the purpose of concentrating peoples within a small area where dwellings closely border one another often within enclosing walls?⁵⁶⁸ Clearly Cain is expecting opposition. He has disobeyed the Lord and refused to repent. Now he has retreated to a place of exile and has built himself a sanctuary which serves as protection. Naming his first son “*Enoch*” signals his intention to keep himself separate from all that concerns the Lord God. Cain is dedicated to a life of earthly thoughts bounded by what he has built for himself and his family. Mankind glories in the fruit of his own labours. Cain was furious that the Lord refused his offering and so in defiant mood he builds something he can be proud of amongst his own. It was almost as though Cain was raising a fist at the Lord here.

We see such a similar attitude expressed by worldly men today. A rich man who has the wherewithal seeks out a remote island and builds himself a luxury complex fit with surveillance and protection redolent of a James Bond villain. Or what of the modern propensity to build ever bigger and bigger cities? It is certainly the case that the world's population is becoming more and more urban and less and less rural.⁵⁶⁹ But why? It seems that the “*way of Cain*” would lead to such a conglomerating effect.⁵⁷⁰ In our modern times the drive towards urbanisation is the hope of greater wealth, and yet city slums are on the increase. In such high population densities the opportunity for sin increases dramatically. Violence and crime are more prevalent in cities where people congregate than in rural areas where they are separate. Many cities are dominated by high rise centres of business and power. When you think of cities in the modern world the tower blocks predominate in the skyline. Cities enable control of population. These ideas indicate the bent or drive of the heart of worldly mankind which always acts in opposition to the Lord God who commanded man to populate the whole earth.⁵⁷¹

566 Genesis 4:17.

567 Genesis 49:3.

568 Ancient cities were often enclosed by walls which acted to define the people within and as defences.

569 In 2007 for the first time in history more than 50% of people lived in urban areas. In 1960 1 billion lived in urban areas and 2 billion in rural. In 2017, 4.13 billion people lived in urban areas and 3.40 billion lived in rural areas. <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanization>

570 Jude 1:11.

571 Genesis 1:28; 11:4. See *Appendix 5*.

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[b] Lamech's boast and the fruit of man. (Genesis 4:19-24).

4:19-24.

When we reach Lamech there is a distinct gear shift. Others in Cain's line are merely named but Lamech has six verses dedicated to his life. The first thing to mention about Lamech is his name because it means “powerful” and this characteristic (in its worldly sense) shines through. He is the first we learn of who took to himself two wives, thus the first polygamist. Adah's name means “ornament,” whilst Zillah's name signifies “shadow” or “shade.” Thus Lamech had his trophy wife and another who hovered in the background to do whatever pleased him. Here is a man who dominates.

The second thing to note concerning Lamech is that three of his children (the males) are described as being the first to develop certain skills and talents. His daughter is simply named, and her name signifies “pleasant” or “pleasure.” Again we have the idea of that which is pleasing to the eye.⁵⁷² Adah bore to Lamech two sons. The first was *“Jabal.”* He was the *“father,”* (that is, the leader or authority), over all those whose interest and skill centred on farming and trade. We make this assertion on the basis of the term used translated *“livestock.”* The Hebrew word is מִקְנֶה *miquneh*, which has the essential meaning:

“something bought, i.e. property, but only live stock; abstractly, acquisition:—cattle, flock, herd, possession, purchase, substance.”⁵⁷³

Cain built Enoch a city, but Jabal was one who dwelt in a tent. It would appear that his business was in rearing animals for trade. We are not given many more details here and we assume that these animals were for the purpose of sacrifice and clothing as we learnt concerning Adam and Eve and their sons. However by the time we get to the days of Noah we discover that sin has run rampant. We offer no certain facts here, but it may be possible that these animals were used for other purposes (such as gaming, sport and even for food). Adah's second son was *“Jubal”* and he was the *“father”* of all musicians. Two instruments are noted. These are the *“harp”* such as David later played (“laid hold of” or “manipulated”), and the *“flute,”* which is derived from the original thought of breathing. It may indicate either a woodwind instrument such as the flute or panpipes or (possibly) a reed-organ. Although only the harp and flute are listed we infer the general from the particular. This is a common way of expressing a range of items of which the examples are types. Thus Jubal begins the music and entertainment industry.

Now Lamech's second wife had a son by the name of *“Tubal-Cain,”* which means “flowing forth of Cain” or “flowing forth of possessions.” This man was the first of all metallurgists and artificers. There

572 Compare Genesis 3:6.

573 James Strong. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. Strong's entry: 7069. Hereafter as **J.Strong**.

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is some variation in translation of the main part of this verse. A selection of renderings is shown below:

he was the **forged** of all instruments of bronze and iron. [RSV & ESV].

who **forged** all kinds of tools from/out of brass and iron. [CJB/NIV].

the **forged** of all implements of bronze and iron. [NASB].

an **instructor** of every artificer in brass and iron. [YLT].

The debate hinges on two Hebrew words the first of which (לֹחֵשׁ *lōḥēš*) is translated either as “*forged*” or “*instructor*.” The meaning of the second Hebrew word (חֹרֵשׁ *ḥōrēš*) is then influenced by the choice of meaning for the first. The AKJV, NKJV and the YLT opt for a translation which has Tubal-Cain as a master craftsman who acts to teach others in using metallurgy. However, most modern translations suggest that Tubal-Cain was a forged of metals and made them into cutting implements, that is, he was the first blacksmith. Now we have to be very wary of importing evolutionary thinking back into the text. We are apt (because of our training and upbringing) to imagine blacksmiths as a primitive trade and therefore fail to uncover what lies behind such an important art. The basic meaning of the word given in our text as “*instructor*” (לֹחֵשׁ *lōḥēš*), means “to hammer out.” It appears five times in the Old Testament and three of those have to do with sharpening a cutting tool.⁵⁷⁴ In Job 16:9 it is used of an enemy having a keen eye upon a victim, hence it suggests one who looks very carefully. From this the idea of an instructor is derived by the AKJV and NKJV translators. However the basic meaning would lead us in the direction of forging, for that is the essential meaning of the term. We are not to limit our thinking here to the old-time blacksmith who beats out a heated steel or iron. The second word (חֹרֵשׁ *ḥōrēš*) has the preposition “*all*” or “*every*” (כָּל) attached to it. Thus the meaning would be:

he was the forged of all types of cutting tools.

The implication that Tubal-Cain made swords, knives, ploughs, and other sharp metal objects seems to be to the fore.

With regard to the two metals (listed as “*bronze*” and “*iron*” in our text) we need to understand a little bit of metallurgy. The term “bronze” is also rendered as “brass” by different translations but these are two very different alloys.⁵⁷⁵ Bronze is made from copper and (most usually) tin (although other elements could be present). Brass is made from copper and zinc with the latter element being present from 30% to 40%. It is possible to find copper in its native state (i.e. as the pure element), however more

⁵⁷⁴ 1Samuel 13:20; Job 16:9; Psalm 7:12; 52:2.

⁵⁷⁵ An “alloy” is a mixture of two or more metals. The term “metal” is reserved for a pure metallic element such as copper, iron or zinc.

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often it is found in mineral form combined with other elements. In order to get the pure copper from its mineral, chemical reactions must take place. Such require the use of energy, typically in the form of heat. For example, heating the ore **Malachite** ($\text{Cu}_2(\text{CO}_3)(\text{OH})_2$) produces copper oxide and releases carbon dioxide and water. This is known as a thermal decomposition reaction and is one that used to be done in schools at secondary age level. Once copper oxide has been formed this then has to be reduced by heating with carbon (charcoal). The carbon reacts with the copper oxide to form carbon dioxide leaving pure copper as a result. So to go from Malachite to copper requires a two-step process involving heat and the use of another reagent (carbon or charcoal). Now we do not know what form of copper alloy was known by Tubal-Cain. Whether it was brass or bronze is unclear. If we follow modern archaeology we run the risk of falling into an evolutionary scheme and we will be guilty of stating what we believe ancient man was or was not capable of. Such an approach is not a good one to say the least. In either case to make an alloy we would need to source the second main element, tin or zinc. These would need to be extracted and processed chemically from their ores too. Without going any further into the chemistry, enough has been shown to indicate that Tubal-Cain was by no means some primitive ancient who merely stumbled onto something worthwhile. We have not yet mentioned the fact that he worked in iron too. This metal is much more reactive than copper and requires a great deal more heat energy and chemical processing. Now I am not suggesting here that the full range of modern techniques were being practised by Tubal-Cain.⁵⁷⁶ We cannot be sure exactly what techniques he did in fact use. Nevertheless he used some methods which required intelligence, skill and ingenuity. But what I am suggesting is that archaeology must abandon its false notion of stages in human development. The three age system commonly followed by archaeology was invented by Danish curator of the Museum of Northern Antiquities, Christian Jurgensen Thomsen in 1836.⁵⁷⁷ Thomsen was concerned at the vast range of stone, bronze and metallic objects gathered in the museum and wanted to formulate some means whereby it could be understood. He suggested that primitive mankind worked first using stone tools. Following this came the age of copper because this metal could be found native and might be easily recognised. Then came the bronze age and finally the iron age because iron required great heat and ingenuity to extract and primitive ancient man was incapable of such a task. The early nineteenth century was a time of challenge and change when modern geologists were pushing for a much older earth than revealed in Scripture.⁵⁷⁸ Thus Thomsen's suggestion follows in the general pattern of a push away from Scriptural truths towards a more secular humanistic outlook. 1836 was the year that Charles Darwin returned from his expedition to South America and other

⁵⁷⁶ If you look up on the internet concerning mining, extraction and smelting of ores you will come across such techniques as: froth-flotation, percolation, reflux extraction, pressurised liquid extraction and so on.

⁵⁷⁷ **Robert F. Heizer**. *The Background of Thomsen's Three-Age System*. Technology and Culture. Vol. 3 No. 3. (Summer 1862). PP259-266.

⁵⁷⁸ **James Hutton** (1726-1797) and **Charles Lyell** (1797-1875) were the key promoters of an ancient earth. Their work influenced the likes of the theologian and pastor **Thomas Chalmers** (1780-1847) who invented the gap theory to accommodate the new geology.

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places on the Beagle. Darwin had a copy of Charles Lyell's ***Principles of Geology*** which formulated the idea of an ancient earth whilst he was on the Beagle. Thus the rising tide amongst intellectuals was against Scripture and for a new independent secular humanistic way of thinking.

None of this recent modern history can explain the details we find in Genesis 4:22. For whilst people may invent strange schemes, the word of God declares that by the time of Tubal-Cain, there was a thriving metallurgical industry.⁵⁷⁹ I say that we have an industry here because I am also inclined to believe that Tubal-Cain did in fact instruct others in the art of metal extraction, refining and metal working. I derive this thought from the fact that although he was not specifically termed the ***“father of”*** indicating a position of authority, his two other brothers were so named. Consequently it is likely that Tubal-Cain was also an authority on his specialism too. Perhaps he was not termed “father” specifically because such industry was already well known from early days. In that Cain built a city it is probable that he made use of metal tools for such a task, so the art of mining, smelting and refining was probably as old as the earth itself. Given that Genesis 2 (which was before the fall) describes minerals and native metal deposits, such suggestions are highly likely. Fathers instruct their children or their students. This term ***“father of”*** is applied to two of Lamech's sons so we see here the pioneers in the three main enterprises of what we may call human life on earth. In the table below I have simply added Naamah and the meaning of her name (“pleasant”). I think it significant that Adah, (Lamech's first wife), means “ornament” indicating a kind of “trophy wife,” for display. Thus, Naamah represents aesthetics and beauty in man's world.

Table: 4.1: Lamech's posterity.

Jabal	Jubal	Tubal-Cain	Naamah (f)
The father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.	The father of all those who play the harp and flute.	An instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron.	“Pleasant”
Farming, commerce, business, trade and travel.	Music, the arts, entertainment.	Industry, technology, “science”.	Beauty, desire, attraction.

It will be seen from the information in the table above that we have all those features which characterise life on earth ***“under the sun”*** as Solomon in Ecclesiastes might put it. There is business and trade, entertainment and distractions, science and technology, and those things which are part of what we desire and find beautiful. Now none of these things in and of themselves are wrong. What is wrong, however, is that these are ***all*** that the line of Cain amounted to. We might add the rhetorical question Christ made as a fitting conclusion to this section:

579 Ecclesiastes 7:29.

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For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?⁵⁸⁰

Just as Cain's descendants did in the pre-flood world, we today fill up our lives with activity to prosper, innovation and adventure, entertainment and distraction, and adoration and pleasure, but what do we end up with? The end of this section focuses on Lamech's boast in verses 23 and 24. Lamech was the first polygamist (that we know of) and he was also like his fore-father Cain in that he was also a murderer. Cain killed out of jealousy and in hot anger. Lamech did not merely stand his ground refusing to repent as did Cain when questioned by the Lord, rather he boasts of his achievement. There is reduplication in what Lamech says in his speech which we could arrange thus:

Adah and Zillah,
 hear my voice;
wives of Lamech,
 listen to my speech!
For I have killed a man
 for wounding me,
even a young man
 for hurting me.

Twice Lamech calls upon his two wives to attend to what he had to say. That amounts to a real boast, not just some exclamation. Lamech wanted this known far and wide publicly. Then Lamech declares what he has done and why he did it. In that it is repeated twice I think we are meant to understand a single incident which typifies Lamech's general behaviour. If anyone dared to wound Lamech or hurt him then that person would be slain by this “powerful” man.⁵⁸¹ Finally Lamech draws upon the fact that Cain was marked so that none could take revenge. It would appear that Lamech is claiming impunity. If Cain could be avenged perfectly then Lamech even more so. What this amounts to, in effect, is the declaration of a warrior who is leader of his tribe. Dare to wrong me! Before we leave these thoughts concerning Lamech's descendants we must note that it is highly probable that Tubal-Cain's drive was fuelled by the formation of weapons (swords, knives etc.) as well as tools (ploughs, pots, implements etc.). We say this because of this boasting of Lamech. It is not spelt out clearly here so we are walking circumspectly, but the building of a city for defence and identity, and the boast of murder for harm received is usually backed by weaponry. Thus we have depicted here the “*way of Cain*” which starts with murder, focuses on this earth and its fruits (illustrated by the building of a city and the professions pursued by Lamech's sons) and ends with polygamy and violence.⁵⁸²

580 Matthew 16:26.

581 Remember that Lamech's name means “powerful.”

582 Jude 1:11.

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[3] The end of Adam's tale (4:25-5:1a).

Adam's book is nearly at a close. At this point it will be helpful to cast a look back over the contents of this, the second book of Genesis. We outline them in heading and sub-division below:

The creation of mankind in the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:4b-25).

The creation of Adam and the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:4b-17).

Adam created from the dust. (Genesis 2:4b-9).

Geographical interlude. (Genesis 2:10-14).

A helper needed for Adam, a command issued. (Genesis 2:15-17).

The creation of woman and marriage. (Genesis 2:18-25).

The fall of mankind. (Genesis 3:1-24).

The temptation of Woman and the silence of Adam. (Genesis 3:1-7).

Four questions posed by the Lord God to Adam and Woman. (Genesis 3:8-13).

God's word to the serpent, the Woman and Adam. (Genesis 3:14-19).

Out of Eden but clothed by God. (Genesis 3:20-24).

The story of Adam and Eve and their children. (Genesis 4:1-15).

Eve bears the first “man.” (Genesis 4:1,2a).

A tale of two offerings. (Genesis 4:2b-7).

The first murder. (Genesis 4:8-15).

The line of Cain. (Genesis 4:16-24).

Cain builds a city and forges his line. (Genesis 4:16-18).

Lamech's boast and the fruit of man. (Genesis 4:19-24).

The end of Adam's tale. (Genesis 4:25-5:1a).

It can be seen from these headings and sub-headings that Adam has described the making of mankind, the fall, his early experience of raising a family, and then ends with the line of Cain whom Eve thought was the promised one of Genesis 3:15. Within this “book” there is a clear presentation of the gospel both in the actual formation of mankind (and especially woman), in the promise given in the fall, and in the outworking of faith by Abel. We note that the life of faith is not straight forward and that the life of wickedness (*“the way of Cain”*) dominates in this earthly life. How then will Adam conclude his work?

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4:25.

Well it is fitting that the concluding section begins with Adam and Eve having another son. The family is so very important. Obviously at this stage of life on earth there were few around.⁵⁸³ However the family unit is central in the gospel. Fathers and mothers of children have an immense responsibility to train their children in the “*ways of the Lord*” (and not in the “*way of Cain*”).⁵⁸⁴ The new son was called “*Seth*” and was born when Adam was one hundred and thirty years old, and then we are told why he was given this name.⁵⁸⁵ The Lord had “*appointed another seed*” in the place of Abel who was murdered by Cain. Thus Seth was a substitute appointed in place of Abel and would be the “*seed*” through whom the promise would come. Thus these few verses mark a delineation and act as a fitting conclusion to this section of Genesis.

4:26.

In verse 26 we are given the first in the new line of Seth, for his first named son was “*Enosh*,” but the genealogy is paused here. There is a very good reason for this because the name “*Enosh*” simply means “man.” Seth knew of the promise given in Genesis 3:15, but this time there was no jumping to the conclusion that the next in line was to be the promised one, (as Eve had done in Genesis 4:1). Thus whilst Seth was the substitute “*seed*” in place of Abel, Enosh, (Seth's first named son), was just an ordinary man. Next, at the end of verse 26 we read that it was at this time that “*men began to call on the name of the Lord.*” Enosh was born when Seth was one hundred and five years old, so this is now the year 235 AC.⁵⁸⁶ What is indicated by this phrase at the end of verse 26? Does it mean that before this time none had called upon the Lord? Or is it an indication that the Lord's interaction with the world had changed? Or is it simply indicative of revival? Before we answer these questions, it is notable that once again the various translations have struggled with this verse. A selection of different versions are shown below:

At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord. (ESV).

Then *men* began to call upon the name of the Lord. (NASB).

Then *men* began to call on the name of the Lord. (NKJV).

Then a beginning was made of preaching in the name of Jehovah. (YLT).

At that time he began to call on the name of Yahweh. (LEB).

583 It is not possible to say how many people there were, but it ought to be borne in mind that life spans were extremely long and the Lord informed Eve that her conception would be multiplied. Seth was not born until Adam was 130 years old but it is inconceivable that they did not have other children between the first two and Seth.

584 Judges 2:22; 2Samuel 22:22; 2Chronicles 17:6; Psalm 18:21; 138:5; Hosea 14:9; Acts 13:10. Compare Jude 1:11.

585 Genesis 5:3.

586 Genesis 5:6.

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The word rendered as “*began*” in most translations is rather interesting. Its basic meaning is “to pierce,” “to lay open,” or “to loose.” Because the verb is a Hophal perfect form we need to render it as a passive causative action. In other words, the word indicates that a way was prised open, or a beginning was made. The verb is a third person masculine singular, so the pronoun “he” should be employed. Thus my translation would be as follows:

At that time he made a beginning (or caused a way to be opened) to call towards the name of the Lord.

This translation accords in the main with the LEB rendering and with the beginning of the YLT translation. Other translations suggest the general term “*people*,” or “*men*” should be used, but this does not seem to fit the Hebrew. Notably, the NASB and the NKJV puts “*men*” in italics signalling that the word is not in the original Hebrew. The YLT falters by bringing in the concept of preaching which is not present explicitly.

To sum up, it would appear that in point of fact it was Enosh who began this new movement. If you like, with Enosh we see a return to calling upon the Lord in faith and repentance. His turn and repentance paved the way for others to follow. Perhaps seeing the word in the sense of an opening and thence a start, most translators have opted to provide the outcome rather than the specific start of this new movement (new only in the sense of at this time).

What is implied in the phrase “*to call on the name of the Lord?*” Well the first thing to be said is that it indicates a reliance, a trust and a dependence upon God. Second it shows the superiority and need for God's very name, (His character) to be known. This points us to the means by which we can call on the name of the Lord, that is, through His word, by preaching and in dependence on His Spirit. Thus, as some have stated, the whole gamut of knowing the Lord is encapsulated in this short phrase. The Lord and His character (“*the name of the Lord*”), are the rock and stability upon which we depend. How do we know of this unless someone tell us?⁵⁸⁷ Hence the need for declaration, publishing and preaching of God's will and word. But then also the knowledge of God requires humility and utter dependence (“*to call on*”). It requires us to stop relying on self like Cain did, and to throw all our hope and trust upon God. We do not just call out to Him, we cry out in desperation, for nothing else but God will do. Buried in the root idea of this word “*to call*” is the concept of accosting a person you happen to come across. The idea is that in walking along a road you suddenly see a person nearby, so you call out their name to stop them so you can meet up with them. Thus to call upon the name of the Lord, is to cry out to God so that you can meet with Him and engage with Him.

587 Romans 10:14,15.

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5:1a.

The section ends with the summary title: *“This is the book of the genealogy of Adam.”* Perhaps it might be better if we render this as: “This the book of the history according to Adam.”

Overlap between Genesis 4 and 5.

Before we move on to chapter 5:1bf and Noah's story, it would be good to consider the connection between the end of this section (Genesis 2:4b-5:1a) and the beginning of the next (Genesis 5:1b-6:9a). At points where there are these *tôledôt* markers indicating division in the book of Genesis there is often some overlap in ideas. These overlaps help in understanding what the Lord God intends for us to know. Figure 8 shows the details of the overlap between these two sections.

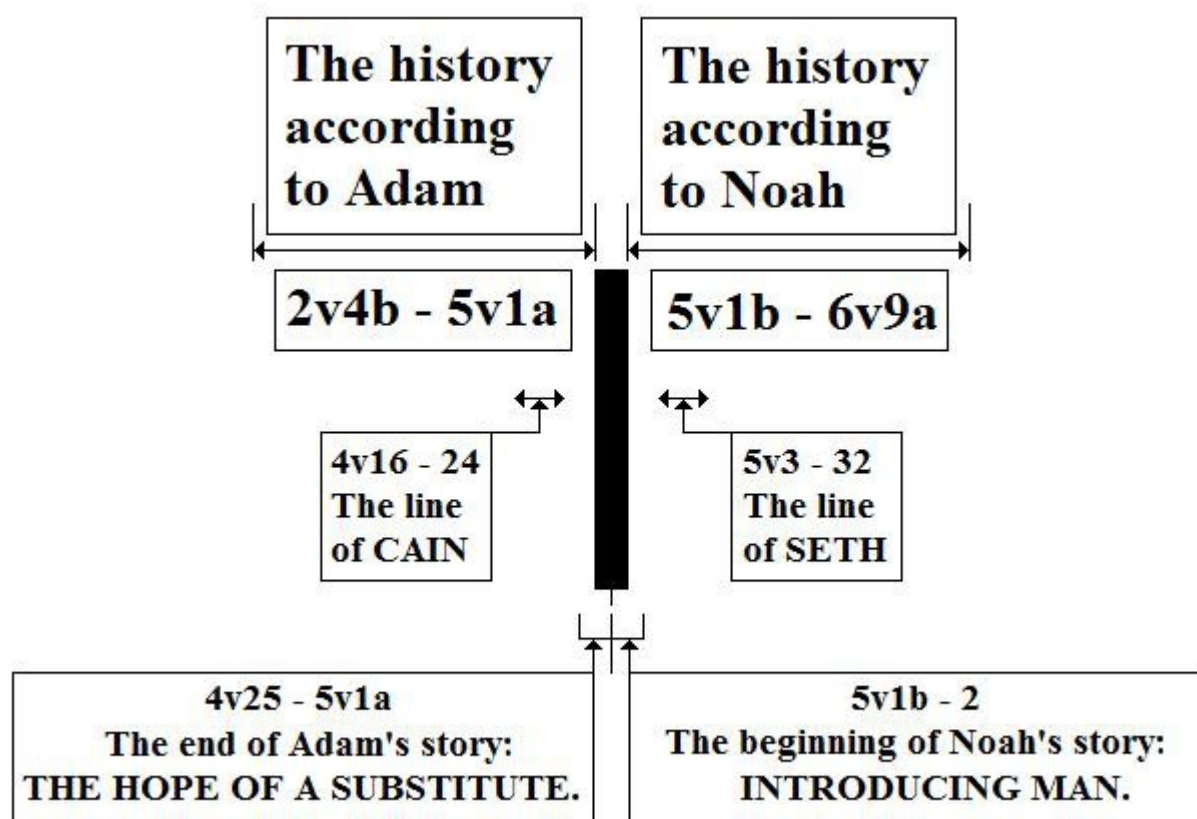


Figure 8: The intersection between Adam's account and Noah's account.

Genesis 2:4b-5:1a describes how Adam and Woman (Eve) were created on day 6 (Genesis 2:4b-25), documents their fall into sin, the curse on creation and the beginning of redemption, (Genesis 3), then describes the first beginnings of life in a fallen world (Genesis 4:1-15). After this we have the first genealogy (the line of Cain) followed by the completion of Adam's account, which we have entitled

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“THE HOPE OF A SUBSTITUTE” in figure 8 (Genesis 4:25-5:1a). The next section begins with an introduction which we have titled “INTRODUCING MAN” in figure 8 (Genesis 5:1b,2). It continues with a second genealogy of Seth from Adam to Noah (Genesis 5:3-32), and then moves to describe the state of the world prior to the flood (Genesis 6:1-7), ending with a description of Noah (Genesis 6:8,9a). Thus our current section, Adam's story, ends with this looking forward to the hope of a substitute to come in the promised seed of the woman. But the next section starts by referring back to creation week (*“in the day that God created man”*). In particular, the writer references Genesis 1:26-28 and mentions the fact that man is made in the *“likeness”* of God, that they were created *“male and female”* and that they were *“blessed.”* Making use of the image-bearing nature of man, the writer then details the genealogy of Seth from verse 3 onwards. Thus it was fitting for Adam to conclude the disastrous line of Cain with the story of Seth's birth and then of his grandson Enosh, followed by the statement concerning calling upon the name of the Lord. It was equally fitting for Noah to begin his story with a recap about the origin and creation of man, before introducing Seth and his descendants. By setting these two histories in such a way the Holy Spirit thus draws our attention to the highlighted persons in the two genealogies, namely the two “Enochs” and the two “Lamechs,” (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2: The two Enochs and the two Lamechs.

Person highlighted:	Line of Cain.	Line of Seth.
Enoch (“dedicated”).	Cain builds a city for Enoch which signals defence and self-identity. (Genesis 4:17).	Enoch walked with God for three hundred years and then God took him up to heaven. (Genesis 5:22-24).
Lamech (“powerful”).	Lamech has two wives, and four children who pioneer in worldly pursuits. He issues a boast concerning his murderous acts. (Genesis 4:19-24).	Lamech named his son “ <i>Noah</i> ” because his name means “rest.” There is faith in the promise of God in Noah who will effect a “salvation.” (Genesis 5:28-32).

It is also noteworthy that throughout the genealogy of Genesis 5 we read that each person in the line *“died.”* Such a repeated statement is wholly absent from the line of Cain. The worldly minded only has eyes on earthly achievements and boasts, but the spiritual man knows that death is the wages of sin. And yet amongst the godly there is also this desire to walk with God and a trust in the promise of rest and salvation.

Chapter 5.

The line of Seth the substitute

– the story of grace. (5:1b-6:9a).

Analysis.

In the day that God created man,
He made him in the likeness of God.

2 He created them male and female,
and blessed them
and called them Mankind
in the day they were created.

3 And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years,
and begot *a son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

4 After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.

5 So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years;
and he died.

6 Seth lived one hundred and five years,
and begot Enosh.

7 After he begot Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters.

8 So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years;
and he died.

9 Enosh lived ninety years,
and begot Cainan.

10 After he begot Cainan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters.

11 So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years;
and he died.

12 Cainan lived seventy years,
and begot Mahalalel.

13 After he begot Mahalalel, Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years, and had sons and daughters.

14 So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years;
and he died.

15 Mahalalel lived sixty-five years,
and begot Jared.

16 After he begot Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters.

17 So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years;
and he died.

18 Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years,
and begot Enoch.

19 After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

20 So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years;
and he died.

21 Enoch lived sixty-five years,
and begot Methuselah.

22 After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

24 And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him.

25 Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years,
and begot Lamech.

26 After he begot Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters.

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- 27 So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years;
and he died.
- 28 Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years,
and had a son. 29 And he called his name Noah, saying,
“This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the
Lord has cursed.”
- 30 After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters.
- 31 So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years;
and he died.
- 32 And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
- #6 1 Now it came to pass,
when men began to multiply on the face of the earth,
and daughters were born to them,
2 that the sons of God
saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful;
and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.
- 3 And the Lord said,
“My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty
years.”
- 4 There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterwards, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and
they bore *children* to them.
Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.
- 5 Then the Lord saw
that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth,
and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.
- 6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth,
and He was grieved in His heart.
- 7 So the Lord said,
“I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of
the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”
- 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.
- 9 This is the genealogy of Noah.

We have now reached the history which we believe was recorded by Noah and which runs from Genesis 5:1b to Genesis 6:9a. Bear in mind that we work on the principle ***always*** that what we have before us is precisely what God wanted us to know. These are God's words and not the words of man. We assert that God caused Noah to record these details and He did so without manipulation nor coercion of Noah's personality. Noah wrote down what he observed, but the Lord inspired the words. Our passage divides easily into three main sections with the last falling into two sub-divisions as follows:

[1] Introduction – how man was made. (Genesis 5:1b,2).

[2] The line of Seth – a line of hope. (Genesis 5:3-32).

[3] Amidst wickedness Noah finds grace. (Genesis 6:1-9a).

[a] The Lord warns the world. (Genesis 6:1-4).

[b] The Lord issues the judgement and Noah finds grace. (Genesis 6:5-9a).

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[1] Introduction – how man was made. (Genesis 5:1b,2).

5:1b,2.

Once again we have some back-tracking pointing us to the “day” that God created mankind. This is reminiscent of Genesis 2:4bf where Adam relates details prior to his creation as an introduction. Noah does the same here by focusing the reader's attention on God's creation of man. Although the term “day” is not qualified by a number so that the word could mean an extended period of time, the context makes it very clear that day 6 is in view. The passage begins and ends with similar phrases (“in the day ... created”) which act as bookends. It would appear from the terminology used that Noah was referencing the first section of Genesis (1:1-2:4a). The words “likeness,” “created,” “blessed” and the phrase “male and female” can all be found in Genesis 1:26-28. The one feature recorded in our passage which does not seem to be evident in the first part of Genesis is the statement “and called them Mankind,” (where the name “Mankind” is actually “Adam” in Hebrew). The Lord God does refer to Adam by name in Genesis 2 but nowhere do we find an explicit reference to Adam actually being named by God.⁵⁸⁸ Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created “man” (Adam) and that He created them “male and female.” This does not tell us directly that God named mankind as “Adam,” but the comment that Noah gives us here in Genesis 5:2 suggests that in fact God did name mankind as “Adam.” Thus Adam stands both as a term for mankind in general, and also as the familiar name for the first man created.

The intention of the writer by drawing attention to mankind's beginning seems to be to give an introduction to the genealogy of Seth. This is no mere repetition, but a reliance on the former text. It serves further to reiterate the fact that man was created and is not evolving or at some stage in progress. There was a time when man did not exist, then God created man on day 6, and now man exists and reproduces after his kind. The writer (Noah) starts with what God has revealed and builds from there. It also serves to show the great contrast. God created man and blessed him at a time when everything was “good” before the fall. Now we will hear ringing in our ears the repeated refrain “and he died.”

[2] The line of Seth – a line of hope. (Genesis 5:3-32).

We have already noted that this text enables us to date creation and document the length of time up to the flood, but a depiction of the information in chart form is shown in figure 9 below. The genealogy of Seth from Adam continues in verse 3 with an emphasis on the fact that Seth was begotten in the “likeness,” and “image” of his father Adam, pointing us back to the fact that Adam (male and female) were created in the image and likeness of God.⁵⁸⁹ This serves to show that progeny are all like Adam.

⁵⁸⁸ The Lord God forms Adam and places him in the garden in Genesis 2:7,8. In Genesis 2:15,16 the Lord God takes Adam and places him in the garden. In Genesis 2:18 the Lord God uses Adam's name in speaking about seeking a helper for him.

⁵⁸⁹ Genesis 1:27.

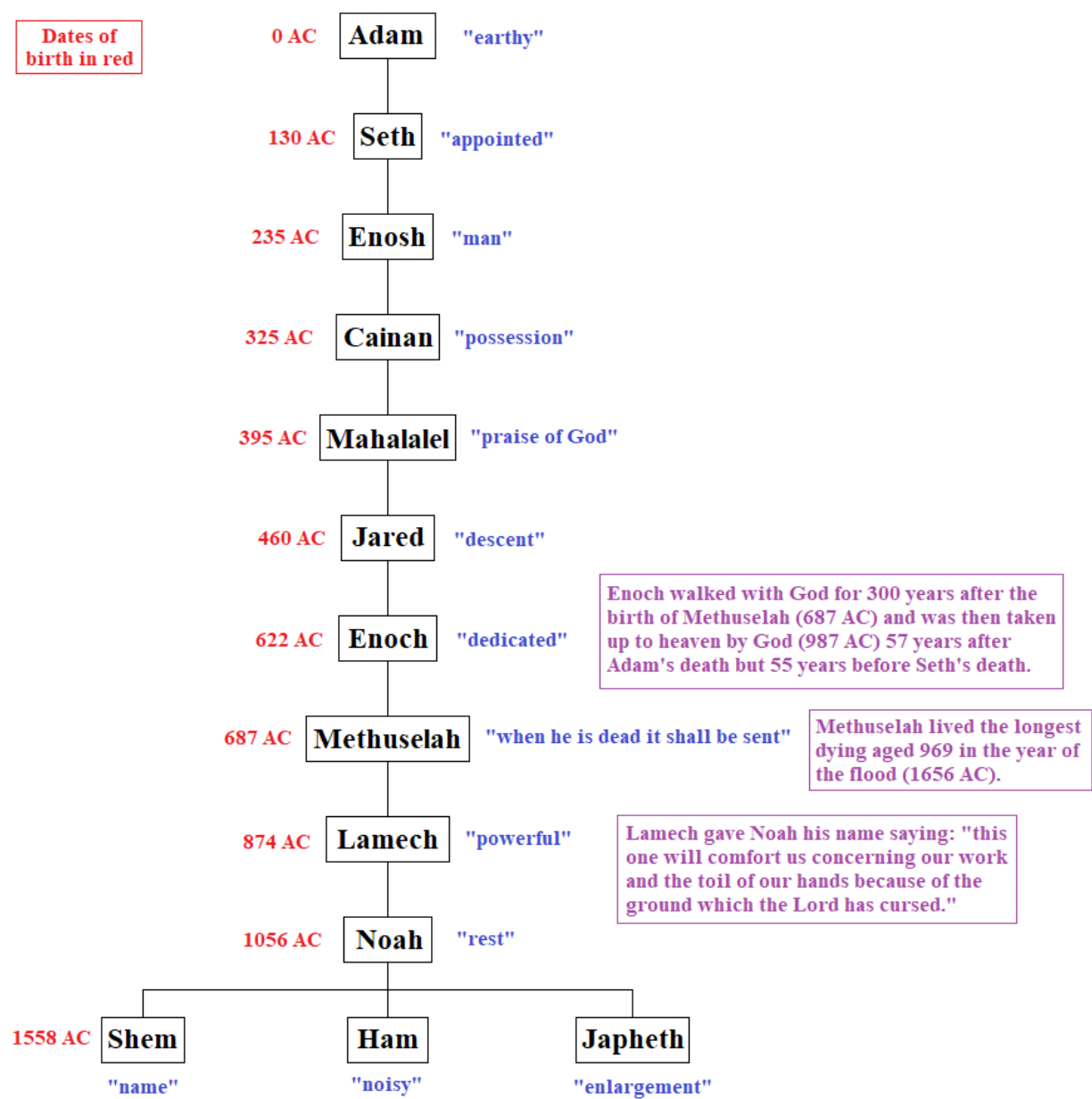


Figure 9: The line of Adam through Seth.

Thus all born from Adam by the normal reproductive process bear the same image and likeness to God as did Adam. Although these words are not repeated throughout the rest of this genealogy, we are free to assume that because it was true of the first one named (Seth) it must be true of the rest. We have already commented elsewhere on the formulaic aspect of this text and how it enables dating to be engaged in. Here we note in passing that such a formulaic or structured framework has never been used to circumvent the essential nature of the text as historical. Those who advocate a framework view of Genesis 1 because

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of its structure and form, and who thereby deny that Genesis 1 is history, ought to follow through with their view in Genesis 5. That they do not do this, and accept it as historical narrative goes a long way to further discredit the framework hypothesis.

One feature of this genealogy we must emphasise is the repeated refrain “*and he died.*” This strikes a tremulous repetitive note acting as the baseline through the early recorded history of the world. The Lord God had warned Adam that if he disobeyed then dying he would die. Adam was separated from God by his act of disobedience (as evidenced by his hiding among the trees in Genesis 3) and then 930 years later he died physically. Theistic evolutionists who accept physical death in their view of creation cannot grasp the intensity and force of what we read in Genesis 5. The antediluvian patriarchs lived very long lives and had many children, but then they all died (physically). This is tragic.

We have observed that Genesis 5 is an intact genealogy which can be used to date the creation of the world because the relationships mentioned are not relevant for dating purposes. Here we need to consider the various ages at which the named people had their named son (table 5.1). It is to be recalled that Adam, in fact, had two sons (Cain and Abel) shortly after being banished from Eden presumably within the year after creation or shortly thereafter. Genesis 5:4 tells us that Adam had other sons and daughters. Now Seth was not born until Adam reached the age of 130. The way in which we are introduced to the arrival of Seth in Genesis 4 is worth looking at, which reads as follows:

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”⁵⁹⁰

Is it conceivable that Adam waited for 130 years before laying with Eve?⁵⁹¹ I think that is hardly possible. Consequently it is highly probable that Adam had other children between the first two and Seth. Seth is mentioned in the genealogy of Genesis 5 because he would be the one through whom the promise would continue.

Given the above considerations, we do not think it likely that the sons mentioned throughout Genesis 5 are ***necessarily*** the firstborn sons in each case. They may be, but it is much more likely that at least some are not. The range of ages at which each son was born is large, from 65 years up to 500 years. In the case of Noah is it likely that he waited until he was 500 years old before starting a family? I grant that such is possible since in our day men begin families in later life. However given the Lord's instruction to man to multiply and fill the earth I think it more likely that the other sons and daughters are passed by in this account because the focus is on the line of promise through whom the Messiah would eventually come.⁵⁹²

590 Genesis 4:25.

591 No pun intended!

592 Genesis 1:28.

Table 5.1: Ages at which antediluvians had sons.

Name.	“Son” mentioned.	Age at which he had named “son.”
Adam	Seth	130
Seth	Enosh	105
Enosh	Cainan	90
Cainan	Mahalalel	70
Mahalalel	Jared	65
Jared	Enoch	162
Enoch	Methuselah	65
Methudelah	Lamech	187
Lamech	Noah	182
Noah	Shem, Ham, Japheth ⁵⁹³	500

Furthermore, bearing in mind that Eve's conception was multiplied it does not seem possible that in each case mentioned the first child born came along so late in time.⁵⁹⁴ It is to be noted here that the ages at which the first mentioned child is observed after the flood in Genesis 11 are much shorter.⁵⁹⁵ Thus the selection of names to form this genealogy in Genesis 5 is probably due to each person being designated as special in some way. One suggestion is that these were true believers and perhaps were identified by the Lord in some unknown way, although the mention of calling on the name of the Lord in Genesis 4:26 may enhance this suggestion. If we take the view that each named son was necessarily the firstborn in each case, then such selection is obviously unnecessary. In which case the named sons may not have been believers. These considerations we have discussed are by no means certain. Whether each had children throughout their lives and one son among the number was selected for this genealogy, or whether we have a list of firstborns does not really matter in the long run. So why discuss it? The purpose is simply to show that what we have is an historical account. For example, the various ages at which each had their named son can hardly have been invented or manufactured. Do they indicate men having families at different stages or do they indicate some form of selection we have suggested? The point is that these ages indicate that we have a reliable historical text.

Yet another important feature of this genealogy in Genesis 5 is that it shows how each generation coexists with many subsequent generations. In our time a man is considered blessed if he gets to see his

⁵⁹³ Genesis 5:32 tells us that Noah was 500 and had Shem, Ham and Japheth. Genesis 11:10 tells us that Shem was 100 years old when Arphaxah was born and this was 2 years after the flood. Thus Shem was born in the year 1558 or 98 years before the flood when Noah was 502. We have no information on when Ham and Japheth were born but presumably one of these was born in the year 1556 and the other in 1557. Shem is listed first in Genesis 5:32 as he was the one through whom the promise would come.

⁵⁹⁴ Genesis 3:16.

⁵⁹⁵ Shem was 100, Arphaxad was 35, Salah was 30, Eber was 34, Peleg was 30, Reu was 32, Serug was 30, Nahor was 29, and Terah was 70. Genesis 11:10-27.

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grandchildren having children, but in these pre-flood days many got to see several generations following. These points are illustrated graphically in figure 10 and table 5.2.

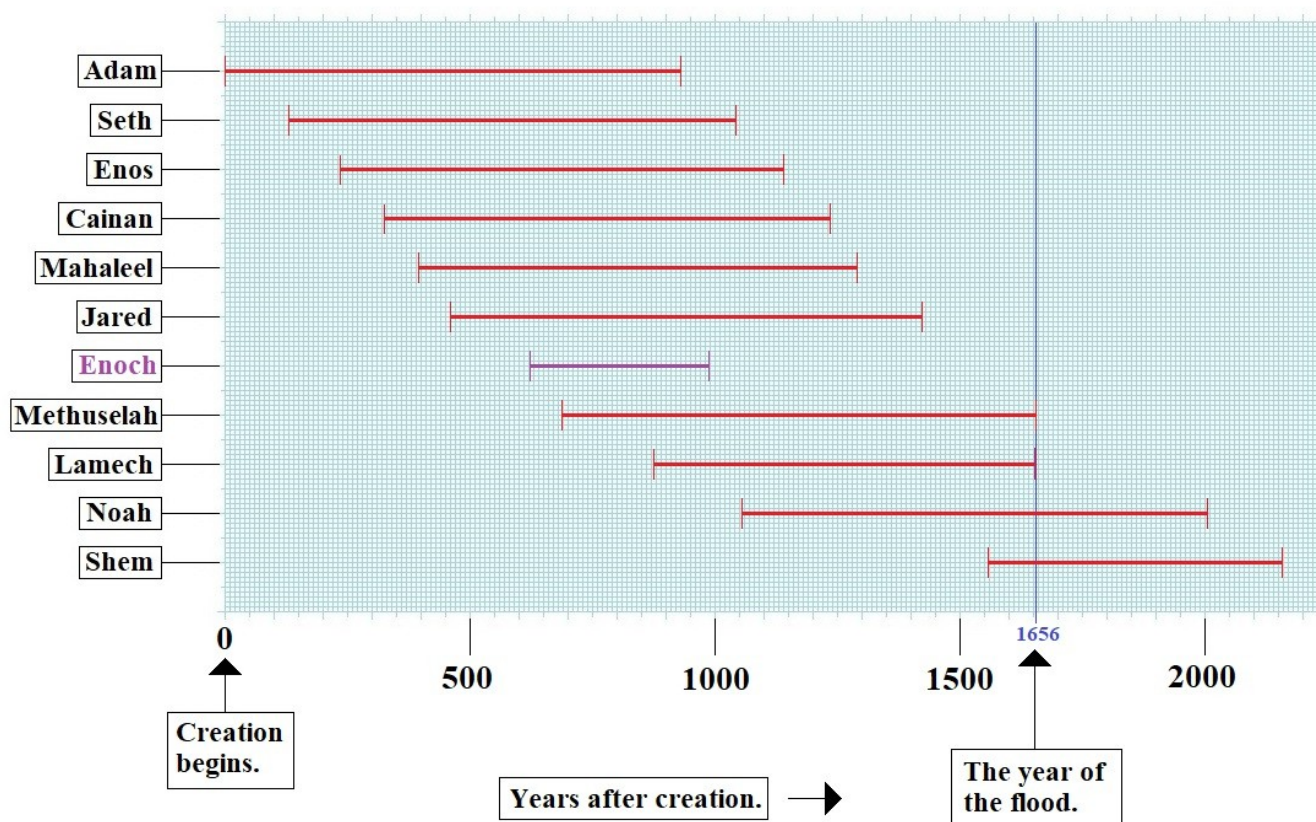


Figure 10: The overlapping of the generations in the pre-flood world.

Table 5.2: The generations of Genesis 5.

Name	Born AC	Died AC	Age at death	Lived to see ...
Adam	0	930	930	8 th generation – dying when Lamech was 56 years old.
Seth	130	1042	912	7 th generation – dying when Lamech was 168 years old.
Enos	235	1140	905	7 th generation – dying when Noah was 84 years old.
Cainan	325	1235	910	6 th generation – dying when Noah was 179 years old.
Mahaleel	395	1290	895	5 th generation – dying when Noah was 234 years old.
Jared	460	1422	962	4 th generation – dying when Noah was 366 years old.
Enoch	622	987	365	2 nd generation – taken when Lamech was 113 years old.
Methuselah	687	1656	969	3 rd generation – dying when Shem was 98 years old.
Lamech	874	1651	777	2 nd generation – dying when Shem was 93 years old.
Noah	1056	2006	950	
Shem	1558	2158	600	

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Three final things we need to discuss on Genesis 5 concern certain men named about which we have further information. These are: Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech. Enoch was born in the year 622 AC and had Methuselah when he was 65 years old in the year 687 AC. He then walked with God for 300 years, and at the age of 365 in the year 987 AC was transported into heaven by the Lord. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews adds further insight:

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.⁵⁹⁶

Enoch did not die, and furthermore we discover that Enoch “*pleased God.*” Now Enoch's walking with God is mentioned alongside Methuselah's birth. Methuselah's name is very interesting, for it has the meaning: “when he is dead it shall be sent,” and as it turns out Methuselah died in the year of the flood.⁵⁹⁷ Thus Enoch seems to have been a prophet, and his naming Methuselah as he did comes from his walk with God. We get more information from Jude's letter in the New Testament:

14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, **15** to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”⁵⁹⁸

Where Jude got this information is not at all relevant here.⁵⁹⁹ We affirm the view that what Jude wrote was under the guide of the Holy Spirit, so that what we have before us is the inspired word of God. Two things to be noted with regard to Jude's letter. First, Jude affirms the historical nature of Genesis by saying that Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam. Second, we note that Jude shows Enoch as a prophet. It looks as though Enoch prophesied of a judgement to come on account of the wickedness prevalent in his day. He names his son “*Methuselah*” in connection with this prophecy, and then when Methuselah dies the flood of judgement comes fulfilling Enoch's prophecy.

What then, of Enoch's walking with God? What are we to make of this? Well to begin we note that the first time this Hebrew word occurs is spoken of the Lord in Eden. Adam and Eve after they sinned “*heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.*”⁶⁰⁰ This seems to indicate a normal activity and one which formerly Adam and Eve had enjoyed. Walking in the garden for

596 Hebrews 11:5.

597 **Alfred Jones.** *Jones' Dictionary of Old Testament proper Names.* 1990. Kregel publications. Hereafter as **Jones.**

598 Jude 1:14,15.

599 Some assert that Jude simply referred to the “Book of Enoch” – a second century BC document which is not inspired. It is more likely, however, that Jude received revelation from God, or that he derived his source from a true document of Enoch which was other than this so-called “Book of Enoch.”

600 Genesis 3:8.

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fellowship. This concept of a walk or a path is one we find throughout Scripture and has been used allegorically to great effect by John Bunyan in his book ***Pilgrim's Progress***. To walk with someone means to be in fellowship with them, it means to be in agreement with them, and to journey where they are going. We see the same in Christ Jesus in the New Testament who called His disciples to follow Him.⁶⁰¹ Enoch, therefore, was someone who agreed with God, and wanted to go where God was going. God is still seeking those who would follow Him! What a marvellous thing. Here in the depths of world history was a man who walked with God and pleased Him in such a way that the Lord prevented him from experiencing death! Remarkable. The thing is that Enoch was dedicated (remember that the meaning of his name is: “dedicated”). Nothing else but God would do. He had yielded entirely to the Lord in all matters. Sadly there are far too many in our day who play dodge with God. They feign trust but all the while display a love for the world.

Then at the end of this genealogy we come across Lamech. Now Lamech was born 113 years before Enoch was taken up by the Lord, and he died 6 years before the flood when Methuselah died. Lamech, whose name means “powerful,” is significant because he was given assurance from the Lord that his son would be the means by which comfort and rest was to come. Noah's name means “rest,” and Lamech names him so because he believed that through Noah comfort from the curse that God had inflicted on the ground would (somehow) come. We know, of course, that such comfort would not come finally until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone could bring true and lasting peace and life. However Noah is a type along the way. His life and experience is so important for our day, In Noah and the ark we see the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified illustrated graphically and perfectly.

[3] Amidst wickedness Noah finds grace. (Genesis 6:1-9a).

This section can be split up into two. First we have the Lord issuing a warning to world for their behaviour (Genesis 6:1-4), and then, second, we find the Lord issuing His judgement and at the same time Noah finds grace (Genesis 6:5-9a).

[a] The Lord warns the world. (Genesis 6:1-4).

At the beginning of chapter six we note a new division. The phrase “*now it came to pass*” may also be rendered simply as “now it was,” or, we might like to say: “it so happened *that*.” At some time, then, mankind began to increase rapidly (“*multiply*”). The mention of daughters here is not meant to suggest that prior to this time no girls had been produced. We already know that Adam had other sons and daughters as did all the others listed in Genesis 5. What we do have simply is a point of introduction. Daughters were naturally born alongside sons, but the writer (presumably Noah) is introducing daughters

601 Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21.

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of men for what follows next about which we need to spend some time. I must add at this juncture that this passage of Scripture has been the subject of great speculation and is rife with controversy. I do not want to fuel further speculation, nor do I want to be controversial. However it is important that we approach the word of God humbly seeking the Lord's help (always). Thus what follows is by no means perfect. Nor is it the final word. Where the word of God is plain and clear all can rejoice in such understanding. In this case the Scriptures are still clear, for the message and lessons which are revealed are surely clear to all, but certain aspects are hidden or obscure. What causes contention and difficulty, I believe, are the details of several points of interpretation concerning the named characters and peoples in this passage. I have offered my study and grasp of this passage below. If you see flaws in this I ask you to be gracious and inform me. To begin I would like to look a little more closely at the term *“sons of God.”*

The sons of God.

Before we continue with commenting on the text it will be necessary to consider what this phrase *“sons of God”* may mean. There has been a great deal of controversy about this phrase and not a little futile speculation as a fruit of that. As always we recognise that what we have before us is the very word of God. In other words, the words chosen are those which God Himself selected. We note further, that the entire Bible from beginning to end is God's word so that no part ever contradicts another. We are entitled therefore to look throughout God's single book to help us in grasping the detail we are viewing. These two principles are ones we must always bear in mind. Hence we need to see detail in the context of the whole. This is not always straightforward. Sometimes a phrase or word is used in a variety of ways. Sometimes the first occurrence of a word or phrase sets up the meanings of later ones. We see this in the case of the phrase *“without form and void”* which first occurs in Genesis 1:2. We are not entitled to read into this first occurrence later connotations of judgement because in Genesis 1 the concept of judgement is alien for a world that was created *“good.”*⁶⁰² With these thoughts in mind let us try to grasp what is indicated by the phrase *“sons of God.”*

To begin we note that the phrase in the singular, that is, *“the Son of God,”* has exclusive reference to Christ Jesus as the second person of the holy trinity.⁶⁰³ Christ alone is The Son of God from eternity. This title signals deity. It also indicates a close relationship in the Godhead between Father and Son which is expressed clearly (for example) in the gospel of John. The Father and the Son are in perfect harmony. What the Father does the Son does. The Father is pleased with the Son and so on.⁶⁰⁴ The plural form of the phrase *“sons of God”* cannot have the same meaning for there is only one Divine Son. And yet the

602 Isaiah 45:18; Jeremiah 4:23.

603 Daniel 3:25; Matthew 4:3,6; 14:33; 26:63; 27:40,43,54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 1:35; 3:38; 4:3,9,41; 22:70; John 1:34,49; 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4,27; 19:7; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Romans 1:4; 8:19; 2Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5,10,12,13,20; Revelation 2:18.

604 John 1:18; 3:35; 5:19,20,21,22,23,26; 10:36; 14:13; 17:1.

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implication of the phrase is that those signified are in close relationship to God. The phrase thus signifies, in the first instance, the concept of close relationship.

Now the phrase “*sons of God*” is found in only five places in the Old Testament and five in the New Testament.⁶⁰⁵ Genesis 6:2 is the first ever occurrence of this term and it is repeated in Genesis 6:4. The remaining three occasions it is used in the Old Testament are all found in the book of Job. The first two appear to depict a scene in heaven where the phrase is used to designate angels:

6 Now there was a day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. **7** And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?”⁶⁰⁶

1 Again there was a day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. **2** And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?”⁶⁰⁷

The last is where the Lord Himself remonstrates with Job asking where he was when God created all things. In this statement the Lord mentions the sons of God shouting with joy at the dawn of creation so it would seem that once again angels are intended.

4 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding. **5** Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? **6** To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, **7** When the morning stars sang together, and all the **sons of God** shouted for joy?”⁶⁰⁸

Angels are those designated as “*sons of God*” because they dwell in God's presence. They are related to God by virtue of their creation. The Son of God (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ) is God and relates to the Father in eternity. The angels are spiritual beings created by God and are those who carry out His will.⁶⁰⁹

The New Testament references are a little more involved. Here, the main point is the idea of adoption. For example Paul declares:

For you are all **sons of God** through faith in Christ Jesus.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁵ The phrase “*sons of God*” occurs at: Genesis 6:2,4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Matthew 5:9; Luke 20:36; Romans 8:14,19; Galatians 3:26. The phrase “*sons of men*” occurs at: Genesis 11:5; 2Samuel 7:14; 1Kings 8:39; 2Chronicles 6:30; Psalm 4:2; 11:4; 12:1,8; 21:10; 31:19; 33:13; 45:2; 57:4; 58:1; 66:5; 145:12; Proverbs 8:4,31; Ecclesiastes 2:3,8; 3:10,18,19,21; 8:11; 9:3,12; Isaiah 52:14; Jeremiah 32:19; Daniel 5:21; 10:16; Joel 1:12; Micah 5:7; Mark 3:28; Ephesians 3:5. The phrase “*daughters of men*” occurs at: Genesis 6:2,4.

⁶⁰⁶ Job 1:6,7.

⁶⁰⁷ Job 2:1,2.

⁶⁰⁸ Job 38:4-7.

⁶⁰⁹ Psalm 104:4; Luke 1:19.

⁶¹⁰ Galatians 3:26.

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Such a statement points us to the wonderful truth of regeneration and adoption. By faith a person is born again and is now enabled to be a part of God's family.⁶¹¹ Those who are thus adopted into God's family will behave like their Father in heaven. Thus the Lord Jesus could declare:

Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called **sons of God**.⁶¹²

The sons of God are so called because they act and behave like their Father. Paul also describes the sons of God in the eighth chapter of Romans thus:

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**. **15** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” **16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **19** For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the **sons of God**.⁶¹³

The sons of God are those who are led by the Spirit and have come to a close and intimate relationship with the Father, so that they now know that they are children of God, adopted into His family. Then Paul speaks of final redemption when there is this final *“revealing of the sons of God,”* or, in other words, the revelation of all those who are part of God's family. Now whilst the main thrust appears to be men, women and children who have been born again, this does not exclude the angels.⁶¹⁴ Our final reference comes from the time when the Lord Jesus was remonstrating with the Sadducees over their hypothetical scenario which “proved” against resurrection. In His response the Lord Jesus teaches us about what life will be like in the resurrection:

34 Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. **35** But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; **36** nor can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels and are **sons of God**, being sons of the resurrection.”⁶¹⁵

Those who are saved or *“counted worthy”* to attain the age to come will not marry and they will never die. Instead these redeemed folk will be *“equal to the angels”* and are therefore are to be known as *“sons of God,”* because they are *“sons of the resurrection.”*

Thus the phrase *“sons of God”* indicates the angels in the Old Testament, but in the New

611 John 1:12,13.

612 Matthew 5:9.

613 Romans 8:14-19.

614 Matthew 16:27; Hebrews 12:22; Jude 1:14.

615 Luke 20:34-36.

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Testament redeemed adopted believers are also designated as such too.

Returning our thoughts to Genesis 6 we have three other New Testament references which bear consideration. Peter mentions certain “*spirits in prison*” who had been “*disobedient*” during the time when the Lord waited “*in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.*”⁶¹⁶ This text in Peter's first epistle is difficult. However the phrase “*spirits in prison*” indicates evil spirits who have been constrained somehow.⁶¹⁷ This points us in the direction of fallen angels. In his second letter Peter is a little more explicit. In the second chapter of 2Peter the apostle describes three distinct situations.

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; **5** and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; **6** and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterwards would live ungodly.⁶¹⁸

First Peter speaks of the casting down of angels who had sinned. Second he speaks of the destruction of the world by a flood. Third he mentions the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It would appear from these examples that Peter is mentioning situations in chronological order. The reference to angels being cast down must then be linked to the events in Genesis 6.

Finally we have a statement in Jude's epistle which also bears consideration:

6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; **7** as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.⁶¹⁹

In this Scripture we note that Jude speaks of angels who “*left their own abode,*” and then talks about Sodom and Gomorrah. What is interesting here is that Jude links these two by saying that Sodom and Gomorrah with its sexual perversions were “*as*” or, in other words, like “*the angels*” who had not kept “*their proper domain but had left their own abode.*” In other words, those of Sodom and Gomorrah had, like the angels, left what was natural and correct. They had become perverted. In the case of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah it had to do with sexual perversion. With regard to the angels they had abandoned their normal dwelling place and status.

616 1Peter 3:19,20.

617 The term “*spirits*” used like this suggests evil, wicked or unclean spirits. See: Matthew 8:16; 12:45; Luke 4:36; 10:20; Acts 19:12-16

618 2Peter 2:4-6.

619 Jude 1:6,7.

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We know from the Gospels and Acts that fallen angels (evil spirits) can possess humans.⁶²⁰ However we also know from various texts that angels can appear in human form and can even eat a meal.⁶²¹ From all of the above texts and considerations, it would appear clear that the term “*sons of God*” in Genesis 6:2,4 signifies angels who had fallen. It would appear from what Peter and Jude have written that angels left their domain and took on human flesh.⁶²²

Strange times.

6:1,2.

Thus angels who once dwelt in the very presence of God have left that abode where they ought to have remained, and have taken upon themselves to be clothed in flesh dwelling on the earth. Why did they do this? Was it an attempt at hoodwinking mankind into thinking that the promise of the deliverer spoken of in Genesis 3:15 had come? Were these false incarnations? It may not be possible to say what exactly the intention was, but the outcome was deception amongst men along with increased corruption of their humanity.

These sons of God saw that the daughters of men were “*beautiful.*” And as a consequence of seeing their beauty these fallen angels now clothed in flesh “*took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.*” This statement is charged with passion and desire. Note that there was no thought of request made either to the daughters of men or to their fathers. The angels merely “*took*” them, and, what-is-more, they did so “*for themselves.*” Now it is true that the expression “... took a wife/wives” is one that simply means the idea of getting married, but here the context leads us to understand that this was no natural union.⁶²³ These fallen angels grabbed women that they desired. The selection was done on the basis of desire, the choice of the fallen angel, and not in any reasoned or thought out way.

This statement of verse 2 which tells us that the “*sons of God*” viewed “*the daughters of men*” as being “*beautiful*” cannot really be explained if we understand the title “*sons of God*” to mean the godly line of Seth. If that were the case it amounts to declaring that the daughters of Seth were all ugly and this seems to be wholly unlikely.

6:3.

As a direct consequence of this state of affairs as described in verses 1 and 2, we read next that

620 See, for example: Mark 5:1-20; John 13:27.

621 Genesis 18:1-2,8; 19:1,5; Hebrews 13:2.

622 I am aware that there is another interpretation that takes the phrase “*sons of God*” to indicate the line of Seth as a godly line in contradistinction to those of the line of Cain. However nowhere is this phrase found in Seth's genealogy and it seems likely that at least one amongst the line of Cain was a godly man (Methusael's name means “man of God” Genesis 4:18).

623 See, for example: Genesis 11:29; 21:21; 24:67; 25:1 etc.

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this caused the Lord God to issue a warning statement:

My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.⁶²⁴

The general import of this statement is that there must come an end to the Lord's dealings with mankind as a whole. The word rendered “*strive*” signifies rule or govern. Now the Lord God is always governing and will always be King. But here we are thinking specifically of the Spirit of God and His dealings with mankind in the flesh as-it-were. This is the particular task of the Spirit of God. He brooded over the waters in primal (raw-material) creation and is forever at work amongst men and women. But here we note that this striving or pleading with mankind must come to an end. The second clause, translated as: “*for he is indeed flesh*” in the NKJV is interesting because of one Hebrew term which can be translated in two ways. Before we look at the Hebrew word consider three various renditions of this clause:

for that he also *is* flesh. [AKJV].

because he also *is* flesh, [NASB].

in their erring they [are] flesh. [YLT].

because they are corrupt. [CSB & HCSB].

Now the Hebrew for this clause is as follows:

בָּשָׂר	הוּא	בְּשָׂגָם	←
flesh	he	?	←

The first word in this clause בְּשָׂגָם can be translated in two ways. First it is considered by some (perhaps most) to be a combination of three particles or prefixes, the combined effect which signifies the word “*also*” or something equivalent. Second it could be the third person plural masculine (Qal) infinitive form of the verb שָׁגָג which means “to err” or “to sin.” Hence it would be translated as “*they [are] sinning.*” Only the YLT (a literal translation) opts for choosing this second way of translating this word. Both the CSB and the HCSB combine the two main Hebrew words (flesh and sin/err) to yield the word “*corrupt.*” Whichever choice is made, the point really is that the Spirit will not continue to struggle with *sinful fallen* mankind. Man (Adam) was made perfect, sinless, but now mankind is fallen, sinful and corrupt.

624 Genesis 6:3.

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The last clause in this statement of the Lord also has two applications. It either signifies the length of time man will individually live, or it means that from this point there will be only that length of time before judgement falls. If it is the later then we can date this statement to one hundred and twenty years before the flood, that is, the year 1536 when Noah was in his 480th year. Concerning the first suggestion, that mankind's life span would be limited to one hundred and twenty years, this may be a possibility but we would have to suggest a delayed one. Noah would live to be 930 and Shem to 600. Abraham reached 175, Isaac 180 and even Jacob lived to 147. So this stipulation (if it was intended to be such) did not come into effect immediately but gradually. We shall return to this thought when we consider the line of Shem in Genesis 11.

6:4.

After this statement from the Lord, which we believe was a public one for the world, we are then told a little more about the situation that pertained within the pre-flood world. Later we will be given more details, but for now we are told about the outcome of the fact that fallen angels took human flesh. Fallen angels who had become men took women and had children by them and these offspring were different. They are described in verse 4 as being *“giants,” “mighty men,”* and *“men of renown.”* We ought to recall that Lamech in the line of Cain was a boasting murderer who took to himself two wives. His name means “powerful” and he displayed a domineering tyrannical nature. Perhaps such a man and his expression of life was in accord with what we read of here in Genesis 6, or maybe the instigation. Although the two lines (of Cain and Seth) are displayed as separate we must remember that the world of that time was much like ours. The righteous are not together in a separate conclave or commune. Rather they are embedded in the world. Thus what was going on would have been a great irritation and heart ache for the believers of that time. Now verse 4 has been variously understood depending upon how interpreters view the phrase *“sons of God.”* The way in which the whole verse reads comes across rather awkwardly in many versions, as a comparison of three other translations serves to show:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also later. That was when the sons of God had sexual relations with the daughters of human beings. These women gave birth to children, who became famous and were the mighty warriors of long ago. [NCV].

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days. After that, the sons of God went to the daughters of men, who bore children for them. Those became the powerful, famous men of ancient times. [EHV].

The fallen ones were in the earth in those days, and even afterwards when sons of God come in unto daughters of men, and they have borne to them -- they [are] the heroes, who, from of old, [are] the men of name. [YLT].

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In the NCV we get the idea that the “*Nephilim*” were on the earth through a period of time (“*in those days and also later*”). Then the translators have suggested that the statement of Genesis 6:2 which speaks of the “*sons of God*” was during that particular span of time. The outcome of these strange marriages is then highlighted at the end of the verse so that the “*mighty warriors*” were the children born to the “*sons of God.*”

The EHV tends to imply that the “*Nephilim*” were on the earth at some period of time, and then “*after that*” comes the occasion spoken of in Genesis 6:2 where the “*sons of God*” married women who had children of fame.

The YLT gives the same impression as the EHV that the “*fallen ones*” were on the earth for a period of time and then later we get the coming of the “*sons of God*” who married women and had children. But then it seems to suggest that the “*fallen ones*” were the men of renown.

The NKJV seems to give the impression that there was a span of time when “*giants*” were around, but then after this (when they were still around) then the “*sons of God*” married women and had children of renown.

So how are we to understand verse 4 and what went on in those days? I have attempted to translate this verse and the outcome is shown below:

The fallen ones were on the earth in those days (and also after that) when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore to them. These *were* the mighty ones, who were from of old (eternity), men with a name (reputation).⁶²⁵

Interestingly, it is not very different to the NIV rendering:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterwards—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.⁶²⁶

With the regard to the word “*Nephilim*” (or “*giants*”) this is the Hebrew word: הנפילים. According to **Davidson**, the root word from which this is derived is the verb “to fall.” (נפל).⁶²⁷ Since it is a plural noun we should translate this as “the fallen ones,” or “the fallers.” The vast majority of translations leave the word untranslated as “*Nephilim.*” The AKJV, NKJV and the CEB opt for “*giants,*” and only the YLT translates Nephilim as “*fallen ones.*”⁶²⁸

Now this Hebrew word rendered as “*Nephilim*” only occurs three times in Scripture, once here in

625 Genesis 6:4. My translation.

626 Genesis 6:4, NIV.

627 **Davidson**. P202.

628 Nephilim: ASV, CSB, CJB, CEV, EHV, ESV, HCSB, ICB, ISV, LEB, MEV, NASB, OJB, WEB. Giants: AKJV, NKJV, CEB, Fallen ones: YLT.

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Genesis 6:4 and twice in Numbers 13:33. In all three cases the Hebrew word employed is: הנפילים *ha-nepilim*, or “*the Nephilim*.” The vast majority of translations render the word simply as “*Nephilim*,” but there are some which opt for the interpretation as “*giants*.”⁶²⁹ The term “*giant*” for Genesis 6:4 is (perhaps) predicated on the idea that the verb is a causal form but there is no clear indication of this in the word.⁶³⁰ However it is clear from the reference in Numbers that the term does seem to indicate the idea of giants as a look at the NIV rendering will illustrate:

We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.⁶³¹

So it is quite right to suggest that the name “*Nephilim*” also indicates men of giant stature.

I must interject at this point, that I am by no means demanding my interpretation or translation. I am merely seeking to make sense of what the Lord has revealed. In essence then, the writer begins by informing us of a group of people known by the term “*Nephilim*,” and which name I have suggested indicates their nature and origin as “*the fallen ones*.” They were also giants. These were to be found on the earth at the time in question when the Lord God spoke His warning. But they were also in evidence after this time. In other words, the phrase “*and also after that*” (my translation) or “*and also afterwards*” (NIV) is just telling us that they were around for some length of time. After this we return to those featured in Genesis 6:2 (the “*sons of God*”) and the verse concludes with a further description of their character. What we have then is a threefold description of these folk. They were:

- Nephilim or the fallen ones (fallen angels).
- The sons of God who took daughters of men and had children by them.
- The mighty (powerful) ones who were from of old (eternity) and had a name or reputation.

It may be objected that the last phrase concerning might and reputation ought to be assigned to the offspring. It seems to me, however, that the prime focus is on the “*Nephilim*” or “*fallen ones*.” Notwithstanding this, such characteristics of the fathers must also be shared by their offspring. Thus these progeny too would be mighty and men of renown.

⁶²⁹ Of 18 translations examined, 15 opt for “*Nephilim*”: CEB, CEV, CSB, EHV, ESV, HCSB, ICB, ISV, LEB, NASB, NCV, NEV, NIV, NRSV, YLT, and only 3 go for “*giants*”: AKJV, MEV, NKJV.

⁶³⁰ The Hiphil Hebrew form of a verb usually has a prefix ה as well as an interpolated ו, but the former indicator is absent.

⁶³¹ Numbers 13:33, NIV. Another Hebrew word rendered as “*giants*” is: רפאים *rp'im*, sometimes written simply as Rephaim. See: Deuteronomy 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Joshua 12:4; 13:12; 15:8; 17:15; 18:16; 2Samuel 21:16,18,20,22; 1Chronicles 20:4,6,8.

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Final thoughts.

What then are we to make of this opening part of Genesis 6? To follow my interpretation it would appear that at some point in time *“when men began to multiply”* on earth, angels (*“sons of God”*), left their natural estate and came to earth as men. They were giants (Nephilim) who were extremely strong and powerful, and were thus known as men of reputation. They were famous. In the course of time, through their strength and fame, they took for themselves wives as they chose from amongst mankind. These unnatural unions bore children and it is likely that these children bore the stamp of their fathers and were strong and renown as well.

Now if my understanding of these terms and peoples is wrong, what is the alternative? We may have to suggest that a certain people amongst mankind gained strength and power and through this became famous, or perhaps notorious. These might have come from the line of Cain. However these were simply men amongst men. They may have been more powerful than many others, but they were still men. They act in their strength and pride and forcibly chose women with whom to have children as Lamech in the line of Cain did. The outcome was children of might and fame.

Both of these positions lead to the same basic thoughts. Pride, strength, reliance in human prowess, self-centredness and reputation are all vicious and awful things so that the Lord's statement of Genesis 6:3 is fully justifiable. That being said I think that my interpretation is correct given the input and information from Peter and Jude.

[b] The Lord issues the judgement and Noah finds grace. (Genesis 6:5-9a).

We have been introduced to the state of the world in the opening verses of Genesis chapter 6 but now we begin to see things from God's perspective. These five verses form a single unit in which we discover what God *“saw”* and what Noah *“found.”*

6:5.

Since the verb is imperfect we could render this as the YLT does, namely, *“And Jehovah seeth.”* It was not that the Lord just looked on one occasion, for He could see what the state of the world was continually. What did He see? We have two expressions of what He observed:

- that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth,
- and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

The word rendered *“great”* can be translated as “abundance.” This is a general observation. Mankind as a whole was abundantly wicked. There was no end to this wickedness. Just as God had created abundantly

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a rich variety of life in Genesis 1, so mankind repays by offering up an abundance of evil. The evidence of such wickedness was evident all around. Moving from this general observation concerning mankind (“Adam” in Hebrew), we arrive at the particular. In the second statement we are concerned with particular individuals that make up the general term “*man*,” as can be observed by the phrase “*his heart*.” This particular individual is representative of the whole. Looking at a representative of the entire population we discover that the motive of their thinking was entirely bent on evil. The essential meaning of the word rendered “*intent*” in the NKJV is “form” or “conception,” so it does not merely signify intent or motive. The AKJV uses the word “*imagination*” in this verse. Thus whatever man was thinking, it was continually evil both in motive and form or conception. Man was extensively and abundantly wicked as a whole, so that in his very thinking the essence was only evil continually. The Hebrew for the last part of verse 5 is literally “all of the day,” or we might say “all his waking hours.” Thus the Lord observed not just the external effects but the internal (heart) of man. He saw (and continued to see) that man thought only evil all the time, and as a result acted wickedly too.

The two statements we have discussed are a positive way of stating the nature of mankind at this time. Negatively we would have to say, with the Psalmist:

The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.⁶³²

There was no thought of God, so in the absence of good, only evil can fill the vacuum. One of the great lies of our current age is to assume that (in his arrogance) man is neutral and can make up his own mind regarding the truth. This is a lie. We are only ever with God or not, and being outside of God's care and influence means that we are in the hands of the enemy, Satan, and are thereby wicked, filled with evil thoughts. We are very unhappy with such black and white statements and prefer to assume many “grey” areas. However the general teaching of Scripture is that you are either inside or outside of Christ, righteous or wicked, saved or damned. The Lord Jesus once put it like this:

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.⁶³³

As a man thinks within his heart, so is he. If we have no thought of God or despise whatever He has to say, it will be no wonder that our lives and actions will be selfish and wicked to boot.⁶³⁴

632 Psalm 10:4.

633 Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23.

634 Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45.

6:6.

As a consequence of observing not just the outward action but the inner thought of mankind, we are next informed of the consequence of such a state of affairs. Before we unpack verse 6 we need to make some statements about the nature and being of God, (the Lord). God cannot lie, and is immutable. In other words He never changes. God is holy and perfect in Being. Nothing can distort nor change the essential nature and Being of God.⁶³⁵ In great contrast we are changeable and vary. God is “simple,” by which we mean that He is not composed of parts. When we say that God is love, we can also say that God is holy and just in the same breath. His wrath and His righteousness cannot be set against His love and mercy. He is constant and consistent. Therefore God is not subject to change:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.⁶³⁶

And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.⁶³⁷

And yet here in verse 6 we discover that the Lord was both “*sorry*” that He had made man, and also He was “*grieved*” in heart. The ESV version uses the word “*regretted*” whilst the AKJV uses the word “*repented*.” What are we to make of such truths?

I am sure that the only way to view these statements is to remember that the Lord here is the pre-incarnate Christ. God in His essential nature and Being is unchanging and cannot repent, regret nor change His mind. However the God-man (pre-incarnate Christ) Has two natures, human and divine. In His human nature He must be clearly able to express human emotion and is subject to change. We see this supremely when we look at the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels. He experienced the full gamut of human emotion and change. The boy Jesus grew in wisdom and stature.⁶³⁸ Jesus was hungry, tired, thirsty and wept.⁶³⁹ But God never changes. Somehow the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who was both fully human and fully divine could grow as a man and experience all the full range of human emotions but was also God who never changes. The Word became flesh, He assumed flesh, and dwelt amongst us.⁶⁴⁰

Another way of viewing this verse is to consider it as an anthropomorphism. That is, we see how the Lord would act were He simply a man. We might say, “what other human response is there than to be regretful and hurt concerning the making of mankind?” Of course God knew full well what would take place when Adam and Eve sinned, and He was fully prepared for this. Before time began He was the

635 Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6.

636 James 1:17.

637 1Samuel 15:29, AKJV.

638 Luke 2:40,52.

639 Matthew 4:2; 8:24; 21:18; Mark 4:38; 11:12; Luke 19:41; John 4:7; 11:35.

640 John 1:14.

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“Lamb slain.”⁶⁴¹ And yet the horror and wickedness of the outcome of Adam's transgression is given its full human expression here in that it made the Lord Himself declare that He was ***“sorry”*** He had made man and that He was truly ***“grieved”*** in heart. God cannot be hurt in heart because He is unchangeable. And yet He is also described repeatedly as one who has compassion and who is merciful and forgiving. God is by no means indifferent to us. He is always good, always merciful and always forgiving. This does not mean that all people partake of the fruits of such love because when they refuse to listen and hear what God has said, they withdraw from His love, compassion and mercy. This is how the Lord presented Himself to Moses, as the unchangeable God who has compassion but by no means will acquit the guilty:

6 And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”⁶⁴²

The Lord does not change. All sin must be punished. But God's righteousness must never be set in opposition to His mercy and grace. He forgives on the basis of the finished work of the atonement (Christ's death on the cross), where His wrath was satisfied by the offering of Christ in the place of sinners. Christ suffered not just on our behalf, and not simply as the representative man, but He took those who would believe with Him to the cross. Believers are united with Him in death and so are united with Him in resurrection. But those who refuse this incredible offer of forgiveness on the basis of Christ's death are effectively withdrawing from God's care and concern and are in essence declaring: “no I will bear my own guilt and sin!” How then can such be forgiven?

This is why I think that the Lord expresses these things in such a stark way. It is for our benefit. God, were He simply a man, would be utterly sorry and devastated that He had made mankind and He would be bitterly and deeply hurt. God cannot be hurt, but Christ Jesus experienced such things in His human nature and so knows by experience how we would feel.

6:7.

Next we see the consequence of the Lord's “experience” of the wickedness on the earth, as He takes definitive action. Whenever we read that the Lord speaks we are reminded of His creative and effective word. When God ***“said”*** in Genesis 1, the inevitable consequence was ***“and it was so.”***⁶⁴³ So here we read that the Lord (anthropomorphically speaking) was sad and regretful that He had created man, and now He has determined to destroy them. In effect the Lord is undoing their creation. We should

641 Revelation 13:8.

642 Exodus 34:6,7.

643 Genesis 1:3,6,9,11 etc. and Genesis 1:7,9,11 etc.

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recall that when the Lord made mankind (Adam) He told Him that the consequence of sin and rebellion would be death. Here we ought to recognise the incredible patience and long-suffering God has towards His rebellious creatures. He has already warned mankind that the Spirit of God would not continue to plead with man calling them back to repent and trust in Him, for there was to be a limit to this pleading. Now there comes the end. If mankind will not repent and turn what hope is there?⁶⁴⁴

One significant thing to note here is that the beasts, the creeping things and the birds are also to be destroyed alongside mankind. These are chosen not exclusively but to signify that all of creation was to be under judgement. This highlights the extensiveness of God's curse on the ground. When Adam sinned, all of creation fell, and the beasts, birds, and other creatures suffered death as result too. Those who try and attempt to drive a wedge between man's experience in judgement and what is assumed to be normal and natural death in the animal kingdom err terribly. Human sin brought world-wide destruction to both creature (beasts, birds and fish) and created thing (the earth – in this instance the surface features). The Lord declares that He will *“destroy”* all created things *“from the face of the earth.”* This means the judgement is limited to the surface of the earth. It is not yet the final judgement. The word *“destroy”* signifies “to wipe out,” “to erase,” or “to blot out.” The surface of the earth will be wiped clean. Here we are told clearly that such an act of God must be considered as universal. How could God wipe clean a part of the surface (*“face of”*) the earth? In everyday terms, what would be the point of wiping down half a table or half the kitchen work surfaces? The term rendered *“earth”* in verse 7 of the NKJV is actually more often translated as *“ground.”* This is to highlight mankind's sin (in Adam) because the words for man and ground are closely related, and a reminder of the judgement passed in Genesis 3.⁶⁴⁵

17 ... Cursed *is* the **ground** for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life.
18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. **19** In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the **ground**, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.⁶⁴⁶

In simple terms, the unchanging God, who is gracious, compassionate and merciful, but who will never “wink” at sin, exercises His right to judge all who refuse to repent, all the while extending His loving arms to receive those who trust in His perfect way of righteous forgiveness in Christ and His wonderful work.

644 Genesis 6:3.

645 Compare *“man”* אָדָם, with *“ground”* אֲדָמָה. Note also that the word אֲדָמָה (usually translated as *“ground”*) occurs in verses 1 and 7, whilst the normal word אֶרֶץ (normally rendered *“earth”*) occurs in verses 4,5 and 6. Thus the entire earth is in view in this whole section, but there is a focus on the ground both to highlight man's origin and end, and to signify the means of the judgement – the flood to wash away.

646 Genesis 3:17b-19.

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6:8.

All of the above sorrow, hurt and pain which any man could see and feel if he viewed the world as God “*saw*” it, is to be contrasted with Noah and his experience. Notice that whilst the Lord “*saw*” what was going on in the world and in the hearts of wicked men, in wonderful contrast the “*eyes of the Lord*” are upon Noah. This expression is often used to signify the Lord's care and favour upon people and things. For example, in Deuteronomy we read that the Lord's eyes were on the land of promise:

11 but the land which you cross over to possess *is* a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, **12** a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God *are* always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.⁶⁴⁷

Or take the following verse showing the Lord's intentions to show His strength and aid to those who trust Him:

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him. ...⁶⁴⁸

Peter uses this expression to indicate the favourable look of the Lord:

For the eyes of the Lord *are* on the righteous, and His ears *are open* to their prayers; but the face of the Lord *is* against those who do evil.⁶⁴⁹

Although this phrase can also indicate simply that the Lord is watching over the world both with regard to the wicked and the righteous, it would appear that here there is that sense of beneficence and favour intended.⁶⁵⁰ The Lord looks with a loving eye towards Noah.

As the Lord looks with a favourable eye towards Noah, Noah, as a consequence, “*found grace.*” Note that Noah did not acquire this by effort nor did he earn it. The essential meaning of the word translated as “*found*” is “to arrive at,” or “to come to.” In other words, it seems that Noah stumbled upon God's good grace. He was not searching for it, but the Lord's eyes ensured that Noah would arrive at or come to this grace which He was pleased to give. Such is the experience of all who come to know the living God, who come to a living faith in Christ. They all testify that it was not them who sought and found, but that God somehow made Himself known to them.

647 Deuteronomy 11:11,12.

648 2Chronicles 16:9. See also Psalm 34:15.

649 1Peter 3:12.

650 Compare: Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; Amos 9:8;

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6:9.

This section ends with the regular dividing marker using the Hebrew word *tôledôt*, which we suggest indicates “history,” or “record.” The translation in the NKJV as “*genealogy*” appears awkward because we do not get any genealogical listing until verse 10, and then only a list of Noah's three sons. It would be better to render the end of this section, (the first part of verse 9), as: “these are the records of Noah.”

Connections between Genesis 5:1b-6:9a and Genesis 6:9b and Genesis 10:1a.

Before we move to the next major section it would be worthwhile just considering the relationship between this section and the next at the junction between them. Genesis chapter 6 can be seen as follows:

- Mankind multiplies on the earth but the fallen angels take wives and the Lord's Spirit issues a warning. (Genesis 6:1-3).
 - The outcome of these perverse unions shows that the wickedness of man was great, so the Lord enacts His plan to destroy the surface of the earth and all upon it. (Genesis 6:4-7).
 - Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Genesis 6:8).
 - This is the **genealogy** of Noah. (Genesis 6:9a).
 - Noah is described by his three sons, and his sons identified. (Genesis 6:9b-10).
 - The earth described as corrupt and violent. (Genesis 6:11,12).
- God reveals Himself to Noah with instructions for safety in light of the coming judgement. (Genesis 6:13-22).
- Noah obeys the Lord. (Genesis 6:22).

It will be observed here that the focal point as I have arranged things is the genealogy (or history/record) concerning (or by) Noah. Either side of this central feature we have descriptions of Noah (**highlighted in blue**). Noah's section ends with Noah's own statement of faith (he “*found grace*”), whilst in the next section, which is given by Noah's sons, we get further details of Noah's life (which would have been rather pompous if Noah himself had offered them). To either side of the descriptions of Noah we get a description of the world and what it was like (**highlighted in yellow**). Finally at the outer extremes (**highlighted in green**) we get the revelation of God generally to mankind (Genesis 6:1-3), and more specifically to Noah (Genesis 6:13-22). Thus as Noah concludes his account ending on his personal testimony having outlined why the world has come to judgement, Noah's sons begin by speaking of their father's walk of faith and then give us further insight into the nature of the world and of God's revelation to Noah.

Chapter 6.

Prepare for judgement. (6:9b-22).

The third section of the book of Genesis which runs from Genesis 6:9b to Genesis 10:1a is that which we believe to be by the hand of Noah's sons, since Genesis 10:1a concludes with these words:

Now this *is* the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.⁶⁵¹

Overall it can be split into four main sections which we shall consider in this chapter and the next three chapters as follows:

Genesis 6 – Preparation for judgement. (Genesis 6:9b-22).

Genesis 7 – Judgement comes. (Genesis 7:1-24).

Genesis 8 – A new world. (Genesis 8:1-22).

Genesis 9 – Covenant and curse. (Genesis 9:1-10:1a).

Analysis.

Genesis 6:9b-22 begins with a description of Noah (6:9b,10), moves to a further description of the world, (6:11,12) and then homes in on God's special revelation to Noah, (6:13-22), which appears, by virtue of its length, to be the main emphasis in this chapter.

Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations.

Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 The earth also was corrupt before God,
and the earth was filled with violence.

12 So God looked upon the earth,
and indeed it was corrupt;
for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

13 And God said to Noah,
“The end of all flesh has come before Me,
for the earth is filled with violence through them;
and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.
14 Make yourself an ark of gopher-wood;
make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.

651 Genesis 10:1a.

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15 And this is how you shall make it:

The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits,
its width fifty cubits,
and its height thirty cubits.

16 You shall make a window for the ark,
and you shall finish it to a cubit from above;
and set the door of the ark in its side.

You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third *decks*.

17 And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth,
to destroy from under heaven

all flesh in which *is* the breath of life;
everything that *is* on the earth shall die.

18 But I will establish My covenant with you;

and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every *sort* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. **20** Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive.

21 And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them.”

22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

[1] Noah – a man of faith who walked with God. (Genesis 6:9b,10).

6:9.

Noah has already given us his testimony (that he “*found grace*”) and now in the rest of verse 9 we discover some more detail from the record of Noah's sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth). We are given three descriptions of Noah's faith.

Noah was a just man.

Perfect in his generations.

Noah walked with God.

First we learn that Noah was a righteous man, the essential meaning of the word “*just*.” Does this mean that Noah was righteous by his own effort? Was Noah a man whom the Lord observed and noted that he wasn't corrupt, and his heart wasn't evil continually? Well both from the whole tenor of Scripture, and from what we have already read in Genesis 6:8, we know that this cannot be the case. Everywhere in Scripture we learn that there is no one who does right and that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.⁶⁵² The only means by which a person can be declared righteous (or “*just*”) is for them to be justified by faith.⁶⁵³ None, with the single exception of the Lord Jesus Christ, can claim any righteousness. All, apart from Christ, must receive righteousness by faith. This is the consistent and pervasive teaching of Scripture. Thus it simply cannot be that Noah was “*just*” (righteous) by virtue of his own effort or

⁶⁵² See Romans 3 where Paul quotes from a variety of Old Testament texts to this effect.

⁶⁵³ Romans 5:1.

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being. Then also we note that we have already been told that Noah “*found grace*” from the Lord. Noah was thus the recipient of grace, the unmerited favour of God. Perhaps the main point of describing him as “*a just man*” is that he was actually in his life an upright, righteous man. In emphasising the need for faith and the idea that no one is just save by faith, we do not mean to pass over the fact that all who have true faith, will actually *display* the righteousness of Christ within their lives. Of course none is perfect and sanctification is always an on-going thing, but a person who lays claim to faith and does not display righteousness in life is a liar.⁶⁵⁴ We remind ourselves that there are only two options. We are either wicked and bound in sin, or we are righteous and that by faith. There is no half-way house.

Having established that Noah was a “*just*” man because of the grace of God, and because he trusted God by faith, we must hurry on to assert that His faith truly worked.⁶⁵⁵ Therefore, because of his faith in God, he lived in a righteous and just manner. This was uppermost in Noah's sons minds. He must have shone out amidst the wickedness that surrounded, for he is also described as being “*perfect in his generations.*” Noah was not sin-free, so perfect in the sense of sinlessness, for the term really indicates the notion of “completeness” or “soundness.” Within the word is the idea of sincerity so that Noah was a man without dissembling nor guile. The trouble with wickedness and corruption is that often it is bathed in lies and deceit. Noah was not like this. He was a man of his word. Peter refers to Noah as a “*preacher of righteousness*” which would be difficult to maintain if his life did not reflect such perfection.⁶⁵⁶

Finally we learn that Noah was one who “*walked with God.*” He is thus only the second (that we read of) who could be described in this way. Enoch walked with God and was taken straight into heaven, but Noah was not taken into heaven. So we cannot make the assumption that walking with God inevitably leads to being taken to heaven without dying. The Lord has the right to determine the life and outcome of His saints. As we shall see, Noah was given an incredible task which was singular and unique amongst men. To walk with God indicates being in agreement with Him. The Lord is on His perfect and righteous path, His mission. The Lord Jesus calls people to follow Him, and to do so requires such people to humble themselves and take up their cross to come after Him.⁶⁵⁷ It means to walk diametrically opposed to the world. Walking against the general tide of this world is a hard thing to do.⁶⁵⁸

[2] The earth was corrupt. (Genesis 6:11,12).

In the earlier section (through Noah) we noted that it would be the “*ground*” (אֲדָמָה) that would be judged and swept clean, although throughout the early part of Genesis 6 the entire planet (the earth – אֶרֶץ) was always in view. Now, in verses 11 and 12 the word “*earth*” (אֶרֶץ) is used exclusively. This is another

654 1John 2:4; 4:20.

655 See Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:10; 1Thessalonians 1:3; 2Thessalonians 1:11; James 2.

656 2Peter 2:5.

657 Micah 6:8; Matthew 10:38; 11:28f.

658 Matthew 7:13,14.

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reason why it is possible to believe that each section was penned by a different human author. We remind ourselves that all that we have here is from the very mind of God, for the Bible has its origin in God alone (even though He used human penman and never violated any personality as He made known His word). It is also noteworthy that we have this word “*earth*” (אֶרֶץ) repeated four times, as if to state that none of the four corners were omitted, or, in other words, the entire planet was culpable.

6:11.

Verse 11 gives us two statements concerning the earth. The details are an addition to what we were told in Noah's part. In the first phrase the condition of the earth is put as being “*before God,*” as if to say that man's behaviour was an offence to Him and that what was going on was in open defiance of God. In the second statement we are informed that the entire earth was involved in this terrible behaviour.

Two words are used to characterise the state of the entire earth at this period of time. The earth was “*corrupt*” which term signifies the notion of something that is destroyed, despoiled and ruined. No thought nor care had been taken to keep things tidy and ordered, but instead all is rubbish, ruin, and neglect. Such a situation we find in the densest cities of our day where little care is taken over cleanliness and the buildings are all tumbled-down, neglected, and dirty. But, of course, this type of physical corruption comes from a corrupt heart and mind. The second word used to characterise the state of the earth is “*violence.*” This word hardly needs expounding. It indicates oppression both through physical harm and the violence of the mouth. Thus everywhere there is corruption, decay, waste, ruin and neglect as the backdrop for human existence, and this dreadful scenery is populated by a people who war, fight, argue, and bicker for all they are worth. This is the state of man whose inner being, (his heart), is only evil continually.⁶⁵⁹ Such is the outcome of neglect of God and His ways. Man seeks either to follow God and do His will, or he seeks his own ways. If a man sets about to seek his own way (as Frank Sinatra once sung about), the end result is corruption and violence. It is corruption because the self-seeking person never considers others nor the environment (unless it directly affects personal choice), and it is violent because the self-centred person is always desperate to protect what they desire and crave for. Such a walk, following one's own will and ways, will inevitably lead to these twin outcomes: corruption and violence. James had this to say concerning Christians!

1 Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires* for pleasure that war in your members? **2** You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.⁶⁶⁰

659 Genesis 6:5.

660 James 4:1-3.

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If the believer struggles over selfishness and in-fighting, what of those who have no thought of God in their heart?

6:12.

In verse 12 we discover that the Lord *“looked upon the earth.”* This mirrors the statement in Genesis 6:5 where we read that the Lord *“saw”* what was going on upon the face of the earth. Exactly the same Hebrew verb and form is used in both cases, and so the Lord is fully aware of things upon the earth both by way of behaviour, and also that which occurs within man's heart. The word *“corrupt”* which we were introduced to in verse 11 makes two more appearances in verse 12. The statement of verse 11 is verified by the Lord's inspection. He *“looked”* and discovered that *“indeed it was corrupt,”* and this corrupt state was only because *“all flesh”* had indulged in such destruction and despoiling. There were no exceptions (save Noah). Mankind had indulged in selfishness, and this amounted to them corrupting *“their way”* on the world God had created for them. They could sing Frank Sinatra's song *“My Way”* with gusto!

At this point it is essential to remark that the descriptions of the earth and of God's view of what was transpiring upon the earth are all universal. It was *“all flesh”* which had corrupted their way, and it was *“the earth”* (i.e. the planet) which was *“corrupt”* and *“filled with violence.”*⁶⁶¹ Statements in Genesis 6:1f also indicate that a worldwide scope is in view and not some local affair.⁶⁶²

[3] God's special revelation to Noah. (Genesis 6:13-22).

Before we embark on making comments on this text I want to draw attention to the comment made by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, as this is a beautiful statement of God's way of salvation:

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.⁶⁶³

Noah was *“divinely warned”* receiving special revelation from God. Because he loved God and walked with Him, Noah was *“moved with godly fear”* and set about obeying all that God had commanded him. The outcome of such a walk of faith was salvation for him and his family, not to mention the start of the new world and the condemnation of the old.⁶⁶⁴

661 Genesis 6:11,12.

662 Those who argue for a limited local flood are guilty of capitulation to the dictates of modern science – a man-made enterprise – and fall into the trap of viewing Genesis through the spectacles of the ancient Near East cultures. I repeat that the ancient Near East cultures were not prior to Genesis, but derived from them.

663 Hebrews 11:7.

664 This text is almost a readily given sermon on the subject of true faith. See **Appendix 6** for an outline.

6:13.

At verse 13 we are introduced to a special revelation which was received by Noah, (*“God said to Noah”*). Earlier in Genesis 6 we are given statements made by the Lord which were published to the whole world. Now we have more detailed revelation given to one who was walking with God. This is ever the case. The word of God goes forth so that all may hear. It must be made public. However those who are walking with God get further insight and more detailed truths. Such an idea we can find also in Psalm 25:

12 Who *is* the man that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. **13** He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth. **14** The secret of the Lord *is* with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. **15** My eyes *are* ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.⁶⁶⁵

Because Noah found grace, walked with God, and listened to the warnings issued by the Lord, he was given further revelation. On top of this we discover in this Psalm that the Lord would show these blessed ones *“His covenant,”* which truth we see fulfilled in verse 18 in the case of Noah.

At the time of Noah, of course, the complete revelation we now have in Scripture was yet in the future. Thus Noah can be termed a prophet for he received direct revelation from God. Such revelation must always be made public, (that is why it is here in Scripture for us to read). Whenever God brings in new revelation through a prophet it must be made public. The topic of revelation is a vast one. We must distinguish between the revelation of God to a believer by His Spirit, from the revelation of *“Biblical”* truth which is for all mankind. Both elements are in view here with Noah. Because he walked with God the Lord was pleased to make known to him further insights. But since these constitute truth concerning the nature of the gospel, then they must be made known for all mankind. In our day there is no new revelation in the sense of the gospel. When Christ accomplished all on the cross and through His resurrection, and when the apostles (and those designated by them) consigned the truth revealed to writing, no more revelation in that sense would be forthcoming. After all what more could God reveal except Himself in Christ who is the very *“image of God”*?⁶⁶⁶ But the revelation of God to a believer is ongoing. We seek to know Him and He delights to manifest Himself to us. What wonders!⁶⁶⁷

The Lord's first statement to Noah in verse 13 is that all of mankind will be destroyed because of the violence that indwells them. We have arranged the text in our analysis as follows:

665 Psalm 25:12-15.

666 2Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3.

667 John 14:16-21; 17:6.

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The end of all flesh has come before Me,
for the earth is filled with violence through them;
and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

The opening sentence and the closing sentence give us the two sides concerning what is about to happen. The middle part is the reason. The Lord begins by saying to Noah that all of humanity has reached its end. In full view of Him (*“before Me”*) the Lord has seen that humanity cannot go on any more as it is. It has come to an end, it has come to its limit. Why? Well it is because of the extreme violence that has filled the entire earth. We note in passing that again the language is universal and there is no room whatsoever for a local flood theory to be accepted. But having said that humanity has come to an end, or to its limit, because of the extreme violence, the Lord continues with His expressed will: *“and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”* Interestingly, the Lord uses the same word we came across translated as *“corrupt”* earlier.⁶⁶⁸ Because mankind has corrupted his way (and thus himself) all over the earth, then the Lord will bring this corruption to its inevitable conclusion and thereby will lead them to destruction. Notice this is not simply letting the people decay and fall to reach the inevitable end, for we read that the Lord *“will destroy them.”* This is intentional. Further, we discover that the Lord will destroy mankind *“with the earth.”* We know, of course, that this will be by means of the flood waters, but here it is important to understand that the earth itself will be corrupted and destroyed. This again points to a universal flood.

6:14.

In verse 14 we are introduced to the Lord's plan as an overview first. The first two words can be translated: *“make to (or for) yourself.”* This imperative command brings to mind the summary statement we find in Hebrews chapter 11:7 that we have already mentioned. Noah was motivated by fear (awesome respect) of God and obeyed what He had heard. He thus built the ark *“for the saving of his household.”*⁶⁶⁹ This is the essence of the text before us in Genesis 6:14 where we find that Noah was commanded to make *for himself* the ark. Now such a statement may seem to be selfish in the extreme. What about living for others or doing for others first before attending to one's own needs? However moving to such considerations puts the cart before the horse. Before we can help others (and we must be concerned to do this clearly from the general import of Scripture and of what we know of God) we must be right with God and receiving from Him first. When the Lord tells us to attend to our own salvation as a matter of first importance, we do well to listen. The opposite of this leads to trust and reliance on something else. We are not independent autonomous beings. We are contingent. The Lord says to us to get the matter of salvation right and to make sure that we are hearing God's revelation as a matter of prime importance.

668 Genesis 6:11,12.

669 Hebrews 11:7.

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We learn from Peter that Noah was a “*preacher of righteousness*” and this indicates that whilst building the ark Noah was engaged in making the gospel known.⁶⁷⁰ As one who “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*” it is inconceivable that Noah did not include the element of grace in his preaching, so that the righteousness mentioned was the righteousness that comes by faith.⁶⁷¹

The general statement given to Noah in verse 14 includes the basic plan. He was to make an ark. This signifies a box or chest-like structure. The material is specified as “*gopher*” (גֹּפֶר) wood in our text but the exact identification of this wood is unknown. This term is used just once in the Bible, but given that it was the Lord who selected the material we can be sure that it was the right one! Having said this it is very interesting to discover that the feminine form of the word (גֹּפֶרֶית) is used on seven occasions in Scripture and usually translated as “*brimstone*” in the AKJV, but indicates “sulphur,” “bitumen,” or “pitch.”⁶⁷² Presumably this wood either grew close to tar deposits or was a wood that exuded resinous compounds which resembled tar. Of greater significance than its identification is the connection in sound and form with other words in the text. The word “*gopher*” sounds similar to the word which is given in our text as “*pitch,*” at the end of the verse (see table 6.1):

Table 6.1: Some alliteration in Genesis 6.

English	Hebrew	Transliteration
Gopher	גֹּפֶר	Gōper
Pitch	כֹּפֶר	Kōper

This word “*cover*” in verse 14 is the verb form of the same Hebrew word as that given as “*pitch.*” Because of this the AKJV translators use the same word for both: “*and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*” Now it would seem that the best translation is that which doesn't use the same word, because the Hebrew word כֹּפֶר signifies more than pitch. It is used throughout the Scriptures to indicate something which covers over in the sense of an atonement.⁶⁷³ This pitch was to be put both inside and outside so that the whole would act like a composite material. The wood was literally impregnated with the pitch. Composite structures are very strong but are also light in weight.

The ark was to be made with “*rooms*” and this word actually indicates a “nest.”⁶⁷⁴ Such a word appears to have been chosen to suggest the idea of habitable and comfortable places, just as the bird is

670 2Peter 2:5.

671 Romans 1:17.

672 Genesis 19:24; Deuteronomy 29:23; Job 18:15; Psalm 11:6; Isaiah 30:33; 34:9; Ezekiel 38:22.

673 See, for example, Leviticus 4:20,26,31,35. Pitch is a flammable material – see Isaiah 34:9.

674 Translated as “*nest*” in AKJV at: Numbers 24:21; Deuteronomy 22:6; 32:11; Job 29:18; 39:27; Psalm 84:3; Proverbs 27:8; Isaiah 10:14; 16:2; Jeremiah 49:16; Obadiah 1:4; Habakkuk 2:9.

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careful and diligent over feathering its nest for the next clutch. These rooms would be for the various animals to be housed as well as for Noah, his sons and their wives. Mention of such habitations reminds us of the Lord Jesus' words to the disciples the night before His death:

1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”⁶⁷⁵

The word rendered “*mansions*” here signifies dwelling places or abodes, indicating the more intimate and comfortable aspect akin to the idea of a nest.

6:15,16.

In these two verses we are given the outline of the details required to build the ark. This is not a full nor complete plan, of course, for the Holy Spirit does not require us to build this structure a second time. The new ark is Christ. However, enough is given here for our instruction in that which is important. On a minor level we can see that such a structure would be buoyant and capable of bearing the watery judgement it was about to face.

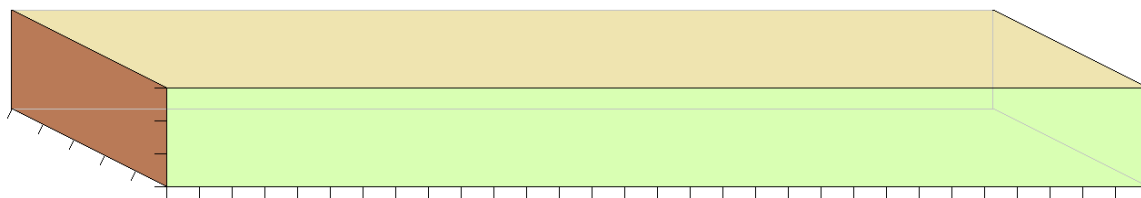


Figure 11: The shape of the ark.

The length is ten times the height and six times the width as shown in figure 11. Such a structure would be very difficult to overturn in the water. The dimensions thus indicate a structure that is very stable.

The statement in verse 16 concerning the window is a little unclear. It might indicate that all around the ark to within one cubit from the top, there were openings. It could, alternatively, mean that only one window was placed in the ark to within one cubit from the top. Given that the wood for the ark was completely covered inside and out with pitch, this window was provided to give ventilation. There is only one door into this ark and it is placed “*in its side,*” by which we infer that the long side is meant. Such a feature would be replicated in the making of the tabernacle and signifies that there can only be a

675 John 14:1,2.

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single entrance way.⁶⁷⁶ It is surely significant that the Lord referred to Himself as the door of the sheep.⁶⁷⁷ The last sentence of verse 16 tells us that the inside was split into three stories. Obviously that would maximise the use of the space available for animals and living quarters. However it is tempting to suggest that the three stories point to the three types of animals God created, namely, those that dwell in the sea, those that dwell on the land, and those that occupy the air. The three stories would then serve to indicate that the Lord intended to rescue the entire span of creation, and not simply man and a few animals.

6:17.

In verse 13 the Lord had outlined what He was about to do and why. All flesh on earth would be destroyed because of the rampant violence. Now this thought is repeated but this time the means by which such destruction would come is revealed, it would be by water.

The Lord repeats the fact that the judgement is His. The personal pronoun *“I”* comes first in this sentence and then we get the word *“behold.”* Thus the verse should read: *“And I, behold, am bringing the flood of waters upon the earth.”* Once again we see the universal reference in the terms used. The flood waters will be *“on the earth,”* (not just in some locality), and destruction will be *“from under heaven,”* (thus covering the entire globe). Further we learn that *“all flesh”* and *“everything that is in the earth”* will die. The word *“destroy”* is again the word used to signify corruption in earlier verses.⁶⁷⁸ Thus the floodwaters will come at the will of God and will complete and conclude the corruption that mankind has wreaked upon the earth.

6:18.

Verse 18 introduces a contrast as signified by the use of the word *“but.”* The entire world, both man and beast upon all its surface, was to be destroyed. All flesh must die. But God establishes His covenant with Noah. This is the first time we read the word *“covenant”* in Scripture so demands our careful and considered attention. As one academic has said:

*“Therefore, Gen 6:18 should be seen as a turning point in this narrative.”*⁶⁷⁹

Although in our opening analysis we have arranged the text to show forth the main narrative and the instructions of the Lord to Noah, it is also possible to see this text in a chiastic frame which serves to highlight the most important part of the whole passage. The beginning and end parts ([A] – [A']) form a

676 Exodus 26:36.

677 John 10:7,9.

678 Genesis 6:11,12.

679 **Ronald Rojas.** *Nature of the Covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18.* 2017. Andrews University Digital Commons @ Andrews University. P6. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=papers>

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contrast between God's declared intent and Noah's obedient response. Then the next level in ([B] – [B']) shows the Lord's instructions to Noah to build the ark and to gather food. The next level ([C] – [C']) pits God's bringing the flood waters against Noah's gathering of the animals. It will be seen from this that verse 18 is the focal point. It is split into two parts. In the first we have the idea of the covenant, and in the second the focus is on the beneficiaries of the covenant.

[A] God declares His intention to destroy humankind and the earth (verse 13).

[B] God **instructs** Noah to build an ark (verses 14–16).

[C] God will **cause to bring** [**bô**] a flood to destroy everything (verse 17).

[D] God makes a covenant with Noah (verse 18a).

[D'] Noah and his family shall enter in the ark (verse 18b).

[C'] Noah will **cause to bring** [**bô**] animals to keep alive (verses 19–20).

[B'] God **instructs** Noah to gather food to the ark (verse 21).

[A'] Noah obeys God (verse 22).

The verb used at the head of this sentence in verse 18 (*“I will establish”*) comes from the root meaning “to arise.” It is the perfect tense suggesting completed action. It is also a Hiphil form indicating causative mood. Thus whilst it can be rendered as *“establish”* it can also be translated as: *“I will raise up,”* or, *“I will cause to stand.”* These ways of translating the word point us to the concept of a resurrection, a raising up. Then also there is the issue of tense. Should it be translated as a future or as a past? In Hebrew there is no past or future, just perfect (completed action) or imperfect (incomplete action). Most translators opt for a future reference and so have what the Lord intends to do in the future, that is, He will raise up or establish His covenant with Noah. However this is not the only way we can understand these terms. It could be rendered as the YLT has it:

And I have established My covenant with thee, and thou hast come in unto the ark, thou,
and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee.⁶⁸⁰

Now since this is the first time we come across the word *“covenant,”* it is important to consider its use here in more detail. This concept is pervasive in Scripture but we need to establish the fact that God introduces the idea here first with Noah. It is fashionable to speak of a covenant being made in Eden with Adam, but the word does not appear in Genesis 2, so is this correct? Because the word is used so extensively in Scripture, and because it has a latitude in meaning, we need to be very careful how we see it here in its first occurrence. We begin by considering the Hebrew word.

680 Genesis 6:18, YLT.

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The Hebrew word used for covenant is: בְּרִית *berît*. There is some dispute as to the essential meaning and origin of this word. Some suggest that it is related to the Hebrew word: בָּרָה *bārāh*, which means “to eat or consume” (in the sense of cutting). Others suggest a connection to: בָּרַר *bārār*, meaning “to purify,” “to separate,” or it may be linked with: בֹּרַ *hōr*, which indicates “that which cleanses.” From these thoughts it is possible that the original idea of the term we understand as “*covenant*” came from the idea of a burnt offering which was wholly consumed, or from the idea of a fellowship meal at which some form of decisive (or purifying) agreement was made. In Genesis 7 we discover that the Lord told Noah to bring in seven of every “*clean*” animal, and then after the flood in Genesis 8 we find that Noah builds the first “*altar*” and offers the first (recorded) burnt offering.⁶⁸¹ Later in Genesis 15 we see the Lord making a covenant by instructing Abraham to divide various animals into two parts through which the Lord caused a smoking oven to pass.⁶⁸²

Having considered the Hebrew word meaning, we must then consider its general usage. The phrase “*establish [a/the] covenant*” is used in various places in Scripture and, according to Dr. C. L. Irons, it:

*“... is not a technical term with a single uniform meaning. It has two broad uses: (1) to initiate or make a covenant, and (2) to confirm a pre-existing covenant.”*⁶⁸³

The natural inclination of coming upon the term for the first time would be to suggest that the Lord is making a covenant here with Noah. However the text informs us that the Lord is going to establish (or make to stand) a covenant that He describes as being “*My covenant.*” This designation with regard to the covenant tells us at least two things. First the covenant is God initiated. It is not an agreement between two equals. This agreement is something God owns and has brought into existence (as far as Noah is concerned). The covenant concept is not, therefore, a man-made idea that many seem to think it is. A second implication of the phrase “*My covenant*” is that it appear to be something that God has had in His possession before this time, it is something already in existence. In other words God's covenant that He already possesses, will now be established or raised up with Noah.⁶⁸⁴ Indeed because we understand that the covenant is central in the story of redemption, and because we understand that this incredible story has its origin in eternity (“*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*”), we are thereby entitled to consider that the Lord's covenant was also something from eternity.⁶⁸⁵ Given these thoughts how should

681 Genesis 7:2; 8:20,21a.

682 Genesis 15:9,10,17,18.

683 Charles Lee Irons. *Hēqīm Bērīt in Gen 6:18: Make or Confirm a Covenant?* P13.

https://www.academia.edu/35833018/H%C4%93q%C3%AEm_B%C4%95r_%C3%AEt_in_Gen_6_18_Make_or_Confirm_a_Covenant (Irons is a Biblical languages academic).

684 Ronald Rojas. *Nature of the Covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18*. 2017. P9. Andrews University Digital Commons @ Andrews University. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=papers>

685 Revelation 13:8.

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we view this idea of a covenant here in Genesis 6:18? It is clear, at least, that the word is connected to sacrifice. We have seen, that following Adam and Eve's sin the Lord initiated His plan of salvation with a promise in His speech to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, the promise of the *“Seed.”* Following this the first human pair were given clothes of animal skins, and Abel's sacrifice of the fat and of the best of his sheep was accepted by the Lord. Eve's misunderstanding that Cain was the one hoped for was mitigated by the provision of a substitute for Abel, namely Seth. Abel died an innocent victim, and Seth was appointed in his place. Such statements we find in Scripture cannot be mistaken. Together with the better sacrifice of Abel, they point us to the gospel of Christ the innocent One who acted as our substitute. From the line of Seth comes Noah whose name means “rest” and whom God used to save some through the coming judgement. And so the Lord (rightly) introduces the concept of covenant here, because in Noah and through what the Lord did with Noah, we have a remarkable depiction of the grand story of redemption. This is God's covenant, His agreement with man, which He has had in thought before ever there was a world to save. And so the Lord establishes, or causes to arise, His covenant with Noah.

The next phrase in verse 18 is usually translated simply as we have it here in the NKJV, (*“and you shall go into the ark”*) suggesting merely an invitation to come into the ark, but I think much more is intended. With the remarkable and pivotal statement offered as a contrast at the start of verse 1, we are left somewhat bewildered if the next phrase merely signifies an invitation to go into the ark. What the apparent invitation really signifies is the essence of the covenant – the covenant of grace. The ark was a wooden box covered inside and outside with pitch. It would house everything that was to be saved for the new world. As such it signifies that which would preserve and *“keep ... alive”* those who would escape the judgement by the waters of the flood.⁶⁸⁶ Only the ark would suffer the punishment from the raging waters, for all those inside would be safe. It thus points us to the Lord Jesus Christ to come, whose death on the cross took for us the punishment for sin that God's righteous wrath demanded. All who are *“in Christ”* are, like those in the ark, safe from judgement.⁶⁸⁷ It is significant, I think, that the ark was only made from wood, for as such it points us to the human nature, although we must assert that the person of Christ died on the cross not just His human nature. Later the ark of the covenant, (which undoubtedly looks back to the ark of Noah) would be made from acacia wood overlaid with gold which materials identify the type as both human (wood) and divine (gold).⁶⁸⁸ This, then, is the Lord's covenant or agreement by sacrifice. The ark – pointing to Christ Jesus – will suffer judgement from the flood, but Noah and all his family will *“go into the ark”* in order to be saved. At this point of time, of course, we are still in the realm of God's revealing to Noah what should be done. Some consider the time period to still

686 Genesis 6:19,20; 7:3,23.

687 The phrase *“in Christ”* is a frequently used one in the New Testament indicating the believer's union with Christ.

688 Exodus 25:10f.

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be 120 years prior to the flood which would make Noah 480 and his three sons not yet born.⁶⁸⁹ However we cannot be certain exactly when God spoke specifically to Noah from Genesis 6:13f. Nevertheless the Lord has described His plan to Noah and revealed it as His covenant in which Noah, by faith, will obey the Lord in building the ark and will enter it, so that the Lord will rescue Noah and his family from the coming judgement.

The final part of verse 18 is interesting because the main emphasis in the verse is upon Noah. This is illustrated clearly by the repeated use of the words “*you*” and “*your*.” My translation is as follows:

But I have caused to rise (namely) My covenant **with you**. Thus **you** shall enter into the ark
– **you** , your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives **with you**.

Noah's family was included, but this is because they are Noah's. The covenant was made with Noah, it was made “*with you*” and it was Noah who was to enter the ark primarily, (“*you*” “*with you*”). In such a way we see that the benefits of the covenant made with Noah accrue to his family. From this we note that in the same way the benefits of the covenant made between the Father and the Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) flows down to those who are found in Him. Furthermore, we can apply this to individual believers. Where one is the receiving subject of God's covenant of grace, all that such a person has will be blessed in consequence. See also the beauty of this covenant of grace. Noah was commanded to enter the ark. That was his part. He need do nothing else. His salvation depended upon him putting his trust in God's commandment to go into the ark. And the same is true for us today. The appeal of Christ (who is our ark) to all today is much the same as that given to Noah:

Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.⁶⁹⁰

6:19-21.

In verse 19 we learn that Noah is instructed to gather and to organise all living creatures into twos, (male and female), for the purpose of their preservation. Whilst verse 19 expresses the general, (“*every living thing*”), verse 20 makes it more specific, to include “*birds*,” (flying creatures), “*animals*,” (beasts or cattle), and “*creeping*” things, (from reptiles to insects, from moles to snakes). Fish and sea creatures are not included, of course, for although many would die, many would survive.

Now whilst verse 19 gives us Noah's part in this process, (“*you shall bring*”), verse 20 informs us that these animals (of all types) “*will come to*” Noah. How will this be? We might be tempted to think

⁶⁸⁹ This would mean that from Genesis 6:3 where the 120 year period is mentioned to the end of Genesis 6, all that was recorded was happening at the same time, or over a short stretch of time. Noah was 600 years old when the flood came and 500 years old when these three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth) began to be born (Shem was born 98 years before the flood when Noah was 502 so presumably the others were born earlier).

⁶⁹⁰ Matthew 11:28.

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along the lines of animal instinct. If we consider this motion in terms of animal instinct only, then obviously there would be a great problem, for swarms of animals may arrive all at once! However it is better to consider that it is the Lord who directs the motion of the animal kingdom. Noah would require only two of each type not a herd, so there is clearly a note of the miraculous involved. However when the flood waters finally approach it is certain that animal instinct would set in and that swarms of animals would run for safety. This goes some way to explaining how fossil beds are formed.

God's purpose in sending every type of animal into the ark is clearly to preserve life for the new world. Practically it may have been that only juveniles were sent to the ark in order to conserve space.⁶⁹¹

Verse 21 describes a second instruction for Noah. He was not only to organise the arriving animals, but he was also to arrange for a sufficient food supply. What food and how much? We can only offer some thoughts in response to such questions. This would have been some undertaking, so that the regular dismissal of the story of Noah as a mere children's tale is untenable. Furthermore, it is inconceivable that the Lord did not also tell Noah the length of time that the flood would continue for, given that he must organise sufficient food. Now when we look at the diversity of food requirements today we are amazed at the variety of things eaten but we cannot simply assume that the same conditions prevailed in the pre-flood world. Initially all creatures were created herbivorous eating fruit, nuts, crops and vegetation, but since the fall of man and the introduction of death it is likely that there was some predation amongst the animal kingdom. Again we cannot be dogmatic about this. However what we can assert is that Noah must have done some research on the matter. If he was going to organise the preservation of all the different types of creatures on the earth he would need to know the food they ate and their other requirements for life (e.g. type of habitat or nest, amount of space, and so on). Arranging for the food to be bought or grown and then housed would have required efficient management and a knowledge of the requirements for storage of the food supply. Noah may also have brought on board some means to continue the growth of certain crops or vegetation. Mushrooms and other fungi may have been something Noah cultivated whilst on board. Thus lying behind the simple instruction to take food onto the ark, is a massive project which demanded thought and planning. Never let it be said that this event was a mere moment of history. In its typical significance it is monumental, but in the detail of its undertaking it is nothing short of stupendous as well as being miraculous. The notion that Noah was some neolithic brute who gathered a few crops and a few animals on some wooden boat for a short while (the type of scenario envisaged by many) is utterly preposterous. The task was monumental. Noah was to gather both food and animals and this required powers of thought, a good knowledge of the situation in hand, and good management skills. However he was not alone for this was the Lord's plan and the miraculous element is also clearly evident in the directing of the animals. It is therefore reasonable to

691 It may have been that for some species, only eggs were taken on board (e.g. reptiles and dinosaurs).

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assume that the bare bones of the instructions we have in our text are just those we need to realise the immensity of the task Noah faced. It is also obvious that the Lord gave further more detailed instructions, so that the Lord was “project manager” not Noah. The situation is probably akin to that which Moses faced when receiving the law and instructions for building the tabernacle. God was insistent that the tabernacle would be built exactly as outlined and explained in the detailed plans the Lord had given Moses.⁶⁹²

In these instructions for the populating and supply of the ark we see a great principal of life being worked out which the apostle Paul describes in his letter to the Philippians, and which the missionary William Carey encapsulated in his maxim, “Expect great things; attempt great things.” The apostle Paul teaches us how this principle works out:

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; **13** for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.⁶⁹³

As we trust in Christ and do what He asks of us, we find a higher principle (the Holy Spirit) in work within us.

6:22.

The last verse of this section sums up the outcome of God's revelation to Noah. To say simply that Noah did what he was asked is not enough. What we ought to see is a type of Christ here. The Hebrew text is arranged carefully in a chiasmic form. The first word and the last phrase form bookends. Immediately after the opening word and just before the last phrase we have Noah's name and God's name. Then in the centre we have the essential point:

and he did

(i.e.) Noah

according to all that was commanded to him (*specifically*)

(by) God

so he did

By beginning and ending with the idea of ***doing*** what was commanded we get the sense that from beginning to end all was accomplished. Nothing that God requested of Noah was left out. In its typical significance we are reminded that Christ accomplished everything that was commanded of Him by the

692 Exodus 25:9,40; 26:30.

693 Philippians 2:12,13.

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Father. The night before He died He could declare:

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.⁶⁹⁴

694 John 17:4. See also: John 19:30.

Chapter 7.

Judgement comes. (7:1-24).

Analysis.

- 1 Then the Lord said to Noah,
 “Come into the ark,
 you and
 all your household,
 because I have seen *that* you *are* righteous before Me in this generation.
- 2 You shall take with you
 seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female;
 two each of animals that *are* unclean, a male and his female;
3 also seven each of birds of the air, male and female,
 to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth.
- 4 For after seven more days
 I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and
 I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.”
- 5 And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him.
- 6 Noah *was* six hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth.
- 7 So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.
- 8 Of clean animals, of animals that *are* unclean, of birds, and of everything that creeps on the earth, 9 two by two they went into the ark to Noah, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.
- 10 And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth.
- 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month,
on that day
 all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and
 the windows of heaven were opened.
- 12 And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.
- 13 On the very same day
 Noah and
 Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and
 Noah’s wife and
 the three wives of his sons with them,
 entered the ark—
- 14 they and
 every beast after its kind,
 all cattle after their kind,
 every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and
 every bird after its kind,
 every bird of every sort.
- 15 And they
 went into the ark to Noah,
 two by two, of all flesh in which *is* the breath of life.
- 16 So those that entered, male and female of all flesh,
 went in
 as God had commanded him;
 and the Lord shut him in.
- 17 Now the flood was on the earth forty days.
The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.
- 18 The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters.

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19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.

20 The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth:

birds and
cattle and
beasts and
every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and
every man.

22 All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of the spirit of life,
all that *was* on the dry *land*, died.

23 So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both

man and
cattle,
creeping thing and
bird of the air.

They were destroyed from the earth.

Only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark remained *alive*.

24 And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.

There is some disagreement amongst the various versions as to how to slice up Genesis 7. In my analysis I have agreed with the ordering followed by the NASB rather than by the NKJV, because I feel that the statement of verse 5 serves as a fitting conclusion to the opening piece, and the reference to Noah's age seems to serve as a better introduction to the second (see table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Section headings of Genesis 7 in various translations compared.

<i>My arrangement</i>	<i>NKJV</i>	<i>NASB</i>	<i>ESV</i>	<i>AKJV</i>
v1-5	v1-6	v1-5	v1-5	v1-6
v6-12	v7-12	v6-12	v6-10	v7-10
v13-16	v13-16	v13-16	v11-16	v11-16
v17-24	v17-24	v17-24	v17-24	v17-24

One other thing to mention about Genesis 7, (which is also a feature of the next chapter as we shall see) is that the chronology often back tracks. Thus events are relayed systematically up to a certain point, and then in the next section where the subject alters, or the focus shifts, the time frame sometimes shifts back a little. Such a feature is one we are all familiar with whenever we record events. Sometimes we give a first broad brushstroke of what has happened in some incident, but then we go back in time and fill in the details. Such a feature gives us great assurance that what we are reading concerns real recorded events. An outline of the chronology of events during the flood year which lasted from the seventeenth day of the second month on Noah's six hundredth year, to the twenty seventh day of the second month of Noah's six hundred and first year, a span of a year and ten days, is shown in the table 7.2.⁶⁹⁵ For a more detailed discussion and further tables see *Appendix 7*.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ Genesis 7:11; 8:13-15.

⁶⁹⁶ I have also written extensively on this subject in my book: “**Ushering in an Old Age.**” Unpublished. Written in 1993.

Table 7.2: A Chronological Analysis of Genesis chapters 7 and 8.

PASSAGE	VERSE(S)	DATE		
		YEAR ⁶⁹⁷	MONTH	DAY
7:1-12	7:1-9 ⁶⁹⁸	600	2	10
	7:10-11	600	2	17
	7:12 ⁶⁹⁹	600	3	27
7:13-24	7:13-16	600	2	10
	7:17 ⁷⁰⁰	600	2	17
	7:23	600	3	27
	7:24	600	7	17
8:1-5	8:1-2	600	3	27
	8:3-4	600	7	17
	8:5	600	10	1
8:6-12	8:6-7	600	3	27
	8:8-9	600	4	4
	8:10-11	600	4	11
	8:12	600	4	18
8:13-19	8:13	601	1	1
	8:14-22	601	2	27

[1] The Lord's invitation. (Genesis 7:1-5).

7:1.

Once again we note that the Lord takes the initiative. The Lord offers Noah this invitation to enter the ark. The invitation is also a command. It is the first word in what the Lord says to Noah, and the second is the pronoun “*you,*” thus we have “come you!” There is an urgency here. We pause to reflect that the Lord has many invitations to us which are, in point of fact, commands, and these too are a matter of urgency, for “*now is the day of salvation.*”⁷⁰¹ Have we come to Him?

Then we note that the Lord adds that Noah's “*household*” were all invited too. At this we note the vital importance of family. Were Noah's family all believers? That is not at issue here. What is important is to recognise that a man is the head of his household. He is responsible for them and their well being. We are reminded of the comments in Hebrews where the writer reports that Noah “*prepared an ark for the saving of his household.*”⁷⁰² His work was at the command and instruction of God, but he was also concerned greatly for his family. How vital it is for men, with the help of their wife, to draw their children

697 That is of Noah's life.

698 Noah and his family enter the ark seven days before the rain came – compare Genesis 7:4 and 7b11.

699 Marking the end of this forty days.

700 Genesis 7:17 begins the forty days of rain (Genesis 7:12). Genesis 7:17-23 detail the forty day period, although Genesis 7:23 does not mark, necessarily the end point.

701 I am thinking of Matthew 11:28f but there are many others. See 2Corinthians 6:2.

702 Hebrews 11:7.

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into the ark which is Christ. Undoubtedly Noah involved all the family in the building of the ark, but there does come a point when they had to embark. Are we building the ark in our family's view and understanding? Are we inviting them into Christ?

At the end of verse 1 we are given the reason offered by the Lord for this invitation. It was because the Lord had seen in Noah the out-flowing of righteousness. We remind ourselves that righteousness can only come through faith. This is the great lesson of Scripture and not simply a New Testament idea. Noah was righteous not because he managed to do the right thing from his own strength, but because he obeyed the Lord's voice through faith. Now the text can be translated as follows:

because with you I have seen righteousness before My face in this generation.

In other words, Noah's faith worked. Noah looked to God and heard what the Lord had to say. Then he followed what the Lord said through his faith and love of God. The result was righteousness on the earth which presented itself to the Lord's face. The statement is also singular. This could have been said of no one else. In this we see a type of Christ (or, if you prefer, a prophecy of Christ). The Lord Jesus alone was truly righteous in that generation. Noah, of course, was righteous to a degree because he was a sinful man born of Adam as we all are. Christ, however, is the righteous one par excellence and in completeness. When the Father looked at the Lord Jesus Christ in earth He declared that He was well pleased with His Son.⁷⁰³

7:2,3.

The Lord continues with the command to bring in the animals. What was issued in Genesis 6:13-21 as instructions, Noah had obeyed and here we have a restatement of the commands. Probably what is happening in Genesis 7:1,2 is a general call to Noah to begin populating the ark. We are not to imagine that the ark was filled with animals and food all on one day. The invitation to come had been a part of the revelation to build the ark, and over a process of time Noah was building and gathering animals and food as the Lord directed and helped him. Literally verse 2 reads:

from all the beasts [that are] clean you shall take to yourself seven [by] seven a male and a female and from the beasts which [are] not clean it [shall be] two a male and his female.

Thus the foremost emphasis is placed on animals which would be sacrificed. The thought is continued into verse 3 which reads literally:

703 Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

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also from the birds of the air seven [by] seven a male and female to keep alive a seed upon the face of all the earth.

It might be thought that the mention of seven of each kind of bird was to enable preservation. However it is more likely that the Lord has in view both sacrifice as well as species propagation. The reference to “*seed*” surely indicates both the offspring and fruit of the animals being preserved and also a reminder or hint of Genesis 3:15. Of course the “*Seed*” mentioned in the promise concerns Christ who was born of a woman. Here we are speaking of the offspring of the birds of the air. However since the text mentions the preservation of life (“*to keep the species [lit. seed] alive*”) we cannot glibly assign the meaning merely to the continuation of physical or animate life. There is within and behind these words the promise of God as a back drop. That the promise is mentioned in such a veiled way and in connection with the birds and beasts rather than with Noah and his family, serves to show two important truths. First this is God's plan and initiative. Whilst He has promised to save mankind through the Messiah who would be born of a woman, Noah and his family are not to get the impression that it would be imminent and through their strength or prowess. Second it serves to show that more than the salvation and rescue of mankind from sin is indicated. The Lord Jesus came not just to save mankind, but **all things**, as the following words from Colossians clearly indicate:

19 For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell, **20** and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.⁷⁰⁴

Of course the immediate work was one of preservation of the eight people and representatives of all creation, but the prime focus is on looking forward in anticipation to the coming Messiah.

7:4.

At this point in time in the Lord's address to Noah, he is given a week's notice concerning the flood. Which day was it at this point? It is very tempting to think of these opening words as indicative of the Lord's regular meeting with Noah on each successive Sabbath. The Sabbath was instituted in creation week as the day on which the Lord ceased from His work of creation. It was, therefore, the day of rest. Later when we come to discuss the birds being sent out after the rain ceased we observe this idea of waiting seven days repeated. Well we cannot be dogmatic on this but it surely points to the keeping of the Sabbath..

Once again we note that it is God who takes the initiative and we learn that the flood was through His will and purpose. Up to this time there had been no rain on the earth. Now the Lord would bring

704 Colossians 1:19,20.

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about rain for the first time. What would the process be? We are not told here and the emphasis again is upon the Lord's action. He will most certainly cause the rain to come. We pause to reflect here that in our day and age we are so indoctrinated to think about all that goes on around us in “the elements” as being independent of God.⁷⁰⁵ This should never be. The sun shines and the rain falls at the express will and command of God. Always. Yes because God is so perfect and regular the sun and the moon can be tracked and predicted in their paths, but never let us drift into thinking that these (and all the other creatures God has created) work by their own inexorable laws. The Lord is the mover of heaven and earth, and the Lord is the giver of rain. In this case the Lord will bring about such rain as has never been observed at any point in history, for it will be the means by which He will utterly “*destroy*” all that lives on the earth's surface. The judgement has come. The wickedness of man will not be turned and so the only option is to wipe all from the face of the earth. Notice that the Lord reminds us here that it was He who had “*made*” all of these things. At the very least these creatures are His to do with as He pleases. Nevertheless the warnings have been issued and the chance of repentance given. Even the means of escape has been provided in this ark to which Noah has been called to enter.

7:5.

Verse 5 ends this piece with a statement concerning Noah's obedience. The man of rest (for that is what “*Noah*” means) was obedient to all that God had commanded concerning the ark. Once again we are pointed towards the fulfilment of such things, for the true man of peace (the Lord Jesus Christ) did everything that the Father had requested.⁷⁰⁶

[2] A date to be remembered. (Genesis 7:6-12).

7:6.

The first thing we need to establish is the date of the flood. Obviously from Genesis 5 and this verse we can conclude that the flood occurred in the year 1656 AC.⁷⁰⁷ Now in verse 6 we are told that Noah was 600 years old when the flood waters came upon the earth. Then we are given more precise detail in verse 11. It was on the 17th day of the 2nd month of Noah's 600th year. So one month and seventeen days after Noah turned 600 the flood came onto the earth.

7:7.

In Genesis 6:18 the emphasis was upon the call to Noah to come into or to enter the ark. His

705 This expression which we use to refer to the weather stems from the Greek ideas about the world (the four element theory which came from Miletus) which are wholly secular and have no thought of God.

706 John 17:4.

707 Noah born in the year 1056 AC and the flood occurred in his 600th year, so 1656 AC.

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family were included but only because they were his family. The command was for Noah primarily, but this included his sons, his wife and then his sons wives as a follow on. In the same way we think of the Lord Jesus showering the benefits He has accrued through His obedience to all who are His and who dwell with (and in) Him. The same order is repeated here in verse 7. The difference between these two verses is that whilst in Genesis 6:18 the instruction begins with reference to the ark (*“and you shall go into the ark ...”*), in Genesis 7:7 mention of the ark comes last (*“... went into the ark”*). The NKJV is not entirely correct in its rendition of the first part of this verse. Literally it should read:

And he went in, Noah, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him into the ark.

Again Noah is the first in and all the other seven come in *“with him”* under his coat-tails, as-it-were. The last part highlights the thing being escaped from. They were entering the ark *“from the face of the waters of the flood,”* that is, they were leaving the impending flood behind them.⁷⁰⁸

7:8,9.

In these verses we read of the general population of the ark. This appears to be different to what we read of in verses 2 and 3 because here the emphasis is different. Of all animals both clean and unclean of all sorts whether they be beasts, birds or creeping things, they came by twos (male and female). Earlier we noted that some clean animals came in by sevens. This was for the purpose of sacrifice. But generally the vast majority of what was to be saved came in twos, a male and a female, to preserve them for the future world.

Note that the Lord brought them in to Noah (*“went into the ark to Noah”*). This serves to show Noah as the main and central character. The animals were drawn into the ark to Noah and in the same way people from every tribe, tongue and nation will be drawn towards Christ who is pre-eminently **the** Man and **the** Prince of Peace. All took place exactly *“as God had commanded Noah.”* Noah was commanded but God seems to be the instigator and energiser behind what was going on.

7:10-12.

The seventh day arrives and so we read in verse 10 that on that day the waters of the flood *“were on the earth.”* This is another universal statement. It was not that the waters were in a region or special place, rather they were *“on the earth”* signifying that all the world was inundated with the waters. Verse 11 goes on to explain the general statement of verse 10. We are told the outcome first, that the entire world, or the whole earth, would be covered in water, but then we are also told how this actually

708 The Hebrew is: **מִן־הַמַּבּוּל** which reads literally: *“from the face of the waters of the flood.”*

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happened.

This would be a day to remember and so Noah's sons ensured that it would be remembered. It was exactly 47 days after Noah's 600th birthday! On that day two things occurred to bring about the flood upon the earth. The text opens with the verb in reference to the fountains and concludes with the verb connected with the windows of heaven. Both are passive. The fountains of the great deep were broken open and were split apart by the Lord. The fountains of the deep are then put alongside the windows of heaven which are mentioned next, and then comes the action which God has taken, namely, to open them. Thus we have direct action of God. Left alone, both would have remained intact. The *“deep”* and the *“waters above”* were first encountered in Genesis in the first chapter.⁷⁰⁹ These two sources of water, one from below, and the other from above, indicate that there would be no escape from such an all-encompassing judgement. The people of earth at that time were continually wicked, and whereas some had put their faith in human prowess and strength (such as Lamech of Cain), others had looked to the heavens and sought out the *“sons of God”* for entertainment.⁷¹⁰ Thus judgement would come from beneath the earth and from the heavens above in the form of water which would wash away and wipe from the surface of the ground all creatures in which there was the breath of life.

Considering this in terms of geology, we recognise that such a catastrophe indicates the breaking up of the structures of the earth in such a way that the surface features (land masses, mountains, coastlands, rivers and valleys) would all be completely destroyed, rearranged and reformed. The ground plan or topography of the pre-flood world would bear no relation in any way to the post-flood land structures and topography. The passage concludes with a repetition of the length of the rain (40 days and nights). This is an important feature of the story. It indicates that this was no mere monsoon. It was a one-off event of colossal and immense proportions. Water is incredibly powerful. The rise of the waters from both sources reached the point where the entire surface of the globe was covered within the forty days of rain.

[3] Roll call! (Entering in). (Genesis 7:13-16).

7:13.

The opening statement points us back to verses 10 and 11 which describe the date for this signally important event. The first thing to note here is that the Bible is not untrustworthy! The Holy Spirit has seen to it that the data we have is reliable. It was the *“very same day”* that Noah and all the creatures God had brought finally enter the ark. I do not suppose that Noah was filling the ark with the animals at the very last minute, somewhat like the opening of the gates at a concert or massive sporting event! I suspect

709 Genesis 1:2,6,7.

710 Genesis 4:19-24; 6:1f.

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that animals had been brought in during the days prior to this final day. What is indicated in these verses is that this was the final day for entrance.

Of course verse 13 is only concerned with Noah and his family. In this instance the same order is given but a little more detail is added. We have the names of the sons, and the fact that the sons had *“three wives,”* by which we may assume they had one each. It is one thing to hear the call “come you” as we observed in Genesis 7:1, but this must be heeded and obeyed. Noah and all his family entered the ark.

7:14.

Next we have all living creatures identified. Again we are given some more detail. The verse begins with a word rendered *“they”* which looks back to verse 13. By this we are to understand that there is a unity in creation. Man may be distinct and separate from the animal world because he was made in the image of God, but nevertheless man is still a part of God's creation. We ought not to forget this connection, and we ought also to take seriously the command to care for it. The list of creatures given in this verse is very interesting. Some modern translations smooth over the details. Here is my version and Young's Literal Translation to show the detail:

They and all living things after their kind, and all beasts after their kind, and all creeping thing that creeps upon the earth after its kind, and all birds after their kind, every little bird and all wing [types].⁷¹¹

They, and every living creature after its kind, and every beast after its kind, and every creeping thing that is creeping on the earth after its kind, and every fowl after its kind, every bird -- every wing.⁷¹²

The opening words point us to creatures in general, or all things which have life. Then we get the land animals, then all things that hug the earth's surface and burrow down, from insects, to voles and so on, and then we get all types of bird. Two words for bird are used and the second one indicates a small bird, or a song bird. Finally we end with a reference to every wing type, by which we are meant to consider the whole plethora of winged creatures from flying squirrels to pterodactyls, and from golden eagles to hummingbirds.

7:15.

All of these creatures also entered the ark, but we note here that they actually went to Noah, for the text literally reads:

711 Genesis 7:14, my translation.

712 Genesis 7:14, YLT.

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And they went in to Noah into the ark ...

Noah is the focal point in these verses and this is why we can see him as a type of Christ. We are lead to consider the words the Lord uttered very shortly before He was to die:

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.⁷¹³

The verse ends with a general statement that it was “*all flesh,*” (all types and kinds), and that it was every creature in which “*the breath of life*” was to be found. Not a single creature type was missing. The same detail and care the Lord God exercised in His creation, He exercises here. We are not to imagine a haphazard or disorganised arrangement, but a fully comprehensive and ordered one. The undertaking was immense, but this was not something left entirely in the hands of Noah. Yes, of course, he was to exercise his skill and ingenuity, but miracle plays a very big part in this event. Somehow the Lord made Noah an animal magnet. Some people are like that to a degree. It is the same with plants. We call good gardeners those who have “green fingers.” Well it was not just that Noah was disposed towards the animals, but rather that God endowed him with some form of affinity and connection. The animals trusted him. This is miraculous. Note that here the reference is to all of creation, and not just those which would be for sacrifice as indicated by the numbers (“*two by two*”) that went in. This is not contradictory as some have claimed. It is simply that the focus here is on the whole of creation. Noah is the focus. Creation is coming to rest (the meaning of Noah's name).

7:16.

The final verse in this section acts as a kind of summary. We are to understand that a good representative (male and female) of the entirety of creation entered the ark. If it be asked how this could possibly be in a practical sense, then I would ask the reader to consult the many good resources amongst creation writers which clear this up. For myself I read ***The Genesis Flood*** by Whitcomb and Morris as an early believer and it convinced me then that there was no issue in practical terms at all.⁷¹⁴

All of these creatures entered the ark “*as God commanded him,*” that is, Noah. This is a remarkable statement. God commands Noah to bring in all the animals. Such a task is humanly impossible. Could Noah know of all the different types? Think of biologists today who have hardly catalogued every living thing! But it was done! How so? Well of course it was God all along really. And yet the Lord tells us here that Noah was the one responsible. Such an intimate connection between God's wish and plan, and Noah's part and work is amazing. Clearly we also have a pointer to Christ. He did all

⁷¹³ John 12:32.

⁷¹⁴ **John C. Whitcomb** and **Henry M. Morris**. *The Genesis Flood*. 1961. Baker Book House. See also: ***Answers In Genesis*** website.

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that the Father asked of Him. But we also draw from this immense confidence in the Lord. We are tasked with taking the gospel to all creatures and to make disciples. How can this be done? It is humanly impossible! But God is doing it and He is using ordinary believers who will one day here those words:

Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.⁷¹⁵

Noah was faithful in building the ark and in gathering food and animals, but without the Lord's miraculous help he could never have completed the task. In application we ought never to shrink from what the Lord is commanding us even though it seems impossible. Take the first step in faith and trust in the Lord. It will be hard. I imagine Noah suffered setbacks. The trees he sourced may not all have been sufficiently up to the task, or perhaps a section of the ark collapsed for some reason. But he did not stop. He was faithful to the revelation. He was, like Paul, one who was *“not disobedient to the heavenly vision”* that he had received.⁷¹⁶ What revelation have you received? What ***vision of God have you been energised by?*** The faithful servant was entrusted with just *“a few things”* but in being faithful with them he received the blessing and joy of His Master.

Finally we read these important words: *“and the Lord shut him in.”* Notice again that the focus is on Noah. His family and representatives of all creation were inside too, but the Lord shuts Noah in. Noah was urged to come into the ark. Noah enters, but only the Lord can seal the door. You have been called by Christ to enter into the ark (trust in Christ and all He has done), and the Lord will draw all men to Himself. Are you entering in? Know this, that it is the Lord who seals the deal. We cannot choose our state (saved or unsaved), and we can do nothing about changing our state and condition. We cannot transform ourselves from unsaved to saved. All we can do is heed the call and rush forth towards the Lord in trust and faith. But if you have entered the ark, it will be the Lord who seals the door. Look carefully at these wonderful truths:

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: **13** who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.⁷¹⁷

13 In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.⁷¹⁸

715 Matthew 25:21,23.

716 Acts 26:19.

717 John 1:12,13.

718 Ephesians 1:13,14.

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To receive Christ is to forsake self and trust in Him and all He is and has done. Such who trust are adopted and have the right of being called “*children of God.*”⁷¹⁹ But having believed the gospel, the Lord then “seals” such an one. He closes the door and secures you safely in His rescue boat – Christ! And that is not all, of course, for the presence of God with us by His Holy Spirit is, in itself, a remarkable and blessed thing.

[4] The waters of judgement. (Genesis 7:17-24).

Thus far we have been considering all that comes before the great day of the flood. Everything has been in preparation. All the events that have gone before the passage under consideration now, are representative or indicative of the time before judgement. As such they are helpful for us today who live in days before the second coming of Christ. But now our focus is moved towards the judgement that falls. Before we proceed I want to simply mention the fact that the whole history of Noah here recorded ought to be one ringing in the world's ears. It serves as a great warning to mankind. God has judged the ancient world and washed away all wickedness from the face of the earth with the waters of the flood. However, we live in days when such a history is roundly ridiculed. It is considered mere mythology and has no bearing on modern man's mind. When man looks at the topography and surface of the world today, they have been trained to consider it all took many millions of years to form in a gradual process. What they should be “seeing” instead, is a record of the judgement of God. The rocks do not speak or tell us of millions of years of earth history. They do speak of judgement. Consider what is in the record of the rocks. It is made up of a jumbled mass of boulders and twisted sediments amongst which are heaps of dead creatures in contorted and broken form. This is not the place to discuss flood geology or the fossil record.⁷²⁰ What I am simply noting is that mankind is under a delusion. They have been sold a lie. They look at the surface of the world and are taught to see it as having come to be through a very long and slow process. All the while they ought to be seeing the fact that God judged the world because of its wickedness.

As an aid to our thoughts it would be helpful to show the two words used indicating the idea of destruction and translated as “*destroy*” or “*destroyed*” in the NKJV text of Genesis 6 to 9 (see table 7.3).

From this it is clear that destruction of both man and beast by means of the flood waters had a twofold aspect. First the idea suggests a wiping away from off the surface of the earth, or a removal or blotting out. But second there is also, alongside this, the idea of a decay and ruination but without any thought of annihilation of the life destroyed. In other words there would be a remnant of life, indicated by the saving of Noah and his family, and by the fact that the earth would still be in existence after the

719 John 1:12,13.

720 The reader should consult the creation ministries, such as: *Answers in Genesis*, *Creation Ministries International*, and, *The Institute for Creation Research*.

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judgement had passed.

Table 7.3: The kind of 'destruction' experienced in the flood.⁷²¹

Hebrew	Meaning	Scriptures	
<i>māchâh</i>	“To erase” – to blot out, abolish or wipe out or away.	6:7	I will destroy man.
		7:4	I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things.
		7:23	So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground.
		7:23	They were destroyed from the earth.
<i>shâchath</i>	“To decay” – to cause to ruin, perish, mar (but no thought of extinguishing that which was destroyed).	6:13	I will destroy them with the earth.
		6:17	... to destroy from under heaven all flesh.
		9:11	... never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.
		9:15	... the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

The two main words describing the course of the waters and their essential meanings is shown below in table 7.4:

Table 7.4: The two words that describe the course of the waters in the flood.

Word.	Scripture.	Rendered as:	Main meaning:
רָבָה <i>rābāh</i>	7:17,18	Increased	To multiply, be in abundance, become many.
גָּבַר <i>gābar</i>	7:18,19,20,24	Prevailed	To be strong, to exceed, to be superior.

7:17.

The opening statement refers to the length of time there was rainwater, not to the duration of the flood. We can assert that because we are told twice that the rain lasted for forty days and we know the flood lasted a year and ten days because we are informed of the precise dates when the flood began and when Noah finally left the ark.⁷²² The rain (and the fountains from the deep) were pouring forth the waters of judgement for forty days. This time is fixed. When it was over, it was over and done with. This is very interesting both from the perspective of the number, and with regard to its finite nature. This judgement was limited in time to forty days. It would not be eternal but finite.

Forty days was the length of time that Moses was with the Lord on the mountain, it was the length of time that the spies investigated Canaan, it was the period of time in which Elijah was sustained by food

⁷²¹ The only other place where the word “*destroy*” occurs in the NKJV is at Genesis 8:21 where the Hebrew word (נָכָה *nācāh*) means “to smite,” “to kill,” or “to strike.”

⁷²² Genesis 7:4,12; Genesis 7:11; 8:14-16.

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from God, it was the time period of Jonah's preaching and warning to Nineveh, it was the time for which Christ was tempted, and also it was the length of time in which the risen Christ was seen and heard before His ascension.⁷²³ Some would draw from these instances the idea that since the times are all equivalent they must indicate something other than real historical events, as you would not expect such diverse things to occur over the same time period. I assert on the contrary that all of these events recorded happened over a literal forty day period. They are presented as historical. And yet I also affirm the truth that the time is significant. Why then forty days? It would seem that the primary point is to suggest a time of judgement or trial. As we noted earlier, the length of judgement was fixed and finite. This points us towards the cross where Christ took the punishment due to sin and in a finite time frame (the time upon the cross) endured the infinite wrath of God on our behalf. Only an infinite One could take an infinite punishment and expunge it within a finite period.

Now during this time the waters *“increased”* or multiplied to an abundance, so that the ark was *“lifted up”* or raised upwards, so that it *“rose high above the earth.”* In these words of verse 17 we are given the indication of a rapid and vehement increase in flood waters (from the two sources) so that the ark was raised very high above what was originally the earth's surface. Such words of being raised up and lifted up point us very clearly to the Lord Jesus who spoke of being lifted up and raised for all to see:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.⁷²⁴

Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.”⁷²⁵

32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” **33** This He said, signifying by what death He would die.⁷²⁶

The reference to being lifted up in this instance is not in connection with the ascension, for that indicates victory and completion. Here the ark is being lifted up above the earth as it suffers the punishment from the waters both above and below. We mentioned earlier that none outside could escape this punishment. They were to be assailed from all sides, from above by the windows of heaven, from below by the fountains of the great deep, and from all sides around them as the waters covered the earth. In the same way the ark bore the rain from above and the surging waters from below and all around. As it rose up above the earth the ark suffered the wrath of a holy God. all the while those inside were covered and secure. What a marvellous type we have here! And how clear it is! This is one reason why we must insist

723 Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Numbers 13:25; 14:34; 1Kings 19:8; Jonah 3:4; Matthew 4:2; Acts 1:3.

724 John 3:14.

725 John 8:28.

726 John 12:32,33.

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on the historical aspect. What happened to Noah was for our benefit illustrating and making plain the teaching concerning Christ's death on the cross. He was raised up upon the cross to be judged by the wrath of God, and this is pictured for us in the raising up of the ark in the floods and outpouring of God's judgement by water.

7:18-20.

In the next three verses we are given a description of the situation that resulted from the forty days and nights of rain and fountain flow. We could imagine that these descriptions include the forty days as verse 17 seems to indicate that the rise of the ark on the surface of the water was a rapid one. The last verse in this section speaks of 150 days and so the time frame here is from the beginning of the flood up to this 150 day point. In order to grasp what is going on in these verses I have arranged the text in indented form to show the main point and how this is worked out:

- 18 The waters
prevailed
and greatly increased on the earth,
and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters.
- 19 And the waters
prevailed exceedingly on the earth,
and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.
- 20 The waters
prevailed fifteen cubits upward,
and the mountains were covered.

Those words which are highlighted with the same colour indicate that the same Hebrew word is being used in each case. From this analysis it is clear that the primary focus here is the waters. These are the instrument of God's wrath. The waters are the means by which judgement has come to the earth. It will be seen also that each verse has a statement about the waters and then a consequence. Thus in verse 18 we have two thoughts concerning the waters, (they “prevailed” and they “greatly increased”), and then we have the consequence (the ark moving about on the surface).

The word “prevailed” indicates “to be strong” and thence victorious. Nothing could withstand the force of these waters. Verse 18 continues with an expansion of what this prevailing means. The waters “greatly increased,” or, more literally, “were vehement in their multiplication.” In other words the force and strength of this rise in flood water was something never witnessed before and would never be witnessed again. Peter coins a Greek term to describe this incredible strength. The word he used was *kataklyzo*, from which we get the English word “cataclysm.” This Greek word has two thoughts within it

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which point us to the original source of the flood (fountains and windows of heaven).⁷²⁷ Essentially the word has come to mean “to overwhelm with water,” or “to submerge, deluge.” However nothing within human experience since this event has come anywhere near the strength and force of what was experienced by the ark and those who were judged. In modern times we might like to think of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as being the height of terror. The flood of Noah's day far exceeded those terrible tragedies. In the words before us in Genesis 7 the writer has attempted to convey the sheer magnitude of this awful event. Belittling it by apathy, or by illustrating it as some afternoon paddle in the sea as most story books do, or ignoring it altogether, is a very grave sin.

The consequence comes at the end of verse 18 and it was that the ark “*moved about on the surface of the waters.*” The ark had suffered the full force of the falling and rising waters and yet remained unscathed. All inside were safe (albeit buffeted and shaken).

In verse 19 we have a second statement concerning these waters. In the first statement the consequence was that the ark moved on the surface, but here the focus is upon the surface of the earth. The word “*prevailed*” meaning strong is used again but then we get this addition that the waters “*prevailed exceedingly.*” It will be noted that the word “*greatly*” in verse 18 is highlighted in the same way as the word “*exceedingly*” in verse 19. What is not apparent in our English version is that the Hebrew word occurs twice in verse 19. Literally the text reads as:

“and the waters prevailed greatly [with] greatness ...”

or

“and the waters prevailed vehemently [with] vehemence ...”

In other words we have the superlative. There was an excess or superabundance in the strength of these waters. The statement at the beginning of verse 18 was not enough and a greater statement indicating the force is now given at the start of verse 19. The consequence of such rapid, vehement, and incredibly forceful floodwaters was that “*all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.*” Notice that the word “*hills*” here is highlighted the same as the word “*mountains*” in verse 20 because they are the same Hebrew word. In verse 19 these are not just mountains but “*high*” ones. In other words, whatever mountains existed in the pre-flood world the highest of them were fully covered by the waters of the flood. We cannot speak of the Himalayas, the Rockies or the Andies and so forth because none of these ranges were yet in existence. These modern mountain ranges only came about as a consequence of the flood and the shifting of continents and so on. The pre-flood world mountains (including the highest)

⁷²⁷ The Greek word *kata*, signifies “downwards” and the Greek word *klydon*, indicates “a dashing or surging wave,” “a surge or violent agitation of the sea.” Thus *kata* signifies the rain from above, and *klydon* indicates the fountains from below.

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were all covered with the floodwaters. It is to be stressed that the reference point taken is not on the earth but instead *“under the whole heaven.”* Such a reference indicates that no mountain was excluded. All were covered. But in order to make quite sure that we do not simply mean that the mountains had water splashed all over them or that it rained on them and waves roared up their sides, verse 20 pushes the point that they were submerged. Thus for the third time we see that the waters *“prevailed”* or were strong. When things are repeated we ought to pay heed, but when the same thought is expressed a third time we must be deadly serious about what is being said. This was no mere flood we have witnessed in times since that day.⁷²⁸ Now the Hebrew word order for verse 20 is different to those of verses 18 and 19. The literal translation would be:

Fifteen cubits upward prevailed the waters and were covered the mountains.⁷²⁹

The mention of a measurement can only have reference to the ark. The ark, of course, was thirty cubits high. This statement in verse 20, therefore, indicates that the waters covered the mountains to a depth of at least fifteen cubits so that the ark would not run aground. In other words, the highest mountain was covered to a depth of at least fifteen cubits of water. And this was probably because the ark displaced water to a depth of fifteen cubits. We must conclude here by asserting that any who read these words and conclude that the flood was a mere local event must be reading with blinkered or deceived eyes. The fact that the flood covered the entire earth is so plainly taught that to deny such a fact is tantamount to calling God a liar.

The covering of the entire planet by water has an important spiritual significance. The Hebrew word used here is: כָּסָה *kāsāh*. It generally indicates a material substance that essentially hides or conceals something. In this case the earth's ground has been covered over and so concealed. In a great sense the earth has been washed as it has been submerged with water.

7:21-23.

Having informed us of the means of judgement, (i.e. *“the waters”*), in the previous three verses, we now come to a focus on the objects of judgement. Again we continue the thought we ended with just a moment ago. Any idea that this was a local affair affecting only Mesopotamia is sheer nonsense. The writer has gone to inordinate lengths to show that this was a worldwide event.

These three verses begin with a summary statement. Every creature died. Any creature that had *“flesh”* or that *“moved on the earth”* died. Not content with a blanket statement the writer (Noah's sons)

728 For a sampling of floods in recent history see ***Appendix 8***.

729 Genesis 7:20, my translation. The YLT renders this in a similar way: *“Fifteen cubits upwards have the waters become mighty, and the mountains are covered.”*

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give us a breakdown of the various types. These include: “*birds,*” “*cattle,*” “*beasts,*” “*every creeping thing,*” and “*every man.*” All that had animate life died. We could have assumed this on the basis of what we read in verses 18 to 20 because of the sheer force of the rising flood waters. But here the point is pressed home. All animate life perished and none survived. Verse 22 reiterates the point again. Any and all creatures that lived on the land, and any and all creatures that had “*the breath of the spirit of life,*” perished and died. Again, not content with this statement, the writer continues with a third statement in verse 23. The NKJV informs us that “*He destroyed*” every creature. The Hebrew text informs us that the surface of the earth was washed clean or wiped away. Thus every living creature, from man to all land animals of all types and all creatures of the heavens were swept away and rubbed out from off the surface of the ground and the earth.

And he wiped away every living thing which was upon the face of the ground, from man to beast to reptile and to the birds of heaven, all were wiped from the earth, and only Noah and those with him remained in the ark.⁷³⁰

Notice that the Lord wiped from the ground and swept from the earth. The implication is that all on the surface of the entire earth (the ground) were destroyed and swept away or blotted out. Finally, to make things ever more clear, we read that it was surely only Noah and those with him that remained safe inside the ark. Such clear language about the effects of God's judgement on the ancient world ought to be heeded as we face the soon coming judgement by fire. None will escape the coming judgement. There is no escape. Just as all died in the flood, so all will die in the coming conflagration. The only means of escape is to be on the ark. We need to be “*in Christ*” so as to be shielded from the wrath of God.

7:24.

Finally we discover that the flood waters were strong (“*prevailed*”) on the earth for a period of 150 days. Noah entered the ark on the 17th day of the 2nd month of his 600th year.⁷³¹ 150 days later would be the 17th day of the 7th month of Noah's 600th year, a date of which we read of in Genesis 8:4 when the ark came to rest, and in which Genesis 8:3 also indicates was the end of the 150 day period.

730 Genesis 7:23, my translation.

731 Genesis 7:11.

Chapter 8.

A new world. (8:1-22).

Analysis.

- 1 Then God remembered
 Noah, and
 every living thing, and
 all the animals that *were* with him in the ark.
And God made a wind to pass over the earth,
 and the waters subsided.
2 The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped,
 and the rain from heaven was restrained.
3 And the waters receded continually from the earth.
At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.
4 Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.
5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month.
In the tenth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.
- 6 So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.
7 Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth.
8 He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground.
9 But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him,
 for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth.
So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself.
10 And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark.
11 Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf *was* in her mouth;
 and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth.
12 So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him any more.
- 13 And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month*, the first *day* of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth;
 and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked,
 and indeed the surface of the ground was dry.
14 And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried.
15 Then God spoke to Noah, saying,
 16 “Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.
 17 Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that *is* with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”
18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him.
19 Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.
20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.
21 And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma.
Then the Lord said in His heart,
 “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth;
 nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.
22 “While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”

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The text of Genesis chapter 8 can be viewed in three parts. First we have the idea that God *“remembered Noah”* in Genesis 8:1-5. Second we have the story which centres around Noah sending out various birds (Genesis 8:6-12). Finally we have the account of Noah and all that was inside the ark leaving to take up residence in the new world (Genesis 8:12-22).

[1] God remembers! (Genesis 8:1-5).

The first thing to mention here is the time frame. First we have the statement that *“God remembered Noah.”* Then we have the statement that the water sources, *“the fountains”* and *“the windows,”* ceased. Next we have mention of a period of 150 days, and then immediately the date: 17th day, 7th month (of Noah's 600th year). Finally we have mention of another date, namely, 1st day of 10th month (of Noah's 600th year) when the mountain tops were first seen. To see what is going on here let us put these statements and times in sequence:

1. God remembers Noah (verse 1).
2. Both water sources stopped (verse 2).
3. 150 days elapse, which was the 17th day of the 7th month of Noah's 600th year (verse 3,4).
4. Day 224, which was 1st day of 10th month of Noah's 600th year (verse 5).

From this we can conclude that God was mindful of Noah at the point when the two sources of water ceased. It would appear that the Lord kept a watchful eye on the ark and when the time came for the waters to cease He *“remembered”* Noah. This would mean that Genesis 8:1,2 records the events of day 40 after the flood. I am aware that many look at these verses and consider them as successive and chronological, but attention to the text indicates that the writer is often back tracking. At this point in the narrative the writer goes back to the point when the rain and fountains stopped. From all considerations this must have been on the fortieth day because we are told repeatedly that the rain was on the earth for forty days. When the rain stopped so also were the fountains stopped so we must conclude that this happened on day forty after the flood.⁷³²

The main words used to describe the course of the waters in this section of the narrative and their essential meanings is shown in table 8.1.

732 See *Appendix 7* for further discussion.

Table 8.1: Key word study in Genesis 8.

Word.	Scripture.	Rendered as:	Main meaning:
שָׁכַד	8:1	Subsided	To decrease, to pacify, to settle down.
סָכַר	8:2	Stopped	To shut up, to close.
כָּלָא	8:2	Restrained	To shut up, to restrain, to hold back.
שׁוּב	8:3	Receded	To turn back, to return, to turn around.
חָסַר	8:3,5	Decreased	To lack, to be without, to decrease.
יָבֵשׁ	8:7,14	Dried up; dried	To be dry, to lack moisture, to wither.
קָלִיל	8:8,11	Receded	To be light slight, to be of little account.
תָּרַב	8:13(x2)	Dried up; dry	In a less degree than יָבֵשׁ. The taking away of moisture.

8:1.

By stating that God “*remembered*” the writer (which we believe was ultimately God Himself who used Noah's sons), we are not to think that God forgot the ark and then suddenly brought it back into His mind. Such a thought is impossible. The Hebrew word here has also been translated as “*mindful*” in a few places, such as Psalm 8, for example:

What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?⁷³³

The idea here is of one who is thinking about someone in a beneficial way. We get an indication of the thoughts of God towards those whom God has set His love in a number of places in Scripture:

17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! **18** If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.⁷³⁴

Many, O Lord my God, *are* Your wonderful works *which* You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.⁷³⁵

How remarkable that the living God thinks of Noah and those like him who walk with God! But the Lord does not think upon Noah alone, for the text tells us that He also “*remembered*” all that were on the ark with Noah. Now at this point the Lord's action of being mindful was to make a “*wind*” to blow across the earth. The word translated “*wind*” is the same as the word for Spirit (רוּחַ *rûah*). We could, therefore translate this as follows:

⁷³³ Psalm 8:4.

⁷³⁴ Psalm 139:17,18.

⁷³⁵ Psalm 40:5.

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And God caused the Spirit to pass over upon the earth and the waters subsided.⁷³⁶

The verb employed here is one used in reference to the Passover of Exodus. It is also reminiscent (in idea at least) of Genesis 1:2 where the Spirit hovered over the great deep. From the physical point of view a wind blowing across the surface of the earth would cause the waters to subside. This appears to have been the work of the Spirit of God.⁷³⁷ The word rendered “*subsided*” in the NKJV does indicate a decrease, for the root word has the meaning: “to bow or stoop down,” “to lower itself,” or “to abate.”

8:2.

Verse 2 follows on from the train of thought that began in verse 1. In that God was mindful of Noah and those on the ark He caused a wind to blow over the earth so that the waters began to lower. Then a second consequence of God's remembrance and action was that the two sources of water (“*fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven*”) were stopped. In this verse we have a double statement to the effect that the waters stopped. A literal rendition of this verse would be as follows:

And they were shut up the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven, and they were restrained (shut up) the rain from the heavens.

In the first part, both sources are referred to as being shut up or closed. In effect, they were turned off like a tap. Then in the second part of verse 2 we have the notion that the rain from heaven was stopped, restrained or shut down. At the very least we ought to recognise that the sources had ceased and that no more rain fell. Transferring this physical restraint to its spiritual counterpart, we infer from this that judgement had been completed. If the rains continued, or if the fountains were still spewing forth, then judgement was still being enacted. The phraseology of Genesis 8:2 leaves one in no doubt that the judgement by water had come to an end.

8:3.

There is yet another consequence to God's blowing the wind across the earth, and that is that the waters were now going down. The end of verse 1 informed us immediately that the “*waters subsided,*” indicating a lowering or decrease in water level. Now here we have two statements to the effect that the waters were decreasing:

1. And the waters receded continually from the earth.
2. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.

736 Genesis 8:1b, my translation.

737 John 3:8.

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The waters were *returning* from off the earth and they were *going along* to return. The first and the last Hebrew word (שׁוּב *šûb*) in this first statement is the same and has the essential meaning of “to turn back.”

וַיָּשׁוּבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הָלוֹךְ וְשׁוֹב
and receding the waters from all the earth going/walking back

The Hebrew construction is frequently translated as we have it in the NKJV to indicate a steady or continual decrease. The second statement informs us that from the end of the 150 days, that is, when the 150th day was reached, the waters were decreased, lacking or diminished.

Now in the former section we discovered that for the first 150 days the waters were strong (*“prevailed”*) on the earth. But now we discover that from the end of the 40th day when the windows and fountains were stopped and the rain and upsurge completely ceased, the waters decreased continually to the point that they were diminished or not strong.

8:4.

In this verse we are given a precise date, the 17th day of the 7th month of Noah's 600th year. This is exactly 150 days after the flood started. At this point when the waters were no longer strong but were abated (*“decreased”*), the ark comes to a rest. The word for rest, (which is essentially the same as Noah's name), is put first in the verse. The ark came to a rest *“on the mountains of Ararat,”* by which we are meant to understand the mountain *range* which includes Ararat. It is not very clear at this point if the ark grounded, or if it simply stopped and floated above the Ararat mountain range. The phrase ought to be rendered: *“... upon the mountain [range] of Ararat.”*

Prior to this the ark was lifted up on the rising waters which prevailed and were strong on the earth until day 150, but when the waters stopped on day 40, although they were still strong on the earth, they decreased continually so that by the end of the 150 days and beyond they were decreased. This is depicted in figure 12.

8:5.

From the 150th day until day 224, (which was the first day of the 10th month of Noah's 600th year), the waters continually decreased. Another translation has it: *“and the waters became steadily decreasing.”*⁷³⁸ This decreasing indicates a diminishing, lacking or reducing in the water level. At the 224th day the mountain tops could be seen. The ark had stopped being thrashed about and was resting or

738 See Bible Hub. Interlinear translation. Genesis 8:5. Online at: <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/8.htm>

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floating on still waters. The waters decrease steadily and eventually the mountain tops are seen. These are the mountains of the Ararat range.

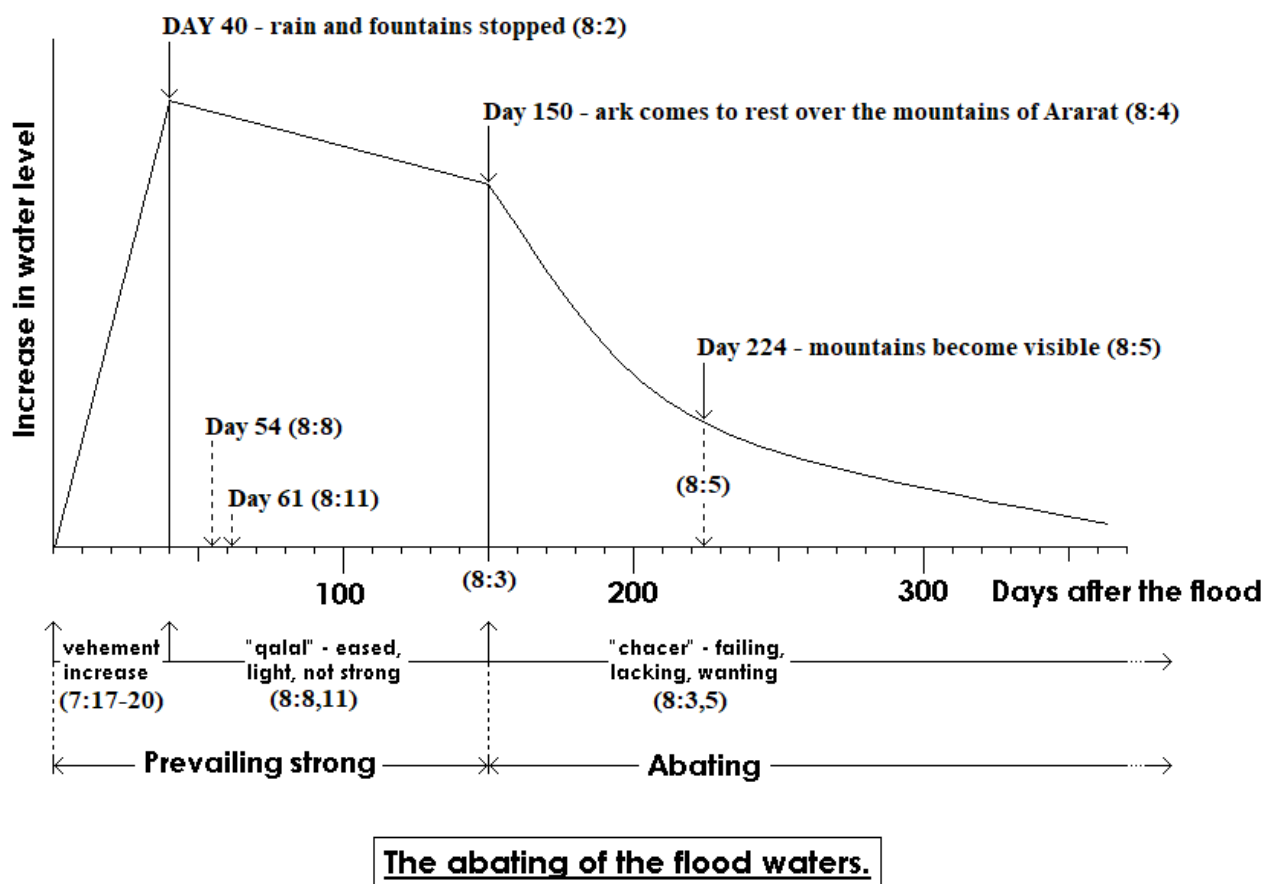


Figure 12. The rise and fall of the flood.

[2] Noah sends out the birds. (Genesis 8:6-12).

8:6.

The passage opens with the statement *“and it came to pass”* which is a translation of the verb “to be” that could be rendered: “and it was.” This triggers the reader to pause and reflect. Next we read that it was *“at the end of forty days.”* The word rendered *“end”* here comes from a root meaning “to cut off” and so signals an extremity. It was *at the cutting off* at day 40 that we are now being asked to view. This can have no other meaning than to point us back to the end of the rain and fountains on day 40. It is more natural to understand that Noah opened the window when the rain stopped, than that he waited until day 190 (the 150 days of Genesis 7:24 and another 40 days of Genesis 8:6).

8:7.

First Noah sends out a raven. Why this bird? The Hebrew name simply suggest the notion of something dark.⁷³⁹ This bird occurs ten times in Scripture. The raven was not a “clean” animal but was amongst those which were later on to be regarded as an abomination by the Israelites and so could not be eaten.⁷⁴⁰ Notwithstanding this designation, the Lord had care for these creatures and provided them with food and even used them to feed Elijah.⁷⁴¹ As to their character, they appear to have been scavengers and ate just about anything. Agur the son of Jakeh, the Proverb writer, suggests that they would peck out the eyes of a corpse.⁷⁴² Isaiah depicts them as one of the creatures to inhabit a desolate city once judgement has been meted out.⁷⁴³ When Noah sent this creature out we discover that it simply *“kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth.”*⁷⁴⁴ The Hebrew word given here as: *“dried,”* (יָבֵשׁ *yābēš*) signifies truly dry. It is employed of things that were moist but have dried and become withered. This word is not used again until verse 14 at which point it is a year and ten days after the flood and Noah is told to leave the ark. Thus the raven flies off and returns continually until such a point when Noah finally left the ark. If the bird signified was in fact a raven, we know it as an opportunistic eater and carrion feeder. It probably fed on those dead and decaying creatures that littered the waters as they receded.

8:8.

Next Noah sends out a dove. It does not tell us expressly here that he waited for seven days between sending the raven and then sending the dove. However in verse 10 we note that the text tells us that *“he waited yet another seven days”* before sending the dove out for a second time. Thus it is most probable that Noah did in fact wait seven days between each sending out of successive birds. We are also told that Noah *“sent out from himself”* the dove. This obviously simply indicates that Noah was probably holding the bird in his hand, for we get this impression from the words at the end verse 9 (*“he put out his hand and took her”*). However in that Noah is a type of Christ, the Prince of peace, (the man of rest), it is important to see this typically as the sending out of that which the dove represents, namely, the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴⁵ The lord Jesus informed the disciples that the Holy Spirit would be sent out by the Father but would be sent out in Christ's name.⁷⁴⁶ Further, after Christ's resurrection, the Saviour spoke peace to the disciples and then commissioned them adding these words: *“Receive the Holy Spirit.”*⁷⁴⁷

In the case of the sending of the dove we are given a reason: *“to see if the waters had receded*

739 Song of Songs 5:11.

740 Leviticus 11:15; Deuteronomy 14:14.

741 1Kings 17:4,6; Job 38:41; Psalm 147:9.

742 Proverbs 30:17.

743 Isaiah 34:11.

744 Genesis 8:7.

745 The dove is linked with the Holy Spirit in all four gospels. See: Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32.

746 John 14:26.

747 John 20:22.

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from the face of the ground.”⁷⁴⁸ The word given as “*receded*” indicates being less or diminished, but the whole expression at the end of verse 8 signifies the reappearance of the ground. The dove then is sent to discover the new ground which had suffered the punishment meted out by the waters.

8:9.

It is important to understand that the dove was a bird that could fly great distances and was accustomed to dwell in the crags of rocks on cliff faces.⁷⁴⁹ It was not, as popularly perceived, a bird that was soft and unwilling to rest in harsh locations! So when we read that “*the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot,*” we are not to infer from this that such was a delicate animal that was rather choosy about where it would or would not land. No! What we are being told is that there was no land anywhere within the dove's flight range where she could land. This fact is supplemented by the statement that follows. The dove, having flown out some great distance, returns to Noah because “*the waters were on the face of the whole earth.*” Thus there simply wasn't anywhere that the dove could alight. It is to be recalled that in verse 5 we have the mountain tops being observed on day 224. If this bird story follows chronologically from the events in verse 5, how could it be stated that the dove could not find a place to rest and, more importantly, how in the world could it be asserted that “*the waters were on the face of the whole earth*”? These facts indicate clearly that the bird story must be located immediately after the 40 days of rain when the rain stops.

The final part of verse 9 where we discover that Noah retrieves the dove by hand indicates that this was probably a domesticated bird. The bird may well have been trained by Noah. This fact gives a small window into the immense preparations that must have gone on prior to the flood. Once again we are not to imagine some brute beasts or mere “stone-age” characters here. Noah was a man of intelligence and ability, and in no way inferior to the best of men today. What is important to remember concerning Noah is that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord and walked with God.

8:10-12.

It is now day 54. Noah had opened the window on day 40 and dispatched the raven. He waited seven days and then sent out the dove on day 47. Now another seven days has passed and he sends the dove out for the second time. Why did Noah send out the birds every seven days? Was it that he was doing this on the Sabbath each time? We cannot be certain, but it seems likely that it is all a part of Noah's worship.

Verse 11 informs us that the dove returned “*in the evening,*” by which we can deduce that the bird flew some distance. Homing pigeons are known to have travelled thousands of miles and a round trip of

⁷⁴⁸ Genesis 8:8.

⁷⁴⁹ See: Psalm 55:6; Song of Songs 2:14; Isaiah 60:8; Jeremiah 48:28; Ezekiel 7:16.

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several hundred out and back is not uncommon. For a typical speed of 50 mph a bird can make a round trip of about 400 miles in an eight hour period.⁷⁵⁰ This time the bird returns with *“a freshly plucked olive leaf”* in her beak. The Hebrew text simply indicates an olive leaf torn off from a branch. What are we to derive from this discovery? There could not have been time for an olive plant to grow afresh producing new leaves. Perhaps it was from floating vegetation where an olive plant had managed to grow once again? We cannot be sure. However Noah clearly deduced from this retrieval by the bird that *“the waters had receded from the earth.”* The waters were no longer strong and prevailing (גבר *gābar*), but were light and had diminished (קלל *qālal*). The ground surface was by no means dry but the waters were no longer strong. They were going down continually. Another seven days pass so it is now day 61. Noah releases the same dove that had been out twice already but this time she does not return, indicating that she had now found somewhere to rest and (presumably) set up a nest.

[3] The earth is dried. (Genesis 8:13-22).

In this section we move into the phase which we could term the **“drying earth.”** The passage uses two distinctly different words for the idea of dryness that indicates a gradual but continual removal of water from the ground surface (table 8.2).

Table 8.2: The earth dries up.

Word.	Scripture.	Rendered as:	Main meaning:
יָבֵשׁ	<i>yābēš</i> 8:7,14	Dried up; dried	To be dry, to lack moisture, to wither.
חָרַב	<i>ḥārāb</i> 8:13(x2)	Dried up; dry	In a less degree than יָבֵשׁ. The taking away of moisture.

The new ground, of course, would be different in topology from the old world, caused by (assumed) tectonic activity. The current rate of tectonic motion in the world that gives rise to volcanic activity, earthquake and tsunami is slow and diminishing from the catastrophic upheavals experienced through the flood and shortly thereafter.

8:13,14.

Thus in Noah's 601st year on the first day of the first month we discover that the waters had *“dried”* from the earth, and the ground surface was now *“dry.”*⁷⁵¹ It will be seen from the information above that the Hebrew word for *“dried”* and *“dry”* indicates a less dry state than the other word used in Genesis 8:7 where Noah was seeking to know whether the earth had fully dried, or in Genesis 8:14 where

⁷⁵⁰ See, for example: <https://www.wonderopolis.org/wonder/how-do-homing-pigeons-find-home#:~:text=In%20fact%2C%20homing%20pigeons%20have,time%20of%20the%20ancient%20Egyptians.>

⁷⁵¹ Presumably this would be Noah's birthday, since the time frame is being connected with Noah's life.

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the earth had fully dried enough for Noah to leave the ark exactly one year and ten days after the flood began.

Consequent on the ground now being drier, so that the waters were not spread everywhere, Noah removes the *“covering of the ark.”* Up to this point, the only covering we have been informed of in connection with the ark, was the pitch used to cover the inside and outside of the wood construction to make the whole ark watertight. There, however, the emphasis was on the pitch and not the idea of a covering. In Genesis 7:19,20 we were informed that the entire planet was covered with water so that the mountains were submerged. The Hebrew word used on these occasions was the verb כָּסָה *kāsāh* which simply means “to cover.” In Genesis 8:13 we have a noun derived from this verb “to cover” and so indicates a covering of some description. The Hebrew word here is: מִכְסָּה *mik’sēh*, and it is used exclusively to refer to the covering for the tabernacle made from rams and badgers' skins.⁷⁵² From this we might assume that there was some form of weather proof flexible covering that wrapped around the entire top of the ark, rather like the tarpaulin covering you can see on some on the top of some lorries. It is important then to note that the tabernacle, which comes later, has a close connection in thought theologically to the ark. Noah's removal of the covering signifies that the work of judgement has passed. If we transfer our thoughts to the tabernacle, this removal of the covering may be thought of as being akin to the veil in the temple being torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross.⁷⁵³ The work of atonement is complete and there was no need any more for the covering.

As the *“covering”* was removed, this enabled Noah to be able to inspect the ground better and in doing so he observed that the ground surface was now *“dry,”* although not yet completely dry. What is probably the situation here is that the waters were not now continuously covering the whole area that could be viewed, but rather were patchy like a swamp. It would take another 57 days (1st day, 1st month, 601st year to 27th day, 2nd month, 601st year) for the ground to change from being הָרֵב *hārēb* dry (swamp-like) to being יָבֵשׁ *yārēš* dry (withered). Such information indicates that whilst the initial stages of the decrease may have been rapid and continual, the later stages were much slower. This is, of course, what may be expected. The pressure exerted by a large body of water decreases as the level of water decreases and so the time to reduce the level by a certain amount increases. It is now one year and ten days since the flood began and the earth is now dry.

8:15-17.

It is only at this point that we find the Lord speaking again to Noah. The Lord had spoken to Noah about entering the ark in Genesis 7:1 (*“Then the Lord said to Noah, “Come into the ark ...”*), and now we find that the Lord speaks again to Noah, this time to leave the ark.

⁷⁵² Exodus 26:14; 35:11; 36:19,34; 40:19; Numbers 3:25; 4:8,10,11,12,25.

⁷⁵³ Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45.

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Come thou into the ark (7:1).

Go forth from the ark (8:16).

It was at the command of God that Noah (and his family) entered the ark, and it was at the command of God that they left. Note that the ark had settled, and the ground dried to a swamp-like state by day 314, but Noah waited for 57 days before leaving because he was waiting for God's command. This is a very important lesson. How easily it could have been for Noah to make his own judgement here. I wonder how often we take things into our own hands instead of waiting on God and listening intently for His command? It cannot have been easy to remain cooped up in the ark for those 57 days. I wonder how much trouble Noah faced from the other seven occupants, never mind the stink and noise of the animals!

The order in which the occupants are listed in 8:16 is slightly different to that given in 6:18.

6:18:

אַתָּה וּבְנֶיךָ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וְנָשֵׁי-בְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ

you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you

8:16:

אַתָּה וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּבְנֶיךָ וְנָשֵׁי-בְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ

you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.

This may indicate the basis upon which the new earth would be organised. It would be by family. Noah and his wife form one unit, and each son with his wife would form another unit. This is not to say that such a system did not prevail before the flood, of course. It is just that the order in which the occupants leave may suggest this thought. The entrance into the ark perhaps suggests a focus on the promise which would come through the male line. It was vital that the male line through whom the promised Messiah would come must be preserved, and so the order is males before females.⁷⁵⁴

Verse 17 continues the command to leave but concerns the animals and all living things. Thus mankind issues forth first (male and female) before all the rest of creation. So whilst in the original creation mankind (male and female) was the pinnacle being made on day 6 after all the other creatures were made, here the order is mankind (male and female) first, followed by living creatures. Since we are arguing that Noah himself is a type of Christ such an order serves to point us to Christ's pre-eminence. He is the pioneer who suffered death, was raised to new life and has ascended into heaven forever.

Thus all the animals and living things from birds, beasts and creeping things, were to be brought

754 Please note this in no way diminishes females who are co-equal with males in dignity, purpose and love with males.

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out “*with*” Noah for the purpose of replenishment. It is significant that the Lord states that the animals were to be brought out “*with*” Noah and his family, as this signifies the close connection that ought to exist between man and creation, despite the curse of the fall being still active. The animals and all living things were to, “*abound*,” they were to “*be fruitful*,” and they were to “*multiply on the earth*.” Such statements remind us of God's bounty in creation and His will that the earth be populated with His created beauty. To a great extent the original purpose and mandate in creation is still in force. The entire world was to be filled with the creatures that God had made in profuse abundance originally during creation week.

8:18,19.

It is interesting to note that the original order concerning Noah's family (Noah, his sons, his wife and his sons' wives) found in Genesis 6:18 is now given here in verse 18. This is the order in which Noah and his family actually left the ark in obedience to God's command (see table 8.3).

Table 8.3: Entering and leaving the ark.

Instruction to enter. 6:18.	And you shall go into the ark— you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.
Actual entrance. 7:7.	And he went in, Noah, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him into the ark.
Actual entrance. 7:13.	On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark.
Command to leave. 8:16.	Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you.
Actual leaving. 8:18.	Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.

It would appear then that the obedience was only partial. Noah should have listened to what God had said and left with his wife with his sons and their wives following in succession. Instead Noah leaves first followed by his sons, then Noah's wife, and finally the wives of Noah's sons. When it comes to the animals leaving we read that they came out “*according to their families*,” or, in other words, according to their kinds. This highlights the concept of distinct kinds or families. Whilst creation is all of a single unit because it was created by One God, nevertheless there are differences between kinds and among men in families and these too must be preserved.

8:20-22.

The first thing Noah does on leaving the ark is to build an altar and to worship God. This is wonderful. God is to be praised for His judgement. We are so distorted in this day and age when we repudiate judgement and have a sloppy and sentimental attitude where love denies justice. Noah's response is not only the right and just one, it is eminently sensible and wholesome too. All around him he would have seen the devastation that the flood caused. There may have been dead and decaying bodies strewn here and there. There may have been ruined vegetation or trees scattered about across the surface of the earth. Noah takes no thought of organising or cleaning these up first, for his prime focus is on worship of God.

This is the first mention of building an altar in Scripture but we are not to suppose that it was the first time in actual fact. The making of clothes from animal skins for Adam and Eve, and the sacrifice offered by Abel would all have utilised an altar, because the altar was simply the place where the animal was offered. Again we note that the concept of a *“burnt offering”* is mentioned here for the first time. This is not to suggest that it was the first time that a sacrifice was offered wholly to God as outlined in the book of Leviticus. It is likely that Abel's offering was of a whole burnt sacrifice. That we have it mentioned here in Genesis 8:20 for the first time suggests that there must have been a history. Of course, the Lord could have revealed this method of sacrifice to Noah at this point in time, but we have no indication to that effect. Rather it is more likely that Noah was doing what his forefathers had done which was what the Lord had showed to Adam and Eve, and what Abel did when he sacrificed of the best of his flock.

Noah took of all the *“clean”* animals for the purpose of offering his burnt offering in worship of God. He had been instructed to take more of the *“clean”* animals onto the ark for this very purpose.⁷⁵⁵ The idea of something labelled as *“clean”* was that it was pure, unalloyed or mixed. Thus clean animals were those only which the Israelites were allowed to eat.⁷⁵⁶ Noah had not yet eaten any flesh, so it is more likely that the idea behind this term *“clean”* is the concept of an unblemished specimen. The burnt sacrifice was given as an offering by fire and wholly unto the Lord. None of it was eaten by the worshipper. For any sacrifice the animal offered had to be without blemish or spot, neither could it be lame or deficient in any way.⁷⁵⁷ The unblemished, pure or clean nature of the sacrifice points us to the sinless nature of the one true offering, namely Christ Himself. Consequent upon Noah's offering we read in verse 21 that *“the Lord smelled a soothing aroma.”* This response of the Lord is characteristic of the burnt offering which is described as *“a sweet aroma,”* as well as, *“an offering made by fire to the*

755 Genesis 7:2,8.

756 Leviticus 11:47.

757 Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 1:3,10; 3:1,6 etc.

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Lord.⁷⁵⁸ Now these burnt offerings are types of the offering Christ made of Himself once for all. Paul writes of Christ's sacrifice as *“an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma,”* in the letter to the Ephesians.⁷⁵⁹ Now the expression we find here in Genesis 8:21 is very interesting. The word rendered *“sweet”* is actually closely related to Noah's name. Essentially it has the connotation of restfulness or satisfaction. The smell from the burnt offering was pleasing in God's “nose” and He was fully satisfied.

As a result of this the Lord issues a promise which comes in two parts. First the Lord promises that *“never again”* will He *“curse the ground”* because of man and the wicked imagination of his heart from his youth onwards. This relates back to the curse issued on the ground and spoken to Adam in Genesis 3:17. Second the Lord promises not to *“destroy every living thing”* in the way He had just done, that is, by means of the flood waters. These promises are vital for life today and they are further explicated in verse 22. As long as there are days on earth, (literally: “all the days of earth”) or, *“while the earth remains,”* there will be the regular seasons and day followed by night. The length of time that the earth would remain is dependent upon God and His will. We must not get the idea that the earth has a “sell-by-date,” nor that the earth will inevitably crumple under the weight of sin and the curse. The Lord promises that whilst time remains for the earth (and this will come to an end when God decides), then all the while the regular pattern of life will continue. Now we do not know what pattern of seasons existed in the pre-flood world. Whether you accept a water canopy encircling the globe or not, we understand that there was no rain on the earth during its first 1656 years. Now, after the flood, there will be extremes. There will be cold and heat, summer and winter. But the Lord will preserve the earth to continue both seed growing and harvest all the days that remain. We rejoice and praise the wonders of God's grace here. Even though man is wicked in the imagination of his heart from youth, the Lord will not destroy all life as He had done in the flood. This does not mean there will be no final judgement. Of course not! It simply means that this judgement was one in which every living thing (save those on the ark) died. Again we see the universal application here. Any thought of a local flood is wholly ruled out, for there have been many great and widespread local floods ever since the time of Noah.

758 Exodus 29:18,25; Leviticus 1:9.

759 Ephesians 5:2.

Chapter 9.

Covenant and curse. (9:1-10:1a).

Analysis.

1 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them:

“Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the earth.

2 And the fear of you
and the dread of you shall be
on every beast of the earth,
on every bird of the air,
on all that move *on* the earth,
and on all the fish of the sea.

They are given into your hand.

3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.

I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood.

5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*;

from the hand of every beast I will require it,
and from the hand of man.

From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed;
for in the image of God He made man.

7 And as for you,
be fruitful and multiply;
bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.”

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

9 “And as for Me, behold,

I establish My covenant

with you

and with your descendants after you,

10 and with every living creature that *is* with you:

the birds,

the cattle,

and every beast of the earth with you,

of all that go out of the ark,

every beast of the earth.

11 Thus I establish My covenant with you:

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood;

never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

12 And God said:

“This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make
between Me

and you,

and every living creature that *is* with you,

for perpetual generations:

13 I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

14 It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;

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- 15 and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me
and you
and every living creature of all flesh;
the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.
- 16 The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.”
- 17 And God said to Noah,
“This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth.”
- 18 Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were
Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
And Ham *was* the father of Canaan.
- 19 These three *were* the sons of Noah,
and from these the whole earth was populated.
- 20 And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.
- 21 Then he drank of the wine
and was drunk,
and became uncovered in his tent.
- 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan,
saw the nakedness of his father,
and told his two brothers outside.
- 23 But Shem and Japheth
took a garment,
laid *it* on both their shoulders,
and went backward
and covered the nakedness of their father.
Their faces *were* turned away,
and they did not see their father’s nakedness.
- 24 So Noah
awoke from his wine,
and knew what his younger son had done to him.
- 25 Then he said:
“cursed *be* Canaan;
a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.”
- 26 And he said:
“blessed *be* the Lord, the God of Shem,
and may Canaan be his servant.
- 27 May God enlarge Japheth,
and may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
and may Canaan be his servant.”
- 28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.
- 29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years;
and he died.
- #10 1 Now this *is* the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

In Genesis 9 we are given the beginning of the history of the new post-flood world up until the end of Noah's life as seen from the perspective of Noah's sons. The passage can be split into three distinct parts as follows:

[1] Commissioned again.

Noah and his sons are commissioned to start afresh. Genesis 9:1-7.

[2] The covenant with creation.

The promise reiterated and sealed as a covenant. Genesis 9:8-17.

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[3] Cursed be Canaan and blessed be the Lord.
Sin is still prevalent. Genesis 9:18-10:1a.

[1] Commissioned again. (Genesis 9:1-7).

And so we have a new world and a new beginning. It is thus significant that the Lord moves to blessing, for this is what He did having created mankind (male and female) in the beginning. It will be worth comparing the blessings issued in Genesis 1 with what we have here in Genesis 9 (see table 9.1).

Table 9.1: Comparing the two commissions.

<i>Genesis 1:28-31.</i>	<i>Genesis 9:1-7.</i>
28 ... Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth ...	1 ... Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.
28 ... and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.	2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move <i>on</i> the earth, and on all the fish of the sea.
29 ... “See, I have given you every herb <i>that</i> yields seed which <i>is</i> on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which <i>there is</i> life, <i>I have given</i> every green herb for food”; and it was so.	2 ... They are given into your hand. 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, <i>that is</i> , its blood.
	5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand <i>a reckoning</i> ; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.
31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed <i>it was</i> very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.	7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.

9:1.

The opening words uttered by the Lord in both cases (Genesis 1:28 and 9:1) are identical in the Hebrew.⁷⁶⁰

פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ

be fruitful and multiply and fill (namely) the earth

The Lord commands Noah and his household to be “*fruitful*,” to “*multiply*,” and to “*fill the earth*.” This much remains the same. The commands to be “*fruitful*” and to “*multiply*” have reference to both generation of offspring, and in the cultivation of the ground, or, perhaps more generally, in the pursuit of useful productive work. The command to “*fill the earth*,” extends not just to the idea of spreading out as

760 Compare Genesis 1:28 with 9:1.

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opposed to congregating, but to the concept of exploration too. This appears to be a very practical set of commands. The ark had rested on the mountain range of Ararat and the continued decrease in water level which would later on reveal the plains around modern day Iraq would have rendered life near the ark very harsh and cold. Coupled with the undoubted devastation of the earth's surface, it was expedient that Noah and his three sons would explore the new world and plan to settle in different areas. We also know very well the difficulties encountered when human beings live in close proximity. Whilst God has organised us to live in family units, these are not to be so close to one another that the opportunity for sin and evil become rampant.

9:2.

Whereas in the original creation mandate the command of God extended to ruling and having dominion over creation, now we see a very different relation to the created order which has come about because of the fall and the judgement of God. Instead of harmony, there was to be *“fear,”* and *“dread,”* (or terror) of mankind amongst all creatures. In the NKJV we have the word *“on”* used throughout which indicates that such a state has been placed there by God.

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be
on every beast of the earth,
on every bird of the air,
on all that move on the earth, and
on all the fish of the sea.
They are given into your hand

In the Hebrew text the first two occasions actually have the phrase *“upon all”* (עַל כָּל *‘al kāl*), but the second two are actually the phrase *“including all,”* or *“with all”* (בְּכָל *bekāl* / בְּכָל *bekāl*). In other words this state of fear and terror has been placed **upon** every single living creature. The reason for this was that they would now be *“given into”* the hands of mankind. Thus rather than acting to subdue and have dominion in a harmonious sense, now there is war.

9:3.

We discover that this state of fear and terror known by all creatures for mankind comes because they were now available to be eaten. It is notable that there appears to be no prohibition with regard to what may be eaten. The fear and terror was to be upon all creatures which included those found in the seas as well as those on land, and those who filled the sky. Here in verse 3 it is *“every moving thing”* in distinction to the plants and vegetation already eaten. All of that which moves *“shall be food for you,”* for the Lord had given them *“all things,”* that is living things, to eat.

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There was probably a practical reason for this. For a year and ten days Noah and his family lived on the ark eating only the crops, nuts, and vegetation they had gathered into the ark. But now as they had left the ark, the new world that they encountered and were now seeing and walking upon, would have painted an awful picture of devastation. Since mountains and valleys would have been reformed and made anew with river systems being carved out as the flood waters continued to recede, the world would have been quite barren and devoid of fertile and fruitful places that we know today. With no vegetation available and with the need for some time to cultivate land and re-grow crops, trees and so on, it was necessary to provide Noah and his family with food they could eat straight away. And so the Lord permits the eating of all and any moving thing.

9:4.

There is just one caveat added to this wide-ranging permit. Noah and his family were not permitted to *“eat flesh with its life,”* which statement is further elucidated by the addition of the words *“its blood.”* The Hebrew construction is quite emphatic beginning with a word which might be translated as “surely,” or “without doubt.” In other words the thing not permitted here was unthinkable. No one in their right mind would surely dream of doing that which the Lord here places a ban upon. Noah, and therefore all his family and all who would come from them, were never to eat any flesh that still had its life, that is its blood within it. What are we to make of the statement we find here? I think what is clearly intended is that Noah and his family were certainly never to eat *living* flesh, that is animals that were still alive. The connection between *“life”* and the *“blood”* is obviously very strong. Later on in Israel's history we read the prohibition against eating the blood because the life of the creature was *“in the blood,”* the *“blood sustains its life,”* and *“the blood is the life.”*⁷⁶¹ Whilst we ought not to read Genesis 9:4 through the lens of the later texts, we must note two important principles. First, God is unchanging, and whilst He does administer His grace and revelation in the way He chooses at different times, He will never state one thing as true and then later repeal such truth. Second we must remember that the instructions given to the Israelites also placed many restrictions on them with regard to eating various animals. Here in Genesis 9:4 the allowance is universal. Noah and his family could eat anything that moved. In Israel later on (after Sinai) there were restrictions, but these would then be lifted at the coming of Christ.⁷⁶² Thus it would appear here in Genesis 9:4 that the Lord was ensuring that Noah knew not to eat an animal which was still alive. The only way to ensure that it was dead was to allow its blood to be drained from the body. Of course the removal of all of the blood would be impossible. The concept of “kosher” meat which has blood completely eliminated is nonsense. The point here simply is that the animal to be eaten must be dead!

761 Leviticus 11:11,14; Deuteronomy 12:23.

762 Leviticus 11:1f; Mark 7:19.

9:5.

Verse 5 is a little complex. The ESV version, although it smooths out some of the Hebrew, does give the main sense well:

And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning:
from every beast
I will require it
and from man.
From his fellow man
I will require a reckoning for the life of man.⁷⁶³

This version suggests that for any human life that is taken, a “*reckoning*” must be made, whether the death came about by man or by beast. And so, as far as God is concerned, the life of mankind is very precious. The word “*reckoning*” in the NKJV is given in italics in the text indicating that it is not actually present in the Hebrew. What is there is the word: שָׁדָרַשׁ (*’ed’rōš*) which is first person singular Qal stem of the verb שָׁדַרַשׁ (*doraš*), which signifies “to seek,” or “to search for.” God seeks and searches out the blood spilt and this leads us to the idea of demanding a reckoning for the blood shed. Every drop of blood is precious to the Lord. For all human death, the Lord will seek out the reason or cause and will enact some form of retribution and judgement.

Let us pause here and consider that we ought to take great comfort from the fact that every person's life is precious to the Lord, whether that be a newly growing baby in the womb, a young lad struggling with some illness, or an older person suffering from dementia. All human life is precious in the sight of God.

9:6.

This verse continues on the theme from verse 5 but gives us a principle for societal living and a reason for such a principle. Since God demands a reckoning for human life taken, whether it be by man or beast, it is vital that mankind himself takes the death of any human being seriously, just as God does. This is why we have the system of inquests and a coroner's enquiry upon the death of any human person. Sadly this does not extend to the death of a baby in the womb.⁷⁶⁴

The stipulation given by the Lord here is that if one man takes another's life, then the murderer's life too must be forfeit. Literally the text reads:

The shedding of blood of a man by a man his blood will be shed.⁷⁶⁵

763 Genesis 9:5, ESV.

764 Abortion is a modern evil. I shudder to think how many have been cast aside in such a selfish way.

765 Genesis 9:6, my translation.

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The reason given is that mankind has been made *“in the image of God.”* Thus man is not simply a brute beast or an ordinary creature, but a living being invested with the dignity of bearing God's image. A question arises immediately here. If human life is precious to God such that He requires a reckoning, how does the taking of a murderer's life not itself demand a reckoning? Should not the one who takes the murderer's life himself have his life taken? Where does such retribution stop?

I think that the answer is quite straight forward. Any man who takes another's life is acting by himself for his own ends. However the one charged with taking the life of such a murderer is not acting by himself or from his own motives but is, in fact, carrying out God's command. Thus in these simple words we are introduced to the whole concept of society, government, and justice. Now at this point we are not given further details. Various questions arise. What happens if the death was accidental? How about a person who truly repents after a moment of rage and fury? These questions await later revelation. The point here is that all of mankind's life is precious because all have been made in God's image. We must take human life extremely seriously.

9:7.

With this verse we come back to the start of God's blessing. There is one difference here compared to what we considered in verse 1. Instead of the command to *“fill”* (or replenish), there is an imperative to multiply *“abundantly.”* The same general thought is thus given but we are reminded of God's original creation in which He fills the seas with an abundance of living creatures so that the seas swarmed with swarming things.⁷⁶⁶ And so we can consider this new world in the sense of pointing us to a re-creation. Obviously the new world is just the old one but washed by the waters of the flood. However by typology we are meant to see this as picturing a completely new creation. Where God created originally with abundance, the new world is also to be characterised by the profusion of life as evidenced by Christ's statement found in John chapter 10:

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.⁷⁶⁷

And so Noah (*“and as for you”*), and his household must seek to fill the earth with an abundance (*“bring forth abundantly in the earth”*). They are thus to multiply *“in the earth”* all types of life not just humankind. This must include the cultivation of plants and vegetation as well as raising animals. Noah and his whole family's experience in the ark will not go to waste in the new world.

766 Genesis 1:20.

767 John 10:10b.

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[2] The covenant with creation. (Genesis 9:8-17).

We have already been introduced to the idea of covenant back in Genesis 6:18. That covenant was one made exclusively with Noah and pointed us towards the covenant of grace and salvation. Noah was presented to us there as typical of Christ, (the man of rest). We remind ourselves that the covenant was presented to us there as *“My covenant,”* (that is, God's covenant), and not one made at that point in time. In this account we have the covenant declared with a promise (verses 8 to 11), and then also a sign set to ratify the covenant (verses 12 to 17).

9:8-10.

Once again God takes the initiative and He speaks to Noah and to Noah's sons.⁷⁶⁸ The Lord is always willing to reveal Himself and His ways. He has done so since the beginning of creation, and is still showing forth His wonders to us through His word and by the Holy Spirit. Those who ignore or reject His revelation do themselves immense harm. If they publish the idea that God is not interested they are placing more stumbling blocks in people's way. How in the world some people think that God is some distant power in the heavens and cares little for life on earth startles me to infinity!

In verse 9 we discover that this covenant is again the Lord's (*“My covenant”*) and one He wishes to enact (*“I establish”*). The opening two words in Hebrew are emphatic. Literally we have: “And I, behold I.” Again there is no thought of equality between the parties in this agreement. It is all an initiative of God's. The covenant is to be established not simply with Noah as in Genesis 6:18, but *“with you”* (plural) indicating all of Noah's household, and then further, *“with your descendants after you.”* indicating all of humanity that would be born from Noah!

Verse 10 informs us of further recipients of this covenant. God's covenant is to be established also with *“every living creature,”* and this is then elucidated by listing various categories, namely, *“birds,”* *“cattle,”* and *“every beast.”* All living creatures means here all creatures that had been *“with you”* (i.e. Noah and family), and which have come *“out of the ark.”* This statement gives us further indication of a universal flood for all outside the ark died. Only those from within the ark could repopulate the earth.

9:11.

In this verse we have a restatement of the fact that the Lord establishes His covenant with all mankind and all of creation, and then we get the essential promise that the covenant contains. It is given in two statements which are reinforcing of one another to give a double strength promise. First we have:

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood.

768 Genesis 9:8.

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The flood was a once-for-all-time event. Only in the flood were “*all flesh*” killed. This statement indicates once again that the flood must have been global covering the entire earth. The second statement reinforces the main idea:

... never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

Now the focus is upon the earth, the ground surface. All flesh were destroyed by the flood and the whole earth was destroyed at the same time. But now the promise is that all flesh will never again be destroyed by water, and all of the earth will never again be destroyed by flood waters. These clear statements reinforce the concept of a universal flood and rule out of court any notion of a local flood.

9:12.

At this juncture we are introduced to the interesting concept of a “*sign*.” The precise sign will not be given until we reach verse 13. For now we are simply told that the Lord will bring about a “*sign*” which is to be connected or linked with the covenant agreement that He has made (“*the sign of the covenant*”).

The Hebrew word for “sign” is: **אוֹת** *’ôṭ*. It indicates, a signal (literally or figuratively), a flag, a beacon, a monument, or some form of evidence, and is translated in the AKJV as “*sign*” (60 times), “*token*,” (14 times), “*ensign*” (2 times), “*miracle*” (2 times), and “*mark*” (1 time). It is thought to come from a word meaning “to consent,” or “to agree” in the sense of an appearance. **Wilson** has the following entry:

*“A sign, mark, or token, which brings to mind, shews, or confirms anything either past, present, or to come; which excites attention or consideration; which distinguishes one thing from another; or is an inducement to believe what is affirmed, professed, or promised.”*⁷⁶⁹

Hence a “*sign*” is a visible reminder of what has been agreed. In Genesis 6:18 there was no sign because Noah and his family entered the ark which stood for the type pointing us to Christ.

And so the Lord introduces the concept of a visible witness or evidence of the agreement that has been established by God. Then He reiterates that this covenant has been made between God and all of creation both human and animate. This is “*for perpetual generations*,” or, we might say, for everlasting cycles from father to son. In other words this covenant has been made with us today as well as with Noah and creation that then was.

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9:13,14.

The sign is now given to us and stipulated as the “rainbow,” but the Hebrew word: קֶשֶׁת *qešt*, is simply that used for an archer's bow. The bow signifies that which discharges arrows and is used to represent the divine anger against the wicked, and also to indicate divine power.⁷⁷⁰ Now in that the bow is curved towards the heavens and away from the earth, it has been suggested that the Lord of heaven Himself was to bear the judgement due to the wicked.

We note further that this “bow” is actually the Lord's for it is put as “*My rainbow*.” Verse 13 also gives us the first mention of the term “cloud.” As such it reinforces the idea that rain was not known until the flood. From this point onwards there would be clouds in the sky. The Lord God will place or establish His bow in “the cloud” which indicates both the idea of His sovereignty, and also of His definiteness. There will be a definite cloud in which the bow will be set. Perhaps we see here that there are set circumstances in which rainbows appear in the clouds.

The bow (or rainbow) appears surrounding the throne of God both in Ezekiel's vision, and in John's visions recorded in Revelation.

26 And above the firmament over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. **27** Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the colour of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. **28** Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the brightness all around it. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.⁷⁷¹

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. **3** And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.⁷⁷²

1 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. **2** He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land, **3** and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.⁷⁷³

The rainbow then was something that is depicted as that which surrounds the throne of God. Perhaps we can see here an indication of God's wrath, His bow for judgement. The placing of the bow so that it is bent pointing heavenwards signals the great grace of God in that His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, bore

770 Lamentations 2:4; 3:12; Habakkuk 3:9.

771 Ezekiel 1:26-28.

772 Revelation 4:2,3.

773 Revelation 10:1-3.

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the punishment due for our sins. In verse 14 we are reminded that the Lord God is sovereign. Clouds do not appear simply as a result of some form of inexorable law. That we might be able to predict their appearance owes everything to a faithful and ordered God, but we must always remember that God brings the clouds into being and establishes their bounds and motion. It is the Lord who directs the clouds and it is the Lord who sets the rainbow.

9:15-17.

In saying that He will “*remember*” His covenant, we are not to imagine that God could ever forget such. The point really is that He will be *mindful* of it. It isn't that the cloud and the rainbow appear and so this acts as a reminder to God a bit like the proverbial knot tied in a handkerchief! It is, after all, the Lord who arranges the clouds and rainbows as He sees fit. These will be brought into place to make the statement that God is mindful of His covenant. He is publishing or promoting it by bringing the cloud and rainbow to our view.

Once again the promise of verses 9 and 10 is reiterated. The covenant is between the Lord and all living things and it declares as a promise that “*the waters*” of “*a flood*” will “*never again*” cause the destruction of “*all flesh.*” Here once again is a statement which rules out any concept of a local flood.

At verse 16 it would seem that we have both the Lord and all of creation as the two parties in the agreement acting as witnesses. So whenever the cloud and its rainbow appear, then the Lord God will gaze upon it “*to remember the everlasting covenant,*” between Himself and all of creation. Of course we recognise the fact that the Lord established the covenant, He has set the bow as His sign of the covenant, and brings the bow out visibly at times with the cloud as He sees fit. Nevertheless when this rainbow appears then the promise is promoted.

This passage ends in verse 17 with a re-statement spoken directly to Noah, of the fact that “*this is the sign of the covenant,*” which the Lord has set between Himself and all flesh, that is, all living things, upon the earth. Noah then stands as the representative head over all creation. The agreement evidenced by the sign is between the Lord and all creation, but the revelation of such is given directly to Noah.

[3] Cursed be Canaan and blessed be the Lord. (Genesis 9:18-10:1a).

9:18,19.

We have already observed throughout this account of the flood several repetitions or reinforcements of ideas. The idea that all flesh outside the ark died is one such example, as is the concept that the entire globe was covered in water. Here in verse 18 we are taught yet again that there were only three sons of Noah who were with him in the ark and who came out of the ark. Noah may well have had

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other sons prior to these three. We have no indication that he did, but the fact that these three came along after he was five hundred years old may be indicative of the fact that others were born to him in earlier years. Now such statements are, of course, speculative, but they are nonetheless reasonable. We must be careful here not to go beyond what is written. The best we can say is that only these three sons “*Shem, Ham, and Japheth*” left the ark, because only these three entered it.⁷⁷⁴

But now we discover that Ham had a son named “*Canaan*.” This name has an interesting meaning, namely “servant,” or “merchant.” It derives from the Hebrew word which means “to bend the knee,” or “to be humbled.” **Wilson** suggests in his entry for Canaan that the ancient name of Phoenicia was also given as “*Cna*” which is synonymous with the name “*Canaan*.”⁷⁷⁵ Apparently Cna's brother was “Isiris” also known as “Osiris,” of Egyptian fame.⁷⁷⁶ We shall defer discussion of these interesting facts until we reach the genealogies of Genesis 10. In that Ham now has a son it is clear that some time has passed. From what we read of later on in this account the son was at least a teenager and may have been older.

Verse 19 reinforces the point that the entire world population had been generated from Noah and his three sons (“*and from these the whole earth was populated*”). Once again we are being shown that the flood was universal and not local. It would seem here that Noah may not have had any more children after the flood, as the text seems to indicate that the whole world was populated from the three sons.

9:20,21.

The opening verse indicates that Noah acted with determination and purpose. The verb used can be translated “and he was strong,” indicative of the use of force and effort. Noah is characterised here literally as “a man of the ground.” Given his pedigree in building the ark and in populating it we ought not to be surprised at this new project! The word given as “*vineyard*” indicates a park that has plants of the nobler sort.⁷⁷⁷ It is almost universally translated in Scripture as “*vineyard*,” and we come to understand this from verse 21 where the produce “*wine*” is referred to. Thus some considerable time has passed to enable a vineyard to grow and produce grapes for wine.

In verse 21 the words rendered “*drank*” and “*drunk*” are from two different Hebrew words. The first (“*drank*”) is: שָׁתָה *šatah*, and has the meaning “to drink, with the notion of enjoyment.”⁷⁷⁸ The idea of a banquet is in view. The second Hebrew word (“*drunk*”) is: שָׁכַר *šakah*, and means “to drink to the full, to drink to hilarity, to be drunk.”⁷⁷⁹ The text suggests a chain of events that would be inevitable. Noah

774 Genesis 7:13.

775 **Wilson**. P81.

776 **Wilson**. P81. Osiris is not mentioned in Scripture but was a character who featured prominently in Egyptian mythology.

777 **Wilson**. P468.

778 **Wilson**. P135.

779 **Wilson**. P134.

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wanted to celebrate his vintage and so had a banquet and imbibed freely of the produce. As a consequence he became intoxicated and drunk, and as an outcome from that he uncovered himself and became naked in his tent. It would appear that he simply staggered into his tent and removed all his clothes lying naked in a drunken stupor.

9:22.

What happened next has often been a puzzle to many readers. Noah celebrated his produce and gets drunk in the process, and his son Ham sees him and simply tells his two brothers that Noah was naked. What is the big deal? As a fellow student I was with once said to the lecturer who was discussing this passage: “surely they were all boys together so what's all the fuss about?”

The first thing to note is that the verb “to see” is one which indicates observation and experience not just mentally beholding something in the mind. The verb also signifies a viewing which is purposeful and with either pleasure or pain.⁷⁸⁰ In other words it indicates a gaze or purposeful viewing. The verb in Hebrew sentences is often put first but it seems to me there is an emphasis upon Ham's action. Ham is described as being “*the father of Canaan,*” to whom we have already been introduced. However it is not clear at this point what part Canaan played in the proceedings if at all. What did Ham see? Well it is clear that Ham saw Noah's nakedness. So what is the problem here? Is it improper to see someone naked? The answer to such a question is obvious. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, people have been clothed to hide their nakedness. The great problem with nakedness is that it leads to temptations, especially of a sexual nature. Men especially are troubled with this problem. For women, touch is more arousing, but for men the sight of a naked body seems to arouse the passions. Now it does not appear evident from the Hebrew text that Ham *did* anything or indeed that he was thinking in any sexual way, but there does seem to be an implication towards this idea. In the next part of the verse we learn that Ham announced and declared this to his two brothers who were outside. The verb used is: נָגַד *nagad*, and this has the meaning “to bring to light,” or “to announce, declare,” so it would appear that Ham boasted or published abroad what he had seen. Whether Ham had done anything perverse or simply exalted in Noah's debasement, the clear implication is that he was not acting out of love nor out of propriety. It may be that he was highlighting Noah's debasement to cover his own perversity. Calvin makes a useful point in his commentary on Genesis:

*“Therefore, it is probable, that he thus perversely insulted his father, for the purpose of acquiring for himself the license of sinning with impunity.”*⁷⁸¹

780 **Davidson.** P670. **Wilson.** P376.

781 **John Calvin.** *Commentary on Genesis.* Geneva Series. Banner of Truth. P303.

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9:23.

Now Ham's two brothers, Shem and Japheth, act in a decidedly different manner. Taking a garment, or covering, the two brothers rest it upon both their shoulders (one either side of the garment), and walking backwards with their faces looking forwards, they retreated over Noah's naked body in order to cover it up. The word *“backwards”* comes twice in this verse, once in connection with their walking and a second time in reference to their faces. This was an attempt to undo the wrong done by Ham's impropriety to their father. It is significant that at the end of this verse we read that *“and they did not see their father's nakedness.”* A literal translation of this phrase would be:

the nakedness of their father they saw not.

The verb comes right at the end of the sentence. This is to be contrasted with the start of verse 22 where the verb “to see” comes first. Thus whilst Ham *saw*, (in some perverse way) Noah's nakedness, the two brothers *saw not*, their father's nakedness. The contrast between the two actions is stark.

9:24-27.

In the course of time Noah comes out of his drunken state (*“awoke from his wine”*). Verse 24 continues with a statement which makes what has gone before a lot clearer. The Holy Spirit has spared us the sordid details of what Ham *did* by focusing our attention on what he *“saw”* and what his brothers turned their gaze away from. Now we learn that Noah *“knew what his younger son had done to him.”* Incidentally, in connection with information from Genesis 5 and 11 we learn that Japheth was the oldest born when Noah was five hundred years old, Shem was born two years later and now we read that Ham was the *“younger son.”*⁷⁸² Returning to the thought expressed at the end of verse 24, we come to realise that Ham did more than view his father's nakedness and scoff at him. What he actually did we do not need to know. We do not want to focus on error and sin. However the use of words here is important. Ham *“saw”* his father's nakedness, and Noah knew what Ham had *“done”* as well. This word is the Hebrew word: עָשָׂה *‘āśāh* which has a range of meanings most often centred around some form of action, that is, “to do, “to do work, “to make,” and so on. So some form of action *beyond merely seeing* must have taken place.

In view of knowing what had happened to him by Ham, in verse 25 we read of Noah's curse. At this point we are surprised to learn that Noah does not curse Ham but Canaan his son to whom we were introduced at the start of this episode in verse 18. There are a number of words which are rendered as *“curse”* in Scripture, but the one used here suggests a detestation or abhorrence of the one cursed coupled

782 Genesis 5:32; 11:10.

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with a wish that evil will befall them. Now the curse uttered upon Canaan can only mean that Canaan must have had a part to play in this affair. Thus Ham with Canaan did something to Noah which at the least was to view Noah's nakedness, and much more likely involved some form of perverse action. As a consequence of this Canaan will be a *“servant of servants.”* The reduplication of the term *“servant”* in verse 25 suggests the superlative, the most servant-like of all servants.

In verse 26 Noah gives us a contrast to this curse. Bad behaviour (whether it be of a perverse sexual nature or mere contemptuous mocking) will result in abhorrence and disgust, and will have dire consequences in God's sight. On the other hand good behaviour as shown by Ham's brothers in verses 26 and 27, was to be rewarded.

Noah's blessing upon Japheth in verse 27 does admit of some ambiguity. The question revolves around whom is indicated as dwelling in Shem's tents. Is it Japheth or is it God? To consider this I have attempted translation of both verses 26 and 27:

וַיֹּאמֶר בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנַעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ יִפְתָּ
אֱלֹהִים לַיִּפֶּת וַיֵּשְׁכֶן בְּאֶהְלֵי-שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנַעַן עֶבֶד לָמוֹ

And he said “Blessed of the Lord my God be Shem, and let Canaan be servant to him.
May He God enlarge (open out) Japheth, and may He dwell in the tents of Shem, and let
Canaan be servant to him.”

It should be noted that there is much symmetry in the wording of these two verses. The phrase highlighted in yellow is repeated. I have translated this as *“and let Canaan be servant to him.”* Shem's name also appears twice which I have indicated by underlining. The third and fourth statements highlighted in green and orange I have translated with God as the subject in both cases. This is where the ambiguity lies. It is very clear that God is most definitely the subject of the third statement which is a blessing uttered concerning Japheth (*“May He God enlarge Japheth”*). I have translated the verb (*“May He”*) and then put God's name immediately afterwards as this is how the Hebrew tracks. In a proper translation we would reduce this simply to: *“May God enlarge”* because the verb relates directly to the subject which is God. I have left it in its literal sense to show the connection with the next statement, which simply reads: *“and may He dwell in the tents of Shem.”* It would make little sense to change the subject to refer to Japheth at this point, although many commentators and translators do in fact do so. I hold that the subject has not changed from the previous clause, and we are still focusing on God and what He will do. If the subject has changed to Japheth at this point, we need to ask why, all of a sudden, are we being told about

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the living accommodation of the two brothers? It would also seem to go against the blessing issued to Japheth, for if Japheth is to be enlarged or spread out, why would he be dwelling in Shem's tents? Thus in effect we have five statements made by Noah which read in succession as follows:

Blessed of the Lord my God be Shem,
and let Canaan be servant to him.
May He God enlarge (open out) Japheth,
and may He dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be servant to him.

It will be seen that the first statement is different to that which appears in the NKJV (*“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem”*). A similar translation is offered by most other renditions with the exception of the YLT which has: *“Blessed of Jehovah my God [is] Shem,”* and the RSV which puts it like this: *“Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem.”* The thing that unites these two versions is their rendition of אֱלֹהֵי *’ēlōhē* as *“my God,”* which all other translations ignore or smooth out, but which I have followed as the first person singular suffix appears on the shortened form of the name of God.

Thus the first blessing is towards Shem. In this statement we note Noah's faith, for Noah is pronouncing a blessing from the Lord whom he describes as *“my God.”* Most translations as we have already noted have Noah blessing the Lord God. This is, of course, perfectly possible but appears an awkward construction. Literally the words we actually have are:

Blessed – Lord – my God – Shem.

The translator has to supply a word in English to make sense of the Hebrew. Usually the verb “to be” is employed. The question is where do we put it? If we put it as most translators do following the word *“blessed”* we have the Lord being blessed and then a statement which is then adjusted to read *“the God of Shem,”* which is awkward. It seems more natural to place the verb towards the end so that the blessing is upon Shem, yielding the following: *“blessed [of the] Lord my God be Shem.”*

The second and fifth statements are a follow on from the curse pronounced on Canaan. He is to be servant of servants but to whom is he to serve? The natural inclination is to suggest that Canaan is to be servant to Shem and Japheth. This, of course, is prophetic. We dare not make the blunder that because a man and his son follow a particular sinful course of action then all their progeny will do likewise. If that were the case none could ever be saved. However if a man and his son and their descendants continue in such a fashion they are reserving for themselves the status of servant of servants with respect to God's

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blessed people. This is not to say that the blessed may lord it over those who continue in such wicked ways, but that those who do so will inevitably end up serving the blessed in some way. In essence the plan of God is for His people to be blessed and those who depart from this will end up serving the cause of God even though they despise Him. We could think of how Pharaoh would later show forth God's glory in his opposition to the Lord and to His people, or we could consider how the authorities who put Christ to death ultimately brought about the blessing of God, even though they intended the exact opposite.

The second and third statements have the Lord as the main focus. Shem was blessed in the first statement, and Japheth is being blessed in these. However the prime focus is on the Lord. Two things are mentioned. First the wish is that Japheth would fulfil the meaning of his name, which means “to be enlarged.” We naturally want to see this again in prophetic terms because shortly we will discover that Japheth and his progeny were the ones who spread the furthest throughout the world. However I feel that there is a greater sense of a personal word meant for Japheth here. The Hebrew verb used here (פָּתַח *pātāh*) can also mean “open-hearted” according to **Wilson**.⁷⁸³ It would seem from verse 23 that Shem took the initiative to cover their drunken father, as his name appears first. Japheth was the older brother, as we discovered earlier, and yet Shem takes the initiative. Thus the Lord is calling Japheth to a more open and trusting way.⁷⁸⁴ If the third statement which I have translated with reference to God as subject ought to be given with Japheth as the subject, (“*and may he (Japheth) dwell in the tents of Shem*”) then this would be a pointer to Japheth to follow Shem's more godly example. That being said I still believe the primary focus is that God was with Shem and dwelt with him.

9:28,29.

Chapter 9 concludes with a summary telling us some more detail about Noah. The wording reminds us of the writing found in Genesis 5. We are informed that Noah lived another three hundred and fifty years and that his life was nine hundred and fifty years long in all, and then “*he died.*” Such a pattern is intended to connect with the earlier genealogy of Genesis 5 and show us that Noah's end is the same as all who went before.

Given that Noah lived for so long after the flood we might wonder what became of him. Scripture is completely silent on that matter. The events we have been discussing probably occurred within the first few decades after the flood so much of the remainder of Noah's life after the flood is shrouded in obscurity. Reference to Noah in ancient Chinese mythology, and the fact that early Chinese script (pictographs) is connected with Genesis details, lead to the probability that Noah moved east and settled

⁷⁸³ **Wilson**. P146.

⁷⁸⁴ It might also be significant that the order of presentation of the three sons of Noah is always: “*Shem, Ham, Japheth.*” Perhaps this order reflects aspects of their character. Shem clearly had a true faith in the Lord. Ham was perhaps the more actively vocal and clearly rebellious and perhaps Japheth was somewhat retiring. These are merely suggestions.

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somewhere near what we now know as China. However the Scriptures do not tell us so we will not pursue this matter.⁷⁸⁵

10:1a.

This fourth section of the book of Genesis concludes with its title found in the first half of the first verse of Genesis chapter 10. The implication of the words is that the three sons of Noah, namely: Shem, Ham and Japheth, were responsible for recording the details we have been investigating.

⁷⁸⁵ The interested reader should consult my work: “**Ushering in an Old Age,**” and the work of **C. H. Kang and Ethel R. Nelson**. *The Discovery of Genesis*. 1979. Concordia Publishing House. See also: <https://www.icr.org/article/genesis-chinese-pictographs/> See also: <http://www.ldolphin.org/miao.html> and <https://www.icr.org/article/genesis-according-miao-people/>

Chapter 10.

Rebellion fails again. (10:1b-11:10a).

Analysis.

And sons were born to them after the flood.

2 The sons of Japheth *were*

Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

3 The sons of Gomer *were*

Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

4 The sons of Javan *were*

Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

5 From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

6 The sons of Ham *were*

Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

7 The sons of Cush *were*

Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah;

and the sons of Raamah *were*

Sheba

and Dedan.

8 Cush begot

Nimrod;

he began to be a mighty one on the earth.

9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said,

“Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.”

10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. **11** From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, **12** and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (*that is the principal city*).

13 Mizraim begot

Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, **14** Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim).

15 Canaan begot

Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; **16** the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; **17** the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; **18** the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.

Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.

19 And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

20 These *were* the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands *and* in their nations.

21 And *children* were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder.

22 The sons of Shem *were*

Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

23 The sons of Aram *were*

Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

24 Arphaxad begot

Salah, and Salah begot

Eber.

25 To Eber were born two sons:

the name of one *was* Peleg,

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for in his days the earth was divided;
and his brother's name *was* Joktan.

26 Joktan begot

Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, **27** Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, **28** Obal,
Abimael, Sheba, **29** Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

All these *were* the sons of Joktan. **30** And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go
toward Sephar, the mountain of the east.

31 These *were* the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their
nations.

32 These *were* the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were
divided on the earth after the flood.

#11 1 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.

2 And it came to pass,

as they journeyed from the east,
that they found a plain in the land of Shinar,
and they dwelt there.

3 Then they said to one another,

“Come, let us make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly.”

They had brick for stone,
and they had asphalt for mortar.

4 And they said,

“Come,

let us build ourselves

a city,

and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens;

let us make a name for ourselves,

lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

5 But the Lord

came down to see

the city

and the tower

which the sons of men had built.

6 And the Lord said,

“Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing
that they propose to do will be withheld from them.

7 Come,

let Us

go down

and there confuse their language,

that they may not understand one another's speech.”

8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth,
and they ceased building the city.

9 Therefore its name is called Babel,

because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth;

and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

10 This *is* the genealogy of Shem:

This section can be divided into two main parts. In the bulk of Genesis 10 we have what is often referred to as the “Table of Nations” which documents the descendants (or at least some of them) from each of Noah's sons. The opening statement (“*and sons were born to them after the flood*”) could sit well with the title of the last section. It may actually be a piece that Moses edited to make the links between each section flow better. Or it may be that the new section (which we hold is according to Shem as Genesis 11:10a indicates) begins at Genesis 10:2 with the introduction of Japheth's descendants. Either

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way, Genesis 10 records the offspring of each of the sons of Noah starting with Japheth and ending with Shem. One reason for this order is probably to enable the next section to move seamlessly from Shem's relatives into the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph who were all Shem's progeny. Japheth was the oldest son and because his descendants spread the furthest they are put first. The central section features Ham's descendants and homes in on Nimrod and his rebellion which forms the subject of the beginning of Genesis 11.

In my analysis I have spliced the text into four separate parts, one each for each son of Noah and then another for the Tower of Babel account that begins Genesis 11. It is important, however, to note that Genesis 10:1b-32 forms a seamless unit which is subdivided into three parts following the progress of each son of Noah. Genesis 11:1-10a focuses on the rebellion which started with Nimrod who was Ham's grandson. Genesis 10:10-12 tells us of later developments under Nimrod's lead so the Tower of Babel history fits within the Table of Nations as a fairly early event, but is separated out to give a backdrop to the unfolding story of redemption which continues with Abram in Genesis 12.

There are a number of works which discuss how Noah's descendants spread across the earth and it is not my intention to add to this work.⁷⁸⁶ I will content myself with some comments appended to some of the names and limit my comments to the text as a whole.

[1] The Table of Nations. (Genesis 10:1b-32).

text of Genesis 10:1b-32 can be summarised as shown in table 10.1.

Table: 10.1: The Table of Nations.

Text.	Main theme.	Some Scripture detail.
10:1b.	Introduction.	And sons were born to them after the flood.
10:2-4.	Japheth's descendants.	
10:5.	Concluding statement.	5 From these the coastland <i>peoples</i> of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.
10:6-19.	Ham's descendants.	
10:20.	Concluding statement.	20 These <i>were</i> the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands <i>and</i> in their nations.
10:21-30.	Shem's descendants.	
10:31.	Concluding statement.	31 These <i>were</i> the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.
10:32.	Final concluding comment.	32 These <i>were</i> the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.

⁷⁸⁶ These include: **Bodie Hodge**. *Tower of Babel: The Cultural History of our Ancestors*. 2013. Master Books. **Bill Cooper**: The early post-flood history of Europe traced back to Noah. 1995. New Wine Press. **Don Richardson**. *Eternity in their Hearts*. 1984. Regal Books.

10:1b-5. Japheth.

The opening words spell out the growth of population by focusing in the Hebrew way upon the sons, (“*and sons were born*” to Noah's sons “*after the flood*”). The sons of the first son, Japheth, are given from verse 2. The first thing to note as a general point in all of these lists is that some names have plural endings (“*-im*”), and others seem to be names used of tribes (i.e. names with endings like “*-ite*” for example). It would seem from this that Shem (the writer of this section) probably did not have direct information about these groups of people. In the case of Japheth, who spread the furthest, we are given seven sons of the first generation, and then seven grandsons. Presumably because they spread so far Shem had little knowledge of these people after the second generation.

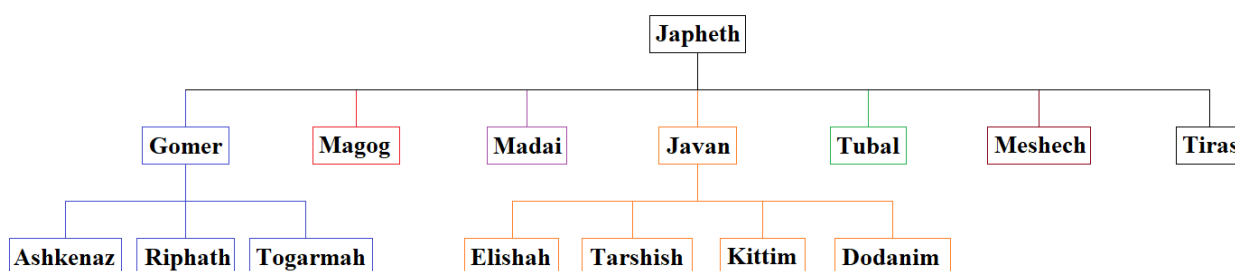


Figure 13: The descendants of Japheth.

By and large Japheth's descendants spread north of the Middle East and spread out through Europe and Russia. Gomer is the ancestor of the Cimmerians who seem to have reached as far north as Wales (known by the name “Cymru”). Magog gave rise to the Scythians and the Goths. Madai is the progenitor of the Medes who feature much in later times. Javan is the ancestor of the Greeks and also of the northern Germanic peoples. From Tubal came the peoples of Spain and Italy. Meshech spawned the Cappadocians, and Tiras the Thracians.⁷⁸⁷

Many of the meanings of the names of Japheth's offspring show that the idea of expansion and conquest is uppermost.⁷⁸⁸ Only two names (“*Madai*” “extended of the Lord,” and “*Elishah*” “God the Saviour” or “salvation of my God”) signify any reference to God. Whether we can assume from this that Japheth and his posterity were lacking in godliness is not at all clear. Where the text is silent we do well to remain quiet! References in Ezekiel reinforce the warrior-like nature of many of Japheth's descendants.⁷⁸⁹ Gomer and Togarmah are mentioned with “*troops*” from the north, for example.⁷⁹⁰ Tarshish, Javan, Tubal,

⁷⁸⁷ Bodie Hodge. *Tower of Babel: The Cultural History of our Ancestors*. 2013. Master Books. P78.

⁷⁸⁸ Jones.

⁷⁸⁹ Gomer – Ezekiel 28:6. Togarmah – Ezekiel 27:14; 38:6. Magog – Ezekiel 38:2; 39:6. Javan – Ezekiel 27:13,19. Elishah – Ezekiel 27:7. Tarshish – Ezekiel 27:12,25; 38:13. Kittim – Ezekiel 27:6. Tubal – Ezekiel 27:13; 32:26; 38:2,3; 39:1. Meshech – Ezekiel 27:13; 32:26; 38:2,3; 39:1.

⁷⁹⁰ Ezekiel 38:6.

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Meshech and Togarmah are noted as trading merchants dealing in horses and slaves.⁷⁹¹

Verse 5 informs us that these people were separated into different families and nations according to both land and language. At this point we jump to Genesis 11:1 where we discover that the whole world originally spoke the same language as one would expect since all were derived from the three sons of Noah. Thus these details come after the events of Genesis 11:1f. This is the first time we come across the Hebrew term: גוֹיִם *gōyīm* “nations” rendered here as “*Gentiles*” in the first part of the verse, and then as “*nations*” at the end. The first use comes in the larger phrase “*coastland ... of the Gentiles*” which in other versions is put as “*isles of the nations.*” This signifies all the islands encountered north and west of Israel. These various descendants have been separated by two main means: first according to “*language,*” and second through “*their families.*” The result is that there are various “*nations*” made up of families speaking a similar language.

The word rendered “*separated*” is the Hebrew verb: פָּרַד *pārad*, which has the essential meaning: “to break off,” “to break in pieces,” or “to separate by breaking.” The same word is also found in verse 32, but the word given as “*divided*” in verse 25 is different and is closely related to the name “*Peleg,*” about which we will have more to say in a moment.

10:6-20. Ham.

Not a great deal has been given in connection with Japheth and his descendants, but when we come to Ham's progeny we are given some very important information which must be connected with Genesis 11, as we shall see.

The way that we are introduced to Ham's descendants is quite interesting. We are given the names of Ham's four sons, and then we get the offspring of the first son “*Cush,*” but in two separate parts. First we get the first five sons of “*Cush,*” and two grandsons through the fourth son “*Raamah,*” in verses 6 and 7. Then we are introduced to another son of “*Cush*” about whom we get a great deal more information in verses 8 to 12. Then we come back to the offspring of Ham's second son in verses 13 and 14, and then the offspring of the fourth son of Ham in verses 15 to 19 rounding off with a summary statement in verse 20.

According to the Jewish historian Herodotus, “*Cush*” stands for the African nation of Ethiopia.⁷⁹² For “*Mizraim,*” all accept this as the founder of Egypt. The name is actually a dual in Hebrew indicating two things. Most recognise this in terms of what is known as “upper” and “Lower” Egypt. The third son of Ham was “*Put*” about whom we are given no further information here, but who probably settled in North Africa and generated the nation of Libya. The last son of Ham was “*Canaan,*” about whom we have been introduced in Genesis 9, and about whom we read a great deal in the remainder of the Old

⁷⁹¹ Ezekiel 27:12-14.

⁷⁹² **Herodotus.** *Antiquities of the Jews.* 1.6. The name means: “A black countenance,” or “full of darkness.”

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Testament. From these four sons of Ham we observe that they occupied the land of Palestine in the main and moved south into Africa peopling that great continent.

The descendants of “*Cush*” probably settled in the regions surrounding Ethiopia, possibly spreading further south into the African continent. Because there is an overlap in names with the sons of Shem (“*Sheba*,” and “*Havilah*”), many assume that some of the descendants of “*Cush*” moved back to the Arabian peninsula.⁷⁹³ This does not seem likely in my view. However Hodge has pointed out that there were probably many migrations back and forth and even some co-mingling of peoples, so that it is not really possible to be exactly sure of migrations merely by analysing the names.⁷⁹⁴

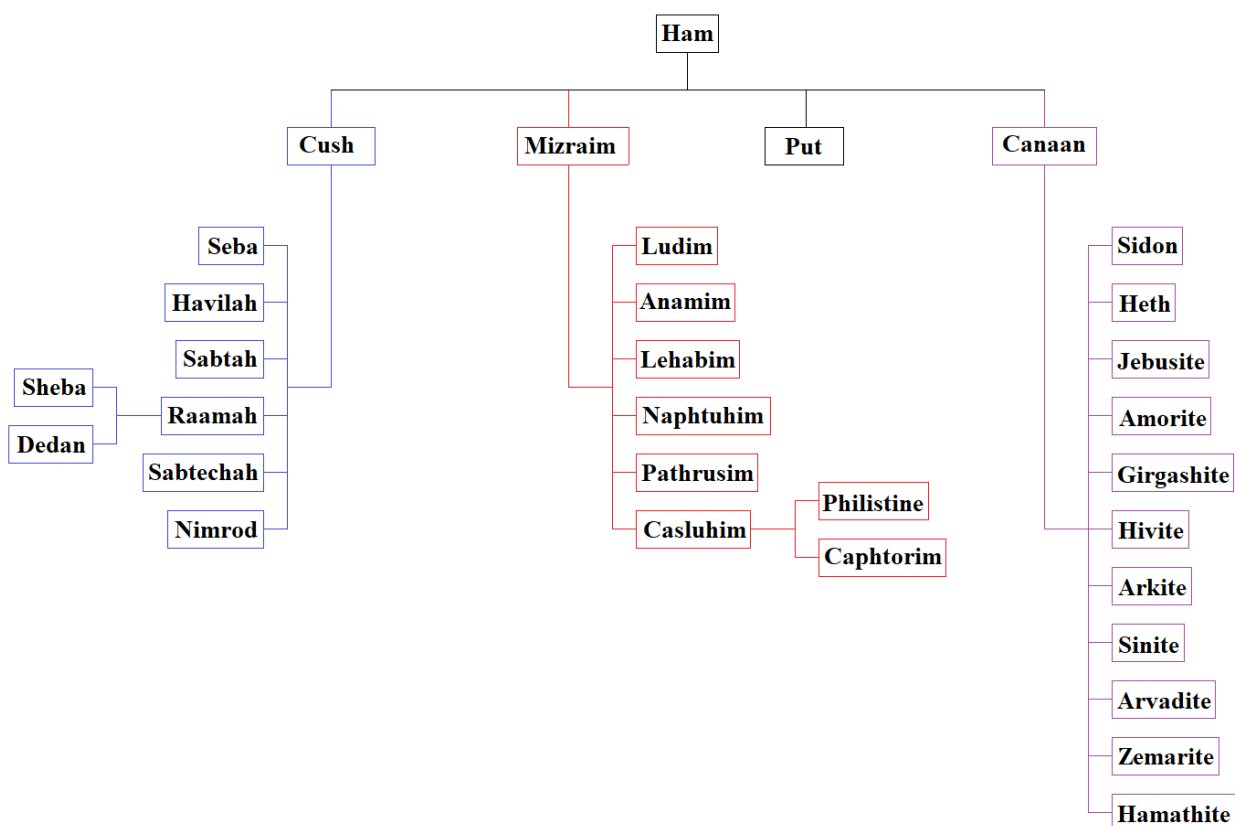


Figure 14: The descendants of Ham.

Nimrod son of Cush.

The earliest possible date for Nimrod is somewhere between 40 to 60 years after the flood. This assumes that Ham's wife had Cush shortly after the flood, and that Cush had Nimrod when he was in his twenties or thirties.

The first important thing to note concerning “*Nimrod*” is the meaning of his name and its close connection with the Babylonian god known by the name “*Merodach*.”⁷⁹⁵ These names are shown below:

793 Genesis 10:7,28,29.

794 **Bodie Hodge**. *Tower of Babel: The Cultural History of our Ancestors*. 2013. Master Books. P123-7.

795 Jeremiah 50:2.

מֶרֶדַךְ	Merodach	That rebel!
נִמְרֹד	Nimrod	Rebel

Now Nimrod was the first to be known by the epithets, “*a mighty one*,” and “*a mighty hunter*.” The natural assumption is to think of this in terms of hunting animals. However, the sentences that follow lead us in a very different direction. Verse 9 thence describes Nimrod in further detail. He was not just a “*mighty one*,” but is referred to twice as a “*mighty hunter before the Lord*.” The last part of this phrase is, literally, “to the face of the Lord.” In other words, Nimrod was hunting against the Lord. The question arises, then, what was Nimrod's prey? Perhaps it was animals. Perhaps he was one who fought against vicious beasts, troublesome dinosaurs or beasts that terrorised? However in view of what is to come in Genesis 11 we think it likely that his intention was to form a kingdom and to act as a king lording it over men.

In verse 10 we see the extent of Nimrod's kingdom. He started at “*Babel*,” about which more will come in Genesis 11, but then continued with three more cities in the land of “*Shinar*,” the country of two rivers (Tigris and Euphrates). The names of two of the cities indicate a military setting:

Erech	“Length,” “to lengthen.”
Accad	“Band,” “chain” (i.e. fortress, citadel, castle).
Calneh	“Fortified dwellings.”

These three cities were situated close to Babel (later Babylon) in the south of the land of Shinar (modern day Iraq). From this vantage point Nimrod then moved north and built in the land which was to become known as “*Assyria*.”⁷⁹⁶ The question to be asked here is why was the land north of Babel already known by the name “*Assyria*”? The text reads as follows in the NKJV: “*From that land he went to Assyria*.” Most modern translations follow this type of translation. However, the AKJV offers a different rendition which suggests that a son of Shem was somehow involved: “*out of that land went forth Asshur*.” It may be that “*Asshur*,” (same as “*Assyria*” in the Hebrew: אַשּׁוּר *’aššûr*), the second son of Shem, settled in the northern region at first, and Nimrod invaded his land. However the difference between the AKJV and modern translations highlights the problem we have in translating this phrase. The Hebrew fir this phrase is as follows:

796 Genesis 10:11.

מִן-הָאָרֶץ הַהִוא יָצָא אֲשׁוּר וַיִּבֶן

from that land he went Asshur/Assyria? and he built

Now, according to *Davidson*, the Hebrew word: אֲשׁוּר *'aššûr* can have the meaning “step” as well as standing for the country “*Assyria*,” or the person “*Asshur*.”⁷⁹⁷ If the name “*Asshur*” was intended here, this would cause some consternation and difficulty. Why, we may ask, was Shem's second son suddenly placed in the section describing sons of Ham when all else is clearly delineated into the separate sons (Shem, Ham, Japheth)? It is also extremely unlikely that the land of “Assyria” is meant here, for we have no indication of such settlement being formed at this time. Remember that this time period is shortly after the flood, so that we are witnessing the earliest days of the earliest settlements and civilisations. The best option is to render the Hebrew word: אֲשׁוּר *'aššûr* by the phrase “*a step*,” thus yielding the following translation:

from that land he went a step and he built ...

Thus Nimrod moved north (“a step”) as the first military conqueror and built four more cities:

Nineveh	“Habitation of Ninus.”
Rehoboth Ir	“Streets,” “wide spaces.”
Calah	“Old age,” “completion,” “vigour.”
Resen	“Bridle.”

With “*Resen*” sited between Nineveh and Calah there seems to be a plan in Nimrod's building programme. This last city is then described as “*the principal city*,” which is literally: “the great city.”

Verse 13 describes the descendants of Mizraim (Egypt) many of which spread out into regions of Africa. From this centre came the Philistines who spread back into Canaan. The last son of Ham, “*Canaan*,” occupied the land of Palestine. The sons of Canaan were spread throughout the region and verse 19 describes the boundaries that were in operation. Verse 20 concludes the division of Ham, again with the various peoples being separated according to “*languages*” and “*families*.”

⁷⁹⁷ *Davidson*. P52. The meaning “*a step*” is found in the following places: Job 23:11; 31:7; Psalm 17:11; 37:31; 44:18; 73:2.

10:21-32. Shem.

A translation of verse 21 is shown below:

וְלִשְׁם יָלֵד גַּם-הוּא אָבִי כָל-בְּנֵי-עֶבֶר--אֶתִּי יָפֶתְ הַגָּדוֹל

And to Shem were born even him the father of all the sons of Eber the brother of Japheth the elder (great)

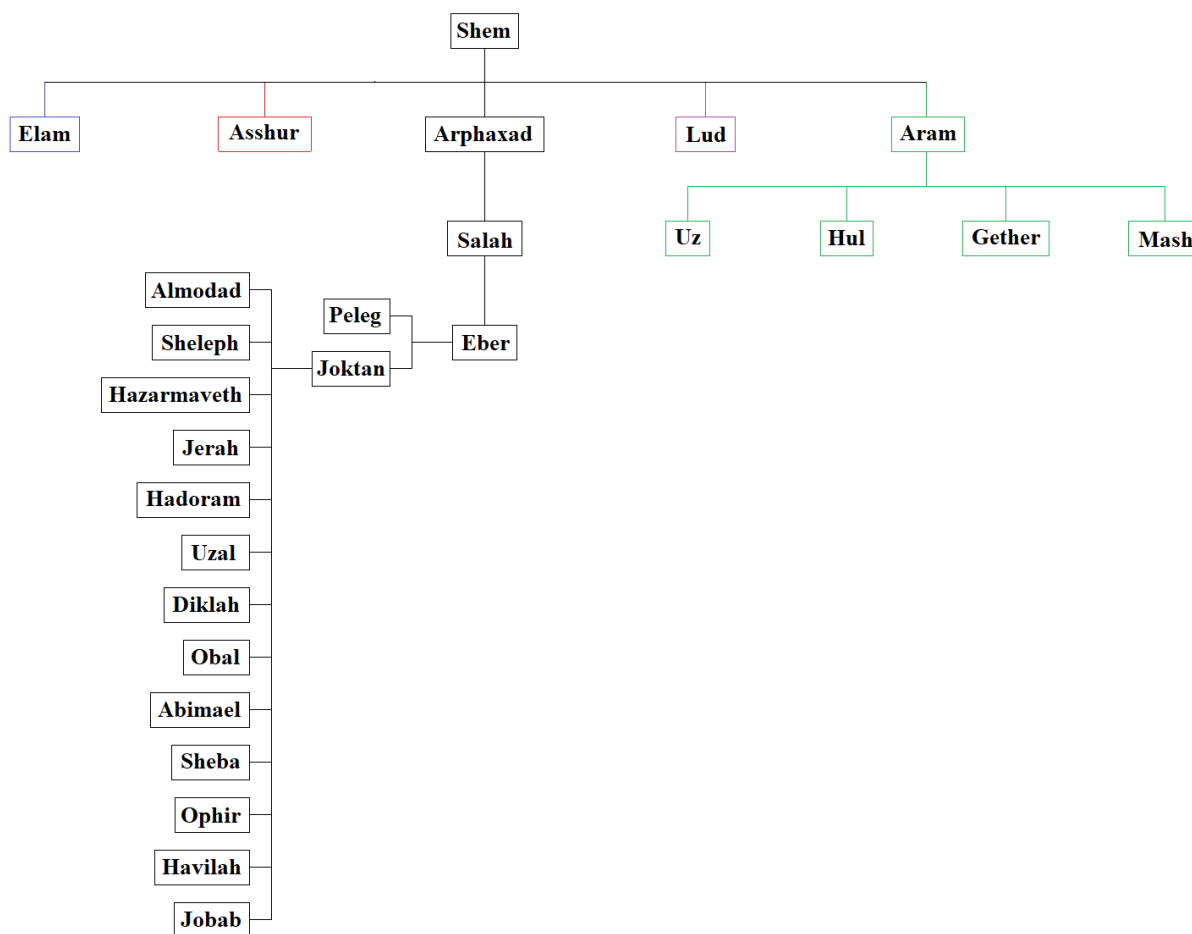


Figure 15: The descendants of Shem.

Shem is put last in the sequence of Genesis 10 primarily because through him will come the one promised, and this is to be the main focus from Genesis 12 onwards. Shem was brother to Japheth who is described as the “*elder.*” Ham was the youngest, so Shem was the middle of the three. In this connection it is significant also that he is described here as “*the father of all the children of Eber*” in verse 21. Why, we ask, is “*Eber*” singled out? To answer this we need to consider some facts we will come across in

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Shem's genealogy in Genesis 11:10b to be discussed in the next chapter. Here, however, we note that the people of God will become known as the *“Hebrews”* or the *“children of Eber.”* It is to be noted at this point that Shem's genealogy is given here in Genesis 10, and then again in the account according to Terah which begins at Genesis 11:10b. There is no conflict between the two accounts for both detail the actual historical details of the various descendants, but both have different aims and purposes. The one given here is to show how Shem's progeny spread out and to show how fruitful they were. The one in Genesis 11:10b is to point the way to the next important figure in God's redemptive story, namely Abram.

Shem's sons are given in verse 22 and from this we note that Arphaxad is given as the third son, whereas in Genesis 11:10 he is singled out as son of Shem born two years after the flood. This suggests that *“Elam,”* and *“Asshur,”* were born prior to this. This indicates that families were very fruitful in these days. Aram's sons are listed in verse 23 and these grandsons to Shem settled in the northern regions of Palestine.

From verse 24 through to verse 26 we have the third, fourth and fifth generations from Shem. It would appear that Shem was concerned to cover the extent of his family rather than the breadth. Verse 25 informs us that Eber had two sons and the first of these is noted as being significant. Peleg's name is similar to the word translated as *“divided.”* It is surely significant that the word used for divided in Genesis 10:25 (פֶּלֶג *pālag*) is connected to Peleg's name (פֶּלֶג *pēleg*) but which is different from the one used in Genesis 10:5,32 (פָּרַד *pārad*). A comparison of these words is shown in table 10.2.

Table 10.2: Peleg and divisions.

Hebrew.		Scripture.	Meaning.
פֶּלֶג	Peleg	Genesis 10:25.	Division, or <i>“the water of a brook or river distributed into small streams, that it may be conveyed to any part of grounds where it is wanted.”</i> ⁷⁹⁸
פָּלַג	Pālag	Genesis 10:25.	To divide.
פָּרַד	Pārad	Genesis 10:5,32.	To break off, break in pieces, to separate by breaking

The idea that the division connected with Peleg's time is different to that described through tongue and family has been advanced by some who are part of the Institute for Creation Research group. John D. Morris and James J. Scofield Johnson argue on the basis of the Hebrew words that the division during Peleg's time was geological:

⁷⁹⁸ Wilson. P423. Translated as *“river”* found at: Job 29:6; Psalm 1:3; 46:4; 65:9; 119:136; Proverbs 5:16; 21:1; Isaiah 30:25; 32:2; Lamentations 3:48. The same word is rendered as *“divided”* at: Job 38:25; Psalm 55:9.

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*“Proper philological study focuses on the Hebrew words verbs translated “divided” in Genesis 10:5, 10:25, and 10:32, with extra insights from the Greek equivalents used in the Septuagint translation of Genesis. Philological analysis supports the conclusion that Peleg was named for something that occurred after the worldwide Flood, of a **geological** nature, that had global **geographical** significance.”*⁷⁹⁹

Concluding their paper, Morris and Johnson suggest that Peleg's time was when the river systems were being formed which was accompanied by extreme weather changes:

*“It is now suggested that Peleg's generation witnessed the earth, at the global level (especially in light of Job 38:25-27), being “riverized” (a literal approach to translating the Hebrew verb palag) – i.e., being hydro-dynamically carved into major riverine systems. These river systems were huge, and they were caused by huge extremes in weather – hypercanes, catastrophic mudflows, and furious water-flows that ripped through bedrock via cavitation dynamics.”*⁸⁰⁰

Whilst others may disagree on this and assert that there is only a division on language and family grounds, the use of the Hebrew word (פָּלַג *pālāg*) throughout the Old Testament indicates clearly a close connection with rivers. For example:

פְּלִגֵּי-מַיִם streams of water⁸⁰¹

פְּלִגֵּי-מַיִם streams of water⁸⁰²

פְּלִגִּים יְרֵלֵי-מַיִם rivers and streams of water⁸⁰³

We might, therefore, re-translate Genesis 10:25 as follows:

To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg for in his days **river systems formed** in the earth; and his brother's name was Joktan.

Now many of Shem's descendants occupied much of the Saudi Arabian peninsula. Interestingly, “*Ophir*”

799 John D. Morris and James J. Scofield Johnson. Rightly “Dividing” the Word about Peleg: Was Earth's unusual “division” in Peleg's lifetime a linguistic even or a geological event? P2. <http://www.icr.org/i/pdf/technical/Rightly-Dividing-the-Word-about-Peleg.pdf>

800 John D. Morris and James J. Scofield Johnson. Rightly “Dividing” the Word about Peleg: Was Earth's unusual “division” in Peleg's lifetime a linguistic even or a geological event? P28,29. <http://www.icr.org/i/pdf/technical/Rightly-Dividing-the-Word-about-Peleg.pdf>

801 Psalm 1:3.

802 Proverbs 5:16.

803 Isaiah 30:25.

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was famous for gold and there is a suggestion that the descendants of Ophir were situated in India.⁸⁰⁴

The passage concludes with a description of the boundaries of Shem's descendants in verse 30 and then the general conclusion of division of the earth according to language and family in verse 31. Verse 32 concludes the entire chapter with a statement about the population of the earth (*“the families of the sons of Noah”*) being divided by nation and family.

[2] The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-10a).

11:1.

The first verse of Genesis 11 informs us that at the time in question the entire population of the earth spoke with the same words and used the same dialect. I derive this idea from the fact that two Hebrew words are used with very different applications as can be seen from table 10.3 below.

Table 10.3: Language, tongue and word.

Hebrew.	Meaning.	Translation (NKJV).	Scriptures.
לְשׁוֹן	The tongue – hence speech or language.	Language	10:5,20,31
שִׁפָּה	The lip hence to talk or speech.	Language	11:1,6
		Speech	11:7
דְּבַר	Words – hence language.	Speech	11:1

The two Hebrew expressions are shown below:

אֶחָד	שִׁפָּה	Lip one
אֶחָדִים	וּדְבָרִים	And words one

A comparison of two other translations, (the New American Standard and Young's Literal Translation), brings this idea out:

Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.⁸⁰⁵

And the whole earth is of one pronunciation, and of the same words.⁸⁰⁶

804 1Kings 9:28; 10:11; 22:48; Job 22:24; 28:16; 1Chronicles 29:4; 2Chronicles 8:18; 9:10; Psalm 45:9; Isaiah 13:12.

805 Genesis 11:1, NASB.

806 Genesis 11:1, YLT.

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In Genesis 10 a completely different Hebrew word is used throughout which combines both ideas. Whereas the **lip** (שִׁפָּה *śāpāh*) is the speech spoken, and **words** (דָּבָר *dābār*) is the form of language in grammar and syntax, the **tongue** (לָשׁוֹן *lāšōn*) combines both ideas, for the tongue signifies both the form of language and its expression. Thus we are at a point in time prior to the end of Genesis 10. The writer of this section (Shem) has sought to make clear that what is to be recorded occurred at some early time after Noah and his family left the ark.

In Genesis 10:8f we discover that ***Nimrod*** was the instigator of the rebellion which began at Babel. Now given that Nimrod was a grandson of Ham, we can date this rebellion roughly to about forty to sixty years after the flood. In contrast the Table of Nations document of Genesis 11 must have come much later. Using Genesis 10:25 and 11:10bf we can get some idea of dates from the life span of Peleg who is found in both genealogies. Peleg lived from 1757 AC (2202 BC) to 1996 AC (1963 BC), or between 101 and 340 years after the flood. Genesis 10:26f tells us of Peleg's brother and his thirteen sons. The genealogy of Shem gives us five generations, whereas the genealogies of Ham and Japheth only detail three and two generations respectively. This is one reason why it is highly likely that Shem is the writer as he would have more information concerning his family. Now for a generation of around thirty years (as seems realistic from Genesis 11:10bf) five generations amounts to one hundred and fifty years after the flood. Since Peleg was born 101 years after the flood, it is likely that Joktan was probably born about a year later. If we assume that Joktan started his family when he was thirty and had his children over a twenty year time span, this brings the earliest possible date for the Table of Nations to around one hundred and fifty two years after the flood.⁸⁰⁷ There is thus at least one hundred years between the rebellion at Babel and the writing of Genesis 10.

Although we know from Genesis 10 that Nimrod was the main instigator, Genesis 11:1f gives us no names. Instead we have ***“the whole earth,” “they,”*** and ***“the people.”*** Are we to imagine that everyone who lived at this time were involved? Calculations of population at these early days are not straightforward! At the flood there are just 8 people on the earth. Two years after the first mentioned child is born. Now in these first sixty years or so after the flood we might assume that no deaths occurred but that each of the three families had a dozen children (half male and half female) over the first thirty years. This would mean the world population would now be 44. If we then assume that a second generation of eighteen families (assuming each of the six males of each initial family formed a pair with each of the six females in that family) started producing and yielded a dozen children each over the next thirty years, then this would yield another 216 people. The total population would then be 260. Carter and Hardy suggest that a population of the order of a thousand at Peleg's birth in 1757 AC (2202 BC) is certainly possible and almost certain by the time of Peleg's death.⁸⁰⁸

807 Jacob would later have his twelve sons over a twenty year time period.

808 These very rough calculations are not too wide of the mark in comparison to more sophisticated models. See: **Robert**

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Thus with such a small population at the beginning of the rebellion it is more than likely that the entire population was involved. It may well be that some like Shem or those who truly worshipped the Lord God were not involved, but from Genesis 11:1f it would seem best to assume that by-and-large all were involved.

11:2.

At some point in time after the flood the majority of the population made their journey from the highland mountain ranges of Ararat and came to the river plain which had been named as the *“land of Shinar,”* by which we understand the region now occupied by the country of Iraq. The meaning of the name is uncertain. It may well have something to do with the continual lowering of the water levels to reveal the river systems in this region. The flood waters had, of course, gone, but the river systems and the forming of drier plains (rather than marshes and swamps) would still be going on this early after the flood.

11:3.

The whole population come to an agreement (*“they said to one another”*). Again the main instigator (Nimrod) is not mentioned here because the culpability rests upon all. This was not a form of coercion but something which was agreed to by all present. Nimrod in Genesis 10 is presented as a great hero and a leader, but here the main point is that whomever may be the leader, joining a confederation is always a matter of choice. Our minds are moved to consider those who followed the likes of Hitler and other dictators. There may well have been immense pressure and intimidation to conform to the leader and his progress, but it is still a matter of choice. Such pressures will always remain in this world, and we need to be aware of this pressure so that we can seek the Lord all the more.

The word translated as *“come”* appears again in verse 4 and 7. The AKJV translates this as *“go to,”* whilst the YLT has *“give help”* which idea comes from the basic meaning of the Hebrew verb **יָהַב** *yāhab*. **Wilson** comments on this term that:

*“... in its strict original propriety it imports, supply, give your assistance, join heart and hand.”*⁸⁰⁹

The intention is clear. This is a rallying call to act and do something definite. Given the context you might imagine Nimrod enthusing and exhorting the people in his great rebellious project.

The focus of their conversation is highly interesting. Remember that we are but two (or maybe

Carter and Chris Hardy. *Modelling biblical human population growth.* Journal of Creation **29**(1):72–79, April 2015. <https://creation.com/biblical-human-population-growth-model>

809 **Wilson.** P82.

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three) generations from the flood and we have here a discussion concerning new technologies. The bricks they made were from a white clay material, and these were used in place of hewn and quarried stone. These were baked “*thoroughly*,” for the Hebrew verb used is employed twice (the Hebrew would be literally: “and burning to [the point of being] burnt”). The bitumen (“*asphalt*”) was from a natural source that bubbled to the surface. This may well be the residue from the flood. Creatures that died and were pulverised by the action of sediments and so on would have been reduced to basic organic substances. This natural thick viscous material was being used to bond the newly created bricks into structures.

11:4.

Again the word “*come*” indicates a rallying call to join heart and hand in the project. Then next we have the confederate company encouraging one another with the words “*let us*.” The exhortation from the leader (we assume) filters down to the rank and file. The subject of their project becomes clear in this verse. First we learn that this is essentially a very selfish or man-centred enterprise, for they intended to construct for themselves (“*let us build ourselves*”). Such an intention must be clearly set against the wish of God who intends things to be built properly with a view to good relationships both with Him and with others. Here the intention is only man-focused. And the problem with that focus is that it tends to be selfish and partisan. Then second we learn that the intention is to build two things, a “*city*,” and a “*tower*.” Perhaps most who read this story focus attention upon the tower and its significance but we must not skate over the mention of the city. We have already commented on the building of cities when we spoke of Enoch in the line of Cain. There is no doubt that cities concentrate people, and so give rise to greater sin and opportunities for sin, This is not to say that we should not build at all, but that we should make sure that there is enough room for all the activities normal human life requires, including the need for open spaces and time alone. Modern cities simply ignore such needs. When it comes to the tower the focus is on worship. The relevant part reads literally as follows:

[וּמִגְדָּל] and a tower – [וְרֹאשׁוֹ] the head of it – [בַּשָּׁמַיִם] in the heavens.

The second Hebrew word in this clause which I have rendered as “*head*” is also often translated as “*beginning*.” The intention is quite plain. There is a new beginning and a new principle upon which mankind is progressing. It is very interesting that wherever there is technological progress this is used in the furtherance of man and his own religious outlook or chosen world view. We saw this with Cain's line in Genesis 4, it appeared with societal experimentation in Genesis 6, and now it rears its head once again in this chapter. Does this mean that exploration, innovation and invention must always be allied with secular or alternative religious world views? Of course not! The rise of modern science since around 1600

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AD would never have got off the ground but for the influence of Scripture and an acceptance of creation of all things by an ordered God. However it is equally true that where there is self, human-focus, or war, then invention and new schemes will not be far behind.⁸¹⁰

It might be argued here that this new idea was in fact heaven-centred, (*“a tower whose top is in the heavens”*), but that is to miss the earlier pointers towards a man-made drive (*“ourselves”*). What seems to have been happening in this event was a re-defining of all things from the point of view of mankind. Hence the tower was built with a view to taking hold of the heavens. It was not that they intended to reach the heavens, but that they had claimed the heavens and their realm for themselves. The Babylonian religion is very much heaven-centred in a man-centred way. The constellations and stars were thought to be heroes of old, and the king a divine being through whom the heavens were to be reached. A similar theme can be seen both in the ancient Egyptian views and in the many megalithic cultures that spread throughout Europe following the dispersal after this time. The Pyramids are aligned to the stars as are many stone circles. Since the entire world was involved in this project, it is understandable that all the cultures of the world that would eventually spread from here shared similar rituals, beliefs and customs.⁸¹¹

The last imperative agreement the people made is one that clearly goes against what the Lord had commanded Noah when he left the ark.⁸¹² There was a rallying call to group together, to make a *“name”* or reputation for themselves, so that they would not be separated and spread across the globe. How this contrasts with the Lord when He came to earth, giving up His reputation!⁸¹³ The gaining of a name and of reputation is such a fallen human trait. It has wreaked havoc the world over. The people did not want to spread out across the earth but wanted to be together. Here, then, we see the defiance and rebellion of the entire population against God. To sum up the rebellion we have the following:

1. It was a technologically driven enterprise but with no leading from God (*“let us make bricks”*). More in keeping with Ecclesiastes 7:29.
2. It was a man-centred project (*“for ourselves”*). There was no accounting to God or consideration of God's wishes.
3. It was against the best interests of preventing the increase of sin through the building of city.
4. It was the beginning of a new form of worship and religion – taking hold of the heavens (*“a tower whose top is in the heavens”*).
5. It was to make a name and reputation for themselves.
6. It was in defiance of God's express command to spread across the globe.

810 Ecclesiastes 7:29.

811 For more information see my work: **“Ushering in an Old Age.”** There are many books and articles that show the essential similarity amongst the ancient cultures that stem from the rebellion at Babel.

812 Genesis 9:1.

813 Philippians 2:7.

11:5.

In this verse we get a great contrast as signalled by the word *“but.”* No matter what mankind may do, however extensive or far-reaching his projects, the Lord is always in charge. We are reminded of the words we find in psalm 2:

1 Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, *saying*, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.”⁸¹⁴

The Lord sits and laughs at the pomposity and arrogance of man. Now here in Genesis 11 we read that the Lord *“came down to see.”* Here is mercy! The Lord could have come down to punish as He will later with Sodom and Gomorrah, and as He had done (albeit with warning) prior to the flood. In this also we see a prophecy of the incarnation. The Word who was before all time would *“become flesh”* in just over two thousand years time. Meantime the second person of the holy trinity has often come at various times, and here is one such occasion.⁸¹⁵ The Lord comes with the intention of seeing. This is another condescension on the part of God for He already knows (since He is God!). He has come as a man would to verify the situation. What grace! From the statements here in verse 5 it would seem that the city and the tower were in fact completed for the verb is in the perfect signalling completed action (*“had built”*). However verse 8 seems to indicate that not everything had been finished.

11:6.

Once He saw the city and tower, the Lord then takes action by speaking. How vital is the very word of God! Now here we get an extended statement from the Lord rather than a word which has creative effect. The action will come shortly, but here we get a kind of report or conclusion from His investigation. The Lord establishes clearly that the people are all together and are of the same lip or vocal speech. In concert together, and with such purpose, they will not stop with the plan they have begun, and so the Lord says that unless something happens they will continue on in this wrong and false path. Such a pathway and course of action would be disastrous.

814 Psalm 2:1-6.

815 John 1:11. This statement comes prior to the incarnation of verse 14 and so indicates all those times when the second person of the holy trinity would visit the earth in Christophany.

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11:7.

Again we have this word “*come,*” (“*go to*” AKJV). But this time it is the Lord who comes, and this time it is the whole trinity in view. Of course we do not suggest by saying this that the trinity comes as a man. What is intended is that just as Christ would later come and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and in complete union with His Father, so the pre-incarnate Christ has come with the Spirit and the Father in full agreement. The agreement and union of mankind is no match for the concert and agreement in the holy trinity.

And so the Lord sets about to “*confuse their language*” by which we understand that He will overwhelm or overflow their speech and hence what they intend and plan. The plans of man can never succeed unless the Lord allow them! Then we see that the purpose of this confusion was so that “*they may not understand one another's speech.*” The word rendered as “*speech*” is lip or words uttered. It would seem from this that the form of language, the words (דָּבָר *dābār*) or grammar written would not change, but instead the way the words formed in the mouth and proceeded from the lip would alter. This was a miracle. Presumably the different families were separated at this point by the new various dialects or sounds.

11:8-10a.

Thus the Lord overturns the intentions of the people and has them spread across the globe. This was always His intention to have the entire world populated and covered. Thus they “*ceased building the city.*” As a consequence the name of this city and tower was to be “*Babel,*” which name means “confusion.” It would later become “Babylon.” Now the later Babylonian view was that Babel or Babylon signified the *gate of heaven*. But here in Genesis 11 we are expressly told that the name arose “*because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth.*” This confusion resulted in the scattering of peoples across the globe about which we read of in Genesis 10. So ends the story according to Shem.

Chapter 11.

A short delay. (11:10b-27a).

Analysis.

- Shem was one hundred years old,
and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood.
- 11 After he begot Arphaxad,
Shem lived five hundred years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 12 Arphaxad lived thirty-five years,
and begot Salah.
- 13 After he begot Salah,
Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 14 Salah lived thirty years,
and begot Eber.
- 15 After he begot Eber,
Salah lived four hundred and three years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 16 Eber lived thirty-four years,
and begot Peleg.
- 17 After he begot Peleg,
Eber lived four hundred and thirty years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 18 Peleg lived thirty years,
and begot Reu.
- 19 After he begot Reu,
Peleg lived two hundred and nine years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 20 Reu lived thirty-two years,
and begot Serug.
- 21 After he begot Serug,
Reu lived two hundred and seven years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 22 Serug lived thirty years,
and begot Nahor.
- 23 After he begot Nahor,
Serug lived two hundred years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 24 Nahor lived twenty-nine years,
and begot Terah.
- 25 After he begot Terah,
Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years,
and begot sons and daughters.
- 26 Now Terah lived seventy years,
and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
- 27 This is the genealogy of Terah.

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In this division of Genesis we read of Terah's contribution ("*this is the genealogy of Terah*").⁸¹⁶ One of the probable meanings of Terah's name is "delay" and essentially that is what this section is all about. It is a brief delay before we get to the story of the four patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph). Although it acts as a bridge moving us from the world stage to a more narrow focus, it has much we need to hear and learn.

Taking the word of God at face value we need first to arrange the data we have here so we can see when the named people were born and died. Let it be said again, that if these details cannot be taken at face value then we are entitled to ask why the Holy Spirit bothered to include them? That they are here and presented in such a way means that we ought to be able to calculate the absolute timeline. The result of this calculation is shown in figure 16 and table 11.1.

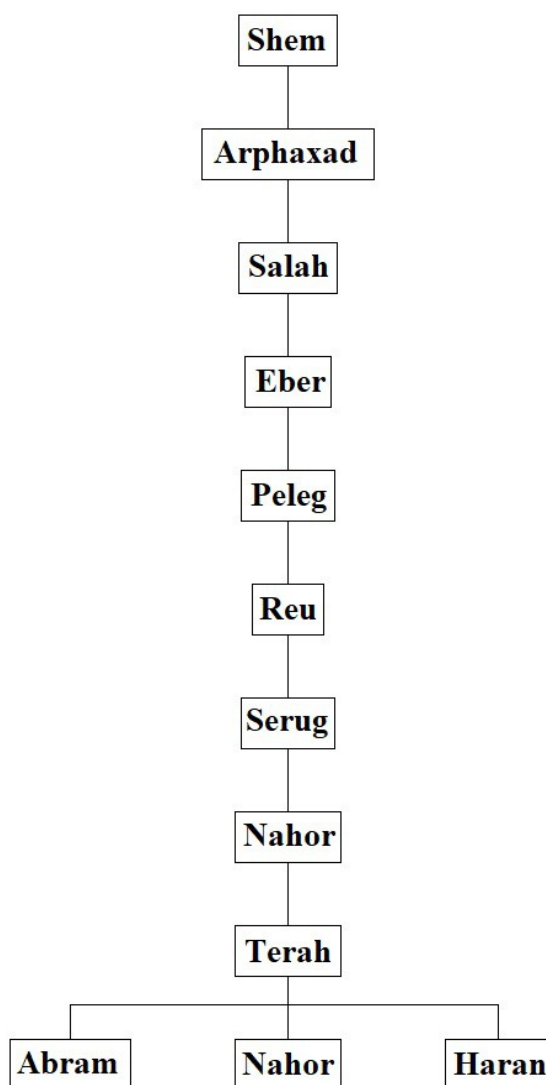


Figure 16: The genealogy of Shem to Abram.

Table 11.1: Dates and ages post-flood.⁸¹⁷

Name	Birth date (AC) ⁸¹⁸	Death date (AC)	Age at death
Shem	1558	2158	600
Arphaxad	Flood (1656) + 2 = 1658	2096	438
Salah	1658 + 35 = 1693	2126	433
Eber	1693 + 30 = 1723	2187	464
Peleg	1723 + 34 = 1757	1996	239
Reu	1757 + 30 = 1787	2026	239
Serug	1787 + 32 = 1819	2049	230
Nahor	1819 + 30 = 1849	1997	148
Terah	1849 + 29 = 1878	2083	205
Abram	1878 + 205 – 75 = 2008 ⁸¹⁹	2183	175
Isaac	2108	2288	180
Jacob	2168	2315	147
Levi	~2249	~2386	137
Kohath	~2297 ⁸²⁰	~2430 ⁸²¹	133
Amram	~2365 ⁸²²	~2502 ⁸²³	137
Moses	2433	2553	120

Several points can be made from this table. First it will be noted that the ages at death decrease over the time period from the flood to Abram. We do not have much data to make definite points but given that Noah died at the age of 950, which is about the same length of life for all of the pre-flood peoples, the drop seems to follow a steady progression (shown in figure 17). Isaac lived to be 180, Jacob died at 147, and Joseph lived to 110. Later on in the time of the Exodus we note that Moses died at 120, Levi lived to 137, and Kohath died at 133, but not many reached these ages in the remainder of Scripture. In our day the oldest recorded age is around 120 years. It would seem that such is the limit for life on this present earth. The statement in Genesis 6:3 that man's *“days shall be one hundred and twenty years”* may indicate that the maximum length of life will not exceed this as time progresses. It may also indicate the length of time from the revelation God was making before judgement would fall in the flood.

⁸¹⁷ I have included later patriarchs from Isaac on down to Moses for clarity.

⁸¹⁸ AC = after creation.

⁸¹⁹ Terah dies aged 205 when Abram was 75. Abraham dies aged 175. (Genesis 11:32; 12:4; 25:7).

⁸²⁰ Born pre – 2298 compare Genesis 46:8-10; 47:9.

⁸²¹ Died pre – 2431 (i.e. 2298 + 133).

⁸²² Born between 2330 and 2400, say between 32 years after Kohath and 33 years before the birth of Moses (assuming a generation here lasts approximately 30 years – see Genesis 11:10f).

⁸²³ Died between 2467 and 2537 (i.e. average of 2330 – 137 and 2400 + 137).

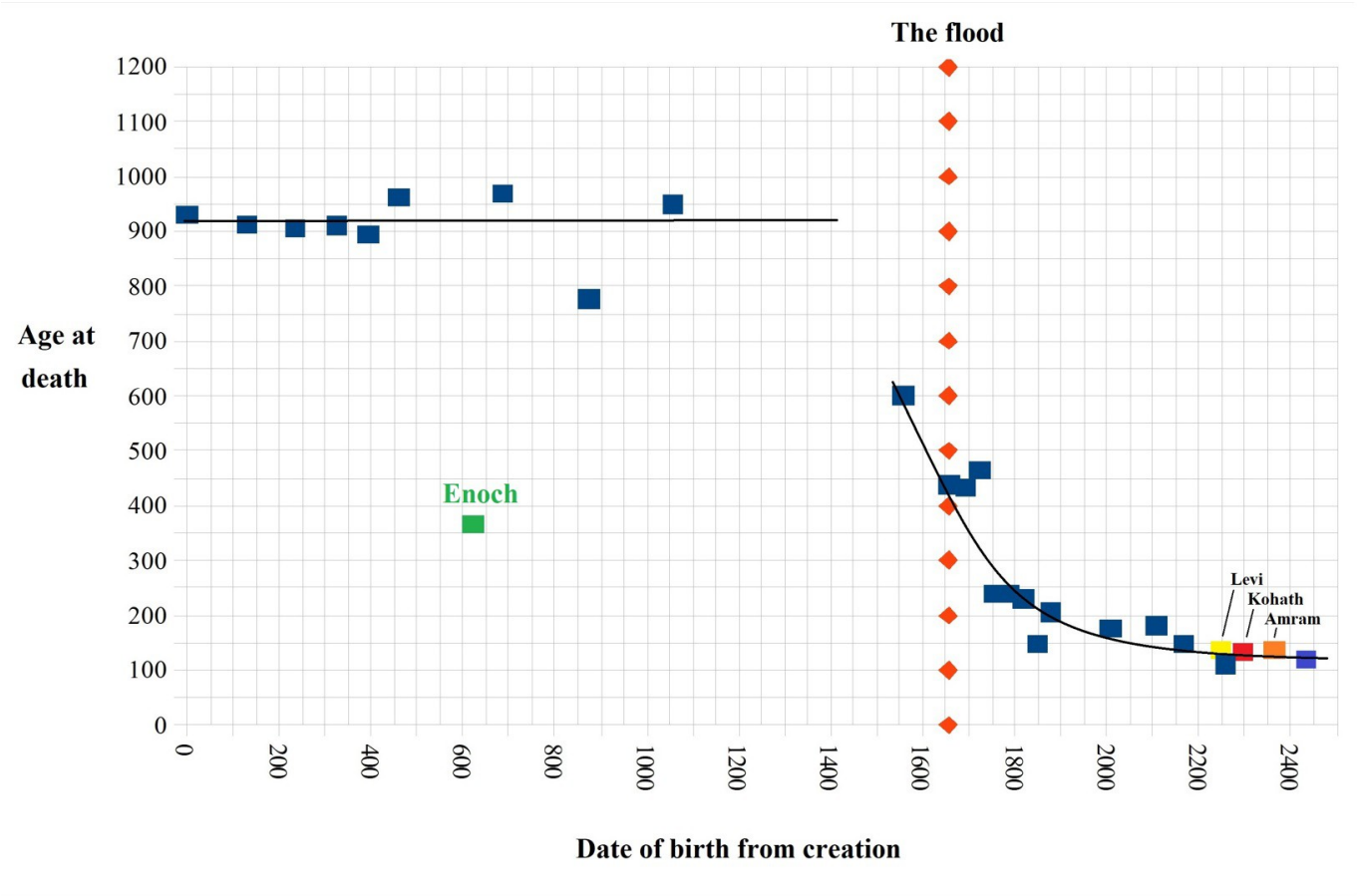


Figure 17: The decay in ages of the patriarchs of Genesis.

Second it can be seen that Eber (עֵבֶר), outlived all the people named in table 11.1, and third, we note that Shem outlived all his descendants listed in this table with the exception of Abram and Eber. These facts, (which are illustrated in figure 18 and table 11.2), help us to understand why the Israelites were also referred to as the “*Hebrews*,” (עֵבֶרִי). So it was because Eber lived so long, that this line of people were know by his name. We can see this idea depicted in Genesis 10 where the line of Shem is described:

And *children* were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder.⁸²⁴

Shem and Eber are highlighted because of their long lives. Shem is called “*the father of all the children of Eber*” because Eber outlived not just Shem but Abraham as well.

Furthermore, the name “*Eber*” has a very interesting meaning. It means, “the region beyond” or “the region on the other side” or “the region across a stream or sea.” We are brought wonderfully to the whole concept of crossing over from one place to another which, of course, Noah and his sons and their

824 Genesis 10:21.

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wives experienced in an astonishing way. It would be prophetic too, for it points to the experience of Abraham as he travelled from Ur to the promised land, it points to the Hebrews when they crossed the Red Sea at the Exodus, it points to the experience of every believer when they are conveyed from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and finally to the time when a believer is taken into heaven.

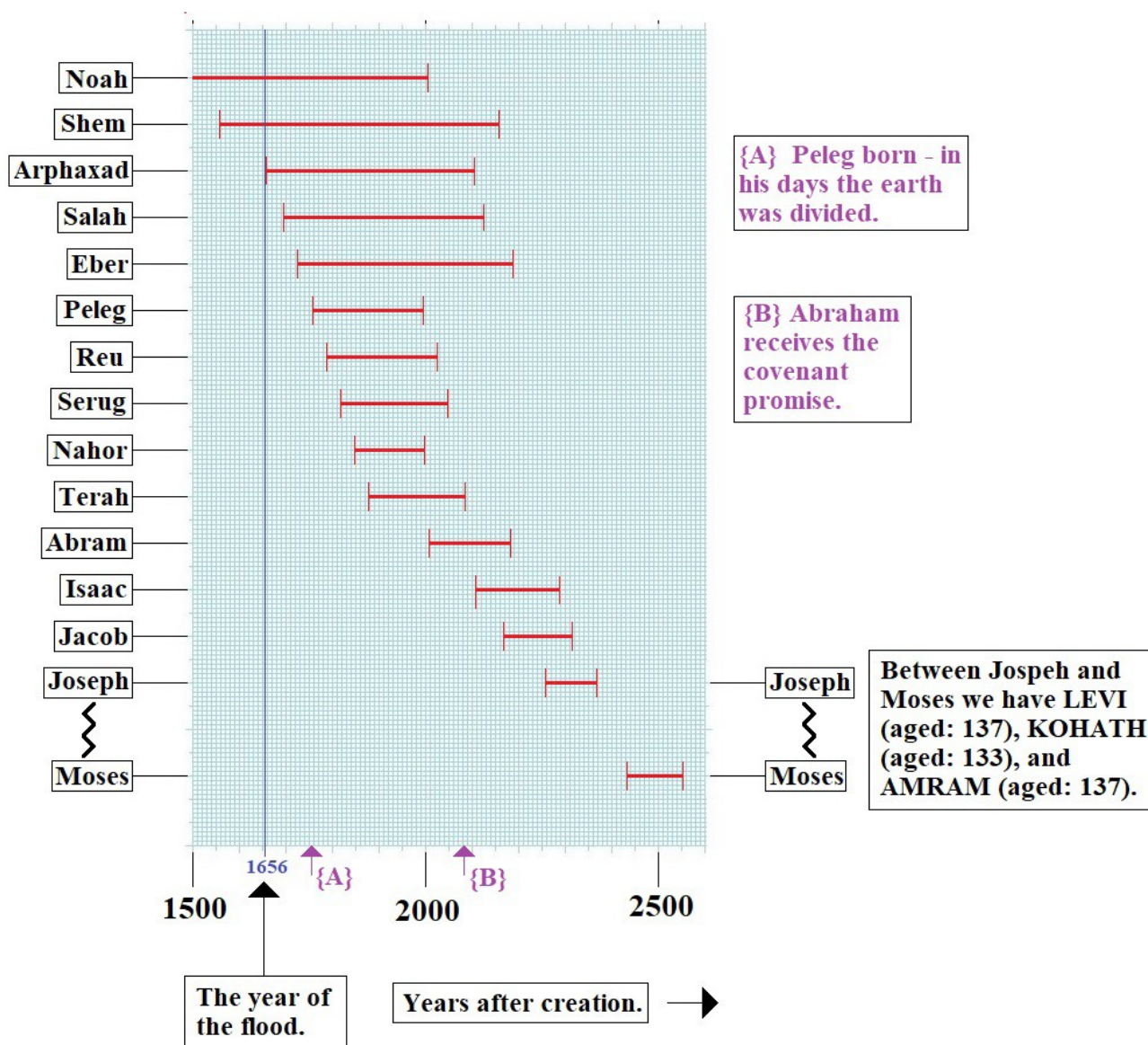


Figure 18: Overlap of the generations after the flood.

It can be seen both from figure 18 and from table 11.2 that the overlaps in life spans diminishes as time progresses. For example, Shem lived to see Isaac who was the tenth generation! Thus not only were life spans shortening, but the chance to pass on knowledge and experience was reducing too. We do not

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know whether Shem and Isaac actually ever met, but subsequent generations would not have experienced the fact that their very distant forebears were still accessible. Of course the details of events were being recorded in written form as we have sought to show from an understanding of the historical nature of the book of Genesis.

Table 11.2: The generations post-flood (Genesis 11).

<i>NAME</i>	<i>Born AC</i>	<i>Died AC</i>	<i>Age at death</i>	<i>Lived to see ...</i>
NOAH	1056	2006	950	9 th generation – dying when Terah was 128 years old.
SHEM	1558	2158	600	10 th generation – dying when Isaac was 50 years old.
ARPHAXAD	1658	2096	438	8 th generation – dying when Abram was 88 years old.
SALAH	1693	2126	433	8 th generation – dying when Isaac was 18 years old.
EBER	1723	2187	464	8 th generation – dying when Jacob was 19 years old.
PELEG	1757	1996	239	5 th generation – dying when Terah was 118 years old.
REU	1787	2026	239	4 th generation – dying when Abram was 18 years old.
SERUG	1819	2049	230	3 rd generation – dying when Abram was 41 years old.
NAHOR	1849	1997	148	1 st generation – dying when Terah was 119 years old.
TERAH	1878	2083	205	1 st generation – dying when Abram was 75 years old.
ABRAM	2008	2183	175	2 nd generation – dying when Jacob was 15 years old.
ISAAC	2108	2288	180	2 nd generation – dying when Joseph was 29 years old.
JACOB	2168	2315	147	Moses lead the children of Israel out of Egypt when he was 80 years old in 2513 AC which is 1446 BC.
JOSEPH	2259	2369	110	
MOSES	2433	2553	120	

The period of time covered by this passage of Scripture is 427 years (from 1656 – the year of the flood – to 2083 – when Terah died and Abraham entered Canaan at 75 years of age). The apostle Paul informs us that it would be another 430 years before the giving of the Law following the Exodus.⁸²⁵ The 427 years we are considering is passed over without much comment. This is in stark contrast to the 430 year period from the giving of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:7 to the details recorded by Moses in the remainder of the Pentateuch. This short passage acts as an interim or transition between the flood and the calling of Abram. It is significant that Terah's name means “delay” or “station” (as in a stop-over point). Terah records this part of Scripture and he has little to say. His part in the proceedings was merely a delay and a stop over. We note in the next section that this is what happened! We ought to remember

825 Galatians 3:16,17.

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that delay never affects the Lord for His plan is always on track. Nevertheless if we delay and stop we are simply doing ourselves harm, for we can never harm or alter what God intends.

Chapter 12.

The father of many is called. (11:27b-12:9).

Analysis.

Terah begot

Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Haran begot Lot.

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

29 Then Abram and Nahor took wives:

the name of Abram's wife *was* Sarai, and

the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31 And Terah took

his son Abram and

his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and

his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and

they went out with them

from Ur of the Chaldeans

to go to the land of Canaan; and

they came to Haran and dwelt there.

32 So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

#12 1 Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,

from your family and

from your father's house,

to a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and

I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him.

And Abram *was* seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

5 Then Abram took

Sarai his wife and

Lot his brother's son, and

all their possessions that they had gathered, and

the people whom they had acquired in Haran,

and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.

So they came to the land of Canaan.

6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh.

And the Canaanites *were* then in the land.

7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said,

“To your descendants I will give this land.”

And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

9 So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

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As we have shown in our analysis the text we have can be split into two parts. First we have the genealogy of Terah and his family, including their departure from their original homeland in Ur (Genesis 11:27b-32). Then second we have the call of Abram and his entrance into Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9).

[1] The genealogy of Terah and the departure from Ur begins (Genesis 11:27b-32).

Terah's written record is over and now we are introduced to Isaac's account.⁸²⁶ Notably the account begins with the descendants of Terah that are pertinent to the history that concerns the central character here, namely Abram. The genealogy of Terah is shown below in figure 19. The data is gathered from Genesis 11:27b-29 and Genesis 20:12.

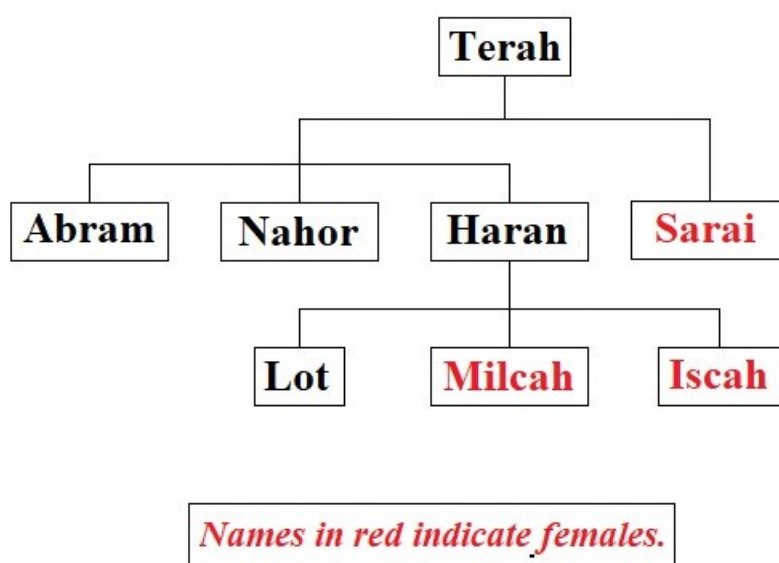


Figure 19: The genealogy of Terah.

11:28,29.

In verse 28 we discover that Haran died in Ur before there was any departure. However in verse 29 we are informed that Haran had a son (Lot) and two daughters, (Milcah and Iscah), one of which, (Milcah), married her uncle Haran's brother Nahor. The Hebrew of verse 28 reads literally as follows:

and he died Haran unto the face of Terah his father in the land of his birth in Ur of the Chaldees

From this it would appear that Terah witnessed the death of his son, which must have been a cause of great sorrow. Terah's other two sons, Abram and Nahor get married, and we are told the names of their wives, but the focus will be first on Abram and his wife "*Sarai.*" Nahor, who married "*Milcah,*" comes back into the picture later on when his granddaughter plays a significant part in proceedings, and then

⁸²⁶ Genesis 25:19b.

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again when his grandson and his daughter become important.⁸²⁷

11:30-32.

Having described the descendants of Terah in some detail, the record ends with a note that Sarai, Abram's wife, was barren and *“had no child.”*⁸²⁸ Thus right at the start of this account we have a problem, and one which does not seem to be a normal occurrence because of the fertility and fruitfulness of peoples in those days.⁸²⁹ Later on we find that Sarai was in fact Abram's half sister (see figure 19).⁸³⁰ Whether this has anything to do with why they could not have children humanly speaking is debatable.

Next we discover that after the death of Haran in Ur of the Chaldeans, it was Terah who took the initiative of setting out from Ur with the intention of going to Canaan.⁸³¹ We are told that Terah took Abram, Sarai and Lot, and then we are informed that *“they went out with them”* on this epic journey. This phrase indicates that Nahor and his offspring came along as well. The company stopped at Haran and dwelt there for some time. Whether this place was so named in remembrance of Terah's son who had died in Ur, or whether that was a common name and named for someone else is unclear. The name means “mountaineer” and probably signifies a high region somewhere north of Ur and west of Nineveh in the land of Aram or Syria.

We get an interesting insight into this part of Scripture from the New Testament witness of Stephen the first Christian martyr. Stephen informs us that God appeared to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he moved to Haran. Stephen then goes on to report what the Lord told him whilst he was in Mesopotamia (i.e. Ur):

2 ... The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3 And said unto him, *Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.*⁸³²

Compare this with what we read in Genesis:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: **“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.”**⁸³³

It seems clear that Stephen assumed that the statement of Genesis 12:1 indicated what *had happened*,

827 Genesis 11:29; 22:20f; 24:1f,29; 29:5f.

828 Genesis 11:30,

829 See for example the descendants of Noah's sons listed in Genesis 10.

830 Genesis 20:12.

831 Genesis 11:31.

832 Acts 7:2,3.

833 Genesis 12:1.

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(*“the Lord had said to”*), and places the message that Abram had received as being from the Lord whilst he was back in Mesopotamia.⁸³⁴ Stephen goes on to describe the process by which Abraham left Mesopotamia. He dwelt in Haran, and when his father Terah died he departed to go to Canaan (*“this land in which you now dwell”*).⁸³⁵ It would seem from the Genesis text that the revelation given to Abraham was shared with the family, and that Terah, Abraham's father, acted on it as head of their house, for we read that *“Terah took his son Abram ...”* from Ur to go to Canaan.⁸³⁶

[2] The call of Abram and his entrance into Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9).

It is not really until Genesis 12:1f that we get the essential details of the call of Abram. This is clearly because the Lord had told Abram to leave not only his country (Ur) but also his own relatives and his father. It may have been that in receiving this revelation from the Lord whilst in Mesopotamia Abram could have been honouring to his father and have allowed Terah to take the lead. However the clear teaching of Genesis 12:1 was that Abram should leave all that he knew. Terah perhaps did not want this, and, seeing the deep conviction Abram had, agreed to take the lead. However whatever the precise details, God wanted Abram to leave his family home and relatives in order to go to the promised land. Terah's intentions of going along would never thwart what the Lord had planned, and so there was a delay in Haran leading to the death of Terah before Abram could come to the land God intended.

12:1-3.

The opening revelation given to Abram has seven elements which we can summarise as follows:

1. Leave all you know (*“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house”*).
2. Go to an unknown place (*“to a land that I will show you”*).
3. You will be a great nation (*“I will make you a great nation”*).
4. Abram's blessing will affect others (*“I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing”*).
5. Those who bless Abram will be blessed (*“I will bless those who bless you, and”*).
6. Those who curse Abram will be cursed (*“I will curse him who curses you; and”*).
7. All families will find blessing only in Abram (*“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”*).

834 The reader is reminded that there is no past or present tense in Hebrew.

835 Acts 7:4.

836 Genesis 11:31.

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The first thing we must note here is the wonderful similarity in Abram's call to the circumstances of the Lord Jesus Christ's mission. He left heaven's glory and came to earth, of which Abram's call to leave his father, country and relatives and go to a land God would show him, serves as a picture and prophecy. The Lord Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection would become a great nation but not of this world. Recall, for example, the prophecy of Daniel which talks about the stone “*cut out without hands*” which felled the great composite statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and then became a huge mountain.⁸³⁷ Then, since Christ is the only way to the Father, and because this plan of salvation involves all three members of the trinity and is therefore perfect, anyone who seeks to embrace it and bless it, will themselves be blessed with the fruit of it, whilst those who reject it and call it a curse or disdain it in any way have cut off all hope for themselves and thereby remain under the curse. Only in *this* gospel will all families of this earth find blessing. What a wonderful illustration of the gospel! But there is more here, for the pioneer of faith, Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven and earth to bless the world serves not only as the means of that blessing but also as the example. We who partake of the blessing of God must follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Saviour. Since he left all he knew, as did Abram, so also we must forsake all in this world in order to take up the blessing in Christ. Abram was called to leave his father and his home and his relatives. He would not again be known as the son of Terah, or as a man of Ur, or among the company of his relatives. He would be known by a different identity.

Then further, we must consider that Abram's pilgrim journey, his walk of faith through the promised land as a sojourner is something that our Saviour and Lord experienced. He too walked through this earth as one who was rejected and despised. The very God who owned all things had no place of his own and had no rights amongst men as He walked this earth. This is the Christian's lot too. We may own our home, and we may have a responsible job which serves to develop life for the good, but our true walk is as a pilgrim and as a sojourner. We must be careful not to hold onto the house and the job as though these are all we need, or as though these are the meaning and purpose for life. Abram was a wanderer through this earth and we are too if we are true believers. Further still, we ought to consider our place and ministry. As Abram was a blessing to others because he obeyed the word of the Lord, we too ought to be a blessing to those around us. It is interesting that Abram's name was to become “*great*.” This speaks of his character. His character would be shown as something of value. We too are to be a city set on a hill and as a light unto the world.⁸³⁸ We should not think in terms of the world's way of greatness as though people will bow down and say “look at them are they not great and wonderful?” This is mere celebrity. No! We look for people to say “there is something about this people that makes me want to turn from my own ways and seek the Lord Jesus.” In other words there is something holy and pure, and good and substantial about them. Abram's name was to be great in that sense. As we pursue our walk with the Lord

837 Daniel 2:34,45.

838 Matthew 5:14.

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we will find that our lives become the message. This does not excuse the spoken (or written) word for that too is part of life. What we say and do ought to be in harmony, and it ought to be radiant and pure. It ought to be a signpost to the Lord Jesus. But as we walk we will find only two responses to our lives and our words. There will be those who bless us, and there will be those who curse us. There will be those who will join us, and there will be those who oppose us. This is what the apostle Paul taught when he wrote to the Corinthians.⁸³⁹ It is summed up by the little saying “the same heat that melts the wax hardens the clay.” Some of those around us will melt at our lives and words because they will see their sin and they will see the Lord's beauty and his grace. Others will resist and become harder and harder as they object to being shown up as at fault, and as they reject what we may say as being far too simple! But what we will find, if we continue long and if we review history and consider the future, is that only in this gospel message will many from all nations, all families, and all peoples find rest, and truth and satisfaction.

12:4,5.

It is not until Genesis 12:4 that we find Abram obeying the Lord, but even then there are some concerns, for Abram still has Lot (his nephew) in tow. We learn that there will have to be a separation from Lot later on, but the words we read here signal that Abram has left not just his home but his father as well. Perhaps Abram felt for his brother Haran, and so decided to take care of Lot. We must pause here and remember that when reflecting on this part of Scripture the writer to the Hebrews records none of the failures, for the faith of Abram truly worked, even though there were hiccups along the way. Listen to what the writer to the Hebrews says:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.⁸⁴⁰

How thankful we must be that the Lord passes over the sins and failings and points just to the work of faith! Abram was faithful, and we see this too in the words of Genesis 12:4, as we read that Abram *“departed as the Lord had spoken to him.”* It was a wholehearted departure for they took everything in their possession to go to Canaan. Eventually they came to the land of Canaan and then we read of Abram's sojourning there as the writer to the Hebrews records:

839 1Corinthians 1:18.

840 Hebrews 11:8.

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By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.⁸⁴¹

Again we note that the writer to the Hebrews only focuses on the faith that works, not on the sin that failed.

12:6,7.

Abram passed through the land and arrived at “*Shechem*” nearby to the “*terebinth trees of Moreh*.”⁸⁴² It would seem from these words that Abram had a definite end in view. He ignored other places and sights and passed through these in order to arrive at Shechem. Now Shechem means a “shoulder” which may indicate a hill, or it may signify the place where burdens were borne to. Shechem was a well-watered, and thus verdant, sheltered valley protected by Gerizim on the south, and Ebal on the north. The base of these mountains, rising from the town of Shechem (modern Nablus), are about five hundred yards apart. Shechem stands about 1800 feet above sea level and Gerizim rises a further 800 feet. Moreh means “teacher.” Whatever the original meanings, their derivations, and why they were so named, it would seem that the Holy Spirit is indicating that Abram came to a settled place where shade and respite could be had from the trees, and where he would receive instruction. Being close to the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim reminds us of where the curses and the blessings would later be placed when the people eventually entered the land.⁸⁴³ Ebal means “stone” or “bare mountain” and Gerizim means “cuttings off.” It was here at this place that the Lord appeared to Abram and gave him the promise that his “*seed*” would be given the land.⁸⁴⁴ Paul picks up on this word as he preached that Christ was the promised Messiah:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.⁸⁴⁵

The instruction or teaching Abram receives is that the “*seed*” would be from Abram, and this One would receive the land of promise. This was the seed of Genesis 3:15. Abram builds an altar to the Lord in this place where the Canaanites were living. How wonderful that Abram owns his faith in God and his message of promise at the crossroads of the land where the Canaanites dwelt. It reminds us that we too ought to be at the heart of the world bearing witness to the Saviour, all the while being separate and apart from the world.

841 Hebrews 11:9,10.

842 Genesis 12:6.

843 Deuteronomy 11:29; Joshua 8:33.

844 The NKJV renders the word as “*descendants*” but it really ought to be “*seed*.”

845 Galatians 3:16.

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12:8,9.

Abram then moved further south towards Bethel and Ai, pitching a tent between these two sites.⁸⁴⁶ Bethel means “house of God” and Ai means “ruin.” Here is a stark reminder that we lie between the ruins of this world and the house of God. All the while we walk through the wilderness of this world we walk through ruins and destruction. We must beware and watch for the enemy would love to make us settle and fall into sin. We walk with the house of God to the other side of us as-it-were and we are reminded thereby that the Lord will always be near at hand. Here again Abram built an altar to the Lord calling upon his name. Worship continues all through our journeys wherever we go. Abram had passed through the north, stayed a while in Shechem, and then continued further south stopping first at Bethel/Ai.⁸⁴⁷

A brief review of Abram's calling.

Before we continue in the text it is important to recognise that in calling Abram the Lord was fulfilling a twofold purpose. This dual plan is seen clearly in Genesis 12:2,3 which we shall show below highlighted to make the point:

2 I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

It can be seen that the underlined parts signify these two great plans of the Lord. First we discover that from Abraham will come a “*great nation*,” which would be Israel. The rest of the book of Genesis describes the beginnings of this great nation, first through the son of promise Isaac, then via Jacob his son who was the twin chosen of God before the two boys were born, and then comes the twelve sons of Jacob who descend into Egypt from where the Lord would bring out the nation Israel to return and claim the land of promise. But second we see embedded within this development of the nation Israel, the promise of the “*seed*” of Genesis 3:15 which would result in blessing to all the families of the earth. Isaac was the son of promise. From Isaac came Jacob and Esau but Jacob was the one chosen. But then from Jacob's twelve sons Judah was the man in whom the promises were to come.⁸⁴⁸ In later books this promise is

846 Genesis 12:8.

847 Genesis 12:9.

848 Genesis 49:10.

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narrowed to the house of David, and the gospels of Matthew and Luke record for us the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was the culmination of this long awaited Messiah or anointed One.

Thus, in order to bring salvation to the whole world God decided that He would choose one man from whom He could bring about a nation through whom the promised Seed would be born. That man was Abraham (originally named Abram). Now, although Christ would eventually be born in the little town of Bethlehem – an isolated place without any fanfare, pomp or great ceremony such as the world might have expected – it was nevertheless within the nation that He had chosen and prepared. Thus God called Abraham whilst he was still in Mesopotamia, and declared to him that He would make him *“a great nation,”* and that in him, or through him, *“all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*⁸⁴⁹ Now when he arrived in Canaan as recorded in Genesis 12:7 the Lord appeared to him and said:

Unto thy seed will I give this land.⁸⁵⁰

The NKJV offers the word *“descendants”* in Genesis 12:7 but the Hebrew word employed is a masculine singular noun and so should be rendered as *“seed”* as the AKJV has it.

Consequently this dual purpose in the calling of Abram is a very important idea to grasp. There are many who emphasise the call of Abram with respect to the promised land as though this alone was the mission. However, the call of Abram as the father of the nation Israel was only a temporary plan. We can say this in view of Christ's mission whereby in coming He did away with the temporary aspects of the work which centred on the nation Israel. For example, the temple was no longer required after His coming for it was to be superseded by His own body.⁸⁵¹ The letter to the Hebrews details precisely how Christ Jesus was *“better”* than all the Old Testament types and shadows, and demonstrates how Christ's once-for-all sacrifice made an end to all sacrifices described and prescribed in the Old Testament law. Elsewhere in the New Testament we read of the end of circumcision, the end of the Levitical priesthood, and the end of the nation as the central focus. With regard to this last point it is noteworthy that the risen Lord Jesus pointed His disciples to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church which was to go to the ends of the earth, and pointedly not to the nation Israel. What is permanent with regard to Abram's call is the coming of the *“Seed,”* and the offer of the gospel (*“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”*).⁸⁵² To sum up this dual purpose in Abram's calling and answer the question of why Israel were called as God's nation, we can make the following points:

849 Genesis 12:2,3; Acts 7:2.

850 Genesis 12:7, AKJV.

851 John 2:19-22; 4:20-24.

852 Genesis 12:7.

1. Perhaps the most important reason for Abram to be the start of the nation Israel was to enable a place for the Messiah to be born. This is emphasised in the prophecy of 2Sam 7:12f, where the Lord promised to build a house for David which would be separate and different from the place and land of Israel. Thus Israel was a guarded place for the arrival of the Son of God. The people were expecting Him even though at the time their expectations were skewed.
2. Then also, the Lord called Israel as a nation in order that He had some means to reveal Himself. If He had not called Israel as a nation, it is difficult to imagine how He would have revealed Himself in such a way as that the whole world could hear what He had to say. Making Israel the centre of His means of revelation, and making them an outgoing nation (they were supposed to be a light to the world – see Deuteronomy 4:6 for example) meant that the message would have been preserved and published. Incidentally this line of reasoning works only if Israel were an ancient nation whose history from Genesis pre-dates those of other ancient Near East cultures. It must have priority. In and through Israel the word of God has come for all mankind's benefit. Thus Abram was called at a time when the nations of the world were in their infancy.
3. Thinking next about Israel as the people of God, this would be a grand demonstration to the world that given all the advantages and privileges God could possibly bestow upon them, a nation of fallen men and women would still ultimately fail. Adam had failed in the garden of Eden given one command, but how would a nation fare given such incredible privileges? The covenant of works given to the nation Israel was thoroughly broken thus showing that the very best system of government possible (what could be better than a law revealed by God?) failed in the hands of fallen human flesh, even though the law given was *“good”* and *“spiritual.”*⁸⁵³
4. Furthermore the calling of Israel was an example to the whole world of exactly how God would deal with fallen human beings.⁸⁵⁴
5. Finally, the whole experience of Israel throughout its centuries of life were the basis and foundation for Christ's future ministry. The truths Christ came to bring concerning Himself and His work needed teaching in simple and pictorial form first (kindergarten) because of man's hatred of God, his sin and his stubborn or stiff-necked nature. Israel were not any better than any others for they were stiff-necked. Thus the details of the tabernacle and the nation and its experiences all serve as preparatory to the final coming of the Son.

853 Romans 7:12,14.

854 1Corinthians 10:6,11.

Chapter 13.

Protection despite failure. (12:10-20).

Analysis.

- 10 Now there was a famine in the land,
and Abram went down to **Egypt** to dwell there,
for the famine *was* severe in the land.
- 11 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering **Egypt**, that he said to Sarai his wife,
“Indeed I know that you *are* a woman of beautiful countenance.
- 12 Therefore it will happen, when the **Egyptians** see you, that they will say,
‘This *is* his wife’;
and they will kill me, but they will let you live.
- 13 Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.”
- 14 So it was, when Abram came into **Egypt**, that the **Egyptians** saw the woman, that she *was* very beautiful.
- 15 The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh.
And the woman was taken to Pharaoh’s house.
- 16 He treated Abram well for her sake.
He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.
- 17 But the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.
- 18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said,
“What *is* this you have done to me?
Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife?
- 19 Why did you say,
‘She *is* my sister’?
I might have taken her as my wife.
Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way.”
- 20 So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

In our last section we find Abram journeying south, and as he goes he builds an altar, first at Shechem, and then between Bethel and Ai. At this point in the text we read that there was a famine in the land. What will Abram do? Remember that the Lord had promised him what would happen to him whilst he was in Ur, and then had appeared to him at Shechem. What we read in this section is the first of Abram's failures. We remind ourselves that Abram was a man of faith and was the Lord's friend. That he failed is put here to remind us that we too are frail and faulty. Let us take heed to our salvation lest we drift away or slip.⁸⁵⁵ Let him who thinks he stands take care lest he fall.⁸⁵⁶ But it would appear that Abram had simply made up his mind, and he failed to inquire of the Lord. What governed his course of action? It was not the promise of God. If he had stood on that he would have not feared and would have reckoned that the Lord, who promised that he would be a blessing, promised that he would be a great nation, and promised that his seed would inherit the land, could surely provide in this famine. No! What governed his heart at this point in time was fear. Fear of a lack of food, and then fear of what the Egyptians may do.

855 Hebrews 2:1.

856 1Corinthians 10:12.

12:10.

It is significant that the Holy Spirit describes Abram's journey into Egypt as going “*down*” into that place. This is not merely talking of a descent to lower land but a descent and a fall from the walk of faith. Whenever we go to Egypt as-it-were we descend from our walk of faith. How often we read in Scripture that Egypt represents the world in all its fallen and godless state and that to go to Egypt means a descent into error and sin.⁸⁵⁷ What should Abram have done given that the famine was so severe? Are we to censure him for thinking practically and going to a place where there would be food? Should he have remained where he was and suffered hunger and possible death rather than go down to Egypt? Well of course we often have such dichotomous thoughts in our minds when all along the Lord is good and gracious! Yes this was a test of Abram's faith. Would he simply take the practical course of action of his own accord? Or would he seek the Lord's counsel and make a decision based on what the Lord instructed? This is what the Lord teaches us:

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.⁸⁵⁸

Had Abram sought the Lord first, it may well have been the Lord's counsel for him to go to Egypt. On the other hand it may not have been, and he may have missed a blessing from the Lord who promises. We cannot be sure of what may have been the case, but the teaching here is clear. We must seek the Lord and his righteousness for **all** events and throughout **all** times before we come to any decisions as to what to do. Practicalities may be clear. However we cannot simply rely on our strength and walk as though we were Lord and Captain. We defer always to the Lord's best judgements.

12:11-13.

It is always the case when we stop relying on the Lord that we then begin to rely on human ingenuity. And so, because of fear, the fear of man, Abram constructs a means by which he can go into Egypt in safety. Abram convinces his wife to tell the Egyptians that she is Abram's sister. What, then, is going on here? Why has the Holy Spirit given us the details of this story? We are given more detail here concerning Sarai than when she was first introduced to us as being barren. That is important. We note also that Abram and Sarai are being presented to us as a married couple (“*he said to Sarai his wife,*” and note also the frequent references to Sarai as Abram's wife), but Abram is frightened of being seen as such.⁸⁵⁹ Now often in Scripture we can see parallels with the life of Christ so that what we read about may be described as “types” or metaphors. Here, however, we do not have a “type” but a “counter type.” Abram

857 See, for example, Isaiah 30:1f; 31:1f.

858 Matthew 6:33.

859 The word “*wife*” comes six times at: Genesis 12:11,12,17,18,19,20.

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is concerned for his own welfare and safety. In stark contrast the Lord Jesus is concerned not for his own life, but for laying it down for his bride. Abram wants to preserve his life and live whilst Sarai his wife is presented as something other than Abram's wife. Christ came to give his life up for his people, the church. Abram is therefore doing precisely the opposite of what Christ came to do. If he had trusted the Lord's promise that he would be a great nation and that his seed would be a great blessing, he could have gone into Egypt as a married man with his wife and known that whatever the consequences, the Lord would have preserved him.

Notice that Abram's fear comes from an observation of Sarai's beauty.⁸⁶⁰ In contrast Christ's giving Himself up was an act in the circumstance of the church's great ugliness and need. Thus Abram was afraid that Sarai's beauty would get him killed if he owned up to being her husband. Christ looked upon the church's great need and sin, and willingly gave Himself up as true loving husband.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.⁸⁶¹

In a way we are reminded of how Adam failed. He failed to warn and direct Eve away from the temptation of the serpent. Here Abram is again taking the coward's route and rather than own up to his true status, he takes the back seat and allows his wife to take the heat. There is much here that men who are married need to take hold of. We must be those who walk close to the Lord and we must teach our wives the word of God in such a loving way that we are effectively washing them.

12:14-20.

Now Pharaoh ended up with Sarai in his harem and Abram received many gifts as a result! All of this was, from the Egyptian (human) point of view, fine, of course. But then there arose a problem! God had promised Abram that those who blessed him would themselves be blessed. He also said that those who cursed Abram would themselves be cursed. Pharaoh and his house ended up being plagued! What type of blessing is that? Surely it was a curse? Well curiously no, it was in fact a blessing. And it was a blessing because it prevented Pharaoh *actually* taking Sarai to be his wife, and thereby ruining the promise of God. See how Abram's fear and his lack of seeking the Lord plays right into the enemy's hands! Abram and Sarai were the couple through whom the promised One was to come, but now Sarai is in Pharaoh's house! By plaguing Pharaoh and his house before anything were to happen (like Sarai becoming pregnant by Pharaoh) the Lord was also signalling to the Egyptian monarch that something was amiss. Somehow (we are not informed precisely how), Pharaoh knew that the great plagues he and his

860 Genesis 12:11,14.

861 Ephesians 5:25.

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household experienced were because of Sarai and Abram. It seems that Pharaoh as a result of these plagues now knows that Sarai was in fact Abram's wife. The end result is that Pharaoh wants nothing more to do with Abram for his trickery and deceit. What a tragic end we have here! Abram was to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, and here he has become a problem and a cause of stumbling to Pharaoh. We cannot call it a curse because Pharaoh was prevented from ruining what God had intended for Abram and Sarai. However Pharaoh is not in the best of moods and it is not difficult to see why. We cannot delve deeper here. Pharaoh ought also to have recognised that here was an especial couple and he should have welcomed them despite their poor treatment of him. It would seem that Pharaoh was a proud man and did not like to be shown up, and so rather than embrace them despite their failures he reacted with pique and sent them away. What lessons we see here! How easily offended we sometimes become when things do not go the way we thought they should. How fearful we are and what havoc we create through fear just as Abram did.

Chapter 14.

Gracious choice from separation. (13:1-18).

Analysis.

- 1 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.
2 Abram *was* very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.
3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel,
 to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,
 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first.
 And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.
5 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents.

6 Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together,
 for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.
7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.
The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.
8 So Abram said to Lot,
 "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren.
 9 *Is* not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If *you take* the left, then I will go to the right; or, if *you*
 go to the right, then I will go to the left."
10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.
11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east.
And they separated from each other.
12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and
Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom.
13 But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

14 And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him:
 "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for
 all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the
 dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered.
 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."
18 Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in Hebron, and built an altar
there to the Lord.

Genesis chapter 13 sees the final separation of Abram from all his remaining family ties. The chapter is a single story but there are three discernible parts to it. First Abram leaves Egypt and returns to the place where he had formerly built an altar (Genesis 13:1-5). In this section we discover that Lot had been with Abram in his journey to Egypt although we learn nothing of what happened to his nephew during that stay. Then second we discover the means by which Abram and Lot would eventually part (Genesis 13:6-13). Finally we read about the Lord's blessing to Abram as the patriarch comes to full obedience to the Lord's commands (Genesis 13:14-18).

[1] The return from Egypt (Genesis 13:1-5).

13:1,2.

We remarked earlier that going towards Egypt was expressed as a going “*down,*” so here now on returning to the land of Canaan the journey back is described as going “*up from Egypt.*” Thus we should always view the world in this way. We go down into the world and we return up out of the world when we enter the heavenly realms (i.e. all those places where the kingdom of God can be found). The last we heard about Lot was in him coming with Abram into Canaan, but now we discover that Lot was among all that returned with Abram from Egypt.⁸⁶² Even though Abram had made a grave mistake in going down into Egypt we learn here that he was greatly blessed in a material sense, (he was “*very rich*”), but this would be the cause of the problem through which the final separation from his nephew would occur.

13:3-5.

And so Abram journeys back into the promised land and heads straight for the place where he had his tent “*at the beginning*” and where he had made an altar to the Lord “*at first.*”⁸⁶³ The “*South*” was the desert region that separated Egypt from Israel. And so Abram goes back to where he made his mistake and back to where he really began to depart from the Lord. This return is thus a repentance and a coming back to the position of humility before God, and so he calls “*on the name of the Lord.*”⁸⁶⁴ How essential is it for us to make sure that as we traverse the path of life through this world we are constantly and frequently coming back to this point of dependence upon the Lord. It is not yet possible for us to continue without ever falling – one day in heaven we will – for we wrestle daily and moment-by-moment with sin. So it is vital that we are not proud, and when we realise our fall and stumble, we run as fast as we can back to the place where we dwelt at first and where we first built our altar – at the foot of the cross. However we are also informed almost immediately that Lot was “*with him.*”⁸⁶⁵ This is significant and will be taken up in due course. As we noted earlier, Abram is described as being very rich in material possessions but there is no record yet of his faith. Egypt is being described here as a representative of this world only able to provide material things.⁸⁶⁶ However Lot too is recorded as having “*flocks and herds and tents,*” indicating that he too was materially blessed.⁸⁶⁷

862 Genesis 12:5.

863 Genesis 13:3,4.

864 Genesis 13:4.

865 Genesis 13:1.

866 Genesis 12:16; 13:2.

867 Genesis 13:5.

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[2] The separation (Genesis 13:6-13).

13:6,7.

We come now to consider the final step of obedience that Abram makes concerning his initial call. We must cast our minds back to remember that the Lord had told him to leave not just his country, but his father and all his relatives.⁸⁶⁸ He left with Terah when he set out. Then he left Terah in Haran (where Terah died) to go into Canaan, but he came in with Lot his nephew. Now we discover that Abram finally parts from the last of his relatives who are with him. The occasion for their parting is through what we may call a *natural* event – the land was not able to bear both companies as they travelled (*“their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together”*).⁸⁶⁹ On account of this natural event there were arguments between the herdsmen. It is sad to note here that Abram did not engineer the separation between him and Lot as would be expected from his initial call from the Lord. Abram's lack of concern about obeying the *precise* details of his call would not, of course, prevent the separation from taking place. On a human level Abram may have felt somewhat responsible for Lot – a laudable and natural feeling given that Lot's father Haran had died in Ur. However there are many ways in which we can be faithful, loving and caring apart from keeping our relatives under our wings. Sadly it is the fact of quarrelling and arguments which arise because of so many people in a small space. It probably occurred through the difficulty of keeping so many animals fed and watered in a single company. Is it not sad that naturally if we are on top of one another and there is little space for manoeuvre we always end up fighting?

Whilst Abram cannot be commended for taking any initiative in separating completely from his relatives, he is to be commended for recognising the need for separation and the means by which he went about this. It seems to be a principle that the human race in its fallen state cannot really survive well in too close communion. However even before the fall, the Lord's will for mankind was that he would spread across the face of the globe.⁸⁷⁰ Following the fall this command is repeated after the flood but then in his folly man tries to gather into smaller groups again as illustrated in Genesis 10 & 11 following Nimrod.⁸⁷¹ We seem destined never to learn, for the tendency amongst modern man is still to gravitate towards cities and the urban sprawls that surround them. Think of the terrible vice and corruption that ensues wherever there is a large group of people! The command to spread out and give space is one we ought to heed as believers. Why is there such a desire to have 'mega churches' in our day? It is pertinent that the Lord spoke of the small flock and gave example by choosing just twelve for his church.⁸⁷²

Verse 7 ends with a statement informing us that *“the Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in*

868 Genesis 12:1.

869 Genesis 13:6.

870 Genesis 1:28.

871 Genesis 9:1.

872 Luke 12:32.

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the land.” These were the people who had settled after the flood and dispersion at Babel.

13:8-11.

Abram appeals to his Nephew that there be no strife, and he offers Lot the first choice of where to go.⁸⁷³ This is faith indeed. Abram has been promised the land by the Lord but he does not seek to grasp hold of that which he is promised. Rather he acts with great favour and grace towards his nephew. Here is a principle for us. We ought never to be grasping and grabbing even what is rightfully ours. We ought to have the mind of Christ who humbled himself in coming to this world in the likeness of sinful flesh all the while he came equally as God incarnate.⁸⁷⁴ He never once demanded his right of worship and honour, knowing that the Father had everything in hand. His was the way of submission to all that the Father had planned in bringing us redemption. We are equally called to a life of humble submission to the will of God, and we must never demand what is rightfully ours as joint heirs with Christ. In His perfect time the Lord himself will render to each person their just deserts. Meanwhile our task is to walk as Christ walked and draw people to Him. Abram in doing this was submitting to the highest authority for he knew that the Lord would so direct things to fulfil his great plan.

Lot's choice freely given to him was not made with wisdom as foundation.⁸⁷⁵ We must be careful here because the apostle Peter informs us that Lot was *“righteous,”* and such a term signifies one who had faith.⁸⁷⁶ But it is clear from our study in Genesis that Lot was of a different type of person to Abram. At this point Lot's choice was based purely on sight:

Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere.⁸⁷⁷

Who of us as believers cannot say that at some point in our lives, or for some situations, our choice is purely based on sight? Abram allowed Lot to choose first and rather than seek the Lord or reason with his uncle about what was right, Lot merely allowed his senses to be the guide. What a lesson for us! We ought always, even when things seem plain and obvious to everyone around, to seek the Lord for his wisdom in making any choice. But then also we are informed that Lot was guided by selfish motives too:

Then Lot chose **for himself** all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.⁸⁷⁸

873 Genesis 13:8,9.
874 Philippians 2:5f.
875 Genesis 13:10.
876 2Peter 2:7.
877 Genesis 13:10.
878 Genesis 13:11.

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We might be fooled by what we see, but then our wills may be wiser still. We know (perhaps instinctively or maybe through knowledge of Scripture) that something is wrong, but our eyes and senses tell us the opposite. This is when confusion occurs and we struggle with what we should do. If our eyes had been set on heavenly sights then the conflict may not have been so great. In Lot's case his motive was selfishness. He chose *“for himself”* and this means he could act in no other way than to follow his sight.⁸⁷⁹ This is the way of unbelief and before we point the finger at Lot we ought to consider how we operate in our day. How much of the wisdom of this world actually governs what goes on in church circles? Or how much happens merely by looking across at what the world does? It all seems *right* to people and so we continue to act in such carnal ways. No wonder the church languishes and fails to make any mark on the world!

It is very instructive how the Lord has described the situation here. We are told that this was before the Lord destroyed that area. Why has this been told to us? Clearly the writer is concerned to point out that these events were long before that time. Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked cities but they had yet to become notorious. Then also we are informed that the region was lush and verdant in such measure that it could be likened to *“the garden of the Lord”* and then also to *“the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.”*⁸⁸⁰ Both of these descriptions signify lush and richly verdant regions. Even though they looked a prime site for life, and even though there is a hint of goodness in the appearance (*“garden of the the Lord”*), this is still a poor basis on which to make a decision. When things seem right to a person, and all the outward indications appear good and right, this is still not enough to be sure.

There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.⁸⁸¹

If what we propose does not accord with what the Bible teaches we must not proceed. This is something largely forgotten today. There are many who think they know best. They cannot see why we should not have women as preachers, or why we should not adopt business strategies for church growth. These things have all the *appearance* of being good. Who would not want to ensure that women are treated well and in the best possible way? Who would not want to give them every opportunity in life? But the Bible has a different tack. It is God who has made man. He made man male and female, and whilst both are “man” in the sense of being humans, they are certainly not identical and have different roles to play. It is very clear in Scripture that only certain men specifically called to the task should be preachers and pastors. Women are excluded from this office as are a large number of men. All men are barred from the office of child bearing. Both of these restrictions are through creation as Paul in referring to Genesis makes plain.⁸⁸² Why then do we have women ministers and preachers? Something else is being sought

879 Genesis 13:11.

880 Genesis 13:10.

881 Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.

882 1Timothy 2:12-15.

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other than the pure will of God. We ought to patiently explain the reasons why these things ought not to be. There are many other things like this, and whilst we could go on we must leave this for now. Suffice to say that when we seek guidance from the Lord, the will of God as plainly expressed in Scripture must come before everything else. We can look to the circumstances, and we can consider the expediency as well as what seems good, but let these all be subordinated to the word of God as our first place to seek direction.

13:12,13.

And so uncle and nephew part company. The outcome of this separation is spelt out in very clear and stark terms for us for both men. With regard to Lot who chose by sight we find that Lot first *“dwelt in the cities of the plain”* by which information we discern a more settled nature in Lot, even though Lot is still actually dwelling in a tent.⁸⁸³ Lot's desire for comfort and the fruits of this world lead him to make roots in this earth. We then learn that Lot located his (for now temporary) dwelling *“as far as Sodom”* indicating that he had gone quite deep into the territory of this world.⁸⁸⁴ We are left in no uncertain terms as to the nature of the inhabitants of Sodom. They were not only wicked but *“exceedingly”* so, and further their wickedness was *“against the Lord”* and not veiled in hypocrisy or subterfuge but openly wicked.⁸⁸⁵ We do not learn the nature of their evil but this is not important at this stage. Thus far are we led to the fruits of Lot. He had chosen by sight. He wanted the blessings of earth, and to acquire these he needed to enter into the wicked cities to be a part of this.

[3] Blessing! (Genesis 13:14-18).

13:14-18.

What of Abram who had given up his right to choose? Abram dwelt in Canaan and received a wonderful revelation from the Lord. He is told that even though Lot appears to have chosen the best for himself, nevertheless Abram would still receive *“all the land”* whether he look to any and all points of the compass.⁸⁸⁶ Lot must have known of the promise given to his uncle, and if he had made a wiser choice would have benefited from the blessings. However in his selfishness he actually loses that which he chose as we shall see in a later chapter. Abram is rewarded with this further revelation concerning the promise. Lot had raised his own eyes but the Lord tells Abram to raise his now and *“look.”*⁸⁸⁷ What a wonderful picture of humility in Abram. He does not set his eyes on this world but looks down in humility awaiting

883 Genesis 13:12.

884 Genesis 13:12.

885 Genesis 13:13.

886 Genesis 13:15.

887 Genesis 13:14.

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the Lord's call for him and the Lord's will for him. What does the Lord promise here? First he promises Abram the whole land for him and his seed after him. He repeats this promise at the end of his speech when he commands Abram to walk through the land to inspect it.⁸⁸⁸ Then second, he is promised a huge number of descendants such as cannot be numbered. Notice that in both, the promise is to Abram's descendants, or *seed*, signifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Does the Lord Jesus have a multitude of descendants and the land of Israel? No, of course not, for the promise is figurative. Christ has numerous brethren whose number is uncountable, literally. He also has the entire world in his grasp.

On hearing this further revelation Abram moves his tent and goes back to the *“trees of Mamre which are in Hebron.”*⁸⁸⁹ The mention of Abram's tent is significant. Here he does not have a continuing and permanent city dwelling, unlike Lot. He is mobile and his sojourn is temporary. Once he arrives in Hebron he builds an altar and worships the Lord. What a stark contrast to Lot of whom we never read that he built an altar.

888 Genesis 13:15-17.

889 Genesis 13:18.

Chapter 15.

A rescue blessed. (14:1-24).

Analysis.

- 1 And it came to pass in the days of
Amraphel king of Shinar,
Arioch king of Ellasar,
Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and
Tidal king of nations,
2 *that* they made war with
Bera king of Sodom,
Birsha king of Gomorrah,
Shinab king of Admah,
Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and
the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).
3 All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).
4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.
5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him came and attacked
the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim,
the Zuzim in Ham,
the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, 6 and
the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness.
7 Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that *is*, Kadesh), and attacked
all the country of the Amalekites, and
also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.
8 And
the king of Sodom,
the king of Gomorrah,
the king of Admah,
the king of Zeboiim, and
the king of Bela (that *is*, Zoar)
went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim
9 against
Chedorlaomer king of Elam,
Tidal king of nations,
Amraphel king of Shinar, and
Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.
10 Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of* asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; *some* fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.
11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.
12 They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.
13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew,
for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they *were* allies with Abram.
14 Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.
15 He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of Damascus.
16 So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.
17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that *is*, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who *were* with him.

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18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine;
he *was* the priest of God Most High.

19 And he blessed him and said:

“blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **20** and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

And he gave him a tithe of all.

21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram,

“Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.”

22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom,

“I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, **23** that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is* yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’—**24** except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

Genesis chapter 14 describes the second major war of the post-flood world as recorded in Scripture. The first, of course, was that which we find in Genesis 10 & 11 with Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. This second war seems to be a more local affair centred on the right of domination of Canaan. It comes immediately after God had promised Abram that the land these kings are fighting over was his. If Abram were to look at these circumstances with the eyes of the flesh he would undoubtedly despair. What of God's promise? The text describes a series of events as a unit, but can be split into three sections. In the first (Genesis 14:1-9) we are given the details of who went to war. In the second part we are let into that part of the war which concerned Lot and his countrymen (Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 14:10-16). In the third and final part (Genesis 14:17-24) the focus is on the blessing Abram received from Melchizedek and his conversation with the king of Sodom.

[1] War in Canaan (Genesis 14:1-9).

14:1.

Chedolaomer was the man of the moment, and it seems that all were to defer to his rule. He lead a group of what appear to be northern kingdoms. Elam was that region south of the Caspian sea and east of the Persian gulf in what is now Iran. Shinar was west of Elam at the head of the Persian gulf and the site of Babylon. Ellasar seems to be that region north-west of Babylon along the Tigris and Euphrates, and the term “*nations*” may indicate the region at the end of the two rivers in what is northern Syria and southern Turkey. These kingdoms under the rule of Chedolaomer had held sway over the land of Canaan (see figure 20).

Chedoloamer's name possibly signifies a religious association meaning “servant of the goddess Lagamar,” where Lagamar was the goddess of that region. Lagamar means “no mercy.”⁸⁹⁰ Chedolaomer's confederates were equally godless it would appear. Arioch's name meant “lion-like” suggesting a fierce

⁸⁹⁰ **Gerard Gertoux.** *80 Old Testament Characters of World History: Chronological, Historical and Archaeological Evidence.* 27 Feb 2016. P 105.

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warrior, Tidal meant “great son” indicating another warrior type, whilst Amraphel meant “one that darkens counsel” or “one that speaks of dark things” suggesting a soothsayer or spirit diviner who sought dark and satanic knowledge.

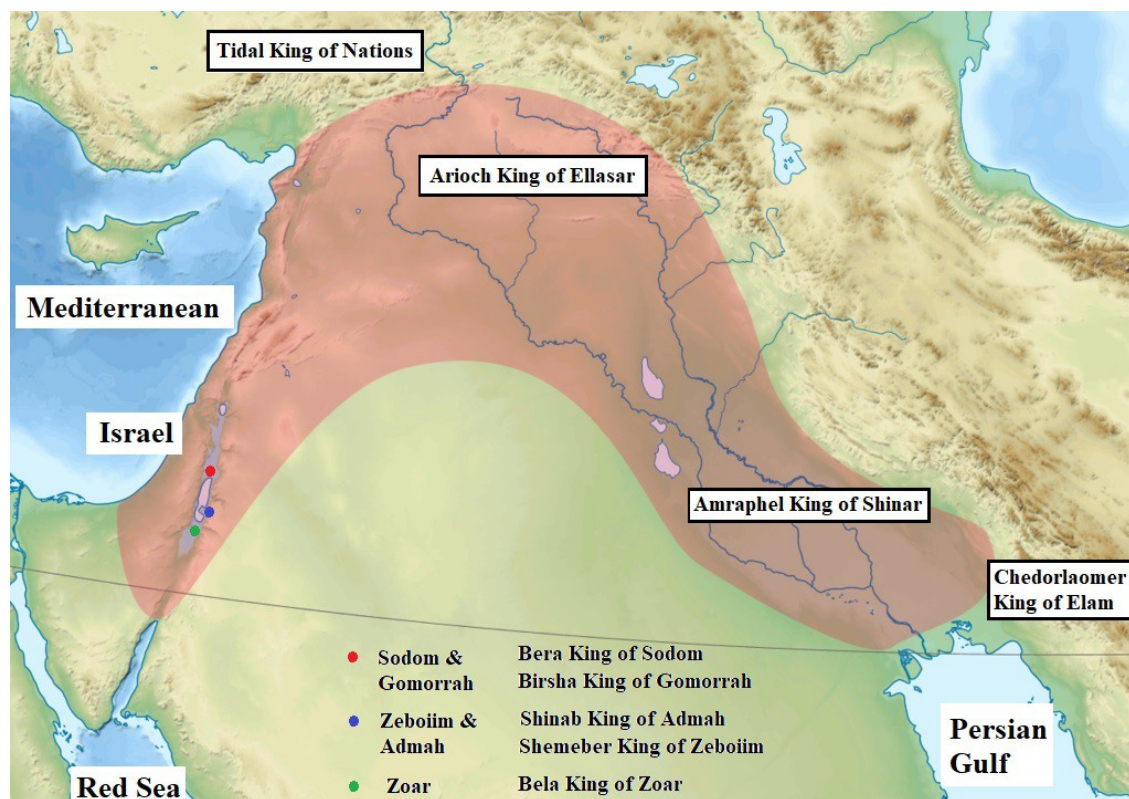


Figure 20: The kings of the north and of Canaan.

14:2-4.

Now the kings of Canaan were under the rule or subjugation of Chedolaomer but they rebelled, after being dominated for twelve years, in the thirteenth year. One year later, presumably after planning and organisation, Chedolaomer forms an allied offensive to take back control. The kings of Canaan are five in number. Those named have equally godless names. Bera meant “son of evil,” Birsha meant “son of wickedness.” whilst Shinab and Shemeber signify some aspect of pride and might. The regions inhabited by these various kings is also shown in figure 20. The war then was one that characterises this world which has seen countless similar offensives for equally selfish reasons. We baulk at the idea but it seems that man is ever bent on gaining rule and subjugation over his fellow man for no other reason than to be in charge!

14:5-9.

In the battle, the northern kings overcome a mix of other peoples described in verses 5 and 6. The route the invading armies take appears to follow the king's highway on Transjordan going from the north to the south (see figure 21).⁸⁹¹

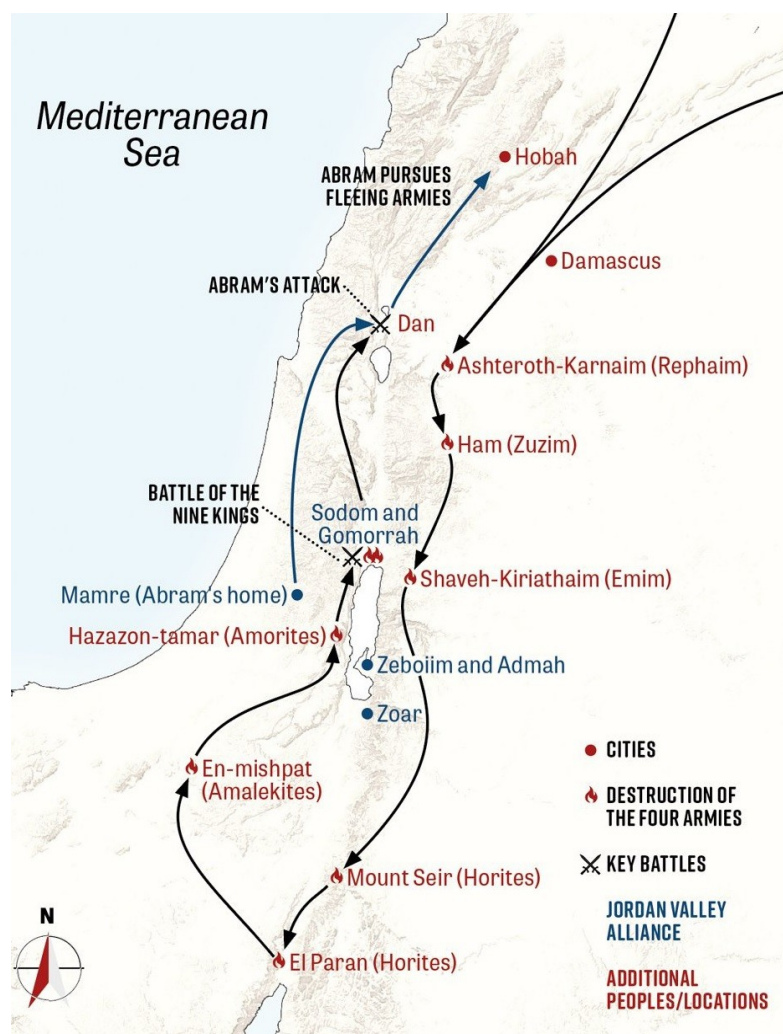


Figure 21: The war in Canaan.

First they defeat the “*Rephaim*” (“giants”) in the north at Ashteroth Karnaim which name signified the “horned goddess Ashteroth.”⁸⁹² Then they overrun the Zuzim who were nomads or roving peoples further south and then the Emim (“terrors”) at Shaveh Kiriathaim located further south east of the Dead Sea. The next stage involves they defeat of cave dwellers (Horites) in the south in the mountains of Seir as far down as El Paran near the wilderness.⁸⁹³ Finally they turned back going to En Mishpat or Kadesh sited south west of the Dead Sea where they attacked the Amalekites and the Amorites who inhabited Hazezon

⁸⁹¹ Numbers 20:17; Deuteronomy 1-3.

⁸⁹² Genesis 14:5.

⁸⁹³ Genesis 14:6.

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Tamar, later known as Engedi, sited on the west shore of the Dead Sea.⁸⁹⁴ It is at this point that the southern confederacy of five kings comes out to join the battle in the Valley of Siddim.⁸⁹⁵ It would seem from the brief details we have examined thus far, that there was fluidity and variety amongst the peoples of the land of Canaan, with an emphasis being on fear, terror and hiding as deduced simply from the names these people owned.

[2] Lot is taken and then rescued (Genesis 14:10-16).

14:10-12.

The description of the war in the Valley of Siddim receives more attention because this was where Lot was living.⁸⁹⁶ The mention of asphalt pits in verse 10 is interesting and reminds us that we live in a world where the evidence of the great flood of Noah is all around. Asphalt is a naturally occurring conglomerate of hydrocarbons probably formed from the crushed remains of the pre-flood living world. These tar-pits were resinous and fluid, and as some fled they got entrapped in them whilst others fled to higher regions. In amongst all the spoil was Lot of whom we read that he was not just situated nearby, but was actually living in Sodom.⁸⁹⁷ Such is the nature of a small compromise. We see Lot desiring the best of life and walking towards what appeals without going straight into it at first. Then we see that in time he has been sucked into the heart of the world and is now living in the city of sin.

14:13,14.

The story develops from an escapee who informed Abram of Lot's dire situation. Notice in verse 13 that Abram is called "*Abram the Hebrew*," that is, descended from Eber who was probably famed for outliving many of Abram's ancestors. Clearly Lot knew that his uncle lived at the trees of Mamre and so managed somehow to get word to him. By now Abram has made an alliance with not just Mamre, but also with Eschol and Aner who were Mamre's brothers. These three men were allies with Abram. In other words there was some agreement operating between them. It is probable that Mamre and his brothers were farmers and fruit-growers as the reference to the trees of Mamre would indicate, as would also the meaning of two of the brothers' names (Mamre means "strength" or "fatness" and Eschol means "cluster (of fruit)"). As soon as Abram hears what has happened we read that: "*he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.*"⁸⁹⁸ Dan was far off in the north of Palestine and so this expedition was no small outing. The mention of Dan here,

894 Genesis 14:7.

895 Genesis 14:8,9.

896 Genesis 14:10.

897 Genesis 14:12.

898 Genesis 14:14.

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named from the later tribe of Jacob rather than some ancient name for the city, is explained by the fact that Moses was collating all of the Genesis records for his contemporaries. We see such editing by Moses also in places where alternative names for cities and regions are given in brackets with words such as *“that is”* offered.⁸⁹⁹

It is especially significant, though, that Abram was ready to act and fight, and further that he had trained men ready as well.⁹⁰⁰ Perhaps this was through expediency. Abram lived amongst nomadic and fearful people who worshipped all sorts of idols. There were those with whom Abram could deal and trade, perhaps like Mamre and his brothers, but this was a harsh environment and the need for trained and armed men was a necessary one. What can we learn from all of this? Well we are not seeking an earthly kingdom, and we do not have weapons of carnal warfare.⁹⁰¹ However we are in a battle and we are frequently exhorted to be armed and protected ready for the onslaught in spiritual realms. We must take up the armour God has supplied us with, and follow the Captain of our Salvation as we seek to live for Him. This does not happen by chance or through some magical means. We need to be trained and ready, and, what-is-more, we need to make sure those around us in our fellowship are equally trained and ready for war. David worships the Lord for his training:

Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, *and* my fingers for battle—⁹⁰²

Are we being trained by the Lord? Or are we apathetic, comfortable and lazy? The Lord calls us to make *disciples*, indicating discipline, and not simply those schooled through fun-filled activities! Notice that these men who were prepared and trained were those *“who were born in his own house.”*⁹⁰³ It is thus the local church's responsibility to train people who are ready for the battle of life. So many churches look to others and to outside help when all along they ought to turn to themselves and ask the great question: what does God want from us here with whom we are and what we have? We might also add here that being born in the same household suggests being a part of the one family of God. Later we find that Abram will be styled as being *“of God Most High”* indicating his true godly origins.⁹⁰⁴

14:15-17.

Abram was not just a wandering nomad but a man who could plan and make strategy. We find that he separated his men into a number of companies and then attacked at night.⁹⁰⁵ We do not read here that

899 Genesis 14:2,3,7,8.

900 Genesis 14:14.

901 2Corinthians 10:4.

902 Psalm 144:1.

903 Genesis 14:14.

904 Genesis 14:19.

905 Genesis 14:15.

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this was given him by divine insight, but the point is that planning and organisation were necessary for a beneficial outcome. We cannot, and we must not, operate a plan and a strategy which is of our own making. The Bible condemns this wholeheartedly. Sadly we often see men and church people making up grand plans which borrow heavily from worldly ideas. This ought not to be. We must seek the Lord and seek his way and means. However this does not mean we sit by passively and simply wait around. No indeed! We need the Lord's insight and we need his revelation. We need to know when we do plan and form strategy that this is the Lord's doing and his plan. The need to call upon him in utter and complete dependence is paramount. But the requirement to think out and plan is equally needed to. Oh may our seeking of Him and our knowing of Him energise us and form us in such a way that we carry out His plan and purpose!

Abram's success is somewhat understated. We read simply in verse 16 that Abram brought back all the goods with Lot and his goods and all the people as well. How unlike us! But how like the Saviour in being a complete and full recovery! When the Lord recaptured us He brought us back entirely. We have been saved out of the dungeons of despair and brought wholly into the wonderful light of his love. But notice the supreme effort Abram undertook. We do not know the sizes of the confederate armies listed here, but Abram took just three hundred and eighteen men, and having travelled so far north that he went beyond the city of Damascus to “*Hobah*,” he recovered ***everything*** that had been taken so that nothing was ultimately lost.⁹⁰⁶

[3] A blessing and a curse (Genesis 14:17-24).

14:17-20.

Verse 17 could be linked with the former section rather than being considered here. However it appears that the king of Sodom had fled and now when things are recovered he shows his face once again.⁹⁰⁷ Such cowardice follows the man who favours sin. The “*Valley of Shaveh*” known as “*the King's Valley*,” was situated north of Jerusalem.⁹⁰⁸ This king comes along with his companions but the victor of this war was Abram and yet this is hardly noted. What we have here is simply a reference to “*the defeat of Chedorlaomer*,” and the only one who could have defeated the northern confederacy was Abram.

The story ends with blessing but also with a note of sadness and sorrow. We meet two people who could not be more opposite, the king of Salem and the king of Sodom. We see this opposition in their names, for whereas “*Salem*” means “peace,” “*Sodom*” means “burning” in a destructive way. The king of Sodom went out to join the battle in the Valley of Siddim and then flees for his life! Now we read that he

906 Genesis 14:16.

907 Genesis 14:10.

908 Genesis 14:17.

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comes to meet the victor, Abram, in the King's Valley almost as though he had been confederate with Abram! In stark and wonderful contrast the king of Salem comes as *“the priest of God Most High.”*⁹⁰⁹ This title of God indicates his supremacy over all. Note that God Most High is described in verse 19 as *“Possessor of heaven and earth.”* There is no one like Him because He is over and above all, both as Creator (hence Possessor) and Redeemer (the one who enabled Abram to rescue his nephew). What a wonderful thing! In the midst of all the terror, hiding, horror, idolatry, sin, and war we find that Salem the city of peace has *the* priest unto God. This is long before the priesthood from Levi was established, of course. Where did Melchizedek's priesthood stem from? We find mention of this priesthood in the book of Hebrews. The writer to the Hebrews starts by quoting Psalm 110:4 which tells us that the Messiah would be priest not in the order of Aaron and Levi, but after the order of Melchizedek.⁹¹⁰ Melchizedek's name means *“king of righteousness”* and along with his title as king of Salem (“peace”) we have a remarkable representation of the Messiah who came in righteousness to bring righteousness and peace!⁹¹¹ In chapter 7 of Hebrews the writer labours the point that the Levitical priesthood was a failure because it could not provide an eternal solution to the problem of sin. Perhaps it would be better to say that it was a temporary means, the main purpose of which was to point forward to the perfect priesthood that Christ came to carry out. That there had been priests operating before this is clear when you consider both Adam and his sons Abel and Cain, and then Noah offering up worship after the flood.

Here in Genesis 14 we find that the king of Salem comes with provision of food and drink (he *“brought out bread and wine”*).⁹¹² Although we may hurriedly rush towards the symbolism of bread and wine, it is important to note first that this priest to the Most High God came bringing sustenance. This is what Christ offers too! He has come not to point the finger, (although our sin definitely needs dealing with), but he has come to rescue, to ransom, to bring rest, and to bring abundant life!⁹¹³

Look what this priest does next. We read in verse 19 that the priest blessed Abram! Notice that the blessing involves Abram as being *“of God Most High,”* that is that Abram is part of God's plan and purpose, part of God's family. Abram is blessed because he is with God Most High who has enabled him to rescue Lot and defeat the warring factions, delivering his enemies into his hands. Abram gave a tenth (a tithe) of all the spoils to the king of Salem. The writer of Hebrews uses this fact to point out the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical one.

909 Genesis 14:18.

910 Hebrews 7:17.

911 Hebrews 7:2.

912 Genesis 14:18.

913 Matthew 11:28,29; Mark 10:45; John 10:10.

14:21-24.

We end with the sorry tale of a king who can only seek earthly gratification. The king of Sodom requests the people and wants Abram to take all the possessions.⁹¹⁴ It seems odd to end the story at this point after we have been lead to consider the Saviour, whose righteousness yields the fruit of peace, but then again we need to remember that we live in a fallen world and we must deal with the likes of the king of Sodom. He wants the people (presumably) so that he has someone to rule over, and perhaps for the gratification of the flesh. Yuk! What a horrible thought. But this is what is in man. Power, sex, money, things of this world. Look how Abram deals with him! He points to the God Most High! Abram had *“raised [his] hand to the Lord”* indicating that the God Most High had his heart.⁹¹⁵ The King of Sodom sought to gratify himself. He was his own king! Abram pointed to the **Possessor** of all things (God Most High). It is a stark reminder that if we merely possess things, or reputation or power, we must sooner or later give an account to God who owns all. Think of the man Jesus spoke of who gathered many crops and built such huge barns for himself!

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. **17** And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ **18** So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ **20** But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ **21** “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”⁹¹⁶

He was unaware that the moment he completed his great building work his very soul was required of him. What are we building? Is it a treasure on earth? Or is it, like Noah, the ark of salvation? I do hope that you are building your life in and around the ark which is Christ! Notice that Abram wanted the Lord, the Most High God, to have all the glory. He did not take any of the spoil, save that which his allies needed to reimburse them, lest the king of Sodom could have claimed to pay for his services.⁹¹⁷ How important that God's work is always done for free. How vital that we offer the good news indiscriminately to one and all for no cost! But then how will we support the work of those who labour in this? Well we should take our cue from the example given here. Abram paid Melchizedek a tithe for he was priest of the Most High God. Those who labour in word and deed leading others ought to be supported for their livelihood by the believers to whom they minister. Nothing should be done by compulsion. A minister knows that his Lord is the good shepherd and will take care of his needs.

914 Genesis 14:21.

915 Genesis 14:22.

916 Luke 12:16-21.

917 Genesis 14:23.

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One thing which we need to add here is to ask the question: where was Lot? Abram and his trained army had defeated the marauding armies to rescue Lot and all who were with him but we do not hear a word from the rescued man. Maybe he was injured or recovering back in his home city? We have learned that Lot chose the verdant plains living first near Sodom and then within the city, but where is he now? Interestingly we will not read about Lot again until Genesis chapter 19 where we find him ensconced in Sodom. It would appear, then, that Abram's rescue of Lot did not change Lot's heart and mind for he simply returns to Sodom the place of sin.

Chapter 16.

The covenant confirmed. (15:1-21).

Analysis.

- 1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,
“Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”
- 2 But Abram said,
“Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?”
- 3 Then Abram said,
“Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”
- 4 And behold, the word of the Lord *came* to him, saying,
“This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”
- 5 Then He brought him outside and said,
“Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.”
- And He said to him,
“So shall your descendants be.”
- 6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
- 7 Then He said to him,
“I *am* the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.”
- 8 And he said,
“Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”
- 9 So He said to him,
“Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”
- 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.
- 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.
- 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him.
- 13 Then He said to Abram:
“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterwards they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”
- 17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.
- 18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:
“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— 19 the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

In the last piece we saw Abram being met by two very different people after having gained a victory over his enemies in the rescue of his nephew, Lot. One was the priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek, the other was king of Sodom. The former brought blessing, the latter only difficulties. Now in this passage we read of Abram being afraid. It is often the case that a great victory is attended by doubts and difficulties brought on by all manner of circumstances, all of which we know are in the Lord's hands, for he is ever sovereign. Why though was Abram afraid after such a victory? Perhaps the experience with the priest of the Most High God was sublime and wonderful but then it did not last and

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now he is downcast? Or perhaps he is tormented by the evils of the likes of the king of Sodom? Or it may be that Abram was saddened by the fact that his rescued nephew Lot went straight back to Sodom. Whatever the case we must know and bear in mind that great victories last but a moment and our task is to keep going and to keep trusting the Lord even through the mundane and the miserable times, as well as in those blessed times of joy.

From our text, however, it would seem that in rescuing Lot Abram was brought to the realisation that as yet the promise of a seed was nowhere in sight. His nephew was his only relative and the thought that he would be the means by which the promise would come was too much. The heir of his house, Eliezer of Damascus, was not even related to him and so he worries and fears.

15:1.

At this point in time Abram receives a visit from the Lord, for it is the pre-incarnate Christ who comes to him. Notice that we are told that it is the *“word of the Lord”* that comes to him in a vision.⁹¹⁸ Was this some ecstatic trance-like experience? Not at all, for we note from verse 5 that this *“word of the Lord”* actually takes Abram outside (presumably of his tent) and begins to speak of his descendants being as numerous as the stars. Clearly we have a theophany, or more precisely, a Christophany, a visit by the pre-incarnate Christ. In passing we must add that John's use of the title *“Word”* may have been suggested by a passage such as this.⁹¹⁹

What does the Lord say to Abram? This is the first time we read that God is a shield (or defender). But the Lord says a lot more. After encouraging Abram to fear not, He goes on to say that He is a defender (a shield) and then, wonderfully, *“your exceedingly great reward”*! There is an upward progression here. We turn from fear, to realise that God defends us, and then having turned fully we run to embrace the Lord who is Possessor of heaven and earth. What a delight that God himself is our reward! Could we ask for anything more? Is this world all you want? Surely not! After all, the world belongs to the Possessor of heaven and earth, the Most High God. If we have Him we have all. Why settle for anything less? This statement is wonderful because it begins to teach whom we are. We are not people who have things or possess things or who could be characterised by our achievements or reputation. These, sadly, are how we think, or are how we are lead to think of people. No, we are to think of ourselves in relation to the *word of the Lord* who made us. He is what we need. His touch, His love, His guidance, His being and His presence – this is what ought to characterise us and formulate our being. Do we know the Lord? Are we those who want to be identified as being with the Lord? Are we like those of whom we read in Isaiah:

918 Genesis 15:1.

919 See also Elijah's experience at 1Kings 19:9 where the word of the Lord is referred to as a person. There are many instances of the word of the Lord being a person throughout both former and latter prophets (e.g. Jeremiah 1:4,9).

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One will say, I *am* the Lord's; another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; another shall write *with* his hand, 'The Lord's', and name *himself* by the name of Israel.⁹²⁰

God is our reward! Oh to know Him better! Oh to see Him fully! Oh to be with Him and to be rid of the sorrow and sin of this world!

15:2,3.

Now Abram was preoccupied with his thoughts. The Lord came to him and told him wonderful things but Abram had a niggle in his heart, something he just could not let go of. I know we all experience this type of thing from time to time. Here in this passage we learn how the Lord dealt with Abram. He had promised him an heir. Abram could not see this happening and was struggling with it in light of his experience in rescuing Lot, and in view of the fact that Eliezer of Damascus (who was unrelated to Abram) was to be his heir. In fact Abram is not just fearful and worried, he is a little bemused and confused about his plight. Let us note precisely what he says in response to the Lord's threefold blessing ("*do not be afraid,*" "*I am your shield,*" and, I am "*your exceedingly great reward*").⁹²¹ After addressing the word of the Lord as "*Lord God*" we find that he makes the following statements in verses 2 and 3:

what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?⁹²²

Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!⁹²³

The term "petulant" springs to mind here. God has promised Abram **Himself**! And Abram responds with "*what will you give me?*" It would seem that having a child to be his heir was overly important to Abram. So much so that he could not see what the Lord was offering him! Eliezer of Damascus would not do, for Abram appears to be going "*childless*"! Abram is not finished for his second statement is even more petulant. Literally rendered Abram says:

behold – to me – not – you have given – a seed.

Abram is so concerned about this, that he repeats the fact that someone not related to him will inherit his wealth.

920 Isaiah 44:5.

921 Genesis 15:1.

922 Genesis 15:2.

923 Genesis 15:3.

15:4-7.

How does the Lord respond? How would you respond if you announced a great gift to someone who was so concerned with something of much lesser consequence? I dare say that you would be angry! The Lord does not respond in this way. He rather takes hold of the concern and worry Abram expresses, and counteracts it. He tells him that what he fears, that Eliezer of Damascus will inherit, is not true.⁹²⁴ One will come from his own body. To cement this idea in Abram's mind the Lord takes him outside to view the starry sky.⁹²⁵ It needs to be said that in those days where light pollution from electric lights did not exist, the sky was resplendent with stars.⁹²⁶ Abram could not count these stars, but the Lord tells him that his offspring would flourish to outstrip such a number. And Abram's response? Well it is one of the most important verses in Scripture. Abram believed in the Lord!⁹²⁷ This gracious act of reinforcing the promise to Abram, that he will have an actual heir from his own body as numerous as the stars, is taken by Abram as being so! This act of faith is credited to Abram as righteousness. In the same way, if we look to Christ and believe that what he has done on the cross is all that is needed, we too will be credited with righteousness. The Lord continues by affirming the original covenant he made with Abram in Ur. The Lord reminds Abram that it was He (*"I am the Lord"*) that brought him out of Ur.⁹²⁸ It was He who brought him out of Mesopotamia to give him this promised land, it was not his own idea and nor was it his father Terah's doing.

15:8.

Now at this point Abram defers back to a fearful state from his act of faith by asking the question *"how shall I know that I will inherit it?"*⁹²⁹ Now such a question really ought not to have been asked.⁹³⁰ Abram believed the Lord's affirmation that he would have a true heir, but he stumbles with regard to the promise concerning the land. Is this not the case with us often too? We are like those who express faith with one breath and unbelief with another.⁹³¹ The remaining verses of chapter 15 describe the details of what will happen in the future. It is described here as a covenant. Before this in Genesis 12 it was a promise, but both of these terms are in fact describing the same thing. God had promised Abram a land,

924 Genesis 15:4.

925 Genesis 15:5.

926 Make it your aim to go to a place where there are no city lights nor street lights and look up at a clear sky! I had the thrill of seeing a glimpse of what Abram will have seen in Northumberland where the light pollution from cities and towns is quite low.

927 Genesis 15:6.

928 Genesis 15:7.

929 Genesis 15:8.

930 It is interesting that such questioning was also put by Zacharias concerning the promise of John the Baptist (Luke 1:18). For his doubting question he was struck dumb until the moment when John was named (Luke 1:20,63,64). Contrast this with Mary's questioning of the angel. She was not doubting as Abram and Zacharias were, for she simply wanted to know how the word would come to pass, not whether it would actually happen, (Luke 1:34).

931 Mark 9:24.

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blessing, and a seed (descendants), and now these promises were to be formally ratified in the covenant. It is interesting that the apostle Paul uses the word “*promise*” first in referencing Genesis 12:1f and then also “*covenant*” when talking of the giving of the law at Sinai:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.⁹³²

Thus the promise made to Abram in Genesis 12:1f is in fact a covenant which is now ratified by sacrifice in Genesis 15:1f. Abram is instructed as to what he should do. Whilst he is obeying the Lord's instructions he receives a dark and horrific vision of the future both near and far.

15:9-11.

In verses 9 to 11 we are told the details of a sacrifice which is not completed until verse 17 with a statement of the covenant given in verses 18 and 19. Sacrifice was initiated by the Lord at the fall of Adam and Eve. We remind the reader that Christ the promised One was the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*”⁹³³ Sacrifice was not something taken hold of by God from any other culture. Any cultures in the world that perform sacrifice do so as a consequence of what the Lord had originally revealed to Adam and Eve and through their descendants. We must ask ourselves the question: what is the significance of the details recorded here? Clearly we must focus our thoughts on the Lord Jesus and his great sacrifice. Perhaps by the variety of animals used here we have an indication of the extent and completion of his great work. The heifer was used in threshing and ploughing, and as such signifies our Saviour acting in submission to the Father's will.⁹³⁴ The female goat was used frequently for the sin offering, and so we see reflected here Christ pictured as our offering for sin.⁹³⁵ The ram was used in the consecration of the priests as well as the basis for specific offerings such as the trespass and peace offerings.⁹³⁶ Christ was fully given in consecration to the Father, and in His death we see all things are accomplished including the trespass against God, and the need for reconciliation. The turtle dove and the pigeon were the only birds used in sacrifices, but perhaps their significance is in their flight. The turtle dove is a gentle bird, but both signify humility and gentleness and so we see our Saviour's gentleness and heavenly origins portrayed. All of these animals were in place to point to the Saviour in all his wonderful goodness and provision.

932 Galatians 3:16,17.

933 Revelation 13:8.

934 Jeremiah 50:11; Hosea 10:11; Deuteronomy 21:3; Judges 14:18; Isaiah 7:21.

935 Leviticus 4:27-31; 5:5f; Numbers 15:27f; Genesis 31:10,12; 32:14; 1Samuel 25:2.

936 Exodus 29:15f; Leviticus 8:22f; Leviticus 5:15f; 19:21f; Numbers 6:14f.

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The reference to three years has been interpreted by some to signify the length of Christ's ministry on earth. This seems somewhat forced as an interpretation. Perhaps better, is to consider that the third year of the animal indicates a full grown specimen. Or perhaps there is significance that in the third year of growth in the field, the produce was to be as a tithe for the Levites.⁹³⁷ Or finally when the Lord spoke of the parable of the barren fig tree it was to be given three years to produce figs and then if it failed it would be cut off.⁹³⁸ Whichever is the correct interpretation, what we are meant to see is the Lord Jesus Christ being represented. The animals (not the birds) were broken into two parts signifying our Saviour's broken body. Then we find that Abram had to wait, and whilst he waits vultures come to feed off the carrion so that Abram is moved to force them away. Curiously the word translated *"drove ... away"* actually means "to blow."⁹³⁹ Perhaps Abram shooed them away with a hissing or calling out? But it seems to me that the Holy Spirit who authored these words is intending us to recognise that those who may want to obliterate the sacrifice and covenant will be blown away as though they were mere chaff! Why did the Lord make Abram wait? Clearly the Lord intended us to realise that the fulfilment of this illustration would not come for some time.

15:12-16.

Before the animals would be burnt up we next find the Lord inducing a deep sleep upon Abram similar to that which Adam experienced.⁹⁴⁰ In the former case we noted that the sleep signified prophetically the sleep of death that Christ would experience.⁹⁴¹ Here perhaps the same idea is being rehearsed. Before the promises given to Abraham will be brought about, there must come the death of one in Abram's line. It was whilst Abram was in this deep sleep that the Lord spoke to Abram, but please note the effect that this sleep had. Abram wasn't in some paradise or beautiful surroundings with sweet smells and glory. No, rather he experienced *"horror and great darkness."*⁹⁴² Why so? Well in part because of the terror and darkness that Abram's descendants would face. Perhaps partly also to signify the type of death that the one of Abram's line would face.⁹⁴³ In support of this we note that Abram's experience was when the sun was going down, at the end of the day, just at the point of time when Christ experienced the deep sorrows of anguish in the garden of Gethsemane and then on the cross.

What then did the Lord tell Abram would happen? Essentially we have two things to note. First, Abram is told about what will happen to his descendants in a wide or national sense both immediately and

937 Deuteronomy 14:28.

938 Luke 13:6f.

939 Genesis 15:11.

940 Genesis 15:12.

941 Genesis 2:21.

942 Genesis 15:12.

943 Such is reflected in the words of Psalm 22:1, for example.

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in the future.⁹⁴⁴ Second, Abram is told what will happen precisely concerning his own future and his generation to the fourth generation.⁹⁴⁵ Before we continue we must note that the details given here are vital if we want to grasp the chronology of Israel. To understand what is going on we must remember that we have two ***distinct*** and ***different*** time spans. First we have a period of 400 years. That is a precise time and means 400 years. Second we have a time noted as in the ***“fourth generation”*** which is not defined in terms of an exact number of years but has reference to four cycles from father to son. Since the latter is spoken in reference to Abram it must refer to his immediate descendants. We have already discussed these dates and times in the introduction to help in our outline of the book and the formation of a chronology, so we shall not consider them again in detail here. The prophecy of a four hundred year period of oppression begins with Ishmael's mocking of Isaac at his weaning party when he was five years old, thirty years after Abram entered Canaan. Abram's descendants from Isaac onwards were to be ***“strangers”*** both whilst they dwelt in Canaan, as well as when they eventually enter Egypt with Jacob. Finally the nation they would eventually serve (Egypt) would be judged so that the new nation could return ***“with great possessions.”***

Regarding Abram he is informed that he will have a long life and he will die ***“in peace.”***⁹⁴⁶ That is a great comfort isn't it? We unthinkingly say RIP when we talk of the dead, but what we have here is a man who has demonstrated his faith in God and who is now being promised that when he dies he will not go to a place of torment but will go ***“in peace.”*** Death is a terrible thing. If you don't think that then you are not thinking correctly. But for true believers like Abram, death has lost its sting and we have the sure promise that we shall go ***“in peace”*** or as the Psalmist so wonderfully puts it:

Precious in the sight of the Lord *is* the death of his saints.⁹⁴⁷

The rest of verse 15 gives us two key thoughts. First we are told the time span in terms of generations when Abram's descendants will return, about which we have discussed in detail in the introduction. Second we are told why there is this long delay. Taking the reason for the delay first, we are brought to consider God's wider plans and purposes. It is so easy to get caught up in the great plan of redemption promised to Abram. Abram himself was concerned as to why things were taking so long. Here we are taught that God was waiting for the people of that land to run their full course. The expression used is curious to modern ears. We are told that ***“the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”***⁹⁴⁸ Essentially the Lord is giving the people (the Amorites) enough time to repent and turn. They are currently in a state of sinfulness as indicated by the war we have just studied, but have not yet gone to such a state that they need final judgement. We remember that the Lord gave the pre-flood peoples a significant amount of time

944 Genesis 15:13,14.

945 Genesis 15:15.

946 Genesis 15:15.

947 Psalm 116:15.

948 Genesis 15:16.

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in which to turn. Noah preached righteousness throughout those days. Here we have the witness of Abram and of Melchizedek and there may well have been others who knew the Lord at this time. However the general populace, comprised of all the disparate tribes, will be given a time, and after their sinfulness has come to its fullness or its completion, then judgment will fall. In this case the judgment will come when the people of God finally enter the land and claim it for God's rule. How this should give us cause for thought! We too are being allowed a time. We have no idea how long that may be. Sin abounds and continues. It is not yet allowed its full course because the Lord still has a people to gather. But when the fullness of the sin of this present world has run its allotted course, judgement in the form of the return of The King will come.

15:17-21.

Abram has already been asked to gather various animals for the purpose of sacrifice in verses 9 to 11. After these dire prophecies of verses 12 to 16 we are informed in verse 17 that *“a smoking oven and a burning torch”* appeared and then passed between the divided animals. The two figures indicate a single thing. Fire and smoke. We have here the very presence of God. The smoke symbolises at once the anger of God and also serves as a cloak to preserve those nearby from the unbearable purity of the light.⁹⁴⁹ The flaming torch indicates both revealing light but also the fire that burns. So we have a wonderful figure of the Lord's glorious presence amongst men.

We note here that Abraham was simply an observer. Only the Lord God passed between the separated animals. In this we understand that God was confirming His covenant with Abram as an unconditional promise. There was no joint initiative as can be seen in the covenant of works made with Adam, and then later expressed by means of a phrase of the following kind: “this do and you shall live.”⁹⁵⁰ When the Lord (as symbolized by the smoking oven and flaming torch) passed through the divided animals, He was saying, in effect, that His covenant would be upheld in perpetuity and was not dependent upon what Abram nor his descendants would do.⁹⁵¹

The image used here also reminds us of the pillar of cloud and fire that attended the Israelites on their future wilderness journey. With this act of passing between the pieces that probably consumed the animals, (as a burnt offering), the Lord confirms the covenant he had made with Abram at the start. At this point we should note that many commentators are overly influenced by a secular mindset when it comes to offerings, sacrifices and covenants. It is worth reiterating here that God is no copier of men's ideas. Those who suggest that God merely stooped to copy a form and ritual that man had engaged in, are

949 Psalm 74:1; 104:32; Song 3:6; Isaiah 6:4; Daniel 10:6

950 Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:12.

951 Genesis 15:17,18.

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way off the mark. We learn in Isaiah that God has revealed his will and way from the very beginning.⁹⁵² When once Adam and Eve had fallen and were ejected from the garden of Eden we learn there about sacrifice, and then looking further at Noah's life we read more about sacrifice and a distinction between clean and unclean. If we are going to understand the Lord's ways we need to start with his word and work through these details patiently rather than follow those who look to the world of the ancient Near East and suggest that the Israelites borrowed from their culture. In fact the very opposite is true. The nations around Israel took what they knew of the truth handed down by godly men and twisted it and amalgamated it with their own ideas and legends. The Bible tells us the history of the world in broad outline, and all our studies ought to be based on this foundation. God has shown from the beginning the truth and how we should seek him, but man has sought out his own way often using the very forms and ideas given to them by the Lord. Take Egypt as a case in point. Not happy with understanding that there was a Creator God, who made all things, who judged the world by a flood, and who has promised to come, they sought to display this God in visual form. Once they had degenerated to depicting God and his attributes through idols, it was a short step to the invention of new and unheard of ideas. The story of man and his ideas is always a downward one. Given the glorious gospel of truth man will twist and turn this way and that until what they profess to believe is utter evil even though it may have roots in the truth.

In conclusion note the extent of the promise that God gave to Abram. The land to be inherited stretched from the Euphrates to the Nile and encompassed the land now presently occupied by ten different peoples.⁹⁵³ It was to be only in Solomon's reign that such an extent was realised. The sad tale following this (i.e. after Solomon) is that Israel would split into two and would never recover the heights (earthly speaking) experienced under the peaceful reign of David's son. It would be the prophets who would take this prophetic vision to its final fulfilment. Rather than an earthly and literal fulfilment of a land from Egypt to Assyria, instead we have pictures of these two lands being in alliance properly with Israel to such an extent that all three nations (which serve to represent the entire world) are united in the gospel. Listen to these wonderful words:

In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, “Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”⁹⁵⁴

952 See: Isaiah 48:16, for example.

953 Genesis 15:19-21.

954 Isaiah 19:24,25.

Chapter 17.

Jumping the gun

– a tale of two women. (16:1-16).

Analysis.

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no *children*.

And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

2 So Sarai said to Abram,

“See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.”

And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived.

And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

5 Then Sarai said to Abram,

“My wrong *be* upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.”

6 So Abram said to Sarai,

“Indeed your maid *is* in your hand; do to her as you please.”

And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

7 Now the Angel of the Lord found her

by a spring of water in the wilderness,

by the spring on the way to Shur.

8 And He said,

“Hagar, Sarai's maid,

where have you come from, and

where are you going?”

She said,

“I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

9 The Angel of the Lord said to her,

“Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”

10 Then the Angel of the Lord said to her,

“I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.”

11 And the Angel of the Lord said to her:

“behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. **12** He shall be a wild man; his hand *shall be* against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said,

“Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”

14 Therefore the **well** was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

16 Abram *was* eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

We left chapter 15 at a point following the rescue of Lot and the Lord's confirmation of his promise to Abram but we have no real clue as to the date for those events. In verse 3 of Genesis 16 we read that Abram and Sarai had been ten years in the land, and at the end of this chapter we learn that

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Abram is eighty-six years old. The chapter opens with a note about Sarai's barrenness. Abram had already lamented that he had no heir in chapter 15, now we are brought to consider things from Sarai's perspective. It is well to remember that when the Lord blesses a man with truth and revelation it is necessary to bear with it in patience and faith. If it becomes a burden to us, then we cannot complain when others misunderstand things. It would seem that Sarai's intentions here were laudable. Abram has had a revelation telling him to leave his father, his relatives, and his land to go to Canaan which will be given to his seed and descendants. It is now ten years since he was told this. Sarai has been with him all along and even obeyed her husband when they went to Egypt and where she was nearly forced into an adulterous relationship. Is it any wonder after all this time that she proffers a suggestion of how God's vision may come true? I am not excusing her of the failures here. I am merely saying that had Abram walked firmer and with deeper conviction maybe Sarai would not have made the suggestion she makes in this chapter.

The chapter comes in two parts. In the first six verses we see Sarai's (human) suggestion to promote God's work, and in the final ten verses we discover the grace of God operating in amidst Sarai's false idea.

[1] Abram's failure of leadership (Genesis 15:1-6).

16:1,2.

After noting that Sarai still had no child, we are then informed about Hagar her Egyptian maid.⁹⁵⁵ Although we are not told, it seems safe to conclude here that Sarai acquired this maid when they were down in Egypt. If they had not ventured down into that country they would not have acquired Hagar of course. Without Hagar we cannot say that Sarai might not have suggested the course of action she advises here, but the introduction of a foreign culture and a foreign way of doing things may well have been avoided. We learn later of God's grace to Hagar but we note here that Hagar was an *“Egyptian,”* and this fact is put here to alert the reader to impending danger.⁹⁵⁶ Not that Hagar was at fault necessarily, but that her culture and what she represents is coming to have influence in Abram and Sarai's lives.

Notice how Sarai speaks. Her first words are problematic. She states that the Lord had *“restrained”* her.⁹⁵⁷ The Lord had promised Abram concerning a future seed and descendants but maybe it was a promise that did not include Sarai? Such was her conclusion. She was still not pregnant so maybe she was not included in the promise. Now it is easy to look back and point the finger, but we have already been taught of the Lord in Genesis that marriage was to be between one man and one woman. Our Lord

955 Genesis 16:1.

956 Genesis 16:1. This fact is also repeated in Genesis 16:3.

957 Genesis 16:2.

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and Saviour endorses the teaching of Genesis 2 and adds that what God had joined, man was not to separate.⁹⁵⁸ In view of the monogamous nature of marriage, Sarai should have reckoned the promise to Abram as one to her also. At least Abram ought to have stepped in here and said that God's promise to him must also include her. What we find here is a sad indictment of Abram's lack of authority and leadership, for we read that he *"heeded the voice of Sarai."*⁹⁵⁹ We ought not to be too hard on Sarai here. She was wrong to suggest it, even though the opportunity to make such a mistake was really afforded by Abram's failure in going to Egypt and thereby acquiring Hagar in the first place. But we must censure Abram's failure to challenge Sarai which was his job and responsibility to do. Perhaps from her opening words (translated here as *"see now"*) which in the Hebrews suggest an arresting plea or a interjected call, we can see an element of frustration in Sarai. Abram had clearly told her of the promise, but now after all this time Sarai thinks it is not going to happen via her and so she exclaims in frustration and suggests a new plan.

The question which arises next is: where did she get the idea that she could have children through the surrogacy of her maid? Perhaps it was a common practice amongst the Canaanites and Egyptians of that time? We are not informed. However what we are clear on is that marriage was monogamous and this idea smacked fully of a man-made scheme to "fix" an apparent failure or injustice. How often do we hear such suggestions made in the world? Sarai was barren. This was an undeniable fact. God had promised Abram a son. This too was an undeniable fact. How do these two things cohere? In human thinking they simply do not! So what are we to do? Well the right thing to do is to wait, to trust God, and to see Him at work. After all it was God's plan, and Abram and Sarai are God's people. So this was all God's responsibility. The wrong thing to do was to try and fix what appeared to be a conundrum as though human ingenuity can provide answers!

16:3-5.

Please note that this whole episode was clearly one which was energised and put in place by Sarai. The passage starts with a reminder of Sarai's barrenness, and then we read of Sarai's suggestion in verse 2. Then in verse 3 it was Sarai who seemed to take the lead, but then we run into a terrible outcome. Once Hagar conceived things changed dramatically. Now that Hagar had been able to do what Sarai couldn't we find that Sarai *"became despised"* in Hagar's eyes.⁹⁶⁰ Hagar is now in the ascendancy. She has provided for Abram what Sarai could not. Sarai suddenly sees what has happened and now she blames Abram. It is curious how she puts this. She states *"my wrong be upon you"* as though she acknowledges that it was her

958 Matthew 19:4-6; Genesis 2:24.

959 Genesis 16:2.

960 Genesis 16:4.

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error but that the fruit of this ought to fall on Abram.⁹⁶¹ Of course there is blame shifting in this. Sarai was responsible. However she is right to say that Abram should suffer the outcome too as he was wholly culpable. He ought not to have acquiesced to Sarai's suggestion. The phrase *“the Lord judge between you and me”* is a Hebrew idiom signifying that God will judge who is at fault here.⁹⁶² I think Sarai knew she had made a terrible suggestion, but Abram was her “lord” and ought to have exercised his authority and quashed the whole idea at the beginning. The fact that he failed to do this is being highlighted here by Sarai. We ought to recognise that there is an order in marriage. It is the husband's responsibility to take the lead and to own all that goes on. Marriage is not a democracy but neither is it a totalitarian dictatorship. The man must consider all things from the point of view of what the Lord requires. He must not simply walk and act as though his wife is of little consequence, or as though she can lead her own life. Neither must he act as though she must be obeyed. Rather he ought to be in such a loving relationship with his wife that she is free to express her view and her ideas without being censured. The final decision is the husband's to make. How far we are from such an ideal! How important it is for a man to so love his wife as Christ loved the church and to take ownership and responsibility for the marriage. Abram ought to have not heeded Sarai's voice, but he should have done a lot more. Sarai was clearly frustrated and lacking in faith. It was all going horribly wrong she was thinking. What is that husband doing? Here is a plan do this! And without thinking Abram falls into accepting it. What he should have done is to consider the plan, test it against what he knew, and then he ought to have corrected Sarai and taught her from what he knew of God and his commands. He ought to have focused on the fact that marriage was sacrosanct and monogamous. But now he has two wives with all the troubles that produces! He ought to have reviewed the promise and have told Sarai that this was God's responsibility, and He would see it through in His way. How it teaches us that men ought to be taking a lead and we ought to sanctify and cleanse our wives by *“the washing of water by the word.”*⁹⁶³

16:6.

Abram comes out very badly in these verses. First we note that he allows Sarai to take the lead, then we find that he listened to her voice and allowed her to make the decision, and now we find again that he abrogates his responsibility. Sarai is now discredited because her maid Hagar is bearing Abram a child. Sarai is thus wronged and she has been wronged by her husband Abram. The fact that it was Sarai's suggestion in no way excuses Abram from being at fault. He went ahead and lay with Hagar and because of this he has now dishonoured Sarai. What was going to happen now? At this point Abram has failed in several ways. He failed to take the lead. He failed to correct Sarai and her suggestion. He failed to remind

961 Genesis 16:5.

962 Genesis 16:5.

963 Ephesians 5:26.

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her of the promise and of their being married as God required in a single monogamous relationship. Now he fails again. He could have thought about what had happened and called upon the Lord for aid and help, but he does not. He merely tells Sarai to do as she pleases (*“do to her as you please”*)! His words are quite shocking. He treats the maid Hagar as a mere chattel. By saying that Sarai's maid was in her hands he was demeaning this poor Egyptian woman. Make no mistake here, for she was poor in the sense that she had no godly influence except that which she had through Abram and Sarai. And what a mess they made of that! Consequently Sarai treated Hagar harshly and belittled her with many tasks, so much so that Hagar runs away.

[2] Grace to a woman who ran away (Genesis 16:7-16).

16:7,8.

From verse 7 we find that Abram and Sarai's failures are not in any way detrimental to the plan that God has put in place. It is significant here that the *“Angel of the Lord”* appears not to Abram or Sarai but to the fleeing Hagar, whose name means “flight.”⁹⁶⁴ Hagar was on her way back to Egypt, for Shur lay on the border of that country. She was by a water spring on the road to Shur and the Angel of the Lord speaks directly to her. Notice that this *“Angel of the Lord”* was in fact a person – a theophanic appearance of Christ (a 'Christophany'). There then ensues a conversation between Hagar and the Lord. The Lord begins with a question.⁹⁶⁵ It is asked not for information note, because the Lord has already identified this woman by name and by occupation. How did a mere man know this? So why does he ask the question? Well it is just like the question the same Lord asked Adam after he had sinned. It was a question that searched the heart. Tell me Hagar what has brought you to this fountain spring? Hagar gives him the bare bones of the situation but she certainly owns up to the truth. She is fleeing – running away.⁹⁶⁶ She cannot face a moment longer in the company of one who has used her, and then abused her. Make no mistake, Sarai was guilty of using Hagar to fix the state they thought they were in, and once Hagar fell pregnant and took on the role of Abram's wife, Sarai abused her harshly.

16:9.

The Lord's response is quite remarkable and it is one we perhaps would like to question. Why would the Lord send Hagar back to the problem she faced? Well I think the first thing we must note here is that running away from things never works. Hagar had to face the problem and the only way to do that was to return to Sarai. But there is another reason she must return. And this is to submit herself to Sarai's

964 Genesis 16:7.

965 Genesis 16:8.

966 Genesis 16:8.

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rule. This was her place! We baulk at this because we cannot abide slavery, and further we are horrified at the way Sarai treated Hagar. But the Lord knows best, and since He can only do good, (for He is the very definition of good), we must seek an understanding deeper than the mere surface glance will allow. We must remember that Abram was called of God. Since Sarai was Abram's wife she too is under the authority of the Lord. These two were not free to act as they saw fit. Not at all. The fact that we read of these terrible lapses in Abram and Sarai is for our learning. But Hagar must return to this couple for this is where God's blessing would flow. It is the same in the gospel. The Lord opens our hearts to reveal a cacophony of sinfulness. He points the finger and says “this is what you are really like” and then we want instinctively to run a mile from such revelation. But no, the best thing to do is to embrace the very one who seems to be condemning us. It is like the surgeon who has to tell us that we are going to die from some terrible condition unless we allow him to wield his knife to cut out the problem. The Lord bruises us and makes us bleed first, before he offers healing and balm. It always sounds terrible but it isn't! Hagar must return to her mistress because this the only place where she can receive a blessing.

16:10-12.

Next we observe that the Lord offers a promise to Hagar.⁹⁶⁷ She receives revelation concerning her son. Listen to the grace here! The Lord has heard her affliction. Perhaps she cried out to the Lord? We do not read of this but it is clear she was sorrowful and perhaps fearful, and her state and condition cried out to God. He is the one who sees all things! And Hagar recognises this. It is interesting to note *precisely* what the Lord says to Hagar by way of promise. First she is given almost an Abrahamic promise when she is told that her descendants will increase “*exceedingly*.”⁹⁶⁸ This is not something we may have expected, except that it is, of course, Abram's seed. It was only in the last chapter that there was any mention of the impossibility of counting descendants when the Lord was blessing Abram.⁹⁶⁹ Now it is Hagar's descendant which will increase so they cannot be counted. The next message to her informs her that what was conceived in her was a son.⁹⁷⁰ The way it is put reminds us of the announcement given to Manoah and his wife concerning Samson, and then also the one given to Mary concerning her son and in prophecy.

And He said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son’⁹⁷¹

967 Genesis 16:10.

968 Genesis 16:10.

969 Genesis 15:5.

970 Genesis 16:11.

971 Judges 13:7.

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Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel.⁹⁷²

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.⁹⁷³

Next we read that he shall be named *“Ishmael”* because the Lord had *“heard”* of Hagar's affliction.⁹⁷⁴ What tenderness of the Lord we have here, to inform her that all is well, that she will have a son, and that his name will be a clear reminder to her and others that God has heard of her terrible plight! Imagine what this would mean for Abram and Sarai! When we sin and do not take up our responsibilities we will be made to confront the consequences, and in seeing Ishmael, Abram and Sarai would be face-to-face with the folly of their sin. With regard to Hagar, she is given the assurance that God – the living God – knows and hears. This son will be wild and perpetually in the midst of conflict amongst his brethren.⁹⁷⁵ Why was Ishmael to be so wild and aggressive? This is not an easy thing to answer here but we must note that there would always be conflict between the man of promise (Abram) and his seed, and the fruit of Egypt (Hagar).

16:13,14.

When Hagar hears all of this she is in awe. She has been with a person, who knows her by name and occupation, who has told her of the son in her womb, and who has given her a great promise for her future. She responds in faith. She then calls the Lord by a name to highlight the amazing fact (to her at this point) that God sees her.⁹⁷⁶

You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees

The Hebrew with a literal translation is as follows:

אַתָּה אֵל רֹאִי
you God [who] sees (me)

Here then we have a title for the Lord: אֵל רֹאִי *'el ro'i*. Psalm 139 is a further exposition of this beginning thought and well worth the reader's consideration. God sees us not just in our circumstances and

972 Isaiah 7:14.

973 Luke 1:31.

974 Genesis 16:11.

975 Genesis 16:12.

976 Genesis 16:13.

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environment but in our essential depths too. So the Lord God sees Hagar in all her affliction and sorrow and in all her private moments as she fled from Sarai. What is more, this God who sees her, who knows her plight, and her folly too, is seen by her! Is it real that the God who sees me (in every detail) is seen by me here in this place? This confession is not dissimilar to the woman of Samaria's in John chapter 4. I can see no reason why we ought not to see in Hagar a measure of faith here. As a result of this encounter, the well nearby was given a name to reflect these events, "*Beer Lahai Roi*." Only this name has a little more to it than revealed in the expressions and exclamations Hagar utters, for the name translates as: "well of the living one who sees me" or "well of the life of vision." That word "life" or "living one" signifies that it was not just a mere encounter of wonder and awe, but a matter of life. She had seen the "living one" (the one who gives life) and had lived to tell the tale. We are informed of the location of the well between Kadesh and Bered.⁹⁷⁷ Although we are unsure of the whereabouts of Bered, we know that Kadesh is located in the southern region called the "Negev."

16:15,16.

Thus Hagar returns to her mistress and it would seem from the last few verses of chapter 16 that all has been resolved. We say this because Abram is referred to here as the one who names Ishmael. Recall that it was the Lord who told Hagar whilst she was at the well what the child should be named, so it must have been that Hagar told Abram, and Abram must have believed her story and honoured the Lord by naming the child "*Ishmael*." It is noteworthy in the last two verses that we read three times that it was Hagar who "*bore*" Abram a son.

15 So **Hagar bore** Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom **Hagar bore**, Ishmael.

16 Abram *was* eighty-six years old when **Hagar bore** Ishmael to Abram.

I think at the very least we are to see that God is concerned for all peoples and Hagar is given due respect here as the one who bore Abraham a son.

977 Genesis 16:14.

Chapter 18.

The covenant signified. (17:1-27).

Analysis.

- 1** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him,
“I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. **2** And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”
- 3** Then Abram fell on his face,
and God talked with him, saying:
- 4** “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. **5** No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. **6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. **7** And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. **8** Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”
- 9** And God said to Abraham:
“As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. **10** This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; **11** and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. **12** He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. **13** He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **14** And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”
- 15** Then God said to Abraham,
“As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. **16** And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.”
- 17** Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart,
“Shall *a child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?”
- 18** And Abraham said to God,
“Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”
- 19** Then God said:
“No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. **20** And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **21** But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”
- 22** Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.
- 23** So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.
- 24** Abraham *was* ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.
- 25** And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.
- 26** That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael;
- 27** and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

At the end of chapter 16 we learn that Abram was 86 years old and had thus been in Canaan for eleven years. He had a son by the Egyptian maid, Hagar, whose name was Ishmael signifying that God heard of (and saw) Hagar's affliction. Now we find that thirteen years had passed by and the Lord again

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appeared to Abram. In passing it is well to remember that in this historical record of Abram's life we find that God did not appear to the patriarch as frequently as many may suppose. We have the appearance in Genesis 12 when Abram was 75 years old, a word from the Lord when Abram separated from Lot shortly after this in chapter 13, the meeting with Melchizedek in chapter 14 soon after that, a word from the Lord in a vision in chapter 15 probably at about the same time as chapter 16 when Abram had been in the land for ten years, and then this appearance when Abram is 99 years old. So over the course of 24 years there were no more than four occasions when the Lord appeared to Abram or spoke to him in a vision.⁹⁷⁸ That is not to say that Abram did not have daily communion by the Spirit with the Lord, but such open visitations are clearly not as frequent as may be thought.

This chapter describes the covenant of circumcision. It is sometimes thought that the words of the Lord in verse 2 indicate that this is the first time we have a covenant with Abram. However this is to miss the way in which the Lord introduces his covenant and promise which is not given simply as something fully revealed and finally sealed, but rather we find that the Lord brings things about through the training and instruction Abram needs. The starting point for the agreement between God and Abram is really Genesis 12:1-7. Abram had to be set apart first and so he is commanded to leave his home, his family and his relatives. It finds confirmation in Genesis 15 through the action of a sacrifice offered and received, and here in Genesis 17 we find the covenant is sealed to Abram by two singular signs. First his name is changed and second his flesh is cut.

The detail provided here is given in the form of a conversation. Some suggest that it takes the form of a typical treaty of that time, but it would be better to consider this one of the templates from which other ancient treaties were formed. It is unthinkable that the sovereign Lord would borrow man-made treaty forms for what he was proposing with Abram. We say that this is a conversation because of the way it develops with the Lord speaking initially several times, and then Abram speaking somewhat later, but we are left in no doubt whatsoever that the Lord is vastly superior to Abram. At the first appearance and word from the Lord Abram falls on his face, and this is where he should be. We shall consider this sealing of the covenant in six parts as follows:

[1] I am Almighty God. (Genesis 17:1,2).

[2] From Abram to Abraham. (Genesis 17:3-8).

[3] Circumcision. (Genesis 17:9-14).

[4] From Sarai to Sarah. (Genesis 17:15,16).

[5] When laughter becomes a name. (Genesis 17:17-21).

[6] Abraham obeys. (Genesis 17:22-27).

⁹⁷⁸ It is not likely that Melchizedek was a theophany for he is presented to us as the real king of Salem. The pre-incarnate Christ does not appear to have been a permanent dweller amongst men.

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The first five of these divisions centre on that which the Lord speaks, whilst the last focuses on how Abram obeys.

17:1,2. (*I am Almighty God*).

Twenty four years after the Lord had promised Abram an heir and a land we see the Lord appearing again, but this time the emphasis is not on the promise at first, but on the One who promises. It is ever the case that young believers often get so caught up with what the Lord has done for them personally, that sometimes (perhaps always) they forget the Lord, and bask in the provision of His gifts (peace, joy, and so on). Such an attitude is one found amongst the youngest of children and it is not to be unexpected. Now, however, after some training and development, we find that that Lord opens Abram's eyes to consider more about the Giver, than the gift. Thus we see that God's words begin with a declaration of His nature. It is true that the Lord had revealed His nature to Abram on earlier occasions. For example, in chapter 15 we read that the Lord tells Abram that He is His *“shield”* and *“reward.”*⁹⁷⁹ But Abram did not seem to grasp these truths fully at the time, for he seemed more obsessed with who will be his heir. Now, however, the Lord wants Abram to see Him truly and more truthfully.

And so in this first section, we have three distinct and ordered statements which serve to indicate how we ought to approach God and His gift:

[1] The Lord reveals His nature.	<i>I am Almighty God....</i>
[2] A call for Abram to heed.	<i>... walk before Me and be blameless...</i>
[3] A promise and a covenant.	<i>... And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.</i>

This is the first time we read of God being termed *“Almighty”* signifying the all-powerful nature of the Lord.⁹⁸⁰ In other words, Abram is being taught to know with full assurance that the Lord can do all things both by virtue of authority, and by virtue of ability. God is all powerful because He is sovereign and has the right to do as He pleases, and He is all powerful because He has the ability to do anything He chooses to do. We learn this from the very first chapter of Genesis, but it is one thing having information about what God can and has done, and quite another to be faced with God who declares His nature in a revealed way. This is what we need today. Not simply the bare knowledge we can glean as we read the Scriptures, but the face-to-face revelation of God which demonstrates His power. I am not advocating a kind of ecstatic and charismatic-centred experience, but a real dealing with the Lord so that we encounter God in

979 Genesis 15:1.

980 Genesis 17:1.

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such a way that our whole being is energised by His almighty power.

There is a consequence to receiving such a revelation. Abram is taught that God is all powerful, and so he must now heed the call of God. I wonder if we realise that this second sentence is a call? It is a command for sure, but it is more than merely a command that must be obeyed, for with the command comes aid and help. The Lord says to Abram two wonderful things here. First the Lord is calling Abram to walk *“before”* Him.⁹⁸¹ Do we realise what this entails? Abram is being given the privilege of walking in front of the Lord as-it-were face-to-face. There is an element of friendship here. Walk with Me! We can see the same kind of call in the words of Jesus when he called people to follow him, or literally, to walk after him.⁹⁸² Have we heard this call to walk with Jesus, to walk with the Lord? Then second we are told that Abram is called to *“be blameless.”* This is not a pre-requisite but a promise. The God who said *“let there be light”* and it was so, now calls Abram to be blameless, so do we not think that is equally to be so? Of course there is to be no mere mechanical response from Abram as though his bones and flesh would automatically comply with this request. No, for Abram's very will and heart are involved, but are we not of those who know that God is Almighty and can even call the heart to repentance, to faith, and to walk in a blameless way? Isn't this remarkable? The Lord calls Abram and gives him the ability because He alone is powerful.

Now this word *“blameless”* has the sense of “wholeness,” “completeness,” or “soundness” in it. In other words it is a call to perfection and blamelessness that signifies a healing of the whole person. In this modern age people are obsessed with physical healing sometimes as though that is all that is necessary. However God is far more concerned with our wholeness which can only come from a right relationship with Him. I sometimes wonder if people realise that we are in fact made to be in right relationship with God, and if this is not true of our current condition then we are sick indeed. People need this healing of their souls far more than any physical healing of the body. I am not discounting physical healing. It is true that God does this too as He sees fit. However we know from the Scriptures that our physical bodies are still under the curse and will not be released from this until Christ returns. Consequently the soul and its health are of far more importance. We praise God when someone is healed from some disease, but we are far more excited and happy when someone is healed of sin-sickness and brought into the kingdom. The former person (if they are not saved from sin) will relapse, die, and will languish in eternal torment. The latter may suffer all kinds of physical sickness and illness in this world but when the Lord returns, they will live in paradise where there is complete healing with no sin, sickness nor death!

After a revelation of the character of God and the call to heed both whom He is and what He has

981 Genesis 17:1.

982 Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 19:21 etc.

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to say, we finally read of the covenant and promise.⁹⁸³ It is put in the future tense here, for ultimately this points forward to the covenant of grace found in Christ. The promise first given in chapter 12 and confirmed in chapter 15 is now to be sealed in this chapter, but all of this points in prophetic manner to the wonderful covenant we find in Christ. At this point we will see that God seals the covenant agreement He made earlier. In support of this view it should be noted that the word “*make*” is literally “gift” so that what we have here is the fact that God will *give* His covenant between Himself and Abram. This is no agreement between two equals, but a gift given by the Almighty God for the blessing and benefit of His chosen people.

17:3-8. (From Abram to Abraham).

Hearing all of this opening introduction causes Abram to fall on his face.⁹⁸⁴ He is at once humbled and comes to a point of worship. This marks a change for this is the first time we read of anyone falling at the appearance of God. And yet we find that God speaks with Abram and He does so in the most remarkable way. The first lesson we need to learn is that the Lord is ready and willing to reveal Himself to the humble man. An arrogant and proud person will never hear the Lord talking with him.

In this section we find the two key parts of the covenant reaffirmed. These are the promise of a seed and descendants, and, the promise of a land. Sometimes people get so transfixed with the physical nature of these promises that it causes them all manner of trouble in interpreting Scripture. If we consider the promise of a seed and descendants we can begin to unpick the way these promises work. Paul teaches clearly that the promise of a “*seed*” was indicative of the coming Christ.⁹⁸⁵ For Abram this promise of a seed is fulfilled in the coming of his son through Sarai. But then also we note that there is a promise that Abram's seed will be so numerous that it cannot be counted. So from the one seed, Abram's son by Sarai, come a multitude. Now if the seed of Abram points first and foremost to Christ, the many descendants that issue via Abram and Sarai's son point to the many brethren who own Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is the same thing when it comes to considering the land. Abram was to inherit the land of Canaan and this came true through his descendants when they entered the promised land under Joshua. How should this be applied for us in the future? Well clearly it is not really about inheriting a strip of landmass between Egypt and Mesopotamia. What is prophesied is an inheritance of the nations (the redeemed of the Lord) and thereby the new creation, the new heavens and earth.

Looking at the details of what we find in verses 3 to 8 we begin by noting that this is God's covenant. This is all God's doing, His plan, and His right! The most amazing thing is that He has sought

983 Genesis 17:2.

984 Genesis 17:3.

985 Galatians 3:16.

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to include mortal man, for we read that His covenant that He has made is with Abram!⁹⁸⁶ The covenant is sealed here by the change of Abram's name to (the more familiar) Abraham.⁹⁸⁷ A change which turns his name from meaning “exalted father” to “a father of many nations.” Thus Abraham is to be the head of many nations. But notice the repetition here:

you shall be a father of many nations (verse 4).

I have made you a father of many nations (verse 5).

I will make you exceedingly fruitful (verse 6).

I will make nations of you (verse 6).

kings shall come from you (verse 6).

It is sometimes necessary to have things spelled out in very clear terms. It isn't enough to say to Abraham that he will be fruitful or that he shall be the father of many nations, for the Lord wants this truth to sink deep down into his heart. How we need to have our ears dug out! We need to hear and really hear, and then hear again, and then listen, and then reconsider, and then to meditate before we hear again!

Then also we are told that this covenant is no mere one off for Abraham, but it is to be carried on with his descendants after him.⁹⁸⁸ Once again we note that there was a temporal phase which included the nation of Israel, the temple and so on, and a future eternal fulfilment of which the temporal is but a picture. Abraham entered into the eternal nature of this covenant as well as being the first to partake (to a limited extent) of the temporal expression of the covenant.

I am aware that there are many who pick up on the nature of this particular covenant (which was to be sealed by circumcision) as being an eternal or everlasting one as described in verses 7 and 8. Here we are told that this covenant will be “*for an everlasting covenant*” and that God will give the land of Canaan to them “*as an everlasting possession.*” Does this mean that the covenant of circumcision and the promise of the land of Palestine is forever given to Abraham's descendants? Well I think we need to consider two points here. First this statement of what I have referred to as the *temporal* covenant, which features the land of Canaan, and ultimately the temple and the sacrifices and so on, is indeed an everlasting one but it is a ***conditional*** covenant. The New Testament makes this quite plain. It is based on the principle “this do and you shall live” or, in other words, obedience to the stipulations is a requirement before blessings of life come to pass.⁹⁸⁹ It is, in effect, the same covenant we find in Genesis 2:17. Adam was constrained to keep just one command and the blessing would have been eternal life. But second we

986 Genesis 17:4.

987 Genesis 17:5.

988 Genesis 17:7.

989 Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:12.

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must recognise that the ultimate fulfilment is not the temporal continuation of Israel, but the spiritual and perfect completion and fulfilment we find in Christ. Christ kept the old covenant perfectly. He did what was required in full and as a result reaped the benefits of life and an inheritance and so on, which believers are free to partake of. For us it is not “do this and live,” but, “live! And you will do this” or, in other words, the new birth bringing life will result in the conditions and requirements being met. If we are really born again of God's Spirit, we shall obey the Lord. If we do not demonstrably obey the Lord then that is evidence that we have not been born again. This is essentially the teaching found in John's first epistle. But lest the reader become burdened by doubt I want to make it clear that whilst we are justified in Christ and stand righteous before the Lord, our sanctification and being made perfect is a progressive and growing thing. We all sin. If we say we do not then the truth is not in us.⁹⁹⁰ ***However if we continue in sin***, and if we practice sin, then we can be sure that we are not born of God. If, on the other hand, we hate the sin we do, and we long to do what is right and practice righteousness out of our love and affection for the Lord, this indicates a heart that has been renewed.

Israel could have been a perpetual kingdom, if the people obeyed God fully. This was, of course, impossible because man is sinful and so it was always going to be a temporary affair even though the offer of an eternal possession was there. However the true “Israel” was Christ, the sinless One, and He has obeyed the Father fully and thereby inherited an eternal kingdom of which the temporal Israel was but a picture.

17:9-14. (Circumcision).

In this chapter the specific detail that forms the main focus is the covenant of circumcision. It has been considered as a separate covenant by many. However it is better considered as a seal of the covenant made with Abraham from Genesis 12. Abraham is called upon to keep this “*covenant*” of circumcision in perpetuity. In verse 11 it is specifically termed a sign or token and so that is how we shall consider it. The apostle Paul states that the “*sign of circumcision*” that Abram received was actually “*a seal of the righteousness*” of his faith.⁹⁹¹ The stipulation is quite simple. All males of eight days and over must be circumcised immediately, and anyone who comes among them or who is born latter on must also be circumcised. Any male not circumcised is to be cut off. Hence circumcision was effectively a means of identification of being among the people of Abraham. Clearly the mechanical act of circumcision does nothing to the heart or the belief. Males could be circumcised and not trust in the Lord. This seal of the covenant was a cutting of the flesh of the foreskin. As such it was a painful thing and so not entered into

990 1John 1:8.

991 Romans 4:11: “*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.*”

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lightly. It signified the fact that the flesh of man (his sinful nature) needed serious treatment, or cutting off. If a man was unwilling to be circumcised he himself would be cut off. This points to the final state of those who refuse God's offer. If they will not suffer the loss of their foreskin, then they will suffer the loss of their whole life. Why the foreskin? There are a number of reasons for this as a fitting sign and seal. First, we see that man's regenerative ability is flawed. When a man impregnates a woman with his seed, the fruit will always be fallen, sinful creatures. Fallen man reproduces fallen man. Such procreation will never replenish the earth as it was intended. This means of reproduction needs cutting off (in a spiritual sense). It is not that human reproduction ought to be stopped, but that this means of replenishing the earth of being fruitful and of filling the earth will never succeed. What is needed is a new means of regeneration, one provided by the Spirit. Second, we remember that the promise of Genesis 3:15 speaks of the *seed* (singular) of the woman and her descendants, which is then picked up in Genesis 12 in respect of Abram, and which Paul in Galatians chapter 3 identifies with Christ. Thus it was not to be by ordinary generation through the male seed implanted in a woman. This leads us to the incarnation and the virgin birth of Mary who was with child by the Holy Spirit. Circumcision effectively indicates the end of the male generative means of bringing about the filling of the earth or its replenishing. Third, circumcision is an act of cutting the flesh. The sinful flesh must be cut and removed, just as the foreskins of males were. We note in this that entrance into the kingdom of God is by being separated from the world. We are cut off from the world, or we are cut off from God and His presence at the end of time if we do not seek to follow Him. Fourth, circumcision must be seen as a sign of failure and not as a badge of honour as the Jews viewed it. That it was something that identified the group is clear from Genesis 17:9-14. Any male not circumcised would *"be cut off from his people."* However, being circumcised is a mark of being cut in a sensitive place which, although generally hidden from sight, is nevertheless indicative of something lost or less than perfect. Fifth the new-born males were to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. This is significant. The eighth day was the first day of a new week and so signalled a new beginning. Thus it points to the regeneration, the new birth, the new heavens, and the new earth. As such, then, circumcision tells us of the failure of the old order of generation, and the need for regeneration by a different means.

This covenant of circumcision is again stated as an everlasting one and is God's covenant. Thus if Israel as a nation had managed to keep God's commands properly, it is conceivable that they could have continued on for eternity. In such a case all males would have to be circumcised to be part of this godly kingdom. The fact that Israel failed and fell does not prove that this covenant failed, but only that Israel failed. It is still in effect. The real purpose of this was to teach man that even if he was offered all the opportunities for success and all the provision for blessing, nevertheless man would still ultimately fail. What more could the sovereign Lord do for Israel that He had not already done? The only chance of

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success was for the Lord Himself to do this as a perfect man, hence the need for the incarnation. This truth is to be found throughout the Scriptures from Genesis onwards. We have seen many glimpses thus far, and we shall see many more as we continue. For now Abraham was called to obey this word, even though God knew that such a way would only be successful for Abraham's Seed (i.e. Christ Jesus).

17:15,16. (From Sarai to Sarah).

We have already had cause to note that the promise made to Abraham also included Sarai because the promise was of a (the) *Seed*. Abraham was married to Sarai and so this promise obviously involved her. She too is included in the covenant and her name is changed to seal this great promise. Her name is changed from Sarai meaning “princess” to Sarah which means “princess of many.” Sarah is to be a mother of nations and from her shall come kings. She, therefore, is to be included in this great promise given to Abram. Here we can see the function of wives as initially created being confirmed. She is to be a helper and an equal partner in the fruits and blessings of the union. Whilst Abraham is to be the responsible one, Sarah is an equal partner of all that is contained in the promise. After all, the promise consists of their son made from their bodies. In stark contrast the Son we look to, came not from a man at all but from the Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin. What we are taught here is that women are not to be neglected but are equal sharers in the promise.

17:17-21. (When laughter becomes a name).

At this point Abraham reacts with incredulity. Inside himself he considers the promise to be unthinkable as he is now almost 100 (he says here 100 but verse 24 informs us he is actually 99) and Sarah is 90!⁹⁹² However he laughs openly and he asks the Lord to accept Ishmael as the heir apparent.⁹⁹³ In response to this outburst the Lord reiterates emphatically what He has already stipulated. The new data we are given is the name for the promised son, and it is going to be one which Abraham and Sarah will never forget! Because Abraham laughed, his son will be called “*Isaac*” which means “he laughs” and the promise and covenant will be confirmed with him and his descendants.⁹⁹⁴

But take note of the great grace of God here, for Abraham's request with respect to Ishmael is granted too. God hears Abraham! What a wonderful thing! For Ishmael will come temporal blessings, and from him will come twelve princes and a great nation.⁹⁹⁵ However the covenant is to be exclusively with Isaac. Ishmael will be blessed but the promise of the Messiah is only through Isaac. Thus the Lord reiterates firmly that the covenant will be with Isaac, and the section ends with Abraham being told that

992 Genesis 17:17.

993 Genesis 17:18.

994 Genesis 17:19.

995 Genesis 17:20.

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Sarah will bear Isaac a year from this time.⁹⁹⁶

17:22-27. (Abraham obeys).

God has said all He need to (He *“finished talking with him”*) and so He returns by going up from Abraham (He *“went up from Abraham”*).⁹⁹⁷ The Lord may be gracious in repeating His words to Abraham (as in repeating that the covenant is with Isaac and not Ishmael), but what He states can in no way be changed. This gives us great confidence. The Lord is never fickle and what He says and determines is sure and certain. We learn also in this opening verse that the Lord had departed from Abraham by going not just away but *“up.”* It would seem from this that the appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ were a descent from heaven to earth. The pre-incarnate Christ would descend and meet with people from time to time, and would then would leave and ascend back into heaven.

Following this conversation Abraham immediately obeys what the Lord had commanded him. All the males were circumcised in the flesh of their foreskin on that very same day. Notice that we read five times about circumcision, three of which point to the *“flesh of his foreskin”* being cut.⁹⁹⁸ It is a reminder to us that entrance into the kingdom of God does not come without cost. We are to put off the flesh and be cut off from this world if we are to be partakers of the heavenly covenant of grace. No delay in obedience characterises the walk of faith.

996 Genesis 17:21.

997 Genesis 17:22.

998 The phrase: *“flesh of his foreskin”* occurs at: Genesis 17:23,24,25. Other references to circumcision also come in Genesis 17:26,27.

Chapter 19.

The promise announced. (18:1-15).

Analysis.

1 Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.
2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him;
and when he saw *them*,
 he ran from the tent door to meet them,
 and bowed himself to the ground,
3 and said,
 “My Lord, if I have now found favour in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. **4** Please let a little water
 be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. **5** And I will bring a morsel of bread, that
 you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.”

They said,
 “Do as you have said.”

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said,
 “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes.”

7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.
8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as
they ate.

9 Then they said to him,
 “Where *is* Sarah your wife?”

So he said,
 “Here, in the tent.”

10 And He said,
 “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.”
(Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.)

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.
12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying,
 “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

13 And the Lord said to Abraham,
 “Why did Sarah laugh, saying,
 ‘Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?’
 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and
 Sarah shall have a son.”

15 But Sarah denied *it*, saying,
 “I did not laugh,”
 for she was afraid.

And He said,
 “No, but you did laugh!”

What we read of from Genesis 17 until the beginning of Genesis 21 concerns events that all occur within the space of one year. God had told Abraham that it would be a year from when he was 99 years old that Sarah would conceive and bear a son to him. So all that transpires in Genesis 18, 19 and 20 occurs within that year. Some of what occurs concerns Lot and his family, but here in Genesis 18 we have a continuation of what was started in the previous chapter.

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How much time elapsed between the Lord finishing His conversation with Abraham and ascending from him in Genesis 17, until the events recorded here is nowhere stated. It is tempting to assume that it followed the healing of the men from their circumcision, that is, after a few days, but we cannot really be sure that it wasn't some weeks later. The circumstances of this encounter are quite different to what we read of in chapter 17. There we have Abraham falling on his face but here, although there is great respect and reverence, we have Abraham entertaining the Lord.

18:1,2.

Abraham was sitting at his tent door by the terebinth trees of Mamre shading from the midday sun and happened to notice three men *“standing by him.”*⁹⁹⁹ The way the text reads gives us every indication of being a sudden appearance, similar to when the resurrected Christ appeared to the disciples. The Lord appeared to Abraham and the visible outward sign of this was three men suddenly standing beside Abraham as he was seated at his tent door. Presumably his eyes were down on the ground at first, and then suddenly as he looked up there were these three men.

As soon as he saw them he responded immediately by running towards them from the tent door bowing himself to the ground.¹⁰⁰⁰ Presumably there was a little distance between Abraham in the tent and the three men beside him at the tent door, and so his response is to spring up and then down again in worship. This action is wonderfully instructive. The excitement and joy at seeing the Lord makes him leap up and run! Isn't that how we ought to feel (and do I trust) when we know that the Lord is present? And then all at the same time with the feeling of excitement and joy comes the recognition of the great worth and dignity of the One we love to be with, and so he bows himself to the ground. We rise in our hearts to God and we humble ourselves in adoration and praise.

18:3-8.

What Abraham says next reminds me of the occasion when the resurrected Christ met the two on the road to Emmaus. The Lord made it look as though he was going on, but the two from Emmaus persuaded him to come with them to their home.¹⁰⁰¹ Here Abraham pleads with the three to stay with him to enjoy his hospitality. The way Abraham speaks gives the impression that they may well have passed on by if Abraham had not pressed them to remain. When the Lord comes by, make every effort to entertain him and persuade him to stay! If we let him pass on we have only ourselves to blame. In the Song of Songs we read of an instance where the Shulamite is in bed and her beloved comes to rouse her but she replies with less than enthusiasm saying:

999 Genesis 18:2.

1000 Genesis 18:2.

1001 Luke 24:28.

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I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on *again*? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?¹⁰⁰²

But then she sees her beloved's hand at the door and this stirs her desire, but when she rises to open the door and let him in, he is gone and she has great trouble finding him.¹⁰⁰³ Never let the Lord go by when you feel Him near! Welcome Him eagerly!

Coming back to Genesis, notice that Abraham does not demand that the Lord stay. He bases his persuasive request on grace by saying *“if I have now found favour in your sight.”*¹⁰⁰⁴ Abraham offers all the normal things an hospitable man would offer, including water and bread, comfort and shade, but look further at what Abraham does in response to the Lord's acceptance! He tells Sarah to get fine flour to make cakes, a process which would have taken some time. Then he gets a *“tender and good calf”* which is to be prepared by one of his young men, another process which would have taken some time. Finally he gathers butter and milk (pre-made or prepared?) and with the prepared calf and bread cakes offers them to the men. This entertainment and hospitality is no mere cup of tea and a biscuit! It entails not just some water and a morsel of bread but a veritable banquet of the best. We learn much from this. First we may think that what we have to offer the Lord in fellowship is a mere drink of water (*“a little water”*) and a slice of bread (*“a morsel of bread”*), but (done in a right heart) what we actually offer is a veritable banquet!¹⁰⁰⁵ To think that the Lord would tarry with us and enjoy our hospitality! We ought to bend every sinew and move every muscle to make our times with the Lord the very best we can possibly give. Second we learn that true fellowship and hospitality requires some planning and preparation. We all know that a party requires planning and preparation but do we realise that we ought to plan and prepare our times with the Lord? There are many who think that we ought to just spontaneously come into worship without any thought at all, believing that the Holy Spirit will instantaneously guide us. On the opposite side there are those who spend so much time planning and preparing that that is all they really ever do! We ought to think about our times with God and prepare and plan these in such a way that we have something to offer. Something to thank Him for. Something to consider and offer by way of glorifying Him. Something that will declare His praise to the world. Something which shows how much we think of Him. And so on!

That we have three *“men”* here is further explained through the narrative by the events that follow on. One of these is clearly the pre-incarnate “Lord” for this is how Abraham addresses the men as a whole. It would seem, then, that one of these *“men”* is evidently the Lord who had previously appeared to him.

1002 Song of Songs 5:3.

1003 Song of Songs 5:4-8.

1004 Genesis 18:3.

1005 Genesis 18:4,5.

18:9-15.

Eventually Abraham would be left still speaking with the Lord whilst the other two men go down into Sodom.¹⁰⁰⁶ We then learn later that these two “*men,*” were in fact two angels.¹⁰⁰⁷ From all of this we learn first that the Lord appears as a man. The pre-incarnate Christ comes in the form of a man who could do whatever a man could do, such as eat and rest as here. Further we learn that angels can appear to us as ordinary men. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us not to neglect hospitality especially of strangers, because we may be entertaining angels.¹⁰⁰⁸

The purpose of this visit was to confirm the promise and especially to ensure that Sarah would be encouraged in this. We have already been told that their son will be named “*Isaac*” because Abraham laughed. Now we find a similar thing with respect to Sarah. The Lord asks where Sarah is and we find that she is just inside the tent by the door behind Abraham and able to hear what was said.¹⁰⁰⁹ The Lord knows this but asks for Sarah to make her pay attention. Remember, Abraham and Sarah were old and Sarah was passed the age of child bearing. It is in this setting that the Lord gives the couple a certain and sure promise. The Hebrew here uses a doubling of terms (in Hebrew it is literally: “returning I will return”) to emphasise the certainty of such a promise. Presumably the phrase “*the time of life*” is meant to signify the normal course of conception and pregnancy.¹⁰¹⁰ Hearing this, Sarah did inwardly what Abraham had done earlier outwardly, (she laughed). For her the thought of even having “*pleasure*” (gratifying sex) is a joke. So inwardly she laughs and thinks it funny that she would enjoy the sexual pleasure with her aged husband. The Lord knows all things and knew what Sarah was thinking within herself, and so He asks Abraham why she was laughing? He does not expect a response at this point. He has exposed Sarah's heart and continues to emphasise the fact that nothing is too hard for Him, and, further, that at the appointed time, following the natural course of events (sex, conception, pregnancy), Sarah will have a son. The Lord's great rhetorical question: “*is anything too hard for the Lord?*” is a signal to Abram to consider carefully the nature of God.¹⁰¹¹ It is thus also a witness to us too that we ought never to limit God in His work. Of course we cannot then presume on His power and might, but we are never to limit Him in any way at all. He is truly sovereign and infinite in knowledge and all power.¹⁰¹² We also note here that God has His appointed times. This was set and decided on right from the very start. Abraham and Sarah have been impatient and have struggled with (what was to them) such a long wait and delay. How we are so like this pair! Known unto the Lord are all His times. It ought to be sufficient for us

1006 Genesis 18:22.

1007 Genesis 19:1.

1008 Hebrews 13:2.

1009 Genesis 18:9.

1010 Genesis 18:10.

1011 Genesis 18:14.

1012 Genesis 18:14.

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that our times are in His hands.¹⁰¹³ If we knew when the promises would come and when the fulfilment would come we would undoubtedly make a hash of things. Sarah denies that she laughed. Of course she did not actually laugh out loud. That is true, but she did laugh inside. So the Lord is firm in having the last word here and says that she certainly did laugh.¹⁰¹⁴

1013 Psalm 31:15.

1014 Genesis 18:15.

Chapter 20.

What the Lord was about to do. (18:16-33).

Analysis.

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

17 And the Lord said,

“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, **18** since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? **19** For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

20 And the Lord said,

“Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, **21** I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord.

23 And Abraham came near and said,

“Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? **24** Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? **25** Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

26 So the Lord said,

“If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.”

27 Then Abraham answered and said,

“Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: **28** Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of* five?”

So He said,

“If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it*.”

29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said,

“Suppose there should be forty found there?”

So He said,

“I will not do *it* for the sake of forty.”

30 Then he said,

“Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?”

So He said,

“I will not do *it* if I find thirty there.”

31 And he said,

“Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?”

So He said,

“I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.”

32 Then he said,

“Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?”

And He said,

“I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.”

33 So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

The passage before us is one made the basis for many missionary addresses. It is a unified passage but in the first seven verses we find the Lord speaking to Abraham. This short section is bookended by

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reference to: the two “*men*” who accompanied the Lord, to Sodom, and, to Abraham:

16 Then **the men** rose from there and looked toward **Sodom**,
and **Abraham** went with them to send them on the way.

22 Then **the men** turned away from there and went toward **Sodom**,
but **Abraham** still stood before the Lord.

First the men “*looked toward Sodom,*” and finally the men “*went toward Sodom.*” In contrast Abraham at the beginning arises and goes with the men to “*send them on the way,*” whilst at the end he stands “*before the Lord.*” Thus the opening section focuses on the words that the Lord speaks to Abraham which covers five verses (v17-21) all the while the “*men*” (angels) are with them but in preparation for their journey to Sodom. The next eleven verses (v22-33) detail the appeal that Abraham makes to the Lord on behalf of those righteous who were in Sodom. We shall consider the text as a whole making comments on verses as we find them.

18:16,17.

Apart from confirming to Sarah that Isaac (he laughs) will be born by the following year, the Lord has another purpose in view for this visit. Here we can see in development, Abraham's relationship with the Lord. As we noted earlier the three men rise from their meal and look to make for Sodom and Abraham walks along with them. But then the Lord speaks to Abraham in such an amazing way by confiding in him what He is about to do.

The way that the Lord communes with Abraham is quite simply remarkable. Here we see the description of Abraham as a friend of God clearly demonstrated.¹⁰¹⁵ But Abraham isn't the only one to experience such intimacy. Listen to what the Lord spoke to Jeremiah when he was shut up in prison:

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.¹⁰¹⁶

The Psalmist could declare having read and studied the law that he was over and above those who had gone before him and those who taught him:

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.¹⁰¹⁷

1015 James 2:23.

1016 Jeremiah 33:3.

1017 Psalm 119:99,100.

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When we stop and consider what an amazing God we have who has revealed His will and ways for us to read and walk in, this is nothing less than remarkable.

18:18,19.

Within this conversation initiated by the Lord we have a confirmation of the blessing that Abraham will receive, for he will surely become a great nation and all nations will certainly be blessed in him. But the details of this relationship are given to us further and we will do well to pay attention to what we find here. The first thing to note here is that it is God who knows Abraham, *“for I have known him.”*¹⁰¹⁸ It is vital that it is God who knows us! Remember that there will be those who can claim that they did miracles and wonders in the sight of all, but the Lord declared that he did not know them and so they would be cast out:

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22** Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ **23** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’¹⁰¹⁹

If He knows us, we will come to know Him. It isn't that we have sought Him to know Him. No not at all. He, like the perfect Shepherd He is, has sought us out.¹⁰²⁰ He knows us and has sought us out and by this means we come to know Him. This order is essential. If we claim that we know God then a whole series of implications follow suit as the apostle John details in his first epistle. Many who claim to know God do not want to abide by what the Lord demands. In fact they do not really want to be part of God's true family, and rather set up their own ideas and conditions which they deem to be right and godly. By such things they fool no one but themselves. We have some of the implications of being known by the Lord set out here. God knew Abraham for a reason. God knew Abraham so that he would train up his children, and his whole household, in the ways of the Lord to do what that which is right and fair and also that the Lord may bring to pass that which He has promised.

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.¹⁰²¹

How this challenges fathers! It is our duty to train the children we bring into the world in these specific

1018 Genesis 18:19.

1019 Matthew 7:21-23.

1020 See: Ezekiel 34 and John 10.

1021 Genesis 18:19.

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ways. Look at what is demanded here. There is only one thing that is truly essential. We may like to think that providing money, opportunity, fun, experience and so on are all important things to lead our children in, but the God who made us all has other ideas. The essential part of Genesis 18:19 can be set out like this:

that they keep the way of the Lord,
to do
righteousness and
justice,
that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him

There are two *“that”* statements here which indicate purpose. The first is what is required of those who train children and households, whilst the second is the consequence that follows as the Lord brings about His purposes. God has known Abraham in order that he may lead and train all in his care in *“the way of the Lord.”* That is the one essential thing. This is the first time we come across such a phrase, but it is a theme we find which recurs throughout Scripture.¹⁰²² What is this *“way of the Lord”*? Well it is the way of truth, faith and love. It is the way of peace and righteousness. In this short text it is expounded with two things that must be done (*“to do”*). First we have *“righteousness,”* by which we understand doing what is right, true and proper. Then second we have *“justice,”* by which we understand being fair and outwardly concerned about the doing of what is right for all, and especially with regard to the Lord. We get a very similar set of statements in Micah 6:8 which is a text to remember:

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?¹⁰²³

Now in the Old Testament setting we are informed of what we must do. We must do what God requires. We know from our New Testament that such is, of course, impossible for fallen sinful human beings even though the Lord is just and right to demand such obedience. The law is holy, spiritual and good.¹⁰²⁴ And anyone who claims to disregard it is on very dangerous ground. But the gospel brings in this wonderful news that Christ alone was able to keep the law and do what was required in full. He not only did this but at one and the same time He paid for all our failures too. Faith in Christ leads to obedience to the law. What Christ did on the cross was to pay for our sins in full and then provide for us the righteousness of faith. That is, the righteousness which comes from Christ to us by faith. In other words we are now

¹⁰²² This phrase or something similar is found in the NKJV at: Judges 2:22; 2Samuel 22:22; 2Kings 21:22; 2Chronicles 17:6; Psalm 18:21; 138:5; Proverbs 10:29; Isaiah 40:3; Jeremiah 5:4,5; Ezekiel 18:25,29; 33:17,20; Hosea 14:9; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23; Acts 13:10; 18:25.

¹⁰²³ Micah 6:8.

¹⁰²⁴ Romans 7:12,14.

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enabled, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to take what Christ has done and walk in newness of a godly life.

Thus *“the way of the Lord”* is to do what is right and fair. This is obviously something all right minded people agree to. However it cuts across sin, selfishness and vice. We can only do these things if we have true saving faith in the Lord. The outcome of training children and households in this way is that the Lord will bring about all that He has promised. How foolish and childish we really are. We expect all the blessings and fruits of a godly life but we are unwilling to have the faith that obeys. It is like the three year old who wants what he wants now and is not prepared to listen to his mum about getting ready properly! It is remarkable that true believers are friends of God, but make no mistake that such friendship does not subvert or override the Master to servant relationship that exists too.

18:20-22.

There next follows the details of what the Lord was planning. There are some deep lessons we need to learn here. First we must remember that sin can never be done in secret. The idea that what we do in the privacy of our own homes is our business and no one else's is horribly wrong, but even if it had no effect on anyone else, be sure and remember that sin and its effects are known by God, for there is an *“outcry”* against the sinner.¹⁰²⁵ Then further we note that the Lord is extremely fair and just in all His dealings. He has purposed to come and see for Himself even though He knows for certain that the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is *“great”* because their sin is *“very grave.”*¹⁰²⁶

Next we find that the Lord remained with Abraham whilst the other two men went toward Sodom. We started out with three men, but now we find one is the Lord (a Christophany), and we will later find that these two men are in fact angels when we read of them coming into Sodom.¹⁰²⁷ As the two men leave, we read that *“Abraham still stood before the Lord.”*¹⁰²⁸ This is the right thing to do, of course, for only the Lord knows and can command the outcome. I wonder if Abraham was tempted to go down with the two men and seek to rescue Lot himself? Isn't that what many do in similar circumstances? It is often said that prayer is only half our task. Those who pray for others without lifting a finger to help when they can are rightly censured by James.¹⁰²⁹ However sometimes we are brought to prayer alone.

1025 Genesis 18:20,21.

1026 Genesis 18:20.

1027 Genesis 18:2,22 ; 19:1.

1028 Genesis 18:22.

1029 James 2:16.

18:23-33.

What can Abraham do here except plead with the Lord? And so he draws near to the Lord.¹⁰³⁰ He begins his request by making use of his knowledge and understanding of the Lord. He starts with the premise that the righteous ought not to be condemned with the wicked, for God who is the Judge of all the earth will always do right.¹⁰³¹ He begins by asking if fifty righteous among the wicked would prevent disaster coming, and then once he has this concession granted, he progresses to ask for 45, then 40 and then 30, then 20 and finally 10. On some occasions Abraham recognises his own frailty and weakness (he was but *“dust and ashes”*), and also God's righteous anger against the wicked.¹⁰³² His requests seem to be made in fear and trepidation. This passage is often used as a spur to intercessory prayer but I rather think it is more that Abraham is trying to secure Lot's safety. He reasoned that Lot, by now, would have at least ten amongst his family who were right with God.

From the Lord's side we see a certain detachment in these exchanges. The Lord opened the conversation with a warm appeal to Abraham that he could not conceal what was in his heart now that Abraham was to be blessed.¹⁰³³ But through these requests the Lord seems merely to be taking a back foot. How far is Abraham going to press? Is he really concerned for these folk? We first note that God is wonderfully gracious. If there were fifty righteous among the wicked then Sodom would be spared. How many cities are currently being preserved because there are godly people within their walls or boundaries? Could Abraham have pushed this to just one? Why not? The passage ends by telling us that the Lord left when *“He had finished speaking with Abraham”* but I wonder if this again was an end because Abraham did not press further?¹⁰³⁴

1030 Genesis 18:23.

1031 Genesis 18:25.

1032 Genesis 18:27.

1033 Genesis 18:17.

1034 Genesis 18:33.

Chapter 21.

Judgement confirmed. (19:1-26).

Analysis.

1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening,
and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.

When Lot saw *them*,
he rose to meet them,
and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

2 And he said,
“Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.”

And they said,
“No, but we will spend the night in the open square.”

3 But he insisted strongly;
so they turned in to him and entered his house.

Then he
made them a feast,
and baked unleavened bread,
and they ate.

4 Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.

5 And they called to Lot and said to him,
“Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them *carnally*.”

6 So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, **7** and said,
“Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! **8** See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.”

9 And they said,
“Stand back!”

Then they said,
“This one came in to stay *here*, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.”

So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.

10 But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.

11 And they struck the men who *were* at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary *trying* to find the door.

12 Then the men said to Lot,
“Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take *them* out of this place! **13** For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.”

14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said,
“Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!”

But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying,
“Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.”

16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said,
“Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.”

18 Then Lot said to them,

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“Please, no, my lords! **19** Indeed now, your servant has found favour in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. **20** See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is* it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.”

21 And he said to him,

“See, I have favoured you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.

22 Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.”

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.

24 Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.

25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Genesis chapter 19 informs us about the judgement upon Sodom and Gomorrah, but it also describes the rescue of Abraham's nephew Lot and how he and his wife ended up. First we have the “*two angels*” (formerly described as “*men*” in Genesis 18) arriving in Sodom and their meeting with Lot who was “*sitting at the gate,*” (Genesis 19:1-3).¹⁰³⁵ Then, next, we discover the sin of Sodom displayed by all the people of the city, and a close shave for Lot who had to be rescued by the angels (Genesis 19:4-11). In the third part we hear the urgent warning and advice given by the angels to Lot to leave the city, and the hurried departure to a nearby small city (Genesis 19:12-22). The chapter ends with the Lord's judgement being poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah, and the awful end of Lot's wife (Genesis 19:23-26).

[1] Two angels arrive in Sodom and meet Lot. (Genesis 19:1-3).

19:1-3.

The first thing we must mention here is the sorry and low state that Lot had fallen into. We find him “*sitting in the gate of Sodom.*”¹⁰³⁶ We must remind ourselves that the apostle Peter informs us that Lot was “*righteous*”:

7 and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked **8** (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds).¹⁰³⁷

Even though Lot was “*righteous*” (by faith), we learn also that he was “*tormented.*” However by Genesis 19 he is sitting in the gate which indicates that he is in some form of leadership or governance, which fact is made clear in the narrative as it progresses, for it appears that the townsfolk did not like him making (righteous) judgements.¹⁰³⁸ Thus, from pitching his tent near to Sodom in Genesis 13, he has now

¹⁰³⁵ The word “*angel*” does not appear in Genesis 18, for only the term “*men*” is given in that chapter, but we know from what we read here in Genesis 19 that these were in fact angels.

¹⁰³⁶ Genesis 19:1.

¹⁰³⁷ 2Peter 2:7,8.

¹⁰³⁸ Genesis 19:9.

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migrated into the town and become one of their dignitaries.¹⁰³⁹ Lot seems to have been guided by his desires for the things of this world, and has now come to a settled place of influence, but he is still a righteous man. As Peter informs us, we learn that by his own actions of being in Sodom, Lot “*tormented*” his own soul. This is a lesson for us. If we keep harking after worldly desires, if we keep pursuing this world's goods and trinkets, we will end up tormenting our own souls even if we have true faith.

Lot was sitting in the gate when “*the two angels*” approach.¹⁰⁴⁰ After this, we observe Lot's response as he observed the approaching angels. As soon as he saw them Lot rises to greet them in a respectful way bowing to the ground. His words indicate that he realises something special about these “*men.*”¹⁰⁴¹ He also seeks to look after these folk, for it is clear that Lot recognises their imminent danger. Unbeknownst to Lot these angels can well look after themselves, (as we will shortly see), but here Lot is worried for their safety. Lot insists “*strongly*” that they stay with him and so they agree to his request and enjoy Lot's hospitality.¹⁰⁴² The expression used here is very forceful. Literally we might put it like this: “and he pressed upon them greatly.” There was some urgency to Lot's strong appeal presumably because Lot knew the wickedness of the place. We have to hand it to Lot that he is clearly godly and concerned for these folk who have entered Sodom.

Verse 3 informs us that Lot provided these two men with “*a feast*” the prime ingredient of which is given as “*unleavened bread.*” This is curious. Why did he use “unleavened bread”? Perhaps this signals the need for haste. To bake with leaven required time and there appears to be no time now. The next time we come across unleavened bread is at the Exodus where again the emphasis was on haste – there was no time to allow the bread to rise.¹⁰⁴³

[2] Sodom and its sin displayed. (Genesis 19:4-11).

19:4-8.

However what happens next is shocking in the extreme. Before even the two men get settled, the men of Sodom, both young and old, came out and sought to abuse these newcomers. Presumably word got around that Lot had entertained strangers. The people of Sodom (which may have included womenfolk too from the words of verse 4) surround Lot's house and openly declare what their intentions were, namely, to abuse these men sexually.¹⁰⁴⁴ Notice that they came from “*every quarter,*” so that the whole town were complicit.¹⁰⁴⁵ Lot attempts to reason with these Sodomites. He goes out through the door

1039 Genesis 13:12.

1040 Genesis 19:1.

1041 Genesis 19:1.

1042 Genesis 19:3.

1043 Exodus 12:8.

1044 Genesis 19:5.

1045 Genesis 19:4.

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and closes it behind himself to protect the two men (angels) and his family. Perhaps this is instinct. Lot does have faith in God, and he does not want the men of the town doing such wickedness. But what a presumption! Lot is not able to deal with this situation as events transpire, and he must be rescued by those he is attempting to keep safe.¹⁰⁴⁶

We have seen that Lot sought to rescue these men from the terrors of that place, but what takes place next does not make good reading, and it goes some way to explain the parlous state of affairs that came about after these events and which gave rise to two tribes (Amon and Moab), which would be a sore irritation to the people of God for some time. Lot's attempt at a reasoned appeal is shocking because it includes a trade off concerning sin. He begins with an appeal to them as his *“brethren.”*¹⁰⁴⁷ Perhaps this is his greatest mistake. These were not his *“brethren”* because they had no thought or reverence towards God. They were not righteous (by faith). In mixing with them, as we have observed, Lot did not just bring torment to his soul, he also brought in serious compromise. Then next he moves to an assertion that their behaviour and intentions were evil (*“do not do so wickedly”*).¹⁰⁴⁸ However his next statement is one which beggars belief. Speaking as a father and as a grandfather I cannot understand why Lot would even consider for one moment an exchange of his own *virgin* daughters (*“have not known man”*) for the sexual abuse by the townsfolk in exchange for these men.¹⁰⁴⁹ Nevertheless this is what he offered. He did not want these men who had taken shelter under his roof and care from being abused. Such is laudable. But to offer as an alternative his own daughters so that the men of Sodom could do with them as they wanted (*“you may do to them as you wish”*) is, quite simply, horrendous.¹⁰⁵⁰ But such relativism which judges one sin (the abuse of two strangers) as greater than another (the *use* of his own daughters) is common where there is such worldly influence and compromise. The world often poses hypothetical questions which those in esteemed places deem unanswerable especially by any who hold to an absolutist position as promoted by Scripture. The Sadducees posed what they considered to be an unanswerable question to the Lord Jesus to prove that an afterlife was impossible.¹⁰⁵¹ Yet the Lord had an answer and there is always an answer to moral dilemmas. Nothing is too complex that it cannot be resolved by the Lord and, by implication, from Scripture. Lot's suggestion that the men take his daughters was, perhaps, to bring their homosexual perversion back to what he deemed as more “normal,” – sex should only occur between male and female. However this half-hearted attempt at normalising behaviour is woeful. Perhaps the prevailing culture had burrowed into Lot's family and children so that such an offer was not unusual? Or maybe the status of children and women were considered so low that they could be easily exchanged?

1046 Genesis 19:6,7.

1047 Genesis 19:7.

1048 Genesis 19:7.

1049 Genesis 19:8.

1050 Genesis 19:8.

1051 Matthew 22:23f.

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Whatever the case it is horrible to contemplate. If Lot had not wanted to go to Sodom in the first place, he may have saved his family from such horrors. This episode acts as a salient warning to us to be separate from the wicked culture. For Lot to denounce the people of Sodom and to refer to their intention as wicked is one thing and we agree with his assessment, but to then offer his own daughters so that they may do with them as they wish is awful, to say the very least. How the world sullies our thinking. I wonder what follies of moral ineptitude we are guilty of in our day?

19:9-11.

Twice we read the words “*and/then they said*” in the Hebrew in verse 9 which serves to indicate a vociferous crowd shouting this and that. In the first statement there is utter indignation. How dare Lot judge them! He is to “*stand back.*” The current political and social melee in which certain people deemed to be of privilege because of their colour or background and who are thereby “no plat-formed” or prevented from speaking publicly comes to mind. Then next we get the sneering description of Lot with his righteousness. He is merely an “in-comer” as we may say. He isn't “one of us.” The phrase “*he keeps acting as judge*” is literally: “judging he judges.”¹⁰⁵² Lot saw the wickedness all around and spoke out about it all clearly, and the people hated him for it. As a consequence they declare that Lot is to be treated far worse than they would have treated the men.

Earlier in verse 3 Lot had urged the two angels to come to his house with some urgency, but now in this situation the men of Sodom pressed with excess against Lot. The same type of expression is used in the Hebrew in both cases. Here a literal rendition would be: “and they pressed upon the man Lot with excess/greatness.” Such was their vigour and force that they were in danger of breaking down the door. Lot is now completely undone. He has no more answer. His righteous indignation has got him nowhere. He was right to make judgements, of course, but in his carnality he could offer no authority nor any solution except an extremely weak and wicked compromise. How ineffectual our ranting about sin can be! If we are compromised and worldly, who will listen to our indignation against sin? Contrast this with the Lord Jesus and His ministry. He was no less indignant against wickedness, but He came both with authority, for the people listened to Him and the religious leaders could offer no counter arguments, and He brought ***the*** solution to the problem of sin. This is why the gospel is so very vital! There is but one solution to the problem of sin – of whatever flavour or stripe. If we preach the gospel as sinners saved by grace, as condemned men rescued by a Saviour, in the power of the Spirit then we may be heard. A mere rant against wickedness is not going to cut the mustard. Lot needed rescue.

The two angels did two things. First they rescued Lot. In grabbing Lot forcibly and shutting the

¹⁰⁵² Genesis 19:9.

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door they brought Lot out of the situation.¹⁰⁵³ We are reminded of the Lord shutting Noah inside the ark.¹⁰⁵⁴ Second they did something about the men outside. The men outside, (*“both small and great”*) were struck with *“blindness.”*¹⁰⁵⁵ What is curious about this situation is that this does nothing to stop the men trying to *“find the door”*! They are *“weary”* in doing so, but they do not stop. Presumably it slows them down sufficiently to prevent damage and harm. It may be that they were blinded from seeing the doorway – maybe the doorway was made invisible to them. If the doorway was made invisible so that they were blinded to it then this would explain why they were still seeking the doorway to the point of weariness. These folk are now distracted but they are still bent upon their vile pursuits. We note also that these angels were well capable of looking after themselves, so that Lot's insistence on them coming under his care was not really offering them much by way of security.

[3] Flee for your life! (Genesis 19:12-22).

19:12-16.

Inside the house the angels act decisively. It is clear to the angels that the wickedness of this city was indeed very great, and so they call Lot to gather all his family and flee for their lives.¹⁰⁵⁶ The Lord had sent these angels to see whether the wickedness of the city was such that its destruction was the only possible outcome.¹⁰⁵⁷ Should the Lord destroy the city because of the wickedness which had come before Him? This was now no longer an issue or a question.¹⁰⁵⁸

Next we find that Lot is trying to persuade his sons-in-law who were married to his daughters. Earlier Lot had said that he had two daughters who were virgins, (they had *“not known a man”*).¹⁰⁵⁹ So either they were betrothed but not yet married, or possibly there were two other daughters who were married. However when Lot tries to remonstrate with them it appeared to these young men as a joke!¹⁰⁶⁰ Perhaps this was because such an assessment seemed so ridiculous to them in such a wicked culture. The same is true today. The image of a man who walks around with a sandwich-board proclaiming that “judgement is nigh” is utterly ridiculed in our day. But when judgement finally comes the terror will be unparalleled.¹⁰⁶¹

This was an all-night affair so that as it began to dawn the angels urge Lot to take action.¹⁰⁶² The

1053 Genesis 19:10.
1054 Genesis 7:16.
1055 Genesis 19:11.
1056 Genesis 19:12.
1057 Genesis 18:21.
1058 Genesis 19:13.
1059 Genesis 19:8.
1060 Genesis 19:14.
1061 Isaiah 2:10f.
1062 Genesis 19:15.

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way the angels press Lot seems to indicate that he had more than the two virgin daughters mentioned earlier, for the imperative command is: “... *take your wife and your two daughters who are here.*” The phrase “*who are here*” suggests that there were in fact other daughters who were married and whose husbands thought Lot was joking about the soon coming destruction.¹⁰⁶³ However it was imperative that they escape because the Lord was about to pour out upon Sodom (and that region) the fires of His indignation. We are reminded here that the final judgement will also be one of fire.¹⁰⁶⁴ Oh that people would hear and turn to Him who loves!

Remarkably Lot hesitates!¹⁰⁶⁵ How sin and the wicked culture he dwelt among has seemingly got under his skin and affected him so much that he cannot see the great danger! What of us? The angels have told him they are going to destroy the city and he hesitates! How terrible to be so affected by sin that a clear course of action which *must* be taken is not taken immediately, and how awful that there is such confusion in Lot's mind! But what great mercy and grace of God is here also! It was while Lot “*lingered*” that the angels grab their hands (him and his wife with one angel, and his two daughters with the other), and we read that such action is described wonderfully as “*the Lord being merciful to him.*”¹⁰⁶⁶ What mercy! In our hesitation the Lord takes action. If a person is dead set against heeding the voice of God as Pharaoh would be at the Exodus, then only the hardening of the heart is left for such, as the Lord withdraws His favour. But when a person yields and then hesitates or lingers the Lord is merciful! There is an energising nature about this event. If there is but a glimmer of faith the Lord empowers the one who believes! And so the two angels rush the four outside the city.

19:17-21.

The words of the angels to Lot are stark and they bear remembering. It is the same for us. God has visited this earth and knows its poor frame and state. He is about to rain judgement down on it very soon. Consequently the word to one and all is “*Escape for your life!*”¹⁰⁶⁷ We must not look back. We must not hanker for, nor seek for, nor yearn for, the things of this world. Lot was enjoined to escape to the mountains, a high place, where the coming destruction would not reach him. We are called to look to Christ who is our heavenly Saviour and flee to Him. In Him, we escape the destruction of this world. The most glorious picture of this identity or union with Christ is the ark that Noah built. Are we inside the ark? Have we fled to the heavenly abode, namely Christ?

Rather than run for his life, Lot remonstrates with the angels.¹⁰⁶⁸ It is curious to find that Lot

1063 Genesis 19:15.

1064 2Thessalonians 1:8; 2Peter 3:7,10f.

1065 Genesis 19:16.

1066 Genesis 19:16.

1067 Genesis 19:17.

1068 Genesis 19:18.

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brings forth an excuse which is vague in the extreme. The imperative command is to flee, but Lot stands and argues. It is true that he recognised the “*favour*” and “*mercy*” extended to him by the Lord through these men (angels), but then he proffers his excuse for not doing exactly what the angels command.¹⁰⁶⁹ What was he thinking? He could not escape to the mountains because “*some evil*” may overpower him to his death.¹⁰⁷⁰ What evil? It is all rather sorry and strange. He then pleads to be allowed to go to a nearby city which would later be called “*Zoar,*” which name means, “insignificance.” It would appear that Lot could not bear to go up into the mountains. Perhaps he did not want to go back to his uncle Abraham. Maybe he still wanted the comforts of this world (perhaps shown by the words: “*and my soul shall live*”).¹⁰⁷¹ It would seem that he asked of the Lord some measure of comfort and security in the small city of Zoar, for he mentions twice that it was but a “*little one.*”¹⁰⁷² Such a concession must surely be granted? (So Lot reasoned). Perhaps Lot loved his comforts so much that he could not bear to go up the mountains and live rough in caves. But what amazing grace and mercy we find here because the Lord (through these angels) grants the request. It was through these angels that the Lord grants this favour as well as the mercy of rescue whereby the angels forcibly grabbed their hands (“*the Lord being merciful to him*”), and thus as a consequence the city of Zoar gains rescue because of Lot's intercession!¹⁰⁷³ We pause to wonder what would have happened if Abraham had asked if there be just one righteous person in Sodom!

[4] The judgement upon rebellion comes. (Genesis 19:23-26).

19:23-26.

As soon as Lot reached Zoar at sunrise, the fire and brimstone of God fell on Sodom and all that plain, bringing a full and complete destruction.¹⁰⁷⁴ Speculation about the source of the destruction is futile. The destruction came “*from the Lord out of the heavens.*”¹⁰⁷⁵ There may well have been some physical effects or alterations in the earth or from the heavens that the Lord used, but all we need to understand is that the judgement came from Him directly. This is important because the same will be true in the final day. It will not be because we destroy ourselves through some nuclear conflagration (even though the Lord may allow such), but it will be because the Lord brings upon us the fire and vengeance of a holy and righteous wrath we fully deserve. Sodom (and Gomorrah) deserved this punishment. We need to repeat such an idea because the concept of retribution is so alien in our modern culture. Sin deserves judgement. It is the mercy and grace of God that He waits so long before acting. However be assured that no sin will

1069 Genesis 19:19.

1070 Genesis 19:19.

1071 Genesis 19:20.

1072 Genesis 19:20.

1073 Genesis 19:16.

1074 Genesis 19:23,34.

1075 Genesis 19:24.

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be left undone.

Notice that in verse 24 we have the Lord's name mentioned twice as if to reinforce the idea that judgement is not something that comes as a mere consequence of sin, but that it comes directly from the Lord who punishes. It is to be observed also that the names of the two places comes before the punishment inflicted. In fact we have the following arrangement in the Hebrew sentence:

And the Lord rained down
upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah
brimstone and fire
from the Lord out of the heavens.

The instrument of judgement is incidental. The focus is the Lord's judgement and the subjects of such are *“Sodom and Gomorrah.”*¹⁰⁷⁶ The Lord *“overthrew”* the cities by which is meant that they were overturned as a cake may be when it is taken out of the oven.¹⁰⁷⁷ Such was the destruction that there would be nothing worthwhile left over. The destruction included the *“plain”* that Lot had so set his eye upon, *“all the inhabitants”* of those cities, and also that which *“grew on the ground.”*¹⁰⁷⁸ No living thing and no vegetation would survive. Fire and brimstone rendered everything utterly destroyed.

The passage ends on a sorry note indeed. We remind ourselves that the angels had told Lot clearly not to look back.¹⁰⁷⁹ Sadly Lot's wife disobeyed this command and looking back behind Lot, that is, towards that which had now been destroyed, she suffered her own destruction being turned into a pillar of salt.¹⁰⁸⁰ Why a pillar of salt? Well it would seem that she was dessicated with all the water removed from her body to become dry and solid. This indicates that she has turned from life offered in their escape and embraced the utter dryness of death. Then further she is fixed firmly as an erect pillar as a witness. Recall that the Lord calls this incident to mind when He spoke of His final return that would usher in judgement:

31 “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods *are* in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. **32 Remember Lot’s wife.** **33** Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. **34** I tell you, in that night there will be two *men* in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. **35** Two *women* will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. **36** Two *men* will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.”¹⁰⁸¹

1076 Genesis 19:24.

1077 Genesis 19:25.

1078 Genesis 13:10,11.

1079 Genesis 19:17.

1080 Genesis 19:26.

1081 Luke 17:31-36.

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There is coming not just another temporal judgement offered as a warning for those around, but the final judgement to which all temporal judgements give witness. Lot's wife disobeyed the express command of the angels and suffered terribly. Do you think that the final judgement will be less awesome, less severe, less terrifying? If terror is struck into hearts by these temporal judgements, what will be the terror of those who face the final one be like? Such thoughts are too hard for us to take in fully. But we must address this issue. Judgement is coming. But there is a way of escape! We urge all to flee the wrath that is to come. Our sins have found us out. We cannot continue operating with impunity. We must be called to account. Praise God that in His immense mercy He has grabbed hold of us! The gospel of God has come. Christ the redeemer calls to us repeatedly:

28 Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.¹⁰⁸²

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.¹⁰⁸³

So why will we not come?

1082 Matthew 11:28-30.

1083 Revelation 22:17.

Chapter 22.

Lot's descendants. (19:27-38).

Analysis.

27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.

28 Then he looked

toward Sodom and Gomorrah,

and toward all the land of the plain;

and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.

29 And it came to pass,

when God destroyed the cities of the plain,

that God remembered Abraham,

and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow,

when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

30 Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains,

and his two daughters were with him;

for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar.

And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.

31 Now the firstborn said to the younger,

“Our father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. **32** Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.”

33 So they made their father drink wine that night.

And the firstborn went in and lay with her father,

and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

34 It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger,

“Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in *and* lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.”

35 Then they made their father drink wine that night also.

And the younger arose and lay with him,

and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

37 The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab;

he *is* the father of the Moabites to this day.

38 And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi;

he *is* the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

The history of Sodom and Gomorrah is over, but before we move on we are given Abraham's viewpoint of the judgement in the first three verses of this text. The remainder of this passage which concludes Genesis chapter 19 describes the sorry state Lot and his daughters end up in.

[1] Sodom and Gomorrah judged – Abraham's view point. (Genesis 19:27-29).

19:27-29.

The opening three verses of the text we have here could equally have been included as the end piece to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah's overthrow. Thus they act more like a bridge between the events in Sodom and Lot's escape, and Lot's subsequent history in the mountains.

We are brought back to Abraham's view point, to the *“place where he had stood before the Lord,”* which connects us with Genesis 18:22, the site of Abraham's intercession with the Lord. It is *“early in the morning.”*¹⁰⁸⁴ At once we are reminded of the first morning of the week after the crucifixion. Before we get to thoughts of resurrection, however, the Holy Spirit drills home the effect of the judgement.

Abraham *“looked”* across the region to where Sodom, Gomorrah and all of the plain were sited, by which term we are meant to understand that Abraham surveyed the region.¹⁰⁸⁵ He went to some vantage point and looked over the edge down onto the plain and the cities to inspect what had happened. There Abraham *“saw”* or “beheld” and could see clearly what the Lord had done. The verbs used in verse 28 indicate a progression from seeing physically to perceiving spiritually. The smoke that remained after the fire rose like *“the smoke of a furnace.”* The deed was done and the evidence could be seen. Abraham knew that the judgement of God had fallen righteously upon a very wicked land. This same situation would be experienced by the Israelites at Mount Sinai.¹⁰⁸⁶

But then next we are given an insight into the mercy of God.¹⁰⁸⁷ Abraham had not specifically asked concerning his nephew Lot. He had asked for deliverance if there were ten righteous within the city. Perhaps he had calculated that there was Lot, Lot's wife, Lot's two virgin daughters and then two other daughters with their husbands and perhaps a couple of others who might be saved by faith. Abraham sees the smoke rising and would presumably have concluded that Lot would have been caught up in the conflagration too. Instead what we are told is that God *“remembered Abraham,”* or, that God took thought of Abraham. He heard not just the outward request for deliverance if there were ten righteous, but what motivated him, (Abraham), Namely, the compassion he had for Lot. God heard that inner request which was not spoken, and in remembering Abraham he rescued Lot. God sent Lot out. We have read that it was in fact the angels who grabbed hold of Lot, his wife and two daughters – no more could be grabbed hold of as they had only four hands – but here we read that God initiated, organised and commanded this to happen.

1084 Genesis 19:27.

1085 Genesis 19:28.

1086 Exodus 19:18.

1087 Genesis 19:29.

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[2] Lot and his two daughters – the beginnings of Ammon and Moab. (Genesis 19:30-38).

19:30-38.

What follows next is a sad end to the story of Lot. A righteous man who vexed his own soul by being amongst the Sodomites, Lot ends up in a terribly dire situation. After asking to go to Zoar he now leaves there to go to the mountains which was where the angels had suggested he go in the first place. The reason? Lot was afraid to live in Zoar. Why so? Perhaps the wickedness of that city was the same as Sodom and perhaps Lot reckoned that it would not be long before they suffered judgement like Sodom. Perhaps he feared for his daughters? We are not sure. But the fact that he feared indicates clearly that his faith was very low. Perfect love casts out fear.¹⁰⁸⁸

And so Lot and his daughters resort to life in a cave.¹⁰⁸⁹ One wonders why he could not have gone back to his uncle? Perhaps he was proud. Whatever lead him to this position, it indicates his low estate. And then we read the terrible events where his daughters seek to engineer their future. There is a connection in thought with the incident found in Genesis 9 after the flood where Noah got drunk and Ham abused him. How vital it is that fathers, and thereby leaders, must always be vigilant and on their guard. One slip to bring them low, and the consequences with regard to others can be dire. We cannot say for certain that if Noah had not got drunk Ham (and Canaan) would not have been tempted to sin. But we can say that the opportunity arose because of Noah's drunkenness. We must be vigilant. We must never let the devil gain a foothold.

What induced these girls to fall to such a low act? The initiative seems to have been the older girl's. The apparent success of the older girl fuelled the impetus of the younger to commit the same deed. Outwardly they were concerned for their father's lineage.¹⁰⁹⁰ But they used means which we find very difficult to reconcile with faith and righteousness. The girls thought they had no opportunity to gain a husband. Perhaps this was because of their father's new reclusive nature? But if they had been trained in the ways of the Lord they would never have fallen to such a low course of action. It is curious to find that the girls did the same thing twice and Lot seemed unaware! Was it that he was so drunk? Or was his heart now so despondent that he couldn't care less? Twice we read the following words: *“and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose,”* which ignorance may be explained at a low level by his inebriation, but in reality is a telling indictment against Abraham's nephew.¹⁰⁹¹ Ignorance is no defence against the law. We learn, for example, in Isaiah chapter 1 that not knowing the Lord is a truly astonishing

1088 Genesis 19:30; 1John 4:18.

1089 Genesis 19:30.

1090 Genesis 19:32.

1091 Genesis 19:33,35.

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thing.¹⁰⁹² All through Scripture we learn that a lack of knowledge is a grievous thing indeed.¹⁰⁹³

Well the fruit of this course of action, which Lot allowed to take place, was to be disastrous for the people of God. We cannot excuse Lot. He really ought to have taken the lead here but he is utterly passive and easily lead by his daughters into such supine excess. There is no redeeming feature in Lot here whatsoever. Both Moab and Ben-Ammi were to bring forth tribes who would be a sore trouble to Israel in later years. Moab's name means literally “from father” or “water of father,” and Ben-Ammi means “son of my people.” Thus there would always be a spurious and ignominious origin for such a people. How this ought to make us shudder when we fail to take responsibility. This is the last we hear of Lot in Genesis or in history although his sons/grandsons will loom large in later days.¹⁰⁹⁴

1092 Isaiah 1:3.

1093 Isaiah 5:13; Hosea 4:6.

1094 A brief comparison between the faith of Abraham and that of Lot is shown in *Appendix 9*.

Chapter 23.

A second failure. (20:1-18).

Analysis.

1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.

2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She *is* my sister.”

And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him,

“Indeed you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she *is* a man’s wife.”

4 But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said,

“Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? 5 Did he not say to me, ‘She *is* my sister’? And she, even she herself said, ‘He *is* my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.”

6 And God said to him in a dream,

“Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours.”

8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid.

9 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him,

“What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.”

10 Then Abimelech said to Abraham,

“What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?”

11 And Abraham said,

“Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12 But indeed *she is* truly my sister. She *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This *is* your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, “He *is* my brother.”’”

14 Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him.

15 And Abimelech said,

“See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you.”

16 Then to Sarah he said,

“Behold, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who *are* with you and before everybody.”

Thus she was rebuked.

17 So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore *children*; 18 for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

Genesis chapter 20 concerns Abraham and his visit to Gerar where Abimelech was king. The narrative is seamless and centres on Abraham and Abimelech in the main as the above analysis clearly shows. There are seven mentions of Abraham's name, only five of Sarah's, but ten of Abimelech's name.

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20:1,2.

The narrative returns to Abraham. For the second time we find that Abraham journeys south to the region bordering Egypt. This time we are not given any reason for this journey. This event follows the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham travels “*from there*” which probably indicates from the place where he witnessed the judgement of God. Genesis 19 is an interlude teaching us about the results of Lot's life, and then we are brought back to Abraham and his journeys. Gerar signifies a lodging place. It seems that it was ruled by a king whose name means “father king.” Shur indicates a wall or boundary, and Kadesh signifies the place of holiness. Shur is the farthest place from the holy land and Kadesh was the place where the people dwelt for a while on their journeyings from Egypt. It seems that Abraham was journeying away from the land of promise and passed beyond the place of holiness towards the boundary marker of the land (i.e. Shur). Why had he gone there? We are not told and it is fruitless to speculate.

We then discover that Abraham continued his former deception which served to demean his wife. Not that being a sister is less important but that by misconstruing her status she was open to abuse. We struggle to understand Abraham's weakness here. Abimelech clearly acts with immediacy and seeks to take Sarah as wife. In all this Abimelech is not doing anything wrong which fact becomes clear as the story unfolds.

20:3-7. (The intervention of God).

We noted earlier the frequencies of the names Abraham, Abimelech and Sarah but we did not mention how frequently the name “*God*” occurs. This name occurs six times, but what is significant here is that in verses 3 to 6 we have the name uppermost. The other four occurrences come in connection with Abraham and his testimony.¹⁰⁹⁵

What was going to happen now? Abraham has lost his wife, Sarah is compromised, and Abimelech is about to become an adulterer. It is at this point that we read “*but God ...*” in verse 3. It is truly wonderful and certainly a work of grace to find that God intervenes here. He warns Abimelech in a dream that he will be a “*dead man*” because he has taken another's wife and so is about to commit adultery. The king of Gerar, Abimelech, protests innocence in the matter and it is very instructive to note that it is this king who speaks of God as the “*Lord*” using the title first used by Abraham, namely, *’ădōnāy* (אֲדֹנָי).¹⁰⁹⁶ Abimelech notes that as king he represents the nation. The Lord said that Abimelech would be a “*dead man*” but Abimelech questions whether the Lord would destroy a “*righteous nation*.”¹⁰⁹⁷ To what extent, we may ask, was Gerar a righteous nation? Certainly in this little story Abimelech comes out in far better light than does Abraham. It is probable that there were pockets of

¹⁰⁹⁵ Genesis 20:11,13,17(x2).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Genesis 15:2,8; 18:3,27,30,31,32.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Genesis 20:3,4.

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righteousness in the world at this time.¹⁰⁹⁸ We have already met with the godly king of Salem and it is not impossible that there were other good people around here and there. Such a reference (*“Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?”*) may also serve to show that Abimelech was not unaware of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁰⁹⁹

It was in fact because Abimelech was innocent that God intervened. We have the Lord God's own testimony to this effect in verse 6. Abimelech had acted with integrity and the Lord acknowledges this fact. Thus Abraham, the father of faith, is set in poor relief in contrast to the king of Gerar. But note further that even though Abimelech had acted innocently, whilst Abraham had acted out of fear, the Lord still intervenes for the sake of Abraham and Sarah. Abimelech must restore Sarah to Abraham which would have been a humiliating thing for the king to do. He must do this because otherwise he and his family would die. It is clear here that God is with Abraham despite Abraham's failure.

We learn some vitally important truths here from this incident. First we note that even if Abimelech had taken Sarah as wife and had slept with her in all innocence, this would still have been a sin against the Lord.¹¹⁰⁰ We are still held accountable for sins, even if we are unaware of the fact that we are sinning. The Old Testament law even made provision for unknown sins.¹¹⁰¹ This serves to highlight the fact that it is more important to think of the one wronged than the one doing the wrong. When God is offended by our actions, He is truly offended, even if we are unaware of the fact. Sadly we do not see how terrible our sins are. We fail to recognise the sleight and demeaning nature of our actions to the thrice holy and good God. When we chart a course of action without first considering how this would reflect on God or affect Him, we are in danger of committing sins aplenty. The glory of God is our first priority (or it ought to be). How we need to be careful that what we do does not violate the standing and stature of God in the world. Of course many would respond and say that if God is so weak as to be offended by others riding roughshod over His ways and character then that doesn't speak greatly of His character. How foolish to think this! God could snuff out any who offend Him in an instant. He is not affected in any way by sin. But what does happen is that in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of people whom He is seeking, sin means that His character and His ways are maligned, brought low, and distorted. If God's character and work are belittled in the eyes of the world, this besmirches His honour and standing.

A second thing to note here is that God is truly sovereign. Abimelech took Sarah in innocence but was prevented from touching her by God. God is certainly in charge of all things. In His wisdom He allows some to continue in sin whilst others He actively prevents. The sins committed by people are the

1098 By which we mean righteousness as a result of a true and living faith in the Lord and His (future) work.

1099 Genesis 20:4.

1100 Genesis 20:6.

1101 Leviticus 5v17,18.

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intentions of those people. Some will be allowed to progress in these, whilst others will be prevented. Take, for example, the incident in Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel we looked at earlier. God allowed the confederacy led by Nimrod to go so far, but then, in His wonderful mercy, He stepped in and prevented them from getting too far. Some may ask, why didn't he step in earlier? Why does He allow some to pursue a sinful course and others He prevents? Well we cannot fully answer this. God is good. He is only good. No evil or wickedness can be attributed to Him. Consequently when He allows sin to go unpunished for a time, this is a good thing. We do not fully understand all of this suffice to say two things. First we recognise that there must be a degree of freedom allowed for people to act. We see this in a father with his children. There is a desire in the father to allow the children to act freely. At some point the father steps in. Sometimes he may allow a child to go further in order to teach a lesson, especially if the child will not listen to reason. A second thing is that the Lord turns evil and wickedness to do good. We see this supremely in the death of our Lord and Saviour. It was wicked men who took the Lord and made sure that He was crucified by the Roman authorities. However this wicked act was something that God in His sovereignty had pre-determined:

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.¹¹⁰²

One final thing to note from this incident is that God is still with Abraham despite his abject failure.¹¹⁰³ Abimelech has acted innocently. This did not mean that he would escape judgement if he continued the path he had begun (by sleeping with Sarah). God prevented this and that was an act of mercy and grace. However Abraham had acted foolishly, fully knowing what the outcome would be (without God's intervention), and yet God was with Him. We note this from verse 7 where we find that God speaks of Abraham as a *“prophet”* who would *“pray”* for Abimelech in his current distress.

Abimelech is commanded by God to put things right. Note here that things were very serious. It was a matter of life or death for the king. Then also we are told that Abraham would pray for Abimelech and, as a result, Abimelech would live. There is more to this than merely the prevention of death because of sin. I wonder if we take to heart the fact that if we pray for people then life will result? Of course unless the Lord change the heart and bring a person to new birth all we do is fruitless. However the Lord asks us to pray, and (amazingly) it is through prayer that people are brought to faith. We are so used to the idea that it is by hearing the word of God that faith comes, that we have forgotten the equally important need to pray.¹¹⁰⁴ These two things, the word of God and prayer, are the two vital things of life. Without the word of God we are bereft and lost. It does not matter how much you may pray and cry out. If you neglect

1102 Acts 2:23.

1103 Genesis 20:6,7.

1104 Romans 10:14.

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the word of God you are lost, hopelessly so. But without an intimate and close communion with the Lord we are dead! We come to the Lord in prayer and communion as we read and study God's word. If we come to the word of God simply as a matter of intellect and to know information you can be sure that we will end up as a Pharisee or a Sadducee! Oh how we need to get into our hearts and keep ourselves in the love of God!¹¹⁰⁵

20:8-13. (*A righteous king meets a fearful prophet*).

Following the dream in which God prevented Abimelech from sinning, we note that the king takes action immediately, for we read that he rose up *“early in the morning.”*¹¹⁰⁶ This is so important. As soon as we are convicted, or reproved, and as soon as we know that we have sinned, it is essential that we do something about it immediately. We note further that the king was not afraid to speak about what he had heard from God. True repentance is always open. This does not mean that we speak of the sin in an open fashion, but rather that we speak of God's glory and His grace. There are occasions when sin is openly spoken of in Scripture but this is to show us the sinfulness of sin. More often the sin is not named because the focus is on God and His great, gracious, glorious, goodness.¹¹⁰⁷

As a result of Abimelech's revealing what God had done and said, the servants become afraid. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.¹¹⁰⁸ What will happen to us, the servants wonder, because of this terrible thing? Will God be gracious? There seems to be more to praise the people of Gerar here than Abraham. Next we find Abimelech asking Abraham why he had done such a thing.¹¹⁰⁹ It was Abraham that had brought the sin upon the nation of Gerar. Why had Abraham done this? Abraham offers no response to the initial question posed by the king. It would seem that Abraham is nonplussed or embarrassed here, so Abimelech changes the approach. He asks Abraham what his purpose was.¹¹¹⁰ The verb used in his question (*“what did you have in view?”*) is actually the verb “to see,” and Abimelech seems to be saying – what did you see in your mind's eye would happen when you did this thing? We would say: what were you thinking? Or, what did you expect as an outcome? There is an appealing flavour to this question, for it is only at this point that Abraham responds.

Abraham's explanation of why he had referred to Sarah as his sister is revealing. We learn that they both had the same father (Terah) but not the same mother.¹¹¹¹ Abraham starts his response by confessing his fear. He thought the people of Gerar would not fear God. He thought his life was in

1105 Jude 1:21.

1106 Genesis 20:8.

1107 See: Psalm 145.

1108 Psalm 111:10; proverbs 1:7; 9:10.

1109 Genesis 20:9.

1110 Genesis 20:10.

1111 Genesis 20:12.

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jeopardy.¹¹¹² At this point we must ask why on earth Abraham journeyed to Gerar if he thought that they were godless and dangerous? What was it that he was leaving or fleeing? Why go to Gerar if the people didn't fear God and would kill him on account of his wife? Abraham's faith is not to the fore in this encounter. We pause to ask the question of ourselves. Do we fear man in any way? Do we go places where we know or suspect that God is not honoured and thereby alter our behaviour through fear? We must never fear man and we must always be ready to speak as ambassadors for Christ. Let us remember what the Lord has said:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.¹¹¹³

20:14-18.(The final curtain).

Abimelech continues with the work of restoration. He honours both Abraham and Sarah before all and in so doing we find that Sarah was rebuked.¹¹¹⁴ Here we note that Sarah was complicit in Abraham's sinful act. She ought to have told Abraham not to act in this way. We can never get away with thinking that obedience to one in authority justifies a sinful act. When her husband asked to join him in the deception that he thought would save them, she should have responded by being faithful to God.¹¹¹⁵ This is not easy when those in authority wield the sword, but whatever the outcome, trust in God and obedience to the faith we profess is the best course of action. It is so because we seek the glory of God and not the preservation of life. Listen to these words of the Saviour:

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.¹¹¹⁶

Finally we see how serious this matter was to the Lord. He prevented Abimelech from committing adultery with Sarah, but all the women had their wombs closed up. This is usually taken to mean that they were barren, but perhaps a better explanation would be that their monthly cycles had stopped.¹¹¹⁷ Abraham prays for them and their ability to conceive is restored.

1112 Genesis 20:11.

1113 Matthew 10:28.

1114 Genesis 20:16.

1115 Genesis 20:13.

1116 Matthew 16:25.

1117 It would require some considerable time before the women would know that they could not conceive, but a sudden loss of the regular cycle may have become more readily apparent

Chapter 24.

Isaac born Ishmael thrown out. (21:1-21).

Analysis.

#21 1 And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said,
and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken.

2 For Sarah
conceived
and bore Abraham a son in his old age,
at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

3 And Abraham called the name of his son
who was born to him—
whom Sarah bore to him—
Isaac.

4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old,
as God had commanded him.

5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6 And Sarah said,
“God has made me laugh,
and all who hear will laugh with me.”

7 She also said,
“Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?
For I have borne *him* a son in his old age.”

8 So the child grew and was weaned.
And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned.

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian,
whom she had borne to Abraham,
scoffing.

10 Therefore she said to Abraham,
“Cast out this bondwoman and her son;
for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.”

11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son.

12 But God said to Abraham,
“Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman.
Whatever Sarah has said to you,
listen to her voice;
for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

13 Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman,
because he *is* your seed.”

14 So Abraham rose early in the morning,
and took bread and a skin of water;
and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar,
and sent her away.

Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba.

15 And the water in the skin was used up,
and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs.

16 Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot;
for she said to herself,
“Let me not see the death of the boy.”

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So she sat opposite *him*,
and lifted her voice and wept.
17 And God heard the voice of the lad.
Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her,
“What ails you, Hagar?
Fear not,
for God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*.
18 Arise,
lift up the lad
and hold him with your hand,
for I will make him a great nation.”
19 Then God opened her eyes,
and she saw a **well** of water.
And she went and filled the skin with water,
and gave the lad a drink.
20 So God was with the lad;
and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness,
and became an archer.
21 He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran;
and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

In this section we are confronted with the highs and lows of walking with God. We have the promise of God fulfilled leading to great joy, but we also have the consequence of sin realised.

21:1-7. (The Lord visits Sarah).

Verse 1 of Genesis 21 can be translated as shown below:

וַיְהִי	כִּקְדַּ	אֶת-שָׂרָה	כַּאֲשֶׁר	אָמַר
and the Lord	visited	(namely) Sarah	as when	He said
וַיַּעַשׂ	יְהוָה	לְשָׂרָה	כַּאֲשֶׁר	דִּבֶּר
And He did	the Lord	to/for Sarah	as when	He spoke

The first thing to note is that we have in the first verse a reduplication of what the Lord promised, or, in other words, a double statement which serves to give great emphasis to what is said here. So the first sentence tell us that the Lord “*visited*” Sarah “*as He had said,*” and then the second sentence informs us that the Lord “*did*” for Sarah “*as He had spoken.*” We can sure that when God speaks He wastes no words and accomplishes everything He has said. But here the point is forced home. The Lord God has most definitely done that which He promised for Sarah and this needs to be made extremely plain, and so the idea is repeated.

And so in this first section we celebrate with Abraham and Sarah at the news, not just of the birth of a son, but with the fulfilment of the promise that God had made. Apart from the double statement in

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verse 1 we are also reminded a third time of the promise of God in verse 2. The last of these reminds us that God had set a “*time.*”¹¹¹⁸ This is a feature we find repeated throughout the Scriptures. For example, it was at the right time that Christ came and died for us.¹¹¹⁹ Notice the emphasis on Sarah physically bearing the new born son. We read that Sarah “*conceived*” and so she became pregnant. We read that she “*bore Abraham*” this boy when he was old. Then we are told again that it was Sarah who bore to Abraham this son.¹¹²⁰ There is no doubt that this son was the son that God promised. Ishmael was the result of human decision, but this son was not born through any human act, even though Sarah conceived in the natural manner, for this was God's doing.

It is worth considering the opening words of this passage a bit more. Sarah was “*visited*” by the Lord just as He promised, and now she rejoices at the birth of a son – the son of promise. We can take this thought in two different ways. First we look to the coming of the Saviour. The Lord has indeed visited the world in which we live – just as He had promised! What a marvellous thought! I cannot begin to imagine a world in which the Lord Jesus had never entered. It does not bear thinking about. But then in a second sense we note a general principle. When the Lord promises to come, and to do something, we ought never to waver in doubt. If He has said that He will do something, then rest assured for He will surely do it. Now then, we can apply this first to His second coming. He has said that He will return, and so we can be sure that He will. There is a lot of information in the New Testament about this return, and Paul even says to the Thessalonian brethren that they should comfort one another with words of encouragement concerning the return of the King.¹¹²¹ However we can apply this to every promise of God. For example consider the promise of intimate communion with the Lord which the Lord Jesus described the night before He died:

21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” **22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” **23** Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”¹¹²²

Here we can believe that if we truly love Christ and seek Him and seek His ways, then we can be assured that not only will the Lord manifest Himself to us, but that the Father too will come and dwell with us! Oh that we would know more of His very presence! But it is promised!

1118 Genesis 18:10,14.

1119 Romans 5:6; Galatians 4:4.

1120 Genesis 21:2,3.

1121 1Thessalonians 4:18.

1122 John 14:21-23.

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Abraham has Isaac circumcised in accordance with the instructions he had received earlier on.¹¹²³ The name “*Isaac*” was given by the Lord because Abraham had laughed at the possibility of Sarah bearing a son in her old age.¹¹²⁴ Somewhat later on Sarah too would laugh at the thought.¹¹²⁵ Now she recognises both the righteousness of God who promised, and the great joy of being in God's will and promise, so she laughs with joy, and others laugh along with her.¹¹²⁶ What a wonderful God who not only challenges the lack of faith but makes such a thing a cause for joy. Sarah would never forget the fact that she did not believe God's promise of a son, and, what-is-more, God's grace in still giving such a son to her.

21:8-11. (Persecution begins).

The second section of our passage describes the problems that result from human decisions made without proper guide from God. Without going into too much detail, Isaac would probably be around 5 years of age.¹¹²⁷ It is not uncommon for children of Bible times to be weaned far later than we would normally expect in modern days. Perhaps one of the reasons for Abraham making a great feast and party was because Isaac was so close and dear to his mother and she clung to him closer than would normally be the case.¹¹²⁸ We do not stipulate these things as being without some doubt, but suggest them as the best resolution of all the data before us.

Now at this party something very sour begins to take place. Hagar's son Ishmael, begins to mock and scoff. The word used and translated “*scoffing*” is close in sound to Isaac's name:

מִצַּחֵק

m^etsacheq (mocking or scoffing)

יִצְחָק

yit^schaq (Isaac)

The verb is in the intensive active form. It indicates not just a bit of banter, but a directed and forceful action to mock and intimidate. The indication, therefore, is that Ishmael was vehemently mocking Isaac.

1123 Genesis 17:12.

1124 Genesis 17:17,19.

1125 Genesis 18:12.

1126 Genesis 21:6.

1127 This is so that the 430 years of Exodus 12:40-41 and Galatians 3:17 can agree with the 400 years of Genesis 15:13. Both of these time periods must end at the same time (the Exodus), and so since Isaac was born when Abraham was 100, twenty five years after entering Canaan (compare Genesis 12:4 with 21:5), it follows that he would be 5 years old at the beginning of persecution prophesied in Genesis 15:13.

1128 It is possible that Samuel was somewhere between three and six years of age – see 1Samuel 1:22-24.

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Perhaps he was making the most of his late weaning and calling him a “mummy's boy,” or maybe just mocking him for some lack or privilege. We cannot be sure. However the name *“Isaac,”* which means “to laugh,” is picked up by Ishmael as he laughs with scorn and derision at him and the situation. It is important to note the way in which verse 9 is constructed. Literally rendered we would read as shown below:¹¹²⁹

מִצְחָק	אֶת-בֶּן-הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית	שָׂרָה	וַתֵּרָא
Mocking	The son of Hagar the Egyptian	Sarah	And she saw
Intensive active form of the verb.	Hagar had borne Ishmael from Abraham's seed. He was from the same origin as Isaac paternally speaking.	Ishmael is not named, but his origin is indicated – i.e. he was the son of Hagar (a human decision) and of Egyptian origin.	It was Sarah who saw
			Emphasis on seeing, perceiving, observing

By referring to Ishmael as *“the son of Hagar the Egyptian”* rather than using his name, we see that the Holy Spirit is signalling the beginning of the persecution promised in Genesis 15. That this is far from fanciful can be shown by referring to Paul's comments on this very passage:

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.” 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.¹¹³⁰

Thus Paul holds that Ishmael actually *“persecuted”* Isaac. Sarah saw what was going on. Perhaps it was obvious to all, but it is Sarah who makes the observation and requests her husband do something about it. She is in no doubt about what needs to happen. Her request in verse 10 is forceful and imperative – commanding – and reasoned. If these two are allowed to co-exist there will be great difficulty. The two cannot be heirs together. Now in picking up on Paul's teaching we see here that believers and unbelievers cannot inherit together. In this instance the son of the bondwoman, (the son of slavery and of the flesh), must be cast out. Ishmael thus stands as a type here for Adam. Isaac stands for the believer who is born of the second and last Adam.¹¹³¹ The text rendering in the NKJV tracks the Hebrew quite well in verse 10. Sarah is adamant that Ishmael shall not be heir! He shall not be heir with her son, with Isaac. The statement ends with Isaac as the focal point of promise. He alone will be heir and not Ishmael.

Now, of course, this situation had all come about because of Sarah's suggestion in the first

1129 The reader is reminded that Hebrew writing reads from right to left.

1130 Galatians 4:28-31.

1131 1Corinthians 15:45,47.

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place.¹¹³² She had suggested to Abraham that Hagar could act as a surrogate. Abraham was at fault principally, for as head of the two he ought to have considered Sarah's suggestion for three seconds and then explained to her patiently why it was all wrong. We must pay heed to these things. It is a husband's duty and privilege to make the final decision. However a man must let his wife speak and suggest things too. Sarah may have been wrong in making the suggestion, but Abraham was more culpable because he did not lead Sarah into trusting God. Now once again Sarah is making a suggestion. It appeared dreadful and displeasing to Abraham.¹¹³³ He did not want to cast Ishmael, his son, away. We marvel here. Was Abraham unaware of what Ishmael was doing? Had he forgotten the words of the Lord to him back in Genesis 15? Could he not see that Ishmael and Isaac could not co-exist because of the promise? Now we hasten to add that both Abraham and Sarah show to us the two very difficult sides of this situation. Ishmael was mocking Isaac. The unbeliever does not understand the believer and cannot really dwell in community with him. But even though this is the case, the unbeliever is still Abraham's son! Surely he deserves some recognition? Ah yes of course, but not in terms of heavenly things. Now here all these things are displayed in earthly terms. Physically and literally Ishmael and Isaac could not co-exist and something had to be done to make this persecution stop. But what of Ishmael and Hagar now? Hagar was a slave. Ishmael did not ask to be born. What was to happen to these poor folk now?

21:12-14a.

Surprisingly we find that the Lord speaks to Abraham and tells him to follow Sarah's advice on this occasion. And so God tells Abraham to *“listen”* to Sarah's *“voice.”*¹¹³⁴ Now the Lord will bring about His purpose through Isaac, but He will not abandon Hagar and Ishmael to oblivion. Abraham must listen to Sarah at this time, because she has noted that Isaac really is the son of promise and only through him will the promise be fulfilled. The end of verse 12 is very interesting. The Lord gives the reason that in Isaac shall be called (or named) unto him (Abraham) his *“seed.”* Thus indicating that Abraham's name and line will be through Isaac. Ishmael is Abraham's *“seed”* as well, but there is no mention of naming or calling with regard to Abraham's descendants for Ishmael. Nevertheless the Lord will graciously prosper *“the son of the bondwoman,”* by making him into a *“nation”* too.¹¹³⁵

Now Abraham demonstrates that he was a true man of faith because having heard what the Lord had said, he immediately obeys, rising *“early in the morning,”* and sets about sending Hagar and Ishmael away.¹¹³⁶ Abraham gave Hagar some provisions and released the son of his flesh (Ishmael) to Hagar. In other words, the son of flesh is Egyptian and will always remain an Egyptian. Tragic though these words

1132 Genesis 16:1f.

1133 Genesis 21:11.

1134 Genesis 21:12.

1135 Genesis 21:13.

1136 Genesis 21:14.

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seem, God is showing us that the son of Adam and the son of Christ are two diametrically opposed blood lines. In no way must we make this sure and certain fact an excuse for treating the sons of Ishmael (unbelievers) sons of no hope and perdition. We do not know whether the Lord will redeem and save many of the unbelievers all around us. Better for us to treat all men as our equals and our kin in human terms since all have been created in the image of God. We share the same flesh and blood. However when it comes to worship, to fellowship in the Spirit, to devotion and service to God, we cannot ally with any sons of Ishmael, whether they be Arab, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Barbarian, Greek, atheist, humanist or whatever. In these situations the sons of Ishmael must be cast out.

21:14b-21. (Sin's sorry consequences meets God's wonderful grace).

21:14b-16.

Once sent away by Abraham, Hagar departs and begins to wander in the wilderness near Beersheba.¹¹³⁷ The first time we come across the wilderness is in Genesis 14:6 which speaks of the Horites who dwelt in Mount Seir to the south of Israel proper. The name “*Beersheba*” was given to that region some time latter when Abraham struck an agreement with Abimelech.¹¹³⁸ The writer has inserted the name prior to its inauguration to highlight both the location (i.e. the same place where Abraham disputed with Abimelech), and to signify the idea of what we may call, a spring of promise. “Beer” means well or spring and “sheba” signifies the number “seven.” Hence we have a perfect or complete source of water. Hagar was in the wilderness with Ishmael and they had limited resources (water and bread) provided by Abraham. But God was going to show Hagar and Ishmael not only that the resources of Abraham the man would fail, but that God's resources are eternal and full.

Inevitably the provisions Abraham had given them ran out. Now what can the bondwoman do? She knows that her son, who was 19 years old, would die and so she places him under a shrub for shade from the sun, and goes a distance away so that she will not see him die.¹¹³⁹ It is a tragic situation and one which has been replayed with varying outcomes throughout history. We pause to reflect here and worship God. He alone knows the end from the beginning. He is good, and does only good. He always does what is right and we remind ourselves that He alone is Creator and hence owner of all. And so at her extremity Hagar lifts up her voice and weeps.¹¹⁴⁰ What else could she do?

1137 Genesis 21:14.

1138 Genesis 21:31.

1139 Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old (Genesis 16:16). Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5). If Isaac was weaned when he was 5 years old (so that the 400 years of persecution co-terminates with the 430 years from promise to Exodus), this means that Ishmael was now 19 years of age.

1140 Genesis 21:16.

21:17,18.

But then amazing wonder of wonders the Lord God heard not the voice of Hagar, but the voice of the lad!¹¹⁴¹ The Lord responded to Ishmael who had mocked Isaac. What mercy! God is not at all disinterested in anyone. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.¹¹⁴² It is quite remarkable that Ishmael's name is not to be found here in this chapter. He is mentioned with reference to his mother the Egyptian or as the "*lad.*" And yet the very meaning of his name ("God will hear") is being played out here. God has heard the lad's cry from heaven. In fact two times we read that God "*heard the voice of the lad.*"¹¹⁴³ God hears those who cry for help! Now even though the angel of God had heard the boy crying out, the Lord speaks directly to Hagar. Why did the Lord do this? I believe that it was to draw her into faith. The Lord had a message for Hagar:

17 ... What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*.

18 Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.¹¹⁴⁴

Literally: the Lord asks "what to you Hagar?" The Lord calls her to fear not. This type of call is one the Lord frequently offers to his followers. Along with this call to fear not, we see the Lord calling Hagar to "*arise*" and to "*lift up*" the lad! Here we have resurrection language.¹¹⁴⁵ This is what our God is like. He comes to bring life! Both of these words are imperatives. They are akin to the Lord Jesus' commands to the sick, the lame, and the dead to stand up, arise and be healed. We have then a call to salvation! Look also at the care and compassion of the Lord. He tells Hagar to take the lad and "*hold him with your hand*" and then she is given the promise that Ishmael will become a great nation.¹¹⁴⁶

21:19-21.

Now along with the call comes the ability to obey. We marvel at the grace of God. He has come into our sphere of existence and opened heaven to our senses. Hagar has her eyes opened! Again we see salvation language here. It is just like the case when the Lord opened Lydia's heart to see the gospel.¹¹⁴⁷ In this case Hagar is made to see a well of water. How wonderful. The Lord brings what was needed at that very moment – water.¹¹⁴⁸ And this is what the Lord brings to all who call out in truth to Him. He quenches the thirst of the thirsty. Hagar rushes to the well and fills the water skin giving it to her son. She was probably desperately thirsty herself. Yet she has a mother's heart and she deals with her dying son first.

1141 Genesis 21:17.

1142 Ezekiel 33:11.

1143 Genesis 21:17(x2).

1144 Genesis 21:17b,18.

1145 Genesis 21:18.

1146 Genesis 21:18.

1147 Acts 16:14.

1148 Genesis 21:19.

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This indicates that Ishmael was probably very close to death.

The section ends with God's great compassion again. The lad grew because God was *“with”* him.¹¹⁴⁹ He dwells in the *“Wilderness of Paran,”* where *“Paran”* means “place of caverns.” Thus Ishmael becomes an archer amidst the caves and rocks of the wilderness. The piece ends with Hagar getting her son a wife from Egypt. Despite the salvation themes which flow through this passage, Ishmael and Hagar are Egyptians. Hagar most probably felt no regard for Abraham and Sarah, and her return to Egypt does not mark a fall into the world so much as a return to what she knew. Remember that she was a slave of Sarah taken when Abraham and Sarah were in Egypt (when they should not have been). Spiritually we note that Ishmael is akin to, and connected with, Egypt. However we do not judge Hagar with being a worldly person here. Her faith is something we should commend even though the Holy Spirit would lead us to recognise the separation between the godly line and the unbelieving line.

1149 Genesis 21:20.

Chapter 25.

Trouble with Abimelech. (21:22-34).

Analysis.

22 And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying,
“God *is* with you in all that you do.

23 Now therefore, swear to me by God
that you will not deal falsely
with me,
with my offspring,
or with my posterity;
but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do
to me
and to the land in which you have dwelt.”

24 And Abraham said,
“I will swear.”

25 Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a **well** of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized.

26 And Abimelech said,
“I do not know who has done this thing;
you did not tell me,
nor had I heard *of it* until today.”

27 So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech,
and the two of them made a covenant.

28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

29 Then Abimelech asked Abraham,
“What *is the meaning of* these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?”

30 And he said,
“You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this **well**.”

31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there.

32 Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba.

So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army,
and they returned to the land of the Philistines.

33 Then *Abraham*
planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba,
and there called on
the name of the Lord,
the Everlasting God.

34 And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

The last part of Genesis 22 concerns Abraham's dealings with Abimelech and the covenant made at Beersheba. The passage divides into two unequal parts. First we have Abimelech's appeal to Abraham for a fair deal (Genesis 21:22-24). The second section deals with the interaction between Abraham and Abimelech in the matter of wells and the formation of a treaty agreement (Genesis 21:25-34).

[1] Abimelech's appeal to Abraham for a fair deal. (Genesis 21:22-24).

21:22.

Verse 22 signals a new section with the phrase *“and it came to pass at that time.”* And once again we meet up with Abimelech, king of the Philistines at Gerar. We have already noted that Abimelech was a God-fearer, contrary to Abraham's expectations. Now again we note that Abimelech appeals to Abraham to deal fairly with him. Abimelech had been more than kind to Abraham in their previous encounter, but now the king of Gerar requires a kind of treaty agreement with Abraham. Abraham is blessed of God, and Abimelech can see this, so he wants there to be peace between their two groups of people.

Abimelech is with his army commander whose name *“Phicol”* signifies “mouth of all,” or simply “strong.” He would have ruled both by voice and in his strength. Clearly this man was a force to be reckoned with, although it appears that he plays little part in the proceedings, and seems to be there simply as a show of force. Perhaps Abimelech wanted to intimidate Abraham? Now Abimelech (whose name means “my father is king”) opens the meeting with an affirmation concerning Abraham that God was with him, (*“God is with you in all that you do”*).¹¹⁵⁰ The blessing of God was indeed upon Abraham and this appears to have been evident to those who saw him.

21:23,24.

As a consequence of Abraham's growing strength and prosperity, Abimelech sought an agreement with the patriarch. The nature of this agreement is simple. Abimelech wants Abraham to *“deal”* with him fairly and honestly. He invokes *“God”* as witness to whom Abraham is asked to swear by, and the request is actually put in negative terms, on account of their prior encounter when Abraham lied. This agreement was not just to be between the two parties, but rather it was to be ongoing, to include all of Abimelech's children, and all of his *“posterity.”* Abimelech requests that Abraham would deal with him *“according to the kindness”* that the king had already shown to the patriarch.¹¹⁵¹ We noted in their earlier encounter when the truth came out, that Abimelech gave to Abraham a great deal of goods and possessions, and also *“a thousand pieces of silver”* as a means of vindicating Sarah before all.¹¹⁵² Abimelech was the innocent party in the whole affair which was brought about through Abraham's fear and lies. Now Abimelech is reminding Abraham of his former dealings and his generosity, because he now fears that Abraham may become a competitive rival in the land, especially as he now has a son by Sarah. Abraham responds with simplicity saying *“I will swear.”* No caveats or excuses. No amendments or additions. Abraham knew he had dealt poorly with Abimelech so his response is the only one that would fit the bill.

1150 Genesis 21:22.

1151 Genesis 21:23.

1152 Genesis 20:14,16.

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[2] A problem over wells. (Genesis 21:25-34).

21:25,26.

Whilst several years had passed between Abraham's first encounter with Abimelech and the time of the agreement made here, it is unclear if any time elapsed between Abraham agreeing to Abimelech's request and what happens from verse 25 onwards.¹¹⁵³ The opening statement reads simply *"Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech ..."* Was this some time later on or immediately after his declaration that he would swear? It would seem from the text that Abraham's rebuke came immediately after he agreed to swear. It might be that some time elapsed but there is no definite indication of this, so it is better to assume that Abraham's rebuke follows immediately in time.

The issue Abraham raises is a dispute over a well that was violently taken or *"seized"* by Abimelech's *"servants."*¹¹⁵⁴ This was no mere stand-up argument, for the terms indicate force and violence. Wells, of course, were vital in that country as the main regular source of water. Isaiah speaks of the *"wells of salvation."*¹¹⁵⁵ And so we are drawn to think of the need for water not just in the physical sense but also in the spiritual sense too. Abraham's dispute with Abimelech over a well is symptomatic of the struggle we face when we come to Christ. Our sins, the world's draw, and the devil will all try and steal your joy and your supply of heavenly water.

Now on hearing this news, Abimelech responds immediately by saying that he was unaware of the issue, Abraham had not mentioned it, and that up to this very day he had no knowledge of the problem.¹¹⁵⁶ What does this tell us? Was Abimelech in charge of his servants? Did he know full well what was going on, or was he ignorant of their day-to-day activities? Or was Abimelech simply engaging in diplomacy? We cannot be sure.

21:27-32.

It is Abraham who takes the initiative in what follows. We have a practical (physical) difficulty here and we must look at this before continuing with any spiritual applications. What does Abraham do? First he gathers some *"sheep and oxen"* and he gifts them to Abimelech. Abimelech had previously given Abraham flocks and other possessions, but now Abraham returns the favour.¹¹⁵⁷ The purpose was to effect an agreement, or *"covenant."* Next Abraham puts *"seven ewe lambs"* to one side *"by themselves."*¹¹⁵⁸ Abimelech asks what this action means, and by such a question we recognise that this action must be

1153 Sarah had given birth to Isaac, Isaac was weaned and Hagar and Ishmael had been cast out. This indicates that at least five and maybe more years had passed.

1154 Isaiah 21:25.

1155 Isaiah 12:3.

1156 Genesis 21:26.

1157 Genesis 21:27. See also Genesis 20:14.

1158 Genesis 21:28.

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significant. What does all this mean?¹¹⁵⁹ Abraham responds by telling Abimelech that he must receive these animals from his hand, so that they will be a witness to the fact that Abraham dug the well.¹¹⁶⁰ Notice here that these lambs were *“from my hand”* and they were *“my witness.”*¹¹⁶¹ The number seven, which indicates completion or fullness, is closely related to the verb *“to swear.”* Thus Abraham provides Abimelech a complete set of ewe lambs as his witness to the fact that the well was his. In essence it would appear then that Abraham is buying back the well from Abimelech which he had already dug. As a consequence of this action the region was to be known as *“Beersheba”* which means “the well of the oath” (see figure 22).¹¹⁶²

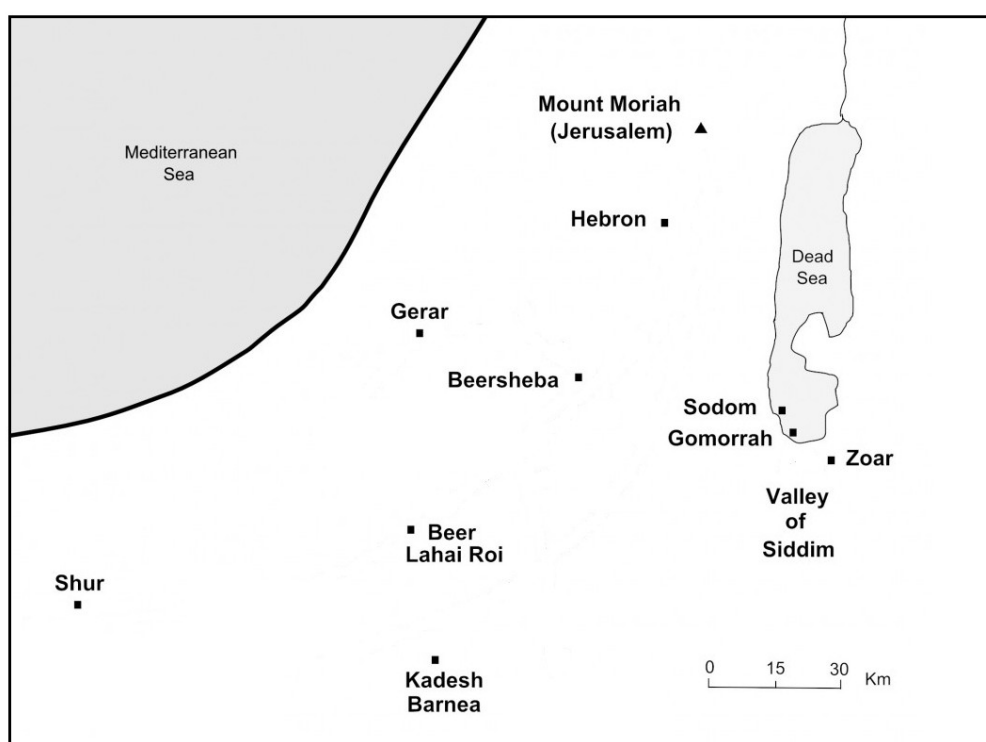


Figure 22: The location of Beersheba.

In verse 32 we are told again that a covenant was made at Beersheba, and then Abimelech and Phicol depart to return to *“the land of the Philistines.”*

From all of the above details I am reminded of our Saviour's parables of the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure:

1159 Genesis 21:29.

1160 Genesis 21:30.

1161 Genesis 21:30.

1162 Genesis 21:31.

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44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.¹¹⁶³

Abraham may not have exchanged everything he had for the well, but he does give a complete price for it. The lesson would be that there is something more vital than earthly treasures and possessions. Abraham needed the water from that well for sustaining life and he was prepared to enter an agreement and effectively re-buy what was his.¹¹⁶⁴ We too must make every effort to keep our hearts, ensure that we reside in the love of God, and resist temptation and the devil.¹¹⁶⁵

21:33.

After Abimelech and Phicol's departure to Gerar (*“the land of the Philistines”*), Abraham plants a tree. The NKJV puts this as a *“tamarisk tree”* but the AKJV suggest a *“grove”* (of trees) is intended. According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, the tamarisk was:

*“a very graceful tree, with long feathery branches and tufts closely clad with the minutest of leaves, and surmounted in spring with spikes of beautiful pink blossoms, which seem to envelop the whole tree in one gauzy sheet of colour.”*¹¹⁶⁶

The action of planting a tree is probably one of faith. Abraham only *“sojourne*d” in the land at this time, but in planting a tree he was looking forward to the promise of God.¹¹⁶⁷ After planting this tree (or possibly collection of trees) we read that Abraham called upon the Lord in worship. And so we read that it was *“there”* (in that very spot) that Abraham *“called on”* the Lord. This signifies trust and worship. We met with this first at the end of Genesis chapter 4.¹¹⁶⁸ Here Abraham worships God. In particular he is trusting and depending upon *“the name of the Lord,”* that is, His very character, and then also, on *“the Everlasting God.”* Here we have a new name for God (*“the Everlasting God”*) which in Hebrew this is: אֵל עוֹלָם *’el ‘ōlām*. This term *“everlasting”* actually means, “the vanishing point,” or “time out of mind,” hence “eternity.” And so Abraham depends upon the character and Being of the eternal “I am,” the self-existent and eternal creator God. Abraham's times are changing. Things around him are temporal and uncertain (although guided and arranged by a sovereign God), but the Lord is the ever continuing and eternal one who never changes, the *“Everlasting God”* who dwells beyond time,

1163 Matthew 13:44-46.

1164 See also Isaiah 55:1f.

1165 Proverbs 4:23; James 4:7; Jude 1:21.

1166 Easton's Bible Dictionary. Entry: Tamarisk. Online: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/eastons-bible-dictionary/tamarisk.html>

1167 Genesis 21:34, AKJV.

1168 Genesis 4:26.

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21:34.

At the end of the account we discover that Abraham was dwelling in the area known as “*the land of the Philistines.*”¹¹⁶⁹ Abimelech and Phicol, his army commander, leave Abraham and return to “*the land of the Philistines*” but Abraham is still dwelling in this same general region. It would appear from this that Abraham was on the outskirts whilst Abimelech and Phicol return to the centre and hub of that region which was probably Gerar, since Abimelech was “*king of Gerar.*”¹¹⁷⁰

1169 Genesis 21:34.

1170 Genesis 20:2.

Chapter 26.

Isaac offered. (22:1-24).

Analysis.

#22 1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him,

“Abraham!”

And he said,

“Here I am.”

2 Then He said,

“Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said to his young men,

“Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said,

“My father!”

And he said,

“Here I am, my son.”

Then he said,

“Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?”

8 And Abraham said,

“My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”

So the two of them went together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him.

And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said,

“Abraham, Abraham!”

So he said,

“Here I am.”

12 And He said,

“Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.”

13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns.

So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day,

“In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, **16** and said:

“By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— **17** blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. **18** In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

20 Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying,

“Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: **21** Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the

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father of Aram, **22** Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.”

23 And Bethuel begot Rebekah.

These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.

We left Abraham at the tree of Beersheba in worship having settled a dispute with Abimelech king of Gerar over the well which he had dug. In Genesis chapter 22 we find that the Lord wants to prove and test this faith Abraham has. God is going to ask Abraham to offer up as sacrifice his one and only son. Would Abraham obey such a strange command? Our passage takes the form of a series of conversations and exchanges between various people, but ends with information concerning other relatives. The narrative part (Genesis 22:1-19) runs along in one complete whole but there are various stages through which it passes as follows:

The strange request of God. Genesis 22:1,2.

Abraham obeys the command and sets out. Genesis 22:3.

The journey begins, but only Abraham and Isaac go on. Genesis 22:4-8.

Abraham offers Isaac. Genesis 22:9-14.

The Lord blesses Abraham. and he returns to Beersheba. Genesis 22:15-19.

After this main section we are given details about Nahor, Abraham's brother, (Genesis 22:20-24), which will be very important for what is to come later in Genesis 24.

[1] God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. (Genesis 22:1-19).

22:1,2.

Our narrative opens with a clear statement that God intended to test Abraham (“*God tested Abraham*”).¹¹⁷¹ Abraham is at Beersheba presumably beside the tree that he had planted earlier. Some years have passed because Isaac is now a “*lad*” (possibly mid teens?) and capable of carrying wood and going on a protracted journey.¹¹⁷² In this quiet setting the Lord calls out Abraham's name. We pause and stop to consider that even though God knows everything (with no exceptions) it is something especial when He calls us by name.

1171 Genesis 22:1.

1172 Genesis 22:5.

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But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel:
“fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; you *are* Mine.”¹¹⁷³

Abraham would later be called a “*friend of God*” and here, in God calling Abraham by name, we see this friendship expressed.¹¹⁷⁴ It seems clear from the narrative, however, that there was no direct appearance of the Lord as occurred in Genesis 15 or Genesis 17, for example. The Lord speaks clearly and openly to Abraham but He has not made an appearance.¹¹⁷⁵ How then, did Abraham know it was the Lord? We do not know how Abraham knew, but it is very clear from what follows that it was indeed the Lord who spoke to Him. In the same way we receive a ***word from the Lord*** in our hearts as we seek Him through His word (i.e. Scripture). The apostle John had much to say about assurance. In the midst of mentioning great opposition from those who are Antichrists we read about what the Lord has provided for us:

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. **21** I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. **22** Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. **24** As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is what he promised us—eternal life. **26** I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. **27** As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.¹¹⁷⁶

True believers have “*an anointing from the Holy One,*” and this which they have “*received*” means that such believers “*do not need anyone to teach*” them, for it “*teaches*” them “*about all things.*” The Holy Spirit will guide the believer into all truth.¹¹⁷⁷ Thus Abraham heard from the Lord directly in some way, and the believer does too. He (or she) may not have direct revelation in the sense of receiving Scriptural truth, but the “*anointing*” leads them into an understanding of God's will and ways for them. Careful attention to John's words show that this is not self-generated, and it is not imagined, nor worked up by reason because it is “*received,*” it is a gift. Neither is it a mystical amorphous feeling, because it does actually teach and lead and it concerns the “*truth.*”

When the Lord speaks there is deep conviction and certainty. There are no true atheists in the world for all know that God is. In the same way, when God speaks His speech is never without force and conviction. There is no doubting the true voice of God. We may receive all sorts of other voices from time

1173 Isaiah 43:1.

1174 James 2:23.

1175 In Genesis 22:11 we read that “*the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven.*”

1176 1John 2:20-27.

1177 John 16:13.

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to time which muddle our minds, but these are never clear like the Lord's voice. We can see this in our Saviour's speech. He spoke with clarity and authority. People responded differently to Him, of course, but there was no doubting that when He spoke His words were like arrows that pierce the soul and reveal the motives.¹¹⁷⁸ Of course, speaking of believers today, we need to add here that what we receive inwardly must always be consonant and harmonious with what we have been given in Scripture. There are always two dangerous extremes to avoid. First we must avoid a dry approach which seeks to unpack Scripture from an intellectual perspective alone with no reliance upon the Spirit of God. but second we must avoid like the plague, the attitude of heart which holds that God speaks to me irrespective of the Scriptures. Rather we seek to hear what God has said to us personally in and through His word (the Bible) aided and energised by the Holy Spirit. That title of the Lord is essential. We come to Scripture and we hear God's voice humbly and with readiness of will.

In verse 2 the word from the Lord is clear. The reference to Abraham's son and his *“only son”* is significant. Only in Isaac will the blessing come. Ishmael was not his son in the sense of promise. In this simple phrase we see reflected the truth of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The second person of the trinity is the eternal Son of God, the only begotten Son of the Father.¹¹⁷⁹ The Lord knows that Abraham loved Isaac (*“whom you love”*) and in this we are brought to consider the eternal love that the Father has for the Son. Such love never varies. Abraham loved Isaac and still loved him through all of the events that unfolded. In the same way we know that the Father loves the Son forever.

The Lord instructs Abraham to go to the land of *“Moriah”* which name means “chosen of the Lord,” or, “visible of the Lord.”¹¹⁸⁰ It would later become the site for the temple that Solomon was to build as instructed by God.¹¹⁸¹ Abraham was to offer Isaac as a *“burnt offering”* at a location that the Lord would later reveal. Here we note, then, that the greater sacrifice of God's *Only Son*, the Lord Jesus Christ, was displayed prophetically in the burnt offering, of which more is revealed in the book of Leviticus. This was an offering which was completely given up to the Lord. It was one in which the *“sweet aroma”* was received by the Lord as a complete satisfaction of His righteous and holy demands.¹¹⁸² This sacrifice was one in which the priests and offerers did not partake. They did partake of other offerings, such as the Passover lamb and so on, but the burnt offering was to be consumed entirely by fire (*“the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice”*).¹¹⁸³

Why did the Lord tell Abraham to offer up his only son in this way? There are two answers I believe. First, and foremost, this was a prophetic type pointing us to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

1178 Numbers 24:8; Psalm 38:2.

1179 John 1:18; 3:16,18; 1John 4:9.

1180 Jones. P258.

1181 2Chronicles 3:1. This and the reference in Genesis 22:2 are the only occurrences of this name in Scripture.

1182 Exodus 29:18,25,41; Leviticus 1:9,13,17.

1183 Leviticus 1:9.

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But second this was a test for Abraham. Where was his “*first love*”?¹¹⁸⁴ Did he put God first always?

22:3.

On hearing this command, Abraham sets about immediately to obey. He knew that murder was wholly wrong, and yet we find him walking in perfect obedience to the message he had received. We have no idea what time of day Abraham received the message from the Lord as given in verses 1 and 2, but the opening statement in verse 3 makes clear Abraham's intention, for he “*rose early in the morning.*” This statement indicates not just that he was obedient and willing, but more, that he was eager to obey. Imagine you are promised something wonderful from someone but it will not come until tomorrow. I am sure that you would be up very early the next day, just like the children are at Christmas time!

This same type of phrase is a repeated one in the book of Jeremiah indicating the Lord's eagerness and intent to make Himself known to the people. In fact the phrase “*rising early*” (and ones close to this) occur eleven times in Jeremiah and then only in two other places besides.¹¹⁸⁵ The phrase “*rose early*” occurs for the first time in Genesis 20:8 and concerns Abimelech and the dream he had. It also occurs some twenty four more times in a variety of books in the Old Testament.¹¹⁸⁶ The only New testament reference concerns the resurrection of Christ:

Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.¹¹⁸⁷

Such a truth is marvellous and serves to indicate the Lord's eagerness to bring about salvation!

Thus Abraham was willing to obey and he was also eager to do so. We are told that this journey was to be a long one, requiring the use of a donkey and two servants (Abraham “*took two young men with him*”). Assuming he was still near Beersheba this would be a journey of about 60 km (see figure 23) and so may have taken two or three days.

The terms used in this verse also point us in the direction of resurrection language. We have already discussed the fact that Abraham *rose* early in the morning, but then after he had arranged everything the text simply says that Abraham “*arose and went to the place ...*” The word rendered as “*arose*” in our text is the Hebrew verb: קָם *qûm*, which indicates “to rise up, from the ground or from a bed” according to *Wilson*.¹¹⁸⁸ At the very least the use of this word suggests a determination to go on this quest, but I rather think that the Holy Spirit uses such terms to spur us to recognise that God's intentions

1184 Revelation 2:4.

1185 Jeremiah 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4; 2Chronicles 36:15; Proverbs 27:14.

1186 Genesis 20:8; 21:14; 22:3; 28:18; Exodus 32:6; 34:4; Numbers 14:40; Joshua 3:1; 6:12,15; 7:16; 8:10,14; Judges 6:28; 7:1; 21:4; 1Samuel 15:12; 17:20; 29:11; 2Kings 3:22; 2Chronicles 20:20; 29:20; Zephaniah 3:7.

1187 Mark 16:9.

1188 *Wilson*. P358.

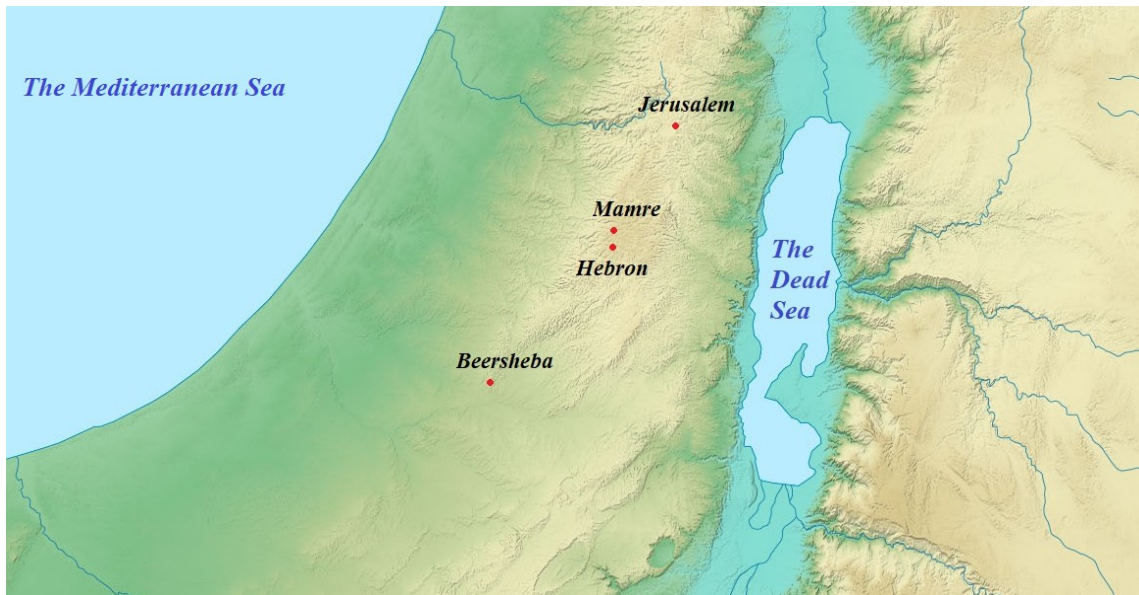


Figure 23: From Beersheba to Jerusalem.

and work are always to bring about life and wholeness. I am not suggesting any form of “health” and “wealth” prosperity idea here, but merely intend to point out that the Lord is the source and giver of life in all its abundance.¹¹⁸⁹ Abraham arose to do what the Lord had commanded, and we ought also to arise in the power of the resurrection of Christ, and in the power of Spirit, with our newly renewed lives so as to obey as he obeyed.

22:4-8.

It was *“on the third day”* that Abraham sees the place he was to make the offering.¹¹⁹⁰ We noted earlier that Moriah was probably about 60 km from Beersheba, so a three day journey is not unlikely (see figure 23).¹¹⁹¹ However, once again, I am sure that the Holy Spirit mentions this to bring our minds forward to the Lord Jesus who suffered and died and was raised on the third day. To those who may sneer and say that Abraham's journey was prior to the sacrifice of Isaac and so cannot possibly point us to the third day of resurrection I simply respond by saying: does the Lord have to make things so plain and regimented before you will believe? Remember that it was Abraham who is being tested here. He heard the command of the Lord and it was not until the *“third day”* that he would finally be able to fully obey the Lord. Abraham must have gone through all sorts of agony of heart during this time. Of course such suffering was nowhere near the depths our Saviour experienced, but it serves to point us to the suffering

1189 John 10:10.

1190 Genesis 22:4.

1191 Moriah was later the site where Solomon's temple was built in Jerusalem.

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of death Abraham experienced in knowing the Lord required of him his only son.

As he approached the site Abraham *“lifted his eyes.”*¹¹⁹² This phrase indicates more than simply observing. It suggests the idea of looking with intention or inspection. Is this the place? There is also an element of trust in the Lord too. Abraham saw the place and knew what he had to do, but in looking up to the mountain, his eyes would also be looking to the Lord. Then we read that he *“saw the place afar off.”*¹¹⁹³ They were obviously some distance from the site the Lord had chosen, and at this point Abraham tells the two *“young men”* with him to remain with the donkey.¹¹⁹⁴ What Abraham says to these two is worth our attention. After telling them to remain behind, he then tells them what precisely will happen. It comes in two parts:

The lad and I will go yonder and worship,
and we will come back to you.

In the first part Abraham is making a clear distinction so that the two servants will stay behind, for this is something only Abraham and Isaac can do. I wonder what the two young men thought? Were they to be excluded from the worship of God? It cannot surely have been the case back when they were all together. It is unthinkable that these lads would have been excluded from such worship. Before the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah the Lord blessed Abraham with these words:

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.¹¹⁹⁵

Remember also that Abraham had trained his household of three hundred and eighteen men, and had used them to rescue Lot.¹¹⁹⁶ This separation between the two young men and Abraham and Isaac serves to show us that there are some things within the atonement which go deeper and are only for the father and son to know. Here, of course, what transpires will be made known, but typically there are those things which pass between God the Father and God the Son we can never be party to. And so in separating from the two young men, Abraham lays the wood on Isaac, presumably on some kind of backpack arrangement, and then grabs hold of the knife and the *“fire,”* by which we understand some means of igniting the wood.¹¹⁹⁷ Now, the fact that Abraham lays the wood on Isaac points us towards Christ who would be

1192 Genesis 22:4.

1193 Genesis 22:4.

1194 Genesis 22:5.

1195 Genesis 18:19.

1196 Genesis 14:14.

1197 Genesis 22:6.

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burdened with the wooden cross.¹¹⁹⁸ Twice we read in verse 6 that Abraham “*took*” the things mentioned. This indicates the intent and motivation of the father. It was God the Father who “*sent*” the Son to be our sacrifice just as it was Abraham who took hold of the items and went alone with Isaac to the place of sacrifice.¹¹⁹⁹

Next we have a short conversation between Isaac and Abraham which concludes with the phrase “*so the two of them went together.*”¹²⁰⁰ This would indicate that this conversation occurred either as Abraham was instructing the two young men and taking hold of the wood, knife and “*fire,*” or at some point before they left the two young men. In other words, the dialogue between Abraham and Isaac was heard by these two servants.

So whilst the arrangements are being made to separate into two parties (the young men staying with the donkey and Abraham and Isaac going on), Isaac asks his father about the missing ingredient. As we comment here we ought not ignore the way in which Isaac approaches Abraham. It shows great respect and is indicative of how we ought to approach our heavenly Father, waiting on Him. However Isaac asks: “*where is the lamb for a burnt offering*”?¹²⁰¹ Such a question resounds throughout creation. Where is THE LAMB which would be truly sufficient for a burnt offering? The lambs, bulls, goats and so on that were sacrificed were all typical and pointed forward to the great sacrifice they represented, namely Christ at Calvary. We might imagine (reverently, of course) that the Son with the Father asks the same question. How are transgressors going to be redeemed? By what means? Whom will intercede? We find this put anthropomorphically in the prophets. The Lord states on several occasions that He looked for a man to intercede or stand in the gap but He could find none.¹²⁰² As a consequence He provides what is missing! Verse 8 gives us Abraham's response which is beautiful. What Abraham tells Isaac is shown below from a variety of translations including my own attempt:

← read from right to left

אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה-לוֹ הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה בְּנִי

My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. [NKJV].

My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. [AKJV].

God will see for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. [My translation].

1198 John 19:17.

1199 John 3:16.

1200 Genesis 22:8.

1201 Genesis 22:7.

1202 See Isaiah 41:28; 59:16; 63:5; Ezekiel 22:30.

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God doth provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son. [YLT].

God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. [NASB].

God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. [ESV].

The interesting thing about this part of verse 8 is that contrary to what is found in the NKJV and the AKJV, the name of “*God*” comes first. This is very significant. Abraham begins in response with God. Such a simple principle, but how we fall into so many traps because we do not follow Abraham's lead.

As can be seen from the above I have given a range of translations alongside the Hebrew to show how they translate each Hebrew word. You will note that in my translation I have translated the verb, which comes second in the sentence (ראה), in its original meaning of “*see*,” whereas all other versions quoted use the word “*provide*.” The Hebrew verb used can be translated in a variety of ways, but the vast majority (65%) take the basic meaning of the verb (“to see”).¹²⁰³ The three other cases where the AKJV translators have rendered the verb as “to provide” do so in the sense of making something appear visible before someone.¹²⁰⁴ For example in 1Samuel 16 the Lord says to Samuel after rejecting Saul as king and sending him to Jesse: “*for I have provided me a king among his [Jesse's] sons.*”¹²⁰⁵ In other words the sense is that of making something come about so that it would be observed. Saul himself uses this word later when he requests a person to play skilful music for him.¹²⁰⁶ Thus the idea is that God will make visible something which will actually do the job.

The next Hebrew word (לו) is made up of a preposition and a pronoun and reads literally: “to/for him.” All the translations we have given with the exception of the AKJV are faithful at this point. The Lord is going to provide not for Abraham, but for “*Himself*” the burnt sacrifice! There was no other. Only God could provide, and the requirement was to appease His righteous and holy wrath. God will never sweep sin under the carpet. He will by no means acquit the guilty.¹²⁰⁷ All sin must be paid for! And so He provides the burnt sacrifice for His own purposes. Make no mistake here. We all need a sacrifice but none amongst the human race could ever provide for this. We cannot make atonement and satisfy God's righteous demands. The debts are so onerously big we cannot imagine any prospect of meeting them. We are at fault and God demands satisfaction, and righteously so. And so God Himself provides for Himself the needed sacrifice.

The next word (השן) must be rendered with the definite article. There is only One Lamb of God

1203 Strong lists the following translations for the AKJV: “*see*” x 879, “*look*” x 104, “*behold*” x 83, “*shew*” x 68, “*appear*” x 66, “*consider*” x 22, “*seer*” x 12, “*spy*” x 6, “*respect*” x 5, “*perceives*” x 5, “*provide*” x 4, “*regard*” x 4, “*enjoy*” x 4, “*lo*” x 3, “*forseeth*” x 2 “*heed*” x 2 and miscellaneous x 74. The first five choices are synonymous to some extent (see, look, behold, shew and appear) and these make up nearly 90% of the uses.

1204 Deuteronomy 33:21; 1Samuel 16:1,17.

1205 1Samuel 16:1.

1206 1Samuel 16:17.

1207 Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18.

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who takes away the sins of the world. Not just any lamb will do.

All of the translations except the NASB render the penultimate Hebrew word (לַעֲלֹה) as: “*for a burnt offering.*” A burnt offering is required to appease the Lord for a sweet smelling aroma of satisfaction and only The Lamb whom God provides will do!

The very last word in this clause (בְּנִי) is universally rendered as “*my son*” but two translations (AKJV and NKJV) mistakenly move it to the front. Abraham has said in the hearing of all present that “*God*” will make appear **The Lamb** who will atone, and then we have the words “*my son*” left right until the end. What are we to make of this? It would appear that the Holy Spirit is indicating that Abraham's son would be the needful sacrifice, but in truth we are being directed to the Father's Son, that is Christ Jesus. If we take the ESV rendition as our example, we have:

God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.

The last words could either be taken as an address, that is, Abraham is addressing his response to Isaac, “*my son.*” Or they could be indicating **the person** to whom he has been referring in what God has provided. In other words God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, **namely** “*my son.*” Did Isaac grasp this? Was he aware that Abraham was about to offer him up as a burnt sacrifice? I cannot say. We shall observe in a moment that Isaac exercised faith too, but I just wonder if they saw more clearly than we are often lead to believe by commentators and preachers.

22:9-14.

Abraham and Isaac reach the site indicated by the Lord and there Abraham sets about the task of obedience. He first builds an altar. It is likely that it would have been a mound of earth or perhaps rocks which were available. However it is most likely that Abraham did not wield any tool or hammer on the stones. We can infer this from the fact that they appear only to have a knife, some wood, and a means for igniting the wood. Abraham thus had no tools by which to dress stone. It was important that no tool was used to fashion the altar because it was never to have any man-made adornments or craft. In the building of the temple later on, the stones used had to be quarried and then moved into position with no further work done on them at the site.¹²⁰⁸

Next Abraham arranged “*the wood in order,*” by which phrase we are probably meant to understand so as it could be burnt efficiently and to be able to take the sacrifice. We should note that when Abraham had completed the altar and made everything ready, he then “*bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar.*”¹²⁰⁹ Abraham was well over 100 years in age at this point, whilst Isaac was a young man with

1208 Exodus 20:25; Deuteronomy 27:5; Joshua 8:31; 1Kings 6:7.

1209 Genesis 22:9.

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greater strength, and yet Isaac was a willing sacrifice offering no resistance. Here we see both the faith of Abraham and of Isaac. The Father offering his son, and the son being offered as a willing sacrifice. What a remarkable and beautifully typical picture of what God the Father and God the Son did at Calvary.¹²¹⁰

We have already made reference to Abraham's faith in being obedient to the command of God but it is worth pointing out that we have a New Testament statement to this effect. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews in speaking of his faith, suggests that Abraham believed that God would also raise Isaac to life:

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, **18** of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," **19** concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.¹²¹¹

Then at just the moment when Abraham was ready to plunge in the knife, the Lord stops him and provides a ram caught in a thicket by its horns.¹²¹² Verse 11 tells us that the "*Angel of the Lord*" called down from heaven. This is a clear indication that we do not have an appearance of the Lord in this instance. Calling the patriarch's name out twice indicates the urgency of the matter. The Lord, of course, is sovereign over all things and could easily have deflected the knife as Abraham plunged it down. However the Lord from heaven calls in urgency to Abraham to stop. Verse 12 gives us the explanation for this sudden change of course. The words which the Lord used here are significant:

And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you **have not withheld your son, your only son**, from Me."¹²¹³

Isaac was Abraham's only true son by his wife Sarah. This is the second of three times where we get the phrase "*your son, your only son.*"¹²¹⁴ We noted earlier in commenting on verse 2 that this type of language is found in reference to the Lord Jesus and it is worth reiterating this point here. He is the **Only** Son of God the Father.¹²¹⁵ A short while later, after Abraham sees the sacrifice that God had provided and offers this in place of Isaac, we read that the Lord blesses Abraham for not withholding Isaac, his only son, from God:

15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, **16** and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and **have not**

1210 John 3:16.

1211 Hebrews 11:17-19.

1212 Genesis 22:13.

1213 Genesis 22:12.

1214 Genesis 22:2,12,16.

1215 John 1:18; 3:16,18; Hebrews 11:17; 1John 4:9.

withheld your son, your only son— 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. **18** In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”¹²¹⁶

The Lord had proved Abraham's faith. Of course this was no proof to God, but was witness to Abraham. We cannot imagine that God would be ignorant of the truth concerning Abraham, so how then do we understand these words: *“for now I know that you fear God”*? I would suggest that it is the knowledge of temporal time. In other words, it has been established in time at this particular place that Abraham feared God. And so it was a demonstration for all. The last part of verse 12 points us inexorably to God the Father who did not withhold His only Son from such a sacrifice.

On hearing the Angel of the Lord from heaven we find next that *“Abraham lifted his eyes.”* This is the second time we have come across this phrase, (the first was in verse 4). Clearly, as Abraham was ready to plunge in the knife his eyes would have been naturally looking down towards Isaac on the altar. But on hearing the words from heaven he looked up. This is always the effect of a true hearing of God's word! We look upwards to the Lord. Even when the Lord rebukes us and causes us to see our sin and how wicked we truly are, the purpose is to bring our focus towards heaven's perspective, to see ourselves as God sees us. We are to *“seek those things which are above,”* and we must set our minds *“on things above,”* as Paul exhorts.¹²¹⁷ If we focus on the earth and the things of earth we will fall and flounder. Even when things are hard and when things are so difficult that we despair of life, on hearing God speak it causes us to look up and see things from God's viewpoint. Yes our sins are bad, terribly bad. And yes we deserve hell for what we have done and whom we are, but look up and see the Lord who rescues and redeems! Imagine what Abraham felt as he was about to slay Isaac. Yes, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it, Abraham trusted that Isaac would be raised somehow. Nevertheless his heart and mind must have been in utter turmoil, but now the Lord speaks from heaven and Abraham looks upward. Can you imagine the relief and joy?

After Abraham lifted his eyes he also *“looked.”* He did not just gaze heavenwards, but he came to a realization, an understanding. As he was looking he saw behind him *“a ram caught in a thicket by its horns.”*¹²¹⁸ The horns signify strength. This ram was powerless because its horns were trapped in some branches of a plant that were interwoven and intertwined like barbed wire. It is noteworthy that the ram is not caught by its fleece, for then there would have been some blemishes on it, rendering it unfit as a sacrifice. On seeing this Abraham uses the ram for the burnt offering in place of his sin (*“instead of his son”*). Here we see clearly the doctrine of substitution. The ram was offered in the place of Isaac. As a

1216 Genesis 22:15-18.

1217 Colossians 3:1,2.

1218 Genesis 22:13.

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consequence Abraham names the place “Jehovah Jireh,” which means *“the Lord will provide.”* The word rendered as *“provide”* in English comes from the Hebrew verb **רָאָה**, which, (as we have already intimated), basically means “to see.” It is the same word that Abraham used when Isaac asked where the sacrifice was.¹²¹⁹ Thus this mountain of Moriah where the Lord saw so as to provide a ram in place of Isaac, was to be called *“The-Lord-Will-Provide,”* and out of this came a proverb or saying, namely, *“In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”* Later we will find reference to the *“mountain of the Lord,”* or to the *“mountain of God.”*¹²²⁰ This was a different place in Sinai or Horeb. It was where Moses met with God at the burning bush and where he would receive the law. However we also get references to the Lord's mount or mountain with reference to atonement and sacrifice in other Scriptures. In Isaiah we have reference to the *“mountain of the Lord”* where the law was to be taught to all nations, and, simply, *“this mountain”* upon which atonement would be made.¹²²¹ In the Psalms we have mention of the Lord's *“holy hill”* and the *“hill of the Lord.”*¹²²² All through Scripture, then, we have reference to a holy hill or mountain upon which the Messiah would be offered as sacrifice.¹²²³

22:15-19.

After making the substituted sacrifice Abraham receives a blessing from the Lord. The *“Angel of the Lord,”* (by which we are meant to understand the Messiah – the Messenger of God), speaks from heaven for a second time. How gracious is the Lord! Oh that we would heed the Lord as He speaks from heaven through His word and into our hearts by His Holy Spirit!

And so the Lord blesses Abraham. The blessing begins with a curious way of giving Abraham assurance. The Lord opens with these words: *“by Myself I have sworn.”* The writer to the Hebrews elucidates this passage in his comments. He explains:

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.¹²²⁴

Usually people swear by something greater than themselves, but because there was none greater, God swore to Abraham *“by Himself.”* The writer to the Hebrews argues that this brings *“strong consolation”* or great assurance and encouragement.¹²²⁵ Thus the Lord richly encourages Abraham for his obedience to the command of the Lord. It was because Abraham had *“done this thing,”* namely, that he had *“not*

1219 Genesis 22:8.

1220 Numbers 10:33; Exodus 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13.

1221 Isaiah 2:2,3; 30:29 and Isaiah 26:6,19. [See also Micah 4:1,2].

1222 Psalm 2:6; 3:4;15:1; 43:4; 99:9 and Psalm 24:3. [See also Zechariah 8:3].

1223 The English words “hill” and “mountain” are often translations of the same Hebrew word.

1224 Hebrews 6:13-18.

1225 Hebrews 6:17,18.

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withheld” his only son, that the Lord was now blessing Abraham.¹²²⁶ The details of the blessing are given in the next two verses which we have arranged in order below:¹²²⁷

17 **blessing** I will **ble**ss
you,
and **multi**plying I will **multi**ply
your **descendants**
as the stars of the heaven and
as the sand which *is* on the seashore;
and your **descendants** shall possess the gate of their enemies.
18 In your **seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,
because you have obeyed My voice.

The duplication of words here indicates a superlative. Abraham is to be richly and greatly blessed above all, and he is to be multiplied in a miraculous and abundant way. We will find that the increase of the nation from such meagre beginnings with Isaac born to very aged parents is astounding. After 215 years there would be 70 and then another 215 years at the time of the Exodus there would be several million. Such a growth is miraculous in a providential sense. Each generation bore a very large number of children and this pattern continued for all those years they dwelt in Egypt. You get a flavour of this in the opening chapter of Exodus where the new Pharaoh (who did not know Joseph) complains of the growing Hebrew population.¹²²⁸ The details of the blessing seem to be repeating earlier blessings, but also adding to them. In Genesis 12 we are informed that Abraham is to receive the land, and that in him *“all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*¹²²⁹ In Genesis 15 the Lord adds that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars.¹²³⁰ Now here in Genesis 22 the extent of Abraham's descendants is increased for it will be *“as the sand which is on the seashore.”*¹²³¹ It would surely have been evident to Abraham that in terms of number there were a greater number of sand grains on the seashore than stars in the night sky. The blessing goes further with a promise that *“your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”*¹²³² This phrase signifies that the nation that would spring from Isaac would be victorious over the surrounding nations, but not in the sense of might nor power, but through the Lord's wonderful lead. Verse 18 is a restatement of the end part of Genesis 12:3, and it points much further afield, to all who own the name of Christ

1226 Genesis 22:16.

1227 Genesis 22:17,18.

1228 Exodus 1:9,10.

1229 Genesis 12:3.

1230 Genesis 15:5.

1231 Genesis 22:17.

1232 Genesis 22:17.

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Jesus! The mention of “*seed*,” of course points us to *The Seed*, which is Christ Jesus, but it is to be noted that the word “*descendants*” given twice in the NKJV in verse 17 is the same word in Hebrew as this word “*seed*.” This passage ends with Abraham returning to the two young men who were minding the donkey, and then their final return to Beersheba. We mention in concluding that there was both a victory and a harmony amongst them all (Abraham, Isaac and the two lads). We read that “*they rose and went together*” to their homestead. In such a phrase we see not only resurrection language but the fruits of such bringing unity and harmony.

[2] The descendants of Nahor, Abraham's brother. (Genesis 22:20-24).

The last part of Genesis 22 forms an interlude and introduces Abraham's relatives some of whom will feature in Genesis chapter 24. We are informed that Abraham is “*told*” details about his relatives. Presumably, because of the distances involved, information took time to get through. Nahor was Abraham's brother. His other brother, Haran whose son was Lot, died on route out of Mesopotamia.¹²³³ Haran also had two daughters one of which was Milcah whom Nahor married.¹²³⁴ These would be Abraham's nieces as Lot was his nephew. Details of Nahor's family are shown below in figure 24.

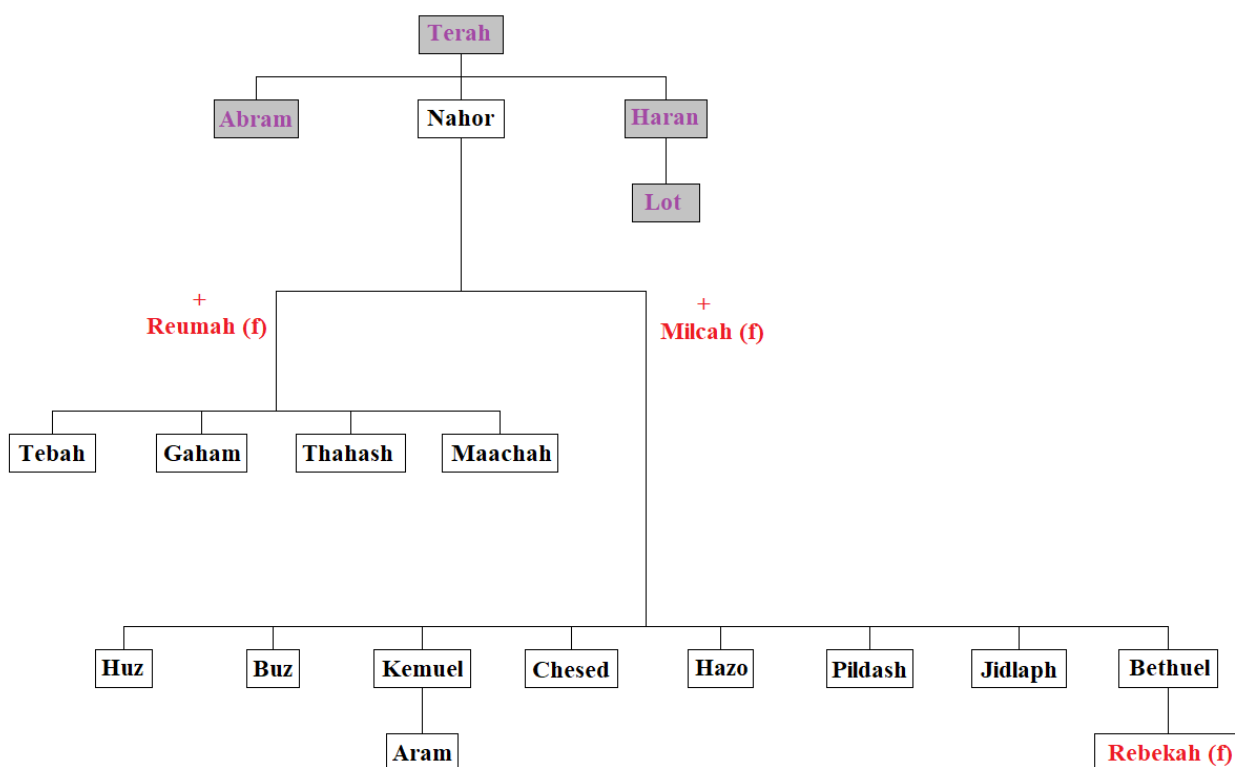


Figure 24: The descendants of Nahor.

1233 Genesis 11:28.

1234 Genesis 11:29. The other daughter was Iscah.

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Now Milcah bore to Nahor eight sons, and we are told of two grand children born to him as well. There was “*Aram*” son of Kemuel and “*Rebekah*” daughter of Bethuel. Nahor also had a “*concubine*” called “*Reumah*” by whom he bore four sons.

Of the descendants of Nahor it is worth noting that the name given as “*Huz*” ought really to be “*Uz*,” and this is how most modern translations render the name. The names “*Aram*,” and “*Huz*” (*Uz*) also occur in the genealogy of Shem. Aram was Shem's last named son and he bore “*Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash*.”¹²³⁵ Obviously these were distant ancestors. The re-use of names is a common feature in many cultures (even in our own). Notable amongst all these names for meaning are the following “*Kemuel*,” “*Bethuel*,” and “*Rebekah*.” The meaning of the name “*Kemuel*” is: “congregation of God” or “raised of God.” The only other name which has God within it is “*Bethuel*” which could either mean “dweller in God” or “separated of God.” Bethuel's daughter was “*Rebekah*” and her name means “a rope with a noose,” which seems to point to the idea of an “ensnarer”! It would appear that she was exceptionally beautiful and captivating. The names of the sons of “*Nahor*” by “*Reumah*” all seem to indicate warrior or warlike attributes with the exception of “*Thahash*” whose name means “badger.”

1235 Genesis 10:23.

Chapter 27.

Sarah dies. (23:1-20).

Analysis.

#23 1 Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah.

2 So Sarah died
 in Kirjath Arba (that *is*, Hebron)
 in the land of Canaan,
and Abraham came
 to mourn for Sarah
 and to weep for her.

3 Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,

4 “I *am* a foreigner and a visitor among you.
 Give me property for a burial place among you,
 that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

5 And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,

6 “Hear us, my lord:
 You *are* a mighty prince among us;
 bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places.
 None of us will withhold from you his burial place,
 that you may bury your dead.”

7 Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

8 And he spoke with them, saying,
 “If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight,
 hear me,
 and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me,
 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah
 which he has,
 which *is* at the end of his field.
 Let him give it to me
 at the full price,
 as property for a burial place among you.”

10 Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth;

and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying,

11 “No, my lord,
 hear me:
 I give you
 the field
 and the cave that *is* in it;
 I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people.
 I give it to you.
 Bury your dead!”

12 Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land;

13 and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying,

 “If you *will* give it,
 please hear me.
 I will give you money for the field;
 take *it* from me and I will bury my dead there.”

14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,

15 “My lord,

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listen to me;
the land *is worth* four hundred shekels of silver.
What *is* that between you and me?
So bury your dead.”

16 And Abraham listened to Ephron;
and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron
which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth,
four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.

17 So the field of Ephron
which *was* in Machpelah,
which *was* before Mamre,
the field
and the cave which *was* in it,
and all the trees that *were* in the field,
which *were* within all the surrounding borders,
were deeded **18** to Abraham as a possession
in the presence of the sons of Heth,
before all who went in at the gate of his city.

19 And after this,
Abraham buried Sarah his wife
in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that *is*, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.
20 So the field and the cave that *is* in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

We come now to another interlude. Perhaps it might have been better to consider Genesis 22:20-24 along with this chapter. We would then have:

[1] The descendants of Nahor introducing Rebekah. (Genesis 22:20-24).

[2] The death of Sarah. (Genesis 23:1,2).

[3] The purchase of a burial site from the sons of Heth. (Genesis 23:3-18).

[4] Sarah is buried in the new burial site. (Genesis 23:19,20).

However the whole of chapter 23 forms a neat unit, and the end of Genesis 22 really sits as a conclusion in anticipation of events in Genesis 24.

23:1,2.

Sarah had Isaac when she was ninety years old, and now at age one hundred and twenty seven she finally comes to the end of her life.¹²³⁶ This means that Isaac was thirty seven years old, and we discover later that he would marry Rebekah some three years in the future.¹²³⁷ The interesting thing about the opening verse is the repetition of the idea of Sarah's life span as shown by the phrase “*these were the years of the life*” coming at the end. It is to be noted that the words “*these were*” are put in italics in the NKJV so are not in the original. In the Hebrew the reference to the life of Sarah comes at the beginning

¹²³⁶ Genesis 17:17. Sarah's dates would then be: 2018 AC to 2155 AC (1941 BC to 1804 BC).

¹²³⁷ Genesis 25:20. Later we learn that Isaac was very close to his mother and Rebekah became a comfort to him over the loss of his mother – Genesis 24:67.

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and end of the sentence:

וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים--שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

and it was the life of Sarah a hundred years and twenty years and seven years the years of the life of Sarah.

Why has the Holy Spirit emphasised this phrase *“the life of Sarah”*? It is noteworthy that Sarah is the only woman whose life and death are mentioned in such detail in Scripture. She is commended twice in the New Testament and once in the book of Isaiah, and so her life is one the Lord wants us to take note of.¹²³⁸

Sarah died in *“Kirjath Arba,”* in the land of Canaan, which we are told is *“Hebron.”* The name *“Kirjath Arba”* means “city of Arba,” and Arba, who was the father of Anak, and who was a noted giant, means “four.”¹²³⁹ Another ancient town was Kirjath Sepher which means “city of books,” and it has been suggested that this region was a centre of learning. The name *“Hebron”* means “confederation” or “association,” and this city was built seven years earlier than *“Zoan”* an ancient city of Egypt.¹²⁴⁰ And so Abraham came to *“mourn”* by beating the breast, and *“weep”* in tears for Sarah.

23:3,4.

Sarah was gone. Now all that was required was to bury her remains. In this next section we are given a glimpse into the ancient customs prevalent in the land of Canaan at this time (early second millenium BC). Abraham was one hundred and forty seven years old, so the date was 2155 AC or 1804 BC.

Abraham *“stood up”* or better “arose” from mourning Sarah and then addressed the *“sons of Heth.”*¹²⁴¹ Heth was Canaan's second son, and grandson to Ham. Abraham, in speaking to the sons of Heth, describes himself as *“a foreigner,”* and as *“a visitor”* amongst them.¹²⁴² Once again we get this notion of sojourning, of being a pilgrim, and of having no permanent place in the world. And yet we see here that Abraham needs to deal with the world in order to bury Sarah. We are to hold the things of this world with loose reins and remember we are on pilgrimage, but this does not prevent us having to deal with everyday things which are governed and organised by the world. In this case Abraham could not carry his dead wife with him wherever he travelled. It was necessary for him to have her buried somewhere and this meant that he had to deal with ordinary people of the world. This dual aspect of life,

1238 Isaiah 51:1,2; Hebrews 11:11; 1Peter 3:6.

1239 Numbers 13:33; Joshua 15:13.

1240 Numbers 13:22.

1241 Genesis 23:3.

1242 Genesis 23:4.

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the impermanence and temporary nature of our journey, and the necessary daily interactions with this world and its affairs, must be held in tension. The only way to negotiate such a tension is to walk with the Lord, keeping in step with His Spirit, and abiding in Christ and His love.

23:5-7.

Having made his request for a gift of property to bury Sarah out of *“sight,”* the sons of Heth respond with respect and honour. Abraham is described as *“lord”* and as *“mighty prince.”*¹²⁴³ The second title could equally be rendered as “Prince of God,” for the Hebrew word used is the name for God (אֱלֹהִים *’ēlōhîm*).¹²⁴⁴ Thus Abraham has a good reputation amongst the people of that land. In consequence the sons of Heth appear completely conciliatory and open towards the stranger and visitor amongst them.¹²⁴⁵

Abraham's response to this open hearted attitude is to stand up (“arise”) and then to bow down (literally) in humility. This is the second time we have the idea of arising (Hebrew: קום *qûm*). Spiritually, then, Abraham has arisen but bows himself down. For us we too must walk in resurrection power and life (we ought to arise), but not in any proud or superior way. Abraham has heard testimony about himself that he is a *“mighty prince”* (or prince of God), and so the temptation to walk in pride must have been there, but he *“bowed himself”* to the people, and thus acted in humility.¹²⁴⁶

23:8-11.

Encouraged by the reception he received, Abraham presents the details of his request. He clearly had done some homework and knew exactly what he required. He asks for a meeting with *“Ephron the son of Zohar”* who owned the *“cave of Machpelah.”*¹²⁴⁷ The name of the cave signifies the idea of “double” suggesting that it had two entrances, or perhaps sported a double cavity, and was sited at the end of Ephron's field. The location of this field was east of Hebron near Mamre. Thus Abraham requests the cave to bury Sarah, and states that he is willing to pay *“the full price.”*¹²⁴⁸

Ephron the Hittite responds to this request *“in the presence of the sons of Heth.”* From the statement following (*“all who entered at the gate of his city”*), it would seem that this is a formal legal meeting, since business and legal matters were dealt with at the city gate.¹²⁴⁹ Ephron's response is curious to modern ears. He appears to be gifting what Abraham requested, for three times we hear the phrase *“I give.”*¹²⁵⁰ Now Abraham has requested of Ephron that he *“give”* him the cave he required, but Ephron

1243 Genesis 23:6.

1244 Genesis 23:6.

1245 Genesis 23:6.

1246 Genesis 23:7.

1247 Genesis 23:8,9.

1248 Genesis 23:9.

1249 Genesis 23:10.

1250 Genesis 23:11.

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responds by saying that *“the field and the cave that is in it”* will be given to Abraham.¹²⁵¹ Note that Ephron is not actually gifting this to Abraham. What we have here is simply the negotiating battle. Abraham wants the cave of Machpelah, but Ephron is not willing to give this alone. He does not want to merely sell to Abraham the cave, but states that if Abraham wants the cave he must also take the field. It is rather like going into a shop to buy an item only to find that you are forced to buy a pack of six! The way in which the negotiation takes place appears very friendly and even generous, but in reality Ephron is a canny real estate dealer. You want my cave? Well you can have it only if you take the field too!

23:12-16.

Once again Abraham *“bowed himself”* before the sons of Heth and so continues to act in humility, and he accepts the deal.¹²⁵² Ephron responds by mentioning the worth of the land. Again it is put in the most open of ways as though he were doing Abraham a favour! He is not going to simply gift the land to Abraham, of course, for he wants the full price, but it is all done with a 'front,' and a 'face' that appears to be gracious and honourable, but which really hides a merchant's zeal. Was the price a fair one? We cannot really say. In one sense the value of something is simply the price you are willing to pay. However we have a few comparative transactions which have a bearing on this incident. Later on Jacob bought a region of land where he had pitched his tent from Shechem's descendants, for *“one hundred pieces of money.”*¹²⁵³ We make the assumption here that this *“money”* was the same as the silver shekels Abraham used. Not knowing the acreage of the land nor its aspect and suitability, it is difficult to simply conclude that Abraham paid four times what he should have and was fleeced here. Much later on we discover that David paid *“fifty shekels of silver”* for the threshing floor which was to be the site of the altar and temple of Jerusalem.¹²⁵⁴ Although it is really very difficult to make comparisons over such distance and time, it would seem at the very least that Ephron got the best possible price for his land. We should note here that Abimelech gave to Abraham *“a thousand pieces of silver”* to vindicate Sarah's honour.¹²⁵⁵ Abraham was thus more than capable of paying such a sum for the field and cave.

And so Abraham pays the requested sum. It is interesting to read how this transaction was made. First Abraham *“weighed out the silver.”*¹²⁵⁶ This shows us that there was a system of weights and measures. These ancient peoples were certainly not backward! This was all done in full view of the *“sons of Heth”* so that it was all above board and completely legitimate. Finally it is to be noted that there was a system of money (*“currency of the merchants”*) rather than a way of bartering.

1251 Genesis 23:10,11.

1252 Genesis 23:12,13.

1253 Genesis 33:19.

1254 2Samuel 24:24.

1255 Genesis 20:16.

1256 Genesis 23:16.

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23:17,18.

Our passage ends with a statement which acts like a deed or contract. We are told precisely who originally owned the land (*“the field of Ephron”*), where it was precisely (*“in Machpelah ... before Mamre”*), what was part of the transaction (*“the field and the cave ... and all the trees ...”*), and to whom the lands and possession were transferred (*“were deeded to Abraham”*). This was all transferred to Abraham before witnesses (*“in the presence of the sons of Heth”*), in a wholly legal manner (*“before all who went in at the gate of the city”*).¹²⁵⁷

23:19,20.

Verses 19 and 20 add little more except by way of emphasis that this land was truly Abraham's possession. And so Abraham purchased a field and a double aspect cave to bury Sarah. The only foothold he now has in the land that the Lord had promised him was for the dead. Abraham had *“property for a burial place.”*¹²⁵⁸ This is surely very significant. The only thing this world is good for is to bury the dead. This earth is not our permanent home. Heaven is. This is why purchasing land and property ought not to be the main aim for life. I do not doubt that in some ways buying a house and land may be more economical and possibly beneficial materially to future children, but the pressure to do so often works against the benefits in many cases. Imagine that the Lord Jesus was just about to return the moment you walked into the bank to negotiate a mortgage or were about to part with all your savings to put down as a deposit for a house. Would you be able to walk away from that to follow the Lord? I am sure that if you truly believe in Christ then nothing would stop you. However if we lay down strong roots in this world we may be tempted to do what Lot's wife did or what the Israelites did in the wilderness when they hankered after Egypt.¹²⁵⁹

1257 Genesis 23:17,18.

1258 Genesis 23:20.

1259 Exodus 16:3; Numbers 11:4-6; Luke 17:32.

Chapter 28.

A wife for Isaac. (24:1-67).

Analysis.

#24 1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age;
and the Lord had **blessed** Abraham in all things.

2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had,
“Please, put your hand under my thigh, **3** and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; **4** but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

5 And the servant said to him,
“Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?”

6 But Abraham said to him,
“Beware that you do not take my son back there. **7** The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying,
‘To your descendants I give this land,’
He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. **8** And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there.”
9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

10 Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, for all his master’s goods *were in* his hand.
And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

11 And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a **well** of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*.

12 Then he said,
“O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. **13**
Behold, *here* I stand by the **well** of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. **14**
Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say,
‘Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,’
and she says,
‘Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink’—
let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac.
And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”

15 And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.

16 Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her.
And she went down to the **well**, filled her pitcher, and came up.

17 And the servant ran to meet her and said,
“Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher.”

18 So she said,
“Drink, my lord.”

Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink.

19 And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said,
“I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.”

20 Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the **well** to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.

21 And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.

22 So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, **23** and said,

“Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father’s house for us to lodge?”

24 So she said to him,

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“I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah’s son, whom she bore to Nahor.”

25 Moreover she said to him,

“We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge.”

26 Then the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord.

27 And he said,

“**Blessed** be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master.

As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren.”

28 So the young woman ran and told her mother’s household these things.

29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well.

30 So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying,

“Thus the man spoke to me,”

that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well.

31 And he said,

“Come in, O **blessed** of the Lord! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels.”

32 Then the man came to the house.

And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

33 Food was set before him to eat, but he said,

“I will not eat until I have told about my errand.”

And he said,

“Speak on.”

34 So he said,

“I *am* Abraham’s servant. **35** The Lord has **blessed** my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. **36** And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. **37** Now my master made me swear, saying,

‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; **38** but you shall go to my father’s house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.’

39 And I said to my master,

‘Perhaps the woman will not follow me.’

40 But he said to me,

‘The Lord, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father’s house. **41** You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give *her* to you, then you will be released from my oath.’

42 “And this day I came to the well and said,

‘O Lord God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, **43** behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw *water*; and I say to her,

“Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink,”

44 and she says to me,

“Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,”—

let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master’s son.’

45 “But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew *water*.

And I said to her,

‘Please let me drink.’

46 And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her *shoulder*; and said,

‘Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.’

So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also.

47 Then I asked her, and said, ‘Whose daughter are you?’

And she said,

‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’

So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists.

48 And I bowed my head and worshipped the Lord, and **blessed** the Lord God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.

49 Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me.

And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”

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50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said,
 “The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good.”
51 Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the Lord has spoken.”
52 And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshipped the Lord, *bowing himself* to the earth.
53 Then the servant brought out jewellery of silver, jewellery of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah.
He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.
54 And he and the men who *were* with him ate and drank and stayed all night.
Then they arose in the morning, and he said,
 “Send me away to my master.”
55 But her brother and her mother said,
 “Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go.”
56 And he said to them,
 “Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.”
57 So they said,
 “We will call the young woman and ask her personally.”
58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her,
 “Will you go with this man?”
And she said,
 “I will go.”
59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men.
60 And they *blessed* Rebekah and said to her:
 “Our sister, *may you become the mother of* thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them.”
61 Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man.
So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

62 Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South.
63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming.
64 Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; 65 for she had said to the servant,
 “Who *is* this man walking in the field to meet us?”
The servant said,
 “*It is* my master.”
So she took a veil and covered herself.
66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.
67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her.
So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s *death*.

This chapter is one of the most beautiful pieces of history in the Bible. It is cast as a series of conversations between the various people involved.

- [1] Abraham commissions his servant to seek a wife for Isaac. (Genesis 24:1-9).
- [2] The servant goes to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor and meets Rebekah. (Genesis 24:10-28).
- [3] The servant meets Rebekah's family. (Genesis 24:29-61).
- [4] Rebekah meets Isaac and they marry. (Genesis 24:62-67).

Although the events form a complete unit we shall consider them under the four sections outlined above.

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[1] Abraham commissions his servant to seek a wife for Isaac. (Genesis 24:1-9).

The promise of a son for Abraham has been fulfilled, but what of this son's future? The provision of a son for Abraham and Sarah was not simply for them, but to enable the greater promise (*“I will make you a great nation and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”*) given to Abraham to be fulfilled.¹²⁶⁰ Thus it was imperative that a bride be found for Isaac. How was this to be achieved?

24:1.

Our text starts by informing us of Abraham's great age, and we recall that Sarah having died aged one hundred and twenty seven years was buried in the cave of Macphelah near Hebron.¹²⁶¹ It also informs us that Abraham had been *“blessed”* by the Lord *“in all things.”* Although we do not read that Abraham enquired of the Lord, the general tenor of what we read throughout this history leads us to the view that Abraham was not acting merely from a human point of view. The Lord had been greatly with Abraham on his journeys and had richly blessed him both materially and by way of revelation and spiritual truths.

24:2.

And thus Abraham takes the initiative, following Sarah's death and burial, to see Isaac provided for. He takes the *“oldest servant”* who was in charge of *“all that he had,”* and requests him to do something which at first sight appears rather odd, namely, to *“put your hand under my thigh.”* It may be that this servant was Eliezer of Damascus, but we are not sure of this, and the name of the servant is not given presumably to draw attention away from him and to the main characters.¹²⁶² The request to place the hand under Abraham's thigh signifies in the first place, the solemnity of the demand. It is akin to the old style of swearing on the Bible to tell the truth. But why this act of placing a hand under the thigh? There are many suggestions but it would appear that Abraham is directing thoughts to the notion of the promised *“Seed,”* the promise of the Messiah who would come through Isaac.¹²⁶³ Abraham received the covenant of circumcision after believing God and this was to indicate the need for purity. The flesh of the foreskin was removed indicating in type the idea that the one to come, the promised seed, would be pure and holy. In effect Abraham was directing his most trusted servant to the promises he had received. This was no regular errand but a monumentally important one. Presumably Abraham was too advanced and old to engage in the journey himself and so in commissioning his servant he enjoins upon this man the great importance of the task he was entrusted with.

1260 Genesis 12:2,3.

1261 Genesis 23:19.

1262 Genesis 15:2.

1263 Genesis 3:15.

24:3,4.

Having secured the servant's rapt attention, and in the process forcing the servant to a low position before him in order to comply with Abraham's request, and further, having directed his thoughts to the promises, Abraham now demands that the servant swear an oath. Abraham refers to the Lord here by a twin designation. He is "*God of heaven,*" and He is also (at the same time) "*God of the earth.*" It might be enough simply to refer to God, or to remember that He rules in heaven, but Abraham directs the servant to consider that God is ruling on *earth*. Despite the outward appearances (even in our day) when it seems that all chaos is let loose, the servant must understand that nothing happens without God's permission. The Lord is indeed "*God of the earth*" and any other pretenders to such a position are false and of no account. This point is significant because we will discover that God's providential ruling is a feature in the account. Even though people do as they wish and act as they intend, they are all under the governance of the "*God of the earth*" who is the Lord and "*God of heaven.*"

Now the particular request made in this most solemn manner is that the servant shall seek out a wife for Isaac not from the Canaanites amongst whom they now dwelt, but from among Abraham's own "*country*" and his own "*family.*" It is worth pausing here a moment to consider the implications of this request. The Canaanites were descendants of Ham and they were certainly not given to following God. Abraham had experience of the Canaanites both in his travels and in his dealings over the burial of Sarah. He knew that amongst these there was unlikely to be any who would seek God and honour His requests and desires. And so to ensure the perpetuity of the promise he decides to seek a wife amongst his relatives. From all of this it would appear that his relatives back in Mesopotamia had some knowledge of the true God. Spiritually we take from this the essential need for a believing man to take a believing woman for a wife. Such teaching is found in the New Testament.¹²⁶⁴ Here the point is to ensure that the line of promise is kept secure, but the point is that where a believing man is joined to an unbelieving woman the result would be conflict and disharmony. A Canaanite woman brought up amongst the nations of this world would find Isaac's dedication to the God of heaven and earth irksome and difficult. If godly marriages struggle because of differences how much more would marriages between the righteous and ungodly?

We need to recall that marriage (always) is a spiritually significant calling. God created man and woman in such a way as to signify that together the two become one and that this is illustrative of Christ's union with His bride, the church.¹²⁶⁵ Thus, as the first detailed record of a marriage, Isaac and Rebekah's story becomes even more significant. The events we are reading of, are real history. They involve the real interactions of real people. But over and above these real events we must recognise the hand of God who moves to perform His will in and amongst the actions and events of men and women. As a consequence

1264 1Corinthians 7:39; 2Corinthians 6:14.

1265 Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31,32.

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of these considerations, we must observe here that the bride of the promised son must also be related to the bride. Obviously all people are related to one another because all stem from Noah and from Adam. But the insistence of Abraham to find a wife amongst his own *“family”* indicates the need for the bride to be part of the promised son's *near* of kin. A believer who is part of the bride of Christ is equally one related to the Son of God. This comes not through physical generation but by adoption.

24:5,6.

The servant next poses an hypothetical question which had some likelihood of happening. What if the woman he selected was unwilling to come back to Canaan? It is interesting to note how the servant speaks here. He suggests that she might *“not be willing to follow me to this land.”*¹²⁶⁶ Such a statement indicates the idea of a call to the proposed woman who must exercise her will. In effect the servant is acting as a representative of Abraham and Isaac, and calling a woman to come to be united to the promised son. In the same way, a believing evangelist is to call people to be united to God! Abraham and Isaac stand typically as Father and Son, and the servant represents all those tasked with acting as ambassadors and evangelists to the world.

And so, given this hypothetical possibility that the woman might not want to follow, the servant asks: *“must I take your son back to the land from which you came?”*¹²⁶⁷ To this request Abraham is emphatic: *“beware that you do not take my son back there.”*¹²⁶⁸ This emphatic statement is later repeated in verse 8. Thus under no circumstances must Isaac be taken back to the land from which Abraham came. Why was this? We will see an answer to this in verse 7, but for now it seems obvious that there could be no turning back for Abraham and his family. There simply was no return to the old ways and life. The chosen woman must be brought to the promised son, and in the same way the church must be brought to the true Son. This signifies the importance of heeding the call from Christ who says *“come unto Me.”*¹²⁶⁹ It is the Father who draws all men to the Son:

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.¹²⁷⁰

24:7-9.

In verses 7 and 8 we have an explicit reason as to why the servant is forbidden from taking Isaac back to Abraham's family and the land which he had left. Abraham refers this time to the *“Lord God of heaven”* because he is speaking of the divine and heavenly revelation that he received whilst in

1266 Genesis 24:5.

1267 Genesis 24:5.

1268 Genesis 24:6.

1269 Matthew 11:28.

1270 John 6:44.

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Mesopotamia.¹²⁷¹ Abraham was extracted both from his *“father's house,”* and from the land of his *“family,”* and God spoke directly to him concerning the land of Canaan, that it would be given to him. What point, therefore, would be served in Isaac returning to Mesopotamia? In these verses the emphasis is upon the promised land rather than upon the seed. Isaac was the promised son, but Canaan was the promised land. This land was to be the place where Israel the nation would find its position in the world and through whom the promised Messiah would eventually come.

Then Abraham tells the servant how things will proceed. The servant will not travel unprepared, because before him will go *“His angel.”*¹²⁷² We are not informed what this heavenly messenger would do, but the consequence of His action would be that the servant would be enabled to *“take a wife”* for Abraham's son. What a great comfort! It is the same with us. We are to call men, women and children (the bride of Christ) out of this world to be united with the promised Son, but we do not do this unprepared. God's *“angel”* has gone before and has prepared the way!

Verse 8 ends Abraham's instructions to the servant with an escape clause. Although God is sovereign and knows the beginning from the end, from the human perspective it may still be the case that the woman selected might refuse. In such a case then the servant would be released from his oath. Abraham ends by re-stating the command not to take Isaac back to the land from which he came, and then in verse 9 we find the servant carrying out the action of taking the oath.

[2] The servant goes to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor and meets Rebekah. (Genesis 24:10-28).

24:10-11.

The servant, being in charge of the household, organises his journey. It would seem that no expense was to be spared. Ten camels are readied to carry some of the *“master's goods”* to act as gifts for the future bride and her family.¹²⁷³ From the midst of Canaan near Mamre and Hebron, the servant sets out to Mesopotamia and the city of Nahor, (i.e. Haran), in the north of Mesopotamia. This journey would have taken something like two to three weeks to complete as it covered somewhere around 500 miles.

On arriving at the city of Haran, the servant stops and rests his camels by a well of water outside the city. It was evening time which was the time that the women went to gather water. Given the description here it is not likely that Haran would be a very large city. Why did the women gather water at evening? Presumably this was the coolest time of the day, and the point at which water was needed for food preparation and other requirements for the coming day. Spiritually speaking, however, the evening

1271 Genesis 12:1f; Acts 7:2,3.

1272 Genesis 24:7.

1273 Genesis 24:10.

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is the start of a new day, for Genesis 1 teaches us that each day started with the evening.¹²⁷⁴ Thus the women would draw water from the well at the very beginning of the Jewish day. Given that women here are typical of the church, we are thus encouraged to start every day with drawing our necessary water, the rain and dew-drops from heaven.

24:12-14.

The servant having stopped and rested his camels, then moves to prayer. It is interesting to find here that the servant prays out of his love and concern for his master. This prayer is a personal request for *“success,”* but it is also one which comes from agreement with his master. It would be false to think of this simply as a prayer of a servant who prays on behalf of his master, but who has no personal interest in prayer. The servant is praying *with* his master in view, and not simply in place of his master. He addresses God by the title *“Lord God”* and then adds *“of my master Abraham,”* but this does not indicate that he had no interest in God himself. It shows rather a love for his master and a personal trust in God which becomes more evident as the story proceeds.

The servant's prayer is truly a prayer of faith. Some would argue that we ought not to pray in this way because it seems to be demanding of God and laying down a series of events to which God must conform to show kindness and success to the mission. I do not think this is fair. Let us examine this prayer in a little more detail. First, as we have noted, the servant remembers and recalls to whom he is addressing himself. He makes request to none other than *“the Lord God”* indicating some knowledge of whom this great God is. This is important. We must always start with God and reflect on His character and beauty, otherwise we will make demands that are unfitting. By focusing our thoughts upon the Lord and His being we will be moved to modify those requests which are not really worthy of being asked. Second he is making request in a state of need (*“please give me success this day”*). He shows his reliance on the God of Abraham his master, and does not depend on his own ingenuity and strength. Remember that the servant was steward over Abraham's extensive household, had organised ten camels with goods, and had travelled for some time through difficult terrain and (possibly) danger. The servant was a capable and enterprising man, but when he arrives at Haran he does not continue in his own strength, but calls for help and aid to the God of his master. There is thus an element of humility here. Third he is not praying for himself so much as his master (*“show kindness to my master Abraham”*). From what transpires we must observe that God is glorified and praised.¹²⁷⁵ The servant's name is not even recorded and there is no mention of reward or blessing for the servant, although it is reasonable to assume that Abraham held him in great regard and may have blessed him on the conclusion of this matter. Fourth there is the matter of reality and the circumstances within which the servant prays (*“behold here I stand by the well of*

1274 The repeated phrase in Genesis 1 is *“and there was evening and morning, day ...”*

1275 See Genesis 24:27,48.

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water ...”). The servant takes note of the real life situation as he could observe it, and makes his request within that compass. He might have asked for a wonder or miracle in creation such as a ray of light pointing to the girl or for her to be transported to him with glowing radiance! Such requests sound ridiculous (unless revealed by the Spirit), but he does none of this. He does not demand of God a sign but seeks to be guided within the normal operation of God's providence. Fifth he makes a specific request and this by means of what he says and what the girl to whom he speaks will respond. Is this demanding of God? Well in some sense it is and that is not a bad thing I believe. How else would he know which of the girls he ought to approach? Perhaps the reader may be thinking that he ought to use his intelligence and speak to the various women approaching to see of which family they were and then to enquire within the family and make a selection given various rational constraints. All of this sounds rational and organised but therein lies the great problem. At the end of such an investigation the servant would not know that the choice made was in accord with God! Outwardly it might be, but that would depend upon the criteria the servant selected. Can he be sure that his process of choosing was godly? I think that many in the church today fall into this grave mistake of self-reliance. We think we are so godly and able! We believe in sanctified common sense. There is no reason to expect some divine providential work, many believe, because God has renewed us and given us His word so we ought to be able to work things out. Such an attitude is very dangerous. I do not mean at all that we should not consider things wisely from our knowledge of God and His word. Of course we should! However in the end we need the Lord's will and decision. Isn't this the reason for prayer? Oh Lord please guide our hands as we embark on this journey or engage in this project! We are not sure how to proceed. We take stock of the situation. We use godly wisdom and our understanding of God's word. But then we need the Lord's hand to energise and direct us. And so the servant was moved to stipulate both his words and the response of the girl that God would choose.

The servant requests of the Lord God *“let it be”* by which words he is asking that what he is about to outline may in fact come to pass. Thus the servant is asking of God, 'may what I say come to pass, and by this I shall understand that you have given me success in my master's mission.' The words the servant chooses are wise. He will make of the young woman one request: that she would allow the servant to drink from the water she had just drawn (*“please let down your pitcher that I may drink”*). What types of response might be expected? There could be a flat refusal or an ignoring of such a request. There might be a compliance but with reluctance. Surely this man could draw for himself? There might be an affable acceptance of the request but no more. But the servant is looking (from God's providential hand) for that young woman not merely to agree to his request for water, but to go much further. He is seeking a young woman who would go the extra mile. Seeing that the servant was thirsty she would comply with his request and then recognise that his camels also needed watering and so willingly draw for them also. This

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is why he stipulates that the woman whom God would choose would say *“drink and I will also give your camels a drink.”* Surely such a young woman would be a choice catch! Not merely willing to help a person in need when asked, but to bless further on top. Such generosity and magnanimity would be a good choice for his master's son. In this matter the servant was indeed wise and this will be shown in what comes next.

24:15-17.

It would appear from the way these verses are written that no women had yet arrived at the well. In verse 13 the servant observed that *“the daughters of the men of the city are coming out.”* Perhaps he could see them leaving the city, or maybe he just knew that they would be coming as this was the normal time to draw water. The servant was praying to the Lord God, and before he had time to conclude his words, suddenly Rebekah arrives at the well. Verse 15 gives us the family detail of whom this young woman was. At the end of Genesis 22 we are informed of Abraham's brother's family (Nahor), amongst whom we read that *“Bethuel begot Rebekah.”*¹²⁷⁶ Thus the reader is made instantly aware that this woman is one of Abraham's close relatives. At this point the servant is unaware of whom the woman is but we are informed so that we can instantly recognise the wonderful willingness of God in answering the servant's prayer. Before he had finished his request the Lord gave His answer, here was the woman He had chosen!

We gain further information about Rebekah in verse 16. We discover that she was of extraordinary beauty (*“very beautiful to behold”*) and that she was a *“virgin”* which fact is reinforced further by the statement that *“no man had known her.”* Again the servant was unaware of these details at this point in time, but we are made aware to reinforce the fact that this young woman was the one whom God had surely chosen for Isaac.

Rebekah's name means “tied up,” “secured,” or “a rope with a noose.” We might be tempted to suggest that she was someone who tied up young men in knots because of her beauty, or that she had to be tied up to ensure her safety! However, spiritually Rebekah represents the church whilst Isaac, the promised Son typifies Christ. Thus her name signifies that she would be tied up and secured to Isaac. In other words the church is secured to Christ!

And so as he was completing his prayer and sees Rebekah we discover an earnestness in his approach for he *“ran to meet her.”*¹²⁷⁷ This urgency as evidenced by the idea of **running** is found elsewhere in this account.¹²⁷⁸ It signals the intent and attitude to get things moving. Urgency, and earnestness are such qualities we need desperately in our day. We are good at activity and business but not in this urgency and earnestness. Urgency and earnestness are qualities born from deep love and conviction

1276 Genesis 22:23.

1277 Genesis 24:17.

1278 Genesis 24:20,28,29.

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for the one whose business we are engaged in, (i.e. God). Consider, for example, Isaiah's readiness in responding to the Lord's question: *Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?* Isaiah responds immediately: *"Then I said, 'here am I! Send me.'"*¹²⁷⁹ Activity and business are merely the outward show and semblance of life, not the life itself. Earnest and urgency stem from the source of life. God has spoken can we not, with urgency, do as He asks because we love Him? And so as he finishes his prayer he puts into action at once the plan and asks the young girl for a drink (*"please let me drink a little water from your pitcher"*).

24:18-20.

Rebekah responds with grace, as shown by the fact that she refers to the servant as *"my lord."* Her action indicates some enthusiasm as she *"quickly let her pitcher down"* in order for the servant to drink. And then when the servant had taken his fill we find the young woman speak not just the words that the servant hoped, but words which indicate great zeal and vigour. It is worthwhile pausing here to look at the difference between what the servant prayed and the woman spoke:

The servant's prayer:

"Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink."¹²⁸⁰

Rebekah's speech:

"Drink, my lord. ... I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking."¹²⁸¹

Rebekah's response was gracious and kind. She did not balk at the request but rather gave with magnanimity and with enthusiasm, for note how she applied herself to the task. We read that *"she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough"* and then she *"ran back to the well to draw water."*¹²⁸² It would seem that the servant took as much as he needed to quench his thirst, and what remained was tipped into the trough and then Rebekah runs to draw more for the camels.

24:21-25.

At this point in the story we might have expected the servant to leap for joy and expound that he had just prayed to God the very sentiments expressed by the young girl. What we find instead is quiet wisdom. Instead of jumping to the conclusion that this woman was indeed the one he was seeking,

1279 Isaiah 6:8.

1280 Genesis 24:14.

1281 Genesis 24:18,19.

1282 Genesis 24:18,20.

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although he would be right in making this assumption, we find him wanting to see if the Lord had indeed prospered his journey or whether this was mere coincidence. Perhaps all the girls of this region were hospitable, friendly, magnanimous and kind? Thus the servant keeps his peace and *“remained silent”* waiting for events to unfold.¹²⁸³ This is ever the case where the Lord operates. There is this immediate answer to prayer (sometimes before even the prayer is finished) and then there are further events which build and confirm the answer. How gracious is God!

When the camels were fully watered, the girl having (presumably) been engaged wholeheartedly in the task of fetching water for the trough, the servant takes a ring for the nose and two bracelets. These adornments were all of gold. The nose ring would have only weighed about 5 or 6 grams, whilst the bracelets would have weighed around 114 grams (about a quarter of a pound).¹²⁸⁴ These pieces of jewellery were thus of significant substance and weight. The nose-ring was often worn by women who were to be betrothed to some man.

The servant then asks after her family, *“whose daughter are you?”*¹²⁸⁵ And he also asks whether he may lodge with them. Rebekah's informs the servant whom her father and mother were, and this is a wonderful confirmation of the providential leading of the Lord. The reader is already aware of whom this girl is from verse 15, but it is only after the servant has given the young girl a nose ring and bracelets does he discover that his mission has been successful.¹²⁸⁶ She adds that her family house is well equipped to care for the servant and his camels.¹²⁸⁷

24:26-28.

The servant's quiet waiting whilst the young girl watered the camels has now been rewarded with the discovery of her lineage. Now that the servant has had an answer to his prayer, and has discovered that the young woman was also a relative of his master, he worships the Lord.¹²⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that he worships physically (by bowing his head) as well as verbally (by uttering words of praise). Whilst we must not simply adopt forms of worship, (kneeling, standing, etc.), as a matter of course, it is surely important that our outward physical being reflect our inner conviction? Surely as a man prays to the Lord he would adopt some attitude of body which would reflect his trust? I dare not stipulate the forms here. One man may stand and open his arms wide in an attitude of submission to the Lord as he prays. Another may prostrate himself by lying on the ground. Still another may simply bow his head in an attitude of humble meekness. None of these forms are enjoined upon any. But if a man (or woman) come into the

1283 Genesis 24:21.

1284 Apparently the average plain wedding band would weigh between 3.5 and 5.3g (depending on size of ring and finger).
<https://www.afashionblog.com/average-weight-of-gold-wedding-band/>

1285 Genesis 24:23.

1286 Genesis 24:24.

1287 Genesis 24:25.

1288 Genesis 24:26.

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presence of God in a presumptuous or familiar way, then the outward physical form may indicate such lack of respect too. Of course a man may adopt any form of physical expression and still have a cold or hard heart. Nevertheless when a person truly worships the Lord they cannot but do it with all of their being, physical and spiritual.

The substance of the servant's praise is given in verse 26. We have again the title of the Lord (*“the Lord God of my master Abraham”*) indicating both the servant's knowledge of God (He is the *“Lord God”*) and his place in the mission he was sent upon (*“of my master Abraham”*). Then next we have some notable doctrine with respect to this wonderful being of God. The servant exclaims that God had *“not forsaken His mercy and His truth”* concerning Abraham.¹²⁸⁹ This was truth because Isaac was the son of God's promise. The Lord had said to Abraham that the future blessing of the world as originally promised to Adam and Eve following their rebellion, would come through Abraham. It was mercy because nothing that came to pass in Abraham's life (especially concerning Isaac) was earned. It was all a matter of the mercy of God. And then we discover the personal angle of the servant. Up to this point the servant is on Abraham's mission which is under God's guide and governance. Now we find the testimony of the servant. First the servant states that he had been *“on the way.”*¹²⁹⁰ This is no mere filling nor padding. It is essential. Earlier the Lord had commended Abraham and his teaching of his family and brethren in the following way:

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.¹²⁹¹

It was not just his children that he taught the *“way of the Lord,”* but his household too. Thus the servant gives testimony that he too had been *“on the way.”* He was not just referring to the journey that Abraham had commanded him, but on his whole walk of life. The servant was *“on the way”* of the Lord. This expression is repeated three more times in this account.¹²⁹² And so being on this journey under the hand of God, the servant continues by adding that *“the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.”*¹²⁹³ This whole affair was completely under the hand and guide of the Lord God, including the servant's prayer request. How wonderful it is to note that God is fully in command and that His plans encompass the very prayers of His saints! How this energises us to pray and to pray according to the Lord's plans! The servant was on a mission of God which Abraham had entrusted him to. He went about this task with eagerness and in faith seeking the Lord, and his dependence upon the Lord's leading was blessed. If we are truly

1289 Genesis 24:27.

1290 Genesis 24:27.

1291 Genesis 18:19.

1292 Genesis 24:42,48,62.

1293 Genesis 24:27.

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engaged in God's mission do you not think that our prayers too will be blessed of God?

In consequence of this revelation, the young woman (Rebekah), runs straight to her mother to inform her of the events that had transpired.¹²⁹⁴ But let us now consider these events from Rebekah's perspective. She was a woman of Abraham's relatives who had remained in Haran. She was clearly a godly and gracious woman and was simply about her duties gathering water for the family. She had no thought whatsoever of God's promise to Abraham – of this she was totally unaware – although it is unlikely she would not have known of Abraham.¹²⁹⁵ Her response was personal, borne out of her love and upbringing, and yet it was overseen by the Lord who was answering the servant's request. Now she discovers that the servant was on a mission of God to come and meet with Abraham's relatives. No mention has yet been made of Isaac, and perhaps the various pieces of jewellery were the only indication that the servant was sent to acquire a virgin wife for a distant relative, but none of this alarms her or causes her grief. Her return to the house appears to be with excitement and expectation. But the servant is left with his camels outside the city by the well. This is curious. She had told the servant that there was room for him and his camels to stay with them, but she runs home leaving the servant behind! Perhaps it is because she must get permission from her parents and those in authority? In any case it is very interesting to note some parallels with our Lord and Saviour's encounter with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. The woman was of a different character and history but she too runs with excitement to her city to spread the great good news of the Messiah.¹²⁹⁶ It seems to me that Rebekah is caught up with excitement about what the Lord has done. We note in passing that she went to her mother to speak of these things and later that her brother seems to take the lead. Bethuel does not appear until later in the events.¹²⁹⁷

[3] The servant meets Rebekah's family. (Genesis 24:29-61).

24:29-32.

The servant is resting with his watered camels at the well outside the city. Rebekah has returned to tell her mother all that happened and now we find that Rebekah's brother Laban makes his way quickly to meet with the servant. But this only takes place after Laban heard all that Rebekah had to say. Laban saw the jewellery that the servant had given to Rebekah, and he heard the whole tale of what had taken place from her lips, and then he ran out to meet with the servant.

Laban tells the servant to come to his house and refers to him as *“O blessed of the Lord”* which

1294 Genesis 24:28.

1295 The family would surely have spoken of their relatives who had gone away?

1296 John 4:28f.

1297 Genesis 24:50.

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clearly indicates a reliance and trust on God.¹²⁹⁸ Apparently Laban had organised things to receive the servant and the camels, but the way in which he addresses the servant is surely very significant? It is inviting, hospitable and eager. I am drawn to consider how we ought to welcome the Lord. The apostle John speaks of those who come to be in God's family as those who *“received Him.”*¹²⁹⁹ We cannot clean ourselves up and make ourselves righteous, but we can with open arms welcome the Saviour into our lives!

And so the servant comes to Bethuel's house where Rebekah and Laban are the main characters.¹³⁰⁰ At this point we discover that there were other men with the servant. This would be natural although we have not heard of such until now. They are not mentioned (presumably) so that we do not get deflected from the main point(s) of the events that unfold.

24:33-36.

As was the custom of those times and places the servant and his men are made welcome and offered food, but the servant is anxious to relate what has happened before eating (*“I will not eat until I have told about my errand”*).¹³⁰¹ He may well have been hungry, after all it was in the evening and he had travelled for some time, but he must tell them the whole story from the beginning. Here we see a principle similar to that which can be found in the patriarch Job:

I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary *food*.¹³⁰²

The servant was on God's mission (his *“errand”*) as instructed by his master Abraham. He must tell the story to get the matter settled, never mind the fact that he was hungry. Job desired God's word and commands more than his required (physical) food. Are we of the same stamp and character? If not let us plead with the Lord that we put Him first in everything always.

And so he is given the floor to relate the matter as it has transpired.¹³⁰³ The servant begins by relating his position and status. We do not know his name (it may be Eliezer of Damascus but it may not be) because that is beside the point. He is *“Abraham's servant.”* He is on a mission for Abraham as directed by God. We learn here that our interest in the gospel is to make Christ known and care little for our recognition. The Lord knows our name! Then he relates the details of Abraham's status. He is not merely a wealthy man, but one whom the *“Lord has blessed,”* and has done so *“greatly,”* that is beyond

1298 Genesis 24:31.

1299 John 1:12.

1300 Genesis 24:32.

1301 Genesis 24:33.

1302 Job 23:12.

1303 Genesis 24:33.

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what might be expected, so that Abraham has become “*great.*” How remarkable! The Lord blesses greatly and this results in the one blessed becoming “*great.*”¹³⁰⁴ We may take this in the following way. The Lord blesses His saints with grace, mercy, forgiveness of sins, truth and all spiritual blessings, and they become all that they ought to be and in the end will be like Christ!¹³⁰⁵ The list of goods and possessions comes in four couplets:

flocks and herds
silver and gold
male and female servants
camels and donkeys

The choice of four indicates comprehensiveness. Just as there are four corners of the world to indicate from all points of the compass and so from the entire globe, so we have all possible blessings indicated. Each part of each couplet signifies the extremity. For example, there are male and there are female servants. These two express the entire range of employ and useful work that may be engaged in. Then also we have silver and gold to represent the two most important precious metals each of which has particular uses. In other words, these possessions are meant to indicate the breadth, the bounty, the abundance, and the greatness of God's blessing to Abraham.

Then we discover the kernel of the matter. Abraham was wealthy and greatly blessed but there is no mention yet of a family. He may have many servants (employees) but he has no son. Then the servant relates the detail of how Abraham and Sarah acquired their only son.¹³⁰⁶ This son was not born until Sarah was advanced in age. This one has received the blessing of his father and will inherit the family estate. Such was the background and introduction to the events that we have recounted here.

24:37-40.

Next the servant relates the conversation he had with Abraham. We have had the introduction informing Rebekah and Laban of their distant relatives, but now we get to the heart of what has transpired in this story. Obviously there is much repetition here but it is necessary because Rebekah and Laban knew nothing of the servant's quest.

Thus first the servant relates Abraham's request for an oath to be taken which he retells in these words:

1304 Genesis 24:35.

1305 Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:3; 2Peter 1:4; 1John 3:2.

1306 Genesis 24:36.

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37 ... You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; **38** but you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.¹³⁰⁷

Compare this with the request made by Abraham before the journey:

3 ... you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; **4** but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.¹³⁰⁸

The two are very nearly the same and certainly convey exactly the same message. Next he recalls the objection that occurred to him that the chosen woman might not be willing:

Perhaps the woman will not follow me.¹³⁰⁹

Compare this with the conversation at the start where the servant asked:

Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?¹³¹⁰

The servant thus omits to mention the idea of Isaac coming on the journey and does not recount to Rebekah and Laban Abraham's repeated insistence that under no circumstances should Isaac go back to the land of Mesopotamia.¹³¹¹ Then the servant relates the words of faith and encouragement that Abraham offered to the servant:

40 ... The Lord, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father's house. **41** You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give her to you, then you will be released from my oath.¹³¹²

This statement is to be compared with the original conversation prior to the journey:

7 The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. **8** And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath;

1307 Genesis 24:37,38.

1308 Genesis 24:3,4.

1309 Genesis 24:39.

1310 Genesis 24:5.

1311 Genesis 24:6.

1312 Genesis 24:40,41.

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only do not take my son back there.¹³¹³

Thus the servant summarises Abraham's original words concerning his journey by stating simply: *“the Lord before whom I walk,”* which phrase reminds us of Enoch and Noah.¹³¹⁴ It is a very good summary phrase we need to bear in mind. To whom do you and I walk before in this world? What is it we think of when we take action or make choices? Whom is overseeing us? We ought to set the Lord before us always, but especially when we make any decisions. The servant only relates the detail in so far as it is relevant to the situation. However the details of this walk which Abraham related to the servant before he left bear consideration. It was God who took the initiative in Abraham's life (*“who took me from my father's house”*) and it was God's word and His promise that formed the basis of all that Abraham was to do (*“who spoke to me and swore to me”*).¹³¹⁵ There is more to walking with the Lord, but these two things are essential. First there is the knowledge that the Lord alone calls us and enables us to come into fellowship with Him. We need to be reborn and just as we did not create ourselves physically we understand that, being dead in trespasses and sins, we cannot cause ourselves to be reborn too. Then second there is an utter trust and reliance on the promises of God and all that He has said in His word. Walking with the Lord can only be engaged in by those who are humble and have given up self-reliance, who love God's mercy and are eager to do what is right.¹³¹⁶

24:42-49.

Having outlined the mission as stipulated by Abraham under God, the servant now comes to the events of the present day when he met with Rebekah. Again there is repetition because although Rebekah was party to the events she was not aware of the details from the perspective of the servant nor of his prayer to God.

First he recounts his arrival at the well and his prayer to God:

42 “And this day I came to the well and said, ‘O Lord God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, 43 behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw water; and I say to her, “Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink,” 44 and she says to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,”— let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master’s son.’”¹³¹⁷

1313 Genesis 24:7,8.

1314 Genesis 24:40.

1315 Genesis 24:7.

1316 Micah 6:8.

1317 Genesis 24:42-44.

The original prayer is recorded thus:

12 Then he said, “O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 Behold, *here I stand by the well of water*, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out *to draw water*. 14 Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink’—*let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”¹³¹⁸

The essence is identical even though the words vary. In the retelling of the events, Isaac's name is not mentioned, he is referred to merely as “*my master's son*.”¹³¹⁹

The servant then recounts the fact that before he had even concluded his request of God, Rebekah was on her way. In both accounts we learn that she had the “*pitcher on her shoulder*.”¹³²⁰ Then the servant recalls that Rebekah acceded to his request for a drink and the servant states that she “*made haste*” in doing so, and he goes on to say that she offered to water the camels as well.¹³²¹ The servant omits Rebekah's deference in calling him “*lord*” perhaps because he was unused to such an appellation.¹³²² Next he recounts his request for her family status (“*whose daughter are you?*”), and she yields the information.¹³²³ In the original event we find that the servant waited quietly as she watered the camels and then gathered the nose ring and bracelets before asking about her family circumstances. And in the original event he also asked about accommodation.¹³²⁴ In his retelling of the events we next discover that he “*put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists*,” but no mention is made of this in the event as it actually happened.¹³²⁵ The servant ends his retelling of the story by noting that he worshipped the Lord.¹³²⁶ In the actual event he mentions how the Lord had lead him, and that God had “*not forsaken His mercy and His truth*” towards Abraham, but in recounting the event he simply states that the Lord had lead him “*in the way of truth*” to gain a wife for his master's son.¹³²⁷

After retelling the events the servant ends by asking for their decision. What will they do? Are they going to “*deal kindly and truly*” with Abraham and his servant, or are they going to deny them this request for Rebekah as wife to Isaac?¹³²⁸ The ball is now firmly in their court.

1318 Genesis 24:12-14.

1319 Genesis 24:44.

1320 Genesis 24:15,45.

1321 Genesis 24:46.

1322 Genesis 24:18,46.

1323 Genesis 24:47.

1324 Genesis 24:21-23.

1325 Genesis 24:47.

1326 Genesis 24:48.

1327 Genesis 24:26,27,48

1328 Genesis 24:49.

24:50-53.

On hearing this grand story Laban, Rebekah's brother, and Bethuel, her father, give their answer. It is noteworthy that Bethuel is put second. This may indicate that Laban has assumed authority in the family. Perhaps Bethuel was advanced in age? Their response takes all that has happened as coming *“from the Lord.”*¹³²⁹ Consequently they state that there was nothing to be added and that Rebekah was to be Isaac's wife *“as the Lord”* had spoken.¹³³⁰ On hearing this news the servant again worships the Lord and bowed himself to the ground.¹³³¹

Now in all of these events to this point it appears that the main characters are godly persons. However when it comes to worship it is noteworthy that the only person who offers such is the servant.¹³³² Perhaps the family of Bethuel were *God-fearing* rather than true servants of God? Perhaps they knew of God and were keen to acknowledge God in many ways but they were not truly called of God, or, as we would say from a New Testament perspective, they were not born again. As an act of gratitude the servant brings out some of Abraham's treasures and dispenses them to the family. First he gives various jewellery and clothing to Rebekah, and then he gives *“precious things”* to Laban and the mother.¹³³³ Blessings always follow true worship and reverence for the Lord.

24:54-61.

At this point after retelling the story the servant and his fellow travellers are free to eat and rest. The task has been done and so they arise the next morning and request leave of the family. The servant knew that he was on an errand for his master Abraham, and so he does not simply take his leave but says: *“send me away to my master.”*¹³³⁴ What comes next is rather puzzling and unexpected. Earlier Laban and Bethuel had said that they could not argue against what had transpired because it was from the hand of God but now they want to keep hold of Rebekah for *“at least ten”* days.¹³³⁵ Why so? What was their motive? Was it that they would miss her and want time to say goodbye? Perhaps this is the most reasonable suggestion. Given that it took the servant two or three weeks to get there a delay of ten days may not have been unanticipated by Abraham. But the servant is not to be swayed. He had shown deference by requesting leave, but on hearing this suggestion he is unmoved in his determination to see this task to its conclusion. His statement of reply comes in two parts. In the first he makes an emphatic plea that they do not delay his going (*“do not hinder me”*) and gives as his reason that the Lord was in all

1329 Genesis 24:50.

1330 Genesis 24:51.

1331 Genesis 24:52.

1332 Genesis 24:26,48,52.

1333 Genesis 24:53.

1334 Genesis 24:54.

1335 Genesis 24:55.

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the events that transpired (*“since the Lord has prospered my way”*).¹³³⁶ What good can come from delaying? This is the Lord's work and task so we had better not delay but rather be diligent and eager to do what is best, what God demands. This is a great principle to have. Where there is the task of the Lord before us we must endeavour to allow nothing to impede our work. This is not an excuse for selfishness or lack of compassion. Bethuel and his family were not remiss in requesting a delay. However they had had the blessing of Rebekah's presence for all of her young life to this point, and now the Lord (effectively) had sent request for her presence to be Isaac's bride. If God had so requested then who was to question it? The servant thus appeals to the highest argument, the fact that God had *“prospered”* him to show that there must be no delay.¹³³⁷

But the second part of his response to their delaying tactics was to appeal to the demands of his master (*“send me away so that I may go to my master ”*).¹³³⁸ He was not in a position to negotiate with the family. Abraham, his master, had sent him on the task. He was careful to be sure that he complied with Abraham's wishes and had even got clarity on the issue he foresaw concerning whether the woman or the family refused the request to allow their virgin to return with him. Such a delay was not in the detail of what Abraham had sent him to do. He was a servant and he knew his position. Abraham wanted a bride for Isaac, and the servant had seen the Lord's hand in his way, and now there ought to be no delay, otherwise Abraham might require an account. Now these two statements with their attendant reasoning are placed with the greater argument coming first, but the lesser is by no means to be ignored. The servant essentially demonstrates his faith here and his respect (if not love) for his master. We must not delay because this is all under the hand and providence of God, and we must not delay because my master (to whom I owe everything) is waiting to see the outcome of this journey.

And so Laban and Rebekah's mother (whom it would seem were behind the request for a delay) then suggest that they ask Rebekah for her view.¹³³⁹ There is no negotiating here. It is not that this suggestion is put to the servant as a possible conciliation. Rather they state what they intended to do (*“we will call ...”*).¹³⁴⁰ The servant would, of course, be happy to accede to this turn of events because if the young woman refused to go then he would be freed from his obligation, even though he would be saddened by such an outcome. However, if it was the case that Laban and Rebekah's mother could not bear for her to go away immediately they probably hoped to apply a little bit of emotional blackmail. Thus they ask Rebekah if she was willing to go with the servant to which she replies unhesitatingly in the affirmative.¹³⁴¹

1336 Genesis 24:56.

1337 Genesis 24:56.

1338 Genesis 24:56.

1339 Genesis 24:57.

1340 Genesis 24:57.

1341 Genesis 24:58.

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There was now no impediment to the return journey. The servant's request to take leave was granted but only by means of the servant's appeal to the work of God in providence and the willingness of the young girl to leave her family. And so the family accept the inevitable and send Rebekah away with her *“nurse”* (presumably a helper or maid) together with Abraham's servant and the men who accompanied him.¹³⁴² The sending of Rebekah was attended with a blessing.¹³⁴³ Their hope was that Rebekah would have a very large number of descendants and that these would be rulers over any enemies they may have. This blessing coincides with the mission of God in some ways. For example, the descendants of Abraham, and therefore Isaac, would be a great multitude.¹³⁴⁴ The statement made by Rebekah's family may be taken in the sense of a singular descendant (*“seed”*) and so there may be an acceptance of the promised Messiah here. The blessing extends to the rule over any enemies that she may have. Spiritually we are reminded of the Messiah's victory over the enemy of souls, Satan the accuser. This statement is almost identical to that found in Genesis 22:17 where the Lord blessed Abraham for his obedience in the matter of offering up his only son, Isaac:

15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, **16** and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— **17** blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”¹³⁴⁵

Following on from this blessing Rebekah departs. She takes with her some *“maids,”* indicating more than simply her *“nurse,”* and the text tells us that they together *“arose.”*¹³⁴⁶ This is the language of resurrection. The whole retinue set off following the servant who *“took Rebekah and departed.”*¹³⁴⁷

[4] Rebekah meets Isaac and they marry. (Genesis 24:62-67).

We come now to the final consummation of this task given to the servant by Abraham, the meeting of Rebekah with Isaac and their union.

24:62,63.

Back in Canaan we find Isaac coming from nearby *“Beer Lahai Roi,”* the site where Hagar met with God, and the name of which we recall means: “well of the living one who sees me” or “well of the life of vision.” From this simple association we may infer that Isaac was most likely in communion with

¹³⁴² Genesis 24:59.

¹³⁴³ Genesis 24:60.

¹³⁴⁴ Genesis 15:15; 22:17; 26:4.

¹³⁴⁵ Genesis 22:15-17.

¹³⁴⁶ Genesis 24:61.

¹³⁴⁷ Genesis 26:61.

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the Lord. This assumption is reinforced by verse 63 where we discover that *“Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening.”* Clearly we have in Isaac a man who has sought the Lord in prayer and meditation. As he was in the field to meditate *“he lifted his eyes and looked”* and he caught sight of the camel train coming in the distance. The raising of the eyes signifies not just looking to see who was coming in the distance (the camels) but looking heavenwards.

24:64,65.

To mirror the action of Isaac, we read that Rebekah also *“lifted her eyes”* and when she caught sight of Isaac she gets off the camel she was riding on, for she had asked the servant of Abraham whom the man in the field was coming to greet them.¹³⁴⁸ The servant replies *“it is my master”* at which point Rebekah takes a veil to cover herself indicating subjection and humility.

It is significant that both Isaac and Rebekah *“lifted”* their eyes and that they met at *“Beer Lahai Roi.”* This site, as we mentioned just now, indicates the well where Hagar met with God and the name suggests that the Lord was present watching over and saw them. Both look upwards, as-it-were to the Lord heavenwards. It is sad that their beginning which was really good, did not continue where it was needed, that is, when the family came.¹³⁴⁹

24:66,67.

The servant then relates to Isaac everything that had transpired on his journey, and in conclusion Isaac takes Rebekah to be his wife. There is no ceremony mentioned here, but the essence of Genesis 2:24 has been fulfilled. Isaac's mother had died and was buried, and Abraham is nowhere on the scene (we read in the next chapter of Abraham taking a new wife and bearing other children). Thus Isaac had left the care of his parents, Rebekah had departed from her home country and family, and the two are joined as one. Isaac brings Rebekah into *“his mother Sarah's tent”* and so she becomes Isaac's wife.¹³⁵⁰ The story ends with the poignant statement that Isaac *“loved her”* and that he *“was comforted after his mother's death.”* Clearly Isaac had a great deal of affection and love for his mother, and Rebekah was to be a comfort to him.

1348 Genesis 24:64,65.

1349 Genesis 26:20,26,28.

1350 Genesis 24:67.

Chapter 29.

The end for Abraham and Ishmael. (25:1-19a).

Analysis.

#25 **1** Abraham again took a wife,
and her name *was* Keturah.

2 And she bore him

Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

3 Jokshan begot

Sheba and Dedan.

And the sons of Dedan were

Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

4 And the sons of Midian *were*

Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah.

All these *were* the children of Keturah.

5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

6 But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had;
and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

7 This *is* the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.

8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full *of years*, and was gathered to his people.

9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him

in the cave of Machpelah,

which *is* before Mamre,

in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite,

10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth.

There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

11 And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac.

And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

12 Now *this is the genealogy of Ishmael*, Abraham's son,

whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham.

13 And these *were* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations:

The firstborn of Ishmael,

Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, **14** Mishma, Dumah, Massa, **15** Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

16 These *were* the sons of Ishmael and these *were* their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations.

17 These *were* the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

18 (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which *is* east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.)

He died in the presence of all his brethren.

19 *This is the genealogy of Isaac*, Abraham's son.

In this section, (the first part of Genesis 25), we come to the end of the story which focused (in the main) upon Abraham, but was compiled or collated under the care of the son of promise, Isaac ("*This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son*").¹³⁵¹ It is likely that Ishmael also contributed details pertaining to

1351 Genesis 25:19a.

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his progeny.¹³⁵² For details of the structure of the end of this section of Genesis which was according to Isaac, the reader is referred to the introduction and to the details of table I.3. It is to be noted that whilst the details of Genesis 24:1-67 were known by Isaac (as related to him by the servant and Rebekah), Genesis 25:1-11 would have been known primarily to Ishmael (and possibly to Isaac too), whilst Genesis 25:13-18 would really only have been known to Ishmael. Thus the concluding statement of Genesis 25:12 informs us of Ishmael's records, and these have been incorporated at the end of all that Isaac gathered and collated (Genesis 25:19a).

We can consider this passage under three separate headings as follows:

[1] The genealogy of Abraham and Keturah. (Genesis 25:1-6).

[2] The death and burial of Abraham. (Genesis 25:7-12).

[3] The details of Ishmael's descendants and the conclusion of Isaac's account. (Genesis 25:13-19a).

[1] The genealogy of Abraham and Keturah. (Genesis 25:1-6).

25:1.

We begin by considering Abraham's second legitimate marriage to a woman named *“Keturah,”* which signifies “incense,” or “perfume.” Abraham was one hundred and forty years old at this point in time, with thirty five years left to live.¹³⁵³ Keturah is described in 1Chronicles as Abraham's *“concubine”* (פִּילגֶּשֶׁת), whilst here in Genesis 25 she is styled as his *“wife”* (אִשָּׁה).¹³⁵⁴ There has been a suggestion in some Jewish records that Keturah was in fact Hagar the Egyptian renamed. There is no warrant for this in Scripture. It is to be noted that as Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham when he was eighty six years old some fifty four years before this time, Hagar would then be well beyond the age of bearing children. Nevertheless it is curious that the writer of Chronicles refers to Keturah as a *“concubine”* rather than as a *“wife.”* Apart from her mention in 1Chronicles and here in Genesis 25 we have no other information about this woman, so it is best to leave it at that. The Holy Spirit has seen fit to not inform us of these details.

25:2-4.

The details of Abraham's new family are shown in the genealogy on the next page (figure 25). The genealogy of Abraham by Keturah furnishes us with little information about the peoples listed. We can get some help by looking at their names and where they may have lived.

1352 Genesis 25:12.

1353 Genesis 25:20.

1354 Compare Genesis 25:1 with 1Chronicles 1:32.

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The name “*Zimran*” means “fine chamois.”¹³⁵⁵ The chamois is a type agile goat-antelope and the word is connected with the idea of leaping and hence with dance. Others suggest it has the connotation “musician.” Zimram was head of an Arabian tribe possibly close to the Red Sea. The name “*Jokshan*” means “snarer,” or possibly “sportsman,” as it comes from the root word that signifies “to lay snares,” or “to be a bird-catcher.” The tribe from this man occupied regions in the centre of Arabia. The name “*Medan*” indicates “strife,” or “contention.” The tribe deriving from this man occupied a southern part of Arabia. The name “*Midian*” also means “strife.” It seems that Midian dwelt with Medan in the same general region of Arabia. This tribe is frequently mentioned in Scripture.¹³⁵⁶ The name “*Ishbak*” has the meaning “he will remain,” or “he will leave behind.” We have no sure knowledge of where this tribe settled but it was probably somewhere in the Arabian peninsula. “*Shuah*” signifies “prostration” from the root “to bow down.” This son was founder of the Shuhites an Arabian tribe to which Bildad the erstwhile friend of Job belonged.¹³⁵⁷

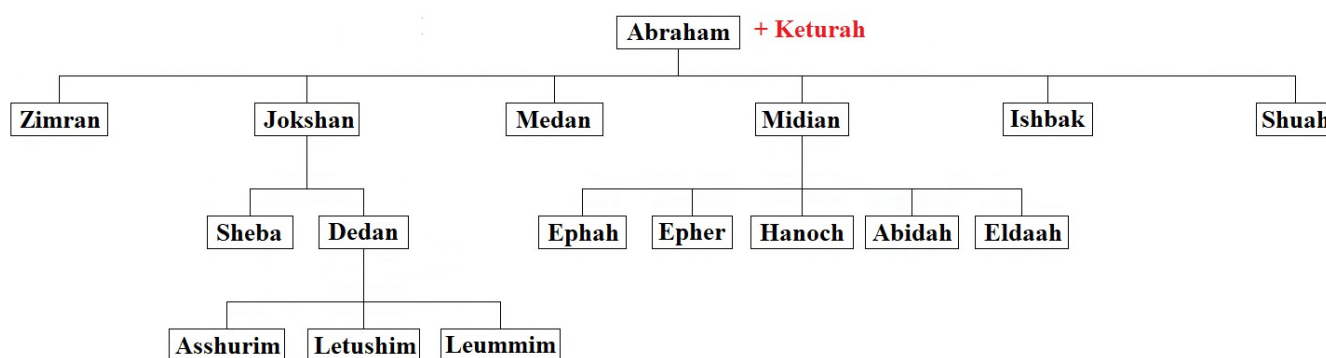


Figure 25: Abraham's descendants by Keturah.

“*Sheba*,” Jokshan's eldest was founder of one of the tribes known as the Sabeans. His name means “man.” These may have been the ones who later plundered Job.¹³⁵⁸ “*Dedan*,” second son of Jokshan, means “leading forward,” or (possibly) “low country.” This man was progenitor of a group that settled close to the Edomites and who were great merchant traders. Dedan's first son was “*Asshurim*,” which means “steps,” or “going forward.” He may have been so named because of his moving abroad from the

¹³⁵⁵ Information gleaned from **Jones, Blue Letter Bible**, and other commentaries.

¹³⁵⁶ We will come up against these folk when we consider Joseph's descent into Egypt at the hand of his brothers – Genesis 37:28,36. It also features in the story of Moses when he fled from Egypt – Exodus 2:15 etc. Moses' father-in-law was a priest in Midian – Exodus 2:16; 3:1; 18:1. The Midianites conspired with Moab in the hiring of Balaam to curse Israel – Numbers 22:4. The Midianites were a plague to Israel according to Moses – Numbers 25:6,18. The Midianites would appear later in the account of Gideon in Judges 6:1f.

¹³⁵⁷ Job 2:11.

¹³⁵⁸ Job 1:15.

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location his ancestors dwelt in. This group probably dwelt in the regions of Gilead. The name *“Letushim,”* means “hammerers,” or “artificers.” This group lived somewhere in Arabia but we are unsure whereabouts. *“Leummim”* dwelt somewhere in the central region of Arabia. The name means “peoples,” or “nations.”

Midian had five sons. The name of the first, *“Ephah,”* means “darkness,” or “gloomy.” This man gave his name to a city in the region of Midian near the Red Sea. The name *“Epher”* signifies “a young hart,” or “a calf.” The location of the tribe from this man is uncertain, but may have started somewhere near the Red Sea and migrated into Africa. *“Hanoch”* is the same name as “Enoch,” and means “dedicated.” We are unsure of his history and geography. The name *“Abidah”* means “father of knowledge,” or “my father knows.” The tribe deriving from this man is said to have inhabited an island which lay between Arabia and India. Lastly, the name *“Eldaah”* signifies “God has known,” or “whom God called.” This people settled somewhere in the east of Arabia.

From the above we note that the promise to Abraham that he would be *“a father of many nations”* is becoming a reality.¹³⁵⁹ We are apt to consider the prime focus of attention upon the son of promise, (and this is good and important), but we must not lose sight of the fact that God had intended Abraham to have many peoples who derive their lineage from him. In many cases the tribes and peoples we have briefly discussed held components of the truths that Abraham instructed his household on.¹³⁶⁰ Circumcision was a widespread practice amongst these Arabian dwellers and some knowledge of God was embedded in their collective knowledge too, so that when the gospel spread it had some leverage with which to work upon.

25:5,6.

Having detailed all of Abraham's descendants by Keturah, we discover that Isaac is still the son who will gain the inheritance. All that Abraham possessed, including the family name and title, was to be passed to Isaac. All Abraham's other descendants were just given *“gifts.”*¹³⁶¹ We do not know what these amounted to. They may have been as small as some trinkets or money, or as large as a flock of animals. It is curious that the text mentions *“concubines,”* (i.e. plural). It is highly unlikely that Abraham had another unnamed concubine. So this plural use may signify that Keturah was a concubine first and a wife second, or that Sarah was the only true wife of Abraham. Abraham was very old when he started his second family with Keturah as we have noted earlier, but whilst he still drew breath he made sure that these descendants were not intermingled with Isaac. He had arranged for Isaac to be married and now he ensures that nothing would alter the plan of God for the promised son. And so Abraham *“sent them*

1359 Genesis 17:4.

1360 Genesis 18:19.

1361 Genesis 25:6.

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eastward,” into *“the country of the east.”*¹³⁶² This would indicate a move into the Arabian peninsula. These descendants were sent *“away from Isaac”* to ensure the purity of the line of promise so that there would be no intermingling in faith and trust.

[2] The death and burial of Abraham. (Genesis 25:7-11).

Sarah had died and was buried by Abraham in a cave he purchased from Ephron the Hittite. This is the essential substance of Genesis 23. Isaac had been procured a wife not from the peoples of Canaan, but from among Abraham's relatives to ensure trust and faith in God. That was the subject of Genesis 24. Now we are given the last parts of Abraham's history and the end of his life.

25:7,8.

Abraham lived for one hundred and seventy five years, only beaten in longevity by Isaac who would make it to one hundred and eighty, (that is of those subsequent to Abraham's father Terah who lived to be two hundred and five). The description of Abraham's death is full here. We have four distinct ideas expressed.¹³⁶³

Then Abraham

breathed his last
and died in a good old age,
an old man and full *of years*,
and was gathered to his people.

The first (*“breathed his last”*) reminds us that we are dependent beings. We have no autonomy but are dependent for our very breath upon God. The Lord God made Adam a living being by breathing into his nostrils.¹³⁶⁴ Every breath we take is at the command of God. There will come a day for all of us that we will breathe our very last breath, and this is the day appointed for us by God to leave this world.¹³⁶⁵ What follows that last breath is something few take thought of, but it ought to be part of the National Curriculum! What will happen to me and you dear reader when we have exhaled for the last time?

The second statement (*“died in a good old age”*) has something of a bitter sweetness about it. We should recall that the first time we read the word *“died”* comes as a repetitive refrain in Genesis 5 (*“and he died”*) illustrating the great enormity of Adam's fall.¹³⁶⁶ Death is not good. It is a terror. It has a sting. It

1362 Genesis 25:6.

1363 Genesis 25:8.

1364 Genesis 2:7.

1365 Hebrews 9:27.

1366 Genesis 5:5,8,11,14,17,20,27,31.

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is the antithesis of life and that which is good. It inculcates fear. It casts a dread shadow, and it can lead to final destruction.¹³⁶⁷ But Abraham's death is stated as being *“in a good old age,”* by which we might understand that he has had a long and *“good”* life. To use a cricketing phrase we would say of Abraham that “he had a good innings.”¹³⁶⁸ We are more saddened on hearing about the death of a young child than an old man. Abraham lived long and much of what he experienced could be described as *“good.”* Having a good (long) life means that there is a greater opportunity to seek God, repent and do good.

The third statement (*“an old man and full of years”*) suggests a life well spent. It is to be noted that the word *“years”* is given in italics in the text indicating that it has been supplied by the translators as the best explanation of what was intended. The word rendered *“full”* signifies “satisfied” or “satiated.” Contentment can really only come from a life of walking in harmony with God.

The final statement (*“gathered to his people”*) suggests rest and peace. Those who are true believers, those who have their faith credited to them as righteousness as Abraham did, are those who will be welcomed at the point of their death by the Saviour.¹³⁶⁹

Precious in the sight of the Lord *is* the death of His saints.¹³⁷⁰

Such will be truly gathered together with all those who have walked with God in faith to be a part of the bride of Christ.¹³⁷¹

25:9,10.

The death of Abraham is attended to by both Isaac, the son of promise, and Ishmael, the son of the flesh. Such indicates that there are two streams that flow from the patriarch. One is the line of promise and the walk of faith where all true believers can be found. The other is the life of the flesh and is seen in all the progeny apart from Isaac. It may be true that some of this line have switched allegiance by becoming part of the godly line (through faith in God), but in general these are all part of this world's order which is destined for destruction. In the same way we may bring to pass that which is godly and that which is of the flesh. May the former outstrip the latter!

Abraham is thus buried by the two older sons in the same place where Sarah was buried, namely, the cave of Machpelah. The details of that place are repeated here in verses 9 and 10 to remind us that the only place the patriarchs owned in that land were the places of burial. This signifies to us that the earth is

1367 Deuteronomy 30:15; Job 3:5; 10:21,22; 24:17; Psalm 23:4; 54:4; Matthew 10:28; 1Corinthians 15:55,56; Hebrews 2:15

1368 For those of you who might not enjoy the best game in the universe, an “innings” is the length of time and the number of runs a batsman can score before losing his wicket to the opposition. {Now that I have begun this “explanation” you are going to have to seek out more information from elsewhere!}

1369 Genesis 15:6; Matthew 25:21,23.

1370 Psalm 116:15.

1371 Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:2f.

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merely a place for life in this fallen world, not a final place of redemption. In other words, the real promised land is not on earth but in heaven (the new earth and the new heavens).

25:11.

Now that Abraham had gone and was with his Lord in heaven, we discover that the Lord God continued in His mission with Isaac, the promised son. We ought always to remember that we are not the end of the story in God's plans, we are merely the current cogs and wheels that are used of God to make things work as He wills. Thus God *“blessed”* Isaac who lived at *“Beer Lahai Roi,”* the site where Hagar met with God and which indicates “well of the living one who sees me” or “well of the life of vision.” Such a choice of site shows clearly that Isaac must surely have sought after the living God?

25:12.

This verse informs us that *“this is the genealogy of Ishmael.”* In our introduction we noted that the details we have been discussing could not have come to be written except Ishmael have a part in it all. We also stated that if Ishmael was the source for these details, then this statement in Genesis 25:12 may be the conclusion to this part of the story he told (i.e. Genesis 25:1-11).

We are also reminded of Ishmael's mother and her origins at this point. This, I think, is to show the clear demarcation between the son of promise, Isaac, and the sons of the flesh.

[3] The details of Ishmael's descendants and the conclusion of Isaac's account. (Genesis 25:13-19a).

25:13-16.

What follows in this present collection of verses is a list of the *“names of the sons of Ishmael.”* These are given in accordance with the historical records accumulated (*“according to their generations”*).¹³⁷² This genealogy is shown in figure 26 on the next page. *“Nebajoth”* means “heights,” or “high places.” This son was progenitor of the Nabataeans who were nomadic dwelling throughout Arabia.¹³⁷³ *“Kedar”* means “dark skinned man,” or “dark.” These peoples dwelt in tents and in cities in the central regions of Arabia.¹³⁷⁴ *“Adbeel”* means “sorrow of God,” or “chastened of God.” *“Mibsam”* means “sweet smell,” or “delight.” *“Mishma”* means “hearing.” *“Dumah”* means “silence.” *“Massa”* means “bearing patiently,” or “burden.” *“Hadar”* means “chamberer,” or “honour.” *“Tema”* means “an untilled region,” or “desert.” The tribe from this son dwelt in the northern parts of Arabia.¹³⁷⁵ *“Jetur”*

1372 Genesis 25:13.

1373 Occurs at: Genesis 28:9; 36:3; Isaiah 60:7.

1374 Occurs at: Psalm 120:5; Song of Songs 1:5; Isaiah 21:16,17; 42:11; 60:7; Jeremiah 2:10; 49:28; Ezekiel 27:21.

1375 Occurs at: Job 6:19; Isaiah 21:14; Jeremiah 25:23.

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means “enclosed,” or “defence.” This son of Ishmael gave rise to the Ituraeans who dwelt nearby to the region known as Syria. “*Naphish*” means “refreshment.” This tribe dwelt near to the Ituraeans east of the Jordan. “*Kedemah*” means “original,” or “eastward.” This people dwelt close to the tribe of Kedar.

Verse 16 concludes this section by summarising the fact that these (up to this point in time) constituted all those of Ishmael who lived in various “*towns*” and “*settlements.*” These were the twelve princes spoken of by the Lord to Abraham when he asked for Ishmael to be his heir:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.¹³⁷⁶

And so another of the Lord's promised prophecies comes to pass

25:17.

Finally we read of the end of Ishmael's life. He was born when Abraham was eighty six years old in 2094 AC (1865 BC), and so died one hundred and thirty seven years later in 2231 AC (1728 BC).¹³⁷⁷ The description of Ishmael's death is much briefer than that of Abraham. We read simply that Ishmael “*breathed his last,*” that “*he died,*” and that “*he was gathered to his people.*” There is no definite assurance that Ishmael entered into glory. The last statement signifies the end of Ishmael. As he was in life, so in death. If a person walked with the Lord amongst the people of God, then they would naturally be gathered to the saints in glory. If, on the other hand, a person was amongst the wicked, they would be gathered to the place where the wicked are destined.

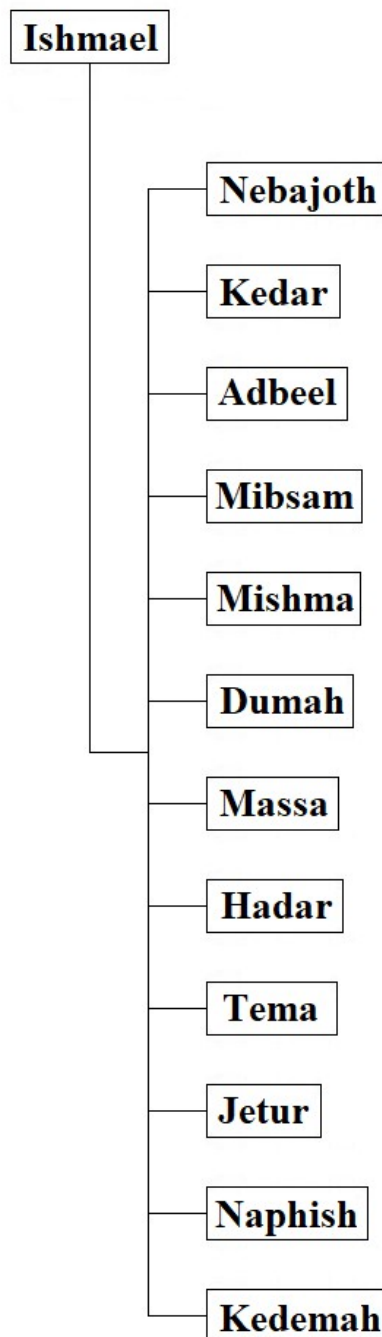


Figure 26: The descendants of Ishmael.

1376 Genesis 17:20.

1377 Genesis 16:16.

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25:18,19

These twelve princes of Ishmael lived in the region described in this verse as being “*from Havilah*” unto “*Shur*.” This is explained as being from the “*east of Egypt*,” up to “*Assyria*,” and so encompasses all the region we know as Arabia. Ishmael died with all his relatives in attendance. And so ends the account which Isaac, the son of Abraham, has gathered for our blessing (verse 19a).

Chapter 30

Two natures. (25:19b-34).

Analysis.

Abraham begot Isaac.

20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.

21 Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she *was* barren;
and the Lord granted his plea,
and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said,
“If *all is* well, why *am I like* this?”

So she went to inquire of the Lord.

23 And the Lord said to her:

“two nations *are* in your womb,
two peoples shall be separated from your body;
one people shall be stronger than the other,
and the older shall serve the younger.”

24 So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red.

He was like a hairy garment all over;
so they called his name Esau.

26 Afterwards his brother came out,
and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel;
so his name was called Jacob.

Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them.

27 So the boys grew.

And Esau was

a skilful hunter,
a man of the field;

but Jacob was

a mild man,
dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau

because he ate *of his* game,

but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 Now Jacob cooked a stew;
and Esau came in from the field,
and he *was* weary.

30 And Esau said to Jacob,

“Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary.”

Therefore his name was called Edom.

31 But Jacob said,

“Sell me your birthright as of this day.”

32 And Esau said,

“Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?”

33 Then Jacob said,

“Swear to me as of this day.”

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils;

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then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way.
Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

We must begin our comments in this part by noting that we are now in the section of Genesis for which Jacob was responsible. This runs from Genesis 25:19b through to Genesis 37:2a. In this opening portion of the records provided via Jacob, we are treated to the account of the birth of the central characters, the twins Jacob and Esau, (Genesis 25:19b-26), and then to the account in which Esau sells to Jacob his birthright (Genesis 25:27-34).

[1] Rebekah has twin boys! (Genesis 25:19b-26).

25:19b,20.

We come now to a new section which gives us the details of Isaac and his offspring. It is noteworthy that the section begins with a reminder that Abraham was the father of Isaac, and then we are informed that Isaac is now married at the age of forty to Rebekah whose name means “ensnared” or “captivated.” As we noted earlier, perhaps she was so beautiful that she was captivating? However the name may also signify “secured” from the idea of tying together with a rope. We could imagine a negative sense for marriage here as though a man is captivated by beauty and tied to his wife like a cart horse to a cart, or we could consider this in a positive light as marriage is supposed to be held. Right from the beginning man was not meant to be alone, and woman (who came from man) was made as a helper and companion.¹³⁷⁸ Therefore we remind ourselves that the two become one flesh and are tied together in a wonderful union.

We are also reminded of Rebekah's origins. Significantly we learn that she was daughter to “*Bethuel the Syrian,*” who dwelt in “*Padan Aram.*” and who was sister to “*Laban the Syrian.*” This place will feature in further events in the life of Jacob. Padan Aram was the plain situated between the two main rivers of Mesopotamia around the city of Haran.

25:21.

Isaac's trust and love for the Lord is shown here by the fact that he pleads with God to open Rebekah's womb, for she was barren. How often we see the ***apparent*** hindrance to the promise of God. In Isaac, not through Ishmael, will the blessing come, Abraham was told when Isaac was weaned, and yet here Isaac's wife is barren! How is the promise to be fulfilled? At once we can see the test of faith. Will Isaac seek to manipulate things to make the promise come true as his father Abraham had done? Or will he try to marry another wife? No! He turns to the Lord and pleads with him for Rebekah. The promises

¹³⁷⁸ Genesis 2:24.

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are sure, but that does not mean they come easy, and often times we are tested by the Lord to see if we really believe what he has declared to be the case. Notice here that we are informed immediately that the Lord granted Isaac's plea. Isaac was praying in faith and for the right thing. Children are the fruit of marriage in a general sense, but the seed of Isaac would be the one through whom the promised Messiah would come. And so this prayer was clearly in line with the will of God. Note that the request was *“granted”* to Isaac so this is all of God's good grace. But notice also that they had to wait twenty years. Isaac was forty when he married, but sixty when he became the father of two twin sons. ¹³⁷⁹

25:22.

Now as Rebekah's pregnancy progressed there appeared to be a problem for the *“children struggled together within her.”* The situation seemed so bad that she asked herself what was going on. Is everything alright with me? I suspect many mothers have had this problem when they are bearing twins. But Rebekah's love and trust of the Lord is shown equally in this event. It may have been tempting to seek out advice from other women who have had more experience, or maybe go to the local doctor. Rebekah does none of these 'normal' things that many people do as a matter of priority. Instead she *“went to inquire of the Lord.”* This is commendable and it is singularly noteworthy that both Isaac and Rebekah seek help and answers from God first and foremost, and not from themselves or others around them. ¹³⁸⁰ Thus we are shown at the outset that both Isaac and Rebekah were a godly and faithful couple. They started out so well.

25:23.

Rebekah receives a revelation from the Lord concerning the twins in her womb. She is informed that the two boys will be heads over two *“nations”* and *“peoples,”* the characteristics of which will differ markedly. One of them will be *“stronger”* than the other. But the older born will serve the younger of the two. It is not entirely clear from what we read that the older son was the stronger one, but it is very clear that the younger one will rule.

Spiritually, we note that all believers born again of the Spirit of God have two principles at work within. There is the old man, the flesh, which is given to sin, and there is the new man which is created in Christ eager to do God's will. These two natures are at war one with the other just as Jacob and Esau are so pictured wrestling within the womb of Rebekah. However always remember that the dominion of sin is broken in those born again. ¹³⁸¹ The fight between the old and the new is tipped towards the new.

1379 Genesis 25:26.

1380 It may be that the Lord would provide help through those around us, but the first thing to do always is to seek the Lord.

1381 Romans 6:14.

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25:24-26.

At length Rebekah comes to the day of delivery, and sure enough there were two boys in her womb. We are then given the details of the births of each with their distinctive features noted. The first to be born is described as being “red” which signifies one full of life. There is a reflection of Adam in the text who was so named because he was ruddy or red like the earth from which he came, or flushed with lifeblood running through the veins at the surface of his skin. On top of his ruddy complexion, this firstborn was also “like a hairy garment,” or covered in hair. Here was a rugged boy indeed – a man's boy! The second boy to arrive is distinguished by the fact that as he was being born he “took hold of Esau's heel.”

The details that the Lord had previously revealed to Rebekah, followed by the birth of these twins ought to have given this couple a head start for parenting the two boys who would be the fathers of two future nations. One would be stronger than the other, but not as might have been expected. It would turn out that whilst the older son would appear stronger in a physical sense, the younger would be stronger in the spiritual sense. The firstborn would serve his younger sibling. Esau was so named because he was hairy all over, for “Esau” means “covered with hair.” Jacob was so named because he grabbed his brother's heel. This is significant. Although it was an innocent grasp of Esau's heel, it was enough to land him his name “Jacob” which literally means “heel holder” or “supplanter.” It came thence to mean a “deceitful” one, probably from the idea of tripping someone up at the heel without them knowing. But this also brings to mind the first mention of the gospel in Genesis 3:15 where we read that the promised one would bruise the serpent's head whilst the serpent would bruise the promised one's heel. The devil (who moved the serpent in deceiving Eve) is the father of lies.¹³⁸²

[2] Esau sells his birthright! (Genesis 25:27-34).

The firstborn son of every father was honoured by being given the privilege of birthright. This privilege conferred both rights and responsibilities upon the son. In the absence of the father, or at his death, the firstborn would take the lead role of the family. On the death of the father he would receive a double portion of the inheritance compared to that received by other sons. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the firstborn was the initial strength of the father and was also to be set apart as holy unto the Lord.¹³⁸³ These details are developed fully from the time of the Exodus but they existed in germ form from the earliest times. We derive this from a consideration of the first use of the word “firstborn” which occurs in Genesis 4 where we read about Abel and Cain's offerings to the Lord. Abel brought the “firstborn” of the flocks in worship but Cain did not. The Lord accepted Abel's offering but not those of

1382 John 8:44.

1383 Genesis 49:3; Exodus 13:2; 22:29; 34:19; Luke 2:23.

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Cain.¹³⁸⁴ The firstborn was therefore not only the strength and honour of the father, but also the first to open the womb, and as such signified that which is the best. The firstborn was to be the Lord's, and an offering of the firstborn to the Lord served to indicate that *everything* possessed by the person making such an offering really and truly belonged to the Lord. Consequently any person must therefore consider themselves as simply a steward of what they had received. The firstborn, then, was to be given wholly to the Lord. Esau in despising his birthright showed that he had contempt for such a position, and in reference to this the writer to the Hebrews described him as being an *"immoral or godless person."*¹³⁸⁵

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is described as the firstborn in three distinct ways. He is the, *"firstborn among many brethren,"* the *"firstborn over all creation,"* and the *"firstborn from the dead."*¹³⁸⁶ He was wholly given unto the Father and had the right to receive the Father's inheritance.

25:27,28.

Both the information given to Rebekah whilst pregnant and the reality observed at the births, you may think, ought to have given the parents a warning that things would be tricky. These two boys were very different! Further details of the two boys would become clear as they began to grow. However, if you are a parent, or a parent-to-be, this is a timely reminder that the Lord expects us to seek Him continually for our responsibilities as parents, not just at the beginning of things. This is not easy, especially when the children are keeping you up in the night or when they are sick. However it is imperative that you keep seeking the Lord and inquiring from him in His word for every eventuality that arises as the children grow up. Now we do not read much at all about how Isaac and Rebekah brought their twin boys up. This is in contrast to the Lord's approbation of Abraham in being a father.¹³⁸⁷ All we read next in the text is that *"the boys grew,"* but what follows is a clear warning to all parents to avoid the terrible fruit of being partial.¹³⁸⁸

Now because of their great difference in nature and appearance these two boys took different paths. Perhaps this was a natural development and one to be celebrated. However something within both Isaac and Rebekah took to each of the boys and this must have had an impact on their lives. Isaac loved Esau but Rebekah loved Jacob.¹³⁸⁹ The implication is that there was a clear separation and division within the family. It wasn't that Rebekah hated Esau or that Isaac hated Jacob, but each parent's preference for one son over the other was openly known and obviously expressed. There may be a natural affection for one or another child in a group, but we must make sure that such natural affinity does not lead to the type

1384 See comments on Genesis 4.

1385 Hebrews 12:16.

1386 Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15; Colossians 1:18 & Revelation 1:5.

1387 Genesis 18:19.

1388 Genesis 25:27.

1389 Genesis 25:28.

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of breakdown we see revealed in these pages of Scripture.

The Scriptures are quite economical but wonderfully contrasting in the descriptions of Esau and Jacob. With regard to Esau we are told first about his occupation, and then something about his character and where he liked to be. In contrast Jacob is depicted with his character first. So what type of men were these two twin boys?

Esau was a “*man of the field*” which indicates that he was an outdoor man because of his love of hunting. In the parable of the soils and the sower we learn that the field represented the world. With that fact in mind we are being lead to grasp that Esau was a worldly man, and the remainder of the account bears this assumption out. Now Esau is described as a “*skilful hunter*” indicating that his hunting was perhaps more of a sport and a game than done for mere sustenance.¹³⁹⁰ The only other mention of a “*hunter*” prior to this was in Genesis 10 where we read of Nimrod (“that rebel”) who was described as a “*mighty hunter before the Lord.*”¹³⁹¹ The phrase “*before the Lord*” suggests the idea of being in opposition to the Lord. Thus Esau was a “man of the world” who loved to hunt for sport. He was encouraged in this by his father Isaac who loved the game. Hence Esau was a physical, earthy man whose father encouraged the physical aspect of Esau's character through his love of food.

In remarkable contrast, Jacob was a “*mild man*” which may suggest some delicacy and perhaps even effeminacy.¹³⁹² However the Hebrew word really means “perfect,” “sound,” “whole” in a moral sense. Most translators are influenced towards depicting this word simply in contrast to the “manly” and more ferocious character of Esau, and especially in view of Jacob's deceit. Consequently they opt for “mild,” “quiet,” or “peaceful.”¹³⁹³ However these are interpretations and not translations of the Hebrew. Thus Jacob seems to have been *somewhat* heavenly minded. We cannot say more than “somewhat” at this point, but it is clear that the contrast to Esau as a “*skilful hunter*” can only lead us to consider someone who is more godly than not. Furthermore, we are informed that Jacob dwelt in “*tents.*” What should we make of this? Well I think the implication is that Jacob is a true sojourner and not a man of the world. He is being depicted as a pilgrim and as one who looked for a heavenly house in contrast to Esau who favoured the open fields of this cursed world.

I hasten to add at this point that the choice of being a stay-at-home or an out-doors type of person does not always lead to the implications we are seeing here in Scripture. It does not follow that people who love the outdoors today are worldly, and those who prefer to be at home are godly. Please do not make that mistake! Godliness is something that can be expressed in all walks and through all types of people. Scripture however leads us with these allusions so that we can make sense of what the Holy Spirit

1390 Genesis 25:27.

1391 Genesis 10:9.

1392 Genesis 25:27.

1393 NKJV, ESV, NASB.

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is wanting us to learn. Here, in *this situation*, Esau's love of the field and of hunting are indicative of a worldly godless nature, whilst Jacob's being mild and quiet and his living in tents does signify a more heavenly disposition.

25:29-32.

Bearing in mind all the information we have about Esau and Jacob, the next event we read of seems to have been an ordinary day where we find that Jacob was at home cooking, whilst Esau had been out hunting.¹³⁹⁴ Esau comes home and he is weary and tired. There is more to this than simply having had a tiring day hunting, however. It seems that Esau was dissatisfied with his life, but he wasn't prepared to change. Jacob had been preparing food, but Esau wasn't really bothered about what Jacob had made for he refers to it just as “*red*” from its appearance.¹³⁹⁵ Hence Esau was also called “red” or “*Edom*” because he simply wanted the red stuff in the pot!¹³⁹⁶ It is important to state here that the words “red” and the name “*Edom*” are similar in form to the name “*Adam*” in the Hebrew indicating again the close connection with Esau's love of the earth and things earthy.

At this point Jacob sees an opportunity.¹³⁹⁷ Why he chose this time rather than any other is unclear. But his actions do not suggest any great measure of faith at this point. However what is clear from the exchange is that whereas Esau despised his birthright, Jacob clearly had a reverence for it, and also for life and posterity. It may not be clear from the translation, but the implication of what was going on here is that Esau really was wholly *earth* centred. The expression “*let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die*” would be one Esau would loudly applaud.¹³⁹⁸ He said he was weary and he wanted food, but he wasn't particularly bothered what the food was. Then when Jacob asked to buy the birthright Esau replies with flippancy: “*Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?*”¹³⁹⁹ He was not about to die, and neither had his hunger brought him to such a state! These were exaggerations. After all he was a “*skilful hunter*” and so knew full well how to acquire food should the need arise.¹⁴⁰⁰ No, rather he was simply expressing his earthly nature. He considered life simply 'for the moment,' and considered it in a very selfish manner. What was the birthright to him? What use had he for it when he would soon, in a few decades, be gone? He thus showed his disdain for anything heavenly.

1394 Genesis 25:29.

1395 Genesis 25:30.

1396 Genesis 25:30.

1397 Genesis 25:31.

1398 Isaiah 22:13; 1Corinthians 15:32.

1399 Genesis 25:32.

1400 Genesis 25:27.

25:33,34.

Whilst Esau cared little for the birthright, Jacob was eager to acquire it. And so he calls Esau to sell his birthright with an oath (*“swear to me as of this day”*).¹⁴⁰¹ Maybe Jacob reasoned that since they were both born on the same day it would matter little that he was not actually the firstborn. Esau therefore gives up his birthright to Jacob for a stew! Jacob gives Esau his food. Esau's belly had governed his mind. Here is a man of earth in action! After he had eaten his full he simply arose from the table and then *“went his way.”* Could there ever be a more damning phrase? It reminds me of the famous song by Frank Sinatra *“I did it my way.”* Oh how we ought to shudder at the thought! To go one's own way is the ultimate horror of horrors. We want to go God's way! Do we not? Esau chose this earth wholeheartedly, and in being so earth-centred he *“despised his birthright.”*

Looking at this event from Jacob's perspective, it is clear that he was not being open and above board. Jacob basically tricks Esau here. Esau was a trivial and superficial man when it came to spiritual things, and so he counted the birthright of no value (he *“despised his birthright”*).¹⁴⁰² But Jacob knew this and took advantage of the situation. In any normal situation surely one brother would give another some of the stew he had been cooking if the former were hungry? Forcing Esau to give up his birthright here was miserly at best but conniving in reality.

Esau and Jacob compared.

And so we see pictured before us two men who were as different from one another as chalk is from cheese. Neither comes out of this account very well. Esau is simply a worldly, fleshly man who cares little for spiritual or godly things (he *“despised his birthright”*).¹⁴⁰³ Jacob, it would appear, has some interest in heavenly things, but he operates in very fallen carnal ways. There is no doubt that Jacob thought the birthright of great value, for after requesting that Esau sell it to him he then presses the point after Esau declares that he has little interest in it.¹⁴⁰⁴ However it is equally clear that Jacob acted in a manner that fitted his name. He deceived his brother, taking advantage of the fact that Esau *“despised his birthright”* and thus sought to gain by scurrilous means that which he held of great value (the birthright). So although he seems more spiritually minded than his brother, Jacob's methods leave an awful lot to be desired.

1401 Genesis 25:33.

1402 Genesis 25:34.

1403 Genesis 25:34.

1404 Genesis 25:31-33.

Chapter 31.

Like father like son. (26:1-16).

Analysis.

#26 1 There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

2 Then the Lord appeared to him and said:

“Do not go down to Egypt;
live in the land of which I shall tell you.

3 Dwell in this land,
and I will be with you and bless you;
for to you and your descendants

I give all these lands,
and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven;
I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

5 because Abraham
obeyed My voice
and kept
My charge,
My commandments,
My statutes, and
My laws.”

6 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

7 And the men of the place asked about his wife.
And he said,

“she *is* my sister”;

for he was afraid to say,

“she *is* my wife,”

because he thought,

“lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she *is* beautiful to behold.”

8 Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife

9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said,

“quite obviously she *is* your wife; so how could you say, ‘she *is* my sister’?”

Isaac said to him,

“because I said, ‘lest I die on account of her.’”

10 And Abimelech said,

“what *is* this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.”

11 So Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying,

“he who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him.

13 The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; **14** for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants.

So the Philistines envied him.

15 Now the Philistines had stopped up all the **wells** which his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said to Isaac,

“go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.”

In Genesis 26 there is no mention of Jacob or Esau. The events are wholly taken up with Isaac and

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his dealings with Abimelech in Gerar, first over the matter of his wife Rebekah, and then over the matter of wells. Since the details of the first event concern Isaac's wife Rebekah it is difficult to imagine that the problem we find here would have occurred if she had Jacob and Esau in tow. Therefore it is likely that the events of Genesis 26 occurred *before* the birth of the two boys, somewhere in-between Isaac and Rebekah's marriage and the birth of the two boys – a period of about twenty years. Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, but he was sixty when Esau and Jacob were born.¹⁴⁰⁵

Our text comes in three separate sections. First we discover that once again there is a famine in the land and Isaac goes to Abimelech in Gerar to the south where God meets with him and reiterates the promise given to Abraham.¹⁴⁰⁶ Second we have the incident concerning Rebekah whom Isaac presented as his sister, thus copying Abraham's former mistakes.¹⁴⁰⁷ Finally we have a concluding piece showing the difference between those blessed of God and those who oppose the blessed.¹⁴⁰⁸

[1] The Lord meets with Isaac. (Genesis 26:1-5).

26:1.

This passage opens with a statement concerning famine indicating a lack of food. We are not told the cause (physically speaking) but recall the fact that God is sovereign over all circumstances and so the famine was under His wise guidance and over-seeing. This was a new famine which was “*besides the first famine*” which had occurred in the earlier days of Abraham's journeying.¹⁴⁰⁹ On that first occasion of famine Abraham went to Egypt, but here we are informed that Isaac “*went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar.*” Why did he go to Gerar? It might be that Isaac knew that Gerar was a fruitful place to grow crops, but that is simply one suggestion.¹⁴¹⁰ The name of this site means “a lodging place,” and it was where Abraham had formerly travelled and where he got into serious trouble when he passed Sarah off as his sister rather than his wife.¹⁴¹¹ We noted earlier in commenting on Genesis 20 that Abraham's purpose in going to Gerar is really unknown, but that it may appear that he was leaving the land of promise and going beyond the holy place (signified by Kadesh) to the very boundary before entering the region governed by Egypt. However it seems significant that the writer has mentioned the famine in Abraham's day. So the likelihood is that Isaac intended to go to Egypt as his father had done so many years earlier when the first famine came.

1405 Genesis 25:20,26.

1406 Genesis 26:1-5.

1407 Genesis 26:6-11. For Abraham's errors, see: Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 20:1-18.

1408 Genesis 26:12-16.

1409 Genesis 12:10.

1410 Genesis 26:12.

1411 Genesis 20:2f.

26:2-5.

To prevent him getting as far as Egypt, the Lord appears to Isaac and gives him some instructions reiterating the promise given to Abraham (which has now passed on to him). By this we understand a Christophany where the pre-incarnate Christ meets with the patriarch. The verb used and rendered as *“appeared”* means simply “to see” in a visual sense. This is the second time we read the phrase *“go down to Egypt.”* The first occurred in Genesis 12:10 where Abraham went down many years earlier. It is significant that going to Egypt is always spoken of in this way, as a travelling *“down.”* Egypt signifies the world in its fallen and lost state. Thus Isaac is instructed not to go to Egypt for this is a step in the wrong direction. How many times elsewhere do we read about looking up or looking heavenward or of not going down to Egypt?¹⁴¹² Instead he is instructed to *“live in the land of which I tell you”* and then at the start of verse 3 we read: *“dwell in this land.”* It would appear from this that Isaac may have received the visit from the Lord prior to entering Gerar. Thus, first he is told not to go to Egypt but to dwell in the place that God chooses, and then he is told to dwell in Gerar where he has now come. We note here the contrast between going down to Egypt which speaks of a death, or of a going down into the earth and the grave, and then in contrast the instruction to *“live”* in the place which God will choose. This is a wonderful truth to behold which we can summarise like this:

“Do not go down to Egypt;”

Do not focus on this world which leads to death.

“live in the land of which I shall tell you”

Have life! Follow God by faith. Listen to what He has to say.

Isaac is then instructed to *“dwell”* in Gerar with the promise that God would be with him and would bless him.¹⁴¹³ The Hebrew word rendered *“dwell”* is often given as *“sojourn”* in the AKJV. In other words the Lord intended that Isaac would stop there for a short while as a guest in a lodging house. We are then informed of the purpose and reasons for this blessing. The Lord will give *“all these lands,”* which included Gerar and the surrounding regions, to Isaac and his descendants and would also *“perform the oath”* that God *“swore to Abraham”* Isaac's father. The reference to the Lord's sworn oath came in Genesis 22 immediately after Abraham was prevented from slaying Isaac:

15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, **16** and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— **17** blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will

1412 Isaiah 8:22; 31:1; 45:22; Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:2.

1413 Genesis 26:3.

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multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. **18** In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”¹⁴¹⁴

This would have been a great comfort to Isaac. The blessing that God had spoken to Abraham was now spoken to Isaac, Abraham's son. There are some differences, however as shown in the table below:

Table 31.1: Comparison of the promises given to Abraham and Isaac.

Description of promise:		To Abraham (Genesis 22:15-18).	To Isaac (Genesis 26:4).
[1]	Incredible blessing.	<i>“blessing I will bless you,”</i>	
[2]	Dramatic increase in descendants.	<i>“and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore;”</i>	<i>“And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven.”</i>
[3]	Victory over the peoples.	<i>“and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”</i>	<i>“I will give to your descendants all these lands.”</i>
[4]	Blessing extended worldwide through Abraham's seed (singular).	<i>“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”</i>	<i>“and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”</i>

The only part which is identical is the last statement which speaks of the gospel and the promise of Christ as the ***seed of the woman***. The blessing given to Abraham seems to be more expansive and all-encompassing. Superlatives are used indicating the absolute definiteness of the blessing (*“blessing I will bless”* and *“multiplying I will multiply”* both indicate a certainty and an abundance). The number of stars visible in the night sky at that time may have been in the thousands, but how many grains of sand would be present on the seashore? Isaac is not promised that his descendants will be so extensive. Are these differences significant? It might appear that God was much closer to Abraham than to Isaac from what we learn here. Verse 5 gives impetus to this thought because the reason for continuing the blessing is down to Abraham's obedience. It was *“because Abraham obeyed My voice”* that God is ensuring the continuation of His promise here. This obedience of Abraham is spelt out for us in detail at the end of verse 5. Abraham did not simply obey the lord's voice, but he *“kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”* Much earlier the Lord had explained that Abraham was called so that he would keep the *“way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice”*:

¹⁴¹⁴ Genesis 22:15-18.

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”¹⁴¹⁵

Now Isaac is being informed that the blessing is to be continued because of Abraham's obedience.

In verse 5 we learn that Abraham's obedience came in respect of listening to the Lord's *“voice.”* Mention of the Lord's voice speaks to us of relationship. It was not simply that a series of commands and laws were given to Abraham to follow – as we might find in modern society, for example. Instead, the Lord was with Abraham and spoke to him and Abraham listened to what the Lord had to say and did what was requested of him. It was not that Abraham was an equal with God and did Him a favour as you would any other friend – not at all. Rather it was that the Lord had fellowship with Abraham, and as a consequence of this, out of love and deep respect for the Lord, Abraham obeys what was asked of him. Now this is the position of faith. A person who trusts in the Lord and has been born again seeks to follow the Lord and obey Him as they hear Him speak. It is not a matter of obeying first in order to gain a blessing or acceptance, but rather an obedience born of love, respect and trust in the One who has condescended to us in grace and mercy.

Not only did Abraham obey the Lord's voice in a general sense, but further he *“kept”* all aspects of what the Lord revealed to the father of many. We read that he kept the Lord's *“charge,” “commandments,” “statutes,”* and *“laws.”* What is intended by these four themes? (See table 31.2).

Table 31.2: Translations and meanings of key words in Genesis 26:5.

Hebrew	Translation	Meaning
מִשְׁמֶרֶת	Charge	A watch. The act of being a sentry. To keep something safe. To be a guard of a ward.
מִצְוָה	Commandments	A command, law, ordinance, precept.
תִּקְוָה	Statutes	Appointed custom, manner, ordinance, statute.
תּוֹרָה	Laws	Law, instruction, doctrine,

In many ways they are synonymous. However there is also a broadness to these terms. In short they stand for a settled godly way of life in which the rules of life, the manners and customs, the detail of how to live, and that which is thought important and worth preserving, all stem from the Lord and from what He says. When a person becomes a believer their whole life is altered. The rules and principles by which they used to live are all overturned and replaced by new ones that have their origin and focus in the Lord God.

¹⁴¹⁵ Genesis 18:19.

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It is His laws and principles the believer wants to ground their life on. It is the Lord's manners and customs they deem of value. It is God's ways that are not just worth following, but are worthy of defence and preservation. A new life demands a new lifestyle which is in accordance with the beauties of the Lord who through grace gives it.

[2] Like father like son. (Genesis 26:6-11).

26:6,7.

Abraham was a godly man of faith but he was by no means perfect. The Lord has reminded Isaac that his father obeyed His voice and kept all His ways, and this ought to have pointed Isaac to consider his own life and lifestyle.¹⁴¹⁶ But in one respect Abraham failed and he did so on two occasions as recorded in Genesis, namely, the matter of fearing what men may do.¹⁴¹⁷

In verse 6 we discover that Isaac *“dwelt in Gerar.”* This word *“dwelt”* suggests a more settled way. It speaks of a more permanent dwelling. The Lord had said in verse 3 to dwell for a time or sojourn in the land, but Isaac has begun to put down roots. Isaac settles in Gerar but there are consequences to such a settled life.¹⁴¹⁸ He will need to interact with the *“men of the place.”* How will he do? The Lord had told him to dwell in this land, and He had also promised that He would be *“with”* Isaac and would *“bless”* him too.¹⁴¹⁹ Now it does not take long before the natives of the land (*“the men of the place”*) make inquiries concerning Isaac's wife.¹⁴²⁰ Here is an interaction with the people of the place concerning which Isaac showed fear. Isaac's knee-jerk response was to do as his father Abraham had done before. He feared the men of that region, and he told them a lie which he hoped would prevent any imagined danger he was going to be in. Rebekah was *“beautiful to behold”* and Isaac *“was afraid to”* tell them that she was his wife in case the men of that place kill him! We cannot help but be reminded of what his father Abraham had done, but was he really in danger here?¹⁴²¹ What about Rebekah? Did Isaac think of her? It may well have been true in those days that through jealousy men fought over women, but even if it were true this was no way to act, especially in light of the promise of God to be near and to bless. Both Abraham and Isaac had the Lord as their God! Why fear men? Well, of course, our natures are extremely weak and we do not point the finger here without noting our own weaknesses. Maybe we worry excessively, or maybe we have other wobbles in our faith. Isaac did not need to be afraid but then in the heat of the moment it is often the case that we defer to what we know or have seen in operation. How we

1416 Genesis 26:5.

1417 Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18.

1418 Genesis 26:6.

1419 Genesis 26:2.

1420 Genesis 26:7.

1421 Genesis 12:11f; 20:2f.

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need the Lord! He is a very present help in times of trouble and we need to rest and rely on that fact when things take a turn for the worse.¹⁴²²

26:8.

We do not know how much time had elapsed except that it was a *“long time,”* and then Abimelech happened to glance through a window where he saw Isaac *“showing endearment to Rebekah his wife.”* The word given as *“endearment”* in the NKJV is translated as *“sporting”* in the AKJV. The NASB suggests *“caressing”* whilst the ESV opts for *“laughing with.”* The basic idea behind the Hebrew is “to laugh outright” which might be expressed either positively in merriment, or negatively in scorn.¹⁴²³ It would seem that what Abimelech saw was an intimate familiarity between the two as could only be found amongst those who were married. It was not that he saw them in some compromising position, but that their conversation and relationship was much more than could be imagined between brother and sister. They were laughing openly in joy and merriment. This may have been through an intimate moment but we are not told that, so it is best not to speculate. Abimelech simply saw them and could see clearly that they were husband and wife. Now this shows us that a lie never fully succeeds. It is impossible to restrain and contain lies. The truth will always come out – eventually. In this case it took a *“long time,”* but the truth comes out and now Isaac must face the consequences. It is a good thing that the truth is always substantial and difficult to hide. We should rejoice in this. But mankind is constantly trying to suppress it.¹⁴²⁴ Why? Because his deeds are evil and he is ashamed of them.

26:9-11.

Abimelech calls Isaac to account. The expression used in verse 9 is of emphatic certainty. We might say “without the slightest doubt” Rebekah is Isaac's wife. The NKJV translation is good here. It is as plain as the nose on one's face that Isaac and Rebekah were not only “an item” as we may say, but were in fact man and wife. At this point Isaac confesses why he had passed Rebekah off as his sister. It was because he was afraid he might be killed by another man who wanted her for himself.

Next in verse 10 we have Abimelech's naturally indignant response. Why had Isaac done this? Abimelech appears more righteous than Isaac here. It could easily have been the case that a man among them took Rebekah and made her his wife, but this would have *“brought guilt”* upon the people of that land. Now we cannot necessarily apportion a righteous heart to Abimelech here, but nevertheless his question and statement show greater concern for righteousness than Isaac's lie and fear. In verse 11 we

¹⁴²² Psalm 46:1.

¹⁴²³ The idea of laughter or merriment is expressed in Genesis 17:17; 18:12,13,15; 21:6. The notion of mocking or scorn is expressed in Genesis 19:14; 21:9; 39:14,17. The idea of sporting and jesting is shown at Exodus 32:6; Judges 16:25.

¹⁴²⁴ Romans 1:18.

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find, surprisingly, that Isaac's fears are totally unwarranted, and rather there is protection given to him and Rebekah. And so when Abimelech made his public declaration he “*charged*” the people, by which term he declared as an appointed fact that these two were in fact married. Not only are the pair protected on pain of death but they are publicly displayed as man and wife. The truth is out!

[3] *Those whom God blesses the world hates. (Genesis 26:12-16).*

Isaac has not presented the best of fronts to Abimelech and his people in Gerar. Abimelech discovers the lie Isaac proffered to keep himself safe (astonishingly he appears to have no thought about Rebekah), but now at the conclusion of this part of the story we discover that Isaac is greatly blessed.

26:12-14.

And so Isaac settled, planted his crops, and the Lord blessed him with a bumper return the very same year. Talk of sowing and reaping inevitably leads to thoughts of the gospel.¹⁴²⁵ Those who diligently sow in the good soil will reap the reward. It was because of famine that Isaac ventured to this land, and although he spent some time there, the increase he experienced is rather more than would be naturally expected. This is because “*the Lord blessed him.*”

And then in verse 13 we are told more about his prosperity and the trajectory his prosperity took. First, he “*began to prosper*” and such is the way of the abundant God of creation. It is also the beginnings of a person come to true faith. As they make their first steps in the Christian walk the Lord adds His blessing and they prosper in spiritual things. Where the soil is good the fruit will be equally good too. Then next we discover that Isaac “*continued prospering*” which indicates the need for growth to continue just as plants continue to grow. This continuation in prosperity reached the point of him becoming “*very prosperous.*” Now although all we have in this account is a record of physical growth and the increase in crops and other material goods, the spiritual application is clear. A believer is one whose heart has been made new and the richness of the fertile soil is ripe for the growth of a good harvest. But plants that have no depth of root, lack a good supply of minerals and water, and have insufficient sun, will simply wither and die. In the same way believers need fertile hearts in which the seed of the word of God can be sown. These seeds need watering by the Spirit of God and require the warmth and light streaming from the Son of God's illuminating rays of truth.

In verse 14 we discover that Isaac had become so prosperous that “*the Philistines envied him.*” This is ever the case with material possessions! What tragedies have occurred through jealousy and envy amongst people the world over! When it comes to spiritual blessings there are two effects noted. First there are those who see one blessed of God, are convicted of their sin, and see in what is presented to

¹⁴²⁵ Matthew 13:8,23; Mark 4:8.

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them as hope and favour. These run to the gospel lived and preached, and they seek the Lord. Then second there are those who react in pride and cannot bear the illumination that shows up their sin and fallen state. These turn and run from what they have glimpsed. They may be envious of the blessings experienced but they hate the message and all it stands for.

26:15,16.

We next hear in verse 15 that the Philistines blocked up “*all the wells*” which Abraham's servants had dug with earth. Why do this? Why stop the flowing waters with “*earth*”? Spiritually we can see that those who are envious of the church of God, and who are jealous of its growth and real success, pour scorn on the means of grace and seek to prevent the work of the Spirit. Such, of course, is folly. The Spirit cannot be stopped. However obstacles are put in the way. I remember in the 1970s and 1980s that many Christians in Soviet Russia were prevented from meeting together and hearing the word of God. Believers met in the woods in secret in order to hear the word of God preached. Bibles were scarce and godly men sought to smuggle the word of God into the land. This type of thing is going on today in some countries and has gone on in many countries across the world at different times. As believers we always need to be aware that the gospel message has these twin effects. To those being saved it is the word of life, but to those perishing it is nonsense and must be resisted.¹⁴²⁶ There are many other ways in which the world pours its earth into the wells of the Christian. Filling the mind with the things of the earth. Requiring people to conform to a societal norm. Enforcing all children to be schooled to a national standard. These and many other ways are the world's attempts at stopping up the wells from which the water of life may spring. There was a time when schools were required to teach Scripture! An elderly couple I knew in the 1990s spoke of their school experience in the early part of the twentieth century. They spoke of being required to memorize Scripture as a matter of routine! My own father growing up in London in the 1920s and 1930s knew all about Latimer and Ridley and the events of the Reformation. Now the Christian faith is becoming an embarrassment to modern life. So many of the wells that our forefathers dug have been stopped up by worldly rubbish. It was Christians who started schools, hospitals, the trades unions, boy scouts and so on, but how many of these have been usurped by the secular world and have been severed from their roots.

Now in verse 16 we note that as Isaac increased in wealth and possessions Abimelech has had enough and tells Isaac to leave. And the reason? It was because Isaac was “*mightier*” than the Philistines. Material wealth leads to power and influence. The Philistines do not like this!

1426 1Corinthians 1:18.

Chapter 32.

A tale of wells. (26:17-33).

Analysis.

- 17 Then Isaac
 departed from there
 and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar,
 and dwelt there.
- 18 And Isaac
 dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father,
 for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham.
 He called them by the names which his father had called them.
- 19 Also Isaac's servants
 dug in the valley,
 and found a well of running water there.
- 20 But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying,
 "the water *is* ours."
So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarrelled with him.
- 21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that *one* also.
So he called its name Sitnah.
- 22 And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it.
So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said,
 "for now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."
- 23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba.
- 24 And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said,
 "I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants
 for My servant Abraham's sake."
- 25 So
 he built an altar there
 and called on the name of the Lord,
 and he pitched his tent there;
 and there Isaac's servants dug a well.
- 26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army.
- 27 And Isaac said to them,
 "why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?"
- 28 But they said,
 "we have certainly seen that the Lord is with you. So we said,
 'let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, 29 that you
 will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and
 have sent you away in peace. You *are* now the blessed of the Lord.'"
- 30 So
 he made them a feast,
 and they ate and drank.
- 31 Then
 they arose early in the morning
 and swore an oath with one another;
 and Isaac sent them away,
 and they departed from him in peace.
- 32 It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him,
 "we have found water."
- 33 So he called it Shebah.
Therefore the name of the city *is* Beersheba to this day.

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There is no mention in this passage of Jacob or Esau because it is probable that the events recorded here come before the birth of the twins. In the last chapter we ended by noting that the Philistines had stopped up the wells that Abraham's servants had dug. In this section the word “*well*” comes seven times so forms a centre piece of the whole narrative account.¹⁴²⁷ We need to note that the requirement for water is, of course, essential for life, and was a very important feature of the experience of people in those days. Thus what we are reading is most certainly historical. And yet because wells feature so strongly here we cannot but consider this in a spiritual sense too. It is worth recalling here that Isaiah wrote a kind of hymn in praise of God which featured wells.

1 And in that day you will say: “O Lord, I will praise You; hough You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. 2 Behold, God *is* my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For Yah, the Lord, *is* my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.’ ” 3 Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 And in that day you will say: “Praise the Lord, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted. 5 Sing to the Lord, for He has done excellent things; this *is* known in all the earth. 6 Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in your midst!”¹⁴²⁸

The “*wells of salvation*” signifies the water of life. This theme of living water is a running one in Scripture.¹⁴²⁹

26:17.

Isaac was asked to leave because of envy and so he departs from the company of Abimelech and moves to the “*Valley of Gerar.*” The name “*Gerar,*” signifies a sojourning or a lodging, and it is to be noted that Isaac is still living in a tent. This highlights the idea of our temporary residence on this planet.

26:18.

Settled in his new location Isaac begins to seek out water, that which is essential for life. The text tells us that he “*dug again*” the sources of water that his father Abraham had originally dug, and which the Philistines “*had stopped*” when Abraham had died. The gospel is always the same from age to age. The source of spiritual life is always the same too. The Lord alone is the Rock of salvation and so Isaac returns to the sources his father had used. How we too need to dig and get back to the old paths.¹⁴³⁰ The difficulties we face in this day and age cannot be traversed and navigated without the gospel of old. Those folk who abandon or sidestep the gospel when new problems arise, will always fall foul and fail. No! We

1427 Genesis 26:18,19,20,21,22,25,32.

1428 Isaiah 12.

1429 Psalm 46:4; 65:9; Isaiah 43:20; 44:3; 55:1; John 7:37,28; Revelation 21:6; 22:17.

1430 Jeremiah 6:16.

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need to stick close to the truth, to the waters of life that the Lord alone provides. He has promised to guide us through all situations whether the waters are deep or shallow. We recall the promise recorded earlier in Isaiah:

When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.¹⁴³¹

But then we need to understand that Isaac had to dig the wells *“again,”* because the Philistines had filled them in. And so when we face new issues our recent forefathers knew little of, we must ***dig again***, seeking the Lord in earnest for the waters of life that will be sufficient for this new thing. Of course, there is really *“nothing new under the sun,”* for others in different ages have faced similar issues.¹⁴³² It is thus a very good idea to read widely amongst those who have truly known the Lord. These are our brothers and sisters and they have wrestled with issues in their time. But it is our task in ***this day and age*** to live the gospel, to walk with the Lord, and to apply the unchanging truth of the gospel to the things and issues we face. Perhaps top of the list today is the doctrine of man and creation. How little today do people understand the nature of man as created in the image of God, created for purpose, and created as male and female for specific reasons. Or what of the great problem of our time caused by the science of genetic engineering? Whom amongst the people of God are thinking about these issues with the unchanging gospel as their ground?

It is significant here that the text tells us that Isaac *“called them by the names which his father had called the.”* When we look through history and we see the great doctrines of Scripture expounded and taught in different times we rejoice! We too may take these and teach and live them using exactly the same names and ideas. Consider the doctrine of the trinity, the person of Christ, and His great work (atonement). These are ever the same and we can be certain of their beauty and truth as we face whatever issues there are in our day.

26:19-22.

Now it was not to be long before Isaac would meet with opposition. Finding a well of *“running water”* Isaac's servants run into trouble with the *“herdsmen of Gerar.”* These rogues lay claim to the well the servants of Isaac had just dug saying *“the water is ours.”* It is to be noted here, that the quarrel was initiated by the Herdsmen of Gerar, for we read that *“they quarrelled with him.”* So what did Isaac do? Well he named the well *“Esek”* (“contention”) but he does not engage with the men from Gerar. Instead Isaac's servants dig *“another well,”* but unfortunately the herdsmen *“quarrelled over that one also.”*

1431 Isaiah 43:2.

1432 Ecclesiastes 1:9.

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Isaac named this well ***“Sitnah”*** (“strife,” “accusation,” “hatred”) and moves on. Finally, in verse 22 we discover that the third well dug was one the men of Gerar ***“did not quarrel”*** about. Isaac names this ***“Rehoboth,”*** (“wide places,” “streets”) which Isaac explains as favour from the Lord: ***“for now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.”***

So what should we make of these events? Clearly the spiritual imagery has altered. We began by thinking of our need for water – spiritual water. Now however these wells are a source of contention, strife and argument. Should we deduce from this that we ought never to quarrel with those in the world over spiritual matters? Well, of course, worldly people have no understanding of spiritual matters.¹⁴³³ But then also we must note that Jude tells us of the importance of contending earnestly for the faith:

I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.¹⁴³⁴

However Jude was speaking about: ***“certain men”*** who had ***“crept in unnoticed”*** amongst them and who are described as ***“dreamers,” “spots in your love feasts,”*** who ***“serve themselves.”***¹⁴³⁵ In a different context, the apostle Paul warned Timothy to not get involved with foolish quarrels and arguments:

23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. **24** And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.¹⁴³⁶

Clearly we must not strive and argue with people. However it is essential that we stand for the truth and declare it publicly and openly because this is our commission.¹⁴³⁷ When contention and strife arises the best course of action is to avoid it and to walk away just as Isaac does. But what do we do if we seek to preach the gospel in some location, and contention, strife and hatred is whipped up? Should we stop and move on? Or should we stand and keep going? In the great revivals of the eighteenth century, both Whitfield and Wesley preached openly facing down opposition on numerous occasions. The Lord Jesus too withstood opposition. However in this case it would seem that there was no especial reason to contend for the first two wells, and eventually a well was dug over which no contention was to be had. There was room for Isaac and his family. It would seem that on occasion, then, it is not wise to fight for a foothold where the only outcome is bitter disputes and wrangling when we could occupy a different spot blessed of the Lord. The situation we are speaking about was one the Lord made mention of when He sent the twelve out on mission:

1433 1Corinthians 2:14.

1434 Jude 1:3b.

1435 Jude 1:4,8,12.

1436 2Timothy 2:23,24.

1437 Matthew 28:18-20.

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12 And when you go into a household, greet it. 13 If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.¹⁴³⁸

26:23-25.

Whenever we read words like *“he went up from there”* we are meant to understand this in a positive light spiritually speaking. It is the polar opposite of statements where we read of someone going *“down”* to Egypt.¹⁴³⁹ Isaac had sought for living water – that which was necessary for life – and had not been deviated into quarrelling and arguments. Now he travels towards Beersheba which is south east and upwards in elevation. Beersheba was the place where Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant declaring that the well there belonged to Abraham.¹⁴⁴⁰ The very name bears testimony to this event for it means “well of seven” or “well of the oath.” Perhaps Isaac was seeking some assurance at this point after so much contention and strife. And so at this juncture in his journey, the Lord visits him once more. It is interesting that we are told that the Lord came to him *“the same night,”* presumably as he reached Beersheba after a days weary journey. How gracious of the Lord! The Lord does not waste time and brings to Isaac His wonderful word. The Lord brings great encouragement saying:

I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.”¹⁴⁴¹

Three times the Lord speaks to Isaac here introducing Himself as *“I.”* We ought always to be blessed when God reminds us of His self-existence, for He alone is the great “I AM.” He alone can say *“I”* and not fall into wicked pride or arrogance, for He has all power and is full of love. And so the Lord reminds Isaac that He is still the God of Abraham his father even though Abraham had died.¹⁴⁴² Isaac is not to fear because the Lord's very presence is with him, and the blessing given to Abraham is now passed on to Isaac.

Many would argue that because Isaac does not feature nearly as much in the accounts of Genesis as Abraham, Jacob and Joseph do, that this indicates a weaker faith or a lower spiritual state. Such a conclusion might be enhanced by the fact that God blesses Isaac here for *“Abraham's sake.”* Does this show Isaac as being less concerned than his father for God? I do not think so. The Holy Spirit has seen fit to give us the record of Isaac's life such as it is necessary for our walk with God. The key features of Isaac's life seem to be his son-ship (he was the son of promise), his submission to Abraham his father in

1438 Matthew 10:12-14.

1439 Genesis 12:10. See also comments on Genesis 26:2.

1440 Genesis 21:22-34.

1441 Genesis 26:24.

1442 Genesis 25:8.

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the matter of sacrifice, and then this focus on digging wells to seek out living water. Such features are ones we do well to ponder and consider. Are we sons of the living God by promise and supernatural birth (regeneration)? Are we given to God wholly as Paul speaks of in Romans 12:1,2 as living sacrifices? Are we seeking living waters earnestly? That is, are we pursuing deep and lasting knowledge of God?

Isaac's response to the encouragement of the Lord in building an altar is more than simply fitting. This is no mere ritual, for we read further that he *“called on the name of the Lord,”* which phrase indicates both reliance or dependence as well as adoration.¹⁴⁴³ When we think of the incredible things God has done for us why would we not also break out in worship and adoration? We read further that Isaac *“pitched his tent there,”* and then also that his *“servants dug a well.”* It is not surprising that he decided to stop there in view of the blessing he received from the Lord, but it is a little curious that there was need to dig another well. Perhaps the well at Beersheba was in need of repair? Spiritually speaking we note that we cannot simply go back to old experiences for we are always to draw afresh from new supplies of grace. The wells we dig today will not be sufficient for the troubles we face tomorrow.

26:26-31.

Whilst his servants were digging the well, Isaac gets a visit from Abimelech, along with his friend Ahuzzath and the head of his army Phicol. Isaac's first reaction is one of puzzlement. Why have they come, given that they had asked him to depart from them on account of their hatred of him?¹⁴⁴⁴ Now earlier in Genesis Abimelech had come to Abraham bringing only Phicol with him for support. On that occasion the king of Gerar sought an oath of trust from Abraham on account of his fearful deception concerning Sarah whom he said was his sister not his wife.¹⁴⁴⁵ Immediately after this, Abraham remonstrated with Abimelech over the matter of a well which Abimelech's servants had wrongly seized. The two then made a covenant in which it was recognised that the well belonged to Abraham who named the place *“Beersheba,”* as we have had reason to note already.¹⁴⁴⁶ On that occasion it is to be observed that Abimelech opened his conversation with Abraham saying: *“God is with you in all that you do.”*¹⁴⁴⁷ Here Abimelech opens with Isaac in a similar manner: *“we have certainly seen that the Lord is with you.”*¹⁴⁴⁸ Thus in both cases the blessing of the Lord is apparent to those who are outside. Abimelech having sent Isaac away, now wants there to be peace and accord with Isaac! It would seem that the original envy they had experienced has now turned to fear. Abimelech requests that they strike an agreement that Isaac would do them *“no harm.”*¹⁴⁴⁹ The reasons given and the appeal made is all

1443 Genesis 26:25.

1444 Genesis 26:26,27.

1445 Genesis 20:1-18; 21:22,23.

1446 Genesis 21:25-34.

1447 Genesis 21:22.

1448 Genesis 26:28.

1449 Genesis 26:29.

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flummery. But what good had they done to Isaac? What is the record as it stands here? They had quarrelled over the wells he had dug and for envy had sent him packing! But now that they recognise Isaac as “*blessed of the Lord,*” they want some of the blessings too without any of the responsibilities.

What happens next comes as a surprise for Isaac “*made them a feast.*” What should we make of this? Some might say that he ought rather to have sent them away with a stern word for their effrontery. But what we find here is nothing but grace. To those who do not deserve such treatment, hospitality is given. Thus Isaac, the son of promise, the one offered as sacrifice, and the one who sought living water, blesses those who deserve to be treated with contempt. What a marvellous picture of our Saviour's grace and mercy! After rising early they made their compact and Isaac “*sent them away ... in peace.*” Again this is remarkable. And then just as the trio depart, news comes of the success of the servants digging for water. Isaac named the new well “*Shebah*” (“an oath”) because of the oath that had been made.¹⁴⁵⁰ Where grace is offered blessings abound!

1450 Genesis 26:32,33.

Chapter 33.

A problem of deception. (26:34-27:46).

Analysis.

34 When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives

Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite,
and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

35 And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

#27 1 Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him,

“My son.”

And he answered him,

“Here I am.”

2 Then he said,

“Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death.

3 Now therefore, please

take your weapons, your quiver and your bow,
and go out to the field and hunt game for me.

4 And make me savoury food, such as I love,
and bring *it* to me that I may eat,
that my soul may **ble**ss you before I die.”

5 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son.

And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring *it*.

6 So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying,

“Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying,

7 ‘Bring me game and make savoury food for me, that I may eat it and **ble**ss you in the presence of the Lord before my death.’

8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you.

9 Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats,
and I will make savoury food from them for your father, such as he loves.

10 Then you shall take *it* to your father, that he may eat *it*, and that he may **ble**ss you before his death.”

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother,

“Look, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth-skinned man.

12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a **cur**se on myself and not a **ble**ssing.”

13 But his mother said to him,

“Let your **cur**se *be* on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.”

14 And he went and got *them* and brought *them* to his mother, and his mother made savoury food, such as his father loved.

15 Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.

16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

17 Then she gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 So he went to his father and said,

“My father.”

And he said,

“Here I am. Who *are* you, my son?”

19 Jacob said to his father,

“I *am* Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may

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“bless me.”

20 But Isaac said to his son,

“How *is it* that you have found *it* so quickly, my son?”

And he said,

“Because the Lord your God brought *it* to me.”

21 Isaac said to Jacob,

“Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you *are* really my son Esau or not.”

22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said,

“The voice *is* Jacob’s voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.”

23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he **blessed** him.

24 Then he said,

“*Are* you really my son Esau?”

He said,

“*I am.*”

25 He said,

“Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son’s game, so that my soul may **bless** you.”

So he brought *it* near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

26 Then his father Isaac said to him,

“Come near now and kiss me, my son.”

27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and **blessed** him and said:

“surely, the smell of my son *is* like the smell of a field which the Lord has **blessed**.”

28 Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine.

29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. **Cursed** be everyone who **curses** you, and **blessed** be those who **bless** you!”

30 Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished **blessing** Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31 He also had made savoury food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father,

“Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that your soul may **bless** me.”

32 And his father Isaac said to him,

“Who *are* you?”

So he said,

“*I am* your son, your firstborn, Esau.”

33 Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said,

“Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have **blessed** him—and indeed he shall be **blessed**.”

34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father,

“**Bless** me—me also, O my father!”

35 But he said,

“Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your **blessing**.”

36 And *Esau* said,

“Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my **blessing**!”

And he said,

“Have you not reserved a **blessing** for me?”

37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau,

“Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?”

38 And Esau said to his father,

“Have you only one **blessing**, my father? **Bless** me—me also, O my father!”

And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him:

“behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. 40 By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

41 So Esau hated Jacob because of the **blessing** with which his father **blessed** him, and Esau said in his heart,

“The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”

42 And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah.

So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him,

“Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey

my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. **44** And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, **45** until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?"

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac,

"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

The narrative now returns our attention back to Jacob and Esau, whose birth story opened the account according to Jacob.¹⁴⁵¹ On account of the great frequency with which the words: "*bless*," "*blessing*," and "*blessed*" occur, our analysis shows up the fact that the central theme of the text is the blessing of the promise passed down from Abraham. We might title this section: 'how Rebekah sought to ensure the blessing passed to her favourite son Jacob.' In this we are reminded of the way in which Sarah sought to procure the promise of God via Hagar, and we note here that despite man's meddling, God's plans are never thwarted. All that man's interference really procures is sin and further trouble. We are also allowed in to see the problems that ensue through favouritism in family life, where Isaac loved Esau but Rebekah preferred Jacob.

This section begins at Genesis 26:34,35 rather than at Genesis 27:1, because of the symmetry which can be seen comparing these opening verses with the last verse of Genesis 27 (verse 46):

34 When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. **35** And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.¹⁴⁵²

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"¹⁴⁵³

The Hittites, of course, were sons of Heth. Esau was a man of the earth and so it was natural for him to prefer women of the world as supplied by the sons of Heth. Both Rebekah and Isaac found this a great "*grief of mind*" but seemed to do nothing about it except to ensure Jacob did not follow the same path.¹⁴⁵⁴

The whole section recounts the outworking of the prophecy given of the Lord to Rebekah when yet the boys were still in her womb, and is presented to us as a series of conversations. Soap operas of today have nothing in comparison to the twists and turns shown here! After an introduction concerning Esau and his worldly state depicted by his marriage to Hittite women, the first conversation is between Isaac and his favourite son Esau (Genesis 27:1-4). The second conversation occurs between Rebekah and her favourite son Jacob after she overhears the exchange between her husband and Esau (Genesis 27:5-

1451 Genesis 25:19bf.

1452 Genesis 26:34,35.

1453 Genesis 27:46.

1454 Genesis 26:34,35.

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17). The third conversation occurs between Jacob, (who pretends to be Esau), and Isaac in which Jacob tricks his father into giving him the blessing of the firstborn (Genesis 27:18-29). The fourth conversation occurs at the moment when Esau returns from hunting and goes to his father for the blessing he was expecting (Genesis 27:30-40). The last part deals with the aftermath of the whole debacle in which Rebekah seeks to gain safety for Jacob and uses further deception to get it (Genesis 27:41-46).

[1] Esau's marriages. (Genesis 26:34,35).

Recall that Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah (2148 AC), but he was sixty when Esau and Jacob were born (2168 AC).¹⁴⁵⁵ As we have pointed out, Genesis 26:1-33 describes events before the birth of Rebekah's two very different sons. That chapter focused attention on Isaac and his faith in God. But now we come to the time when Esau (and thence also Jacob because they were twins) was forty years old, Isaac being now 100 (2208 AC). Esau has already been described as a thoroughly earthly man in Genesis 25.¹⁴⁵⁶ This worldly and carnal nature is displayed here in the manner of Esau's choice of wives. He was forty years old which was the same age as his father when he married Rebekah. But the difference is that Isaac had a wife selected for him by God. Esau merely *“took”* his choice of women with no thought of what God might say. From their names they seem to have been of great earthly account. The name *“Judith”* means “praised” as it is the feminine form of the name Judah. There is also a possibility that Judith spoke Hebrew as her name can signify the Jewish language. She was the daughter of *“Beeri”* whose name means “my well.” Hence Esau was to drink of the earthly delights of a woman whose praise was equally of this earth. The name *“Basemath”* means “spice” and can signify “sweet smelling” or “fragrance.” Perhaps she was one adorned by perfumes and spices to entice and seduce? The name of her father (*“Elon”*) stands for an “oak,” or a “terebinth” tree and suggests great strength. So in choosing such wives Esau is acting according to his (fallen) nature. That which was highly praised in this world (Judith) and that which was born of strength and fully of the sweet smell of success (Basemath).

Both women were a *“grief of mind,”* to Isaac and Rebekah. The word *“mind”* is actually the word most often rendered as *“spirit”* in Hebrew. Thus despite their differences and their preferences, Esau's wives caused grief and consternation in the spirit of both Isaac and Rebekah.

[2] Conversation 1: Isaac seeks to bless Esau. (Genesis 27:1-4).

27:1.

Isaac is described in this section as being advanced in age to the point where his eyes no longer functioned well. However the way in which this feature of Isaac's advancing age is described, leads us to

1455 Genesis 25:20,26.

1456 Genesis 25:24-34.

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consider it in more spiritual terms. The story hinges upon Isaac not being able to see his sons clearly, but in saying that *“his eyes were so dim that he could not see,”* the emphasis is on his blindness rather than simply an inability to see his sons.¹⁴⁵⁷ Isaac was not just blind physically, he was also blind spiritually. At the start of this book (according to Jacob) we are told in no uncertain terms that Rachel was given a word from the Lord concerning the two boys she was carrying.¹⁴⁵⁸ In fact after she noted something untoward in her womb, she actually *“went to inquire of the Lord.”*¹⁴⁵⁹ From this, it would appear that she had a meeting with the pre-incarnate Lord at some place unknown to us. Now when she visited with the Lord, we read that:

... the Lord said to her: “Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.”¹⁴⁶⁰

Recalling this beginning, it is striking that Isaac makes no mention of it at all, and his intention clearly in this account is to favour the older son Esau. Rebekah clearly recalls the word that the Lord had told her because she hatches the plan to ensure the younger son Jacob gains the blessing, but nowhere do we find her speaking to Isaac to remind him of this word from the Lord. Thus the word of the Lord is disdained. It is forgotten and passed over by Isaac, and it is belittled by Rebekah's attempts at making the word come true through her own efforts. And so in his blindness Isaac calls Esau to his side.

27:2-4.

We have seen Isaac's faith and worship of God in the previous chapter. What is so striking here is that there is no mention of the Lord, or of coming to Him, at this point. Isaac knows that he is old and is fast approaching the end. He does not know when his life may be required of him, but such a thought should have lead him to recognise the sovereignty of God, and thence to adopt a humbler attitude in dispensing blessings. Remember that Rebekah had been told by the Lord that the older son would serve the younger.¹⁴⁶¹ This information should have been something which motivated their parenting and this blessing, but it does not. This is surprising. Instead, Isaac simply shows his bias and favouritism, and thus he asks Esau to go and hunt game for a tasty meal. Now verse 3 highlights the hunt and the weapons. There is a casting of our sight back to Nimrod who is described as the *“mighty hunter.”*¹⁴⁶² I do not mean to suggest by making this connection that Esau was as Nimrod wholly, but simply that his interest is only

1457 Genesis 27:1.

1458 Genesis 25:22,23; 37:2.

1459 Genesis 25:22.

1460 Genesis 25:22,23.

1461 Genesis 25:23.

1462 Genesis 10:25.

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of *this world*. Isaac is simply after “*savoury food*” which is his great love, and his interest seems to be mainly his stomach.

[3] Conversation 2: Rebekah hatches her plan. (Genesis 27:5-17).

27:5.

Whilst Isaac is with Esau and asking him to hunt for game for a tasty meal, Rebekah “*was listening*” in. What volumes are revealed in this simple statement! It may be that she was simply in another part of their tent and overheard the conversation quite innocently. But even if that were the case why then did she not confront her husband in a gracious manner and remind him of the prophecy the Lord gave her as the twins were being born? From her latter actions it is clear that she believed the prophecy, That she did not speak to her husband about it is indicative of a very sorry state in this family.

At the end of verse 5 we are informed that Esau goes off to hunt game for his father and in this statement we see an element of what we might call “works righteousness.” Before Esau can procure the blessing he must bring a tasty meal for his father.

27:6-10.

As Esau gears up for the hunt and sets off, Rebekah moves into action. The fact that she now “*spoke to Jacob her son*” is suggestive of a serious divide in this family.¹⁴⁶³ Why did she not remonstrate with Isaac as we have already noted? Rebekah reports to Jacob the words of Isaac spoken to Esau. What is interesting in her speech to Jacob is what she adds and subtracts. Naturally she omits all the references to the hunting gear described in verse 3 – these are details only those who have a penchant for such activities relish! What she does emphasise is the food aspect, for she opens her report of Isaac's words by mentioning the fact that Isaac had said “*bring me game and make savoury food, that I may eat it,*” thus showing that Isaac had more than a mere interest in the good things of this world.¹⁴⁶⁴ But then she adds more and it is worth showing the slight difference between what Isaac actually said and how she reports it:

Isaac says: ... that my soul my bless you before I die.¹⁴⁶⁵

Rebekah reports: ... and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.¹⁴⁶⁶

1463 Genesis 27:6.

1464 Genesis 27:7.

1465 Genesis 27:4.

1466 Genesis 27:7.

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What can we conclude here? Isaac seems to have no thought of the Lord God at all. Nowhere in his conversation do we read of the Lord, but Rebekah adds these words because the promise to her in her pregnancy must have been uppermost in her mind. She remembers that the Lord had told her that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob).¹⁴⁶⁷ Now Rebekah assumes that Isaac is going to bless Esau *“in the presence of the Lord,”* but from Isaac's words we rather get the feeling that this old blind man has forgotten God.

Rebekah has made her plan and now seeks Jacob as accomplice. It is very interesting that she uses the phrase *“my son,”* a phrase which emphasises the divide in the family.¹⁴⁶⁸ Had Isaac disowned Jacob? Probably not from what transpires later on. However Jacob was most definitely Rebekah's boy just as Esau was Isaac's. In verses 8 to 10 we have the plan of Rebekah outlined. Verse 8 is a rousing appeal to Jacob to do as he is told by his mother. The first thing Rebekah does is to arrest Jacob's attention. From these words we get the idea that in Rebekah's mind things are progressing rapidly and action is required before it is too late. If Isaac blesses Esau what then of the prophecy given to her during her pregnancy? Of course what is missing here is trust in God! Is God moved or startled by these actions of Isaac? Of course not! But Rebekah seems to think that unless she does something quickly all will be lost.

The question we pause to ask at this point is: where is their trust and faith in God? Now it seems as though Rebekah at least acknowledges the Lord's rule in her reporting of Isaac's words to Jacob. But she does not think that the Lord is going to do anything about the blessing being delivered to Esau instead of Isaac. She has no faith that the Lord would overrule Isaac's forgetting of God and the prophecy. So she takes things into her own hands. How we need to grasp these things clearly! When God promises something we have no need, (let alone any right), to help Him out or engineer things to ensure they are done right. Our task is simply to obey God fully and wait upon Him. I am reminded of the occasion when Samuel told Saul to wait until he arrived so that the sacrifice could be offered. Instead, Saul was impatient because the people started to drift away and so he proceeded without Samuel's presence.¹⁴⁶⁹ Samuel rebuked Saul telling him that he had disobeyed the Lord's commands, and, as a consequence, the kingdom would be passed to someone else.¹⁴⁷⁰ When we disregard what God has spoken and think we know better, or imagine that we have the right to act in ways we deem to be acceptable to the Lord, we are on very dangerous ground. What the Lord God requires is humble people who tremble at His word.¹⁴⁷¹ The Lord wants those who will do all His will in loving obedience, because He is God and He knows best. Rebekah thinks she is doing what is right in securing the blessing for Jacob as prophesied. But she is not! She is acting out of her own mind. She may be displaying faith in what God had revealed to her – that Jacob

1467 Genesis 25:33.

1468 Genesis 27:8,13.

1469 1Samuel 13:8-10.

1470 1Samuel 13:13,14.

1471 Isaiah 57:15; 66:2,5.

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would receive the blessing – but her actions are not borne out of faith and love to God. It is as well to recall here the New Testament teaching that we are to put on as our armour the *“breastplate of righteousness”* (which comes from faith), but which is also designated in another letter of Paul's as a *“breastplate of faith and love.”*¹⁴⁷² In other words our righteous acts must be borne of faith intermingled with love. If Rebekah had remembered love here she would have done things very differently. Where, we might ask, was her love for Esau? It seems as though she has respect and love for Isaac, but there seems no love at all for Esau.

Jacob is thus asked to select *“two choice kids of the goats”* for Rebekah to make a tasty meal that Isaac would love.¹⁴⁷³ He is then to go into Isaac to present the meal before his father.¹⁴⁷⁴ This is a plan devised by Rebekah but carried out (in the main) by her son. Rebekah knew what food Isaac loved, but for this plan to work Jacob must be the one to come with the fare.

27:11-17.

But there was a problem. Up until now the plan hinged on the fact that Isaac was very nearly blind. Jacob points out to his mother that although they were twins, the two were very dissimilar. It is likely, therefore, that Esau and Jacob were not identical twins but made from two separate eggs. Now Esau was *“hairy”* but Jacob was *“smooth-skinned.”*¹⁴⁷⁵ Surely Isaac is likely to notice the difference when he embraced his son?¹⁴⁷⁶ It is highly significant that Jacob notes here that if Isaac were to touch him the deception would fail. Jacob is thus fully aware of the fact that they were engaged in deception and lies. In which case would Isaac still bless him and not rather curse him? Perhaps Isaac had no regard for Jacob? Is it possible here that whilst Isaac favoured Esau and Rebekah preferred Jacob, each parent had an equal dislike for the other child (Isaac being indifferent to Jacob and Rebekah being indifferent to Esau)? I think such a conclusion is most likely. Thus Jacob fears that were the deception to be uncovered all would be lost. Where is faith? Rebekah surely has faith in the prophecy but that is all. Both her and her son seem not to trust to God in the outworking of His own words concerning the blessing coming to Jacob.

Rebekah is unmoved and commands her son to simply obey her for the moment. The call from Rebekah is to focus precisely on what she has asked for, for she says: *“only obey my voice.”*¹⁴⁷⁷ Jacob was to be totally obedient and was not to worry about other issues. This is ironic! They failed here to fully trust in the Lord that **His word** would come to pass. They failed to obey God fully and wait to see how He

1472 Ephesians 6:14; 1Thessalonians 5:8.

1473 Genesis 27:9.

1474 Genesis 27:10.

1475 Genesis 27:11.

1476 Genesis 27:12.

1477 Genesis 27:13.

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would make His word come true. Instead they take things into their own hands, but Rebekah is telling Jacob not to worry about the issue of touch and skin, but to simply do as she asks. Now if they had adopted such an attitude with regard to the Lord, they would have seen the blessing come to Jacob despite Isaac's folly in seeking to bless the worldly minded Esau. How? We have no idea how this might have played out in the event that Rebekah and Jacob trusted to God, but we know without a doubt that God can easily bring about His word in any way He chooses. Jacob fears a curse were the deception to be revealed, but Rebekah passes this worry away by saying *“let your curse be on me,”* thus owning that the plan was all hers.¹⁴⁷⁸

To get around the problem of the hairy/smooth skin issue, Rebekah made Jacob wear Esau's *“choice clothes”* so that he would smell like Esau, and instructed him to put the *“skins of the kids of the goats”* onto his hands and neck in case Isaac actually touched him.¹⁴⁷⁹ Rebekah now feels confident that all bases were covered. The savoury food that Isaac loves is prepared, Jacob is wearing Esau's clothes and is covered in goat skin to appear hairy rather than smooth. What could go wrong? We shall learn later that the one thing they missed was the voice. Jacob sounded nothing like Esau. The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry!¹⁴⁸⁰ Now in this case the deception held, but that was by the design of God and not through the ingenuity of Rebekah. Suitably prepared, Jacob, arrayed in false clothing and deceptive coverings, takes choice food to swindle the blessing from his father.

[4] Conversation 3: Jacob deceives his father. (Genesis 27:18-29).

27:18,19.

Jacob (dressed as Esau) approaches Isaac. At once we note the very precariousness of the situation. Jacob addresses his father with respect but Isaac is unsure whom is speaking *“who are you my son?”*¹⁴⁸¹ Now I would imagine there might be confusion given his poor eyesight. However I venture to suggest that since Jacob and Esau were so different, and the differences were not all physical but in terms of character and disposition as well, on most occasions when one or other came in Isaac would be pretty sure who was who. My own children all have very different characteristics and when they loom large it is generally quite easy to know one from another. Our eldest is Speedy Gonzalez on speed! Our second is the exact opposite but you know her presence everywhere as she casts her belongings all over the place. The other three are equally special but I forbear to elaborate to save the reader from my digressions and my children from embarrassment. The point is that even though Isaac was nearly blind, he may well have

1478 Genesis 27:13.

1479 Genesis 27:15.

1480 I always thought this saying came from John Steinbeck and his book “Of Mice and men.” But it seems the saying is adapted from a line in “To a Mouse” by Robert Burns. (“The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley”).

1481 Genesis 27:18.

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had some inkling of the different entrances of each of his two sons. The hunter with his game making an entrance would surely be very different from the *“mild man”* who loved being at home.¹⁴⁸²

But deception is afoot. Jacob is dressed in Esau's clothes and covered with goat skins, and Rebekah has made the kind of food that Isaac would drool over. Thus the approach of Isaac (as Esau) caused Isaac some confusion (*“who are you my son”*).¹⁴⁸³ What is Jacob (as Esau) to do? Well he does what comes naturally to him. He lies. Let us pause to consider exactly what Jacob states here. He declares himself to be Esau Isaac's firstborn, and he says that he obeyed his father's command to hunt game and to prepare savoury food.¹⁴⁸⁴ None of these things were true. Not only was he not Esau, but he had not hunted anything, and neither had he prepared any food. Jacob (heel holder) comes to Isaac (he laughs) with another's clothes and identity, and another's offering for a blessing.¹⁴⁸⁵ This scenario reminds us of the wonderful fact that we come to Him who laughs in heaven at the scoffing rebellious kings (i.e. the Lord God Almighty), and we come in borrowed raiment and covering (given through Christ and His death and resurrection) to receiving the blessing of eternal life.¹⁴⁸⁶ But unlike with Jacob our approach is wholly justified and fully acceptable.

27:20,21.

Isaac is still not sure and he queries Jacob (as Esau) as to how the game has come to him so speedily.¹⁴⁸⁷ Jacob responds with another lie which includes taking God's name in vain. He tells Isaac that *“the Lord your God”* aided him by bringing the game to him!¹⁴⁸⁸ It is curious that the Lord's name is invoked here, presumably to make an impression upon his father. Isaac is still unsure and so next he asks Jacob (presenting as Esau) to come close so that he could touch him.¹⁴⁸⁹ We can see that Isaac is unconvinced of this son's identity by his explanation of why he wanted to touch him: *“whether you are really my son Esau or not.”*¹⁴⁹⁰ At this point the conman's ruse is open to defeat! Will the goat skins do their deceptive work? Well it seems as though they did, but it was to be a close call because we hear Isaac declare: *“the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”*¹⁴⁹¹ Rebekah had not thought about her son's voice! There is still doubt in Isaac's mind, and yet it seems also that Isaac is sufficiently convinced now that this was Esau rather than Jacob, despite his misgivings over the voice. How do we explain this? Well we must understand that God's way and plan will always proceed despite the

1482 Genesis 25:27.

1483 Genesis 27:18.

1484 Genesis 27:19.

1485 Jacob's name means “heel holder” (or “supplanter”) signifying deception, and Isaac's name means “he laughs.”

1486 Psalm 2:1,4; John 3:15; 6:54; 14:6; Hebrews 7:25.

1487 Genesis 27:20.

1488 Genesis 27:20.

1489 Genesis 27:21.

1490 Genesis 27:21.

1491 Genesis 27:22.

interference from man. Imagine if Isaac had uncovered the deception. Would he then have blessed Isaac? We cannot say. It might have been that such would cause him to repent of his folly in seeking to bless Esau. Or it might have entrenched his determination to continue in blessing the older son. Whatever the case, the goodness and perfection of God rides way above the machinations and despicable actions of men. I imagine that Jacob thought he had got away with it. He is yet to realise that he will pay for this deception in the future in the matter of the choice of his wife.

27:23-29.

Isaac *“did not recognize”* Jacob presenting as Esau, but only because of the goat skin on his hands.¹⁴⁹² Even though these were convincing to Isaac he asks again *“are you really my son Esau?”*¹⁴⁹³ Jacob had another opportunity to speak truth here and to confess, but instead he continues with the deception. On hearing this Isaac asks for the food, and it is in this request of Isaac's that we see the main driving force for his wish and impetus to bless. Isaac asks for the food *“so that my soul may bless you.”*¹⁴⁹⁴ The blessing was Esau's in Isaac's mind because of his hunting skill and food delivery – an earned inheritance! Jacob (as Esau) brings the food along with wine and Isaac asks his son to draw near to kiss him.¹⁴⁹⁵ Jacob (as Esau) comes and kisses Isaac and at this Isaac could smell Esau's clothes and blesses him. From this response it is clear that what impresses Isaac is the open life, the field, and the hunt, for this is the first time in this entire encounter that the Lord's name is used by the patriarch (*“a field which the Lord has blessed”*).¹⁴⁹⁶ The deception is done, and the blessing follows or flows. It comes in three parts. First there is the call for God to bless, then a statement of authority, and finally the declaration of a blessing and a curse:

[1] The call of God to bless:	May God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. (v28).
[2] A statement of authority:	Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. (v29)
[3] A declaration of blessing and curse.	Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!” (v29).

1492 Genesis 27:23.
1493 Genesis 27:24.
1494 Genesis 27:25.
1495 Genesis 27:26.
1496 Genesis 27:27.

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What is entailed in this blessing includes all the promises given to Abraham, but it is presented more as the passing on of a father's bequest. The recipient is to be lord of all, the one who is over the father's estate, and is to be seen as the one favoured of God. This blessing must be compared with the one given later when Isaac sent Jacob to Padan Aram to get a wife.¹⁴⁹⁷ There are some important differences which we shall consider when we reach that point in the narrative.

[5] Conversation 4: Esau comes for his blessing. (Genesis 27:30-40).

27:34,35.

Isaac has barely finished blessing Jacob (as Esau), who then departs, when the real Esau arrives.¹⁴⁹⁸ The Hebrew is clear. It was at that **very moment** in time (*“now it happened, as soon as”*) that the blessing had fallen and Jacob (as Esau) left Isaac's presence, that Esau enters the tent. Now nothing happens by chance or outside of God's control. We are meant then, to understand that God allowed this whole thing to play its course. Esau might have come sooner as the deception was being played out. He may have come before Rebekah and Jacob could enact their plans. Neither of these things were allowed. Instead Jacob's deception is played out and then Esau comes but it is too late.

Esau comes in from his hunting expedition and he prepares food for his father such as he would like. Esau's entrance and speech show his love for Isaac: *“let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me.”*¹⁴⁹⁹ Isaac asks whom this son is, to which Esau replies (truthfully) that he was the firstborn son, Esau.¹⁵⁰⁰ The deception is now revealed and as a consequence we learn that Isaac is extremely frightened and afraid. The Hebrew is over the top it would seem, for literally we have: “and Isaac trembled, trembling greatly, even to abundance.” Some translations say that Isaac trembled with violence.¹⁵⁰¹ So Isaac was greatly afraid here. He was not angry or in a rage, but was all of a sudden deeply terrified. So much so that he splutters in fear asking whom he dispensed the blessing upon. At this point he is totally unaware that Jacob had pretended to be Esau.¹⁵⁰² Now just as Isaac trembled to excess, we also read of Esau shrieking or crying out bitterly to an equal measure of excess.¹⁵⁰³ A comparison of the two statements made by Isaac and Esau is shown below.

1497 Genesis 28:3,4.

1498 Genesis 27:30.

1499 Genesis 27:31.

1500 Genesis 27:32.

1501 Genesis 27:33, NASB.

1502 Genesis 27:33.

1503 Genesis 27:34.

Genesis 27:33:

וַיִּתְרַד יִצְחָק תְּרַדָּה גְדֹלָה עַד-מְאֹד

and he trembled Isaac trembling with excess greatly even to abundance

Genesis 27:34:

וַיִּצְעַק יִצְחָק צַעֲקָה גְדֹלָה וּמְרָה עַד-מְאֹד

and he shrieked [with] a shriek greatly and bitterly even to abundance

It can be seen from the Hebrew of Genesis 27:33 that the fear Isaac experienced was excessive. Isaac not only *“trembled,”* but also he was *“trembling with excess,”* and this was *“greatly even to abundance.”* In like manner Esau's response is equally over the top as shown by a similar emphatic presentation in the Hebrew.

Esau in utter horror pleads with Isaac for a blessing, but the situation is unrecoverable. The blessing has been dispensed upon Jacob the deceiver, and *“indeed he shall be blessed,”* because, as a result of his deception, he *“has taken away”* the blessing that Isaac could give.¹⁵⁰⁴

27:36-39.

The deception has been uncovered. Jacob *“came with deceit,”* and now Esau exposes his character recalling the events that have passed.¹⁵⁰⁵ Esau's reporting of the first occasion where Jacob deceived him is not completely accurate. Esau sold the birthright to Jacob.¹⁵⁰⁶ However, from Esau's statement here it would also seem that Jacob forced Esau into a corner taking advantage of the latter's weakness for food. Is there not a blessing for Esau? Isaac's response shows that the blessing once given is irrevocable. The word spoken cannot easily be recalled or altered. In modern times we spill words and promises with no thought to honour or justice, but in these days of which we speak the word spoken was sacrosanct. So Isaac tells Esau that Jacob is now *“master”* and lord over his estate. All must answer to Jacob as head of the house, and all the supplies of grain and wine (provisions to sustain and for trade) are under his jurisdiction and control.¹⁵⁰⁷ Having given Jacob the right to rule and to be head of the house, what could be done now for Esau? Esau responds by asking if Isaac has but a single blessing, and calls in exasperation for (at least) some blessing to be dispensed his way.¹⁵⁰⁸ Esau ends his appeals with many tears! This is ever the way with those of this world who seek a blessing that focuses on earth. They hope for the blessing but end up receiving nothing.¹⁵⁰⁹ But instead, Isaac now turns to prophecy. He declares

1504 Genesis 27:33,35.

1505 Genesis 27:35,36.

1506 Genesis 25:33.

1507 Genesis 27:37.

1508 Genesis 27:37,38.

1509 Genesis 27:39.

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with a “*behold*” and speaks of what will befall Esau in the future.¹⁵¹⁰ The blessing has been given to Jacob and so, as a result, Esau's future is now set. He is to dwell and be sustained from “*the fatness of the earth,*” and from “*the dew of heaven.*” In other words, he is to make his own way in the world rather than receive from the blessings of inheritance from Isaac. As he roams this world he will also be in need of a “*sword*” to defend his cause, but he will still come under the jurisdiction of Jacob to whom he must do obeisance. Then there will come a point where he will “*break his yoke from his neck*” as a result of his “*restless*” nature. Such is the ways of this world where advantages are sought and fought over in continual displays of power and dominance.

[6] The aftermath. (Genesis 27:41-46).

27:41-45.

The outcomes of this sorry tale are now detailed in verses 41 to 45. First, Esau now “*hated Jacob*” because of his deception and the fact that he conned him of the blessing.¹⁵¹¹ As soon as Isaac passes away Esau has decided to despatch Jacob as well. To some extent we might have sympathy with Esau. However his display of emotion (which was extreme to say the least) and his bent for earthly pleasures lead to the idea that he would not be deserving of the blessing Isaac intended to give him. Next we learn that Rebekah overhears her son's rants and she informs Jacob.¹⁵¹² Rebekah having planned the deception in the first place, now sets to and organises the follow-up plan to deal with the repercussions of the original plan. This type of thing always comes from mankind's schemes and plans. What all seems so easy and straight forward at the start always ends up with alterations or new plans and schemes to deal with the fallout. How fallen we are! How stupid we are to think that we can plan and execute good and wholesome plans! I do not mean to say we stop planning things! We do need to plan, but here there is simply no recourse or calling to the Lord. In marked contrast God's plans are always perfect accomplishing precisely what He intended.

Rebekah knows that Esau is bent on killing Jacob at this very moment, but she also knows that he is all heat and fire. Such raw emotion, although it may not completely subside, will reduce and be placated in time, for Esau seems to forget things.¹⁵¹³ And so she intends to organise Jacob to avert such disaster. Notice in verse 43 we have the same tone of voice in Rebekah's instructions – the words in the Hebrew are identical:

1510 Genesis 27:39.

1511 Genesis 27:41.

1512 Genesis 27:42

1513 Genesis 27:42,45.

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Genesis 27:8 & 43:

וְעַתָּה בְנִי שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי
now therefore my son obey my voice

The instructions are as follows:

1. Arise and flee to uncle Laban (Rebekah's brother) in Haran (v43).
2. Stay with Laban *“a few days”* until Esau's anger subsides when he forgets the details (v44,45).
3. Then Rebekah will send word after Esau's anger has subsided to bring her boy home (v45).

Rebekah cannot bear the thought that when her husband Isaac passes, Esau would immediately kill Jacob so that she would be *“bereaved ... of both in one day.”*¹⁵¹⁴ Can fleeing from the situation resolve the family problems? Rebekah is trying to make the most of difficult circumstances (as she sees them) but there appears no godly nor faithful behaviour in evidence. Rebekah does not realise, at this point, that Jacob will away for many years to come. What seems like a few days away will turn out to be a much longer separation.

Now in reading these words of Rebekah's we cannot help but be reminded of another situation where there is a turning away of anger and wrath. Those words: *“until ... anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done”* speak of the Lord's redemption in Christ and the forgetfulness of God for sins committed. There is no direct allusion or reference to Calvary here, but when we read such words we ought always to remember Christ's great and wonderful work. Rebekah seeks to deliver Jacob from the wrath of Esau, but Christ has averted and diverted the wrath due to us so that God no longer remembers our sins! How great is our God!

27:46.

At the end of this section Rebekah speaks to Isaac to secure the outcome of her plan to save Jacob. It would appear that Esau's Hittite wives were the cause of much irritation. To say that you are weary of your life because of another indicates a situation where normal life cannot proceed. You try to do what you need to do, or what you want to do, but things (and people) around you prevent you from completing such tasks. Rebekah could not face Jacob taking a Hittite wife. The thought was despicable. Now we will not learn of what Isaac does until we reach Genesis 28, but we note here that Rebekah is operating in a

¹⁵¹⁴ Genesis 27:45.

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deeply underhand way. She speaks openly to Jacob about the danger and the plans, but to her own husband (who ought to be in command) she hides all of her plans and simply moans about the Hittite women! She puts it to Isaac that if Jacob takes a Hittite woman for his wife, then how will this be good for her life? Note here that she is concerned about her life (twice we read the expression “*my life*” in verse 46), not about the Lord's honour or her own son's future. What does Rebekah want here? It seems she wants a good and quiet life. The daughters of Heth cause problems because of their culture and (most probably) their false religious worship. They are called “*daughters of the land.*” The word given as “*land*” is actually the Hebrew word: אֶרֶץ *'erets*, which is often given as “*earth*” representing the globe. Here the choice of “*land*” is fine but in our culture the term “earth” has a connotation separating it from heaven. To be earthly or “down-to-earth” means to be worldly and not spiritual. Hence this description should be set in opposition to the phrase “*daughters of Zion*” or “*daughters of Jerusalem*” used elsewhere where the reference is to spiritually minded peoples.¹⁵¹⁵

¹⁵¹⁵ Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5,10,11; 5:8,16; 8:4; Isaiah 3:16,17; 4:4. In Isaiah the phrase “*daughters of Zion*” is used to censure the people for their sin – they should have been better.

Chapter 34.

Jacob goes away. (28:1-22).

Analysis.

#28 1 Then Isaac called Jacob

and **blessed** him,
and charged him,
and said to him:

“You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

2 Arise, go

to **Padan Aram**,

to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father;

and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.

3 “May God Almighty

bless you,
and make you fruitful
and multiply you,

that you may be an assembly of peoples;

4 And give you the **blessing** of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you,

that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”

5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went

to **Padan Aram**,

to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

6 Esau saw

that Isaac had **blessed** Jacob and sent him away to **Padan Aram** to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he **blessed** him he gave him a charge, saying,

“You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”

7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to **Padan Aram**.

8 Also Esau saw

that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.

9 So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set.

And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

12 Then he dreamed,

and behold,

a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 And behold,

the Lord stood above it and said:

“I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac;
the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be **blessed**.

15 Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land;
for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

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16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said,
“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know *it*.”
17 And he was afraid and said,
“How awesome *is* this place!
This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!”
18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.
19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.
20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying,
“If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. 22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Genesis 28 tells us the history of Jacob's departure from the murderous hands of his brother Esau whom he had deceived. It falls neatly into three parts as follows:

- [1] Isaac blesses Jacob and sends him to get a wife from his own relatives. (Genesis 28:1-5).
- [2] Esau marries wives of Ishmael. (Genesis 28:6-9).
- [3] Jacob departs and has a dream at Bethel on the way. (Genesis 28:10-21).

[1] Isaac is sent away to gain a wife. (Genesis 28:1-5).

If all we had before us was Genesis 28:1-5 we might be tempted to think that Isaac always intended to give Jacob the blessing, but the events we have considered prior to this have shown us the sorry interplay within Isaac's family. Jacob gained the blessing deceptively and Esau was livid. And yet another important aspect of the narrative is illustrated by the differences between these two twins. Esau the man of the earth, the hunter who loved his comforts (food). Jacob a home-boy who had some interest in heavenly things.

28:1,2.

The statement of verse 1 indicates a formal blessing from father to son. Jacob is not just “*blessed*,” but is “*charged*” as well. The latter term signifies a commission or an appointment. Jacob is given this important task to carry out. The express instruction to not take a wife of the “*daughters of Canaan*” comes amidst the backdrop of Esau's doing exactly that.

Instead Jacob is called to “*arise*” and to go to “*Padan Aram*” which was the region around which Haran was sited. The name signifies a plain or perhaps a region of pasture land where shepherds fed their flocks. Now wherever we see such a call to “*arise*” we are always lead to think in terms of the resurrection. Here, of course, the primary meaning is for Jacob to get up and to go forth, but we must not forget that the Holy Spirit has put this word here to remind us that we now go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the power of the resurrection of Christ. We “*arise*” in newness of life. With regard to

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Jacob, although he has an interest in the birthright and the prophecy given to his mother when she was carrying the twins, it is unlikely that he is yet a true believer. And so Jacob is told to go to Haran to meet up with Laban and take a wife from his daughters, for Laban was Rebekah's brother born of Bethuel the son of Nahor the brother of Abraham, and the son of Terah.¹⁵¹⁶

28:3-5.

In verses 3 and 4 the blessing of God is pronounced upon Jacob and the content of these verses brings us back to statements made to both Isaac and Abraham. First we note that it is *“God Almighty”* that is the source of blessing. This is only the second time we come across the title *“Almighty,”* which indicates that He is most powerful and able to do all He pleases. Thus Isaac refers Jacob to the Creator God whom is able to do all things, for nothing is too hard for Him.¹⁵¹⁷ Isaac calls upon God Almighty to make his son *“fruitful”* and to *“multiply”* him so that he may be *“an assembly of peoples.”* Earlier the promises were simply expressed in terms of great numbers (stars and sand on the seashore), but here there is the idea of a gathering of people who would share common interests rather than simply be beyond counting.¹⁵¹⁸ In this we may see the idea of church being foreshadowed.

In verse 4 a direct reference is made to the original blessing given to Abraham. Both parts are referenced. First there is mention of Abraham's seed and his descendants: *“to you and your descendants with you.”*¹⁵¹⁹ But then second there is mention of the land as well: *“that you may inherit the land ... which God gave to Abraham.”*¹⁵²⁰ Thus the promise given to Abraham is now passed on to Jacob. This is over and above the blessing of birthright which is usually given to the firstborn but which Jacob conned from his older brother Esau. Despite his failings, Isaac has passed the blessing he received from his father Abraham, onto the promised son Jacob. Recall that Rebekah had received word from the Lord during her pregnancy that the *“older shall serve the younger.”*¹⁵²¹ For some reason in his wanting to bless Esau, Isaac seems to have forgotten this important information, but now, to his credit, he owns the truth and complies with the right order of things.

Thus Jacob sets off to *“Padan Aram”* where his relatives dwelt.¹⁵²² It is noteworthy that the text reiterates the names for us. Jacob was to go to his uncle Laban who was brother to his mother Rebekah.

1516 Genesis 22:20-24.

1517 Genesis 17:1; 18:14.

1518 Genesis 22:17; 26:4.

1519 Compare Genesis 12:1-3.

1520 Compare Genesis 12:7.

1521 Genesis 25:23.

1522 Genesis 28:5.

[2] Ishmael marries again! (Genesis 28:6-9).

28:6-9.

The curious thing about these four verses is that they act as a continual backdrop to the main events which centre around Jacob. We are never allowed to forget that Esau was Jacob's brother whose sole interest was this world, or the earth rather than heaven. Twice we are informed that “*Esau saw*” certain things.¹⁵²³ This is significant because Esau represents the worldly man whose eyes are the sole drive and motivation for his inner desire. So what did Esau see? Well three things are revealed:

[i] That Jacob was blessed by Isaac and commanded to take a wife from their relatives (v6).

[ii] That Jacob obeyed his parents and had set off to Padan Aram (v7).

[iii] That the daughters of Canaan did not please Isaac (v8).

We are not told that Esau was present when Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him away. It does not seem likely that this was so because Esau was in a rage and wanted to murder Jacob. At the end of Genesis 27 Rebekah convinces Isaac to send Jacob away because of Esau's choices of wives but really Rebekah wants to ensure Esau does not do away with her precious son.¹⁵²⁴ And so Isaac sends Jacob away and Esau gets word of this. He observed or realised that Jacob was sent away, that Jacob obeyed his parents, and that the reason Jacob was sent away, (or at least part of the reason) was that Esau's wives were an irritant to Rebekah and Isaac.¹⁵²⁵ So what does Esau do next?

We read in verse 9 that Esau goes to Ishmael and takes a wife from him named “*Mahalath*,” who was sister to “*Nebajoth*” as an “*addition to the wives he had*.” The name “*Mahalath*” means “harp,” or “wind instrument.” However the name is identical to a musical term found in the headings of Psalm 53 and 88. Since there is also a connection with both dancing and sickness, it is thought that the name means a lament or sad song. The name “*Nebajoth*” means “high places,” or (possibly) “fruitfulness.” There is some thought that it may be connected to the idea of (false) prophesy due to a similarity in structure to the word for a prophet. Perhaps by going to Ishmael, who was Abraham's son by Hagar, Esau thought that he might mollify his parents. Perhaps Mahalath was a noted singer of laments whilst Nebajoth her brother was noted for oracles or wise sayings? Thus it may be that Esau sought to appease his parents by choosing a wife from Ishmael. On the other hand it may be that he simply reacted in pique and annoyance at the situation and chose another wife to please himself and spite his parents. The exact motivation is unknown. However the action is placed here to show how a man of this world responds. If it was a choice

1523 Genesis 28:6,8.

1524 Genesis 27:46.

1525 Genesis 26:34,35; 27:46.

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aimed at pleasing his parents by selecting from among their distant relatives rather than from the foreigners in Canaan, it was unlikely really to please Isaac. Remember that Isaac was mocked by Ishmael at his weaning party.¹⁵²⁶ In the same way the pathetic compromises made by people of the world in concession to the godly always fall short. People of this world have no idea at all about the things of God, and their offer of trying to appease or make friends with the godly have little really to commend them. However, if it was simply to do as he pleased, (for Mahalath was clearly an earthly delight in some way), in reaction to being treated badly, it would just add to his problems. Isaac and Rebekah were weary of Esau's wives and this choice from Ishmael's house was hardly likely to make things any better. Later when Esau's genealogy is recorded we discover that *“Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan,”* and in the lists that follow is included *“Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.”*¹⁵²⁷ Whether *“Basemath”* was another name for *“Mahalath,”* or whether Esau latter married another of Ishmael's daughters is a subject we will discuss later. The name *“Basemath”* means “pleasant smelling,” and this highlights the worldly centred disposition of Esau in seeking the things of this world.¹⁵²⁸

[3] Jacob has a dream on route to Padan Aram. (Genesis 28:10-22).

28:10,11.

They had been living in Beersheba which lay west of the southern end of the Dead Sea about 70 km from Jerusalem, which is sited west of the northren end of the Dead Sea. Haran lay far in the north about 750 km from Beersheba (see figure 27).

It must have taken Jacob some weeks to reach Haran from Beersheba. Walking at an average speed of 5 km per hour for 8 hours a day would require 18.75 days, or somewhere between two and three weeks.

At a *“certain place”* he stopped because the *“sun had set.”* At this site Jacob takes a stone of that place and *“put it at his head.”* This does not suggest that he used it as a pillow, but more likely that he made it as a wind-break or as a place of safety. And so Jacob weary from his travels lay down to sleep.

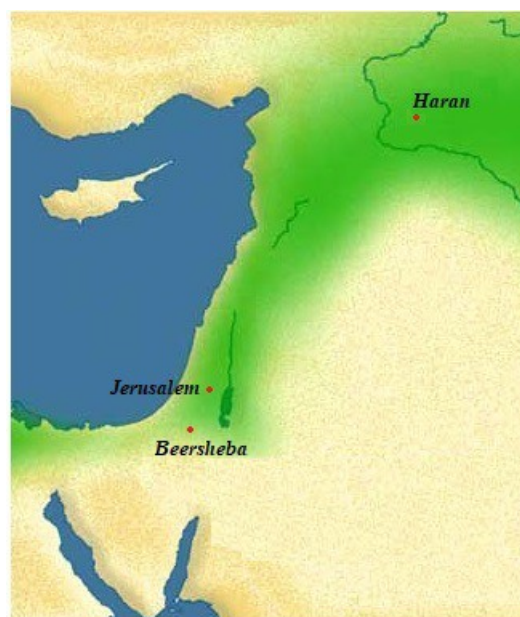


Figure 27: Beersheba and Haran.

1526 Genesis 21:8,9.

1527 Genesis 36:2,3.

1528 1John 2:15.

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28:12.

Jacob's dream is signalled to us as something extraordinary by the word *“behold”* which comes twice, once in verse 12 and a second time in verse 13. This Hebrew word (הִנֵּה *hinnēh*) is the demonstrative particle and indicates something certain or sure. What Jacob dreamed was no mystical or misty vision, but something definite and certain. He saw these images clearly even though he slept.

First Jacob sees a ladder which was set upon the earth and reached into heaven. At once we are reminded of the attempt by Nimrod and his followers to build Babel and the *“tower whose top is in the heavens.”*¹⁵²⁹ That meagre and beggarly project failed at God's hands (it would never have succeeded even if God had not confused them) but here we see the Lord showing the connection or link between heaven and earth. This ladder was the means by which the *“angels of God”* were enabled to descend to earth and return to heaven. The apostle John in recording the Lord's calling of His disciples helps our understanding here.¹⁵³⁰ After Philip found Nathaniel and told him of Jesus of Nazareth, Nathaniel is incredulous because no one of note (he thought) would come from that town. Philip convinces Nathaniel to come and find out about Jesus and as he approaches the Lord said to him that he was *“an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit.”* which statement indicates that Nathaniel was probably reading the account of Jacob in Genesis.¹⁵³¹ Nathaniel is startled and asks how Jesus knew him, to which the Lord replies *“before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”*¹⁵³² Nathaniel replies in worship, to which the Lord responds ending the conversation with these words

Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.¹⁵³³

The ladder in Jacob's dream, therefore, points to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now in this dream it is clear that only angels could ascend and descend upon the ladder. This would signify the fact that the connection between heaven and earth was only by means of the Son of God. He alone was the gateway and He alone gave authority for communication.

28:13-15.

At the second *“behold”* in verse 13 we are introduced to the Lord Himself. We discover that The Lord *“stood above”* the ladder in heaven. Now this fact may seem to contradict what we have just learned from the Lord Jesus in John that He was the ladder. But remember that we are given images here and that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We dare not reduce the trinity to this or that part in this vision or

1529 Genesis 11:4.

1530 John 1:45-51.

1531 John 1:47.

1532 John 1:48.

1533 John 1:51.

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dream. Christ Jesus alone is the connection between heaven and earth. That fact is sure and certain because He took upon Himself flesh and became man.¹⁵³⁴

What we discover next is that the *“Lord God,”* who was both *“God of Abraham”* and *“God of Isaac”* is now giving the blessing that He had initially given to Abraham and then Isaac to Jacob. Jacob is on his way out of the land of promise and at this point on his journey the Lord God has revealed that the place that he has settled for the night will be given to him and his descendants. Once again the word *“descendants”* here in verse 13 is in the singular, that is it should be given as *“to your seed.”* In verse 14 the word is again in the singular but the emphasis in this case is on the innumerable company that would flow from Jacob's seed, for they *“shall be as the dust of the earth.”*¹⁵³⁵ Jacob is also told that his descendants would *“spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south”* which statement echoes what the Lord revealed to Abraham after his separation from Lot.¹⁵³⁶ There is, however, one marked difference. Whereas the Lord told Abraham to raise his eyes across the land to all points of the compass because all the land he could see was given to him, Jacob is told that his descendants: *“shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south.”*¹⁵³⁷ The word given as *“spread abroad”* means to break out, or to burst forth as in a breach of something. This expression may be nothing more than the process by which the people of Israel will inherit the land, but I rather wonder if the extent of the blessing is being enlarged. Thus whereas Abraham was promised all he could see of the land around him after Lot separated, Jacob is being told of an advance into all parts of the compass. Might we be permitted to see in these words the spread of the gospel?¹⁵³⁸

The Lord goes on to reiterate the promise He gave to Abraham in the beginning. It will be worthwhile comparing the two statements:

Genesis 12:3:

וְנִבְרַכְּךָ בְּכָל מִשְׁפָּחַת הָאָדָמָה
and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed

Genesis 28:14:

וְנִבְרַכְּךָ בְּכָל-מִשְׁפָּחַת הָאָדָמָה וּבְזֶרְעֶךָ
And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

It is clear that they are very nearly identical but in the statement made to Jacob the promise is extended to

1534 John 1:14.

1535 See Genesis 13:16.

1536 Genesis 13:14; 28:14.

1537 Genesis 13:14,15; 28:14.

1538 Acts 1:8.

Jacob's seed.

This restatement of the promise is wonderful. Jacob is being informed in no uncertain terms that the promise given to Abraham so many years ago whilst he was still in Ur is now the promise given by the Lord God directly to Jacob. In verse 15 Jacob gets further encouragement. We should remember here that the Lord had promised to be “*with*” Isaac who was not to “*fear*” because the Lord was going to bless him and increase his descendants on account of Abraham, when he was in the valley of Gerar and suffering problems over wells, but here Jacob gets what appears to be a more forceful encouragement.¹⁵³⁹ Again we have the word “*behold*” signalling something important. The Lord promises Jacob not just that He would be “*with*” him, but also that He “*will keep*” him in all places, and would return Jacob “*back to this land.*”¹⁵⁴⁰ Jacob is running away from Esau who wanted to murder him and the Lord, knowing Jacob's deception, offers this promise to preserve his life and enable him to return to the land. As if this was not enough the Lord ends by adding that He would “*not leave*” Jacob until all that was promised had been accomplished.¹⁵⁴¹ In other words Jacob is given great encouragement here from the Lord that he is the one through whom the promises of God are being worked out.

28:16,17.

On waking up from his sleep Jacob is immediately aware that he has been spoken to by the Lord Himself. His outburst in verse 16 amounts to a sudden realisation that the God of all the earth (“*God Almighty*”) was real.¹⁵⁴² It was as though whilst he knew of God and the promises, he was not really aware of God's presence. We can often be like this. We know of the truths of God but we do not live in the knowledge of God's real presence. Jacob has been arrested. The Lord had met with him in his sleep in this place but Jacob never expected such a thing, and it appears that he has been thoroughly shaken and stirred. In fact Jacob is disturbed to the point of fear. He declares that the very place he was in was “*awesome,*” but the Hebrew word used is the same as the one rendered as “*afraid.*” Thus it was a fearful place. A place that induced true fear. He goes on to suggest that this place had some special significance born from the experience of his supernatural dream. He saw a ladder extending from heaven to earth and so he concludes that this place is the gateway to heaven. His description is, in fact, twofold. He states:

This *is* none other than the house of God,
and this *is* the gate of heaven!”

1539 Genesis 24:24.

1540 Genesis 28:15.

1541 Genesis 28:15.

1542 Genesis 28:3.

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This is the first time we come across the phrase “*house of God,*” and the only place where we have the phrase “*gate of heaven.*” What are we to make of these statements? Elsewhere the former phrase is used to mark that place where God has been pleased to set His name. Thus the tabernacle and then after that the temple were to be designated as the “*house of God.*”¹⁵⁴³ It was never that God dwelt in such places as though He was in need of such. Rather, such were the places where people could meet with God. The Lord had met with Jacob, but Jacob having woken seems to be focusing on the ***location.*** Notice, for example, the repeated use of the phrase “*this place.*”¹⁵⁴⁴ His mind seems to have moved from the Lord and the promise to the site and the physical. It is tempting to suggest here that humankind do not like things that are not concrete and real in a physical sense. It is natural for Jacob to consider the place as a site where God dwelt and where the connection between heaven and earth could be made. I am reminded of Peter's desire to remain on the mount of transfiguration.¹⁵⁴⁵ Of course there is no physical gateway and there can be no place where God may be said to dwell on earth, with the remarkable exception of the Lord Jesus Christ who stated that He was the “*door,*” and whom the apostle Paul declared was the every embodiment of God.¹⁵⁴⁶ Remember too that the Lord Jesus indicated that His body was the perfect fulfilment of the temple.¹⁵⁴⁷

28:18,19.

Following his midnight encounter Jacob arose “*early in the morning*” and set about marking or dedicating the site of his encounter with God. What Jacob does is rather curious here. He takes the stone he had as a guard for his head and makes it stand up as a “*pillar,*” and then he “*poured oil*” on its top. Now this is the first time the word “*pillar*” (Hebrew: **מִצְבָּה** *maṣṣēbāh*) is used in the Bible.¹⁵⁴⁸ In later references it came to indicate a statue and especially an idol, or a representation of some false god.¹⁵⁴⁹ This is also the first time we read of “*oil*” and of it being poured out. It would seem, then, that Jacob is the first to practice anointing something. We understand from later Scriptures that oil was used to anoint that which was consecrated or dedicated to God.¹⁵⁵⁰ What are we to make of these actions on the part of Jacob. Where did the idea come from? Was it a spontaneous act on his part? Was it something divinely revealed to him to do? Or was it something he had seen elsewhere and he adapted it for his own use? Now we cannot ignore the fact that Jacob was born in the year 2168 AC (1791 BC) 512 years after the flood. By this time various cities had been built each of which had its own form of worship and religion,

1543 Judges 18:31; 1Chronicles 6:48; 2Chronicles 5:1.

1544 Genesis 28:16,17.

1545 Matthew 17:1f. See also Mark 9:1f; Luke 9:28f.

1546 John 10:9; Colossians 2:9.

1547 John 2:19,21.

1548 The word used in reference to Lot's wife is different: **נֶשֶׁת** *nešet*.

1549 Exodus 23:24; 34:13 etc.

1550 Exodus 25:6; 29:2,7 etc.

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probably all deriving from Nimrod's early rebellion which was also mixed with some attempt at copying the true ways of God. Thus Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Canaan and other centres had developed to such a degree that various (false) beliefs and practices were performed. It is to be observed that whilst the secular world sees the gods and rituals of the different centres as distinct, there is, in point of fact, considerable overlap and similarity. As we have noted from earlier parts of Genesis there were also godly centres too (such as Salem where Melchizedek reigned). Taking all of these thoughts into account, should we conclude that Jacob borrowed some pagan Canaanite practice and used it for his own ends? Given all that we have seen so far in Genesis it would be rather strange to imagine that the Lord allowed one of His chosen vessels to borrow some form of pagan ritual and practice. We have stressed the fact that the sacrificial system stemmed from the Lord God's institution from the very point at which Adam and Eve fell (although in truth it stems from eternity), and was most definitely not something taken on board from outside sources. We do not get a complete picture of the sacrificial system until the time of Moses, but that which was revealed to Moses was none other than that which was given to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and now Jacob cannot be denied. So it is better to imagine that this action of Jacob's is something akin to the practices later given to Moses.

Why then did Jacob raise this pillar and anoint the stone with oil? Such figures as the stone and the oil speak of Christ and the Spirit of God, and the pillar points us to those who would be witnesses of God. Taking this later emblem first. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy saying that the church was *“the pillar and ground of truth.”*¹⁵⁵¹ Many commentators err in their comments on this text (especially those of the Roman Catholic variety) in assuming that the *church* is the foundation of the truth. That, of course, is impossible. There can only be one foundation and that is Christ and His word. Paul's point was that the church was to bear witness to the truth. It was to shine forth the truth as a beacon to the world. His words point to the idea of the pillars of witness of the temple which were not actually structural features, and the platform or pavement before the temple where a welcome to worship might be issued.¹⁵⁵² When Jacob erected the stone as a pillar it thus acted as a visual witness to the world. The stone is also typical. We note that Jacob rested on this stone:

And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.¹⁵⁵³

The stone was a fixed feature that provided rest. This can have no other significance than to point to the Rock, namely Christ Jesus who declared openly that He could give rest.¹⁵⁵⁴ The oil is an emblem of the

1551 1Peter 3:15.

1552 Work on the doctrine of the church in progress.

1553 Genesis 28:11b.

1554 Matthew 11:28f; 1Peter 2:6,7 etc.

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Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁵⁵ Thus we see here the representation of the church. The pillar is a witness and it is made from the rock which is Christ upon which the oil of the Spirit of God rests. As believers who are *“in Christ”* and who feast on Him daily, we are the living stones built on His great foundation.¹⁵⁵⁶ If a believer does not have the Spirit of God he is no believer, according to Paul. And as such we are to stand up and declare openly the truth that God has indeed come into this world and He dwells with and in those whom He loves. In verse 19 Jacob names this place *“Bethel”* which means “house of God.” Before that the place was called *“Luz”* which means “almond tree.”

28:20,21.

After his work Jacob *“made a vow”* or, we might say, he made a promise. Literally the Hebrew suggests that “he vowed a vow.” Given the amazing dream and revelation Jacob has received, and given all that he has done to show forth the nature of true witness (both individuals and the church as a whole), it is tempting to suggest that these verses are a confession of faith. However we need to look carefully at what Jacob actually says. I have analysed the text a little further to show the nature of this promise as follows:

“If God will
 be with me,
 and keep me
 in this way that I am going,
 and give me
 bread to eat
 and clothing to put on,
21 so that I come back to my father’s house in peace,
then
 the Lord shall be my God.
22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house,
 and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Notice that Jacob starts with a set of conditions. He says *“if God will ...”* and he does not simply offer his trust or allegiance to the Lord as Abraham did.¹⁵⁵⁷ He lays down four conditions. The lord must accompany him (*“be with me”*), He must preserve him continually (*“and keep me”*), He must provide for his needs (*“and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on”*), and He must bring him back home (*“so that I come back to my father's house in peace”*). Now this is a far cry from Job's testimony where he says: *“though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”*¹⁵⁵⁸ Jacob then lays out what he would do in return if God

1555 1Samuel 16:13; Isaiah 61:3.

1556 John 6:51-56; Romans 8:1,9; 1Peter 2:4-9.

1557 Genesis 15:16.

1558 Job 13:15.

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did all this. First the Lord would be his God. Second, the site where he had erected the pillar would indeed be “*God's house.*” Finally he would tithe his property. Now such a conditional trust is no real trust at all. We have looked (briefly) at the idea of a covenant in Genesis, and have noted that there is significant reference to this being something God initiated and of it being God's agreement (“*My covenant*”).¹⁵⁵⁹ Jacob, it would appear, is offering God a deal. If you agree to do these things for me then I will allow You to be God, Bethel will be our place of worship and I will give you a tenth of my profits! Now to be fair to Jacob he has come some way towards faith, but this vow is not the language of faith and repentance we have seen in Abraham.

A brief note on Jacob's age.

Before we move on to embark on further comments on the text it will be helpful to consider the age of Jacob as he flees from Esau and meets his distant relatives. We shall simply consider various texts in Genesis where ages or dates are mentioned without making any further comments leaving that for when we reach them later on.

A close reading of Genesis chapters 30 and 31 would indicate that Jacob had his twelve children by the end of the second seven year period for which he served for Leah and Rachel, and before the six year period when he served Laban for the flocks of sheep.¹⁵⁶⁰ Genesis 30:25,26 informs us that Jacob wanted to depart from Laban having served for fourteen years. The text states that it was “*when Rachel had borne Joseph,*” the last of these twelve children, that Jacob requests his release from his uncle which would have been after fourteen years of being with Laban.¹⁵⁶¹ Now Laban wanted Jacob to stay because the Lord had blessed him through Jacob, and so Jacob agrees accepting as wages all the speckled, spotted and brown among the flocks, staying for another six years.¹⁵⁶² Eventually when Jacob finally leaves, and Laban pursues him, Jacob reports that he had served Laban for fourteen years for his daughters and then a further six years for the flocks.¹⁵⁶³ From these statements in Genesis 30 and 31 it would appear clear that all of the twelve children mentioned in Genesis 29:31-30:24 were born in the second seven year period of Jacob's servitude. It is to be remembered that four women were mothers to these twelve children.¹⁵⁶⁴ Thus Joseph was born fourteen years after Jacob fled from Esau and met Rachel.

To get a fix on Jacob's age when he met Rachel we shall look at the dates of Joseph in connection with his father Jacob as revealed in later chapters of Genesis. Now Joseph was thirty years old when he

1559 Genesis 6:18; 9:9,11,15; 17:2,4,7,9,10,13,14,19,21.

1560 Compare Genesis 30:25-34 with Genesis 31:41.

1561 Two periods of seven years served for each wife – see Genesis 29:18,20,27,30. Genesis 30:25.

1562 Genesis 30:27,32.

1563 Genesis 31:41.

1564 For a good explanation of how these twelve children could be born to Jacob in a seven year period see: **Charles L. Zimmerman.** *The Chronology and Birth of Jacob's Children by Leah and Her Handmaid.* Grace Theological Seminary. Grace Journal 13.1 (Winter 1972) 3-12.

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stood before Pharaoh.¹⁵⁶⁵ Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream to say that there would be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine.¹⁵⁶⁶ Two years into the famine Jacob sends his sons to Egypt for food at which point Joseph is now thirty nine.¹⁵⁶⁷ Also at this point Jacob descends into Egypt at the age of one hundred and thirty and dies seventeen years later aged one hundred and forty seven.¹⁵⁶⁸ Joseph was therefore fifty six when Jacob died.¹⁵⁶⁹ Thus Joseph was born to Rachel when Jacob was ninety one years of age.¹⁵⁷⁰ Since Joseph was born at the end of the second seven year period fourteen years after Jacob met Rachel, we conclude, therefore, that Jacob met Rachel when he was seventy seven years old.¹⁵⁷¹

1565 Genesis 41:46.

1566 Genesis 41:25-32,53,54.

1567 Genesis 45:6-9. $30 + 7 + 2 = 39$.

1568 Genesis 46:1f; 47:9,28.

1569 $39 + 17 = 56$.

1570 $147 - 56 = 91$.

1571 $91 - 14 = 77$.

Chapter 35.

A love affair. (29:1-15).

Analysis.

#29 1 So Jacob
went on his journey
and came to the land of the people of the East.

2 And he
looked,
and saw a **well** in the field;
and behold,
there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it;
for out of that **well** they watered the flocks.
A large stone *was* on the **well**'s mouth.

3 Now all the flocks would be gathered there;
and **they would**
roll the stone from the **well**'s mouth,
water the sheep,
and put the stone back in its place on the **well**'s mouth.

4 And Jacob said to them,
"My brethren, where *are* you from?"
And they said,
"We *are* from Haran."

5 Then he said to them,
"Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?"
And they said,
"We know him."

6 So he said to them,
"Is he well?"
And they said,
"*He is* well.
And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."

7 Then he said,
"Look,
it is still high day;
it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together.
Water the sheep, and go and feed *them*."

8 But they said,
"We cannot until
all the flocks are gathered together,
and **they have rolled the stone** from the **well**'s mouth;
then we water the sheep."

9 Now while he was still speaking with them,
Rachel came with her father's sheep,
for she was a shepherdess.

10 And **it came to pass**,
when Jacob saw
Rachel the daughter of Laban **his mother's brother**,
and the sheep of Laban **his mother's brother**,
that **Jacob**
went near

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and rolled the stone from the well's mouth,
and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

11 Then Jacob kissed
Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept.

12 And Jacob told
Rachel
that he was her father's relative
and that he was Rebekah's son.
So she ran and told her father.

13 Then it came to pass,
when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son,
that
he ran to meet him,
and embraced him
and kissed him,
and brought him to his house.

So he told Laban all these things.

14 And Laban said to him,
"Surely you are my bone and my flesh."

And he stayed with him for a month.

15 Then Laban said to Jacob,
"Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing?
Tell me, what should your wages be?"

From our analysis we can see that the first fifteen verses of Genesis 29 form a unit and tell the events of Jacob's arriving in *"the land of the people of the east."*¹⁵⁷² The account forms a single unit but can be viewed in four parts or scenes. In the first scene (verses 1 to 3) the stage is set. It is the scene of shepherds coming to water their flocks at some important well. Verses 4 to 9 relate Jacob's encounter with the shepherds who were gathering at the well. The third scene (verses 10 to 12) displays Jacob's actions upon seeing Rachel the shepherdess. Finally in verses 11 to 15 we have Jacob introduced to the family home of Laban, Rebekah's brother.

Predominant in this text is the word *"well"* which features six times. Obviously because the scene depicts one of watering flocks, the theme of shepherds and shepherding is foremost. The word *"sheep"* is found seven times and the word *"flock(s)"* occurs six times. It would also seem that the well in this account was one which was blocked by a stone that had to be rolled away and back again so that entrance could be made to water the flocks and (presumably when closed) to keep the water secure.

[1] Jacob arrives at "the land of the people of the East." (Genesis 29:1-3).

29:1.

And so Jacob leaves the promised land and arrives at the *"land of the people of the East."* We learn from the details given later that this is the region of Haran north of the promised land. The phrase is

1572 Genesis 29:1.

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used seven times in Scripture.¹⁵⁷³ This group of people is linked with the Amalekites and the Midianites who came against Israel when she had departed from the Lord at the time of Gideon.¹⁵⁷⁴ Then also we find that Job who lived in Uz is described as *“the greatest of all the people of the East.”*¹⁵⁷⁵ The location of Uz is unknown, but from this phrase it must have been somewhere in the region of Haran. Job lived to a great age and probably lived to be in his 200s.¹⁵⁷⁶ We learn this from the statement at the end of the book where it states that after the events recorded:

Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren *for* four generations.¹⁵⁷⁷

Job's great age puts him contemporary with Peleg, Reu and Serug who were born about one hundred to one hundred and sixty years after the flood (see table 35.1).

Table 35.1: Dates BC for post-flood Patriarchs.

Patriarch.	Age at death.	Date of birth BC.
Shem	600	2401
Arphaxad ¹⁵⁷⁸	438	2301
Salah	433	2266
Eber	464	2236
<i>Peleg</i>	239	2202
<i>Reu</i>	239	2172
Serug	230	2140
Nahor	148	2110
Terah	205	2081

Now we cannot precisely locate Job in time, but his influence may well have left the region with some godly people.

29:2,3.

Jacob looks from some distance and he seeks *“a well in the field.”*¹⁵⁷⁹ Given the repeated

1573 Genesis 29:1; Judges 6:3,33; 7:12; 8:10; Job 1:3; Isaiah 11:14.

1574 Judges 6:3,33; 7:12; 8:10.

1575 Job 1:3.

1576 The LXX says that Job was 240. Job 42:17.

See: <https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=2516>

1577 Job 42:16.

1578 Arphaxad was born two years after the flood which is therefore dated at 2303 BC.

1579 Genesis 29:2.

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references to wells here we are brought to consider the source of water for flocks and cattle around this region. Such points us beautifully to the source of water in the field which is the world, namely Christ Jesus our Lord.¹⁵⁸⁰ As Jacob approaches, it appears that there were three flocks waiting there, for they would not open the well until all the flocks were gathered. The well appears to have been in some form of cave or underground opening across which a stone was rolled. From the description it seems likely that the stone was upright as it was rolled rather than lifted away. The stone was replaced after watering presumably to protect the source from interference by other animals. Now such references to a well covered by a stone which needed to be rolled away is spiritually greatly significant. Who can but be brought to consider the tomb where Christ was buried which was covered by a stone that would require some effort to be removed?¹⁵⁸¹ Thus we have a well in “*the field*” (the world) over which a large stone was rolled. These statements lead us to consider Christ and His death as our source of life, our water of life.

[2] Jacob meets some shepherds. (Genesis 29:4-9).

29:4-6.

Jacob gets to a place where he can interact with the shepherds of the flocks. He begins by asking where these folk hail from. This is perhaps surprising. There is no greeting to begin with for Jacob seems to be focused on getting to his relatives. Jacob's calling them “*brethren*” is hardly welcoming and appears more casual or matter-of-fact. He had been tasked by Isaac his father to get to Padan-Aram and find the house of Bethuel, his mother Rebekah's father, and select a wife from his uncle Laban's daughters.¹⁵⁸² This quest seems to have been uppermost in his thoughts. On hearing that they came from “*Haran,*” Jacob inquires whether they knew his uncle whom he refers to as “*Laban the son of Nahor.*”¹⁵⁸³ Nahor was Abraham's brother and he had eight sons by Milcah who was daughter of Haran, Nahor's other brother.¹⁵⁸⁴ On hearing this he inquires after Laban's health and discovers that they were aware of him and could even point out Laban's daughter Rachel.

And thus we have a remarkable miracle of providence in that Jacob happened to come at a time not only when the first people he met knew of his near relatives in the region, but also that they could point out the very ones he was seeking (the household of Laban).

1580 Matthew 13:38; John 4:10,14. See also Jeremiah 2:13.

1581 Matthew 27:60; 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3,4; Luke 24:2.

1582 Genesis 28:2.

1583 Genesis 29:5.

1584 Genesis 11:29; 22:20-22.

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29:7,8.

The conversation takes a sharp turn at verse 7. On hearing that his uncle Laban's daughter Rachel was approaching, Jacob sets about engineering a means to introduce himself to her. The opening word *“look”* is an interjection. He changes the subject from Rachel to the gathering flocks. His concern *seems* to be for the gathered cattle being out in the heat of the sun, but really he wants to be rid of these folk. So he suggests to these shepherds to *“water the sheep, and go and feed them.”* It is almost as though Jacob is issuing commands here for the verbs are all imperatives. Having begun with the best reason he could muster (it being *“high day”* and so too hot for the cattle to be out *“gathered together”*), he wants to dismiss these folk from the scene and move them on.

The response of these shepherds comes in verse 8 and it is very revealing. It would seem that all the flocks had to be gathered and then they had to wait for a certain time when *“they have rolled the stone”* away to enabling water to be drawn. Who are the *“they”* here? Perhaps there was a bunch of folk who guarded the stone and who charged the shepherds for the privilege of rolling away the stone? Or, more likely, the mention of *“they”* suggests that the stone could not be moved by a single person but must be done by several people as it was too large.

29:9.

As he was still in conversation, Rachel arrives on the scene. We mentioned earlier that it was a miracle of providence that Jacob just happened to arrive at the time when Rachel approached the well. This brings to mind the occasion when Jesus came to Jacob's well and met with the woman of Samaria as recorded in John 4. That event was certainly not happen-stance for we are told that *“he needed to go through Samaria”* which indicated that He had planned to meet the woman from Samaria all along.¹⁵⁸⁵ Here in Genesis 29 Jacob and Rachel are guided by the hand of God so that they would meet. Rachel's name means “ewe” and she was a shepherdess in charge of her father's sheep.

[3] Jacob sees Rachel. (Genesis 29:10-12).

29:10.

In verse 10 we have a slight pause signalled by the opening phrase *“and it came to pass”* which highlights the point at which Jacob gets to see his future bride. Jacob *“saw”* Rachel who is described for us as *“the daughter of Laban his mother's brother,”* and then we are also informed of Laban's sheep who are described in the same way (*“the sheep of Laban his mother's brother”*). This repeated description indicates that Jacob saw all at once, both Rachel and her sheep as belonging to Laban his mother's

¹⁵⁸⁵ John 4:4.

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brother. These words paint a clear picture. This young girl with her sheep are coming down towards the well and Jacob takes the whole scene in at once and then acts. It was when he “*saw*” Rachel and her sheep (that belonged to Laban his mother's brother) that he then went to open the way to the water for them. Now previously we were told that there had to be some waiting period before “*they have rolled the stone,*” but here Jacob jumps to and “*went near*” and then single-handedly he “*rolled the stone from the well's mouth*” so that the flock (“*of Laban his mother's brother*”) could drink the water. Jacob was demonstrating to Rachel here that he was able to do what usually required many (“*they*”). It was a very graphic display of his manly abilities! Remember that Jacob is seventy seven years old so this would strike quite a scene. In a spiritual sense we might suggest that Jacob put as a true believer (although not yet mature) was enabled to do with the aid of God's strength and not through his own power, what the ordinary unbeliever was unable to do without considerable help.

The identification of Rachel's father as Jacob's uncle is put for us three times clearly for emphasis, but what does such pointed labelling signify? We have already noted that Jacob was Rebekah's favourite as Esau was Isaac's, so the love of his mother ran strong. Perhaps the simple connection between his mother and this young woman's father as brother and sister gave him assurance?

29:11,12.

Verses 11 and 12 inform us of two more things that Jacob did when he “*saw*” Rachel approaching. First he “*kissed*” her, and he did so with such emotion that second, he “*lifted up his voice and wept.*” It appears that the connection between Rachel and his own mother (she was his mother's niece) was a signal of great excitement for the young deceiver. Undoubtedly Jacob saw Rachel's beauty too, but the connection between himself and her via his mother seems to have allowed him to display his feelings unfettered. This must be the one for him. After Jacob has calmed himself from the emotional outburst of excitement, he informs this young girl whom he was. It is noteworthy that he identifies himself not as the son of Isaac but as “*Rebekah's son.*” Now this may simply be that Jacob wanted to emphasise the closeness in their relations. He was her father's nephew. She was his mother's niece.

Then, on hearing this, Rachel “*ran and told her father.*”¹⁵⁸⁶ At first sight this appears rather odd. Was she unimpressed with Jacob? Did she run from him? If she was favourable towards him and accepting of his affections, why did she not bring Jacob to her father? The situation recorded here speaks of an atmosphere charged with emotional excitement, and we need to gather our thoughts and survey the scene in repose! She was in charge of her father's sheep. Jacob had demonstrated his feelings for her in no uncertain terms. She had the sheep to consider, so what was she to do? In her excitement she leaves the sheep in Jacob's more than capable hands (after all he single handedly rolled the stone!) and she runs to

1586 Genesis 29:12.

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inform her father.

[4] Jacob meets Rachel's father Laban. (Genesis 29:13-15).

29:13.

A brief period of time passes as signalled by the opening phrase *“then it came to pass,”* which also acts as a grammatical break. Rachel has run to her father and told him what has happened. Laban hears *“the report about Jacob.”* I wonder what Rachel said? Or, more to the point, how she told her father? On hearing what Rachel reported, Laban responds in four ways. First he runs to *“meet”* Jacob. The concept of running expressed here and in verse 12 is used to suggest haste and immediacy.¹⁵⁸⁷ It would have taken time for these things naturally to have occurred but the writer wants to move us along. There is an urgency in the whole affair. Then Laban embraces Jacob showing that he is welcome and accepted and to make this very clear to the young man he also kisses him which would appear to be a response to Jacob's kiss of his daughter Rachel. The emotional atmosphere is still running high. Finally Laban brings Jacob (and presumably all the sheep) back to his house to show further hospitality, where Jacob takes up the story further (*“so he told Laban all these things”*).

29:14,15.

On hearing what Jacob had to say he responds with words which bring our thoughts back to Genesis chapter 2.

23 And Adam said: “this *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” **24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.¹⁵⁸⁸

Of course in Genesis 2 the Woman was made from the Man Adam and the two were united in marriage, so that the identity is very close. Nevertheless Laban seems to be alluding to this early account and admits with certainty that Jacob is as he is in bone and flesh. At this stage in the history, Laban and Jacob seem to be getting along very well, so that Jacob *“stayed with him for a month.”*¹⁵⁸⁹ Recall that Jacob had fled from the presence of Esau back in Canaan because he had defrauded his brother of the blessing and did not want to suffer his brother's vehement anger. The expectation was that Jacob would depart to seek a wife amongst their relatives and then return to take up the blessing he was promised. If he were to return

¹⁵⁸⁷ See Genesis 18:2,7; 24:17,20,28,29; 29:12,13; 33:4; 41:14. The idea of fleeing in haste is seen at Genesis 19:20; 39:12.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Genesis 2:23,24.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Genesis 29:14.

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at this point he would have been away for something like two to three months as the distance was considerable.¹⁵⁹⁰ We must recall also that Rebekah only expected Jacob to be away for a short time:

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. **44** And **stay with him a few days**, until your brother's fury turns away, **45** until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?"¹⁵⁹¹

It is notable in this text from Genesis 27 that Jacob is very much under his mother's rule. She suggested he flee to Laban and stay for a short time so that Esau's fury would subside, and then she would *"send and bring you from there."*¹⁵⁹² So what happened? Did Rebekah send for Jacob to return? A month with Laban, and two or three months away would surely have been enough for the fickle Esau to have returned to some normalcy of temper?

In verse 15 we see that Laban seizes the initiative and offers Jacob a permanent position. Just because he is closely related to Laban this does not mean he is not worthy of his wages. Presumably because of his love for Rachel, Jacob was spending time helping out with the sheep. Rachel has already been described as a *"shepherdess,"* and so it would appear that Laban saw Jacob as one motivated to do the work because of his love for his hoped for bride (Rachel).¹⁵⁹³ Laban sought, therefore, to capitalise on this devotion for the benefit of his household. The word rendered as *"wages"* can be equally given as "reward." Laban thus offers Jacob an open contract and he can name his wages or reward. Presumably Laban would not simply accept Jacob's request if it were beyond reasonable or outside of Laban's means, but clearly the offer is one hard to refuse.

And so ends the introduction of Jacob to Rachel and, with Genesis 27:43-45 in view, we might have been expecting some sort of return to his mother. But now things have changed. When Abraham's servant went and gathered Rebekah, despite the attempt to delay their return, Rebekah does return and meets with Isaac.¹⁵⁹⁴ But here Jacob has come, and is about to be detained for many years. Now Isaac remained in the land of promise and a wife was brought to him from that distant land. In this we see Christ prefigured and his bride brought ready and prepared to Him. Jacob, on the other hand, went into that distant land to find a wife for himself. This action depicts Christ who seeks out his bride coming into the world of sin. Although Christ dwelt on the earth for only a short time, the Holy Spirit is still calling people to come and so Jacob's sojourn with Laban would continue until the full measure of his sons (the church) were gathered in.

1590 See comments on Genesis 24:10,11.

1591 Genesis 27:43-45.

1592 Genesis 27:45.

1593 Genesis 29:9.

1594 Genesis 24:51-59.

Chapter 36.

A deceiver deceived. (29:16-30).

Analysis.

- 16 Now Laban had two daughters:
the name of the elder *was* Leah,
and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.
17 Leah's eyes *were* delicate,
but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.
- 18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said,
"I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."
- 19 And Laban said,
"*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."
- 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.
- 21 Then Jacob said to Laban,
"Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her."
- 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.
- 23 Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.
- 24 And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah *as* a maid.
- 25 So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban,
"What is this you have done to me?
Was it not for Rachel that I served you?
Why then have you deceived me?"
- 26 And Laban said,
"It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.
27 Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years."
- 28 Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week.
So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.
- 29 And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.
- 30 Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah.
And he served with Laban still another seven years.

These verses of Genesis 29 describe the deception perpetrated by Laban on the deceiver Jacob. They form a single unit of narrative so we shall simply make comments as we go through the text.

29:16,17.

Although we have a significant break in the narrative with details given of Laban's two daughters, verse 18 indicates that we are still in the conversation between Laban and Jacob concerning what Jacob was to do and how he would be rewarded. Laban had these two daughters but later on we learn of his sons.¹⁵⁹⁵ These are not mentioned here presumably because the Lord wants us to draw our attention onto Jacob and his two wives. Leah's name means "weary," or "wearied." Rachel's name, as we noted earlier,

¹⁵⁹⁵ Whilst Genesis 29:22 only mentions "*all the men of the place,*" Genesis 31:1 tells us "*Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying ...*"

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means “ewe” presumably in connection with her being the shepherdess of the family. Leah is described as having “*delicate*” eyes, by which is meant that her eyes were weak and (presumably) not very presentable. She is contrasted dramatically with Rachel who is presented to us as “*beautiful of form and appearance*.”¹⁵⁹⁶ Beauty is, of course, in the eye of the beholder. But Jacob was smitten by Rachel and he did not see anything to attract him to Leah. Now in these brief details we see that Jacob is moved and motivated by the outward form and appearance rather than the inner strength of personality. It is noteworthy that Leah is described first in the text, for this marks her out as the older of the two. She was not presentable (as far as Jacob was concerned) but Rachel was simply the best!

Attraction is a strange affair. A woman may have perfect form and features but can look as ugly as sin if her inner being is evil and set against God. Likewise one who may not have what are taken as attractive features will look radiantly beautiful as she reflects the Lord's character and disposition by her faith. That being said it is remarkable how certain features are attractive to one but not to another. This is a very personal thing, of course, but in this context it seems as though we are being shown that far from being super-spiritual, Jacob is just as much driven by earthly desires and appearances as was his brother who hunted game and thought only of food. Jacob was just as much a man of this earth as was Esau, despite God's appearance to him. And the Lord allowed Jacob's earthly desires to lead him up to a point. There is, of course, nothing wrong in a man being attracted to a woman because of her appearance. It is clear that God made woman as a delight for man. But this is not all that should guide a man in the choice of a wife.

29:18-20.

Now it is clear from Jacob's position that he was unable to offer Laban any dowry for Rachel.¹⁵⁹⁷ He had fled from Esau with nothing (apart from provisions for his journey). In verse 18 we are informed that “*Jacob loved Rachel*,” and this has been evident from what we have read earlier in the chapter as we saw Jacob's emotional display. That he was moved by her appearance is evident from what we read of his perception of Leah (her “*eyes were delicate*”). And so because he had nothing to offer Laban for Rachel's hand in marriage, he offers his services for “*seven years*.” Seven is the number of completion as we have observed in creation in the first chapter of Genesis. A complete service was thus offered for Rachel as his wife.

What is striking in the statement Jacob makes to Laban is that there is no indication of any relationship having developed between the pair. Jacob seems to be striking a deal with Laban for Rachel. We ask: was Rachel aware of this? From Jacob's kiss and emotional outburst in verse 11 we might ***assume*** that such a relationship would have naturally blossomed. However the text as we have it seems to

¹⁵⁹⁶ Genesis 29:17.

¹⁵⁹⁷ On this issue of a dowry see: Genesis 34:12; 1Samuel 18:25; 1Kings 9:16.

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show that Rachel was not consulted. This is very different to what we observed with regard to Rebekah where she is consulted as to whether she wanted to return with the servant to be wife to Isaac.¹⁵⁹⁸

Laban responds favourably saying that Jacob would be *“better”* than any other man.¹⁵⁹⁹ The word given as *“better”* can be translated as “good.” Thus, for Laban, this match would be a good thing. Twice Laban refers to ***giving*** Rachel to Jacob, and here we see the correct order displayed, that a man must give away his daughter to another man who is worthy of her. Now Jacob set about the task of serving Laban for seven years.¹⁶⁰⁰ It is to be noted here that Jacob did not receive the gift of Rachel as wife until that seven years were up. How this speaks to our day when the emphasis in all quarters of life is to have things instantly before the time they are truly due or earned. We hear of “buy now pay later,” of terms of credit, of possessing things long before we truly own them. This history teaches a great many important spiritual lessons, but this one of waiting and patience in receiving is surely one for our time. Not least is it a message for those who would rush into intimate relationships without any thought for the future or what they were doing. Jacob was prepared to wait for Rachel for seven years of hard work. By the time he would have his wife he would be eighty four years old. But notice that *“because of the love he had for her”* the time seemed like *“only a few days.”* Time flies when you are having fun and enjoying things!

29:21-24.

What is striking about the events recorded in these verses is how little is made of the occasion. Jacob has served Laban for seven years so that he could take Rachel as his wife. The years passed by swiftly because he was smitten by Rachel's beauty. Yet had he formed any relationship with Rachel? The text is silent on this. And yet Jacob simply demands his wife now that his service of seven years has completed.¹⁶⁰¹ It all seems rather matter-of-fact. We are, of course, not in the realms of a Hollywood romance, but surely there ought to have been some ceremony and solemnity? Jacob merely blurts out an imperative: *“give me my wife!”* His explanation for this demand reads as though he were merely claiming his rights for the deal he had earlier struck with Laban (*“for my days are fulfilled”*).¹⁶⁰² His main interest seems to have been carnal. He demands his wife because he had fulfilled his part of the contract, and now it appears that it was all so *“that I may go in to her”* (i.e. have sex with her).¹⁶⁰³

Strangely Laban seems to have simply wanted to arrange a party for all his mates.¹⁶⁰⁴ Whilst Jacob is merely claiming his dues for the purpose of gratification, Laban wants to have a ball with *“all the men of the place.”* There is no thought of family here. His sons are not mentioned specifically, (although they

1598 Genesis 24:58.

1599 Genesis 29:19.

1600 Genesis 29:20.

1601 Genesis 29:21.

1602 Genesis 29:21.

1603 Genesis 29:21.

1604 Genesis 29:22.

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may have been present), and Rachel and Leah are nowhere in view. This leads to the thought that what has transpired is merely a *gentleman's* agreement between Jacob and his uncle of which (perhaps) his daughters have little knowledge. It was at this men-only party (as the text seems to indicate) that “*in the evening*” Leah was brought to Jacob.¹⁶⁰⁵ The text is quite sparse here. It was evening and so presumably it became very dark quickly as the transition from daylight to darkness in this region is sharper and quicker than in northern countries like the UK. At some point during their party under the cover of darkness Laban simply “*took Leah his daughter*” to bring her to Jacob. Then immediately we read that Jacob simply “*went in to her,*” that is, he had sex with her. It was dark, perhaps Jacob was drunk (?), but the implication of what we read here in verse 23 is as far from a romantic scene as you can possibly imagine.

As we read this text we are stunned that Jacob fell for this gross deception. How can a man sleep with a woman and not have any knowledge of whom she is? How did he not know that this was not Rachel? Now, of course, this is the first time he has had sex, but surely in speaking to Rachel and Leah, and in observing their ways and characteristics after seven years he ought to have known? And yet he did not. This rather points us toward the idea that he merely wanted a wife in a physical way, and did not really have much time for the niceties of conversation and getting to know her.

But what of Leah? What did she think at this point? Clearly she was in obedience to her father, but was she part of this deception or was she unaware and deceived too? Had Laban lied to her that Jacob wanted her as wife? Was she not aware of Jacob's true love for Rachel? The deception of Laban is open for us to see, but it is difficult to know what part the two girls played in this. Rachel is nowhere in view. Was she not saddened by this event? Was she even aware of what was going on? It would seem that she was very much in the dark.

In verse 24 we note that Laban gave Leah his own maid Zilpah to be her maid. This seems to have been a custom for newly married women, and this would suggest that Leah at least knows something of the plans hatched by Laban.¹⁶⁰⁶

29:25.

It was not until the next day in the morning in broad daylight that Laban's deception is revealed. The text is literally:

וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַתֵּינֶה-הָאִשָּׁה לְאֵלָה

and it was in the moring and behold she [was] Leah!

1605 Genesis 29:23.

1606 Genesis 24:61.

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Jacob awakes and as his eyes adjust to the daylight he looks and there was Leah. ***She*** was not Rachel but Leah. We are astonished that a man could ***know*** a woman (physically) without really knowing her at all. It is a salutary reminder of the folly of separating physical sex from true (Biblical) love and respect for a wife. How would Leah have felt here? It is very difficult to know because we do not know whether she was complicit with Laban, whether there was already rivalry with her sister Rachel over looks, or whether she was simply acting in obedience to her father's demands. If the latter then it must have been quite a painful thing to observe Jacob's response to her the morning after.

Jacob does not engage with Leah in any way, which is remarkable, and instead he runs straight to Laban. Laban has reneged on the deal that Jacob struck with him. His uncle has swindled him and he does no more than demand an account forthwith. Notice the self interest in Jacob's response. He is not at all concerned for Leah whom he slept with and spent a night with. He simply blurts out to Laban: “*what is this you have done to me?*” The indignation of Jacob is more than evident here as he poses three questions in quick succession hardly giving Laban time to reply.

What is this you have done to me?

Was it not for Rachel that I served you?

Why then have you deceived me?

And so the deceiver is deceived. How could he have fallen for such a trick? The conned man always wonders how it is that he has been duped and has been left in a state of humiliation. Jacob now knows how Esau his brother felt.

29:26-30.

Laban's excuse is typical of those who know no shame and simply angle for what they want. Not only does he explain away the deception with an explanation which should have been made clear at the beginning, but he compounds his deceptive ways by demanding Jacob serve for another seven years. The way in which the text appears seems to give the impression of a very smooth operator. He comes across rather like the car salesman who spins a yarn about the sleek lines and fast speed of some jalopy which he knows will break down fifty yards from the forecourt. Such are all smooth words and quick witted undermining any thought and sobriety.

In verse 26 Laban simply asserts that the custom in his land was that the older girl must be given away before the younger. He speaks with alarm and incredulity of Jacob's ignorance. Didn't Jacob know this? Surely he was aware of such obvious things? Surely he cannot mind Laban's ruse here? We are reminded here also that Jacob deceived his brother Esau out of the birthright and the blessing which was

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the right of the firstborn older son (i.e. Esau). The fact that Jacob has now been deceived in a similar fashion must have hit him full square in his conscience. He had defrauded his older brother and now he was being defrauded by being given Leah the older daughter.

And then in verse 27 Laban continues by issuing firm instructions within which he adds further demands. He begins by saying that Jacob must *“fulfil her week,”* by which we assume is meant that Leah was to be his concern for that week as was customary at marriage feasts in those days.¹⁶⁰⁷ This is the only intimation that a wedding had actually occurred, for the text generally indicates something other than a normal marriage and wedding ceremony as we have already discussed. And then Laban adds a bombshell. Just as the smooth car salesman having sold you his wreck then adds car valet service charge and various other sundry items to the bill of which you were unaware, so Laban adds that Jacob must now serve *“another seven years”* for the privilege of gaining the wife he asked for in the first place.¹⁶⁰⁸

At this point in time Jacob has been well and truly duped, and he has no other course of action left open to him but to comply with Laban's demands.¹⁶⁰⁹ We read that *“he did so”* by fulfilling Leah's week, and as a consequence of such compliance Laban condescended to *“give him his daughter Rachel as wife also.”*¹⁶¹⁰ It is not difficult to imagine this situation or picture the scene. Jacob struck a deal with Laban for Rachel, but was conned by his uncle to receive Leah. On discovering this Jacob is dismayed and demands an account, but Laban is too smart for him and forces Jacob to comply with things the way Laban has played them out. What a terrible strained week that must have been. Unsure of Leah's attitude and heart we wonder how they managed to fill the week to the full! What of Rachel? She will now be second wife to Jacob. How did she see all of these events? What is plainly obvious in all this account, is that a deceiver cannot last long without becoming the victim of deceit by others. If you lie and cheat through life and dupe people of possessions or of respect, what sort of responses ought you to expect as a result?

Just as Leah received Zilpah as maid, Rachel is given Laban's maid Bilhah for her maid.¹⁶¹¹ Verse 30 ends on rather a sad note. Jacob is clearly a man of passion and lay with Rachel, but then we read that Jacob *“loved Rachel more than Leah,”* and that he served Laban *“still another seven years.”* The repetition of this phrase indicates that Jacob has paid double. He might have thought he was earning his way towards the wife of his desire, but the Lord makes him pay twice for what he wanted.

1607 Genesis 29:27. See Judges 14:12.

1608 Genesis 29:27.

1609 Genesis 29:28.

1610 Genesis 29:28.

1611 Genesis 29:29.

Chapter 37.

Sons of Jacob. (29:31-30:24).

Analysis

- 31 When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.
- 32 So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said,
“The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.”
- 33 Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said,
“Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.”
- And she called his name Simeon.
- 34 She conceived again and bore a son, and said,
“Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.”
- Therefore his name was called Levi.
- 35 And she conceived again and bore a son, and said,
“Now I will praise the Lord.”
- Therefore she called his name Judah.
- Then she stopped bearing.
- #30 1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob,
“Give me children, or else I die!”
- 2 And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said,
“Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”
- 3 So she said,
“Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her.”
- 4 Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her.
- 5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.
- 6 Then Rachel said,
“God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.”
- Therefore she called his name Dan.
- 7 And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.
- 8 Then Rachel said,
“With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed.”
- So she called his name Naphtali.
- 9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife.
- 10 And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.
- 11 Then Leah said,
“A troop comes!”
- So she called his name Gad.
- 12 And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.
- 13 Then Leah said,
“I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.”
- So she called his name Asher.
- 14 Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah.
- Then Rachel said to Leah,
“Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”
- 15 But she said to her,
“Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?”
- And Rachel said,

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“Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.”

16 When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said,
“You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.”
And he lay with her that night.

17 And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

18 Leah said,
“God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.”
So she called his name Issachar.

19 Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.

20 And Leah said,
“God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.”

So she called his name Zebulun.

21 Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

23 And she conceived and bore a son, and said,

“God has taken away my reproach.”

24 So she called his name Joseph, and said,
“The Lord shall add to me another son.”

We have in these verses spanning the last five verses of Genesis 29 and the opening twenty four verses of Genesis 30, the history of the birth of Jacob's first twelve children. Our text can be divided up into six sections as follows:

- [1] The unloved Leah has four sons! (Genesis 29:31-35).
- [2] Envious Rachel struggles to engineer two sons by her maid Bilhah. (Genesis 30:1-8).
- [3] Leah copies Rachel and has two sons by Zilpah. (Genesis 30:9-13).
- [4] Leah hires Jacob for the night with Reuben's mandrakes for a fifth son. (Genesis 30:14-18).
- [5] Leah has her sixth son and also a daughter. (Genesis 30:19-21).
- [6] Rachel has her first son, Joseph. (Genesis 30:22-24).

Jacob has been deceived by Laban, but what transpires in these verses is surely a dramatic object lesson in why polygamy is not just wrong but damaging. The Lord allows sin its path for a while, for otherwise no one would survive. But here we see the dreadful effects of ploughing the wrong furrow. Nevertheless the Lord is not deviated in His plans, for out of Jacob would come the twelve tribes of Israel and here we see their origins.

[1] The unloved Leah has four sons! (Genesis 29:31-35).

29:31.

And so Jacob now has two wives. We read in Genesis 29:30 that Jacob *“loved Rachel more than*

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Leah” so this rings loudly in our ears as we move to see the development of Jacob's family.¹⁶¹² It was because of this sorry state of affairs that Leah would be blessed first. The Lord observed that “*Leah was unloved,*” and so to bless her the Lord “*opened her womb.*”¹⁶¹³ In contrast Rachel “*was barren.*” Thus Jacob would have to sleep with both women on alternate nights. Whereas Rachel bore none, the Lord opens Leah's womb. We remind ourselves in this very materialistic and so-called scientific age that God is in charge of whom does or does not have a child. We are so apt to think it our right to have children, and that normal intercourse at the right time of the month ought inevitably to result in pregnancy. Now, of course, in God's good and wonderful providence this is the normal state of affairs. Young people who are full of life, vigour, and strength in a physical sense ought to be extremely cautious and careful. Of course, sex is limited to married couples only in God's view (and therefore in truth), but it is more likely that young men and women in their prime are likely to bear children easily, and of that fact we ought to be aware. Nevertheless every child that is conceived is only conceived at God's command. We cannot stress this fact too much. All children conceived in the wombs of women are those whom God has made and they are all precious in His sight. Let no one deviate your thinking on this issue by smearing and smudging truth saying that countless conceptions are naturally aborted. That may be true, but these are so because of God's allowing such to be so. He, and He alone, has the right to bring to life and to bring to the end in death. The current wicked belief that physical life and conception happens so much more often than we understand so that countless zygotes are passed away without anyone's notice leads to a very callous view of life. Human conceptions are not to be compared to the billions of frog spawn few of which survive to maturity. The world is in a truly wicked way. We see so much death and destruction that occurs in the natural world (really the world under the curse because of sin), but the wickedness of our current age with abortion on demand is surely far more heinous. But such ought to make us weep. Look what mankind has done. Oh that we had right thinking on the things we have viewed in such heinous ways supplied by godless men such as Darwin, Wallace and so on!

29:32.

Leah conceived and had her first son which she named “*Reuben*” which means “see! a son,” or, “look! a son! She then declares that the Lord had “*looked on*” her affliction using the same word in Hebrew. The Lord looked with favour upon her, and so she acknowledges this and she expresses the hope that in consequence Jacob will thereby show her love and affection. Leah refers to the “*Lord*” on three occasions in this opening sequence and this seems to suggest that she had a true faith in the Lord.¹⁶¹⁴

1612 Genesis 29:30.

1613 Genesis 29:31.

1614 Genesis 29:32,33,35.

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29:33.

Hardly has Reuben entered the world stage before we read that Leah “*conceived again*” bearing her second son. It is impossible to say how much time elapsed between Reuben's birth and her becoming pregnant again, but the way the text reads it would suggest that it was pretty soon afterwards. This second son was named “*Simeon,*” which name means “hearing with acceptance.” Leah explains the choice of this name by noting that the Lord had “*heard*” that she was “*unloved.*” This statement indicates that despite having a second son by Jacob she was still “*unloved*” by her husband.

29:34.

Once again we read that Leah conceived and, from the way in which the text appears, presumably in quick succession from having Simeon. This third son was to be called “*Levi,*” and his name means “adhesion,” or “joined to.” Leah explains her hope that having this son would cause her husband to “*become attached*” to her because she had now born three sons one after the other.

29:35.

Again Leah conceives shortly after Levi was born, and has a fourth son whom she calls “*Judah,*” which name means “praised.” Her naming of this fourth son comes after her exclamation of praise to the Lord. It would appear that with the coming of this fourth son she has stopped trying to please her husband and get him to love her. Instead she pours forth praise to the Lord for having had four boys in quick order. And then after coming to the point of praise to the Lord, Leah stops bearing. Remember that her conceiving is through God's agency. It may be a natural consequence of having sex, but in reality these are as a result of God's sovereign will. We need always to remember that God is in charge of the smallest sub-atomic particle and the greatest stellar object completely .

[2] Envious Rachel struggles to engineer two sons by her maid Bilhah. (Genesis 30:1-8).

30:1-5.

The narrative now draws our focus and attention away from Leah and onto Rachel.¹⁶¹⁵ It is to be understood that Jacob probably slept more often with Rachel for she was loved “*more than Leah.*”¹⁶¹⁶ But Rachel “*bore Jacob no children,*” and all the while this state of affairs persisted Leah was pregnant and having sons one after the other. This situation lead Rachel to fall into the sin of envy. She wanted what Leah had! She clearly had her husband's affection, but she wanted more and she exclaims that unless Jacob give her sons she will die. Clearly Rachel is blaming Jacob for her barrenness. This contrasts with

¹⁶¹⁵ Genesis 30:1.

¹⁶¹⁶ Genesis 29:30.

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Leah's acknowledgement that the Lord has given her four sons. Thus we have a woman unloved by her husband but being blessed by producing four sons, and a woman loved by her husband but not being blessed and remaining barren.

On hearing this outburst *“Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel.”*¹⁶¹⁷ His rhetorical question is rather dismissive. It may be true that he is not *“in the place of God,”* and it may also be true that the Lord had *“withheld”* fruit from her womb, but surely he could have had some compassion? Leah has made mention of the *“Lord”* (the relational name for deity) in her experiences of being unloved, but concerning Jacob and Rachel this is the first mention of *“God”* (which depicts the deity as Creator) we have and it does not seem to be one borne from faith.¹⁶¹⁸ Rachel then makes the same suggestion to Jacob that Sarah did to Abraham when she suggested Hagar as a means to gain a son.¹⁶¹⁹ The details of that sad mistake must have been known to Jacob, as Abraham was his grandfather and the two were contemporary for fifteen years.¹⁶²⁰ But whereas Sarah attempted to effect the promise of God by means of her ingenuity, Rachel's suggestion has no god-ward merit to it at all. It was simply a means to get what she wanted – a son (*“that I also may have children”*). Jacob makes no protest about this which is quite reprehensible in view of the lessons he ought to have heeded with regard to Ishmael. He simply received Bilhah from Rachel and had sex with her.¹⁶²¹ Three times we read of a wife giving something to her husband that he ought to have refused:

[1] The Woman gave of the forbidden fruit to her husband Adam in the garden of Eden.¹⁶²²

[2] Sarah gave Hagar her maid to Abraham as wife to bear a surrogate son.¹⁶²³

[3] Rachel gave Bilhah her maid to Jacob as wife to bear a surrogate son.¹⁶²⁴

In all three cases the husbands were silent and offered no response and no guidance to combat such erroneous and wayward ideas. The outcome of Adam's failure brought down the curse upon the universe. In the case of Abraham's failure we find that Ishmael and his descendants would be a thorn in Israel's side. This would be a sore problem to Israel but not nearly as bad as the curse on the whole universe. But Jacob's failure in this regard brought about a son who would yield one of the tribes of Israel, Dan. How incredibly gracious is our God! Each failure, which appears equally sinful, brought less trouble, and this can only be because of the graciousness of God. The great grace of the Lord is displayed further by

¹⁶¹⁷ Genesis 30:2.

¹⁶¹⁸ Compare Genesis 29:32,33,35 with Genesis 30:2,6.

¹⁶¹⁹ Genesis 16:2; 30:3.

¹⁶²⁰ Abraham's dates are: 2008-2183 AC (1951-1776 BC). Jacob's dates are: 2168-2315 AC (1791-1644 BC). They thus were both alive from 2168-2183 AC (1791-1776 BC) or for a fifteen year period.

¹⁶²¹ Genesis 30:4.

¹⁶²² Genesis 3:6.

¹⁶²³ Genesis 16:3.

¹⁶²⁴ Genesis 30:4.

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Bilhah conceiving and bearing a son.¹⁶²⁵ It is likely that this son was born during the time when Leah was bearing her four sons. There is no reason in the text to insist that these events of depicted in Genesis 30:1f follow on after the events of Genesis 29:31-35.

30:6-8.

Rachel names the son that Bilhah bore to Jacob, “*Dan*,” which name means “judge,” or “judging.” She declared that God had “*judged*” her situation favourably, for He had “*heard*” her voice and the result was a son.¹⁶²⁶ It would appear that Rachel had cried to God for a son, and she makes the assumption that God had heard her cries and allowed her maid Bilhah to produce a son in her place. Not content with this son by Bilhah, Jacob's continued union with her produced another son.¹⁶²⁷ This son was to be named “*Naphtali*,” which means “my wrestling,” or “my twisting.” Rachel states openly that she has “*wrestled with*” Leah, and claims that these sons showed that she had “*prevailed*.”¹⁶²⁸ How can it be that God would endorse Rachel's behaviour here? Well, of course, the Lord does not condone this competitive situation which has resulted from Jacob having two wives. Nevertheless God is not thwarted in His plans to multiply Jacob and to bring forth from his loins the twelve tribes that would form the nucleus of the nation Israel. What we see here is God at work amidst the sin and evil of human beings in their envy, earthly desire, and pride.

It appears that Rachel has strived and wrestled with Leah in a monumental way. The Hebrew phrase rendered as: “*with great wrestlings I have wrestled*” has the name of God (אֱלֹהִים *’ēlōhîm*) in the midst:

נִפְתָּלִי אֱלֹהִים נִפְתָּלְתִּי
wrestlings God I have wrestled

Does this suggest in her arguments and fights with Leah that she has also been wrestling with God too? It would appear that Rachel is suffering under this situation brought about by her father's deceitful ways. Jacob deceived Esau. Laban deceived Jacob. And now Rachel and Leah are paying a high price for their father's and husband's deceitful ways.

1625 Genesis 30:5.

1626 Genesis 30:6.

1627 Genesis 30:7.

1628 Genesis 30:8.

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[3] Leah copies Rachel and has two sons by Zilpah. (Genesis 30:9-13).

30:9-11.

Up to this point Leah has had four sons by Jacob and she has shown herself honourable even though unloved by her husband. Rachel has not acted in a godly way, and in her struggles with Leah and thence with God to make sense of this, she has followed a path which they must have known was not right. But now Rachel's behaviour in competing with Leah leads Leah astray too, Leah already has four sons so why does she seek more? It would seem clear that the only reason was to get the better of her sister Rachel. It is noteworthy here that nowhere do we see Leah giving praise to the Lord or calling upon His name as she did before when she bore her own sons. And so Leah plays Rachel's game by giving Jacob Zilpah as wife.¹⁶²⁹ Again it is likely that these events transpired at the same time as Rachel's exploits depicted in Genesis 30:1-5. Thus Zilpah bears another son to Jacob and Leah names him *“Gad,”* which name means “good luck,” or “good fortune.”¹⁶³⁰ Now Leah's explanation for this name is rather different from this bare meaning. She declared: *“A troop comes!”* by which she seems to be indicating that she has made a breakthrough and she expects more to come. On this name **Jones** makes the following comment:

“from the root ... to gather in troops, to cut through, from the idea of a troop of men cutting through opposing ranks.”¹⁶³¹

Thus Leah has entered the fray. The gloves are off! Who will gather a troop of offspring like Leah?

30:12,13.

From the way in which the text appears in verse 12 it would seem that Zilpah has a second son very soon after the first. Leah names this son *“Asher,”* which name means “happy,” or “fortunate,” and she declares that she is happy because her contemporaries will call her *“blessed.”* It is noteworthy that there is no mention of the Lord here again. Leah has well and truly entered into competition with her sister and she seems to be out in the lead with six sons, four of her own and two by her maid Zilpah.

[4] Leah hires Jacob for the night with Reuben's mandrakes for a fifth son. (Genesis 30:14-18).

Reuben would now be about four or five years of age by this time.¹⁶³² The time of wheat harvest was in the month of May so there would be much produce and flowering evident at this period. It would appear that Reuben saw these and picked some for his mother. Perhaps it was simply the action of a child

1629 Genesis 30:9.

1630 Genesis 30:10,11.

1631 **Jones.** P123.

1632 Genesis 30:14.

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who saw something delightful to give to his mother or maybe he had been trained to gather these by her? In any event Reuben gathers these for his mother out of love and affection. Rachel was also around on the scene and on seeing Reuben with these she asks Leah for some of Reuben's gathered mandrakes. Now, from **Davidson** and **Wilson** we learn that the Hebrew word rendered as “*mandrakes*” in verse 14 comes from the root which means “love” and often indicates “beloved.”¹⁶³³ As such our word indicates an aphrodisiac, or love-apple, which promotes sexual desire and favours procreation. The word is only used here and in Song of Solomon which reads:

The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates *are* pleasant *fruits*, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved. ¹⁶³⁴

Why did Rachel ask for these mandrakes? She was already loved by Jacob over Leah, so for what purpose did she need these love-apples? Leah then replies to her request by pointing out that Rachel had “*taken away*” Leah's husband, so her taking her “*son's mandrakes*” added insult to injury.¹⁶³⁵ Did Rachel think of this as a “*small matter*,” something of little consequence? Rachel offers payment! The response she makes indicates that she has some command or influence over Jacob, for she could say that Jacob would be with Leah that night in exchange for Reuben's “*mandrakes*.”

Meanwhile Jacob has been busy in the field, and when he comes back in the evening, Leah informs him that she has paid for his attentions!¹⁶³⁶ Jacob simply complies with this situation (“*and he lay with her that night*”) so this highlights a very dysfunctional family. Perhaps Jacob is caught in two minds? He had been deceived by Laban to take Leah when he only wanted Rachel, but now the reality was that he has two wives, so how should he deal with them both? Like other men before him Jacob seems to have let the women deal with their situation alone. There is no instruction or advice. Jacob simply complies with this demand.

Wonderfully in amongst all of this sinful and messy mix the Lord operates in sovereign power. Leah has purchased Jacob for the night and we then read that “*God listened to Leah*” even though we are not privy to her prayer or inner desires.¹⁶³⁷ And so the Lord blesses Leah with a fifth son whom she names “*Issachar*,” which name means “he is wages” or “he brings wages.”¹⁶³⁸ Her declaration that God had given her “*wages*” on account of the fact that she had provided her maid for Jacob is curious. Now it was only after Rachel first gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob who bore two sons (presumably during the time when Leah was bearing her four sons) that Leah thought to give her maid Zilpah to Jacob who also bore

1633 **Davidson**. P147. **Wilson**. P267.

1634 Song of Solomon 7:13.

1635 Genesis 30:15.

1636 Genesis 30:16.

1637 Genesis 30:17.

1638 Genesis 30:18.

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him two sons. But this was done the moment that Leah stopped bearing.¹⁶³⁹ So what appears to have happened is that Leah bore four sons in quick succession and then stopped bearing and at that point she gives Zilpah her maid to Jacob who bore two sons and now on account of paying for a night with Jacob Leah has born her fifth. She credits this fifth son to the bounty of God who had also blessed her with two sons by Zilpah her maid.

We pause and wonder at the misunderstanding and curious way in which these women seem to display. But God is gracious and loving still and He has blessed Leah with five sons and two surrogates.

[5] Leah has her sixth son and also a daughter. (Genesis 30:19-21).

Hardly has Issachar been born than Leah has her sixth son who is named “*Zebulun*,” which name signifies “wished-for habitation,” or “exalted.”¹⁶⁴⁰ We are not given the circumstances of this pregnancy and birth but Leah seems to recognise the hand of God in this provision, and the hope that Jacob may become firmly attached to her so that he would “ *dwell* ” with her on account of bearing six sons to her husband.¹⁶⁴¹ Bearing six sons is seen by Leah as a “*good endowment*” and something for which Jacob ought to be thankful. The mention of “*Dinah*” is not an afterthought, even though the focus here is upon the raising of the twelve tribes, but is given here because of the history related in Genesis 34.¹⁶⁴² Dinah's name means “judged” or “judgment” and the positioning of this daughter and her name would signify the fact that Leah has done nothing wrong, and that judgement has been passed.¹⁶⁴³

[6] Rachel has her first son, Joseph. (Genesis 30:22-24).

Recall here that the idea of God's remembering someone does not indicate that He had forgotten and now brings back to mind.¹⁶⁴⁴ Rather the idea is of being mindful or of thinking upon someone with intent. So the Lord was concerned and mindful of Rachel's position. From what we read at the end of verse 22 we discover that Rachel must have been pouring her heart out to the Lord because He now “*listened to her*” and as evidence of this He “*opened her womb*” so that she may conceive. Remember that it is God who is in charge of the womb and of reproduction (and, in point of fact, all things). Although we have been able to chart the course of conception and pregnancy these things by no means occur simply as a matter of course following some inexorable laws (the laws of science). Rather our understanding of these processes is a poor reflection of God's ordered control of all things. Since He is ordered and sure, all things He does are equally ordered and sure. At times He may do something

1639 Genesis 30:19,20.

1640 Genesis 30:6.

1641 Genesis 30:20.

1642 Genesis 30:21.

1643 Genesis 30:21.

1644 Genesis 30:22.

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unexpected (such as walk on water or change water into wine) but never for show and always for some purpose. It is at the right time that the Lord allows Rachel to conceive in her womb. Details of Jacob's children are shown in table 37.1.

Table 37.1: The Children of Jacob with some comments by A. W. Pink.

	Name	Meaning	Comments by A. W. Pink ¹⁶⁴⁵	Mother	Scripture
1	Reuben	See a Son!	This is just what God says to us through the Gospel: to the Son of His love we are invited to look —"Behold the lamb of God."	Leah	29:32
2	Simeon	A hearing	This points to the reception of the Gospel by faith, for faith cometh by hearing, and the promise is, "Hear, and your soul shall live."	Leah	29:33
3	Levi	Joined	[This tells] of the blessed Union by which the Holy Spirit makes us one with the Son through the hearing of the Word.	Leah	29:34
4	Judah	Praise	[In this name] we have manifested the Divine life in the believer, expressed in joyous gratitude for the riches of grace which are now his in Christ.	Leah	29:35
5	Dan	Judgment	This tells of how the believer uncompromisingly passes sentence upon himself, not only for what he has done but because of what he is, and thus he reckons himself to have died unto sin.	Bilhah	30:6
6	Naphtali	Wrestling	[This] speaks of that earnestness in prayer which is the very breath of the new life.	Bilhah	30:8
7	Gad	A troop OR companing	[This speaks], perhaps of the believer in fellowship with the Lord's people.	Zilpah	30:11
8	Asher	Happy	[This] announces the effect of Christian fellowship.	Zilpah	30:13
9	Issachar	Hire	[This] speaks of service.	Leah	30:18
10	Zebulun	Dwelling	[This] reminds us that we are to "occupy" till Christ comes.	Leah	30:20
11	Dinah			Leah	30:21
12	Joseph	Adding	[This] tells of the reward which He will bestow on those who have served diligently and occupied faithfully.	Rachel	30:23
13	Benjamin ¹⁶⁴⁶	Son of my right hand	[This speaks] directly of Christ.	Rachel	35:18

When Rachel discovers she has conceived, become pregnant, and then has actually given birth to a son she exclaimed that God had delivered her from "*reproach.*"¹⁶⁴⁷ She decides to call her first son "*Joseph*"

¹⁶⁴⁵ A. W. Pink. *Gleanings in Genesis*. Note: this work was written early in Pink's career. Whilst it has much useful teaching and helpful devotional content, his bent towards dispensationalism is evident and should be carefully scrutinized. See *Appendix 10* for further spiritual significance according to A. W. Pink.

¹⁶⁴⁶ I have included Benjamin here for completeness.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Genesis 30:23.

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and explains: “*the Lord shall add to me another son.*”¹⁶⁴⁸ The name “*Joseph*” means either “Jehovah has added,” or, “may Jehovah add.” And so Rachel appears to believe that this son will be the first of more. At this point the narrative changes as we discover that Jacob now asks for release of Laban.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Genesis 30:24.

Chapter 38.

Let me go! (30:25-43).

Analysis.

- 25** And it came to pass,
 when Rachel had borne Joseph,
 that Jacob said to Laban,
 “Send me away,
 that I may go
 to my own place
 and to my country.
26 Give *me* my wives and my children
 for whom I have served you,
and let me go;
 for you know my service which I have done for you.”
- 27** And Laban said to him,
 “Please *stay*,
 if I have found favor in your eyes,
 for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake.”
- 28** Then he said,
 “Name me your wages, and I will give *it*.”
- 29** So *Jacob* said to him,
 “You know
 how I have served you
 and how your livestock has been with me.
30 For what you had before I *came* was little, and it has increased to a great amount;
 the Lord has blessed you since my coming.
And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?”
- 31** So he said,
 “*What* shall I give you?”
- And Jacob said,
 “You shall not give me anything.
If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks:
32 Let me pass through all your flock today,
 removing from there
 all the speckled and spotted sheep,
 and all the brown ones among the lambs,
 and the spotted and speckled among the goats;
 and *these* shall be my wages.
33 So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every
one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is*
with me.”
- 34** And Laban said,
 “*Oh*, that it were according to your word!”
- 35** So he removed that day
 the male goats that were speckled and spotted,
 all the female goats that were speckled and spotted,
 every one that had *some* white in it,
 and all the brown ones among the lambs,
 and gave *them* into the hand of his sons.
- 36** Then he put three days’ journey between himself and Jacob,

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and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

37 Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which *was* in the rods.

38 And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks
in the gutters,
in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink,
so that they should conceive when they came to drink.

39 So the flocks conceived before the rods,
and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted.

40 Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock.

41 And it came to pass,
whenever the stronger livestock conceived,
that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters,
that they might conceive among the rods.

42 But when the flocks were feeble,
he did not put *them* in;
so the feeblers were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

43 Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

The events recorded in this passage have been a great puzzle to commentators for many years! What exactly was Jacob doing when he had charge over Laban's flocks? We shall work through the text as best we are able given the various explanations that have been offered, but what will be uppermost in our minds is how the Lord views all these things. It is to be noted here that in Genesis 31 we learn that Jacob actually had some revelation from the Lord on the matter of breeding.¹⁶⁴⁹ This passage seems best to be viewed as a whole but for convenience we shall look at it under three headings:

[1] The strange deal Jacob strikes with Laban. (Genesis 30:25-33).

[2] Laban's conditions for this deal. (Genesis 30:34-36).

[3] Nevertheless, Jacob prospers. (Genesis 30:37-43).

[1] The strange deal Jacob strikes with Laban. (Genesis 30:25-33).

30:25.

And so the fourteen years of service that Jacob gave to Laban were over, and this comes at the point where Rachel bore Joseph. Jacob had served the first seven years for Rachel, but was cheated into taking Leah, and was then made to serve a second seven years for his second wife. And now Jacob comes to Laban and makes request that he be allowed to return to his "*own place,*" and his own "*country.*" Notice here that Jacob does not take matters into his own hands. He has been deceived by Laban but he still makes request to him. Here we see the honour and deference paid to fathers (father-in-law) and such

¹⁶⁴⁹ Genesis 31:10-13.

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is worthy of bearing in mind in an age where authority is disdained and flouted at every corner and opportunity. Such deference brings to mind the whole concept of authority. Whom has the right to send or delay? In this instance it would appear that Jacob recognises the right of his father-in-law to give his blessing or withhold it.

30:26.

In requesting to Laban that he “*give*” to Jacob his wives we see this principle of order and authority further expressed. At the very least it indicates the concept of grace. What do we have except it be given to us? Jacob here sees that his two wives are first Laban's daughters and so he makes request to his father-in-law. Jacob appeals to justice. He had served Laban as agreed beforehand that he would serve seven years for each, and now that the time was up he requests what is due to him. He does not demand his rights. He requests the fulfilment of the agreement he had made with Laban.

Notice here how often Jacob refers to the service he had rendered Laban. He first asks for his wives and children “*for whom I have served you,*” and then asking to be “*let go*” he reminds his father-in-law of his “*service*” which he had “*done for*” Laban. These statements bring to mind the fact that the service our Saviour Jesus Christ offered to His Father was fully repaid and credited to Him. Consider, for example, these prophetic words of Isaiah which speak of the Saviour's service to the Father and the reward which was His due:

11 He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. by His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. **12** Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. ¹⁶⁵⁰

Jacob was thus asking for what was his due, but he was making request with due regard to the authority of his father-in-law, showing great respect.

30:27,28.

Laban responds in typical fashion – he wants Jacob to stay and no wonder.¹⁶⁵¹ Jacob has worked great wonders for Laban and his household, and Laban knows that all of this blessing was from the Lord. The word used and given as “*I have learned by experience*” could be rendered as “I have divined” for the Hebrew has that notion attached to it.¹⁶⁵² From what we learn later it would seem that Laban is no true believer in God. He may have some respect unto the God of Abraham but not in any real or deep sense.

1650 Isaiah 53:11-13.

1651 Genesis 30:27.

1652 See, for example, Leviticus 19:26; 2Kings 17:17; 21:6.

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He is rather like those who are associated with the church and its respectability today, but have no real depth and living faith. Notice how Laban refers to his prosperity. It was the Lord who had “*blessed*” him, but it was for Jacob's “*sake*,” for the Lord was (in reality) blessing Jacob, and Laban benefited in consequence. Such a statement serves to show clearly that Laban does not have true faith in the Lord God, for otherwise he would exclaim praise to God for such blessings. Laban recognises that without Jacob he would have no success and so he asks for Jacob to remain.

And so Laban tells Jacob to “*name*” his reward and promises that he will “*give it.*”¹⁶⁵³ The choice of expression by the NKJV is unfortunate. We rather take this meaning as indicating that the sky would be the limit for Jacob. However the word given as “*name*” actually signifies the idea of being precise and distinct in what Jacob might require – but with no firm acceptance of such. It is the opening bid in a negotiating war.

30:29,30.

Jacob is not immediately swayed by Laban's request that he name his wages. Rather he continues to appeal to Laban in his integrity. He makes plain that Laban knows full well that all the while Jacob had “*served*” for his wives he had also improved his livestock!¹⁶⁵⁴ Before Jacob came to Laban all that he had was “*little*,” but now his flocks have “*increased to a great amount*,” and this is only because it was the Lord Himself who had “*blessed*” in the coming of Jacob. And then Jacob asks a rhetorical question which highlights the duty of a father-in-law to his son-in-law and daughters. The pattern for marriage was (since God created Woman from Adam) that a man and the woman would leave their respective parents breaking away to form a new family.¹⁶⁵⁵ Laban ought to have recognised this biblical and creation pattern and should have acquiesced to Jacob's reverent request. How should Jacob provide for his family if he is a mere servant in Laban's household?¹⁶⁵⁶ This rhetorical question declares clearly that Laban was at fault here.¹⁶⁵⁷

30:31-33.

Laban is still holding Jacob at bay here. He is reluctant to make a sensible and fair suggestion. He is putting his son-in-law at a disadvantage and he asks rather disdainfully what he ought to “*give*” Jacob?¹⁶⁵⁸ Such a suggestion would mean Jacob would still effectively be servant to Laban dependant upon his father-in-law's grace. I am reminded of the film “Hobson's Choice,” starring John Mills and

1653 Genesis 30:28.

1654 Genesis 30:29.

1655 Genesis 2:24.

1656 1Timothy 5:8.

1657 Genesis 30:30.

1658 Genesis 30:31.

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Charles Laughton. Mills is the apprentice cobbler in Hobson's shop but it becomes clear as the film progresses that the success of the shop has been largely due to the expertise of Mills' character William Mossop. Hobson keeps Mossop as his downtrodden apprentice, but Hobson's daughter recognises the injustice and taking a liking to Mossop they engineer things in their favour. Before this transpires, however, Hobson has Mossop in his iron grip and this is rather like the situation Jacob found himself with his uncle Laban. Unlike Mossop Jacob simply replies to this by saying that he does not want Laban to *“give”* him anything – he does not want to be subservient to Laban any longer. Instead, Jacob agrees to *“feed and keep”* Laban's flocks if his uncle will do for him what he is about to outline and the request seems to be both reasonable but also very humble.¹⁶⁵⁹

Flocks and herds of sheep or goats are most usually a single colour, white. And so Jacob suggests that his wages may be clearly identified by their unusual colours.¹⁶⁶⁰ He requests three things:

[1] The *“speckled and spotted sheep.”*

כָּל-שֶׂה נִקְדָּו וְטָלוּא

[2] The *“brown ones among the lambs.”*

וְכָל-שֶׂה-חֹם בְּכִשְׁבִּים

[3] The *“spotted and speckled among the goats.”*

וְטָלוּא וְנִקְדָּו בְּעִזִּים

Although the AKJV reads somewhat differently with respect to the animal kinds mentioned, most modern translations suggest the types and kinds that we find in the NKJV. From this it would seem that Laban had flocks of sheep and goats only. The terms used to describe these animals that would form Jacob's wages indicates either dark colour (i.e. black sheep) or patched or mottled in colour rather than pure white as was the normal colouration among the flocks. The animals Jacob was asking for were the rare ones, for these colourations were unusual, since in the East the sheep are usually white, and the goats black or dark brown. Why did Jacob request such for his reward? I would suggest it is rather like the unwanted misshapen fruit and vegetables rejected by the supermarkets in our day. Now the rejection of such by the supermarkets is, of course, utterly ridiculous. Why should we have only perfectly straight carrots and perfectly rounded potatoes? Similarly, the discoloured sheep and goats were no different in substance from the pure coloured ones. But I suspect that apart from a ready means to identify which were to be his, Jacob was probably also being humble in his request here.

In verse 32 we are told expressly Jacob's reason for requesting these flocks. It would be so that there could be no mistakes when time passed. All the spotted and speckled would be his and not of such a character would be *“considered stolen”* if they were among his herds. Thus we see in these few verses the characters of both men. Laban was merely after the best deal he could arrange for himself, but in Jacob's

¹⁶⁵⁹ Genesis 30:31.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Genesis 30:32.

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request we can see that his heart has changed. He appears no longer to be deceiving, but is open and humble in his requests. There is no suggestion of Jacob claiming self-righteousness here at the start of verse 32 (“*so my righteousness ...*”). It would appear that Jacob is making the deal as clear and above board as possible so that were he to break the agreement it would be obvious. In such a way his honesty and integrity could be observed. We noted earlier that Jacob made conditions when he met with God at Bethel:

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, **21** so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. **22** And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.” ¹⁶⁶¹

And now it would seem that fourteen years of servitude in the house of Laban has softened his heart with respect to the Lord and His ways, for he was concerned to be honest and open in the deal.

[2] Laban's conditions for this deal. (Genesis 30:34-36).

Jacob's suggestion is pounced upon by Laban.¹⁶⁶² Laban cannot believe his 'luck.' Not only would he have Jacob as his steward in charge of his flocks, but the payment would be all the odd coloured ones which were not usually preferred. Next Laban acts swiftly and removes all the those featured in Jacob's request.¹⁶⁶³ A comparison between verse 32 and verse 35 might suggest a difference between what Jacob mentions and that which Laban removes. Verse 35 begins with both sexes among the goats who were speckled and spotted and then speaks of the lambs (young sheep) that were dark. Thus it would seem that Laban's flocks had clearly identifiable goats of both sexes with such discolouration, but only young sheep that were black (“*brown*” in the text but really a dark colour). That it is Laban who takes this action is clear from the last statement in verse 35 and from the details of verse 36 which indicate that Laban was making the moves. Laban acts like a dealer who has sealed the deal and is very keen to see it worked out so there could be no re-negotiation or challenges. Laban is careful to remove all those which would qualify for wages and gives them to his sons who took them away so that they would need three days to reach.¹⁶⁶⁴ It would appear that these were not part of the deal. A new start is being put in place. These separated by Laban would not be wages for Jacob, for Jacob was to tend and keep the rest of Laban's flocks and herds and out of these all the streaked and spotted and black among the sheep would be his wages. Thus Jacob is given a blank slate. How would things pan out?

1661 Genesis 28:20-22.

1662 Genesis 30:34.

1663 Genesis 30:35.

1664 Genesis 30:35,36.

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[3] Nevertheless, Jacob prospers. (Genesis 30:37-43).

Verses 37 to 43 have occasioned much difficulty for commentators over the years. What was Jacob really doing here? The following is my attempt at translation for these verses:

37 And Jacob took fresh rods of white poplar and of almond and of chestnut trees and peeled them to lay them bare white so that the rods appeared white. **38** And he set the rods which he had peeled by the gutters by the troughs of water which the flocks came to drink before and the flocks became inflamed in coming to drink. **39** And the flocks mated upon the rods. And the flocks bore streaked, speckled and spotted. **40** And Jacob separated the lambs and he set the faces of the flocks towards the streaked and all the brown of the flocks of Laban and he put his herds to themselves and he did not put them toward Laban's flock. **41** And it was when all the stronger flocks mated there Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the flocks in the gutters for them to mate by the rods. **42** And with the feebler flocks he did not place them and it was so that the feebler ones became Laban's but the stronger were Jacob's. **43** And the man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, and maid-servants and men-servants, and camels and asses.

30:37-39.

From verses 37 to 39a what seems to be happening is that Jacob is controlling which of the flocks will mate and conceive. The rods stripped bare to show them as white have been explained in three main ways. First as a magical or mystical talisman. This is obviously wrong. There is no way that the Lord would endorse such error and superstition. Second it has been suggested by others that the rods added some aphrodisiac or medicinal additions which enabled certain flocks to conceive. This may be a possibility. The third suggestion is that the rods were what have been called a “Phallus fallax” (an artificial male organ used to deceive the ewes and she-goats). These false inducements were arranged for the females to mate with rather than with the males, or to simply encourage mating. A ewe that observed such a rod when inflamed or “on heat” would then be ready to receive and would either 'mate' with the rods carefully positioned, or mate with a suitably ready male nearby. By such means Jacob could control which ewes would be used for the next generation. Now whichever of these last two suggestions is correct it seems clear that Jacob was engaged in selective breeding.

30:40.

This verse is not straight forward. What it seems to indicate is that as streaked, speckled and black animals were born, these were separated out by Jacob so that there was a distinct difference between those which would be his wages and those which would remain Laban's.

30:41-43.

Thus Jacob used these white rods in or near the watering troughs to encourage or at least control

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which ewes and she-goats were to be bred with. By arranging the white rods in these ways he would observe the ewes and see their offspring. One ewe may always bring forth unspotted and unspeckled offspring, whilst another would yield some that were discoloured. Knowing this, Jacob would then take such a ewe and breed again with them using the strongest males. In this way Jacob could maximise his wages. Knowing which ewes may produce spotted and speckled offspring, and knowing which were the strongest among Laban's herds, he could ensure that these mated to yield strong speckled, spotted and black offspring. Now in all of this work there would be many of a normal colour produced as well. We must remember that Jacob had said to Laban *“when shall I also provide for my own house?”*¹⁶⁶⁵ And so this selective breeding programme was clearly a means for Jacob to prosper. There is no deception here. And as a result Jacob increased his portfolio.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Genesis 30:30.

Chapter 39.

The Lord tells Jacob to return. (31:1-16).

Analysis.

#31 1 Now *Jacob* heard the words of Laban's sons, saying,

"Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth."

2 And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it *was* not *favorable* toward him as before.

3 Then the Lord said to Jacob,

"Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, 5 and said to them,

"I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not *favorable* toward me as before;
but the God of my father has been with me.

6 And you know that with all my might I have served your father.

7 Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times,
but God did not allow him to hurt me.

8 If he said thus:

'The speckled shall be your wages,'
then all the flocks bore speckled.

And if he said thus:

'The streaked shall be your wages,'
then all the flocks bore streaked.

9 So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me.

10 "And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. **More likely to mate**

11 Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying,

'Jacob.'

And I said,

'Here I am.'

12 And He said,

'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted;
for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.

13 I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me.

Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.'"

14 Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him,

"Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

15 Are we not considered strangers by him?

For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money.

16 For all these riches which God has taken from our father are *really* ours and our children's;
now then, whatever God has said to you, do it."

The deceiver who has himself been deceived is now prospered and blessed by the Lord! This passage describes in the main the conversation that Jacob has with his two wives as the six years of Jacob's service to Laban continues. We are informed of further details here which serve to show the different characters of Jacob and Laban. Laban is clearly one who wants the best for himself and acts out of suspicion and jealousy. Jacob is clearly one who is in communion with the Lord.

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31:1,2.

In the course of time Jacob overhears Laban's sons moaning about Jacob's success in his programme of selective breeding. It is put in a very one-sided way in verse 1. Jacob was charged with looking after Laban's flock, but he was also free to ensure that he derived benefit from his work in having for his reward all the speckled, spotted and black offspring. The sons of Laban consider that Jacob's actions have *“taken away”* that which was their father's. But this is untrue. Some people cannot abide another's success. It was a wise thing for Jacob to suggest that the odd coloured would be his for then there could be no complaint, but Laban's sons in seeing Jacob's flocks grow and Laban's doing less well put their 'spin' on the whole affair by speaking of Jacob effectively ripping their father off. These sons do not seem to realise that they too could use the same methods Jacob was using to prosper their flocks. Why did they not do so? Why did they not benefit from Jacob's godly motivated ingenuity?

Such talk was not confined to the sons and it would appear that Laban was equally guilty of misconstruing events.¹⁶⁶⁶ Laban's face could not hide his view of things for it was *“not favourable toward”* Jacob any longer. Thus Laban's character is displayed for us as one who is fine when all is going well for him, but spitting fury when he is not gaining and another seems to be doing better.

31:3.

At this point in the story we discover that the Lord had spoken to Jacob. But at what point in time exactly Jacob received this word from the Lord is not clear. Presumably it was as he was becoming prosperous in his selective breeding. Perhaps the sons saw what Jacob was doing and complained to their father. When Laban observed the increasing numbers of spotted, streaked and speckled flocks he reinforced his sons concerns. The atmosphere in the family was getting increasingly tense and difficult. And as the tension rises and as Jacob prospers he receives the Lord's very needed counsel.

Later we will learn that it would be twenty years in total that Jacob had been with Laban.¹⁶⁶⁷ But here we learn that it was now the command of the Lord that Jacob was to return to his own family. And this would not be without hope for the Lord promises Jacob His presence. The introduction of the Lord and His command here is matter-of-fact and latter statements confirm this idea that Jacob has been in communion with the Lord throughout these times. We do not know whether Jacob received a Christophanic appearance, or if the instruction was given by vision in a dream, or if it was received through the revealed word written. The precise method of how Jacob hears the instruction is unimportant, for the point is to show the contrast between Laban and Jacob. Whilst Jacob was one who heard the Lord and walked with Him, Laban was one who had no time for such intrusions.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Genesis 31:2.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Genesis 31:38.

31:4,5.

Having received command and counsel from the Lord, Jacob now calls his wives out to his flock in the field.¹⁶⁶⁸ Jacob speaks to his wives concerning their father's disposition towards him that it was not favourable *“as before.”*¹⁶⁶⁹ Nevertheless despite the changing nature of Laban's character and approach to Jacob, the Lord God of his father *“has been with”* Jacob.¹⁶⁷⁰ This is Jacob's testimony. Jacob knew the blessing of the Lord. We read little of this through the years of service but this statement surely indicates that despite his sin and failure, Jacob had been following the Lord.

31:6,7.

Now Jacob speaks openly of what has transpired over these years of service, first for the two wives, and then for his wages (the flocks). He has worked in his integrity serving their father with all his power and ability. He had not shirked his responsibilities and duties, but had faithfully and with diligence worked for Laban.¹⁶⁷¹ During all of this time Laban has been deceptive, first with regard to giving him Leah instead of Rachel, and then in the matter of his wages during the six years after Joseph was born. Laban had deceived Jacob and had changed the agreement over what was to be paid to Jacob *“ten times.”*¹⁶⁷² This number signifies the idea of comprehensiveness or completeness. Just as the Lord gave ten instructions in creating all things, and as later we will find that the Lord gave ten words to describe His character and how the people ought to be in relation to Him in the Law, Laban's general disposition has been one of complete deception. At this point we can see the wrong Jacob inflicted on Esau and Isaac is now being reimbursed upon Jacob through Laban. The Lord is teaching Jacob that his deceiving ways are far from good. As one writer once put it: we all know what is right and wrong because we do not like it when wrong is done to us and right is withheld. Jacob has tasted the deceptive ways of Laban and sees in effect the stew he brewed for Esau and Isaac. We must insist that Jacob has acted in integrity here, even though his treatment of Leah and his being lead into taking his two wives' maids as concubines which would have been happening at the same time was not right. No one is perfect. But that Jacob has been following God throughout these years is surely attested by several statements made throughout Genesis 30 and 31:

Both Rachel and Leah's cries were heard by the Lord. (Genesis 30:17,22).

Laban testified that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob's sake. (Genesis 30:27).

Jacob acknowledges that Laban's prosperity was from the Lord. (Genesis 30:30)

1668 Genesis 31:4.

1669 Genesis 31:5.

1670 Genesis 31:5.

1671 Genesis 31:6.

1672 Genesis 31:7.

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Jacob heard the word of the Lord. (Genesis 31:3).

Thus even though Laban had been wicked in the manner of Jacob's wages, having also been deceptive in the matter of his daughters, Jacob recognises that the Lord would not allow Laban to “*hurt*” him.¹⁶⁷³

31:8-10.

In these three verses we learn some further details of the six years of service Jacob gave to Laban for his flocks. First Laban appears to have only allowed Jacob to take the “*speckled*” flocks. So, under the providence and direction of God, there was a preponderance of speckled among the flocks. Then Laban switches the terms and says Jacob may only have the “*streaked*” for his wages, and again there was a plethora of streaked under the providence and sovereign direction of the Lord.¹⁶⁷⁴ We are not to suppose here that Jacob was passive. He was working hard and using his selective breeding knowledge as we have already described. But all the effort of man in the world will never guarantee a positive outcome. We err badly if we think that things are simply guaranteed to us as a matter of *fait accompli*, or as a matter of inexorable scientific law. We have already had occasion to note that all things happen according to the Lord's doings whether by miracle or through providence. We like to think that if we hold an object 1 metre above the ground it will automatically accelerate towards the ground according to the laws of gravitation and we can measure these with accuracy and regularity. But never assume that this is something that happens because it happens! It happens only because the Lord wills it so. We have the fact that God is a God of order to thank for the fact that the law of gravitation works. The so-called laws of science are simply approximations to the will of God regularly expressed. Jacob, therefore, observed how the flocks mated and produced various offspring and made use of these observations, but it was God who ensured that he was blessed.

Thus Jacob can make the claim that he has done nothing untoward, for it was God who saw to it that He “*has taken away the livestock*” of Laban and given them to Jacob.¹⁶⁷⁵ And then we discover that Jacob's prosperous success was aided and energised by a dream that God gave him.¹⁶⁷⁶ The opening statement of verse 10 shows forth the wonders of providence. The phrase “*and it happened*” seen from the human perspective merely indicates a happen-stance, a fortuitous occurrence, but from the perspective of God, all is under His divine control. It is notable that Jacob “*lifted*” his eyes, for always when we look heavenward we see what God wants us to see. If we have our eyes pointed down to earth, or if our thoughts are earth-bound (as the Israelites would later be in their wilderness wanderings) we will suffer

1673 Genesis 31:7.

1674 Genesis 31:8.

1675 Genesis 31:9.

1676 Genesis 31:10.

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confusion of heart.¹⁶⁷⁷ But if we look up towards heaven where God dwells we will see things in a better light. Look up! Look to the Lord! Look to heaven and see things from God's perspective. The Lord speaks repeatedly in this way. Take for example the Lord's statement through the prophet Isaiah:

Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I *am* God, and *there is* no other.¹⁶⁷⁸

This injunction to look up is not one confined to the Old Testament. Consider what Paul declares in the book of Hebrews:

... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith.¹⁶⁷⁹

Notice here that the call is not just for a one time look, but for for a continual *“looking.”* The apostle continues by saying that such an attitude must be done with care and diligence, for we are to be:

looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.¹⁶⁸⁰

Such an attitude of looking to the Lord is not just a casual glance but an earnest desire, a desperate demand and a longing for life. And so it would seem that Jacob trained his thoughts and eyes towards heaven, and the Lord blessed him with a dream filled with instruction. It would appear that that the Lord revealed to Jacob that the most likely to mate were *“the streaked, speckled and gray-spotted.”*¹⁶⁸¹ Armed with this information Jacob set about his breeding programme and was greatly blessed. He used his ingenuity and skill but under the direction of God.

31:11-13.

Verse 10 acts as a recounting of the events in a general sense. Jacob is reporting the events in sum. Then in verse 11 Jacob recalls some of the details. It was no simple regular or normal dream, for none other than the *“Angel of God”* spoke to him. This is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ here presented to us as a messenger or revealer. Christ's mission (according to John) was to make plain the nature of God (as far as we humans are able to grasp it).¹⁶⁸² The very *“Word of God”* makes known the Father and the Father's will. So here Jacob receives a dream from the *“Angel of the Lord,”* the messenger or revealer of truth .¹⁶⁸³

1677 Numbers 11:15.

1678 Isaiah 45:22.

1679 Hebrews 12:2.

1680 Hebrews 12:15.

1681 Genesis 31:10.

1682 John 1:1,18.

1683 Genesis 31:11.

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Further instruction comes in verse 12 where the Angel of the Lord instructs Jacob to *“lift”* his eyes and thus *“see.”* This reinforces what we have already noted, that looking up toward God and heaven enables us to see properly and, what-is-more, in truth. The only person who sees things aright or truly is the one who sees things through God and via heaven. This is why I have such a disdain for modern science. How can they be accepted as purveyors of truth when they deny God and refuse to take a heavenly view of things? The Angel of the Lord calls Jacob to observe that the most likely to mate were the *“streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted”* and he has told Jacob this because He had *“seen all that Laban”* was doing to Jacob.¹⁶⁸⁴ We learn here a valuable lesson. God sees. He sees our hearts – we know this from Psalm 139 for example. But He also sees the wrongs and injustices we face. The thing to remember, however, is that the right to bring to justice is the Lord's and not ours.¹⁶⁸⁵

The Angel of the Lord identifies Himself to Jacob as the *“God of Bethel”* where Jacob met with God in his escape from Esau's fury. The Lord reminds Jacob of the vow that he had made:

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, **21** so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. **22** And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”¹⁶⁸⁶

We noted in our comments earlier that Jacob was hedging his bets. This vow made at Bethel was a conditional one. Jacob would allow God to be his God and would give back a tithe, *“if”* certain things were to happen, namely that God would provide for him and return him to his *“father's house in peace.”* Thus God reminds Jacob of this vow. Jacob has asked the Lord to do certain things and because of His nature and goodness He has done them, although not to fulfil the conditions that Jacob set but rather because He is God and therefore gracious, good, glorious and great.¹⁶⁸⁷ And so the Lord commands Jacob on the basis that he had made a vow and God has not been unfaithful to him. Note that the language used here (*“arise”*) is resurrection language (as we have mentioned before). In fact, taking this last sentence at the end of verse 13 as a whole, we have a remarkable word from the Lord. There is a three-fold statement which encompasses what happens in conversion. We could put it like this:

[1] New birth /resurrection	“Now arise ...”
[2] A change of kingdom/repentance	“... get out of this land and return ...”
[3] An entrance to the land of promise	“... to the land of your family.”

1684 Genesis 31:12.

1685 Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1; Romans 12:19; 1Thessalonians 4:6; Hebrews 10:30.

1686 Genesis 28:20-22.

1687 See Psalm 145.

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When Christ effects new birth in a soul there is true resurrection. We ought to refer to this as the “*first resurrection*” as John has it in Revelation.¹⁶⁸⁸ Being raised with Christ on account of His resurrection leads to the possession of eternal life so that a believer is no more to die.¹⁶⁸⁹ Looking at this in the whole we rejoice as it says in Hebrews 10 that:

... by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.¹⁶⁹⁰

But then also we note that conversion requires not just faith, it also includes repentance – a complete change of heart and mind. As Paul puts it in Colossians we can see a dramatic change of allegiance and now “*here we have no continuing city.*”¹⁶⁹¹ We were once of *this world*, and now we are of a different kingdom:

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love.¹⁶⁹²

And so we leave this world to follow Christ on the pilgrimage road of holiness to heaven's celestial city, as John Bunyan put it.¹⁶⁹³ To walk upon this road requires our repentant and believing hearts.¹⁶⁹⁴ And then we must note that our conversion includes an entrance into the kingdom of God. We are part of God's family and this new association starts the moment we are truly born again. It will find its complete fulfilment (as with all aspects of faith) when the Lord returns. But that we are to come back into the land of our true family – the family of God – this means we ought to be clear about our membership of God's family, God's called out ones. The doctrine of the church and the kingdom of God is a digression we cannot now pursue but the gospel entails our being brought out of this world into the company of the redeemed.¹⁶⁹⁵

31:14-16.

And thus Jacob's wives, having heard Jacob's testimony, give their husband their views. Both women recognise that there is now no “*portion*” nor “*inheritance*” in their natural father's house.¹⁶⁹⁶ What a glorious statement! When a believer realises that whatever their earthly father may be able to leave them as an inheritance it cannot help in the final journey. Recognising that all earthly ties and

1688 Revelation 20:5,6.

1689 John 3:16; 6:50,54; 10:28.

1690 Hebrews 10:14.

1691 Hebrews 13:14.

1692 Colossians 1:13.

1693 **John Bunyan.** *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

1694 Isaiah 35:8.

1695 Hebrews 12:18-24.

1696 Genesis 31:14.

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possessions avail no hope and yield no fruit really is a great lesson to learn.

But there is more here for the wives also realise that now, in being connected with Jacob their husband on whose side is the Lord, they have thus become “*strangers*” in their father's eyes.¹⁶⁹⁷ This is always the effect of conversion. People who were once dear friends and even close relatives suddenly do not want to be associated with the new believer. Their tastes, outlook, and dispositions have all changed. They are no longer fun any more. Those whom we mixed with think us strange and unfriendly as Peter observed:

3 For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with *them* in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of *you*.¹⁶⁹⁸

Then next we are treated to the women's view of how Laban has acted. It would appear from their perspective, that Laban had, in effect, “*sold*” them to Jacob as things of value to him. Laban had not only sold them to Jacob, but had “*consumed*” all the money.¹⁶⁹⁹ Of course in ancient cultures the father had jurisdiction over his daughters and their future lives – but only for their benefit. In our day we live in an age of *free-for-all* so that women and men choose irrespective of parents wishes or concerns, but in ancient days a father wanted the best and sought to ensure such. Laban, however, has acted purely for his own selfish ends. Now the wives continue by noting that Laban had suffered loss whilst their husband had been blessed.¹⁷⁰⁰ But note that they acknowledge that God had done this. God had “*taken from*” their father what was truly theirs by right.¹⁷⁰¹ This is the case with us. The enemy has deceived us and taken from us those things which God has given and which God desires us to have. In effect Laban (standing for this world and its systems) had sold them and had squandered all their wealth and possessions. That is what has happened. People give their allegiance to this world and end up losing all!

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ¹⁷⁰²

And so Rachel and Leah give their full consent and affirmation to Jacob saying “*whatever God has said to you, do it.*”¹⁷⁰³ To do what God has said is not only wise but the best.

1697 Genesis 31:15.

1698 1Peter 4:3,4.

1699 Genesis 31:15.

1700 Genesis 31:16.

1701 Genesis 31:16.

1702 Matthew 16:26.

1703 Genesis 31:16.

Chapter 40.

Jacob is pursued by Laban. (31:17-55).

Analysis.

17 Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels.

18 And he carried away
all his livestock and
all his possessions
which he had gained,
his acquired livestock
which he had gained in Padan Aram,
to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

19 Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep,
and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.

20 And Jacob stole away,
unknown to Laban the Syrian,
in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee.

21 So he fled with all that he had.
He arose and crossed the river,
and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

22 And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.

23 Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey,
and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead.

24 But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him,
"Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."

25 So Laban overtook Jacob.

Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains,
and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

26 And Laban said to Jacob:

"What have you done, that you have
stolen away unknown to me,
and carried away my daughters like captives *taken* with the sword?

27 Why did you flee away secretly,
and steal away from me,
and not tell me;

for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?

28 And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters.

Now you have done foolishly in *so* doing.

29 It is in my power to do you harm,
but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying,
'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.'

30 And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, *but* why did you steal my gods?"

31 Then Jacob answered and said to Laban,

"Because I was afraid, for I said,
'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.'

32 With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live.

In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you."

For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find *them*.
Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

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34 Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them.

And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find *them*.

35 And she said to her father,

“Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me.”

And he searched but did not find the household idols.

36 Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban:

“What *is* my trespass?

What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?

37 Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found?

Set *it* here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both!

38 These **twenty years** I *have been* with you;

your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock.

39 That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night.

40 *There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes.

41 Thus I have been in your house **twenty years**;

I served you

fourteen years for your two daughters,

and six years for your flock,

and you have changed my wages ten times.

42 Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.

God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night.”

43 And Laban answered and said to Jacob,

“*These* daughters *are* my daughters,

and *these* children *are* my children,

and *this* flock *is* my flock;

all that you see *is* mine.

But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?

44 Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I,

and let it be a witness between you and me.”

45 So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar.

46 Then Jacob said to his brethren,

“Gather stones.”

And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.

47 Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha,

but Jacob called it Galeed.

48 And Laban said,

“This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day.”

Therefore its name was called Galeed, **49** also Mizpah, because he said,

“May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.

50 If you afflict my daughters, or if you take *other* wives besides my daughters, *although* no man *is* with us—see, God *is* witness between you and me!”

51 Then Laban said to Jacob,

“Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which I have placed between you and me.

52 This heap *is* a witness, and *this* pillar *is* a witness,

that I will not pass beyond this heap to you,

and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.”

And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

54 Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread.

And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.

55 And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them.

Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

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In this part of the narrative we see Jacob fleeing from Laban and (eventually) meeting up with Esau his estranged brother. Our text can be split into four rather uneven parts for convenience, although the narrative runs along in a single sequence of events and conversation.

[1] Jacob sets off. (Genesis 31:17,18).

[2] Laban gets word and sets off in pursuit. (Genesis 31:19-25a).

[3] Laban and Jacob meet in Gilead. (Genesis 31:25b-42).

[4] Laban makes a covenant with Jacob. (Genesis 31:43-55).

[1] Jacob sets off. (Genesis 31:17,18).

Having discussed the situation with his wives and gained their agreement and approbation, Jacob takes action. Again we have the language of resurrection, for although the word “*arose*” is a natural expression indicating to get up as if to do something, we are convinced that these words are for our learning.¹⁷⁰⁴ Jacob “*arose*,” and this points us to the idea of taking action only from the perspective of our ***new*** lives – we are to live out of the resurrection of Christ. Jacob organises the camel train with his eleven sons one daughter and his two wives.

The name “*Padan-Aram*” has the basic meaning: “field of height,” but it may also indicate the idea of “height redeemed.” This was the region where Abraham's relatives dwelt. Abraham's brother Nahor dwelt there, and Isaac's wife Rebekah was from this region being the granddaughter of Nahor and the sister of Laban. Jacob drives the flocks he has earned away from this region.¹⁷⁰⁵ Our text is rather over-expressive of what Jacob left the environs of Padan-Aram with. We are told that he left with “***all his livestock***” that he had worked for, and “***all his possessions.***” Then we are told pointedly that these were those “*which he had gained,*” and then this thought is repeated for us with the location of where he “*acquired*” them. It is not difficult to see here a prophetic reflection of the Lord Jesus acquiring the benefits and fruits of our salvation. Now in the case of Jacob he merely earned the flocks and herds that were his due, through his hard work energised by the revelation of God. But in the case of Christ He acquired spiritual blessings in abundance through His perfect work.¹⁷⁰⁶ And so Jacob sets off to return to his father, Isaac. In referencing the God whom he met, Jacob would later speak of Him as “*the Fear of Isaac,*” by which we understand that Isaac had a reverent awe and respect for God.¹⁷⁰⁷ Thus just as Jacob returns to his father, so our Saviour when sent would return to His Father in heaven. The parallels are clear and we have, therefore, a graphic illustration of the victory of the Saviour in bringing all the blessings of salvation.

1704 Genesis 31:17.

1705 Genesis 31:18.

1706 Psalm 68:18; Isaiah 53:12; Ephesians 1:3f.

1707 Genesis 31:42,53.

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[2] Laban gets word and sets off in pursuit. (Genesis 31:19-25a).

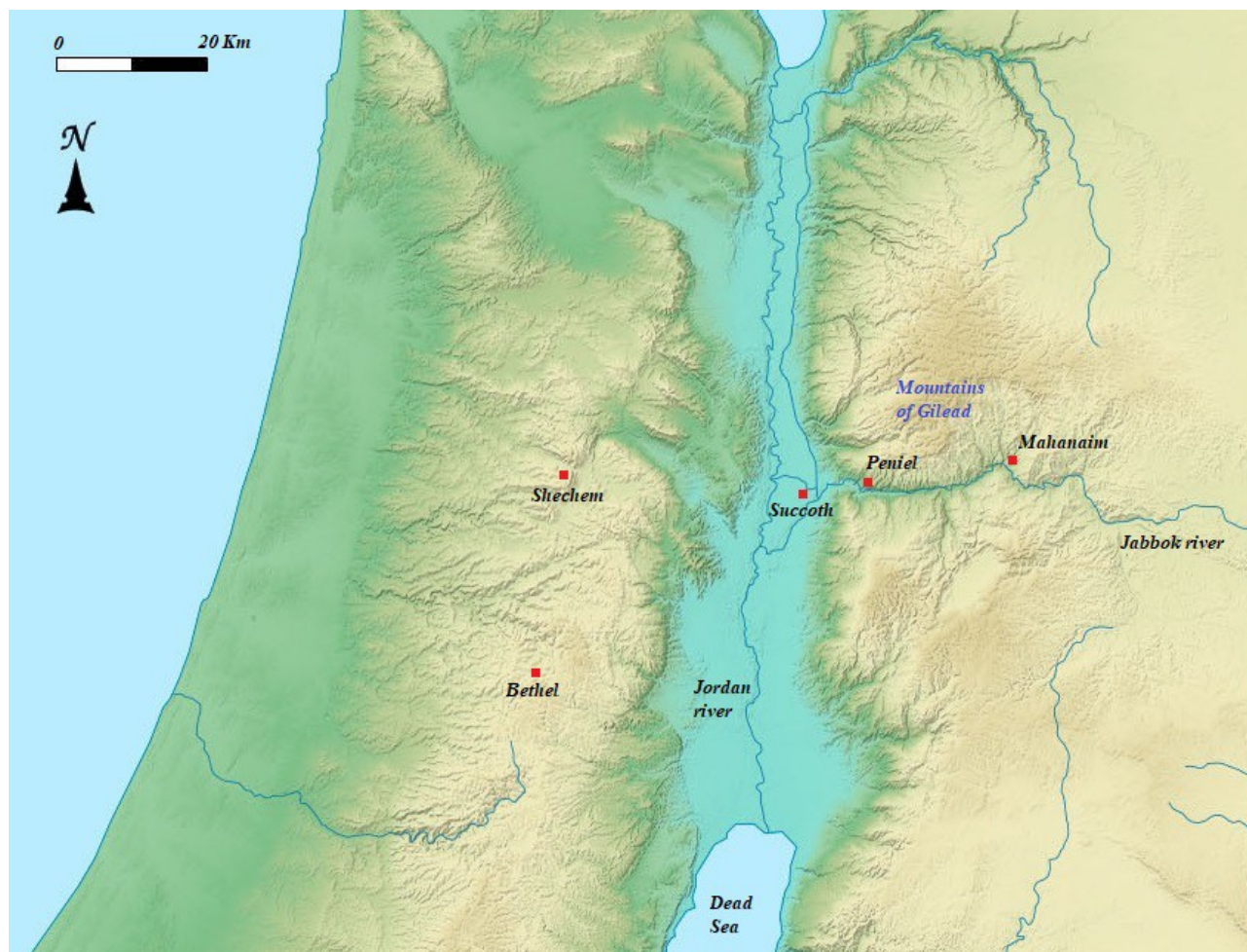


Figure 28: Jacob's return to Canaan.

31:19-21.

In the account we have of Laban's discovering Jacob's departure, the opening statement concerning Laban's *“household idols”* strikes a rather curious and jarring note.¹⁷⁰⁸ Immediately we ask: why did Laban have such, and why did Rachel think it necessary to steal them? The Hebrew word is: תְּרָפִים *terāpîm*, but the root meaning of this word is unclear. They appear to have been small moulded or cast figures which held some superstitious draw to the owners, and were also used as a means of divination.¹⁷⁰⁹ They feature significantly in the story of Micah (recorded in the book of Judges) whose mother made carved and moulded images for her son to use in the mountains of Ephraim . During this period of time a Levite came by and Micah hired him to be his own personal priest. The story progresses

¹⁷⁰⁸ Genesis 31:19.

¹⁷⁰⁹ 1Samuel 19:13,16; Ezekiel 21:21; Hosea 3:4; Zechariah 10:2.

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with the tribe of Dan becoming involved, but the essential point is that these images were used as talismans or helps to the people's worship of the Lord by their own means.¹⁷¹⁰ In effect it was the worship of God but by man-made means. Presumably the idols were simply helps or prompts to seeking the Lord. Now it is noteworthy that in this passage we are studying this is the first time we have mention of such idols or images in Scripture. They do not appear among Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, but only among the people who dwelt in the region of Padan-Aram – a locale of Mesopotamia. The great deliverer Joshua, towards the end of his life called the people to denounce the gods of Terah who *“dwelt on the other side of the River”*:

And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.’¹⁷¹¹

It was from this idolatry (*“other gods”*) that Abraham was called, but such seems to have persisted among Abraham's relatives who lived in Haran and the surrounding regions. Whether there was any acknowledgement of the true God or not is not very clear. However the making of idols is always wrong – even before the ten commandments had been revealed – because none can represent the true God except the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is *“the image of the invisible God.”*¹⁷¹² At best, then, Laban's idols represent a man-made means of worshipping the true God. We see this form of compromise in the story of Micah of Ephraim in Judges 17 and 18 we have just mentioned. At worst it is just another religion, another man-made form of worship. But why did Rachel see the need to steal these idols? Did she have any faith in them? Did she think that by taking them it would prevent Laban from divining what had happened? Or did she think that in taking them it would aid in their escape? Albert Barnes in his Notes on the Bible made this comment:

It is not the business of Scripture to acquaint us with the kinds and characteristics of false worship. Hence, we know little of the teraphim, except that they were employed by those who professed to worship the true God. Rachel had a lingering attachment to these objects of her family's superstitious reverence, and secretly carried them away as relics of a home she was to visit no more, and as sources of safety to herself against the perils of her flight.¹⁷¹³

We cannot be entirely sure of Rachel's motives here, and it may well be that Laban and his family worshipped the true God but made use of images. However Scripture does not yield a benign attitude to such. Idolatry and the use of man-made forms of worship is to be rejected.

1710 Judges 17 and 18.

1711 Joshua 24:2.

1712 Colossians 1:15.

1713 Albert Barnes. Barnes' Notes on the Bible.

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Whilst Rachel had stolen the household gods, Laban is away shearing his sheep which, from two other Scriptures, would appear to be a time of festivity and thanksgiving.¹⁷¹⁴ At such a time Jacob “*stole away*” presumably because he knew Laban would be otherwise distracted.¹⁷¹⁵ We recall the fact that Jacob has been told by God to leave and had openly spoken of this to Rachel and Leah.¹⁷¹⁶ Was he being deceptive in stealing away when Laban was otherwise engaged? Or was he being wise because he knew of the deceptive power of his uncle? We recall again that Jacob was simply doing as the Lord had asked. On the flip side our text in verse 20 rather emphasises the secrecy of Jacob's action. The secretive nature of Jacob's departure is described in three distinct ways:

[1] “*Jacob stole away.*”

[2] [Jacob's departure was] “*unknown to Laban the Syrian.*”

[3] [Jacob] “*did not tell him that he intended to flee.*”

The word rendered “*stole away*” has the implication of theft and secrecy. It is the action of a thief who carries away by night under the cover of darkness to hide what he is doing. The word “*flee,*” suggests a bolting or a rapid departure. Such a departure speaks of much fear. The same word is repeated at the start of verse 21. Jacob “*fled with all that he had*” and crossed over the river in that region. Now we also observe again the language of resurrection for “*he arose*” to cross over the river, and then made for “*the mountains of Gilead.*”¹⁷¹⁷ The name “*Gilead*” indicates “perpetual fountain,” or “heap of booty.” Gilead was the place where medicinal balm was found in various trees.¹⁷¹⁸ It signifies a place of great and long-lasting bounty and life. What are we to make of these statements and the manner of Jacob's departure? On the human level it is clear that Jacob was fearful of Laban. He did not want Laban getting wind of his departure and causing mayhem, and so he arranged to leave whilst his uncle was otherwise disposed at the joyous occasion of sheep shearing. But spiritually speaking we note that fleeing oppression and deceit (as represented by Laban) must be done stealthily and in great haste, and it must be done in resurrection power. Jacob fled in a spiritual sense to the place where blessings may be had (the mountains of Gilead), and the sinner fleeing from the wrath of God and the wickedness of this world must run to the only safe haven we have, which speaks of infinite blessings, namely the Lord Jesus and His death at Calvary.

1714 Genesis 31:19; 1Samuel 25:36; 2Samuel 13:23f.

1715 Genesis 31:20.

1716 Genesis 31:3-16.

1717 Genesis 31:21.

1718 Jeremiah 8:19,22; 46:11.

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31:22-25a.

Laban is busy sheep shearing. After three days word comes to him that Jacob has fled.¹⁷¹⁹ Thus Jacob has a three day head start, but he is leaving with all his flocks and herds so (obviously) cannot go very fast. Laban does not stop to think and he certainly does not enquire of the Lord for what to do. We simply read that *“he took his brethren with him and pursued”* Jacob.¹⁷²⁰ There is a sense of urgency and haste in this statement. You can imagine the messenger speaking to Laban and when news reaches his ears he leaps onto his camel or donkey shouting out instructions to his cohorts to follow on. It takes Laban seven days to overtake Jacob *“in the mountains of Gilead,”* so this means that Jacob has been journeying for ten days.¹⁷²¹

At some point in his rush to Jacob we discover that the Lord had spoken to Laban in a dream. Note that Laban is referred to as being *“the Syrian”* both here and elsewhere.¹⁷²² This serves to locate Laban among the peoples of Mesopotamia from whom Abraham was called out of. The Lord simply tells Laban that he must be very careful in his meeting with Jacob and that he is to speak to him *“neither good nor bad.”*¹⁷²³ Such a phrase indicates that not only was Laban not to harm Jacob, he also could not bless him either. Laban was a man of control. He wanted the kudos and approbation of being in charge. Earlier we learnt that Jacob refused any form of gift from Laban and determined that he would earn rightfully his wages. Jacob did not want to be subservient to Laban, nor did he want to be in the pocket of his uncle. The statement at the beginning of verse 25 merely indicates that Jacob was no longer in front of Laban.

[3] Laban and Jacob meet in Gilead. (Genesis 31:25b-42).

31:25b-30.

Both men are now pitched in the mountains of Gilead.¹⁷²⁴ The two meet and Laban then speaks to Jacob in what appears to be a reasonable way at first. He begins by pointing out that Jacob had *“stolen away,”* and that his departure was *“unknown”* to Laban.¹⁷²⁵ Such actions on Jacob's part were not honouring to his father-in-law, so the initial part of this opening question of Laban's was legitimate. But then Laban speaks as though Jacob had also stolen his daughters! In fact he piles on the heat and pressure by suggesting that Jacob has made them *“like captives taken with the sword.”*¹⁷²⁶ Bearing in mind the fact that Jacob worked fourteen years for his two wives, one of which was foisted on him, and recall also the

1719 Genesis 31:22.

1720 Genesis 31:23.

1721 Genesis 31:23.

1722 Genesis 25:20; 31:20,24. Bethuel, Laban's father is also termed *“the Syrian”* – see: Genesis 28:5.

1723 Genesis 31:24.

1724 Genesis 31:25.

1725 Genesis 31:26.

1726 Genesis 31:26.

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fact that Jacob spoke openly to Leah and Rachel who replied that Jacob should do “*whatever God has said to you,*” and the accusation that Jacob and taken them captive is laughable.¹⁷²⁷ In a short while we will see further information showing that Laban's thinking is badly askew.

In verse 27 Laban continues with his questions concerning Jacob's departure. Again he highlights the secretive elements and three times points out what he saw as a gross error on the part of his son-in-law. Jacob acted “*secretly,*” he stole from Laban, (“*stole away from me*”), and he did not inform his uncle ([did] “*not tell me*”).¹⁷²⁸ Laban then brings out two reasons why Jacob's actions were so wrong and unbecoming. He first suggests that he may have sent Jacob off with great ceremony and joy. Was this likely? Recall here that when Rebekah was set to return with Abraham's servant, Laban was keen to keep her for more time and sought to delay their departure. It was only the insistence of Abraham's servant and Rebekah's willingness to leave that outwitted Laban's delaying tactics.¹⁷²⁹ Or what of Laban's deceptive appeals when Jacob reached the fourteenth year of service for his two wives?¹⁷³⁰ Laban's track record is one of manipulation and deceit. It is extremely unlikely that he would have acquiesced when Jacob requested leave, especially given that Laban's sons were so angered at Jacob's success, and Laban's countenance was no longer favourable.¹⁷³¹ The thought that Laban would have sent them “*away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp,*” is laughable to say the least.¹⁷³² In his second reason, expressed in verse 28, Laban shows his true nature, which will come out with greater force later on. The fact that he was denied saying good bye to his grandsons and granddaughter is one thing, but notice that he refers to them as “*my sons and my daughters.*” In that they are his by relation we agree, but these grand children are not his in truth. In fact parents cannot ever say that children born to them are theirs. They are God's! They belong to God. The fact that two parents may have brought into this world children does not mean that such *belong* to them. Children are ours by virtue of the fact that they have come from our bodies, but they are by no means ours as people to possess or own. At the end of verse 28 we observe Laban's true colours again as he declares that Jacob has “*done foolishly*” in his chosen course of action. Laban began by being reasonable, highlighting the nature of Jacob's flight. He continued by claiming that he is a fair and above-board type of person who would have rejoiced in sending them away with his blessing (highly unlikely). And now he shoots out an accusation saying Jacob was a fool. The same word is used of Samuel's challenge to Saul when the king did not keep the “*commandment of the Lord*” by offering the sacrifice before Samuel arrived.¹⁷³³ Thus Laban is accusing Jacob of moral failure. Jacob has done what was morally wrong. Such is the case of truly deceptive people. They highlight the failures of others and

1727 Genesis 31:16.

1728 Genesis 31:27.

1729 Genesis 24:55-59.

1730 Genesis 30:25f.

1731 Genesis 31:1,2.

1732 Genesis 31:27.

1733 1Samuel 13:11-13.

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smooth out the wrinkles and creases that blight their own lives.

In verse 29 we see evidence of Laban's nature being made more apparent. It may well have been in Laban's *“power”* to do Jacob harm, but why would he ever think of doing such a thing? Laban was Jacob's father-in-law and so deserved respect and honour. Laban was the head of his family and so Jacob owed him respect. However Laban has acted deceptively and with despotism throughout. That the Lord had to intervene and warn Laban not to harm Jacob is indicative of the fact that this was what Laban intended. Perhaps Laban would simply have taken back the flocks and his two daughters leaving Jacob to his own devices, but it is equally probable that he may have taken Jacob's life into the bargain. Notice further Laban's reference to God here. He refers to God as *“the God of your father,”* and not as the God he followed or worshipped. God was thus a stranger to Laban. He simply reports exactly the words God spoke to him in the dream he had, and then suggests that Jacob's motive in departing was because he longed in earnest for his *“father's house.”* And then he goes on to accuse Jacob of stealing his *“gods.”*¹⁷³⁴ This mention of *“the God of your father,”* then of Jacob's father, and finally of his own *“gods,”* serves to show Laban's true allegiance. He has no real affinity for the true God. He is a stranger to the God of Isaac and is rather more concerned to relocate his own *“gods.”* We pause and reflect here that gods that have been stolen and need re-locating can hardly be of any use or purpose!

31:31,32.

Jacob responds to Laban's questions concerning his departure, and we learn that it was through fear that he did not tell Laban what he was going to do.¹⁷³⁵ Jacob had been with Laban for twenty years and so he knew well how his father-in-law might respond. Jacob's fear was that Laban would, in fact, use the *“power”* he so proudly boasted of, to remove Leah and Rachel from Jacob *“by force.”*¹⁷³⁶

Jacob then deals with the matter of Laban's household idols.¹⁷³⁷ Now in this matter it would appear that Jacob acted rather rashly. He had no idea that Rachel had taken them and had hidden them in her Camel's saddle.¹⁷³⁸ Jacob is indignant with Laban because in his own understanding all that he had done was to flee with what he rightfully earned, his two wives and all the flocks that he had served Laban for. But to say to Laban that the life of the one who had his idols was forfeit was surely a mistake.¹⁷³⁹ It indicates a degree of exasperation. Laban had been harsh with Jacob – both deceptive and despotic – and so it is not surprising that Jacob gets angry here. Jacob's response is not to be condoned, but it is surely something we all know only too well. When people act so variably, one minute saying they would have

1734 Genesis 31:30.

1735 Genesis 31:31.

1736 Genesis 31:31.

1737 Genesis 31:32.

1738 Genesis 31:34.

1739 Genesis 31:32.

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sent you off with a great party, and the next saying that you are foolish and unreasonable, how do you speak reasonably to such a person? When you are not sure when something is being said in truth or when the person will act petulantly, how do you respond? And so Jacob declares that Laban prove his accusations. He wants everything to be done openly, and so he says *“in the presence of our brethren,”* recognising that his sons and daughter are indeed Laban's grand children.¹⁷⁴⁰ He then states that Laban should *“identify”* anything that was truly Laban's and then take it away.¹⁷⁴¹ Jacob thus challenges Laban unknowing that Rachel had *“stolen them.”*¹⁷⁴² Now at the least we should acknowledge that open challenges like this ought never to be made without the full facts. Jacob should have known that Rachel (whom he loved) had taken them. But clearly spiritually Jacob acted in his integrity. He had done no wrong. He had fled because he thought Laban might have acted violently (and there is ample evidence to this fact being so). He had only taken what was rightfully his, and he had acted on the command given to him by the Lord, not out of his own mind and will. Furthermore, he is being open and above board and not deceptive as he had been with Esau and Isaac and as Laban was being now. In all these ways Jacob acted in subservience to the truth and to the Lord. Now we, as believers, ought never to be afraid of the Laban's of this world, nor of the devil who accuses us and deceptively taunts us as we flee from the wrath to come on this world. As long as we have a clear conscience before the Lord and we act in integrity the Lord will undertake for us.¹⁷⁴³ Hidden and unknown sins will be covered. When we are made aware of these the right thing to do is to confess them and make restitution as we are able.

31:33-35.

Next we discover that Laban is desperate to find his household idols, and so he moves from Jacob's tent to Leah's and then to the two maid's tents before finally entering Rachel's in search but to no avail.¹⁷⁴⁴ We (the readers) are privy to the fact that Rachel had stolen them, and had hidden them in the camel saddle upon which she was now seated. Meanwhile Laban is frantically searching in the tents.¹⁷⁴⁵ Jacob is completely unaware of what Rachel has done, and to make matters worse Rachel takes it upon herself to make request of her father that she be excused getting off from the Camel because it was her monthly period.¹⁷⁴⁶

1740 Genesis 31:32.

1741 Genesis 31:32.

1742 Genesis 31:32.

1743 Psalm 7:8; 25:21; 26:1,11; 41:12; Proverbs 10:9; 11:3; 20:7 for example.

1744 Genesis 31:33.

1745 Genesis 31:34.

1746 Genesis 31:35.

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31:36,37.

At this point Jacob becomes angry.¹⁷⁴⁷ Laban had stormed from tent to tent (presumably) creating havoc among their belongings and there was no sign of the idols. Verse 36 is interesting because we have two statements to the effect that Jacob was angry with Laban, as follows:

Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban,
and Jacob answered and said to Laban:

The Hebrew transliterated is as follows:

וַיַּחַר לַיַּעֲקֹב וַיִּרָּב בְּלִבּוֹ

and he was angry Jacob and he rebuked in/with/by Laban

וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר לַלָּבָן

and he answered Jacob and he said to Laban

Such repetition indicates an emphasis. Jacob had thus far been honourable and concerned, but now he is very cross with Laban's imposition. Then comes two questions which are identical in force but serve to show Jacob's indignation (*“What is my trespass? What is my sin?”*).¹⁷⁴⁸ Laban had pursued Jacob in heat and anger, and now Jacob has responded with sheer indignation. In his eyes he has done nothing wrong at all, but of course we know that Rachel is at fault. In application we must note that sometimes when we are called to account for a wrong done and we have no knowledge of such, we may still be guilty and at fault. It is notable that the book of Leviticus has sacrifice for unknown sins.¹⁷⁴⁹ When accused and you have no knowledge of what you are being accused of, pause and ask God for revelation. It may be that you are guilty of some fault of which you have no clear knowledge.

Jacob is not given to outburst and rage for he next questions Laban's rifling through his belongings.¹⁷⁵⁰ From the tenor of verse 37 it would appear that Laban has been very thorough (*“you have searched all my things”*). Jacob challenges Laban outright. What has he discovered that was his amongst Jacob's stuff? Laban couldn't, of course, and so Jacob continues by appealing to Laban with reason.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Genesis 31:36.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Genesis 31:36.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Leviticus 4:13.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Genesis 31:37.

31:38-41.

There is a symmetry to verses 38 to 41 indicated by the repeated mention of “*twenty years.*” Jacob details how he had acted in complete integrity towards Laban and his flocks. Jacob had seen to it that none miscarried and he had not eaten from that which was Laban's.¹⁷⁵¹ Whenever a sheep or goat was killed by wild animals, or, whenever a sheep or goat was stolen, Jacob “*bore the loss of it.*”¹⁷⁵² His care for Laban's flocks over the years was arduous and hard. He suffered “*drought,*” “*frost by night,*” and his “*sleep departed*” from him.¹⁷⁵³ It was in this way of hard labour and work that Jacob had served Laban for “*twenty years.*”¹⁷⁵⁴ Jacob then reminds Laban of his demands concerning both daughters and the flocks and his wages. Fourteen years he served for Leah and Rachel, and six years for the flocks and in all that time Laban altered Jacob's wages “*ten times.*”¹⁷⁵⁵ The reference to altering his wages this many times indicated a repeated and perpetual on-going deception on the part of Laban. Laban was continually changing the goal posts like this always to get the advantage. It is notable that later on Israel would complain against the Lord or test Him ten times whilst in the wilderness.¹⁷⁵⁶ Jacob has suffered the change of his wages ten times and so was tested by an uncle who treated him as Israel treated the Lord. In this we can see some reflection of Jacob as a suffering servant.

But now comes a point in time where the deceiver must face the deceit he has perpetrated, and this is the time for Laban.

31:42.

Jacob ends with a testimony that God was watching over him. We recall the fact that Jacob made a vow to God as he fled from Esau. He was not completely honourable in this as we have already noted because he stipulated conditions to God being his God.¹⁷⁵⁷ But now there is full acknowledgement of God's care and watching over Jacob.

Jacob begins this word of testimony by saying “*unless,*” by which we understand that all of his success was down to the Lord. Without God in charge Jacob would never have known any success at all. And so Jacob acknowledges that God was the source of his wealth and prosperity. Without God's intervention Laban would have sent Jacob off “*empty-handed.*” Jacob refers to God here both in deference to his father and grand father, and with respect to his own personal encounters with Him. This God is described in three ways. He is:

1751 Genesis 31:38.

1752 Genesis 31:39.

1753 Genesis 31:40.

1754 Genesis 31:41.

1755 Genesis 31:41.

1756 Numbers 14:22.

1757 Genesis 28:20.

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[1] The God of my father.

[2] The God of Abraham.

[3] The Fear of Isaac.

The first statement points us to Isaac, Jacob's father. The second brings us back to Jacob's grand father Abraham. And the third comes back to Jacob's father, Isaac. What is unusual is the description of God as *“the Fear of Isaac.”* This is the only place where we see such a title for God. Isaac clearly feared God. This was no craven fear, but a godly respect and reverence towards God. And this God had observed Jacob's *“affliction”* and also the *“labour”* Jacob expended and this God was the God who had *“rebuked”* Laban the night before. Here again we picture Jacob as the suffering servant.

[4] Laban makes a covenant with Jacob. (Genesis 31:43-55).

31:43,44.

How does Laban respond to this revelation of the truth? Is Laban about to repent and recognise the injustices he has perpetrated? Is he ready to make amends and apologise for his ways? We get his response in verses 43 and 44. There is no sign of back-tracking or of repentance. There is no acknowledgement that Laban has been deceptive and Jacob has been treated badly. Instead Laban opens his response with a declaration of self-interest and authority. He declares that Leah and Rachel are his daughters, that their children borne to Jacob are his children, and that all the flocks Jacob had earned were in fact Laban's.¹⁷⁵⁸ This is hubris of mega proportions. This is megalomania and petulance of bizarre depths. Laban has deceived and manipulated Jacob and his two daughters and now having been called out he makes a stupid declaration that owes nothing to truth and everything to self preservation. The fact of the matter is that whomever we are, we are not our own, and we have no rights over others. Yes we may have produced children in the physical sense, but these do not belong to us! They are created by God, knitted together in the mother's womb by the very hands of God. All of us owe allegiance to God for He has made us. For Laban to stand there and tell Jacob that he owns these people and all that Jacob has rightfully earned is delusional.¹⁷⁵⁹

Laban's concluding rhetorical question (*“but what can I do this day ...?”*) bears careful scrutiny.¹⁷⁶⁰ Remember that Laban has had warning from God in a dream. But for this, we may conclude that Laban would have dealt very harshly with Jacob. However, Laban knows he cannot *“do”* anything to his daughters or grand children. One trembles at what he might have done but for the Lord's intervention?

¹⁷⁵⁸ Genesis 31:43.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Genesis 31:43.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Genesis 31:43.

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And so Laban seeks to make an agreement with Jacob – a covenant.¹⁷⁶¹ This term is used for contracts and agreements between people as well as the term the Lord uses for His covenants. The agreement must have some visible “*witness*” to seal the contract and to act as a marker.

31:45-47.

Now Jacob took a stone and set it up as an upright stone as a marker. He had done this already at Bethel.¹⁷⁶² The pagan cultures set up pillars or standing stones in connection with the stars and planets, but this was simply a marker to represent the agreement between Laban and Jacob.¹⁷⁶³ Next, Jacob gave the instruction to “*gather stones*” and with these they made a “*heap.*”¹⁷⁶⁴ So, we have a single largish stone upright and a mound of stones. Perhaps the pillar was set up and the stones were heaped against it. Or maybe the two were separate and side-by-side. Whatever the case, it would be visible so that it would act to remind the two who saw them of the agreement. After the stones were laid they “*ate*” on the top of the mound.¹⁷⁶⁵ Laban refers to this mound of stones by the name “*Jegar Sahadutha,*” which means “heap of witness.” Jacob referred to the same mound as “*Galeed,*” which name also means “heap of witness” too.

31:48-50.

Laban then affirms the basis of this minor agreement. The stones Jacob has organised are to be “*a witness*” between him and Jacob, and so their official name was to be “*Galeed.*”¹⁷⁶⁶ In verse 49 we find yet another name for this place with an attendant explanation. It is to be known as “*Mizpah,*” which means “*watchtower,*” and Laban explains the choice of this in saying “*may the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.*”¹⁷⁶⁷ Laban then adds a statement concerning his daughters.¹⁷⁶⁸ It would seem that he does have some affection for them, for he warns Jacob about two eventualities he is concerned about. First if he were to “*afflict*” either Rachel or Leah, and second if he were to “*take other wives*” then may God be “*witness between*” Jacob and Laban.¹⁷⁶⁹ In other words, Laban expects God to act as he would have done in such cases. In this we see that Laban is concerned for his daughters. However, it is curious that Laban is concerned about Jacob taking other wives. Clearly he does not want his daughters to be sidelined or to become second best, but in doing what he did he made

1761 Genesis 31:44.

1762 Genesis 28:18; 31:45.

1763 There are many megalithic sites all over the world which are aligned in some way to the stars and planets. These are testament to the fact that the ancient religion initiated by Nimrod and promulgated in Babylon, Egypt and Greece was widespread.

1764 Genesis 31:46.

1765 Genesis 31:46.

1766 Genesis 31:48.

1767 Genesis 31:49.

1768 Genesis 31:50.

1769 Genesis 31:50.

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Leah second in affection to Jacob behind Rachel.

31:51-53.

And now we discover that Laban claims that the stones and pillar that Jacob and his brethren gathered and erected were in fact his!¹⁷⁷⁰ It is clear that Laban initiated the idea of an agreement or covenant, but to claim that he organised the pillar and stones is simply arrogance and hubris of the worst kind. Claiming ownership of something falsely is simply a means of usurping authority. Even though he had been warned by God not to harm Jacob, Laban is still acting in great pride and arrogance. There is no hint of repentance or of turning to the Lord. And so Laban makes reference to both the pillar and the heap of stones as a witness, and he declares that neither he nor Jacob will pass by these to do harm.¹⁷⁷¹ We learn from this that we can come to some form of agreement with those who do not know the Lord, and we can take comfort in the fact that God may choose to restrain the unbeliever as he did in the case of Laban with a dream. Laban concludes his confession within this agreement by speaking not of God as known by him, but of *“the God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father.”*¹⁷⁷² Had Terah been converted? It may well be possible. But Laban does not know this God for he expresses no personal interest. He is simply pointing to the God of his fathers whom he had some fear or respect unto but no personal interest in.¹⁷⁷³ In stark contrast Jacob makes his promise by *“the Fear of his father Isaac.”*¹⁷⁷⁴ We know that Jacob has a personal interest in God, but the mention of God as Isaac's *“Fear”* speaks of a deep and real reverence, not simply some respect that restrains but does not convert.

31:54,55.

This event concludes with Jacob offering *“a sacrifice on the mountain”* in Gilead where the two had met.¹⁷⁷⁵ Once again we see the faith of Jacob, and we learn of the faithlessness of Laban. Jacob realises that his life requires the sacrifice of blood. This is not something we understand naturally, but the Bible speaks plainly on this matter. A life of sin and rebellion cannot go unpunished. Either a person pays for their sin in full, in which case they must be eternally separated from God, or someone else pays for the sins committed as a substitute. Either way a life is forfeit. The sacrifices were shadows of the One True Sacrifice of Christ, but Jacob recognises this need for a substitute blood offering. There is no mention of such talk in connection with Laban. This sacrifice was also a grand feast which lasted the night.¹⁷⁷⁶ It seems therefore, that from Jacob's point of view, the covenant agreement was based on sacrifice. The

1770 Genesis 31:51.

1771 Genesis 31:52.

1772 Genesis 31:53.

1773 Genesis 31:53.

1774 Genesis 31:53. See also Genesis 31:42.

1775 Genesis 31:54.

1776 Genesis 31:53.

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fellowship meal was enjoyed by all in attendance, and then as the new day begins “*Laban arose*” and after kissing his sons and daughters and blessing them he leaves to return to “*his place*” in the north.¹⁷⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷⁷ Genesis 31:55.

Chapter 41.

Jacob prepares to return to Esau. (32:1-23).

Analysis.

#32 1 So Jacob went on his way,
and the angels of God met him.

2 When Jacob saw them, he said,
“This *is* God’s camp.”

And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

3 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

4 And he commanded them, saying,
“Speak thus to my lord Esau,

‘Thus your servant Jacob says:

“I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now.

5 I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants;
and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.””

6 Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying,

“We came to your brother Esau,
and he also is coming to meet you,
and four hundred men *are* with him.”

7 So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed;
and he divided

the people that *were* with him,
and the flocks and herds and camels,
into two companies.

8 And he said,

“If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape.”

9 Then Jacob said,

“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me,
‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’:

10 I am not worthy
of the least of all the mercies
and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant;
for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff,
and now I have become two companies.

11 Deliver me, I pray,

from the hand of my brother,
from the hand of Esau;

for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children.

12 For You said,

‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which
cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

13 So he lodged there that same night,

and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:

14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, **15** thirty milk camels with
their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.

16 Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants,

“Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves.”

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17 And he commanded the first one, saying,

“When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying,

‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?’

18 then you shall say,

‘They *are* your servant Jacob’s. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.’”

19 So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying,

“In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him;

20 and also say,

‘Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.’”

For he said,

“I will appease him with the present that goes before me,

and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.”

21 So the present went on over before him,

but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

22 And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

23 He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

Genesis 32 and 33 give us the story of Jacob's final meeting with Esau after his total separation from Laban has been completed. The highlight of these two chapters is Jacob's meeting and wrestling with “*a Man*.” Genesis 32:1-23 forms a single unit but can be separated into smaller parts as follows:

[1] Jacob is met with by angels. (Genesis 32:1-2).

[2] Jacob sends messengers (angels) to Esau and becomes afraid on their return. (Genesis 32:3-6).

[3] Jacob prepares to meet Esau and prays in earnest to the Lord. (Genesis 32:7-12).

[4] Jacob remains behind but sends the two companies on. (Genesis 32:13-23).

We shall look at the remainder of Genesis 23 in our next chapter.

[1] Jacob is met with by angels. (Genesis 32:1-2).

We have been informed that Laban went back “*to his place*.”¹⁷⁷⁸ And now we learn that Jacob “*went on his way*.”¹⁷⁷⁹ These two locations speak volumes. Laban had a place, a location, a space which he could call his own home. But Jacob was on the “*way*,” he was a traveller, a pilgrim like his father and grand father before him, for he was looking for the heavenly place or settled location. As Jacob departs he is met by the angels or messengers of God. It seems from the text that these angels had been sent to meet with Jacob, but we are not informed of what transpired in their meeting. What was said? How many angels were there? How did they appear? How did Jacob know these were angels? We do not know the answers to these questions, and it is best not to speculate. What we can deduce is that by such a meeting Jacob is blessed by the Lord here, and further, to meet such a company would have been a great boost to Jacob's faith.

1778 Genesis 31:55.

1779 Genesis 32:1.

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On laying sight on these angels Jacob declares that this company was “*God's camp.*”¹⁷⁸⁰ Jacob calls the place “*Mahanaim*” which means “two camps.” This meaning becomes important later on, but it must have been that Jacob saw two companies amongst these messengers. Why so? It may be that there were angels on either side of the river settled on the mountain ranges in Gilead. As Jacob walked along the riverside he saw angels on either side and this would have strengthened the returning pilgrim. Thus the Lord sends His angels as ministering spirits to the believer at the right time to bring help and comfort.¹⁷⁸¹

[2] Jacob sends messengers (angels) to Esau and becomes afraid on their return. (Genesis 32:3-6).

At this point in the narrative we learn of Esau dwelling “*in the land of Seir,*” and this is also depicted as “*the country of Edom.*”¹⁷⁸² Seir is first mentioned in Genesis 14 where we discover that the “*Horites*” dwelt “*in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran.*”¹⁷⁸³ This region was (presumably) named after Seir of whom we shall read more in Genesis 36 (see figure 29). We shall learn later that “*Esau is Edom.*”¹⁷⁸⁴ We shall also see that Esau (Edom) became increasingly prominent in this region. At this juncture the land is still named after “*Seir,*” but it is also referred to as Edom's “*country*” as well. The Hebrew word given as “*country*” is actually a word which is better rendered as “field,” or “cultivated ground.” From this it would seem that Esau had a settlement in the land of Seir.

We have not been informed about any conversation that Jacob had with the two companies of angels but now we discover Jacob enacting a plan in his upcoming meeting with Esau.¹⁷⁸⁵ Jacob had seen God's messengers and so he sends



Figure 29: The land of Seir and Edom.

1780 Genesis 32:2.

1781 Psalm 103:20; Hebrews 1:14.

1782 Genesis 32:3.

1783 Genesis 14:6.

1784 Genesis 36:1,8,19.

1785 Genesis 32:3.

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“messengers” to Esau in Seir. Jacob gave these messengers precise instructions.¹⁷⁸⁶ They were to inform Esau of Jacob's return from Laban and to note that he had wealth of his own. We note that Jacob left his home with only a staff and now he returns with great wealth and possessions. Presumably Jacob is informing his brother that he has no need of his father's inheritance or wealth because God has blessed him abundantly. Jacob requests from Esau his *“favour”* or good grace.¹⁷⁸⁷ Jacob's speech is carefully calculated. Notice, for example, that he presents himself humbly, for he speaks of his brother as *“my lord Esau”* and himself as *“your servant.”*¹⁷⁸⁸

This was a courier message sent prior to Jacob's arrival to ensure a peaceful meeting. Jacob is well aware of the animosity his brother had for him when he fled for his life twenty years before this point, and so he is at pains to placate and mollify any animosity that still remains. The messengers return at some point but all they can say is that when they came to Esau they found that he was also coming towards Jacob together with *“four hundred men.”*¹⁷⁸⁹ There is no message from Esau and Jacob's messengers simply report that Esau and a band of his men are coming towards Jacob. The tension is thus increased. We do not know whether Esau is coming in anger or in conciliation.

[3] Jacob prepares to meet Esau and prays in earnest to the Lord. (Genesis 32:7-12).

32:7,8.

Small wonder that Jacob was both *“greatly afraid,”* and also *“distressed.”*¹⁷⁹⁰ From the Hebrew we understand that Jacob was in fear and greatly straitened. His fear constrained him to think of nothing else but Esau's approach.¹⁷⁹¹

Jacob separates his families and servants and all he possesses into two companies. Why? It would appear that in seeing the two companies of angels on either bank of the valley, that this was presented to him as the best method of approach in meeting his estranged brother. Was it a revelation of God to Jacob? It would appear so. We do not have any direct *word* here intimating that this was the case, but from the arrangement of the angels it seems to have been suggested to Jacob as the best method. He then goes on to explain this method for us by noting that Esau would have to choose which of the two separated companies he would have to attack. At least, Jacob reasons, one of the two will be able to escape Esau's wrath.¹⁷⁹² Now was this a godly action on Jacob's part? I think we have to conclude that it was, given what we now know of Jacob's history and experience of sanctification. We know that he has been under serious

1786 Genesis 32:4,5.

1787 Genesis 32:5.

1788 Genesis 32:5.

1789 Genesis 32:6.

1790 Genesis 32:7.

1791 Genesis 32:7.

1792 Genesis 32:8.

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training thus far in his experience with Laban, to such an extent that he relies more now on God than when he departed. But was he perfect? Clearly not. All of us work with the revelation we have and submit ourselves to God's care for the elements involved for which we are in the dark so-to-speak. Jacob had no inkling about what his brother Esau would do. He suspected that his anger from twenty years before would be the same. In expecting this we can see that Jacob knew that he was in the wrong over his deception of Esau. He had been told by the Lord to return to the land, and there is no manipulation away from the confrontation he was about to face. But what he does do is to prepare for the worse and seek to ensure that at least some of his posterity would survive.

32:9-12.

Verses 9 to 12 describe Jacob's prayer unto the Lord as he faced the upcoming meeting with Esau. Jacob addresses the Lord as both the God of his father and of his grandfather, and then as the *“Lord who”* spoke to him and told him to return.¹⁷⁹³ The God who addressed him is the same God that called Abraham and appeared to Isaac. From this we learn that it is essential that the God we worship is also the same as the one our brethren who have gone before us worshipped, for God does not change. We learn further that we can learn from those who have gone before. Their experiences and their lives under God's guidance and instruction are worth examining and considering. We learn also that it is vital that we know the Lord personally in our own time. We cannot simply rely on what our forefathers experienced because today's circumstances are different. Looking at this a little more closely we rejoice at the confessions and statements our fore-fathers made, but note that there are many issues and difficulties we face that they never knew about, so it is vital we tackle these in our time so that those who come later can see how we have walked with God in our times.

Now Jacob recalls the words spoken to him by the Lord. He was to return both to his *“country,”* and to his *“family,”* and if he did so then the Lord would *“deal well”* with him.¹⁷⁹⁴ It is interesting that the land was not yet his country and would not be Israel's until after the Exodus from Egypt yet to come, and the subsequent conquest lead by Joshua. But the Lord speaks as though what was promised was in fact a reality. Verses 10 and 11 detail the main aspects of Jacob's prayer. First Jacob owns his sinful state.¹⁷⁹⁵ Given Jacob's deceitful nature it is significant that his focus in confession is the *“truth.”* He starts by recognising that he is *“not worthy,”* but the Hebrew word (קָטָן *qāṭōn*) really means “small,” “of no account,” or “insignificant.”¹⁷⁹⁶ In other words Jacob recognises that he is of no account in comparison to all that the Lord had given him. Recognising our true stature and condition is essential in life. Jacob then

1793 Genesis 32:9.

1794 Genesis 32:9.

1795 Genesis 32:10.

1796 Genesis 32:10.

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describes two things of which he is not worthy, or is insignificant in comparison to. First he speaks of “*all the mercies*” of God.¹⁷⁹⁷ The word here is: **חֶסֶד** *hesed*, and is translated as “loving kindness,” “mercy,” or “goodness.” It speaks of the beautiful goodness and kindness of God which is thoroughly undeserved, and we note that Jacob is being expansive here for there are numerous of these undeserved kindnesses (“*all the mercies*”). Then second Jacob speaks in a similar expansive manner of “*all the truth*” of the Lord.¹⁷⁹⁸ The Hebrew word here (**אֱמֶת** *’emet*) signifies stability, firmness and certainty. God is faithful and true and will not let error and deceit go unchallenged. Jacob has learnt through his experiences over many years that deceit is in stark contrast to God's ways. He has experienced deceit both as a deceiver, and as one being deceived. In the latter case Jacob has learned how he had treated not just others but God. These twin blessings of God, His mercy and His truth, have been demonstrated to Jacob who now describes himself as “*Your servant.*”¹⁷⁹⁹ He is no longer an independent and self-centred man bent on getting his own desires, rather he is willing to submit to the Lord and His ways. He is not perfect, but his centre has shifted, or rather he has shifted from the centre of his life allowing God to be God.

Having declared what God had done for him in a general sense using these two important themes of mercy and truth, which were particularly relevant to his own personal life, Jacob now recalls exactly what the Lord had done for him.¹⁸⁰⁰ Remember that Jacob deceived Esau into giving him the birthright and the inheritance, and so from the earthly perspective Jacob was successor to all Isaac's wealth and position. But now Jacob who fled (initially for a short time) from Esau left only with his “*staff,*” but has returned as “*two companies,*” or with an abundance of people and possessions.¹⁸⁰¹ These have been provided for him by God and have not come through Isaac. The Lord wanted to show to Jacob that grabbing what he perceived was rightfully his, as promised in the prophecy given to his mother when she was pregnant, was not going to come by such deceitful means. Instead the Lord had to show Jacob that all he would inherit would come through the gracious provision of God. His own effort was required for sure, but the source and the ultimate provision was all of God. This reminds us of the statement made by Paul in the letter to the Philippians which links how God works in us as we work out our salvation:

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; **13** for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.¹⁸⁰²

Faith is not something that descends upon a person and energises them somehow to do what is right in

1797 Genesis 32:10.

1798 Genesis 32:10.

1799 Genesis 32:10.

1800 Genesis 32:10.

1801 Genesis 32:10.

1802 Philippians 2:12,13.

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some disinterested way. Although faith is a gift of God's grace and thus does not originate with the believer, the faith expressed involves the person's will, emotions, and mind, and so they can say “I believe.” And thus we see that God brought Jacob to a position whereby he acted no longer to secure his own desires, but rather he recognised God's sovereign rule and submitted to this as a servant doing all by faith to honour the Lord.

Having confessed his condition and God's great mercy and faithfulness as demonstrated in his life, Jacob now comes to his petitions.¹⁸⁰³ Notice first that Jacob is open and honest with God about what he feels. He is afraid of his brother Esau. Remember that Jacob fled from Esau's threat to kill him because he had deceived Isaac and stole the blessing. For twenty years Jacob has been apart from Esau and the last thing he remembers of his brother was the rage and fury that he felt on being badly deceived. It is small wonder, then, that Jacob was afraid. He knew he had done great evil to his brother Esau, and he knew that Esau would rightly feel justified in exacting retribution. And so Jacob prays to be delivered (*“deliver me”*).¹⁸⁰⁴ The word used is from the verb “to snatch away,” and so he is praying for an escape and a rescue from the clutches of his brother. Now Jacob appeals to the Lord not on the basis of his own righteousness, for he knows that right is not on his side, but on Esau's. He bases his request on the promise of God to him as he was fleeing. Jacob's statement of the promise is very interesting. He recalls two main features of the promise. First, that the Lord would deal well with him (*“I will surely treat you well”*), and second that his descendants would be incredibly numerous (*“and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude”*).¹⁸⁰⁵ The details of the blessing that Jacob received as he was fleeing are somewhat different.¹⁸⁰⁶ To be specific there is no mention in the blessing Jacob received of descendants as numerous as *“the sand on the sea.”* Such words seem only to have been given to Abraham on the occasion where he offered Isaac his only son.¹⁸⁰⁷ It would appear then, that Jacob recalled the last part of the blessing given to him at Bethel, and then also a part of the blessing given to Abraham. Compare what Jacob uses in his prayer request with the blessing he received and the one delivered to Abraham:

This is how Jacob reports the blessing in his prayer request on approaching Esau:

I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.¹⁸⁰⁸

1803 Genesis 32:11,12.

1804 Genesis 32:11.

1805 Genesis 32:12.

1806 Genesis 28:13-15.

1807 Genesis 22:17.

1808 Genesis 32:12.

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This is how the Lord actually blessed Jacob as he was fleeing from Esau:

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. **14** Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. **15** Behold, ***I am with you and will keep you wherever you go***, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”¹⁸⁰⁹

This is how the Lord blessed Abraham after he sacrificed Isaac:

15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, **16** and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— **17** blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will ***multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore***; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. **18** In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”¹⁸¹⁰

From this we learn that the blessings each patriarch received were to be passed on to successive heirs of the promises. Even though Jacob was never told of the Lord that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand, nevertheless Jacob knew that what was promised Abraham was also promised to him.

Jacob has prayed and made bare his heart before the Lord. He does not receive any vision or direct word from the Lord at this point. He simply offers his prayer in faith and in integrity (he was honest about his own situation and he recalled the Lord's promises) and leaves it there. He does not presume. He does not demand. He simply speaks to the Lord openly and waits for the Lord to act and do His perfect will. This is the nature of true prayer. We open up in honesty to the Lord recognising His great goodness and mercy, we remember what He has promised and we wait for Him to do the right and perfect thing.

[4] Jacob remains behind but sends the two companies on. (Genesis 32:13-23).

32:13-15.

Now having prayed to the Lord, Jacob sets about doing what he believed to be the right course of action possibly suggested by his observation of the two camps of angels at the beginning of Genesis 32. Our text informs us that Jacob *“lodged there that same night.”*¹⁸¹¹ He had offered his prayer and rested content that the Lord would act. Next he gathers together something to offer his brother as a *“present.”*¹⁸¹²

1809 Genesis 28:13-15.

1810 Genesis 22:15-18.

1811 Genesis 32:13.

1812 Genesis 32:13.

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The word can indicate the gift of a tribute owed to a conquering king, or the offering of a sacrifice to a deity, but it also has the idea simply of a gift. We might be tempted to think that Jacob was making an offering to Esau as a prince to mollify him, but I think the personal angle is intended. Jacob had wronged his brother and now he wants to make amends.

From what we learn later on, the gift here described is but a small portion of the livestock Jacob now possessed.¹⁸¹³ The gift consisted of goats, sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys.¹⁸¹⁴ These are beasts which either produce food and were eaten, or helped in the process of making food (beasts of burden). They would also aid in the provision of clothing as well. Remember that here in the Old Testament the material is used to signify or point towards the spiritual. Jacob came with a present of food (and a source of clothing). He sought to give his brother something which would sustain him and prosper his physical life, for without food none can continue. From this we learn that it is our lot to impart spiritual food to our brethren (whether born again or not) such as they may bear. This does not mean, of course, that we neglect the physical, but the higher gift (spiritual food and covering) presupposes that the lesser gift (physical) has already been supplied. It is to be observed that there were a greater number of females of each type than males (perhaps with the exception of the camels). This would clearly be so that each type of animal could be managed and developed. Having a single cow might be useful for a time, but what comes after it has grown old and then has to be slaughtered to be eaten? What then? Thus Jacob's gift is one which was not merely a limited supply of food, but a means to continue providing food for the future. How does the gift of spiritual food and covering we offer continue? How do we endeavour to ensure that the spiritual food we supply is not simply a fast-food meal which quenches hunger for a mere moment? Now as to the numbers we learn that this is a substantial gift (probably 580 animals).

Table 41.1: The gift Jacob sent to Esau.

Goats	Sheep	Camels	Oxen	Donkeys
200 female	200 ewes	30 Milk camels	40 cows	20 female
20 male	20 rams	30 (?) colts	10 bulls	10 foals (colts)

It is also of great variety. You may use an oxen to help you plough, but this range of animals would cover many bases (land management through grazing, variety in milk type and meat, use as pack or burden bearing for crops and trade in goods – for example).

32:16-20.

Jacob now organises these into three “*droves*” (i.e. herds or flocks) which were to be managed by

1813 Genesis 33:11.

1814 Genesis 32:14,15.

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his servants.¹⁸¹⁵ How these animals were organised is not important for us to know but it indicates that Jacob was a careful manager of his possessions and not someone who did not think about what he was doing.

Jacob then instructed the servants to go on ahead and to make “*some distance*” between each servant with their drove.¹⁸¹⁶ He then tells the first servant to deliver a message to Esau, but *only* when Esau asks the meaning of all the animals the servant was in charge of.¹⁸¹⁷ Remember that Esau was a man of this earth, a worldly man, and so represents men in their fallen state. In contrast Jacob is the Lord's representative. He is weak and fearful, but nevertheless he is the Lord's man. And so we can learn something here about how we ought to approach the worldly man with our gift of spiritual food. It may take several gifts like the three offered here before an entrance can be made into a worldly man's life. The message to be delivered must come only after Esau has asked his questions.¹⁸¹⁸ Jacob knows his brother and the customs of those times so it is reasonable to assume that these questions were ones Esau would naturally ask.¹⁸¹⁹ The questions are three, but the first two are linked together (“*to whom do you belong and where are you going*”).¹⁸²⁰ The second question: “*where are you going?*” might equally be given as “*where are you travelling or walking to?*” Or we might suggest that it speaks of the journey being taken. These two questions might seem obvious or even trivial to us. But they are actually much deeper. It is common practice when meeting new people to inquire about their lives. What family are you from? Where do you live? What do you do? We ask such questions simply to begin to know and understand something of this new acquaintance. But these questions go deeper. Now it may be that Esau would just ask these questions in a trivial way, but even so he would want to know the origin and purpose of the person he meets. Consider these questions Jacob expected Esau to ask:

[1] To whom do you belong?

[2] Where are you going?

[3] Whose *are* these in front of you?

What a wonderful opportunity! Imagine that someone of the world you met asked you such questions! Are you ready to answer this not in the trivial sense but in the deeper sense? We belong to Christ! We are going to heaven! The thing that excites us most and which we concern ourselves with is the gospel of Christ! Now of course if we simply blurt out slogans and pat sayings we should not be surprised when the

1815 Genesis 32:16.

1816 Genesis 32:16.

1817 Genesis 32:17.

1818 Genesis 32:18.

1819 Genesis 32:17.

1820 Genesis 32:17.

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worldly man walks away laughing. We might better respond by saying something expected but then lead into our true state as Christians. I sometimes use my surname to break the ice! But there are many other ways and it is vital that we spend some time in thinking about how we answer the worldly man when he asks about us.

Now the servant was tasked to respond in a certain way by Jacob.¹⁸²¹ He was told to say that the flocks were Jacob's but they are given as a *“present”* for Esau. Notice the language used in connection with Jacob and Esau here. Jacob is described as *“your servant”* whilst Esau is titled *“my lord.”*¹⁸²² Some suggest this speaks of Jacob's fearful state before his brother, and that is most likely the case. But I suggest that we have Jacob put before us by the Holy Spirit (who inspired these words) in humility coming to his brother and giving him honour. Is this not like Christ who comes to us? The Lord who stepped down into the earth and humbled Himself so that He was of no reputation, came to sinners and honoured them by bringing good news saying *“come to Me ... and I will give you rest.”*¹⁸²³ He came to heal, teach and restore. He offers life and peace! Now Jacob has learned the hard way and recognises the importance of being honest and humble. When we approach the worldly man we cannot come as proud and arrogant know-it-alls (even if by the incredible grace of God we do in fact know it all because we know Christ).¹⁸²⁴ We must come as humble servants. This is a very important lesson. We are not independent rulers and self-determining ministers. We are servants. We are servants of the people to whom we come. Yes we are servants of the living God first and foremost, but in approaching the worldly man we come as servants to him too.¹⁸²⁵ We come offering gifts to people who do not know that they are in need of such. Notice further that the servant who was coming before Esau was also to say: *“and behold he also is behind us”*.¹⁸²⁶ It might be hard to picture Jacob as a type of Christ, but here we can see that the servant is instructed to say that his *master* will come soon. We offer the gift of the gospel to the worldly man, but we also add that the Lord Himself will come, not just at His return or second coming, but by His Spirit to those who receive this great good news.

Jacob commands all three servants to offer this same message at Esau's questioning (*“in this manner you shall speak to Esau”*).¹⁸²⁷ It is interesting that Jacob chose three servants here. We know that by two witnesses a fact may be established according to the law.¹⁸²⁸ In giving Esau three servants with exactly the same message this is added grace. There is, I think, an important principle here. A worldly man may repent on hearing the good news that you bring to him. But remember that other servants have

1821 Genesis 32:18.

1822 Genesis 32:18.

1823 Matthew 11:28f; Philippians 2:7,8.

1824 Psalm 119:99,100; Colossians 2:2,3.

1825 Remember the two great commandments. We love God first and completely but as a result of this we love our neighbours as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40).

1826 Genesis 32:18.

1827 Genesis 32:19.

1828 Deuteronomy 17:16; 19:15; Matthew 18:16.

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probably offered the same gift you did before you. We cannot lay claim to anything when a worldly man repents and believes. It is all a work of God, and we ought to remember that there are many servants faithfully obeying the Lord bringing the gift of spiritual food for worldly wanderers.

Notice the repeated mention that Jacob would be coming behind these servants.¹⁸²⁹ Jacob had told the first servant that he should say that Jacob was coming *“behind”* them but then he repeats that and states that they were to say *“behold your servant Jacob is behind us.”*¹⁸³⁰ Their master would most definitely be coming. As evangelists we emphasise Christ our Master and His great work, but we ought equally to stress that Christ will come too. It is no good simply getting people to agree with what we may say or hold dear. What we want of them is to know Christ. We preach Christ to the world and we speak of Him coming to those who repent and believe. Here we see the work of the Spirit. The Lord promised that the Spirit would come, and unless this happens when a person hears the gospel all is to no avail. We do not want mere proselytes nor simple converts to our manifesto. We want to see new born babes and children of the living God. so when we offer the gospel make sure to say that Christ is risen and will come! See how often it is noted that believers received the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.¹⁸³¹ This manner of witness is our example. We come offering the gift of God – the good news – true spiritual food rather than flocks and herds. But we point to the Master, He is behind us and will come to you! We are but servants of the Master.

Now of course in this text we have the actual experience of Jacob who had wronged his brother terribly and was thus afraid. He organised this series of presents to *“appease him”* in the hope that he would be accepted.¹⁸³² Such is not the case with regard to our Master. However we are entitled to see a wonderful work of grace here too. God's work in sending Christ to die for sins is such an incredible act of grace and love, a clear demonstration of the depth of God's love, which even the world sees to some extent so that we may ask: maybe, perhaps, they will see this and view this act of love and accept it? I know that God is holy and righteous and will not acquit the guilty so that all sin must be punished. But in these words and in the way in which Christ came and offered Himself there is such condescension, such humility! When Christ returns God will demand an account of all and righteously so. But now we are in the day of salvation and we come in humility to the worldly man and offer this gospel freely. Maybe they will take thought of it! Obviously we know that unless the Lord Himself come and bring new birth there is no hope, but on the human level (as far as our responsibility and tasks are concerned) we must offer the gracious gospel in a gracious and loving way.

Jacob had organised his gift for Esau and sent this on ahead but he *“lodged that night in the*

1829 Genesis 32:20.

1830 Genesis 32:20.

1831 See, for example: Acts 2:38; 8:15,17; 10:47; 19:2.

1832 Genesis 32:20.

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*camp.*¹⁸³³ This statement recalls the same one of verse 13 (*“so he lodged there that same night”*). We noted there that such a rest signalled contentment following Jacob's prayer of confession and supplication recorded in Genesis 32:9-12.

32:22,23.

From what we read of in these verses we learn that Jacob now sets his wives and children and all that he had to cross the Jabbok river (*“brook”*).¹⁸³⁴ Jacob remains behind. The language used is instructive. Young's Literal Translation puts the verses as follows:

22 And he riseth in that night, and taketh his two wives, and his two maid-servants, and his eleven children, and passeth over the passage of Jabbok; **23** and he taketh them, and causeth them to pass over the brook, and he causeth that which he hath to pass over.¹⁸³⁵

Jacob has dealt with the issue of Esau's coming as best he can by organising a present in three parts. Now he sends his family and everything he had (*“he sent over what he had”*) across the Jabbok river or stream. Jabbok means “emptying.” This river was a stream or brook that ran from the mountains of Gilead and emptied into the river Jordan. It lies about half way between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee.



Figure 30: The Jabbok.

1833 Genesis 32:21.

1834 Genesis 32:23.

1835 Genesis 32:22,23, YLT.

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During that night Jacob “*arose*” (which is resurrection language), and he made them all pass “*over the brook*” to the other side.¹⁸³⁶ Jacob thus emptied himself and all that he had into the promised land to face Esau his estranged and (as far as he was concerned) hostile brother. It would seem that Jacob has surrendered everything he has having sent over the two companies of his family and possessions and is now alone. What was to happen now?

1836 Genesis 32:22,23.

Chapter 42.

Jacob meets Esau. (32:24-33:20).

Analysis.

24 Then Jacob was left alone;
and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.
25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. **26** And He said,
 "Let Me go, for the day breaks."
But he said,
 "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"
27 So He said to him,
 "What *is* your name?"
He said,
 "Jacob."
28 And He said,
 "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."
29 Then Jacob asked, saying,
 "Tell *me* Your name, I pray."
And He said,
 "Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?"
And He blessed him there.
30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel:
 "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."
31 Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.
32 Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

#33 1 Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men.
So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants.
2 And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.
3 Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.
4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.
5 And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said,
 "Who *are* these with you?"
So he said,
 "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."
6 Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down.
7 And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down.
Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.
8 Then Esau said,
 "What *do* you *mean* by all this company which I met?"
And he said,
 "*These are* to find favor in the sight of my lord."
9 But Esau said,
 "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."
10 And Jacob said,
 "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. **11** Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough."

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So he urged him, and he took *it*.

12 Then Esau said,

“Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.”

13 But Jacob said to him,

“My lord knows that the children *are* weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing *are* with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. **14** Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

15 And Esau said,

“Now let me leave with you *some* of the people who *are* with me.”

But he said,

“What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.”

16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock.

Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

18 Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.

19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money.

20 Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

In the remaining part of Genesis 32 and in Genesis 33 we have the account of Jacob's wrestling match with God, and then the reunion with Esau. We have three distinct parts as follows:

[1] A “*Man*” wrestles with Jacob. (Genesis 32:24-32).

[2] Jacob meets Esau. (Genesis 33:1-11).

[3] Jacob returns to the promised land. (Genesis 33:12-20).

[1] A “*Man*” wrestles with Jacob. (Genesis 32:24-32).

32:24-26.

And so Jacob is “*left alone*.”¹⁸³⁷ Sometimes this is necessary. Jacob sent all that he had over the Jabbok and now he is alone. We have no idea why he remained behind at this point. Was he seeking the Lord, or was he simply wanting solitude from his family? We do not know, but then suddenly we discover that “*a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day*.”¹⁸³⁸ It had been night when he sent the family across, and now he has to wrestle with this person throughout the night. We later discover that this is the Lord. Hosea makes reference to this event:

3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, And in his strength he struggled with God.

4 Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him *in* Bethel, And there He spoke to us—¹⁸³⁹

1837 Genesis 32:24.

1838 Genesis 32:24.

1839 Hosea 12:3,4.

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It would appear then that Jacob wrestled (*“struggled”*) with *“God”* who is also described as the *“Angel”* (of the Lord), which two terms can be no other than a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ. We note here that Jacob was not the instigator of the wrestling match. It was the Lord – the Angel of the Lord – who came and wrestled with Jacob.¹⁸⁴⁰ The word *“wrestle”* (אָבַק *’ābaq*) comes from a root idea of raising of dust. Wrestlers would raise the dust from the ground as they grappled with each other. They would also rub dust into their hands to gain a firmer grip on their opponent.

Before we consider why the Lord engaged with Jacob in such a way, we marvel at the wonderful grace and condescension of God. Elsewhere in Scripture we have the Lord challenging people from heaven or in His awesome strength, but here the Lord comes down to Jacob's level, for He was *“a Man.”* We are thus confronted with God in the flesh, the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Now why does He wrestle with Jacob? We will not discover the reason until verse 28. So let us consider this contest! The wrestling match seems to have been a fierce and even contest because it lasted the night. The *“Man.”* (i.e. the pre-incarnate Christ), could not overpower Jacob, for there came a point in the contest where this *“Man”* could see that He was not going to win the match on a human level (*“He did not prevail against him”*).¹⁸⁴¹ When we bear in mind that Jacob was ninety one years of age we must give him credit for being able to withstand in this fight!

And so this *“Man”* demonstrates His divine power by simply touching the *“socket of his hip”* so that his leg came out of the socket and dislocated.¹⁸⁴² The word given as *“touched”* does not necessarily suggest any great force. The vast majority of occurrences of this word suggest simply contact.¹⁸⁴³ At the same time as touching his hip the *“Man”* also spoke to Jacob requesting to be released. It was as if He said: 'give up Jacob you can see that My power can harm you.' On the human level Jacob gave the *“Man”* a run for his money, but when He exercised His divine power there was no contest. We might ask: what more could this *“Man”* do? If He could just *touch* Jacob's hip and dislocate his leg could He not also blind him with a word, or cause boils to erupt on his skin, or ,,,? God is never evil and He is not capricious. What He does is always good and is always right. He did this simple act to show to Jacob that this *“Man”* he was wrestling with was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ whom He had met on his flight from Esau many years before. Jacob was frightened of what Esau might do, but his fear needs to be transferred to God. Look what He can do!

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.¹⁸⁴⁴

1840 Genesis 32:24.

1841 Genesis 32:25.

1842 Genesis 32:25.

1843 Blue Letter Bible. Of the 147 uses of this Hebrew word 92 simply indicate the idea of touching. Only about 6 suggest touching with any force.

1844 Matthew 10:28.

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Now at this point Jacob's perception of what was happening to him must have altered. We do not know what he felt the moment this *“Man”* came and started a fight, and (presumably) Jacob was preoccupied with standing his ground for the most part. But on having his leg dislocated he must have come to the realisation that this was the Lord. The fact that the *“Man”* asks to be released suggests that Jacob suddenly clings onto him with all his strength. We say this from Jacob's response to the request to be let go: *“I will not let You go unless You bless me!”*¹⁸⁴⁵ Whom but God can truly bless? It is interesting that the vast majority of places where this word is found in the book of Genesis it speaks of God blessing. Thus Jacob pleads with this *“Man”* whom he now realises is God to bless him!

32:27-29.

The way in which the Lord (this *“Man”*) blesses Jacob is instructive. The Lord asks for his name.¹⁸⁴⁶ Did God not know Jacob's name? Did this *“Man”* not know whom He had picked a wrestling match with? Perish the thought! No He asks him for his name to bring Jacob to a full realisation of his nature. He was Jacob, the heel-grabber, the deceiver. Note that the prophets often make use of this name in referring to the people of God to remind them of their origins in sin and the fallen nature.¹⁸⁴⁷ So recalling his own name Jacob was being made to recognise his origins in sin. But then in verse 28 the Lord changes Jacob's name. Remember that naming is an action of the one who owns or has the right over something. Parents name their children, an inventor names his creation, and an artist names their masterpiece. And so the Lord alone can change the name of a person. Again recall that the name stands for the character. Names as mere labels have no meaning. In our culture a person may be named 'John Smith' but their character and disposition may lead them to being called something that shows this in some way. For example a person who brings with him an air of confusion or pollution might be called 'Smog,' or someone who always brings a sense of fun and excitement and fun might be called 'Fairground.' Now here the Lord has changed Jacob's name because Jacob has changed by the grace of God. These twenty years has seen Jacob go from a deceptive conniving manipulator, to a more humble servant of the Lord. He is by no means perfect but he is not what he used to be.

Jacob's new name is to be *“Israel,”* and the Lord gives us the reason for this.¹⁸⁴⁸ It was because he had *“struggled with God and with men, and [had] prevailed.”*¹⁸⁴⁹ What are we to make of this statement? Was Jacob's struggling combative, defensive or justified in any way? Given the brief history we have examined it appears that Jacob's struggle with men was first deceptive and then in defence. But was it justified? I think the main sense of the word *“prevailed”* in verse 28 is not the idea of being victorious,

1845 Genesis 32:26.

1846 Genesis 32:27.

1847 Isaiah 2:6; 14:1; 40:27; 41:14; Jeremiah 10:25; 30:7; Hosea 12:2,12; Amos 3:13; 6:8; Micah 1:5; 3:8.

1848 Genesis 32:28.

1849 Genesis 32:28.

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but of persisting and enduring. Jacob has persisted. We see this in his dealings with Laban. It was not until the Lord told him to leave that he set off to go back to the promised land. In all the twenty years of his being deceived by his uncle he endured.

Now the name “*Israel*” has two components. The ending “el” is the short form of the name for God. Many names have this “el” ending (eg. Michael, Daniel, Ishmael, Immanuel). The first part is thought to derive either from the verb “to contend” (שָׂרָה *sārah*), or (possibly) from the verb “to have dominion” (שָׂרַר *sārar*). From these, two meanings have been suggested. In the first the idea could be that “God prevails” or that “with God Jacob endures.” In the second, the idea of dominion or of ruling is suggested. The word “*government*” is a noun derived from this verbal root (שָׂרַר *sārar*) and this is found in Isaiah 9:6. Now since the verb “to have dominion” gives rise to the word שָׂר *sar* or “prince,” some hold the meaning to be “he will be prince with God,” or “he will rule with God.” Given these possibilities it seems the best way forward is to assume **both** ideas are to be found in the name. Thus the name suggests both the idea that Jacob as Israel would endure and persist with God's aid and help, and so Jacob as Israel would truly be a Prince of God. Whichever option we may prefer, the name is to be a reminder of Jacob's wrestling with the “*Man*” here in Genesis 32 and of him enduring.

Now at this point, with Jacob still clinging on for dear life, he now asks the “*Man*” for His name.¹⁸⁵⁰ Is Jacob asking who this “*Man*” is? Or is he simply wanting to know more of the character of this “*Man*”? The Hebrew phrase used to depict Jacob's request is quite interesting.

הִגִּידָהּ-נָא שְׁמֶךָ
declare I beg your name

The verb employed is the Hebrew נָגַד *nāgad*, which really means “to be conspicuous,” “to make known,” or “to make manifest.” This is an imperative request which we have rendered using the word “declare” in our translation above. The little word נָא *nā'* is an interjection signalling a respectful entreaty. It can be translated with the word “now” but is often translated as “I pray thee.” I have opted for the phrase “I beg” in my translation above. Jacob is thus insistent and imploring of this “*Man*” that He reveal whom He is and what He is like. This is wonderful. It is the desire of all true believers to know God and to know Him more!

Perhaps somewhat puzzling is the Lord's reply:¹⁸⁵¹

1850 Genesis 32:29.

1851 Genesis 32:29.

וַיֹּאמֶר לְמָה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי

and he said to what [purpose] do you ask this about my name?

To the true seeker there comes further questions. What is the motivation for your enquiry? Do you really want to know Me? says the Lord. Of course the Lord knows the heart, but in stalling Jacob here with this question the Lord seeks to deepen Jacob's desire. Why do we want to know and follow the Lord? Is it for personal ambition or simply as an intellectual exercise? Are we simply motivated by curiosity or by some desire to be loved? For what reason do we seek to know God and His character? These are questions we need to ask ourselves. In coming to the Lord we need to be clear about our main purpose and aim. Our sole motivation ought to be to glorify Him.

Verse 29 ends with the simple statement that *“He blessed him there.”* We do not know how the Lord blessed him. Perhaps there was greater revelation or some insight that Jacob received, but it is not for us to know. These times of communion with the Lord where we receive His blessing are for us alone. None can truly share in such times of communion.¹⁸⁵² We are blessed often together in worship or in fellowship, but here Jacob was alone with this *“Man”* who was God in the flesh. Thus Jacob receives a blessing of which we are ignorant. And yet may the Lord grant us a blessing individually when we are truly alone in His care! Note that the Lord blessed Jacob there in that very place, where he was facing distress, difficulty and fear. God blesses the individual with special blessings meet for the time and place!

32:30-31.

We are not told what happened after the *“Man”* blessed Jacob (now Israel). Presumably He departed but we are left in the dark on this matter. What we are informed of is that Jacob now declares that this place where he received the personal blessing from God will be called *“Peniel.”*¹⁸⁵³ The meaning of the name is then explained for us by Jacob. He had *“seen God face to face.”* The name *“Peniel”* literally means *“face of God.”* Jacob had wrestled with the *“Man”* and had learned that this was the pre-incarnate God-man who had blessed him! This concept of seeing God's face is one we read of elsewhere in Scripture. We are taught that no one has ever seen God.¹⁸⁵⁴ He is a consuming fire and would destroy us in a flash by His holiness and glory.¹⁸⁵⁵ So how can Jacob say that he has seen God and his life is preserved? The simple answer is that he saw the pre-incarnate Christ:

1852 Proverbs 14:10.

1853 Genesis 32:30.

1854 Exodus 33:20; John 1:18.

1855 Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Hebrews 12:29; 1Timothy 6:16.

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No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.¹⁸⁵⁶

Elsewhere we read about having the face or countenance of God shining on us in blessing and favour.¹⁸⁵⁷

Oh may the face of our Saviour shine upon us and lead us to deeper love for Him and all around us!

Now the wrestling match is over, Jacob has been blessed, and the “*Man*” is no longer present, but Jacob had “*seen God face to face*.” Then we read that Jacob “*crossed over Penuel*” at the point in time when the “*sun rose*,” so that he had this experience throughout that night.¹⁸⁵⁸ But there is a difference in Jacob. He is now to be known as “*Israel*,” and he walks with a limp (“*he limped on his hip*”).¹⁸⁵⁹ Sometimes we have to suffer hardship and even infirmity if we want the blessing of God. God's wrestling with Jacob was for his benefit. It was designed to bring him to such a point of submission. The Lord knows what is best for each individual, but we must recognise the requirement in sanctification for the Lord's chastisement.¹⁸⁶⁰

This part of the narrative ends with a statement which highlights what the Lord (the “*Man*”) did to Jacob's thigh and how Israel's descendants commemorated the event.¹⁸⁶¹ We discover here that there was a “*muscle that shrank ... on the hip socket*” and this was the place where the “*Man*” (i.e. the Lord) touched Jacob miraculously. Perhaps what happened was that the Lord's hand touched the muscle at Jacob's hip and caused it to miraculously shrink so that the leg came out of its hip socket. In commemoration of this the Israelites do not eat this particular part of the joint. This might be an added note from Moses as he compiled the book, or it could be an original statement recorded by Jacob's sons as a consequence of their father's experience.

[2] Jacob meets Esau. (Genesis 33:1-11).

33:1,2.

Jacob has crossed over limping and as he reaches the other side he can see his brother with the four hundred men.¹⁸⁶² It would seem that he now organises the children and their mothers into their respective companies. However it is more likely that he had already done this the night before as he sent them over.¹⁸⁶³ The text here is simply confirming this arrangement. First to go ahead were the maidservants of Leah and Rachel and their sons. Then comes Leah and her sons. Finally we have Rachel

1856 John 1:18.

1857 Numbers 6:24-26; Psalm 31:16; 67:1; 80:3,7,19; 119:35; Daniel 9:17.

1858 Genesis 32:31. The slight difference in spelling here is not thought to be significant.

1859 Genesis 32:31.

1860 Psalm 23:4; Hebrews 12:5f.

1861 Genesis 32:32.

1862 Genesis 33:1.

1863 Genesis 32:22f.

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and Joseph last in the procession.¹⁸⁶⁴ Was Jacob intimating a preference here? We learn later that Joseph was an especial favourite of Jacob's and so it is likely that he organises it so that Rachel and Joseph would be less likely to suffer in any attack from Esau. We cannot censure Jacob here. He was doing something practical in the event of disaster approaching. Who could blame such an approach? But it does seem to highlight the problems arising from a polygamous marriage situation. Jacob loved Rachel and so it was natural for him to prefer Joseph above the others but this was not the best way to behave.

33:3,4.

We cannot really censure Jacob in this action of organising the children and mothers so because Jacob went *“before them”* and approaches Esau.¹⁸⁶⁵ Thus Jacob who was fearful of what his brother might do, takes control and takes the lead. He was not acting in craven fear – otherwise he would have fled – but he reasoned that if Esau were to have any residual bitter anger for Jacob he would harm him first and then his family, in which case Rachel and Joseph who brought up the rear would be more likely to escape unharmed.

Jacob comes to Esau in humility bowing *“himself to the ground seven times”* as he approached Esau and *“came near.”*¹⁸⁶⁶ The number seven indicates completion or a full measure and so Jacob intimated to Esau that he was coming with no agenda and in peace. Some have suggested that such an act was not fitting for a man of God before the worldly man Esau. It is true that princes of God have no cause to do homage to men of the world, but this is to miss the point of what is happening here. Jacob had wronged his brother terribly all those twenty years previously, and here he is making amends. Esau was also culpable in the events by counting the birthright of little value, but this fact does not excuse Jacob's wrongdoing. What we observe here is Jacob's wish to make things right with his brother. The gift proffered earlier and his humility here are evidence of a heart that has changed and repented.

On seeing Jacob approach him in humility Esau runs forward to *“meet him”* and he embraces his brother.¹⁸⁶⁷ Can we not see here a picture of the Lord's parable of the prodigal son? I wonder if the Lord Jesus was alluding to this event in the telling of that parable? Recall that when the lost prodigal came to his senses and returned, the father ran to meet him and embraced him:

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’ 20 “And

1864 Genesis 33:2.

1865 Genesis 33:3.

1866 Genesis 33:3.

1867 Genesis 33:4.

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he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.¹⁸⁶⁸

It is particularly noteworthy that Jacob refers to this event in being embraced by Esau later as seeing “*the face of God.*”¹⁸⁶⁹ From this it would appear that Jacob has made his peace and restitution with Esau.

33:5-7.

Now Esau “*lifted his eyes*” just as Jacob had done so earlier in seeing Esau approach.¹⁸⁷⁰ Might we suggest here, in the use of this expression, that Jacob's journey and his fruitfulness has caused his brother to think a little more in heavenly terms? Obviously the simple meaning is that Esau now looked with some focus on the approaching mothers with their children, but I feel that the Spirit of God wants us to know that our journey with the Lord, painful though it may be, enables others to see something of heaven and God's glory. Thus Esau is enabled to raise his eyes and see the fruit of God's dealing with his deceitful brother.

Esau enquires after the approaching retinue and Jacob responds well.¹⁸⁷¹ Here is an opportunity for witness to God's goodness and Jacob takes it wholeheartedly. Jacob might have claimed that it was all his doing and by his strength. Instead he declares that all of his children were those whom God had “*graciously given*” to him.¹⁸⁷² The fruit of our lives is not by strength but by grace. God graciously enables us to be fruitful. He gives faith. He also gives the out-workings of faith and so it is called the “*fruit of the Spirit.*”¹⁸⁷³ We can take no credit and we can offer no boast save in the cross of Christ.¹⁸⁷⁴

The children and their mothers approach in the order that Jacob had set so that the maidservants arrive first with their children and these all “*bowed down*” before Esau as a mark of respect.¹⁸⁷⁵ Then comes Leah and her children who also “*bowed down.*”¹⁸⁷⁶ Finally Rachel and her single son Joseph came up and they too “*bowed down.*”¹⁸⁷⁷ Jacob is now fully presented to his brother Esau.

33:8-10.

Following this reconciliation, (which is the first meeting for all Jacob's family), we have an interesting conversation between the two brothers. Esau first asks about the three droves of animals sent

1868 Luke 15:17-20.
1869 Genesis 33:10.
1870 Genesis 33:1,5.
1871 Genesis 33:5.
1872 Genesis 33:5.
1873 Galatians 5:22.
1874 Galatians 6:14.
1875 Genesis 33:6.
1876 Genesis 33:7.
1877 Genesis 33:7.

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before as a present and Jacob responds honestly and openly that it was meant so that he might *“find favour”* in Esau's eyes.¹⁸⁷⁸ In other words Jacob is not set about making a stand nor of asserting his rights. Rather he is relying on Esau being gracious to him. The servant of God is always reliant on the graciousness of God wherever it may come. We do not demand what may be our right. We rely on the sovereign grace of God. This is why the Lord Jesus taught that if a man strike you on the cheek then offer up the other cheek as well.¹⁸⁷⁹ We are not to resist evil with right but to give good in return.¹⁸⁸⁰ Hence we rely on the grace of God in all circumstances. Jacob feared his brother – and rightly so – and he faces up to this, knowing that he deserved judgement. However in the grace of God Esau is not wrathful. Again there are some commentators who see Jacob's calling Esau *“my lord”* and his seeking to *“find favour”* in Esau's sight, as deceitful and fawning. I rather think that in his encounter with God he is now facing up to reality and is ready to take what may come knowing that God is in charge.

Esau responded by saying that he had no need of Jacob's gift, but Jacob is insistent he take it so *“he urged him.”*¹⁸⁸¹ Consider Jacob's full explanation here. He begins by emphasising the fact that Esau in accepting him without anger and wrath has been gracious (*“if I have now found favour in your sight.”*)¹⁸⁸² He never moves from his position of standing in grace. He then asks Esau to receive his gift from his hand not in payment, but rather as an act of appeasement or restoration. It is rather like Zaccheus offering to repay all those whom he had defrauded.¹⁸⁸³ Then he makes this incredible statement that in seeing Esau's face it was *“as though”* he *“had seen the face of God”*!¹⁸⁸⁴ Esau was gracious and Jacob declares this as though it was through God's sovereign action. Esau was not being manipulated, of course, he was acting in his own will. Esau's favourable response is taken by Jacob as though such was from the very hand of God Himself.

And so Jacob is insistent that Esau take the *“blessing”* he had brought to his brother.¹⁸⁸⁵ And then he gives as his reason again the fact that God had been gracious to him (*“God has dealt graciously with me”*).¹⁸⁸⁶ Jacob also had been greatly prospered by the Lord when he was with Laban, and so he had *“enough.”*¹⁸⁸⁷ Jacob's insistence pays off and Esau received his gift. In all of this narrative we see the mighty hand of God's grace and mercy. Jacob had to face the brother whom he had so grievously deceived. He feared what might happen, but God was incredibly gracious and moved his brother against the wrath he had at the beginning.

1878 Genesis 33:8.

1879 Matthew 5:39.

1880 Romans 12:17,21.

1881 Genesis 33:9,10,11.

1882 Genesis 33:10.

1883 Luke 19:8.

1884 Genesis 33:10.

1885 Genesis 33:11.

1886 Genesis 33:11.

1887 Genesis 33:11.

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[3] Jacob returns to the promised land. (Genesis 33:12-20).

As we move into this final section on Jacob's meeting with Esau we must come back to the ideas we expressed in Genesis 25:19bf where the two boys represent two different natures. We have seen that Jacob was more heavenly minded to begin with, and Esau was thoroughly earthly in mind, and we have been witness to a change in Jacob through his meeting with God at Bethel all the way through to his wrestling with God at Peniel. We have seen Jacob's humility and his making things right with his estranged and dreadfully wronged brother. But now the theme changes because in what follows the main point is where Jacob will live and reside. Can he, or should he, dwell in the company of Esau?

33:12-14.

Esau now takes the lead and suggests that he and Jacob make their journey together with him in the lead (*"I will go before you"*).¹⁸⁸⁸ Bear in mind here that they have been apart for twenty years and we have been privileged to see the Lord's working in Jacob's life, and the spiritual journey that the Lord has lead him on. Esau is always presented to us as a man of the world. In what we have just been considering Esau was gracious. He might have held a grudge and exacted punishment on his brother. He did not do that but received him favourably. Worldly people are very capable of doing good at times. Their motives may not be godly but they can still do good. Here however we must hear alarm bells when we read that Esau wants the two of them to go along together. The expressions *"let us take our journey,"* and *"let is go,"* suggest a uniting of intentions and this simply cannot be. Earlier we saw that Abraham had to separate from Lot. Lot was a righteous man but he was not seeking God as Abraham was, and so there had to be a separation. Here the situation is much more acute. Whilst Esau is Jacob's brother, Esau still has no interest in the things of God, so how can Jacob make his journey with Esau? Especially is this concerning because Esau wants to take the lead (*"I will go before you"*).¹⁸⁸⁹ For Jacob God is the one who leads not Esau.

Now Jacob's response may seem to be vacillating and awkward to modern ears.¹⁸⁹⁰ However we must reckon with the idea that believers and unbelievers have nothing in common. The two traverse very different paths.¹⁸⁹¹ Jacob is not making up excuses to get out of a sticky situation here. His response bears all the hallmarks of a man who is given unto the Lord. Recall the fact that he had already sent his present to Esau and had actively sought his brother out. He could just as well have arrived without making himself known to Esau, (although it is likely Esau heard of his approach because it would be difficult for such a large company of animals and flocks to go unnoticed). He was thus not afraid of going to Esau for

1888 Genesis 33:12.

1889 Genesis 33:12.

1890 Genesis 33:13,14.

1891 Psalm 1.

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a visit. Indeed he makes such a statement at the end of verse 14 (“*until I come to my lord in Seir*”). However Jacob is concerned for the pace and well being of the flocks and children. He first appeals to Esau's knowledge that “*children are weak*” they cannot keep the pace of men, and that the flocks which were “*nursing*” could not be driven hard without some inevitably dying.¹⁸⁹² Thus Jacob again appeals to Esau in humility that Esau go on ahead with his four hundred men who would not do well going at Jacob's slower pace.¹⁸⁹³ Jacob states that he must go slower “*at a pace which the livestock ... and the chikdren*” could bear.¹⁸⁹⁴ **Matthew Henry's** comments on these verses bear repeating here:

And let Jacob's care and tender attention to his family and flocks remind us of the good Shepherd of our souls, who gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young, Isaiah 40:11. As parents, teachers or pastors, we should all follow his example.¹⁸⁹⁵

At the end of his response Jacob says that he would come to Esau at Seir.¹⁸⁹⁶ We know from reading the rest of this chapter and elsewhere that there is no mention of Jacob ever visiting Esau in his home location. What are we to make of this? A number of older commentators suggest that whilst Jacob intended to visit Esau, the occasion either never arose, or it did occur but we have no record of it. Here is what **Matthew Poole** suggested:

We do not read that Jacob did according to this promise or insinuation go to Seir; either therefore he changed his first intentions for some weighty reasons, or upon warning from God; or he used this only as a pretence, which we should not too easily believe of so good a man, especially after such dangers and deliverances; or rather he did perform this promise, though the Scripture be silent of it, as it is of many other historical passages, and as it is here concerning Jacob's visiting of his father Isaac, which is not mentioned till ten years after this time; and yet it is utterly incredible that Jacob should be so near to his dear and worthy father for so long a time together, and not once give him a visit.¹⁸⁹⁷

This is what **John Gill** had to say on the matter:

until I come unto my lord unto Seir; whither, no doubt, he intended to come when he parted with Esau; but for reasons which after appeared to him he declined it: or more probably he did go thither then, or quickly after; though the Scripture makes no mention of it, he might go with some of his servants directly, and send his family, flocks, and herds, under the care of other servants, forward on their journey, and quickly come up to them again; for that he should tell a lie is not likely, nor does he seem to be under any temptation to it: and besides, it would have been dangerous to have disobliged his brother when on his

1892 Genesis 33:13.

1893 Genesis 33:14.

1894 Genesis 33:14.

1895 **M. Henry.**

1896 Genesis 33:14.

1897 **Matthew Poole.** *Commentary on Genesis.* Hereafter as **M. Poole.**

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borders, who could easily have come upon him again with four hundred men, and picked a quarrel with him for breach of promise, and destroyed him and his at once.¹⁸⁹⁸

Such comments seem fitting to me concerning Jacob and his response to Esau. It is certainly not impossible that whilst he intended to go to Esau the occasion never arose. It is also highly likely as **Matthew Poole** states that these people must have had some dealings one with another at various times which are not recorded for us. Further, that circumstances may change or unforeseen events intervene in our plans is something we both know by experience and can read of in the life of the apostle Paul.¹⁸⁹⁹ So whilst we might jump to the conclusion that Jacob was being deceitful in saying he would meet Esau at Seir, it seems unlikely that this was an intended lie in view of Jacob's display towards Esau and from the perspective of his encounter with the Lord at Peniel. We cannot discount deceit entirely – even believers sin – but on balance it would seem that Jacob was being honest here.

33:15,16.

Jacob cannot journey with Esau spiritually speaking. Jacob has explained with reasons why he must go at a much slower pace than Esau with his four hundred men. But Esau suggests that he leave some of his men with Jacob.¹⁹⁰⁰ Jacob asks why this would be needed. After all Jacob has traversed several hundred miles from Haran to get to Gilead and cross the river, so why would he need any other help? Again Jacob relies on grace. He says to Esau *“let me find favour in the sight of my lord.”*¹⁹⁰¹ And so Esau sets off on his way back to Seir.¹⁹⁰² It is to be noted here that Esau was only on his way to Seir. This is his journey which contrasts starkly with that of Jacob. The name *“Seir”* means “rough,” “hairy” or “bristly” and is the same in essence as the name *“Esau.”* Apparently the mountains of that region bristled with rough trees. So Esau was set on a rough and bristly path!

33:17-20.

Jacob's journey and path in the promised land was very different to the path of Esau which was south to the rough mountains. Now it may well be that Jacob visited Esau on occasions. We know that when Isaac died both Jacob and Esau met to bury him, so it is reasonable to assume there were other visits unrecorded in Genesis.¹⁹⁰³ But Jacob does not go immediately to Seir. Instead Jacob goes to *“Succoth”* which name means “booths” (see figure 28).¹⁹⁰⁴ Here Jacob builds a house and made some shelters for his

1898 **John Gill.** *Commentary on Genesis.* Hereafter as **J. Gill.**

1899 See 2Corinthians 1:15f.

1900 Genesis 33:15.

1901 Genesis 33:15.

1902 Genesis 33:16.

1903 Genesis 35:27-29.

1904 Genesis 33:17.

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livestock. Now Succoth was not too far away from Peniel, and from where Jacob and Esau had eventually met. The name *“Succoth”* suggests a temporary stay. This term was used for the booths that the Israelites were to make in their feast of tabernacles in commemoration for the booths they made on their escape from Egypt.¹⁹⁰⁵ Jacob was thus a pilgrim. After some (unknown) time in Succoth Jacob moves on to Shechem and he pitched his tent (a temporary dwelling place) *“before the city”* of Shechem.¹⁹⁰⁶ The text notes that this city was *“in the land of Canaan.”*¹⁹⁰⁷ Up to this point Jacob has been on the fringes of the promised land, but now he has entered it properly. Why did Jacob move to Shechem? Why not go to Mamre (Hebron), or to Beersheba, or to Bethel?¹⁹⁰⁸ Maybe this was a practical reason? Bethel, Mamre/Hebron and Beersheba were all some miles south of where the company crossed over the Jordan. Perhaps Shechem was the nearest place which would be of support to the flocks and herds? We note that this is the place that Abraham went after entering the land. The text records significantly that the *“Canaanites were then in the land.”*¹⁹⁰⁹ The Lord appeared to Abraham there and he built an altar and then he moved on to Bethel further south. We read no more of Shechem until Jacob arrives there in Genesis 33:18.

We noted earlier in our comments on Genesis chapter 12 that Shechem was a richly verdant place in the hills protected by two higher points, Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north. Presumably Jacob sought this place out as being good for his family and flocks, but we shall have cause to see that this might not have been the best place to settle when we come to Genesis 34.

It is notable that the text tells us that Jacob arrived *“safely”* in this region of Shechem having travelled all the way *“from Padan Aram.”*¹⁹¹⁰ The text can be rendered as: “and Jacob came in *peace* to the city of Shechem.” We must take this in a positive light. The Lord had told Jacob to return and now he has returned in peace. His long journey was now done, or was it? We must note here that Jacob erects his temporary dwelling place *“before the city”* which is literally “in the face of the city” signifying that it was in full view. We can't help but be reminded of Lot pitching his tent in sight of Sodom.¹⁹¹¹ Some time elapses and then we discover Jacob making a purchase of a *“parcel of land”* on the site where he had pitched his tent.¹⁹¹² Was this wise or was it simply a necessity on account of the land being owned by various peoples? Should Jacob have moved on? Whatever the case Jacob buys the land from *“the children of Hamor ... for one hundred pieces of money.”*¹⁹¹³ Some have suggested that each of these

1905 Leviticus 23:42,43.

1906 Genesis 33:18.

1907 Genesis 33:18.

1908 Genesis 22:19; 26:23,33; 28:10,19; 35:27.

1909 Genesis 12:6.

1910 Genesis 33:18.

1911 Genesis 13:12.

1912 Genesis 33:19.

1913 Genesis 33:19.

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pieces was equivalent in value to a lamb.¹⁹¹⁴ Hamor was Shechem's father and so people from whom Jacob purchased the land were brothers to Shechem who will feature in Genesis 34. This is only the second time a portion of the land had been bought. The first was Abraham's purchase of a tomb and field from Ephron the Hittite for Sarah's burial.¹⁹¹⁵ Jacob then erects an altar there and he called it “*El Elohe Israel,*” which name means “God, is the God of Israel.” How important it is to establish the worship of God in any new place we may have cause to come to. Whether a new job or a new house we must always make certain that we have our altar erected.

1914 The same Hebrew word is also found at Joshua 24:32 and Job 42:11.

1915 Genesis 23:3f.

Chapter 43.

Dinah. (34:1-31).

Analysis.

- #34 1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.
- 2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.
- 3 His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.
- 4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying,
“Get me this young woman as a wife.”
- 5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter.
Now his sons were with his livestock in the field;
so Jacob held his peace until they came.
- 6 Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.
- 7 And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it;
and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done
a disgraceful thing in Israel
by lying with Jacob’s daughter,
a thing which ought not to be done.
- 8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying,
“The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter.
Please give her to him as a wife.
- 9 And make marriages with us;
give your daughters to us,
and take our daughters to yourselves.
- 10 So you shall dwell with us,
and the land shall be before you.
Dwell and trade in it,
and acquire possessions for yourselves in it.”
- 11 Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers,
“Let me find favor in your eyes,
and whatever you say to me I will give.
- 12 Ask me ever so much dowry and gift,
and I will give according to what you say to me;
but give me the young woman as a wife.”
- 13 But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully,
because he had defiled Dinah their sister.
- 14 And they said to them,
“We cannot do this thing,
to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised,
for that would be a reproach to us.
- 15 But on this condition we will consent to you:
If you will become as we are,
if every male of you is circumcised,
- 16 then we will give our daughters to you,
and we will take your daughters to us;
and we will dwell with you,

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- and we will become one people.
17 But if you will not heed us and be circumcised,
then we will take our daughter and be gone.”
- 18 And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor’s son.
19 So the young man did not delay to do the thing,
because he delighted in Jacob’s daughter.
He was more honorable than all the household of his father.
20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city,
and spoke with the men of their city, saying:
21 “These men *are* at peace with us.
Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it.
For indeed the land *is* large enough for them.
Let us take their daughters to us as wives,
and let us give them our daughters.
22 Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people:
if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised.
23 Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours?
Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us.”
24 And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son;
every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.
- 25 Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain,
that two of the sons of Jacob,
Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers,
each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.
26 And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword,
and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went out.
27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city,
because their sister had been defiled.
- 28 They took
their sheep,
their oxen,
and their donkeys,
what *was* in the city
and what *was* in the field,
29 and all their wealth.
All their little ones
and their wives
they took captive;
and they plundered even all that *was* in the houses.
- 30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi,
“You have troubled me
by making me obnoxious
among the inhabitants ***of the land***,
among
the Canaanites
and the Perizzites;
and since I *am* few in number,
they will gather themselves together against me and kill me.
I shall be destroyed,
my household and I.”
- 31 But they said,
“Should he treat our sister like a harlot?”

Up to now we have been charting the course of Isaac's experiences, of Jacob and Esau's journeys, and of the Lord's dealing with all of these people. We left Jacob nearby to Shechem having built an altar to “*El Elohe Israel*” (or “God, the God of Israel”), but now we come to a sudden jolt to our thoughts and

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meditations – the story of Dinah.¹⁹¹⁶ One (very gifted) commentator whom I have had many occasion to consult, could not bring himself to make any comments on this chapter. He describes Jacob's story in Genesis 33 and then jumps to Genesis 35 in a chapter entitled “Jacob at Bethel again.” Skipping over Genesis 34 he makes the following statement:

In our last chapter we closed with Jacob parting from Esau and failing to keep his word and rejoin his brother at Seir. We pass over the sad record of the intervening chapter, asking our readers to turn to it for themselves. After passing through the grievous experiences narrated in Genesis 34, we might well have supposed that Jacob had been in a hurry to leave Shechem——yet, *whither* would he flee!¹⁹¹⁷

This commentator would also say that if he had no spiritual insight into the text he would not simply add more comments for the sake of it, and such an attitude is to be greatly respected:

But we confess we discern not their significance, and where spiritual vision be dim it is idle, or worse, to speculate.¹⁹¹⁸

Now I will endeavour to make some comments on this chapter, but I do not suggest that my thoughts are by any means the final say. I ask the reader to weigh carefully all that is said not just on this awkward passage but all the way through this offering.

The chapter forms a complete unit but we shall consider it under four headings as follows:

- [1] Dinah dabbles dangerously with the daughters of the land. (Genesis 34:1-7).
- [2] Hamor and Shechem make representations before the sons of Jacob. (Genesis 34:8-17).
- [3] Hamor, Shechem and all the males get circumcised. (Genesis 34:18-24).
- [4] A dishonourable and deceptive destruction. (Genesis 34:25-31).

Before we look in detail at the text it is worth drawing some attention to the analysis we have provided. Although the chapter is occasioned by Dinah's actions we do not read a great deal about this young woman. Rather we see how Jacob's sons follow their father's former ways of deception.¹⁹¹⁹ We also learn something about the nature of the people among whom Jacob and his sons dwelt. Perhaps one of the main lessons to be drawn from this chapter is how the people of God should, or should not, connect or relate to the people of the world.

1916 Genesis 33:20.

1917 **A. W. Pink.** *Gleanings in Genesis*. Chapter 36.

1918 **A. W. Pink.** *Gleanings in Genesis*. Chapter 30.

1919 Genesis 34:13.

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[1] Dinah dabbles dangerously with the daughters of the land. (Genesis 34:1-7).

We begin by first noting that Dinah's name means “judgement,” or “judged.” According to Zimmerman, Dinah was probably born towards the end of the second seven year period under Laban's employ when Jacob was ninety.¹⁹²⁰ Jacob left Laban after twenty years but we are not entirely sure how much time had elapsed between his departure and the events we have recorded here in Genesis 34. If we suppose about a year for the journey, and perhaps a year or so at Succoth, and then another year at Shechem, this means Dinah would only have been around twelve years of age. Most commentators suggest she was nearer sixteen. Whatever her precise age she is described in these verses as a “*young woman*.”¹⁹²¹ The Hebrew is נַעֲרָה *na'ārāh*, which is the feminine form of the word for young man which is נָעָר *na'ar*. According to *Davidson* this word has the following meanings:¹⁹²²

[1] A male infant.

[2] A boy or lad.

[3] A youth.

[4] A servant.

The female equivalent would thus suggest an infant girl or a young maiden.

34:1.

We are introduced to Dinah as the “*daughter of Leah*” born to Jacob after Leah had already produced six sons, and the maids of the two wives of Jacob another four sons.¹⁹²³ It must have been rather unusual for Dinah in amongst ten boys from three mothers. One wonders what type of care and love she may have received? Leah may well have been preoccupied with her six sons, and the two maids were equally distracted with their two sons apiece. What was a young girl among so many boys and with the women so busy? And so we discover that Dinah sought out other women to be with. The text tells us that Dinah “*went out to see the daughters of the land*” and these words are very instructive. We do not censure Dinah in the slightest for seeking out company for this was surely natural. However we are told first that she “*went out to see,*” and such a phrase warns us of the danger of going abroad into this world as lead by our sight. Something attracted Dinah in the physical realm. Again we do not censure this young woman for wanting to see what was abroad. That is quite natural. But we pause and consider our own motivations. What governs our lives and the way we behave? Are we moved by the things we see or

1920 **Charles L. Zimmerman.** *The Chronology and Birth of Jacob's Children by Leah and her handmaid.* Grace Theological Seminary. Grace Journal 13.1 (Winter 1972) 3-12. P11.

1921 Genesis 34:3,4.

1922 **Davidson.** P555.

1923 Genesis 30:21.

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desire in this world? Surely the higher motivation of seeking the Lord and to be delighted in Him must govern our every actions? The Lord knows how to give good gifts and He will see to it that we are provided for in the physical realm. Remember that God is an abundantly good God!

But then the great problem here for Dinah was that she had to go out (*“went out”*) of the family circle to *“see”* the things she craved. Here is a great tragedy. Why were the things she desired not catered for within the family? We do not know what the arrangements were in the family and how each mother cared for their children, but we recall the words spoken of Abraham concerning his family and company and wonder if Jacob failed to build on this foundation?¹⁹²⁴ Jacob was clearly a good shepherd in the earthly sense for God prospered him wonderfully under his servitude of Laban, but was he a good shepherd spiritually speaking? Perhaps because of the way he had been deceived into a marriage with a woman he did not love, he neglected the offspring? In the account of Jacob's sons as depicted in Genesis 37 and following it would appear that Jacob's dealings with his family were some way less than perfect. And so Dinah is left to her own devices. She lacks female company and so seeks it out by herself unguided by any.

But what did Dinah go out to observe? It was *“the daughters of the land.”* Obviously with such a male dominated family, and the only females preoccupied and busy, Dinah was left with no option but to seek company outside among the girls and women who lived in that land. But this expression rather points us to the differences between the godly and the ungodly. We have the *“daughters of the land”* and the word *“land”* can easily be rendered as *“earth”* indicating the preoccupation of such people – they are worldly or earth-centred. We have already come across this phrase in connection with the wives Esau had married and which were a sore trial to Isaac and Rebekah.¹⁹²⁵ The contrasting expression, (which we do not see until the time of Solomon), is *“daughters of Zion”* and this speaks of a more spiritual disposition.¹⁹²⁶ Now we must be careful in our statements about relating to this world. Always and in every respect we owe a debt of love to all mankind whomever they may be. All are created in the image of God and deserve our respect and love. But in these texts we are being lead to consider the affiliation or associations. What were these *“daughters of the land”* like? What were their interests and characters? What did they believe and how did they behave? In short, what company was Dinah letting herself be influenced by? Now although the text simply speaks of a single occasion in which Dinah leaves the family homestead and goes abroad to visit the *“daughters of the land,”* it is probable that this was something she had been doing repeatedly. I cannot speak authoritatively on this but the text seems to give the impression that this was an action which was characteristic of Dinah. How about us? What do we find ourselves going out of the Christian family circle to *“see”*? Let us be clear here. I do not advocate any

1924 Genesis 18:19. See also: Genesis 14:14 which speaks of Abraham's trained servants.

1925 Genesis 26:35; 27:47. The phrase *“daughters of the Canaanites”* occurs at Genesis 24:3,37.

1926 Song of Solomon 3:11; Isaiah 3:16,17; 4:4.

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insular or set-apart monasticism or asceticism – such is cult-like behaviour. We are very much in this world and we see all people as God's created beings. But what company do we keep for sustenance in spiritual, emotional and intellectual food? When we mix with worldly people (as we must do and as we ought to do – otherwise how will they see what God is doing?), what spiritual defences do we engage? How do we comport ourselves in environments and atmospheres which are contrary to the gospel? Are we wearing the full armour of God?

34:2,3.

Now inevitably keeping company amongst those of this world (people of the earth) will lead to trouble. It is not difficult to imagine contemporary situations which mirror the action Dinah took. The young people of today who live in city centres and who dwell amongst the gangs or drug lords do well not to be tempted to join in their mayhem. But Dinah goes *out* of the family circle and *into* a situation which was dangerous. These “*daughters of the land*” were not under the guidance and concern of parents who loved God. They were pagans reared by pagans and would soon come under the judgement of God for their wickedness. And so it was equally inevitable that one of the young men of that land would see Dinah as just one of the girls.¹⁹²⁷

We are introduced in verse 2 to the other main protagonist in the account. Shechem was “*the son of Hamor the Hivite,*” and also a “*prince of the country.*” Hamor's name has the meaning “he-ass,” and the name “*Hivite*” means “villagers.” Presumably these folk were more settled in the land and had created villages and homesteads and, given Hamor's name, were probably farmers and shepherds. The Hivites were sons of Canaan.¹⁹²⁸ The people of Gibeon who deceived Joshua during the time of conquest were Hivites and some of their number lived in villages as far north as Mount Hermon and the Lebanon hills.¹⁹²⁹ So their origins and affiliations were Canaanite and it appears they were a people given to deceit. Was this because of the way the sons of Jacob dealt with the people of Shechem? Shechem is also described as a prince of that region, but the word given as “*country*” is the same word rendered “*land*” in the phrase “*daughters of the land,*” which can be rendered as “*earth.*” Thus Shechem was a prince of this earth, this world.

And so Shechem “*saw*” Dinah.¹⁹³⁰ What did he see? Dinah had come out to be among the “*daughters of the land*” and presumably enjoyed their company. Was she just like these Shechemite girls? Had she become one of their company? Or was there anything different about her? She was a very young teenager but Shechem saw something that attracted him. None of this is wrong, of course. It is mysterious

1927 Genesis 34:2.

1928 Genesis 10:15,17.

1929 Joshua 9:3-7; 11:3,19; Judges 3:3.

1930 Genesis 34:2.

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how a young man becomes attracted to a young girl! Is there such a thing as 'love at first sight'? It is noteworthy that the verb (*“saw”*) comes right at the start of this verse which would indicate an immediate attraction on the part of Shechem. In my experience some are instantly attracted whilst others grow in their attraction. We do not wish to go into this subject save to say that attraction between a man and a woman (or a young man and a young woman as in this case) is wholly natural and a part of our created nature. When Woman was introduced to Adam there was an instant attraction, for God had made the Woman to be Adam's wife.¹⁹³¹

However what occurs next is wholly unattractive. We read that upon seeing Dinah, Shechem *“took her and lay with her, and violated her.”*¹⁹³² To show some of the force of verse two I have attempted translation below:

וַיֵּרָא אֶתְהָא שָׁכֶם בֶּן-חָמוֹר הַחִתִּי--נָשִׂיא תְּאֵרִץ
and he saw her Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite prince of the earth

וַיִּקַּח אֶתְהָא וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲזֹבָהּ
then he took her and he lay with her and he violated her

We have already noted that Shechem was immediately attracted to Dinah by the fact that the verb comes first in the sentence, but notice also the fact that the pronoun *“her”* is repeated three times. It would appear then that Shechem can only see Dinah and wherever he looks she is all he sees! What then of the three statements:

He took her And he lay with her And he violated her.

The first verb (*“took”*) has a range of meanings, from simply the idea of getting, to the forceful idea of seizing or capturing. **Wilson** suggests the following meaning:

“to take ... properly to take with the hand, to lay hold of ... specially to take a wife; to take away, sometimes with violence and force; to take possession, to capture, to seize upon, also to take or captivate any one with blandishments, wisdom ...”¹⁹³³

1931 Genesis 2:23.

1932 Genesis 34:2.

1933 **Wilson**. P435.

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The act of taking a wife seems to be somewhat more forceful in these ancient times. Perhaps on seeing Dinah, Shechem seized her hand and drew her away. The second verb (“*lay with*”) also has a range of meanings from simply to lie down on a bed, to lie down in death, or to have sexual intercourse with someone. When a man and a woman lie down together this is simply a polite way of saying that they are engaging in sexual intercourse. The third verb (“*violated*”) is put in the intensive active form. The meaning of the word is as follows according to **Davidson**:

“to suppress, subdue, afflict, humble.”¹⁹³⁴

According to **Davidson** when this verb is used in connection with a woman it signifies “to ravish,” or, in other words, it depicts the act of rape. The AKJV uses the word “*defile*” here in place of “*violated*.” This English word has the following meanings:

1. To damage the purity or appearance of; to mar or spoil.
2. To desecrate or profane (something sacred).
3. (Archaic) To rape or sexually assault (a woman).

Thus, there is no doubt here that Shechem raped Dinah. It is notable that the sound of the words with these three verbs is very alliterative. My transliteration of the second part of verse 2 is as follows:

way-yiq-qah ’ō-tāh way-yiš^c-kab ’ō-tāh way^c-‘an-ne-ha

From the (perhaps) innocent grab of her hand, to the more dangerous liaison on the ground, Shechem takes Dinah and forces her.

It is very instructive to see how verses 1 and 2 are connected. In my analysis I have shown that the two main characters here are described at length and then their actions follow as an indented line:

- #34 1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob,
went out to see the daughters of the land.
2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country,
saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

Dinah is described first and her action was to leave the family safety and link up with the girls of the earth. Shechem is described next but his action is to take her and rape her. The two actions are set as interconnected. If you leave the safety of the (godly) family circle, do not be surprised if men of the world

1934 Davidson. P606.

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take full advantage. Shechem saw what Dinah presented and thus he took her, lay with her, and raped her.

34:3,4.

Now it would appear that Shechem has become thoroughly smitten and infatuated with Dinah. Later in the book of 2Samuel we read of a similar infatuation of Amnon for his sister Tamar.¹⁹³⁵ Amnon was besotted with Tamar and was thus encouraged to hatch a devious plot to set up a meeting with her. And so after the plan has been enacted, Tamar is instructed by David (who is unaware of the situation) to go and give Amnon some food as he was (supposedly) ill in bed. Amnon then contrives to ensure that he was left alone with Tamar, and as Tamar went to Amnon with the food, Amnon *“took hold of her”* and asked her to have sex with him.¹⁹³⁶ Tamar's response is remarkable. She naturally refuses Amnon saying:

12 ... “No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! 13 And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.”¹⁹³⁷

Very sadly Amnon being much stronger, over-powered her and raped her. Immediately afterwards we discover that Amnon's infatuation was instantly gone and was replaced by an excessive hatred:

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her *was* greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Arise, be gone!”¹⁹³⁸

Now it is very interesting that the expression used for Amnon's *“love”* of Tamar is the same as that in the case of Shechem for Dinah. Compare the following two statements:

2Smuel 13:1:

וַיֵּאָהֱבָה אֲמֹנוֹן בֶּן-דָּוִד
and he loved her Amnon son of David

Genesis 34:3:

וַיֵּאָהֱבָה אֶת-דִּנְעָרָה
and he loved (namely) the young girl

1935 2Samuel 13:1,2.

1936 2Samuel 13:11.

1937 2Samuel 13:12,13.

1938 2Samuel 13:15.

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The last part of verse 3 is literally: “and he spoke unto the heart of the young girl.” In other words he appealed to her emotions. We might say that he buttered her up, or that he was very flattering. We might be tempted to be sentimental and romantic at this point, but given Shechem's behaviour it seems better to see this as manipulative.

Now it is important to recognise here that Dinah was kept at Shechem's house from this point onwards. We do not read of her being with her family again until the sons of Jacob “*took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.*”¹⁹³⁹ Having forced Dinah, and (presumably) confined her to his house, Shechem next speaks to his father Hamor and asks him to procure Dinah formally as his wife.¹⁹⁴⁰ We do not know the age of Shechem but Dinah is, as we noted earlier young, for Shechem refers to her again as “*this young woman.*”¹⁹⁴¹ There is, therefore, still in place some formality. Shechem is not acting in what we might term a barbarian way having Dinah as his own possession with no regard to local customs. He does want to make her his wife.

In all that has transpired, and unlike the incident between Amnon and Tamar, we are not told how Dinah felt. Nowhere do we read of her wishes or her thoughts in this matter.

34:5-7.

Dinah is at Shechem's house having been raped and then kept under Shechem's wily spell and smooth tongue. Now verse 5 informs us that Jacob “*heard*” that Shechem had “*defiled*” Dinah. This word “*defiled*” is important. Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman is never defiling nor dirty. But when a young woman is raped this is surely an unclean thing. The Hebrew word means “to be unclean,” or “to be polluted.” It is not simply the physical act that is uppermost here, but the violation and dishonouring of the young woman as a person that is being declared. She was a virgin daughter of Israel, but now she is an unclean and impure thing. In our culture we have (very sadly) divorced the act of love making from the action of love. People can *make love* at will when there is no real love involved. This is a disgraceful thing! Marriage is first and foremost a representation of the love Christ has for His bride the church. Adultery and fornication is everywhere denounced in Scripture because it is akin to the idolatry of man in his preference for lovers other than God.

How did Jacob hear about what transpired? We are not told explicitly, but Dinah cannot have told them for she was locked up. So it would appear that Shechem must have boasted of his conquest. When Jacob heard the news that his daughter was Shechem's *lover*, his sons were busy in the field and so Jacob kept himself quiet until they returned from their work.¹⁹⁴² At this point Hamor, Shechem's father,

1939 Genesis 34:26.

1940 Genesis 34:4.

1941 Genesis 34:4.

1942 Genesis 34:5.

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came to speak with Jacob to settle the issue of a formal marriage.¹⁹⁴³ News then gets to Jacob's sons and so they return from the field. Their demeanour is vitriolic.¹⁹⁴⁴ The men were both “*grieved*” and “*very angry*” on hearing the news.¹⁹⁴⁵ These words suggest that they were both deeply upset and in pain, and were also boiling hot with rage. Their hot anger was on account of one fact which is described for us in two ways. Simply put, her brothers were spitting hot nails because Shechem had slept with their sister. This was seen by them as:

[1] A disgraceful thing in Israel.

נִבְלָה עֲשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

[2] A thing which ought not to be done.

וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה

In both statements the verb “to do or make” (עֲשָׂה ‘*āsāh*) is used. This is a word used to speak of creative acts.¹⁹⁴⁶ This thing which Shechem did is something which should never have taken place and is a “*disgraceful*” thing “*in Israel*.” The Hebrew word translated as “*disgraceful*” is from the root word נָבַל *nābāl*, which means “foolish.” And so we are left in a state of horror and grave sadness. What will become of Dinah now?

[2] Hamor and Shechem make representations before the sons of Jacob. (Genesis 34:8-17).

34:8-10.

It now appears that Jacob and his sons are with Hamor and Shechem in conference.¹⁹⁴⁷ Hamor, Shechem's father, now appeals to Jacob on behalf of his son. The very “*soul*” of his son “*longs*” for, or desires Dinah, so let it be that Dinah will be the formal wife for Shechem.¹⁹⁴⁸ We next learn that there is something much more important which is connected with this date-rape. Hamor now speaks in wider terms. The union of Shechem with Dinah will be the catalyst for further inter-tribal marriages.¹⁹⁴⁹ Marriages will then lay the foundation for assimilation between peoples. Through marriage the various separated tribes may now be able to strike trade deals and benefit from “mates rates.” So the real purpose of this meeting between Shechem and Dinah (in Hamor's eyes) was to dilute the people of God and to focus on trade, possessions, and this earth. In other words, these Hivites have no thought of God and are only concerned with this world and its trinkets, and so they suggest marriages to cement their cooperation

1943 Genesis 34:6.

1944 Genesis 34:7.

1945 Genesis 34:7.

1946 Genesis 1:26; 2:18.

1947 Genesis 34:8.

1948 Genesis 34:8.

1949 Genesis 34:9.

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and fellowship. It is difficult to see anything which would stop the slide from Dinah's rape and capture by Shechem, and the formation of marriages which would further worldly trade. What then of the “Seed” of the promise?

34:11,12.

Now it is the turn of Shechem. His father Hamor has laid the groundwork (or so they think) of a reasonable basis for which the two peoples may cohere and coexist. What does Shechem have to say? It is to be observed that whilst “*Hamor spoke with them,*” Shechem speaks “*to her father and her brothers.*”¹⁹⁵⁰ There is thus a more personal slant to Shechem's address than that of Hamor. Such, of course, was to be expected. Shechem was infatuated with Dinah and wants the blessing of the family. Hamor is more concerned with the implications of such a union (materially, trade-wise, and in influence and power). The only thing in Shechem's mind is in gaining the family's blessing for his proposed marriage to Dinah. First Shechem requests the family's favour (“*let me find favour in your eyes*”).¹⁹⁵¹ He is thus in their debt. This is the language of grace. He does not demand, neither does he put forth arguments for his actions thus far, nor does he offer excuses. He simply rests on their mercy. Then in three separate statements Shechem asks what he can give them.

[1] And whatever you say to me I will **give** (v11).

[2] Ask me ever so much dowry and **gift** (v12).

[3] And I will **give** according to what you say to me. (v12).

Here we see a different attitude. He initially appeals to their “*favour.*” Will they be favourable or antagonistic? But now he suggests that he can pay the price for Dinah. There is more than a hint of arrogance here. He has been introduced to us as a “*prince of the country.*”¹⁹⁵² As such he would have considerable wealth. But here he suggests no limit to what they may choose to ask. Was this simply displaying the depths of his love for Dinah, as though he might say “I would give the world for you”? This may well be the case, but Shechem is sure that whatever they may desire he is well able to meet their request. Well, three times he suggests to them that they name their price “*whatever*” it may be, even if it be “*ever so much*” or just “*according to what you say.*” Shechem simply wants Dinah, “*the young woman*” to be his wife.¹⁹⁵³ Thus we see in Shechem a mixture of the arrogance of a prince of that region, mingled with a deep desire to have Dinah as his wife through his love of her.

1950 Genesis 34:8,11.

1951 Genesis 34:11.

1952 Genesis 34:2.

1953 Genesis 34:12.

34:13,14.

How will Jacob and his sons respond? Verse 13 gives us the contrasting response signalled by the conjunction *“but.”* Notice first that Jacob is not to the fore here. We read of the *“sons of Jacob”* who offer Hamor and Shechem their response.¹⁹⁵⁴ Where was Jacob? Recall that it was Jacob who heard what had happened to his daughter whilst the sons were in the field.¹⁹⁵⁵ Further, Shechem and Hamor went to speak with Jacob, but here we find that it is the *“sons of Jacob”* who answer.¹⁹⁵⁶ Why did Jacob abdicate responsibility?

Straight away we are informed that the Jacob's sons responded to Shechem and Hamor *“deceitfully.”*¹⁹⁵⁷ The reason given for their deceit was that Shechem had *“defiled”* Dinah. Thus once again the rape of Dinah is brought to our attention. Remember that Dinah is still being held at Shechem's house. In drawing our attention to the deceitful nature of the sons of Jacob's response we are thus reminded of their father's deceitful ways. Like father like sons. Just as Jacob exercised deceit, so too his sons follow suit. A father should be very saddened when he sees his children aping his wicked ways.

And thus the sons of Jacob declare that there was a barrier to Shechem's request because Shechem was not circumcised.¹⁹⁵⁸ It is instructive to note here how the sons of Jacob put their stumbling block to Shechem. They state that they could not do anything about Shechem's request. It was all about what was in their power:

We cannot do this thing,
to give **our** sister to one who is uncircumcised,
for that *would be* a reproach to **us**.

Why did they not rather give God His due glory here? Why did they not point to the Lord and His demands? All of this language betrays their true hearts. They were interested solely in their lot, their name, their reputation. Now in speaking of circumcision the sons of Jacob were not just being deceitful, but were also bringing yet another stumbling block in the way. By making the mere act of circumcision the means by which Shechem may have Dinah as wife, Shechem may then have been lead into a false sense of security that he would be as one of them. It reminds us of the action and behaviour of the Pharisees. Their main aim was to make proselytes. Heed these words of the Saviour:

1954 Genesis 34:13.

1955 Genesis 34:5.

1956 Genesis 34:6,13.

1957 Genesis 34:13.

1958 Genesis 34:14.

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Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.¹⁹⁵⁹

Now, of course, such conversion was never in the minds of the sons of Jacob. They were not willing to gain converts to their way of faith. They merely used their religious custom and practice as a means of gaining an advantage. They simply presented circumcision as the doorway, suggesting that by complying with this ritual, Shechem and his people would be like Jacob and his people, all the while intending them great harm.

34:15-17.

And so the sons of Jacob make a stipulation that all the males under Shechem's jurisdiction must be circumcised. Here is legalism in the extreme. They had no intention of allowing Shechem and his people to be one with them and to form a single people. But they gave the ***impression*** that if Shechem and his people comply with this demand, then they would be accepted. In fact the sons of Jacob give these four assurances on becoming circumcised:¹⁹⁶⁰

[1] we will give our daughters to you,

[2] we will take your daughters to us;

[3] we will dwell with you,

[4] we will become one people.

The giving and taking of daughters in marriage so that they would all dwell in one place, would inevitably lead to them becoming one people. Now this is the important thing to note spiritually. We must not be sidetracked here by the deceitful nature of the sons of Jacob. What they did was utterly reprehensible. However the idea of intermarriage leading to intermingling is surely a principle we need to consider. On the physical side whether a man from Ireland marries a woman from Indonesia, or a woman from Chile marries a man from Cameroon is neither here nor there. Apart from the fact that they will have to work through their cultural differences, marriage between people of different countries and places is nowhere prohibited. What does matter, however, is whether the ones being married together are of the ***true*** circumcision:

For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the

1959 Matthew 23:15.

1960 Genesis 34:16.

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Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.¹⁹⁶¹

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.¹⁹⁶²

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.¹⁹⁶³

Abraham was given the sign of circumcision after he exercised faith. The symbol pointed to the need for the removal of the flesh. Now when that has been done (through the act of faith in Christ's death and resurrection) the symbol or sign is no longer required. Such is the case with all the things that were typical, or were shadows of the good things to come.¹⁹⁶⁴ But to use the sign or symbol as the thing in itself as showing true faith, as the sons of Jacob were doing in this incident, was wicked. Being circumcised in the physical sense alone leads to death, and this is what we will observe later on.¹⁹⁶⁵ A person must be born again and have their heart circumcised with the circumcision that only God can perform. Nowhere in any of the narrative do we read that the sons of Jacob remonstrated with Shechem and his father about true faith, about God and His dealings with mankind. They simply state that Shechem and his people must be circumcised.

There is no alternative for Shechem and his people. The sons of Jacob demand compliance. If they *“consent”* to become as Jacob and his sons in the physical sense only, then they would benefit in being one people, (although they had no intention of honouring this), but if they did not agree to this stipulation, then Jacob and his sons would remove Dinah and they would be gone.¹⁹⁶⁶ Whilst the truth is that to be in union with a man or a woman the intended is also of the same faith, such a presentation here is sheer wickedness. We copy the sons of Jacob in their act of deceit when we demand people sign up to things we deem necessary, rather than seek the true and living faith among all those with whom we have to do. Perhaps you have certain traditions and unscriptural beliefs in your company and you pay more heed to these than to the words of life? Examine yourselves and cut out this legalistic spirit!

[3] Hamor, Shechem and all the males get circumcised. (Genesis 34:18-24).

34:18,19.

The sons of Jacob have stipulated the payment required for Shechem to marry Dinah and for them

1961 Romans 2:28,29.

1962 Philippians 3:3.

1963 Colossians 2:11.

1964 Hebrews 10:1.

1965 Note: I am not condoning the murderous action here performed by Simeon and Levi, but simply note that the consequence of being circumcised physically alone will lead to death.

1966 Genesis 34:15,16,17.

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to become a united peoples. They really should not have offered this in such a way. They could have appealed to the people to call upon the Lord and to seek His wisdom, but they do not do that. Instead they hatch a plan to slaughter them which gave the appearance of welcoming them into their way of life and their faith. Now such *“words”* gave pleasure to Shechem and Hamor, and Shechem, to his credit, *“did not delay to do this thing.”*¹⁹⁶⁷ These *“words”* were the words of mere men. They were not the words of life. We need to be very careful in handling Scripture and the word of God that we do not misrepresent it in any way as the sons of Jacob did here concerning circumcision.

Of Shechem we read that he was more than willing to comply with the request, as we have already noted, on account of the fact that he truly did delight in Dinah (*“he delighted in Jacob's daughter”*).¹⁹⁶⁸ We cannot see any sense of conversion in Shechem though, for he has not been offered the gospel, but merely a means to become Dinah's husband. Nevertheless he is described as being *“more honourable than all the household of his father.”*¹⁹⁶⁹ Given this statement we suggest that Shechem did truly love Dinah. We do not condone his act of rape, but we note that his intentions here, at least, were honourable. What is equally clear, however, is that Hamor's intentions were not. We noted earlier that Hamor, after speaking of his son's infatuation for Dinah (*“the soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter”*), was really only concerned to form an alliance by intermarriage, which would promote trade with Jacob that favoured him and his people.¹⁹⁷⁰ We shall see this aspect to the full in what follows next.

34:20-24.

And so *“Hamor and Shechem”* organise a council meeting at *“the gate of the city.”*¹⁹⁷¹ Note the order of names here. The father precedes the son. The same order is noted in verse 18, but the order is reversed in verse 13 where the sons of Jacob make their response to the son and his father (*“but the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor”*).¹⁹⁷² Jacob and his sons are not interested in anything but Dinah here. Perhaps that is their main problem. They ought to have been concerned first for the glory and honour of God. If they had come to Shechem and Hamor and spoke of the indignation that God felt in Shechem's defilement of Dinah, then maybe a different story would have unfolded. But now we are back in the region of the land where Shechem was a prince, Hamor is to the fore.

And so the father and son come to the people of the city with their report.¹⁹⁷³ They begin by stating that Jacob's family were *“at peace”* with them. Such a state of peace would facilitate the possibility of trade because the land was sufficient to cater for them as well, and this would also enable them to

1967 Genesis 34:18,19.

1968 Genesis 34:19.

1969 Genesis 34:19.

1970 Genesis 34:8,9,10.

1971 Genesis 34:20.

1972 Genesis 34:13.

1973 Genesis 34:20.

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intermarry.¹⁹⁷⁴ A interesting point arises at this juncture. Dinah was the only girl in Jacob's family and she was a mere teenager. To whom then were Shechem and Hamor referring when they stated that they could take Jacob's *“daughters ... as wives”*?¹⁹⁷⁵ This can only be that they had a long term view. Although Shechem was concerned to get Dinah as his wife and this was his sole aim, Hamor seems to be intent on assimilating Jacob and his family into their realm.

Then next the father and son outline what would be required of them, that every male must be *“circumcised as they are circumcised.”*¹⁹⁷⁶ We have already noted that making the mere physical act of circumcision a stipulation was tantamount to legalism, but here Shechem and Hamor's perception was that this act would truly make them like Jacob and his sons. They were wholly unaware that this was all deceptive. Hamor is convinced that this simple act will in fact enable them to advance, for it would mean that what Jacob and his sons possessed would now be theirs.¹⁹⁷⁷ It would appear that such intermarriages were in point of fact a means of assimilation. What one family owned and possessed would, through intermarriage, now belong to all in the group. And thus Hamor pushes for acceptance of the requirement for all males to be circumcised, and as a result *“all who went out of the gate of his city”* listened to Hamor and his son, so that all the males were circumcised.¹⁹⁷⁸

[4] A dishonourable and deceptive destruction. (Genesis 34:25-31).

34:25-29.

What we are about to come across in the verses that follow does not make for easy reading. As all the males were still sore and *“in pain”* on the third day after succumbing to the rite, so Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, seize the fact that they have all been weakened, and kill them.¹⁹⁷⁹ Why Simeon and Levi? These were Leah's second and third sons. What of Reuben the first, Judah the fourth, Issachar the fifth, or Zebulun the sixth? Where were these sons who were all equally true brothers to Dinah by Leah? Well we do not know. But these two boys took up their swords and they *“came boldly”* to that city and murdered all the men.¹⁹⁸⁰ Now physically such an act was abhorrent. Having murdered all the males Simeon and Levi rescue Dinah from Shechem's house and leave.¹⁹⁸¹ Then we discover that the other sons of Jacob enter the city and *“plundered the city,”* and we are reminded once again that this was because *“their sister had been defiled.”*¹⁹⁸² From all of this it would appear that the whole cohort of Jacob's sons

1974 Genesis 34:21.

1975 Genesis 34:21.

1976 Genesis 34:22.

1977 Genesis 34:23.

1978 Genesis 34:24.

1979 Genesis 34:25.

1980 Genesis 34:25.

1981 Genesis 34:26.

1982 Genesis 34:27.

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acted in concert. Simeon and Levi were tasked to kill the weakened males and to rescue Dinah, and then the other nine sons of Jacob were set the job of despoiling the dead. In verse 28 we get a detailed list of what was taken or *“plundered.”* All their sheep, oxen and donkeys and *“what was in the city”* were removed.¹⁹⁸³ Clearly this was some task and must have been planned. Then in verse 29 further details are given. This plundering included: *“all their wealth,”* and *“even all that was in the houses”* and so encompassed everything that was of value.¹⁹⁸⁴ Whilst all the males had been killed, the women and children were taken as captives.¹⁹⁸⁵ How should we view these acts? In another two to three centuries the Israelites would return from Egypt and would enter the promised land conquering all before them. But this was at the Lord's command because the Canaanites had reached the end of their period of grace and were now to be judged by the Lord. But what of these people under Shechem and Hamor? Were they under the judgement of God? Was their treatment justified? Dinah had been *“defiled”* by Shechem, but were the actions taken by the sons of Jacob justified?¹⁹⁸⁶ I would have to answer both yes and no. The action against Dinah by Shechem was wholly wrong. The prospect of Jacob's family being enforced into marriages with these Hivites was unthinkable, because the people of God must not be compromised and must be kept pure for the coming Messiah. And so Simeon and Levi's actions followed by the rest of the sons of Jacob were ones we may have some sympathy with, but on what basis or authority did they take such actions? There is no indication at all that God commanded this action. We cannot take justice into our own hands. We must remember that vengeance is God's prerogative.¹⁹⁸⁷ So this is an abhorrent action. And yet we also remember that the Lord God allowed this action to take place. We know that the Lord is sovereign and in charge at all times. Whilst we cannot condone the actions the sons of Jacob took because they were not so commissioned by the Lord, we know that the Hivites have brought this judgement upon themselves by Shechem's behaviour and Hamor's greed.

34:30,31.

It seems from what Jacob now says, that Simeon and Levi were the leaders in this action. All along Jacob has been present but not taking a lead. We recall that it was Jacob who heard the news about Dinah, and that Shechem and Hamor came specifically to speak to Jacob.¹⁹⁸⁸ But it has been the sons of Jacob who have made all the responses.¹⁹⁸⁹ And now after the murderous deeds have been done, Jacob decides to say his piece.¹⁹⁹⁰ What he says is shown below:

1983 Genesis 34:28.

1984 Genesis 34:29.

1985 Genesis 34:29.

1986 Genesis 34:27.

1987 Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30.

1988 Genesis 34:5,6.

1989 Genesis 34:13.

1990 Genesis 34:30.

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“You have troubled me
by making me obnoxious
among the inhabitants of the land,
among
the Canaanites
and the Perizzites;
and since I *am* few in number,
they will gather themselves together against me and kill me.
I shall be destroyed,
my household and I.”

Jacob begins by saying to his erring sons that they had “troubled” him, and that they had made him “obnoxious” among those who dwelt in that region. Was he being self-concerned, (“me”) or was he speaking on behalf of his family? The Hebrew word “troubled” really indicates the agitation or stirring up of water. These sons had thus stirred up a hornets nest. The Hebrew word given as “obnoxious” has the idea of a bad smell or a stink. These thoughts remind us that the gospel when truly preached has a dual aromatic effect. Listen to Paul's assessment of the effect of him and his preaching on the people of that time:

14 Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. **15** For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. **16** To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? **17** For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

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Believers are an aroma of death or they are an aroma of life. Jacob reckoned that he (and thus his family) were a bad stink to the “inhabitants of the land,” that is, to “the Canaanites and the Perizzites.” The name “Perizzites” means “belonging to a village.” Recall that the name “Hivite” also means “villagers” so that these may well be the same peoples. The connection between the Perizzites with the Canaanites was first encountered when Abraham made his separation from Lot in the region of Bethel and Ai shortly after entering the land.¹⁹⁹² It would seem then, that these tribes which would also include Shechem and Hamor and their people designated as “Hivites,” occupied this region of the land. Now Jacob is fearful of the consequences. The actions of his sons have caused them to become a stink and have stirred up trouble. Jacob was “few in number” and he now fears that the tribes of that land will assemble against Jacob to kill him (“me”). Again was this simply self-interest on the part of Jacob, or was he concerned for himself in connection with the family? In his next statement he shows that it is both personal and for the family, for he uses the personal pronoun twice (“I”) and then speaks of his “household.” What one member of a family does reflects on the whole family, and what one member of the church does reflects on the whole

1991 2Corinthians 2:14-17.

1992 Genesis 13:7.

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church. But ought Jacob to have been so despondent here? What reputation do the people of God need? Well to be a stink for the wrong reasons is clearly not a good thing. But to be a stink in the eyes of the world because we are believers is something we must live with. The whole story ends with a question which Jacob's sons ask of their father: *“should he treat our sister like a harlot?”*¹⁹⁹³ Clearly the answer must be no. However the act of vengeance is not ours to take, we must leave all judgement to the Lord. Should we allow the world to trample over the church and ravish it without protest? By no means! As Jude makes plain we must contend for the faith where worldly people come into despoil and make havoc. However under no circumstances are we to enact judgement.

1993 Genesis 34:31.

Chapter 44.

Consecration and loss. (35:1-36:1).

Analysis.

- #35 1 Then God said to Jacob,
“Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there;
and make an altar there to God,
who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.”
- 2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him,
“Put away the foreign gods that are among you,
purify yourselves, and change your garments.
3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel;
and I will make an altar there to God,
who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.”
- 4 So they gave Jacob
all the foreign gods which were in their hands,
and the earrings which were in their ears;
and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.
- 5 And they journeyed,
and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them,
and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.
- 6 So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.
- 7 And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel,
because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.
- 8 Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died,
and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree.
So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.
- 9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.
- 10 And God said to him,
“Your name is Jacob;
your name shall not be called Jacob anymore,
but Israel shall be your name.”
So He called his name Israel.
- 11 Also God said to him:
“I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. 12 The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.”
- 13 Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.
- 14 So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him,
a pillar of stone;
and he poured a drink offering on it,
and he poured oil on it.
- 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.
- 16 Then they journeyed from Bethel.
And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel laboured in childbirth, and she had hard labour.
- 17 Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said to her,
“Do not fear; you will have this son also.”
- 18 And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died),
that she called his name Ben-Oni;

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but his father called him Benjamin.

19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem).

20 And **Jacob** set a **pillar** on her grave, which *is* the **pillar** of Rachel's grave to this day.

21 Then **Israel** journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

22 And it happened, when **Israel** dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and **Israel** heard *about it*.

Now the sons of **Jacob** were twelve:

23 the sons of Leah *were* Reuben, **Jacob**'s firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun;

24 the sons of Rachel *were* Joseph and Benjamin;

25 the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, *were* Dan and Naphtali;

26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, *were* Gad and Asher.

These *were* the sons of **Jacob** who were born to him in Padan Aram.

27 Then **Jacob** came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that *is*, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt.

28 Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.

29 So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, *being* old and full of days.

And his sons Esau and **Jacob** buried him.

#36 1 Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.

It is to be noted that the divine title “*God*” appears eleven times in verses 1-15, but not at all in verses 16-29. The Hebrew words employed are shown below:

אֱלֹהִים Occurs 8 times in verses 1,5,7,9,10,11,13,15.

אֵל Occurs 3 times in verses 1,3,11.

In this part of the account we see Jacob's consecration, the death of Rachel, and the burial of Isaac. The name “*Bethel*” appears in this part more than anywhere else in Genesis.¹⁹⁹⁴ In fact it comes seven times in our text indicating a fullness or roundedness. In other words the concept of the house of God is uppermost here, (at least in the first sixteen verses), Another term which seems to be particularly linked with Jacob is the “*pillar*” (מַצֵּבֶת *maṣēbēṭ*) which only occurs eleven times in Genesis, but all are associated with the history of Jacob.¹⁹⁹⁵ In later texts this word is associated with idols, but here there is a sense of it being a witness.

This section can be considered under four headings:

[1] God speaks to Jacob and Jacob consecrates his family. (Genesis 35:1-8)

[2] God appears to Jacob a second time and reaffirms his name change to Israel (Genesis 35:9-15).

[3] Rachel dies. (Genesis 35:16-20).

[4] Jacob/Israel together with Esau bury Isaac. (Genesis 35:21-29).

1994 The name “*Bethel*” is found at: Genesis 12:8(x2); 13:3(x2); 28:19; 31:13; 35:1,3,6,7,8,15,16.

1995 The word “*pillar*” is found at: Genesis 28:18,22; 31:13,45,51,52(x2); 35:14(x2),20(x2).

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[1] God speaks to Jacob and Jacob consecrates his family. (Genesis 35:1-8)

35:1.

Now after the incident with Dinah and Jacob's lamenting over his son's actions, we discover that God now speaks to Jacob. There are four things Jacob was to do:

1. Arise.
2. Go up to Bethel.
3. Dwell there.
4. Make an altar there to God.

Once again we have that resurrection word “*arise,*” and Jacob is told to “*go up to Bethel*” where he was to dwell and make an altar. The language again is one of resurrection (“*arise,*” “*go up*”). This was the place where God met with him on his flight from Esau.¹⁹⁹⁶ However, it appears that the emphasis here is on Jacob returning to God rather than to the location of Bethel. How marvellous! Jacob was not at the forefront of the incident with Dinah, letting his sons take command, and what unfolded did not turn out that well, (to say the least). And now God Himself addresses Jacob encouraging him to get back into a right heart and mind. He is to look up and he is to “*go up*” back to being with the Lord.¹⁹⁹⁷ The word dwell here is: יָשַׁב *yāšab*, which has the sense of “to sit down,” “to remain,” or “to stay.” It seems to depict a more settled dwelling than the word: שָׁכַן *šākan*, which suggests a more temporary dwelling (i.e. “to lie down,” “to rest,” “to pitch a tent”). Wherever Jacob (or his sons) may be their permanent dwelling place is to be with God. Then further Jacob was to construct an “*altar*” for the purpose of worshipping God.

35:2,3.

Jacob hears this word from God and then we read that he goes about ensuring that his “*household*” act in obedience as well.¹⁹⁹⁸ It may be that Jacob heard God speak to him whilst his “*household*” were in fact with him (“*to his household and to all who were with him*”). Jacob's instructions to his household (his family and servants) was fourfold:

1. Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you.
2. Purify yourselves, and change your garments.

1996 Genesis 35:7.

1997 Colossians 3:1f.

1998 Genesis 35:1,2.

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3. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel.
4. And I will make an altar there to God,

It would be no use at all going to God if one's heart was divided and focused elsewhere. Thus Jacob asks for this act of consecration. The members of his household were to remove from their very presence all of the “*foreign gods*” which were in their midst. Then, as a further act of repentance, they were to cleanse themselves and put on fresh clothes. It would be only after following this that they could then “*arise and go up to Bethel*” so that Jacob could make the altar. Now does this mean we are to do works to earn salvation? Perish the thought! These actions are ones of sanctification. Here we are presented with Jacob's “*household*,” and Jacob being the type of Christ who alone could make the altar. Jacob thus presents to us a picture or type of Christ who alone was the sacrifice and altar for sin. In what sense did Christ “*make*” this altar? I suggest that it was in His willingness to go to the cross. None could command Him, for He had power to lay down and take up His life.¹⁹⁹⁹

Notice the symmetry in verses 1 and 2:

God says to Jacob:

Arise

Go up to Bethel

And dwell there

And make an altar there to God

who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.

Jacob says to his household:

Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you

purify yourselves, and change your garments

Then let us arise and go up to Bethel

And I will make an altar there to God

who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone

The word received by Jacob must be faithfully transmitted to his people. Did Jacob err in adding the two statements which speak of consecration and repentance? By no means! Even though these are not directly mentioned by the Lord in His address to Jacob, nevertheless they are assumed, for it is not possible to come to God with an unrepentant heart.

¹⁹⁹⁹ John 10:15,17.

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The God who *“appeared”* to Jacob is the only God who *“answered”* Jacob in his distress. Notice here Jacob's confession of faith. When he was in flight from Esau he laid down several conditions (*“If God will ...”*).²⁰⁰⁰ But now Jacob speaks of the God who had *“answered”* him at the time of his trouble and had been with him on his journeys (*“has been with me in the way which I have gone”* v3).²⁰⁰¹

35:4.

We note here that all Jacob's household comply with this command of Jacob. Recall that God had simply told Jacob to get up, make his journey, and make an altar at Bethel where he had visited him in a dream many years before. Jacob adds the need for getting rid of idols and of cleansing, which, as we have already stated, was necessary for repentance is the flip side of faith. Now in this verse the people simply *“gave Jacob all the foreign gods.”* Why did they have such idols? What were they? We know that Rachel stole her father Laban's *“household idols,”* which we assumed were figures that were used to worship God.²⁰⁰² These seem to have been kept by Rachel since she hid them from her father's frantic search.²⁰⁰³ Presumably they were used and copied by members of the family. But now Jacob says 'enough!' Along with these idols went also the *“earnings which were in their ears.”* These were probably talismans or amulets linked to the idols. In our discussion of Laban's possession of these idols we made the assumption that these were false means of true worship. In other words Laban recognised the true God, but he adopted earthly means to prosecute his worship. In this account we have the word *“foreign”* used which rather hints at them being utterly pagan in origin.²⁰⁰⁴ It is not necessary to speculate about these. Whether they were trying to worship the true God using false man-made means, or whether they were given to pagan gods and employed amulets and talismans, they were doing that which was utterly wrong. God alone must be worshipped, but He must be worshipped in His way. The sacrifices, altars, offerings, and so on must only be those which God had revealed. We learn this truth from the history of Cain and Abel and their offerings in Genesis 4. Well whatever the case, the remarkable thing is that *“they”* all gave them up, and Jacob proceeds to hide them *“under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.”* We might ask: why did Jacob bury these and not destroy them by fire? Presumably the latter option was not available to him. Why then did he bury them nearby to Shechem? Well given that Shechem had defiled Dinah it appears that Jacob is simply leaving this collection of idol worship where it was best suited, that is, amongst the debris of that region that was left. He buried them under the Terebinth tree so that it would be unlikely for any to recover them. Such trees were long lasting and were unlikely to be cut down because they were venerated by the pagans.

2000 Genesis 28:20.

2001 Genesis 35:3.

2002 Genesis 31:19,32.

2003 Genesis 31:34,35.

2004 Genesis 35:2,4.

35:5-7.

Genesis 35 follows on immediately from Genesis 34, so that Jacob and his household were in the vicinity of Shechem.²⁰⁰⁵ But now the Lord God has instructed him to journey to Bethel where He had visited Jacob in a dream.²⁰⁰⁶

As they travelled, it appears that all the surrounding cities experienced the *“terror of God.”*²⁰⁰⁷ The Hebrew word translated as *“terror”* comes from a root word which means “to be shattered,” “to be broken,” or “to be abolished.” Thus the surrounding settlements were in immense fear of being destroyed as Shechem had been. Presumably news had spread concerning the sons of Jacob and their dealings with Shechem and Hamor. In consequence, the pursuit and attack that Jacob was expecting because of Simeon and Levi's action, was not in evidence. Now this was God's doing. It was not that this family were formidable in their strength and wisdom. Rather this was the *“terror of God,”* or that which God placed upon them.²⁰⁰⁸ I am not at all sure that we really appreciate how protective God is of His people.

As they arrive at Bethel we are informed of its former name *“Luz”* (which means “almond tree”). All of Jacob's family, his servants, and his possessions arrive at Bethel which is described as being *“in the land of Canaan.”*²⁰⁰⁹ And thus Jacob builds a new altar in that place.²⁰¹⁰ This reminds us that we cannot rely on previous experience and worship. We need to build fresh altars. Obviously our worship focuses on Christ exclusively for He is not only the means by which we may approach God, but He is our love and life. But we cannot rely on prior experiences of worship. We cannot look back on these for today. We need to worship God afresh. Now Jacob names this place *“El Bethel”* which means “God, the house of God.” Recall that on his flight from Esau Jacob was moved to speak of the place which he named *“Bethel”* on account of its *location*. That place was the house of God and the gateway to heaven in Jacob's thought.²⁰¹¹ But now the emphasis is not on the location, but on God. Jacob has learned that God is everything! He has had to come back to the place where God originally met him (where *“God appeared to him”*) to understand that God is all.²⁰¹²

35:8.

At this point we are suddenly re-introduced to Rebekah's maid. Why? It might be that Rebekah's maid was now with Jacob and his family. Or it might simply be that Jacob met with Isaac, and this incident is recorded here. Now up to this point we have not been informed of Rebekah's maid by name.

2005 Genesis 33:18.

2006 Genesis 28:12f.

2007 Genesis 35:5.

2008 Genesis 35:5.

2009 Genesis 35:6.

2010 Genesis 35:7.

2011 Genesis 28:16,17.

2012 Genesis 35:7.

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But now we discover that “*Rebekah's nurse,*” who had just died, was named “*Deborah.*” And thus Deborah was buried beneath an oak at Bethel which was named after the great mourning and lamentation that was expressed, for the name “*Allon Bachuth*” means “oak of weeping.” It would seem that Deborah held a great place in Rebekah's eyes and would be sorely missed.

[2] God appears to Jacob a second time and reaffirms his name change to Israel. (Genesis 35:9-15).

35:9.

After mourning for Deborah we next discover that “*God appeared to Jacob again.*” This is described as being “*when he came from Padan Aram*” by which we understand that this is the second time that God appeared to Jacob in a formal way. Jacob had communion with God and heard from Him from time-to-time, and had even wrestled with Him before returning, but now God makes Himself known to Jacob for a specific reason, to bless him.

35:10-13.

In these verses we read that God spoke to Jacob in two distinct parts. Thus first we read: “*and God said to him*” in verse 10, and then again we read “*also God said to him*” in verse 11. Following this we read that “*God went up*” in verses 13, which seems to imply that He had come down in appearing to Jacob.

Now God starts by addressing Jacob with his given name (“*your name is Jacob*”).²⁰¹³ But why state the obvious? What was the Lord doing here? I think the point is that Jacob had now come to realise that he was Jacob – the deceiver. In other words, God was speaking to Jacob as he was. He was “*Jacob*” the heel-grabber, deceiver and trickster. That was his sin-nature. But now things have changed. Jacob received his new name when he met the “*Man*” at Peniel and wrestled with him.²⁰¹⁴ But now this new name is reiterated to indicate a new beginning. He was no longer to be “*called Jacob any more,*” and instead he was to be called “*Israel,*” and thence God Himself now refers to him by this new name (“*so He called his name Israel*”).²⁰¹⁵ Naming something or someone usually occurs when they have just been made (a ship at its launch, for example), or when they have just been born (parents naming their new baby). Thus this re-naming suggests a new beginning. Jacob has been taken through a long period of hardship and difficulty, and now he is no longer to be known by his old natural name, but by the new name given to him by God Himself. We might conclude from this that Jacob as Israel has now been truly converted.

2013 Genesis 35:10.

2014 Genesis 32:24,28.

2015 Genesis 35:10.

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Then God speaks for a second time, and this time he issues the blessing.²⁰¹⁶ God begins by affirming His identity for Israel. This is none other than God, the *“Almighty,”* the most powerful, awesome, creator with no rivals. We need to recognise God's unique nature. He is powerful. He is The Creator. And there is nothing, and no one, who can come anywhere near Him in power, wisdom, intelligence, beauty, glory, or whatever quality or characteristic one cares to name. On account of the fact that He is *“Almighty,”* that He is The Creator, He now commands Israel to *“be fruitful and multiply.”*²⁰¹⁷ This command is explained in terms of *“a nation”* and *“a company of nations”* springing forth from him. Now that God commands to *“be fruitful”* is something we learn from the original creation, and also in the new creation.²⁰¹⁸ And then with regard to Israel he is to bring forth *“a nation”* by which we might understand Israel – the twelve tribes. But he is also to bring forth *“a company of nations”* as well. What is meant by this phrase? We note, for example, that Abraham gave rise to the Ishmaelites as well as to Isaac the son of promise. Are there to be nations arising from Jacob's sons and daughters which were not Israel? Or is the Lord pointing further afield to the proclamation of the gospel the world over sweeping all nations into its view? Whatever view we adopt, the intimation is that from Jacob (as Israel) there will be great blessing. This is then particularised with respect to the people of Israel in that the land promised to Abraham is now promised to Israel, and to his descendants who will follow on.²⁰¹⁹

After God had spoken these two things, first the re-naming indicating a new start, and then the blessing of the promise given to Abraham and Isaac before him, we then read that *“God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.”*²⁰²⁰ It is obvious that this was a physical appearing of the pre-incarnate Christ. Jacob (Israel) has been blessed with the very presence of God and had the privilege of talking directly with Him. But now this pre-incarnate One *“went up,”* by which we understand that He returned to glory. Such terminology is used in the gospel according to John. In John we discover this idea that Christ was sent by the Father and was preparing to go back to Him via the cross.²⁰²¹ We thus cannot help but be reminded of Christ's ascension after the resurrection where He had been talking with the disciples immediately before being taken up into heaven.²⁰²²

35:14,15.

Even though Jacob has received a new name (Israel), he is still referred to here as *“Jacob.”*²⁰²³ Why is this? Well we must remember that the old nature is always present. We do indeed have a new

2016 Genesis 35:11,12.

2017 Genesis 35:12.

2018 See: Genesis 1:22,28 for original creation, and Genesis 8:17; 9:1,17 for the new world after the flood, and John 15:1,3,5,8 and Colossians 1:10 for the new creation.

2019 Genesis 35:12.

2020 Genesis 35:13.

2021 John 5:23,24,30 etc.; 13:3; 14:2,12,28 etc.

2022 Acts 1:9.

2023 Genesis 35:14.

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name, a new nature, created in Christ Jesus, but we have not yet been fully delivered from the old nature with which we must wrestle on.²⁰²⁴

We noted earlier when Jacob was fleeing Esau that he set up a pillar using the stone by which he rested after receiving the vision of God in a dream.²⁰²⁵ It is not likely that such a witness remained after his long experience with Laban (and then in his return), even though it was the stone by which he lay down for rest. So Jacob is now back where he first met with God, and so he establishes again a memorial to the Lord. The word *“pillar”* used twice in verse 14 is the same as that used in Genesis 28. But it would seem that this was to be a more permanent witness for the expression *“pillar of stone”* is put here signifying something more long-lasting. Christ alone is the stone or rock upon which all true witness must be based.²⁰²⁶ Now Jacob does two things in connection with this stone pillar, one of which is new and appears here for the first time, (namely, the *“drink offering”*).²⁰²⁷ As always when we read of a practice which is dealt with in depth later on elsewhere in the Torah, we do not assume that it was a pagan practice accommodated for use by God's people. Neither do we want to suggest that Jacob merely copied a contemporary practice, nor do we assume that he made up the idea on his own. Rather we have something which God revealed to him. When the full details are given in Exodus 29:40f, Leviticus 23:13f, and elsewhere, we draw the conclusion that God first revealed it to Jacob and then in more detail to Moses at Mount Sinai. The *“drink offering”* Jacob poured out here at Bethel was the same as that which Moses gave instructions for later on.

So what does this *“drink offering”* indicate or signify? Note that later on it was an offering added to the ordinary sacrifices, but here we do not read of any animal sacrifice at all.²⁰²⁸ Are we to assume that Jacob did in fact offer a burnt offering but this was not recorded? It would seem that an argument from silence is not a good one. As we have indication of sacrifices made elsewhere and not here it seems best to take the information we are given as complete.²⁰²⁹ Thus Jacob poured out a drink offering which from later references was probably somewhere between a fourth and a *third of a hin* by volume. This would be somewhere between one litre, and one and a third litres. According to Numbers 28:7 the wine was strong or intoxicating wine. The last part of this verse uses the word: שֵׁכָר *šēkār* which signifies: “an intoxicant,” “strong wine,” or “strong drink.” This was no mere grape juice, but it was not for human consumption. The strong wine was poured out completely onto the pillar of stone. The emphasis, I believe, is on being poured out. Now notice here that Jacob must, therefore, have grown grapes and fermented them for this purpose. Might we be allowed to consider this part of the tithe that he promised back when he was fleeing

2024 Ephesians 2:10; Romans 7:21-25.

2025 Genesis 28:18.

2026 Isaiah 28:16; Luke 20:17; Ephesians 2:20; 1Pter 2:4-8.

2027 Genesis 35:14.

2028 Numbers 15:1-10.

2029 See, for example, Genesis 31:54. See also Genesis 8:20 and 22:2.

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from Esau?

Now it is abundantly clear in the New Testament that wine signified the blood of Christ. Our Saviour on the night before He died pointed His disciples to the cup of wine and spoke of it as His blood shed for them:

Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”²⁰³⁰

The apostle Paul made reference to these words of the Lord when he was instructing the Corinthian believers about communion, or the “Lord's supper”:

In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.”²⁰³¹

That the Lord poured out His life blood for us on the cross is attested to throughout the Scriptures but is pointedly noted by John:²⁰³²

But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.²⁰³³

The strong wine poured out by Jacob onto the pillar of stone indicates to us the pouring out of the blood of the promised Saviour. The wine was not to be consumed by man, but was offered wholly unto the Lord. Now Judges 9:13 informs us that the new wine of the vine was that which “*cheers both God and men.*” Thus the drink offering of strong wine was something that cheered God and pleased Him. Some writers have noted that the drink offering was only offered in the land of promise.²⁰³⁴ So we have the Lord God rejoicing in the offering of the wine poured out (the blood of the Saviour) for His people as they enjoy the blessings of the land.

After pouring out the drink offering, Jacob then pours out oil onto the stone as well.²⁰³⁵ The oil speaks to us of the Holy Spirit. This follows naturally from the drink offering, for the blood spilt in atonement must come before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And then we discover that Jacob reaffirms the name he had applied to this place he reached after fleeing from Esau, namely “*Bethel,*” which means

2030 Luke 22:20.

2031 1Corinthians 11:25.

2032 Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 26:27-29; Marks 14:23-25; Luke 22:20; John 6:53-56; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14,20; Hebrews 9:12,14; 1Peter 1:2,19; Revelation 1:5; 5:9.

2033 John 19:34.

2034 Leviticus 23:10f; Numbers 15:1f.

2035 Genesis 35:14.

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“house of God.”²⁰³⁶ Now at the moment they arrived at this place (formerly known as “*Luz*” but now “*Bethel*”) Jacob named it “*El Bethel*,” or, “God the house of God,” because it was there that God appeared to him.²⁰³⁷ God has now spoken to Jacob and reaffirmed his new name and this event ends with Jacob reaffirming the name as “*Bethel*” but he does not recognise it as a sacred location rather his focus is upon the God who appeared to him.

[3] Rachel dies. (Genesis 35:16-20).

They have been travelling south from Shechem through to Bethel retracing the route which Jacob used in his flight from Esau. As they moved on from Bethel and were approaching Bethlehem, which is named “*Ephrath*” here, Rachel went into labour and this is described as being “*hard labour*.”²⁰³⁸ This labour was so difficult it resulted in Rachel's death.²⁰³⁹ Not many die in childbirth today but it is a reminder of the fall where Eve was told that her conception and her sorrow would be “*greatly*” multiplied for now children were to be brought forth “*in pain*.”²⁰⁴⁰ This birth and death occurred just before they entered “*Ephrath*,” which place was also called “*Bethlehem*.”²⁰⁴¹ The name “*Ephrath*” means “fruitfulness.” The name “*Bethlehem*” means “house of bread.” And so we are in a place of fruitfulness and a place that produces bread or food. Rachel had hoped for more children when she finally had Joseph, for his name has the idea of adding. And now she has her second son but must yield her spirit at the Lord's command. Remember that “*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment*.”²⁰⁴² Consequently Rachel names the new boy “son of my sorrow” (“*Ben Oni*”). Jacob however changes this to “*Benjamin*” which means “son of the right hand,” as a reminder to the boy that his birth yielded his mother's death would be difficult to bear.²⁰⁴³

Ben Oni	Son of my sorrow
Benjamin	Son of the right hand (honour)

In saying this we note that the death of Rachel, the shepherdess, is made worthy by the birth of the “Son of the right hand.” Note that she gives birth in a place of fruitfulness (“*Ephrath*”) close by to the house of bread (“*Bethlehem*”). Is there not here a wonderful picture of death (Rachel's) bringing about life (Benjamin)? Christ died but He was raised again and with Him brought to life the church who together

2036 Genesis 35:15.

2037 Genesis 35:6.

2038 Genesis 35:16,

2039 Genesis 35:18.

2040 Genesis 3:16.

2041 Genesis 35:16,19.

2042 Hebrews 9:27.

2043 Genesis 35:18.

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with their Lord would be sons of the right hand of God!²⁰⁴⁴ Jacob buried Rachel “*on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)*.”²⁰⁴⁵ The idea of a journey is expressed here. We are all walking in the wilderness of this world on the way to glory called a “*highway of holiness*” in Isaiah.²⁰⁴⁶ At some point along that journey as we walk in fruitfulness we will be called to the Lord in death. Jacob buried Rachel and erected a pillar to mark the grave. This site features in the story of the first king of Israel, Saul, and is also mentioned by Matthew in the slaughter of the innocents by wicked king Herod.²⁰⁴⁷

And so Jacob loses the love of his life – she probably was young still – and now he has Leah only. What does the Lord intend? What does this teach us? In many ways Rachel was Jacob's carnal fleshly desire and now this has been removed. Leah was unloved but God favoured her with sons. Rachel's grave was marked with a pillar, a stone of witness.

[4] Jacob/Israel together with Esau bury Isaac. (Genesis 35:21-36:1).

35:21-26.

The name “*Eder*” signifies flock.²⁰⁴⁸ This would probably be a watch-tower to keep an eye over flocks against robbers. Now this phrase “*tower of Eder*” (מגדל-עֵדֶר) is found in Micah (put as “*tower of the flock*” in the NKJV) as a title of the Lord:

And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come,
even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.²⁰⁴⁹

The Lord Himself is the watcher of flocks. However we read that Jacob went “*beyond*” this tower, this protective watch post and then, as if in consequence, Reuben takes it upon himself to lie with his father's concubine Bilhah.²⁰⁵⁰ When we drift out of the protective care of the “*tower of the flock*” (i.e. Christ) we are in danger of falling and stumbling. All we are then told is that “*Israel heard about it,*” which once again shows Jacob (Israel) as one who fails to act or take a lead.²⁰⁵¹ What should he have done? At the least he should have called his son to account, but in that he hears and does nothing we marvel at such complacency.

2044 Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56; Romans 8:17.

2045 Genesis 35:19.

2046 Isaiah 35:8.

2047 1Samuel 10:2; Matthew 2:18 (see also Jeremiah 31:15).

2048 Genesis 35:21.

2049 Micah 4:8.

2050 Genesis 35:21,22.

2051 Genesis 35:22.

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At this point we are given the details of Jacob's twelve sons.²⁰⁵² This is the first roll call after Benjamin's birth. Note that Leah and her sons are put first, then Rachel's two sons, and then Rachel's maid Bilhah's two sons, with Leah's maid Zilpah's two sons last. This is not in the same order of their birth (see table 44.1).

Table 44.1: Jacob's sons ordered by birth and in Genesis 35 compared.

Birth order: Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-20.		Order from Genesis 35:22b-26.	
<i>Mother</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mother</i>
Leah	Reuben	Reuben	Leah
	Simeon	Simeon	
	Levi	Levi	
	Judah	Judah	
Bilhah (Rachel's maid)	Dan	Issachar	Rachel
	Naphtali	Zebulun	
Zilpah (Leah's maid)	Gad	Joseph	
	Asher	Benjamin	
Leah	Issachar	Dan	Bilhah (Rachel's maid)
	Zebulun	Naphtali	
Rachel	Joseph	Gad	Zilpah (Leah's maid)
	Benjamin	Asher	

Did this order reflect some form of hierarchy in the family? Were the sons of the two maids of less import and status than the other sons of the two sisters? It is noteworthy that we are informed that these were the sons of Jacob born to him whilst he was “*in Padan Aram,*” and yet Benjamin was actually born near Bethlehem. Presumably Benjamin was conceived in Padan Aram.²⁰⁵³

35:27.

As Jacob continues on his journeyings he arrives at “*Mamre*” which, we are informed, is also know as “*Kirjath Arba*” or “*Hebron.*” Mamre was an Amorite man who had two brothers (Eschol and Aner) and who had a region of oak trees (terebinth), and who formed an alliance with Abraham especially in the rescue of Lot from the armies and confederacies of Chedorlaomer.²⁰⁵⁴ The name “*Mamre*” means “from seeing,” or (possibly) “fatness,” strength.” The name “*Eschol*” signifies, “a cluster of grapes,” whilst the name “*Aner,*” is uncertain and may mean “boy,” or (possibly) “exile.” Kirjath Arba was the

²⁰⁵² Genesis 35:22b-26.

²⁰⁵³ Genesis 35:26.

²⁰⁵⁴ Genesis 14:13,24.

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city of “*Arba*” who was “*the greatest man among the Anakim,*” and “*the father of Anak.*”²⁰⁵⁵ The name “*Arba*” means “four,” so Kirjath Arba was the “city of four.” The name “*Hebron,*” means “association,” “league,” “confederation,” or “alliance.” This site is then described as “*where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt.*” From these details it would seem that this location clearly had associations with some form of cultivation or fruitfulness, (Eschol's name is connected with grapes and vines), possibly a location for repose or retreat (through the “*oaks of Mamre*” where quiet contemplation may be had), and then also in connection with others by association. Some have noted that Kitjath Arba was close by to Kirjath Sepher, the later meaning “city of books,” and from this have suggested that this was a place of learning or wisdom. We cannot accept that Isaac or Abraham would have joined company with what we might call godless or secular sages. Could this mean that such as Mamre, Eschol and Aner were amongst God's people? This is beyond our grasp and so it is better to leave the matter in doubt. However Jacob has come to a safe haven where his father and grand father had found repose, where Abraham had made an altar and met with God, where Abraham had buried Sarah in the cave at Machpelah nearby, and to which Isaac and Ishmael had added Abraham's bones.²⁰⁵⁶

35:28-36:1a.

Isaac was now living in this area and finally his life comes to an end. His life lasted one hundred and eighty years so he died in the year 2288 AC or 1671 BC. Since Jacob and Esau were born when Isaac was sixty, the twins are now one hundred and twenty years of age.²⁰⁵⁷ Jacob had his first eleven sons between the ages of eighty four (seven years after serving for Rachel but getting Leah as well), and ninety one, (after the second period of service for seven years). This means that the sons were now between the ages of twenty nine and thirty six at the age of Isaac's death. We are not entirely sure when Benjamin was born, but it cannot have been too much after they departure from Padan Aram.

In verse 29 we have the formal statement of the end of Isaac's life. It reminds us that our very breaths are given of God, and when He says that we have “*breathed*” or last then our time is up. Isaac too was to be “*gathered to his people,*” just as Abraham and Ishmael had been.²⁰⁵⁸ At the very least such a statement indicates the continuation of life, for to be gathered to a people surely does not indicate an end to personal existence. Isaac is described at death as “*being old and full of days,*” and such an expression had been used of Abraham but not of Ishmael.²⁰⁵⁹ It seems to indicate a life expended to the full. There was no more for these patriarchs to do. They had lead a full and complete life.

2055 Joshua 14:15; 15:13.

2056 Genesis 13:18; 18:1; 23:17,19; 25:9.

2057 Genesis 25:26.

2058 Genesis 25:8,17.

2059 Genesis 25:8,17; 35:9.

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Now all will die at the precise time and date set for them by the Lord.²⁰⁶⁰ But not all can be said to have lead a “full life.” What constitutes a full life depends on your view of what life really is. From a biblical point of view it is our service for the Lord. Both Abraham and Isaac had done what the Lord asked of them, and there was no more to be done. They would hear those wonderful words: *“Well done, good and faithful servant,”* on entering the final rest of God.²⁰⁶¹ And so Jacob and Esau bury Isaac, presumably in the cave of Machpelah where Abraham and Sarah had been laid to rest.

In Genesis 36:1 we read that *“this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom,”* which serves as an interim conclusion. We should recall our earlier note in the introduction commenting on the statement we find in Genesis 36:1a which we reproduce from table I.4 below:

Scripture verses.	Text (ESV).	Discussion
Genesis 35:27-29	27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.	Then we read of Isaac's death and his burial by Jacob and Esau. It is noteworthy that Esau's name comes first.
Genesis 36:1	#36 1 These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom).	This ends the above short section which was probably from Esau.

It appears, then, that whilst the bulk of Genesis 35 must have been the record of Jacob (and possibly his sons), Esau took note of the end of their father's life. Recall that Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob. So it would seem that Esau may have been in contact with Isaac more than Jacob, and he may have told Jacob of their father's dwindling health and impending death. It is noteworthy that Esau's name is put first. Remember that the prophecy given to Rebekah was that the older would serve the younger (Esau would serve Jacob), but here Esau is named first probably because he was closer to Isaac than Jacob (he was also the older of the twins).

Esau was first named *“Edom”* back at the occasion where Jacob swindled him out of the birthright with his *“red stew”* (“Edom means “red”).²⁰⁶² The mention of this name here is to highlight the fact that Esau was still a man of this earth. His god was still the things of this earth (food, hunting, game etc.).

2060 Hebrews 9:27.
2061 Matthew 25:21,23.
2062 Genesis 25:30.

Chapter 45.

The end of Jacob's history. (36:2-37:1a).

Analysis.

2 Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan:

Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite;

Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

3 and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

4 Now Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau,
and Basemath bore Reuel.

5 And Aholibamah bore Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah.

These *were* the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob.

7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together,
and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock.

8 So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir.

Esau is Edom.

9 And this *is* the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir.

10 These *were* the names of Esau's sons:

Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau,

and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau.

11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

12 Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.

These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

13 These *were* the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

These *were* the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

14 These *were* the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon. And she bore to Esau:

Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah.

15 These *were* the chiefs of the sons of Esau.

The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn son of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz, **16** Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek.

These *were* the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom.

They *were* the sons of Adah.

17 These *were* the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah.

These *were* the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom.

These *were* the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

18 And these *were* the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife: Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, and Chief Korah.

These *were* the chiefs who descended from Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah.

19 These *were* the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these *were* their chiefs.

20 These *were* the sons of Seir the Horite who inhabited the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, **21** Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

These *were* the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom.

22 And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister *was* Timna.

23 These *were* the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

24 These *were* the sons of Zibeon: both Ajah and Anah.

This *was* the Anah who found the water in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon.

25 These *were* the children of Anah: Dishon and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah.

26 These *were* the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

27 These *were* the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

28 These *were* the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

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29 These *were* the chiefs of the Horites: Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibeon, Chief Anah, **30** Chief Dishon, Chief Ezer, and Chief Dishan.

These *were* the chiefs of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir.

31 Now these *were* the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel:

32 Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah.

33 And when Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place.

34 When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.

35 And when Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who attacked Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. And the name of his city *was* Avith.

36 When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place.

37 And when Samlah died, Saul of Rehoboth-by-the-River reigned in his place.

38 When Saul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place.

39 And when Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died, Hadar reigned in his place; and the name of his city *was* Pau. His wife's name *was* Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

40 And these *were* the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their families and their places, by their names: Chief Timnah, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth, **41** Chief Aholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, **42** Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, **43** Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram.

These *were* the chiefs of Edom, according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession.

Esau *was* the father of the Edomites.

#37 1 Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2 This *is* the history of Jacob.

We begin our studies on the end of Jacob's account by recalling statements made in the introduction from table I.4 part of which we reproduce below:

Scripture verses.	Text (ESV).	Discussion
Genesis 36:2-8	2 Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, 3 and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. 4 And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; 5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. 6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. 7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. 8 So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)	This passage describes Esau's wives and children and the fact that he went off into " <i>a land away from his brother Jacob.</i> " Esau settles in the mountains of Seir.
Genesis 36:9	9 These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.	This ends the short section according to Esau.
Genesis 36:10-37:1	10 These are the names of Esau's sons: ... 15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. ... 20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: ... 29 These are the chiefs of the Horites: ... 31 These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. ... 40 These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: ... these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. #37 1 Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.	In this section the sons of Esau are detailed again but then there are also details of those who dwelt in the land of Seir. This information could really only have been supplied by Esau.
Genesis 37:2a	2 These are the generations of Jacob.	This ends the section which began in Genesis 25:19b.

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The bulk of this section describes Esau's descendants and various chiefs and kings who reigned in the land of Edom and in the region known as Seir. We shall consider this conclusion to Jacob's account under the following headings:

- [1] Esau's sons and chiefs. (Genesis 36:2-19).
- [2] Seir's sons and chiefs. (Genesis 36:20-30).
- [3] The kings of the land of Edom. (Genesis 36:31-39).
- [4] The chiefs of Esau. (Genesis 36:40-43).
- [5] The end of Jacob's account. (Genesis 37:1-2a).

[1] Esau's sons and chiefs. (Genesis 36:2-19).

Our text can be split down further into four sub-divisions as follows:

- [a] Esau's wives and their sons. (Genesis 36:2-5).
- [b] Esau relocates to Mount Seir. (Genesis 36:6-9).
- [c] A further genealogy of Esau's sons and their sons. (Genesis 36:10-14).
- [d] A list of the chiefs that came from Esau. (Genesis 36:15-19).

[a] Esau's wives and their sons. (Genesis 36:2-5).

This whole section begins with the details of Esau's wives. The first thing we must note is that the names of Esau's wives are different here. In the table below the wives are given in the order they appear in the various texts.

Table 45.1 Esau's wives.

Genesis 26:34; 28:9.	Genesis 36:2f.
Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite (26:34).	Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite (36:2).
Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. (26:34).	Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite (36:2).
Mahaltah the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth. (28:9)	Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth (36:3).

The question arises immediately as to how many wives Esau actually had. This passage in Genesis 36:2-37:2a seems to follow on in sequence from the events of Genesis 33, where Jacob and Esau meet, and

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Genesis 35 which describes Jacob's onward journey, but we cannot discount the possibility of earlier details being recorded here in this closing section. We know that Esau had been living in Seir from earlier statements. Jacob sent messengers to Seir on his way back to Canaan after he had left off meeting with his uncle Laban in Gilead.²⁰⁶³ But we do not know how long Esau had been living in Seir. After Esau met with Jacob he returned to Seir.²⁰⁶⁴ We know also that Esau began collecting wives before Jacob departed for Padan Aram, when he was forty years old. At such an age he took *“Judith the daughter of Elon the Hittite,”* and *“Basemath the daughter of Beeri the Hittite.”*²⁰⁶⁵ We might easily take the view that at the start of Genesis 36 Jacob and Esau had been reunited so that some fifty plus years has passed since Esau entered into his marriages. This would suggest that the wives listed here were not necessarily those whom Esau married when he was forty and then a little later. However it might also be possible that the opening part of Genesis 36 goes back in time and lists Esau's wives to begin with. In this case they may be a comprehensive account of Esau's married collection.

Both possibilities, that Esau had only three wives but they had different names, or that Esau actually had more than three wives (four, five or six), have been defended by writers in the past. What are we to make of this situation? The names of all these women are listed below:

Table 45.2: The names of Esau's wives and their meanings.

Wife's Name.	Parent(s).	Name meaning.	Scripture.
Judith	The daughter of Beeri the Hittite	Jewess or Praised (feminine of Judah)	26:34
Basemath	The daughter of Elon the Hittite	Sweet smelling, fragrance.	
Mahalath	The daughter of Ishmael ... the sister of Nebajoth	Stringed instrument, lament.	28:9
Adah	The daughter of Elon the Hittite	Ornament, beauty.	36:2
Aholibamah	The daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite	Tent of the high place.	
Basemath	Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth	Sweet smelling, fragrance.	

To begin with we know that people can have more than one name. Moses' father-in-law is a case in point. He is introduced to us first as *“Reuel,”* priest in Midian when Moses met with his daughters and helped them with their flocks.²⁰⁶⁶ Moses joins with this family and marries Zipporah daughter of the priest of Midian, but then shortly after this, when Moses was tending his father-in-law's flocks, we discover he is

²⁰⁶³ Genesis 32:3.

²⁰⁶⁴ Genesis 33:16.

²⁰⁶⁵ Genesis 26:34.

²⁰⁶⁶ Exodus 2:16-18.

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called “*Jethro*.”²⁰⁶⁷ Now in the case of the listed wives of Esau, I think this may apply to one or maybe two of his wives. I say this because of how these woman are described in terms of their origins.

Shortly after Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram, Esau went to Ishmael for a third wife:

So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.²⁰⁶⁸

Compare this statement with what we have in Genesis 36 where the third wife in this list is named as:

Basemath, Ishmael’s daughter, sister of Nebajoth.²⁰⁶⁹

Both “*Mahalath*” and “*Basemath*” are described as being “*Ishmael's daughter*,” and both are described as being “*sister of Nebajoth*.” Now it is possible for Ishmael to have more than one sister so these could well be two different women. But it is equally possible that “*Mahalath*,” whose name was associated with sorrow, was named “*Basemath*” as a kind of nickname or term of endearment, a bit like some Americans name their wives “honey,” or “sweetie.”

Esau's second named wife in table 45.2, “*Basemath*” was the “*daughter of Elon the Hittite*,” and the fourth listed in table 45.2, was “*Adah*” who was also the “*daughter of Elon the Hittite*.” Again it is possible that Esau married two different women who were daughters of Elon the Hittite. However the other two names of table 45.2, “*Judith*” and “*Aholibamah*” cannot be identified as being the same. Judith was the “*daughter of Beeri the Hittite*,” whilst Aholibamah was the “*daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite*.” The differences in the two fathers names is made more distinct by their tribal affiliations, one from Hittite stock and the other from Hivite origins. A glance at Genesis 10 indicates that the sons of Heth and the Hivites were distinct:

15 Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and **Heth**; **16** the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; **17** the **Hivite**, the Arkite, and the Sinite; **18** the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.²⁰⁷⁰

Heth was Canaan's second born son, whilst the Hivites were a tribe deriving from the sixth son of Canaan. It seems best, then, to consider this woman, Aholibamah, as a different wife to Judith who was daughter of Beeri,

2067 Exodus 2:21; 3:1.

2068 Genesis 28:9.

2069 Genesis 36:3.

2070 Genesis 10:15-18.

If we take the view that Genesis 36 was recorded later rather than earlier, then the wives listed here may well be different to those recorded earlier when Jacob was setting off to Padan Aram. In this case Esau would be approaching one hundred years of age following his meeting with Jacob so this was around sixty years after he had taken his first wife.²⁰⁷¹

Whether these names are for just three wives, or whether Esau actually had more than just three wives is not so important. The main take-away from the data of table 45.2 is Esau's focus on this earth and its (so-called) blessings. These women were beauties and thus, we might say, trophy-wives (as far as this world may be concerned). It would seem also that they were notable women. Both Judith and Aholibamah have names which indicate a degree of notoriety and perhaps of religious significance.

Next we learn of the sons which came from these wives of Esau. Since sons are spoken of from only the three named wives in this text, this might be a strong indication that Esau only had three wives. However, we cannot eliminate the possibility that other wives did not bear children (or sons). It may well be, as we have suggested, that the earlier wives have now died. The data from all of Genesis 36 are shown in figure 31 below, but we shall consider the text in progression.²⁰⁷²

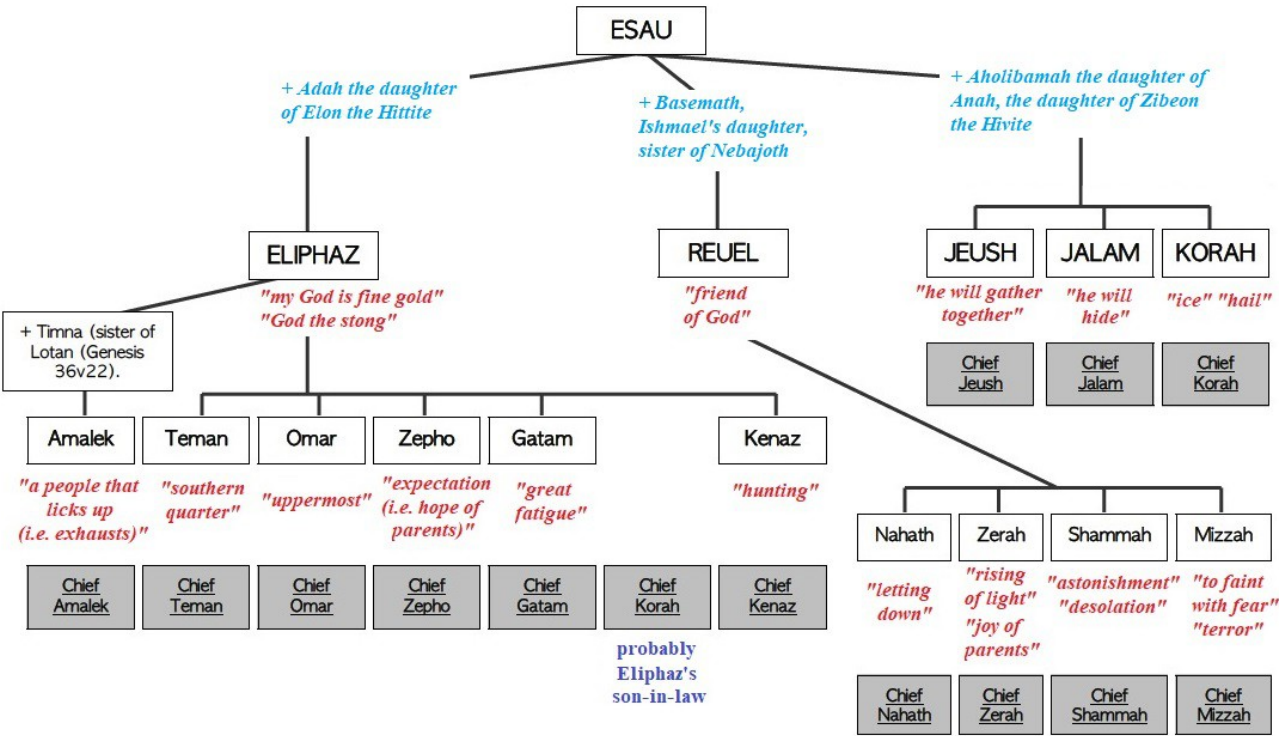


Figure 31: Sons and grandsons of Esau.

2071 Recall that Jacob arrived in Padan Aram aged 77 and left 20 years later.

2072 In this genealogy I have only listed the wives found in Genesis 36.

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Esau's second and third wives listed in Genesis 36 (Adah and Basemath) bore one son each, Eliphaz and Reuel, both of whose names contain the name of God. Esau's first named wife in Genesis 36 (Aholibamah) had three sons. These five sons were born to Esau whilst he dwelt in Canaan.

[b] Esau relocates to Mount Seir. (Genesis 36:6-9).

After these five had been born it would seem that Esau moved away.²⁰⁷³ Now this section might seem to indicate a problem. When Esau met with Jacob on Jacob's return, Esau seems to have come from Seir and would then return to Seir as Jacob entered the land of Canaan.²⁰⁷⁴ But now we read that he is departing from the region where he and Jacob had been together. The resolution to this supposed discrepancy is quite simple. The text is not given for us to retrace all the steps these families and men took in great detail. As far as we can reconcile the facts we should do so. But where we have only possibilities, the best thing is to leave them be. This drives us to seek the real reason why the Lord has seen fit to give us such details as we have here. It is only in so far as God intends for us to learn from them in a *spiritual* way that we should really be concerned.

And so Esau took all that he owned which included not just these five sons, but also *“his daughters”* (unnamed), together with *“all the persons of his household,”* by which we assume is meant his servants. He also took with him all his animals and all the *“goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan,”* travelling to a country that would be *“away from the presence of his brother Jacob.”*²⁰⁷⁵ Now we are also told that the reason for this departure was because they had both outgrown the region they were living in.²⁰⁷⁶ It was because *“their possessions”* were now so vast that they could not *“dwell together.”* Esau's departure thus appears as a practical solution to their ever enlarging population and wealth. However it is clear that we are meant to understand also that material wealth and earthly focus leads to separation. In one sense this is a good thing. The Lord commanded that the peoples of the post-flood times should spread out far and wide. The opposite effect was disastrous as Genesis 11:1f demonstrates, so this separation is in order to limit the growth of sin and evil. However in another sense this separation between 'brothers' is a sad thing to observe. Clearly Esau and Jacob were (probably) not brothers in the Lord but the fact that their possessions caused them to separate is (I believe) a warning to us. We must never let earthly things cause separation among brethren.²⁰⁷⁷

And so Esau moved to *“Mount Seir,”* which is located south of the Dead Sea (see figure 29) and then we are told once again that *“Esau is Edom.”*²⁰⁷⁸ This is significant because we are being reminded of

2073 Genesis 36:6.

2074 Genesis 32:3; 33:16.

2075 Genesis 36:6.

2076 Genesis 36:7.

2077 It is perhaps a dangerous thing to insist that Esau was not a true believer. We cannot be sure of his eternal destiny. However in Scripture he is put for us as a carnal, earthly man.

2078 Genesis 36:1,8,19. Note: all locations are approximate.

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Esau's basic earthly nature. The name “*Edom*” simply means “red” or “ruddy” and this highlights two things. First the desire for Jacob's “*red*” stew with no thought of losing his birthright in the process of gaining it.²⁰⁷⁹ Second, because the word is close in form to the name “*Adam*” it reminds us that Esau was a son of Adam only. Mount Seir was originally the dwelling place of the Horites during the time when Abraham was dealing with Lot's rescue.²⁰⁸⁰ The Seir mountains lie on the east side of the Arabah Valley.

And so ends a brief section attributable to Esau who is described as “*the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir.*”²⁰⁸¹

[c] A further genealogy of Esau's sons and their sons. (Genesis 36:10-14).

Although reading through the text of Genesis 36 might seem rather dry and repetitious, it would appear that there is a development, or a history being recorded. Notwithstanding the fact that a precise timeline is most likely impossible here, we should note in passing that the very fact we have different names for Esau's wives gives authenticity to the text we are reading. It is likely that these wives in Genesis 36 were later editions to the earlier women with the exception of Ishamel's daughter and Nebajoth's sister (called “*Mahalath*” and “*Basemath*”). We know by experience that people are given different names. As a simple case in point a former Prime Minister of the UK was known as “The Iron Lady” but her real name was Margaret Thatcher. To continue this theme, and for the sake of not being accused sexist, we could mention the Duke of Wellington who was known as “The Iron Duke.” Such details are worth pointing out. The Bible is divinely inspired so that every single word and pen-stroke is that which God decided would be written, but He does not eliminate personality and the human element, although all is without error and falsity.

And now we are told once again of the sons of Esau and immediately we must ask ourselves the question: why this repetition? Well of course there are new details given and these point towards the fact that we have (most likely) records given at different *times*. Whereas the opening section, which told of Esau's wives and their sons, was probably recorded whilst Esau was in Canaan near to Jacob, now having moved to Mount Seir we get a further genealogy which describes not just sons but grandsons too. Thus we have an unfolding history in these verses of Genesis 36.

Adah is listed first in Genesis 36 probably because her son, “*Eliphaz,*” may well have been Esau's firstborn.²⁰⁸² Along with the second named son of Esau (“*Reuel*”) these first two sons have names which contain the name of God:

2079 Genesis 25:30-34.

2080 Genesis 14:6.

2081 Genesis 36:9.

2082 Genesis 36:10.

Eliphaz		My God [is] gold
Reuel		Friend of God

We need to be careful here because the use of the name “*God*” does not imply necessarily that the parents were godly. Both boys names might also be explained by considering the essential meaning of the word used for God, that is, might or strength. Eliphaz might then mean “my strength is gold,” and Reuel might mean “friend of might.”

Next we are told of Eliphaz's sons, the names of which have no reference to God at all. We are also not informed of Eliphaz's wife, or of where she was from at this point, but then we discover that Eliphaz also had a “*concubine*” named “*Timna*” who bore to Esau “*Amalek*.” Later we are told that Timna was sister to Lotan, who was son of Seir the Horite.²⁰⁸³ Thus Esau's first son had Seir's daughter Timna as his concubine. This serves to indicate the combining of Esau who is Edom with Seir the Horite who dwelt in the mountains named after him. Now the name “*Seir*” means “rough,” or “bristly.” Perhaps he was a burly fellow with long hair and whiskers! From these thoughts it would seem that Esau had probably gone back and forth from Canaan to Seir at various times.

Amalek was not the founder of the Amalekites whom we came across in connection with Abraham's rescue of Lot in Genesis 14. There we discover that the “*country of the Amalekites*” was west of Edom and the Wilderness of Zin somewhere near to Kadesh.²⁰⁸⁴ However in calling his son by Timna this name, perhaps Eliphaz wanted to associate with this group. Either way, the Amalekites would be a sore trial to Israel in years to come.²⁰⁸⁵

The sons of Reuel, Esau's second named son, are listed and their names are varied in meaning leading us no further.²⁰⁸⁶ Esau also had three other sons alongside Eliphaz and Reuel, but we know nothing of these except for the origin of their mother.²⁰⁸⁷ She is called here “*Aholibamah*” which means “tent of the high place,” and she is listed as being “*the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon*.”²⁰⁸⁸

[d] A list of the chiefs that came from Esau. (Genesis 36:15-19).

Having seen the development of Esau's family we now find even further development, for in this section we have mention of “*chiefs*.” This word has the following meaning according to *Wilson*:

2083 Genesis 36:22.
 2084 Genesis 14:7.
 2085 Numbers 14:45; Deuteronomy 25:17; 1Samuel 15:1f.
 2086 Genesis 36:13.
 2087 Genesis 36:14.
 2088 Genesis 36:14.

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“Head of a family, or tribe, i.e. who unites its members into one body; occurs in this rendering in Genesis 36, Exodus 15, and 1Chronicles 1.”²⁰⁸⁹

The root word is אָלַף *’ālap*, which means “to accustom oneself,” “to learn,” or “to join together/associate.” Thus it stands for one who has become familiar and accustomed to something so that you can then assemble others and lead, guide or teach them. Further we read that these chiefs were such “*in the land of Edom,*” suggesting that they also had possession of certain tracts of land within Edom.²⁰⁹⁰ In the AKJV the word is rendered as “*dukes*” presumably to connect with the idea of dukedoms (the region ruled by a duke) within England in the sixteenth century.

In verse 15 we have an added name for the sons of Eliphaz when compared to Genesis 36:11,12, and it is to be noted that the order is not the same either:

Genesis 36:11,12:	Teman	Omar	Zepho	Gatam		Kenaz	Amalek
Genesis 36:15:	Chief Teman	Chief Omar	Chief Zepho	Chief Kenaz	Chief Korah	Chief Gatam	Chief Amalek

The name “*Korah*” also occurs at Genesis 36:5,14 but this is listed as a son of Aholibamah, and so this Korah was chief as one of the sons of Aholibamah.²⁰⁹¹ It would appear then, that some other man named Korah became chief when he married an unnamed daughter of Eliphaz, and so was listed among Eliphaz's sons. Thus the “*chiefs of Eliphaz*” who were sons of Adah (or son-in-law in the case of Korah) were seven in number.²⁰⁹² Basemath's son Reuel had four sons and these also became “*chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom.*”²⁰⁹³ Finally the “*chiefs who descended from Aholibamah*” were three and this accords with the three sons Aholibamah bore to Esau.²⁰⁹⁴ There were thus fourteen dukes or “*chiefs*” in all:

Table 45.3: Sons and Chiefs from Esau.

Esau's wife:	Son(s):	Chiefs:	f
Adah	Eliphaz	Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz, Chief Korah (son-in- law), Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek	7
Basemath	Reuel	Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah	4
Aholibamah	Jeush, Jalaam, Korah	Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, Chief Korah.	3

2089 Wilson. P137.

2090 Genesis 36:16,17.

2091 Genesis 36:18.

2092 Genesis 36:15,16.

2093 Genesis 36:13,17.

2094 Genesis 36:14,18.

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Thus the first eleven ***“Chiefs”*** were Esau's grandsons, whilst the last three were Esau's sons. The text concludes in verse 19 by reaffirming that these all came from Esau ***“who is Edom,”*** so that what we have is a nation born from the ageing son of Isaac and brother of Jacob in the land now called by his new designated name. Edom would be governed by these fourteen tribes or clans each headed up by a son or grandson of Esau. This is a clear fulfilment of the prophecy given to Rebekah that the two children she carried would each produce a nation.²⁰⁹⁵

[2] Seir's sons and chiefs. (Genesis 36:20-30).

At verse 20 the text changes dramatically introducing ***“Seir the Horite”*** who was the one who originally inhabited the land that is now becoming known as ***“the land of Edom.”***²⁰⁹⁶ We noted earlier that the Horites were dwellers south of the Dead Sea in Seir when we learned of Lot's rescue in Genesis 14.²⁰⁹⁷ We read the same thing in Deuteronomy, but we also learn that by the time of Moses, Esau had dispossessed Seir and had taken full possession of the region.²⁰⁹⁸ So it would appear that this text in Genesis 36 is the beginnings of this take-over by Esau. The term ***“Horite”*** is linked with the words for mountain and cave:

Horite	חֲרִי	ḥorî
Cave	חֹר	ḥôr
Mountain	הַר	ḥar

Seir's sons numbered seven and these sons were also the ***“chiefs of the Horites.”***²⁰⁹⁹ Thus we have two sets of ***“chiefs,”*** some from Esau and others from Seir. At this point we begin to see the interconnections between Esau and Seir. Timna was Lotan's sister and their father was Seir. Timna, we learned earlier, was concubine to Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn. Was this an enforced arrangement? We get further details of Seir's grandsons in verses 22 to 28 as shown in figure 32.

Now whilst Esau's sons and grandsons numbered fourteen ***“chiefs,”*** Seir had only seven ***“chiefs”*** among his offspring. These were all sons of Seir (see table 45.4). All the chiefs from Esau are described as being chiefs ***“in the land of Edom.”***²¹⁰⁰ Here the chiefs deriving from Seir are described both as chiefs

2095 Genesis 25:23.
2096 Genesis 36:16,17,21,31.
2097 Genesis 14:6.
2098 Deuteronomy 2:12.
2099 Genesis 36:20,
2100 Genesis 36:16,17.

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“in the land of Edom,” and also as such *“in the land of Seir.”*²¹⁰¹ I wonder if we see here some tension between the different clans of chiefs? Those who derive from Esau are only described as being chiefs in Edom, whilst those of Seir are put as chiefs in both Edom and Seir.

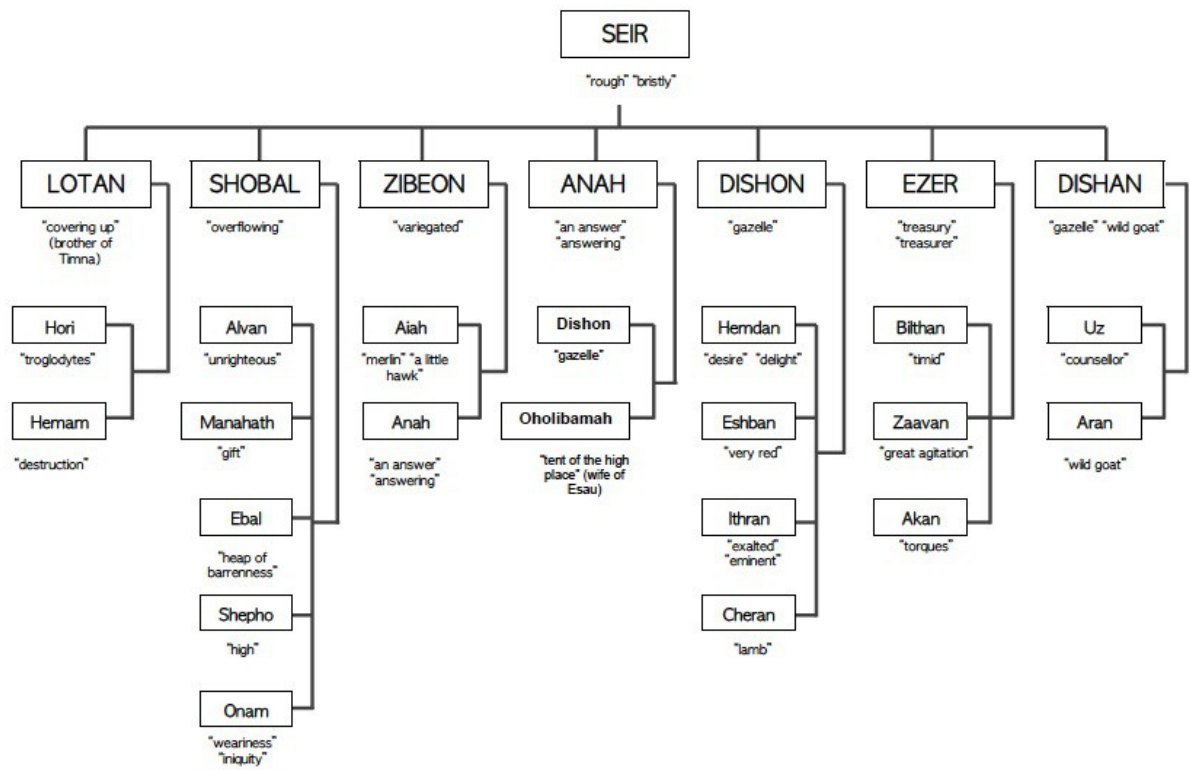


Figure 32: Sons of Seir.

We are told further information about one of Seir's sons by the name of Zibeon. He had two sons and one of these was also called *“Anah”* who happens to have the same name as one of Seir's sons, who would be his uncle.²¹⁰² Presumably this information is given to distinguish the two. We have already been told that Esau's second Isited wife in Genesis 36 (Aholibamah) was *“the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon.”*²¹⁰³ The added information about Anah indicates a man of some resourcefulness in finding a water source, and we are told of his daughter (Aholibamah) and of a son named *“Dishon.”* This name is also the name of one of Seir's sons. At this point we have a slight dilemma. Does verse 26 describe Anah's grandsons, the sons of his son named *“Dishon,”* or are these the sons of Seir's son *“Dishon”*? It seems more likely that the latter is true and this is how I have shown it in the genealogy of Seir.

2101 Genesis 36:21,30.

2102 Genesis 36:20,24.

2103 Genesis 36:2.

Table 45.4: Chiefs from both Esau and Seir.

	Chief.	Father/grandfather.
[1]	Teman	Son of Eliphaz son of Esau by Adah.
[2]	Omar	
[3]	Zepho	
[4]	Kenaz	
[5]	Korah	
[6]	Gatam	
[7]	Amalek	
[8]	Nahath	Son of Reuel son of Esau by Basemath.
[9]	Zerah	
[10]	Shammah	
[11]	Mizzah	
[12]	Jeush	Son of Esau by Aholibamah.
[13]	Jaalam	
[14]	Korah	
[15]	Lotan	Son of Seir.
[16]	Shobal	
[17]	Zibeon	
[18]	Anah	
[19]	Dishon	
[20]	Ezer	
[21]	Dishan	

[3] The kings of the land of Edom. (Genesis 36:31-39).

In this next section we discover that there “*kings who reigned in the land of Edom*” long before any in Israel over the Israelites.²¹⁰⁴ This statement may have been one made by Moses as he was compiling the documents he received. However Jacob was now known by the name “*Israel*” and so it cannot be ruled out that this statement was early. The first time we come across the term “*king*” occurs in the time of Abraham during the occasion when he rescued Lot from a confederacy of kings.²¹⁰⁵ Various kings are listed in Genesis 14 some of which hailed from northern regions (king of Elam, king of nations, king of Shinar, king of Ellasar), and others from the region of Canaan (king of Sodom, king of Gomorrah, king of Admah, king of Zeboiim, king of Bela). Apart from these warring kings we have the king of

2104 Genesis 36:31.

2105 The word “*kingdom*” comes in connection with the rebel Nimrod – see Genesis 10:10.

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Salem (Melchizedek) and then also the king of Gerar (Abimelech).²¹⁰⁶ Abraham was promised that ***“kings”*** would derive from him and Sarah.²¹⁰⁷ The idea of a royal or kingly rule is thus ancient.

Given that the kings we have noted from Genesis 14 and onward were probably kings of small cities or groups of villages, it is likely that these kings in Edom were kings of separate cities. Thus the first named is ***“Beor,”*** and we are told that ***“his city was Dinhabah.”*** Then ***“Hadad”*** was noted as having as his city ***“Avith,”*** and ***“Hadar”*** had as his city ***“Pau.”***²¹⁰⁸ From these it would seem that the city state was the norm at this time. These kings are shown in figure 33 where the kings are numbered and their city or place of rule is shown in blue.

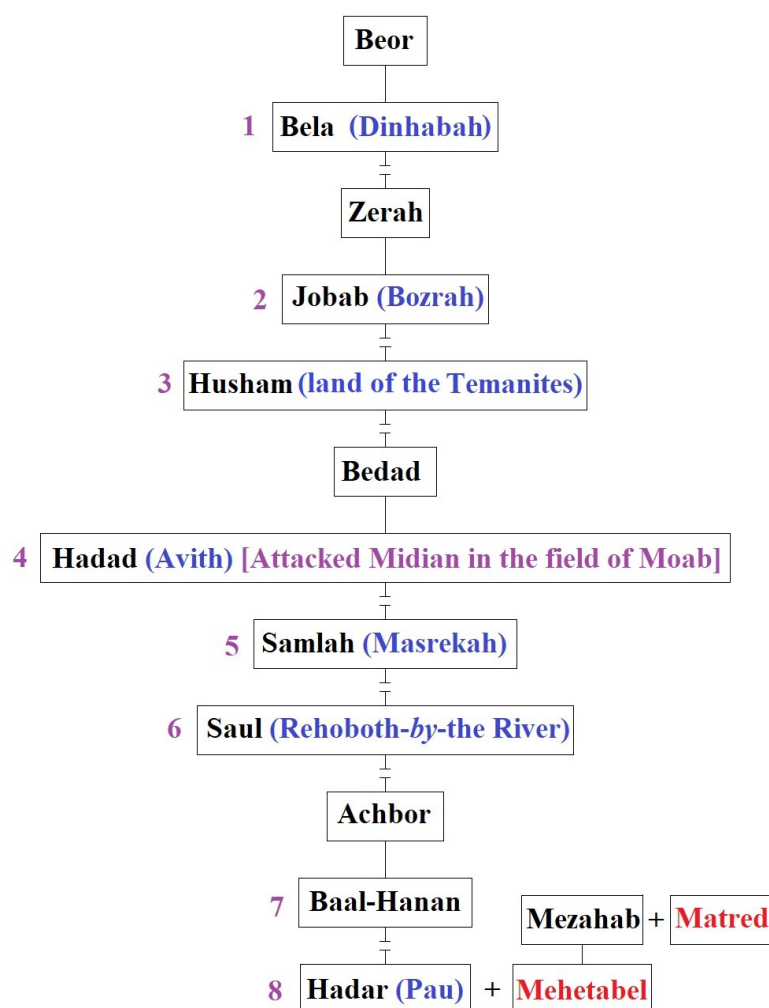


Figure 33: Kings of Edom.

Presumably the world population was not yet sufficient to enable kings to rule more than small locales. It

²¹⁰⁶ Genesis 14:18; 20:2.

²¹⁰⁷ Genesis 17:6,16.

²¹⁰⁸ Genesis 36:35,39.

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is to be noted that these kings did not pass on their rule to their sons, but after each died a new dynasty began in a new region.

Table 45.5: Kings in Edom.

<i>Father.</i>	<i>Son (king).</i>	<i>City/region.</i>	<i>Meaning.</i>
Beor			Burning
	1 Bela		Devouring, destruction
		Dinhabah	Give judgement OR master of plundering
Zerah			Rising
	2 Jobab		A desert
		Bozrah	Sheepfold OR fortress
	3 Husham		Haste
		Temanites	Southern quarter
Bedad			Solitary
	4 Hadad		Mighty
		Avith	Ruins
	5 Samlah		Garment
		Masrekah	Vineyard of noble vines
	6 Saul		Desired OR asked for
		Rehoboth	Wide places OR streets
Achbor			Mouse
	7 Baal-Hanan		Baal is gracious
	8 Hadar		Honour
		Pau	Bleating

Husham was the third king, and he was from Teman which was a city or region that lay eastward of Edom. These peoples were (apparently) famed for their wisdom. In a prophecy against Edom through Jeremiah during the period of Judah's final days we read these words:

Against Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts: “*is* wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?”²¹⁰⁹

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It is also to be recalled further that one of Job's comforters was a Temanite by the name of "*Eliphaz*," which name was also that of Esau's first son.²¹¹⁰

Hadar, the eighth king, was married to Mehetabel whose name means "favoured of God," or "whom God blesses." Mehetabel's father was "*Mezahab*" whose name means "waters of gold," and he was married to "*Matred*," whose name means "pushing forward." The only other piece of information we are given comes in connection with "*Hadad the son of Bedad*." Of this king we read that he "*attacked Midian in the field of Moab*."²¹¹¹ Moab lay north of Edom on the east side of the Dead Sea. Whom was this "*Midian*"? The earliest person named "*Midian*" was one of Abraham's sons by Keturah.²¹¹² Later on we discover that there were Midianite traders who were involved in Joseph's capture and deportation.²¹¹³ This tribe inhabited regions either side of the Gulf of Aqaba.

[4] The chiefs of Esau. (Genesis 36:40-43).

Towards the end of this section we are treated to further "*chiefs of Esau*" as detailed in table 45.6:

Table 45.6: Further chiefs of Esau.

Genesis 36:15-19.	Genesis 36:40-43.
Teman	Timnah
Omar	Alvah
Zepho	Jetheth
Kenaz	Aholibamah
Korah	Elah
Gatam	Pinon
Amalek	Kenaz
Nahath	Teman
Zerah	Mibzar
Shammah	Magdiel
Mizzah	Iram
Jeush	
Jaalam	
Korah	

The two lists are not the same. So it would appear that the ones listed here in Genesis 36:40f were much

2110 Job 2:11. See, for further references: Jeremiah 49:7; Ezekiel 25:13; Amos 1:12; Obadiah 1:9; Habakkuk 3:3.

2111 Genesis 36:35.

2112 Genesis 25:2.

2113 Genesis 37:28,36

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later than the earlier ones of Genesis 36:15f. These chiefs are described by “*their families,*” and by “*their places,*” and by “*their names,*” which designation suggests some time later than the original “*chiefs*” given in Genesis 36:15f. I state this because it seems more likely that later leaders would be recorded by family place and name, i.e. these names and families had become famous. The end statement of Genesis 36:43 would seem to enhance this idea. These chiefs were “*chiefs of Edom*” and they were such on account of the places they inhabited which was “*in the land of their possession,*” or, in other words, the land that they had settled and possessed for some time.

[5] The end of Jacob's account. (Genesis 37:1-2a).

After a lengthy digression south to Edom and Seir to detail Esau's descendants and affiliates, we return to Jacob at the beginning of Genesis 37. Whilst Edom was being settled by Esau and his descendants, Jacob dwelt in the land of Canaan, but he was a stranger as was his father before him. He never settled the land as did Esau, and this we can understand from their natures. Esau the man of the earth was keen to inhabit a land and occupy it to the full. Jacob had his mind on the things of God, the things of heaven, and so he was a stranger in this world, a pilgrim. And so the account that Jacob was responsible for comes to an end.

Chapter 46.

Joseph the dreamer. (37:2b-11).

Before we commence comments on this next chapter in Genesis it is worth making a few introductory comments as we move from the account given by Jacob into the account which centres on Joseph.

A note on: Genesis 37:2b-50:26.

It appears, by all accounts, that the previous section was a rounding off of the details that centred on Jacob and his wayward brother Esau. From Genesis 37:2b to the end of the book the narrative is largely centred on the life of Joseph. We need to remember that the statement of Genesis 37:2a “*This is the history of Jacob,*” is the last of the *tôledôt* markers that divide up the book.

So this last section of Genesis 37:2b-50:26 was probably compiled by both Joseph and Levi, Jacob's sons. Pertinent to this view are the following Scriptures: Genesis 46:8, Exodus 1:1 and Exodus 6:16f.²¹¹⁴ It was because of various tricky situations that Jacob and his sons find themselves going to Egypt and then eventually settling there, and this is to be coupled with the fact that Joseph had been in Egypt for some considerable time. As a consequence we are changing scene from the promised land where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sojourned, (as recorded in Genesis 12 to 36), to the removal into Egypt from where the Lord would bring forth His nation, Israel (dealt with in Genesis 37 to 50). The length of stay from Jacob's descent mentioned in Genesis 46:8 until the Exodus was 215 years, not 400 years as many erroneously believe. Key to a correct interpretation of the time frame is Galatians 3:16,17 where the apostle Paul tells us that the 430 years (mentioned in Exodus 12:41) began when Abraham received the promise, (i.e. from Genesis 12:1f). The data from Genesis 15 corroborate these ideas, especially with regard to the prophecy that the return would occur in the fourth generation, which fact is shown in the genealogy of Exodus 6:16f.

This long section begins with a seventeen-year old boy who had lost his mother and ends with the same person as a grown man in a coffin in Egypt at 110 years of age, 93 years later.

2114 For further information on this please see my work “**Ushering in an Old Age**” on Genesis 1-11.

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Analysis.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers.

And the lad was with
the sons of Bilhah
and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives;
and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children,
because he was the son of his old age.

Also he made him a tunic of many colours.

4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers,
they hated him
and could not speak peaceably to him.

5 Now Joseph had a dream,
and he told it to his brothers;
and they hated him even more.

6 So he said to them,
“Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:
7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field.
Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright;
and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.”

8 And his brothers said to him,
“Shall you indeed reign over us?
Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?”

So they hated him even more
for his dreams
and for his words.

9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said,
“Look, I have dreamed another dream.
And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.”

10 So he told it to his father and his brothers;
and his father rebuked him and said to him,
“What is this dream that you have dreamed?
Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?”

11 And his brothers envied him,
but his father kept the matter in mind.

There are several levels at which we must read these words. We must remind ourselves that all Scripture speaks of Christ, so we must keep in view the idea that what we are reading teaches us about Christ and His mission. However we also recognise that there is a real history going on here. Jacob and his sons are real people with real lives. Consequently we cannot omit reference to the family situation and the difficulties Jacob and his sons encountered. That there is much typical referencing going on we cannot neglect, but we must also attend to the regular and the routine in the experience of the patriarchs.

[1] A normal day. (Genesis 37:2b-4).

37:2b,3.

Joseph is the main subject of this section. We learn that he is seventeen years old and that he was a shepherd along with his brothers. Jacob would now be one hundred and eight years old. At this point we

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must assume that all the brothers are intended here. But then the narrative informs us at the end of verse 2, that Joseph happened to be with Bilhah and Zilpah's sons, (Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher). Why was this? Were there divisions in the family according to whether the sons were sons of the wives or sons of the concubines? It would seem that there was enmity between Leah and Rachel, but what of their maids?²¹¹⁵ However we cannot press this rivalry too far because when Jacob summoned his wives to tell them they were going to leave and return to Canaan, we found that the two sisters appeared to be in complete agreement, for Leah and Rachel speak together.²¹¹⁶

Perhaps the fact that Rachel stole Laban's household idols indicated another difference between her and Leah?²¹¹⁷ Or, we might infer some resentment from the way in which Jacob organised the family to meet Esau, which Jacob considered was a dangerous thing:

And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.²¹¹⁸

Whatever the case, it would appear both from the circumstances of how each son came into the world, coupled with Jacob's clear preference for Rachel over Leah, that such division and rivalry would be evident, although not all consuming.

Next, we discover that Joseph reports back to his father Jacob about what was happening in the field.²¹¹⁹ In the introduction to this section we find that the brothers are all responsible for the flocks, although not all doing the same work. The translation: *“Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father”* is at fault. My translation of this clause is as follows; *“And Joseph caused to come their evil slander unto their father.”* In other words Joseph was merely telling Jacob exactly what these brothers were saying – their evil slander. Now the ESV and NASB give the same basic rendering as the NKJV. However the AKJV and YLT are different:

And Joseph brought a bad report of them to <u>his</u> father.	NKJV.
And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.	ESV.
And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.	NASB.
And Joseph brought unto <u>his</u> father their evil report.	AKJV.
and Joseph bringeth in an account of their evil unto their father.	YLT.

The first three suggest that Joseph, after mixing with Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher, made a report on

2115 Genesis 30:1f.
2116 Genesis 31:14-16.
2117 Genesis 31:34.
2118 Genesis 33:2.
2119 Genesis 37:2.

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them and this was a bad report. The last two suggest something very different. Joseph brought to Jacob ***their*** evil report, or, in other words, the type of things these boys were saying. The NKJV and the AKJV also err in speaking of “***his father***” when the text states that it was “***their father***” (with the third person, plural, masculine possessive suffix, “***their***”). Taking these things into account I would suggest that Joseph brought to Jacob the ***brothers'*** evil speaking. He did not embellish this or twist it, but merely reported what was said and what went on between them accurately. There is no thought in the text that Joseph was doing anything untoward. In his commentary on Genesis, the reformer John Calvin agrees with this assessment:

“Joseph conveyed the evil speeches of his brethren to their father. Some expound the word evil as meaning some intolerable crime; but others more correctly suppose, that it was a complaint of the boy that his brothers vexed him with their reproaches ...”²¹²⁰

The problems that will surface through the narrative that follows are not due to the seventeen year old boy, but can be laid squarely at the feet of Jacob. Thus in verse 3 we discover that Jacob was partial and had a favourite, Joseph. Now before we take Jacob to task we need to remember that he loved Rachel and was duped into marrying Leah. Now, of course, Jacob ought to have been fair to all his family. But Rachel had born to Jacob Joseph, and then had died in childbirth as she was bringing Benjamin into the world. Such circumstances do not excuse Jacob, but they do help to understand why he was so disposed towards Joseph, Rachel's firstborn. Joseph was Jacob's son that he had in his old age and he doted on him. He made him a coat or tunic which was distinctive. Before we continue it will be well to consider in detail what is meant by this special coat given to Joseph.

Interlude. A note on Joseph's “coat of many colours.”

The translation of the Hebrew expression found at Genesis 37:3,23,32 as “***coat of many colours***” in the NKJV is problematic. When the AKJV translators came to this passage it seems that they were guided by the LXX version which uses the phrase: “***χιτώνα ποικίλον***” at Genesis 37:3 and the phrase: “***χιτώνα τὸν ποικίλον***” at Genesis 37:23,32. The only difference between the first expression and the latter two is the addition of the definite article “***τὸν***” which reflects the use of the same in the Hebrew (prefix הַ). Since the Greek term “***ποικίλον***” means “multicoloured,” the AKJV translators were persuaded to opt for such a meaning in Genesis 37. However the same Hebrew expression is also found at 2Samuel 13:18. But in this case the LXX rendering opts for a different Greek expression, namely, “***χιτὼν καρπωτός***,” which has the meaning “coat reaching the wrists.” A comparison of the phrases found in the Hebrew and Greek is shown below:

²¹²⁰ John Calvin. *Commentary on Genesis*. 1992. Banner of Truth. P259.

Table 46.1: Hebrew and Greek phrases relevant to Joseph's special coat.

Scripture	Hebrew	Greek (LXX)
Genesis 37:3	כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים	χιτῶνα ποικίλον
Genesis 37:23	כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים	χιτῶνα τὸν ποικίλον
Genesis 37:32	כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים	χιτῶνα τὸν ποικίλον
2Samuel 13:18	כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים	χιτῶν καρπωτός
2Samuel 13:19	כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים	χιτῶνα τὸν καρπωτὸν

From the above analysis it would appear that the LXX translators were not really sure of what the Hebrew expression found only in these five places really meant. When we look at the Hebrew we find that the second option used by the LXX translators is much more likely. *James Strong's* definition for the root word is: “flat (of the hand or foot), palm or sole” and the suggestion is that it signified a garment which reached to the palms and soles.²¹²¹ In other words, a long robe with long sleeves. A comparison of three entries in the lexicons indicates the same basic idea (see table 46.2).

Table 46.2: Lexical entries for meaning of: כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים

Lexicon consulted.	Entry.
<i>Wilson.</i>	כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים was a tunic reaching to the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; the long tunic with sleeves worn by young men and maidens of the better class; in the case of Joseph, supposed by Bush, notes <i>in loc.</i> , to have been the badge of the birthright which had been forfeited by Reuben and transferred to Joseph. ²¹²²
<i>Davidson.</i>	כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים a long dress with sleeves covering the hands. ²¹²³
<i>Brown-Driver-Briggs.</i>	flat of hand or foot (palm, sole);—only כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים tunic reaching to palms and soles ... Gn 37:3,23,32 2S 13:18,19. ²¹²⁴

Thus the phrase: כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים given as “coat of many colours” in the NKJV, ought to be translated as “long coat” or “long-sleeved coat.” That the tunic was very significant is clear in the narrative that unfolds. That is why some translations opt for “long-sleeved robe” (CSB), “special robe” (EHV), or even “ornate robe” (NIV). Further, that such a robe was worn by the King's daughter as evidenced in 2Samuel 13:18,19, might it not be fair to render this phase as “royal robe”?

²¹²¹ **J. Strong.** Strong's entry: 6446.

²¹²² **Wilson.** P82.

²¹²³ **Davidson.** P629.

²¹²⁴ **Brown-Driver-Briggs.** *The enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon.* Based on the 1906 edition originally published by Clarendon Press: Oxford. Entry under the root Hebrew כָּסָה. Hereafter as **BDB**.

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In making these comments I am reminded that our Saviour had an especial robe too of which we read at His crucifixion:

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. **24** They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.²¹²⁵

This latter statement about not dividing the tunic but casting lots for it brings to mind the treatment suffered by Joseph over his special robe. We are also minded to view the vision of John in Revelation¹ where we read these words:

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.²¹²⁶

Now this garment of the risen Christ is thought to reflect the priestly garments of the old order, because it reached to the ankles. In that it was girded with a golden band this must also signify royalty. But might we not also suggest from this that Joseph's tunic indicated that he was to be considered not just of the better class or of royalty, but that he had a priestly function too?

Taking 2Samuel 13:18,19 into view, Joseph's “*tunic of many colours*” would then signify the special apparel worn by a royal, such as “*the king's virgin daughters.*”²¹²⁷ As we have noted above, the Hebrew term in Genesis 37:3 does not actually indicate colour, but instead signifies a long robe that extended to the end of the wrists and the ankles.²¹²⁸ Another Hebrew word is used for embroidery with rich colours (רִקְמָה *riq'māh*).²¹²⁹ Yet another word is used to signify a variety of colours, or the idea of multicoloured, (שֶׁבַע *seba'*).²¹³⁰ Now these two Hebrew words are combined in Deborah's song as found in Judges chapter 5. The last part of this song is an imagined speech of Sisera's mother waiting vainly for her son's return. At one point the song reads as follows:

2125 John 19:23,24.

2126 Revelation 1:12,13.

2127 2Smuel 13:18,19.

2128 See **BDB**. See **Davidson**. P629. **Wilson**. P82.

2129 1Chronicles 29:2; Psalm 45:14; Ezekiel 16:10,13; 17:3; 27:7,16,24.

2130 The word only occurs in Judges 5:20 but is the basis for the name “*Zibeon*” meaning variegated found in Genesis 36:2,14,20,24,29.

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Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of **divers colours**, a prey of **divers colours** of **needlework**, of **divers colours** of **needlework** on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?²¹³¹

The two different Hebrew words are used together in this passage in Judges chapter 5, and it is thought that such an honoured tunic or coat would, therefore, not only reach to the wrists and ankles signifying a garment of honour, but would also be wonderfully embroidered in rich needlework. Now, of course, we do not have any mention of colour or embroidery in Genesis 37:3, we just have a coat or tunic that extended the length of the arms and legs (to the hands and feet). Such a garment would not be worn by those doing manual labour but by those who were given charge of others. This was the robe of royalty, but it may well also have indicated a priestly function given Joseph's gift of receiving revelatory dreams.

37:4.

The consequence of Jacob's honouring of Joseph are summed up in verse 4. It was obvious that Jacob adored Joseph, and therefore the rest felt left out and second class by comparison. It is significant that the text states that Jacob did not love Joseph exclusively. Rather he *“loved Joseph **more** than all his children.”* This preferment was not acceptable to the brothers. Jacob did love them, but he loved Joseph a lot more. Now the brothers' reaction was, to say the least, not an appropriate response. Jacob did love them all, but because Jacob loved Joseph more (presumably because Rachel was gone), they ended hating Joseph so much that they *“could not speak peaceably to him.”* Consequently we can conclude that the brothers' response was not appropriate.

Taking a step back we can see a glimpse of the relationship between God the Father, God the Son and the race of Adam. The brothers are all Adam's sons and were given to work in the cursed world. Jacob is the Father, and Joseph his especial son upon whom the greatest honour was bestowed. Adam's race hates the incarnate Christ. Such is so obviously true from Scriptures such as Isaiah 53:3; John 1:10,11. The Father loves all peoples but His love falls upon His Only Son with the greatest fervour.

[2] Joseph the dreamer. (Genesis 37:5-8).

37:5,6.

Joseph's name means “Jehovah has added.” When we consider Joseph as a type of Christ we can see the significance of this name only when we consider that the first Adam acted as one who took away. Adam lost paradise because of his sin, but Joseph, the prophetic type of Christ, is the one who will add through the Lord. Thus what Christ brought to us far exceeds that which Adam lost for us.

2131 Judges 5:30, AKJV.

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The English words “*dream*,” “*dreams*,” and “*dreamed*” come ten times in Genesis 37:2-11, so that this theme is central in the narrative. We have been introduced to the idea of God speaking in dream earlier in the text of Genesis. Abimelech the king of Gerar was warned in a dream by God not to do anything to Sarah.²¹³² Jacob, on the occasion of his rapid departure to Padan Aram in his flight from Esau, had a dream in which a ladder reached from heaven to earth.²¹³³ And so here we are told of Joseph having a dream. We must recognise that this was no ordinary nor normal dream. People the world over have dreams and these are not unusual (although their subject matter may be!). Solomon would later speak of normal human dreams:

For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool’s voice *is known* by *his* many words
... For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there is* also vanity. But fear God..²¹³⁴

We all know dreams! They can be awkward, varied, and even weird. They can be normal and straightforward, but always they are simply the activity of the sleeping mind. But what Joseph received was something else. It was a revelation of God. We know this because of the text. We are simply told that “*Joseph had a dream*,” which he then relates to his brothers, and then, as a direct consequence, the brothers “*hated him even more*.”²¹³⁵ If this was a normal dream why would they hate him even more? It must have been something of a divine origin. We can be sure that he had a divine dream by what happened next, for Joseph is insistent that his brothers hear what he has been given.²¹³⁶ We might be tempted to think of Joseph being a precocious and spoilt young lad who always wants to show his gift or his ability, but that would be to misread the intentions of the Holy Spirit here. It will be helpful if we view the Hebrew of verses 5 and 6 together to aid our understanding:

37:5:

וַיְחַלֵּם יוֹסֵף דֶּלֶת וַיְסַף תְּלֹם וַיִּגֹּד לְאָחָיו וַיֹּסֶפּוּ עוֹד שְׁנָא אֹתוֹ

and Joseph dreamed a dream and he told it to his brothers and they added even more to hate him

37:6:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמָעוּ-נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חָלַמְתִּי

and he said to them: “listen I beseech you to this dream which I have dreamed”

2132 Genesis 20:3,6.

2133 Genesis 28:12.

2134 Ecclesiastes 5:3,7.

2135 Genesis 37:5.

2136 Genesis 37:5.

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The repetition of the words “*dream*” and “*dreamed*” here (highlighted in blue) coming at the beginning and end of these two statements, serve to focus our attention upon what Joseph received. In my translation I have stuck to a literal rendering to highlight the fact that Joseph's brothers “added” to, that is multiplied their hatred still further. This dream added fuel to the fire of their hatred. The reader will see that I have coloured the the phrase “*and they added*” with the same colour as I have for the name “*Joseph*” (highlighted in mauve). There is a clear allusion within their hatred to his very name, a type of human blasphemy. In verse 6 when Joseph seeks to tell the dream to his brothers, he is pleading with them to hear what he received. This is a form of entreaty and suggests something important, rather like the person who wants to warn unknowing victims of some impending disaster.

Read without considering the overall spiritual sense of the text and you are left with a family at war with itself. But, as we have already noted, Joseph was not at fault, rather his father Jacob was for not bringing his sons to account, and for not training them all in the matter of godly relationships. Now we do not know whether Jacob had tried and sought for them all to get long, but the text nowhere says that Jacob reprimanded his sons or made any moves to discipline them. The same situation would arise with Eli the High Priest many years later, but in that case we are given a clear statement to the effect that Eli failed.²¹³⁷ The Lord reprimanded Eli:

For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.²¹³⁸

But in this case of Jacob and his sons we do not find any such direct reprimand. What we cannot and must not do here is to think that but for his obsession with his dreams all would be plain sailing for Joseph. It does appear to be true that his dreams and his relating them caused problems, but this was hardly Joseph's fault. Verse 5 simply tells us that Joseph related the dream he received to his brothers and that as a result they “*hated him even more.*” But such hatred can only be put down (at the human level of viewing this text) to the fact that his father preferred him and loved him above them. But in a spiritual sense, if we see Joseph as a type of Christ and his father as a type of the Father, we get a clear picture of how the Son of God would come with His revelation and be hated by all on *that* account. The Father loves the Son above all else. But the Father does not hate. He loved the world so much that He gave His Only Son!²¹³⁹ The Son also loved the world and came to it bringing His wonderful revelation as the “*Word of God*” and as “*the faithful witness.*”²¹⁴⁰ And yet the people ended up crucifying Him. In the same way Joseph brought his

2137 1Samuel 2:12-17,22-25,29,34; 3:13; 4:4,11,17.

2138 1Samuel 3:13.

2139 John 3:16.

2140 John 1:14,18; 1John 2:14; Revelation 1:5.

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revelatory dreams to his brethren and they respond with hate. A. W. Pink has some helpful comments on this theme of the brothers' hatred which are worth reproducing here:

The Hatred of his Brethren. "They hated him and could not speak peaceably to him." It was Jacob's love which brought out the heart's enmity of these men. Joseph then, made manifest both his father's love and his brethren's hatred. So when Christ came to the earth He did these two things. He revealed the Father's heart and He exposed man's enmity. And one of two things always followed: either men hated Him for exposing them, or they accepted such exposure and took refuge in the Grace which He revealed. When Christ exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees they hated Him; but when He exposed to the woman at the well her sinful life and condition, she welcomed it, and availed herself of God's grace.²¹⁴¹

37:7.

Joseph's first dream was of a scene that he had seen in the field where they were used to working.²¹⁴² Somehow the sheaves that were being bound by the workers could be identified (presumably each of the brothers was binding a sheaf) and suddenly Joseph's *"arose and also stood upright."* Immediately, all the other sheaves stood around this elevated sheaf and bowed down to it. Now the Hebrew is very clear and forceful. There are three statements made, each introduced by the Hebrew demonstrative particle **וְהִנֵּה** *hinnēh* which is most often translated as *"Lo!"* or *"Behold!"* The NKJV translates these same three Hebrew words differently in each case (highlighted in **red**):

There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then **behold**, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and **indeed** your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

But these are all the same as can be seen by looking at the Hebrew text of verse 7 which I have translated below, with the relevant words highlighted in **orange**:

וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי מְאַלְמִים אֶלְמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה

and behold we were binding sheaves in the midst of the field

וְהִנֵּה קָמָה אֶלְמָתִי וְגַם-נִצְבָּה

and behold my sheaf arose and moreover it stood upright

וְהִנֵּה תִסְבִּינָה אֶלְמֵתֵיכֶם וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוִינָן לְאֶלְמָתִי

and behold your sheaves they stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf

2141 A. W. Pink. *Gleanings in Genesis*. Comments on Genesis 37. Chapter 40: "Joseph as a Youth."

2142 Genesis 37:7.

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In the first *“behold”* statement Joseph describes the basic scene or picture. In the second we are told about the sheaf which represented Joseph. In the last we see what happens to the sheaves of his brothers. Now in the second statement which is the centre or focus of the dream that Joseph relates, we are told that Joseph's sheaf *“arose.”* This is resurrection language. But then also we are taught that *“it stood upright.”* This is even more significant, for this speaks of elevation or exaltation. The verb used (נָצַב *nāṣab*) means “to set, to place, or station oneself, to take one's stand.”²¹⁴³ The verb is used to depict God rising up to stand in judgement, and it has the idea of a firm, fixed and settled or established position.²¹⁴⁴ It would seem that by these two terms *“arose”* and *“stood upright”* we have prefigured the resurrection and ascension/exaltation of Christ.

Then in the last *“behold”* statement we discover that all eleven other sons come around this firmly established and exalted one, and these *“stood all around,”* but a different Hebrew word is used here than the verb we have already discussed. In this case the Hebrew verb is: סָבַב *sābab*, which really means “to encompass, surround, assemble round.” In other words, Joseph's sheaf literally rose up and then was lifted up further, and all the other eleven sheaves turned around and surrounded this central sheaf but did not rise or elevate. Then next we discover that these eleven sheaves *“bowed down”* to Joseph's elevated sheaf. The Hebrew verb used (שָׁחָה *šāḥāh*) means “to depress, to sink down, to prostrate in homage.” Thus Joseph sheaf was raised and then elevated, whilst all eleven others were gathered around and brought low.

Since we are looking at this historical account as displaying to us aspects of our Saviour, such an image is clear. There is no man upon earth who ought to be elevated or to be celebrated as being of true account.²¹⁴⁵ Only One has that privilege and right, the sinless, glorious Saviour, Jesus Christ. He alone lived a true human life of righteousness which was also merciful and gracious as well as being holy. He alone has died for sinners and was raised again. And He alone is seated at the right hand of the Father in His exaltation.

37:8.

So what do his brothers say when they hear of this dream? It is very clear from verse 8 that they understood full well the meaning of the dream. It seems that they are indignant. The brothers use two superlative phrases which employ a word and then repeat it for force. After the opening words informing us that the brothers responded to Joseph, we have these two superlative or emphatic statements, followed by the concluding statement of their hatred being *“even more”* (table 46.3).

2143 Wilson. P416.

2144 Isaiah 3:13; Psalm 82:1.

2145 I am not making any statement here with reference to temporal achievements, for these have no ultimate value when all is examined. One man may be better or more skilled in some area than another but these differences are mere pimples when compared to the beauty and perfection of Jesus Christ.

Table 46.3: Two superlatives in Genesis 37:8.

Hebrew phrase	Translation	Transliteration
הִמְלֹךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ	Reigning shall you reign over us?	hămālōk tīmēlōk ‘ālênû
אִם-מְשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ	Or dominating shall you have dominion over us?	māšōl tīmēšōl bānû

And so the brothers unanimously exclaim: *“shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?”* There is an expression of great indignation. We might put it differently, like this, for example: 'does Joseph really intend us to believe that he will reign and have dominion over us?' Now such is the statement all rebellious human beings make when the Lord Jesus comes and says that He is King! We all respond with indignation! Does Jesus Christ think that He will reign over me? In our pride and arrogance, in our self-determination, we cannot bear the thought of another having rule and dominion over us. But the truth is that we were made for the Lord's rule and reign, and such is the very best of all possible outcomes. Why? Because God is good! Because God is wonderful! Because anything else is not just second best it is infinitely worse than having God as our king ruling within.

The end of verse 8 includes a phrase which is identical to one found at the end of verse 5 but here we have what it is these brothers truly hated.

וַיֹּסֶפוּ עוֹד שְׂנֹא אֹתוֹ עַל-חֲלֻמֹּתָיו וְעַל-דִּבְרָיו
and they added even more to hate him over his dreams and over his words

This event ramped up their hatred, but now it is because of the revelation he received from God (*“his dreams”*) and because of *“his words.”* The world hates Christ! It might feign allegiance to some things about Him. It might reconfigure Christ to its satisfaction and taste. But in truth the world hates Christ:

The world ... it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.²¹⁴⁶

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.”²¹⁴⁷

... but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.²¹⁴⁸

2146 John 7:7.

2147 John 15:18.

2148 John 15:24.

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The world does not just hate Christ, it also detests His words. We ought always to rejoice in the words that He has spoken.²¹⁴⁹ Not simply in opposition to the world, but rather because they are “*the words of eternal life.*”²¹⁵⁰

In His High Priestly prayer the night before He died, the Lord Jesus observed that the world hated them because Christ had given them the words of the Father:

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.²¹⁵¹

Remember this warning:

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”²¹⁵²

[3] Joseph dreams again. (Genesis 37:9-11).

37:9.

Time passes and Joseph gets another dream. The word “*dream*” or “*dreamed*” appears six times in this section, so once again this is not merely a regular dream but a revelation from God. Now Joseph receives this dream and he then tells it to his brothers. My translation of verse 9 is shown below:

וַיִּחְלֶם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אֲחֵר וַיְסַפֵּר אֹתוֹ לְאֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר

and he dreamed again another dream and he recounted it to his brothers saying:

הִנֵּה חֲלֹמֹתִי חֲלוֹם עוֹד

behold I have dreamed a dream again

וְהִנֵּה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד עָשָׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִי

and behold the sun and the moon and one ten stars bowed down to me

2149 Psalm 119:16,103,140,162.

2150 John 6:68.

2151 John 17:14.

2152 Mark 8:38.

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In my rendering I have translated the Hebrew verb: סָפַר *sāpar*, as “*recounted*” because the basic meaning of this Hebrew word is “to scratch or scrape,” and thus “to inscribe” or “to write.” The Hebrew word for “book” (סֵפֶר *sēper*) is very similar in form. I think that the use of such a word indicates that Joseph after receiving the revelation by dream then wrote it down and in this way passed it on to his brothers and father.

Verse 9 continues with two more “*behold*” statements, indicating the importance of this dream and the need to pay attention. This time Joseph himself is at the centre, but all the other players are depicted as heavenly bodies. We may assume that Jacob was depicted by the sun and his brothers by the eleven stars, but whom does the moon represent as his mother had already died by this time? The other brothers had three mothers between them (Leah and the two maids Bilhah and Zilpah). It seems best to think of these heavenly bodies as depicting Jacob, Rachel and his eleven brothers, as this would suggest that even though she had died bodily, Rachel was still very much alive.

This dream is similar to the first but it is by no means identical. The meaning is plainer than in the first for Joseph is himself in the dream and not some image. Again Joseph is the one to whom all else must pay homage. But Joseph's father and brothers are put as heavenly bodies. The first dream had sheaves of wheat or some other crop and this would stand for all on the earth giving the raised and exalted sheaf obeisance. But now the heavenly bodies are paying homage to Joseph, so that in these two dreams we see the Saviour receiving worship both from those on earth and from all in heaven. Since Jacob and the brothers are put as heavenly bodies here, we also have an indirect reference to the resurrection and the new creation. Whereas Jacob and his family are by nature sheaves, that is, of the earth and human, now they are in the heavens, and so have been resurrected and made new.

These two dreams show at least four important truths which it will be worth summarising here:

1. In that the central focus of the first dream was of the earth (sheaves) but the second was on the heavens (sun, moon, stars), the Saviour is thus portrayed in prophetic types in both human (earthly) and divine (heavenly) form.
2. The raised and elevated sheaf stands for the Saviour in His resurrected and ascended/exalted state.
3. Just as homage must be paid to the raised and elevated sheaf, so worship will be paid to the resurrected and exalted Christ.
4. People who truly worship the exalted Saviour will themselves be raised to the heavens (since they are depicted in the second dream as sun, moon and stars).

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37:10.

Now this dream must have affected Joseph greatly. He recounts the dream first to his brothers and then he recounts it again, this time to his father and his brothers.²¹⁵³ The implication of this seems to be that Joseph was zealous in spreading the revelation he had received. He was not content merely with telling some, but it was so important to him (because it was from God) that he recounts it repeatedly.

At this point Jacob takes a stance. It is interesting that this is the first time we read of Jacob reprimanding any of his own family, and it would seem to be the wrong move. Again the meaning of the dream is clear and apparent. Jacob uses the same Hebrew word twice as a superlative emphasising the serious nature of what has been revealed. We might say that Jacob asks rhetorically: 'are you **seriously** saying that your mother and I and your brothers must bow down to the earth to you'? The point of the rebuke is essentially to belittle the revelation Joseph had received. In the words of an old tennis player bemoaning his misfortunes at Wimbledon: "you cannot be serious!"²¹⁵⁴

37:11.

Having poured scorn on Joseph and his dreams, we discover two concluding outcomes in verse 11. Joseph's brothers envied him. Why? Well obviously from the human point of view they envied their father's greater love for Joseph. They hated Joseph for his dreams and his words. Perhaps they were also envious because he had something about him which they simply could not emulate. In contrast Jacob *"kept the matter in mind."* Now this last phase is literally: "but his father kept the words." Might we be permitted to think here that Jacob kept hold of one of the books or tablets which Joseph had written down? I think that is a distinct possibility. This statement also triggers our memory to consider Mary's response to the way her baby son was viewed after the shepherds came and spread the news of the wonders they had seen:

But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²¹⁵⁵

And so we have Joseph presented to us as a prophetic type of the Saviour. But how would he fair?

2153 Genesis 37:9,10.

2154 John McEnroe, 1981.

2155 Luke 2:19.

Chapter 47.

Joseph sold into slavery. (37:12-36).

Analysis.

12 Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13 And Israel said to Joseph,

“Are not your brothers feeding *the flock* in Shechem?

Come, I will send you to them.”

So he said to him,

“Here I am.”

14 Then he said to him,

“Please go

and see if it is well with your brothers

and well with the flocks,

and bring back word to me.”

So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron,

and he went to Shechem.

15 Now a certain man found him,

and there he was,

wandering in the field.

And the man asked him, saying,

“What are you seeking?”

16 So he said,

“I am seeking my brothers.

Please tell me where they are feeding *their flocks*.”

17 And the man said,

“They have departed from here,

for I heard them say,

‘Let us go to Dothan.’”

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

18 Now when they saw him afar off,

even before he came near them,

they conspired against him to kill him.

19 Then they said to one another,

“Look, this dreamer is coming!

20 Come therefore, let us

now kill him

and cast him into some pit;

and we shall say,

‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’

We shall see what will become of his dreams!”

21 But Reuben heard *it*,

and he delivered him out of their hands,

and said,

“Let us not kill him.”

22 And Reuben said to them,

“Shed no blood,

but cast him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness,

and do not lay a hand on him”

—that he might

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deliver him out of their hands,
and bring him back to his father.

23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers,
that they stripped Joseph *of* his tunic,
the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him.

24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit.
And the pit *was* empty; *there was* no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat a meal.
Then they lifted their eyes and looked,
and there was a company of Ishmaelites,
coming from Gilead with their camels,
bearing spices, balm, and myrrh,
on their way to carry *them* down to Egypt.

26 So Judah said to his brothers,
“What profit *is there* if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?
27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites,
and let not our hand be upon him,
for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh.”

And his brothers listened.

28 Then Midianite traders passed by;
so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit,
and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver.
And they took Joseph to Egypt.

29 Then Reuben returned to the pit,
and indeed Joseph *was* not in the pit;
and he tore his clothes.

30 And he returned to his brothers and said,
“The lad *is* no *more*; and I, where shall I go?”

31 So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.

32 Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said,
“We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son’s tunic or not?”

33 And he recognized it and said,
“*It is* my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.”

34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him;
but he refused to be comforted, and he said,
“For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.”

Thus his father wept for him.

36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.

This part of Genesis 37 recounts the events which lead to Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt. Although it forms a continuous narrative, we shall view it under the natural pauses in the account as follows:

[1] Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers. (Genesis 37:12-14).

[2] Joseph has trouble finding them. (Genesis 37:15-17).

[3] The brothers plot to kill Joseph but Reuben intervenes. (Genesis 37:18-22).

[4] Judah suggests they sell Joseph whilst Reuben is away. (Genesis 37:23-28).

[5] Reuben retruns and the brothers lie to their father. (Genesis 37:29-36).

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Once again we can see many points of correspondence between Joseph's experiences and our Saviour's life. Now obviously what we have here is a true historical account of Jacob's family and their on-going family troubles. But over and above all of that is this remarkable prophetic picture of the coming "*Seed*" of the woman, the promised Saviour and King.

[1] Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers. (Genesis 37:12-14).



Figure 34: Important sites in Joseph's life.

37:12.

In Genesis 35:1 the Lord had told Jacob to leave Shechem after the dreadful affair with Dinah, and to go to Bethel further south, where he had met with God on his way to Padan Aram as he was fleeing from Esau. On the way, before reaching Bethlehem, Rachel died in childbirth, and then in Genesis 35:21 we discover that Jacob pitched his tent "*beyond the tower of Eder*" which was near Bethlehem. Then at the end of Genesis 35 in verse 27 we find that Isaac was about to die, and Jacob together with Esau come to him at Mamre, which is Hebron. Jacob and Esau bury their father (presumably in the same place that

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Abraham and Sarah were buried). Genesis 36 tells us all about Esau who lived in Seir/Edom, and then at the beginning of Genesis 37 (the end of Jacob's account) we read that: *“Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.”*²¹⁵⁶ So we must assume that Jacob was now pitched somewhere in the region of Hebron where his father and grandfather had resided, or near to Bethlehem where he buried Rachel (see figure 34).

At this point we find that the brothers set off to feed the flock of Jacob in Shechem some forty or so miles north of Hebron.²¹⁵⁷ Why did they go there? Was it that the pasture there was better than in Hebron? Or was it that they hankered after life in Shechem? I think, however, that we are meant to recall the story of Genesis 34 where Dinah was raped and treated so badly. What type of place was Shechem? The first thing that strikes as we remember this event, is the fact that the man who gave the place its name and so was *“prince”* of that city, took Dinah and *“violated her,”* that is, he abased or humiliated her, and made her unclean or polluted.²¹⁵⁸ A second striking feature of Shechem as exemplified by the prince of that land is the carnal desperation. Shechem demanded of his father that he procure Dinah for him as wife, and when his father approached Jacob he told him that Shechem's soul was consumed with an infatuating desire for Dinah.²¹⁵⁹ A third striking aspect to Shechem was its deceptive presentation, or its dissimulation. After speaking of his son's great *“love”* for Dinah, Hamor sought to win Jacob and his sons over by outlining the immense trade benefits that they might enjoy, all the while knowing that they were behind this union only to take advantage.²¹⁶⁰ Following on from this, the fourth striking aspect of Shechem was its focus on trade and the things of *this earth*.²¹⁶¹ The fifth striking thing about Shechem was their readiness to fit in with religious rites only as a means to gain something as a result. This superficial attitude is demonstrated by the fact that all the men were willing to become circumcised in the hope of greater profits.²¹⁶² Shechem may thus be presented as an example of this world's nature, being, and disposition. In that Jacob's sons Levi and Simeon, who were Dinah's brothers, slaughtered all the males, we see the enactment of God's judgement (even though they had no warrant from God directly), and this connects with the fact that Dinah's name means “judgment.” Whilst we do not condone Levi and Simeon's actions, nevertheless we can see this as a judgement upon the people of Shechem because of their sinful rebellious ways.

2156 Genesis 37:1.

2157 Genesis 37:12.

2158 Genesis 34:2,5.

2159 Genesis 34:4,8.

2160 Genesis 34:9,10,23.

2161 Genesis 34:23.

2162 Genesis 34:24.

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37:13.

Next we read that “*Israel*” had a mind to send Joseph to enquire after them.²¹⁶³ A look at the frequency of instances of the names “*Jacob*,” and “*Israel*,” (see table 47.1), shows that even when he received his new name in Genesis 32, he was still referred to by both names.

Table 47.1: Frequency of the names “Jacob” and “Israel” in Genesis.

Jacob 184x		Israel 43x	
Scripture.	<i>f</i>	Scripture.	<i>f</i>
25:26,27,28,29,30,31,33(x2),34.	9		
27:6,11,15,17,19,21,22(x2),30(x2),36,41(x2),42,46.	15		
28:1,5(x2),6,7,10,16,18,20.	9		
29:1,4,10(x2),11,12,13,15,18,20,21,23,28,30.	14		
30:1(x2),2,4,5,7,9,10,12,16,17,19,25,29*,31,36(x2),37,40,41,42.	20		
31:1(x2),2,3,4,11,17,20,22,24,25(x2),26,29,31,32,33,36(x2),43,45,46,47,51,53,54.	26		
32:1,2,3,4,6,7,9,18,20,24,25,27,28,29,30,32.	16	32:28,32.	2
33:1,10,13,17,18.	5	33:20.	1
34:1,3,5(x2),6,7(x2),13,19,25,27,30.	12	34:7.	1
35:1,2,4(x2),5,6,9,10(x2),14,15,20,22,23,26,27,29.	17	35:10(x2),21,22(x2).	5
36:6.	1	36:31.	1
37:1,2,34.	3	37:3,13.	2
42:1,4,29,36.	4	42:5.	1
		43:6,8,11.	3
45:25,26,27.	3	45:21,28.	2
46:2(x2),5(x2),6,8(x2),15,18,19,22,25,26(x2),27.	15	46:1,2,5,8,29,30.	6
47:7(x2),8,9,10,28(x2).	7	47:27,29,31.	3
48:2,3.	2	48:2,8,10,11,13(x2),14,20,21.	9
49:1,2,7,24,33.	5	49:2,7,16,24,28.	5
50:24.	1	50:2,25.	2

* not in Hebrew but supplied in English so not counted.

Nevertheless it seems to be significant here in verse 13 that the name “*Israel*” is used, for he is set here to represent God the Father. And so Israel (as God the Father) calls his son Joseph and says “*come, I will*

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send you to them.” In the same way, the Father sent the Son into the world!²¹⁶⁴ The writer A. W. Pink made this connection in the twentieth century:

One cannot read of what passed here between Jacob and Joseph without seeing that behind the historical narrative we are carried back to a point before time began, into the eternal counsels of the Godhead, and that we are permitted to learn something of what passed between the Father and the Son in the remote past. As the Lord God with Divine omniscience foresaw the fall of man, and the alienation of the race from Himself, out of the marvelous grace of His heart, He proposed that His beloved Son should go forth on a mission of mercy, seeking those who were away from the Father’s House.²¹⁶⁵

And then we find that the son, Joseph, was willing and ready to go, for he says *“here I am.”* The willingness of the Saviour is remarkable. There are many statements of the Saviour as to why He came, but one of the most marvellous comes in His teaching on the good Shepherd in John chapter 10 where He says these words:

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.²¹⁶⁶

37:14.

In verse 14 Israel gives Joseph further instructions. His words begin with a plea or an exhortation given in the NKJV as *“please,”* suggestive of an earnest request. Israel tells Joseph three reasons for the proposed journey. He was to *“go”*:

[1] and see if it is well with your brothers

[2] and well with the flocks

[3] and bring back word to me

The word rendered twice as *“well”* here is the Hebrew: שְׁלוֹם *š’lôm*, which has the meaning of well-being or peace. Israel must be concerned for his sons away in Shechem, for he is sending his precious Joseph on a mission to see how they are. Now spiritually we know that God knows all things. He is omniscient. How then are we to understand this sending of Joseph in any deeper sense? Or are we simply locked into an historical picture? Well, there are occasions where the Lord has come down on a mission of enquiry. Think, for example, of the Tower of Babel story, or of the judgement upon Sodom.²¹⁶⁷ It is not that He does not know. It is rather to demonstrate to all mankind the truth of the situation. God knows because He

2164 John 5:23,24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,44,57; 7:16,18,28,29,33; 8:16,18,26,29,42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44,45,49; 13:16,20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21.

2165 **A. W. Pink.** *Gleanings in Genesis*. Comments on Genesis 37. Chapter 41: “Joseph Betrayed By His Brethren.”

2166 John 10:10. See also John 8:29; Hebrews 10:5-0, for example.

2167 Genesis 11:5; 18:21.

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is God, but He comes at different times to make enquiry to show to one and all that what He knows, and what He has discovered by such an enquiry, are one and the same. And so Israel sends Joseph to observe or demonstrate the state of his brethren. Are they “*well*”? Are the flocks “*well*”? What then about the last statement: “*and bring back word to me*”? How do we understand this in eternal perspective? Was Christ to come into the world and then report back to the Father? Well what about the Lord's high priestly prayer as recorded in John 17 some of which we reproduce below:

4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ... 6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. ... 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.²¹⁶⁸

It would appear from these words that the Son is indeed reporting back to the Father. All the way through John's account we discover that the Son was not alone, and that He did not operate as a lone ranger doing what He thought was best. Rather He did only that which the Father Himself had done, and He spoke with the words that the Father gave Him.²¹⁶⁹ And so Joseph is commissioned to go to his brethren and their flocks, and then to report back to his father Israel on what he has found. Israel sends Joseph “*out of the Valley of Hebron*” and Joseph travels towards his brethren whom they thought were at Shechem. Hebron was the place where Abraham and Isaac had remained, and it is the place where Ephron's cave known as “*Machpelah*” was bought by Abraham, and where Sarah, Abraham and Isaac were buried.²¹⁷⁰ Shechem as we have noted, stands for the world in all its sin and rebellion. Thus Joseph is sent out from the home of those who were God's people into the realm of this world's business.

[2] Joseph has trouble finding them. (Genesis 37:15-17).

37:15,16.

Strangely we discover that when Joseph arrives in Shechem he does not find his brothers and their flocks. At first reading this looks as though Joseph is all at sea, and like a fish out of water he wanders about not knowing what to do. But then we need to examine the text a little more closely. We are not given the perspective of Joseph but rather we introduced to a “*certain man.*”²¹⁷¹ Thus we are shown how

2168 John 17:4,6-8,12.

2169 John 5:19; 12:49,50; 15:15.

2170 Genesis 13:18; 23:17-20; 25:8,9; 35:27-29.

2171 Genesis 37:15.

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Joseph's mission looks to an outsider, this "*certain man*." Now our text also makes it plain that Joseph was "*wandering in the field*." The Hebrew word (תָּעָה *tā'āh*) given as "*wandering*" means "to go astray, to err." On the human level, and in an historical sense, we see a seventeen year old boy who has gone on a journey of many miles to seek his brethren, but they are not where he thought they should be, and so he wanders almost aimlessly in the field. But the situation is presented to us from an *outsider's* perspective (that of this "*certain man*"). This young man looks as though he is lost and is merely wandering aimlessly in the field. That is how the mission of Christ is viewed upon by the world. The natural man is puzzled by the gospel. Now this "*certain man*" asks him what he is seeking, and he responds by saying that he is seeking his brothers, and he continues by asking this "*certain man*" where his brothers might be "*feeding their flocks*."²¹⁷² Spiritually speaking the "*field*" is the world. The mission is clear. Joseph seeks his brethren ("*I am seeking my brothers*"), and so we see the mission of Christ wonderfully displayed here. To the outsider it looks aimless (and in truth Joseph did probably display an image of aimlessness), but the Lord is not aimless! He is seeking His brethren.²¹⁷³ Now when we come to review the statements Christ made about His mission we find that uppermost was His mission to seek and save that which was lost:

for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. ²¹⁷⁴

For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. ²¹⁷⁵

Joseph was seeking his "lost" brothers and this pictures for us Christ coming to seek and to save those who have been lost in sin. A. W. Pink makes the same assessment:

"And Joseph went after his brethren." How these words gather up into a brief sentence the whole story recorded in the four Gospels! As the Redeemer went about from place to place, one end only was in view—He was going after His brethren. He enters the synagogue and reads from the prophet Isaiah, and with what object? That His brethren might be reached. He walks by the Sea of Galilee, seeking out those who should walk with Him for a season. He must needs go through Samaria we read; and why? Be cause there were some of His "brethren" in that place. Yes, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.²¹⁷⁶

37:17.

Now back in the historical setting of Joseph's journey the man tells him that they had departed from that region of Shechem, and had travelled north to Dothan, which lies about twelve miles north of

2172 Genesis 37:15,16.

2173 Genesis 37:16,17.

2174 Luke 19:10.

2175 Matthew 18:11.

2176 A. W. Pink. *Gleanings in Genesis*. Comments on Genesis 37. Chapter 41: "Joseph Betrayed By His Brethren."

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Samaria. We are told that this man overheard the brothers saying that they should go to Dothan (*“for I heard them say, ‘let us go to Dothan’”*). The name *“Dothan”* has the meaning “two cisterns,” so it appears to have been a well watered region. Presumably the flocks were in need of further watering and so the brothers moved on to there from Shechem. Joseph sets off with this information in mind and discovers them in that place. It is noteworthy that our text records simply that Joseph *“found them in Dothan.”* The lost brethren (as far as Joseph were concerned) have now been found. And thus we know with great certainty that Christ has found and will continue to find all those whom are, or were, lost and for whom He came.

[3] The brothers plot to kill Joseph but Reuben intervenes. (Genesis 37:18-22).

37:18,19.

The scene is now set. Joseph has *“found”* his brothers in Dothan, but what of the brothers?²¹⁷⁷ The perspective shifts from Joseph's journey towards his brothers, to the brothers' view of Joseph's coming.

At once we are told that the brothers could see him when he was some distance away. The text is rather emphatic because they could see him *“afar off”* and *“even before he came near.”* So before Joseph could do or say anything, his brothers were against him, for *“they conspired against him to kill him.”*²¹⁷⁸ This is a graphic description of the opposition Christ faced as He came into the world. The reader might balk at such a statement suggesting a gradual rise in opposition as we see recorded in the gospel accounts, but remember that even at His birth Herod the king wanted Christ killed.²¹⁷⁹ The word *“conspired”* indicates a degree of craftiness or deceit. The word is used to depict a deceiver, or the act of beguiling, or of being crafty.²¹⁸⁰ Perhaps they were intent on accepting him openly but in their hearts planning evil.

Consider how the brothers viewed Joseph. We have been told three times that the brothers *“hated”* Joseph, and the second and third occasions were with repeated intensity (*“they hated him even more”*).²¹⁸¹ Now they openly mock and ridicule him among themselves before he arrived in their company.²¹⁸² Christ was viciously mocked at His crucifixion, but He was ridiculed and mocked all through His ministry. Take for example the occasion where Jesus went to raise the ruler's daughter who had just died. When He informed those around her that she would be raised the mourners *“ridiculed”* the Lord.²¹⁸³ Specifically Joseph is mocked by his brothers because of the revelation he had received. They

2177 Genesis 37:17.

2178 Genesis 37:18.

2179 Matthew 2:16f.

2180 Numbers 25:18; Psalm 105:25; Malachi 1:14.

2181 Genesis 37:4,5,8.

2182 Genesis 37:19.

2183 Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53. See also: John 7:20; 8:48; 10:20.

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refer to him scathingly as “*this dreamer*.”²¹⁸⁴ In the same way the Lord was spoken evil of because of the revelation He brought. The Pharisees were indignant with what the Lord taught the people.²¹⁸⁵ Even the one Pharisee who seemed to want to know more (Nicodemus) had great trouble accepting the revelation Christ brought to him.²¹⁸⁶

37:20.

And so the brothers decide to murder their younger brother. The word “*therefore*” of verse 20 is actually an adverb of time, so is most often rendered as “now.” In other words, they are now putting into action their wicked plan. We might imagine that they had waited for such an opportunity for some time. Joseph is now away from Jacob, on his own, so, we might imagine the brothers saying: “lets do it!” Three statements are made in verse 20, but these are introduced by an imperative command (“*come*”) which has the sense of more than just a simple action. The verb employed is most frequently translated as “to walk” suggesting a path of action. It was as though they had been working up towards this point and set of measures. The same word is used of Lot's daughters who made their father drunk with wine in order that they could have a child by him. Their intent was premeditated and not simply a spur-of-the-moment crime of passion. And so they intended to “*kill him,*” to “*cast him into some pit,*” and then to concoct a lie about what happened to him. Thus not only had they no thought of his worth as a man made in the image of God, they also had no care about his treatment after death. This incident does not show us any faith among the brethren!

What of the lie that they had invented in verse 20? We know that when Christ rose from the dead the guards of the tomb were bought off and commanded to tell everyone that the body was stolen by the disciples.²¹⁸⁷ Here in this ancient story the brothers are going to deceive their father. How tragic. The original deceiver Jacob is now deceived by his own cunning sons. It is also clear that what really irked these men, was not so much their brother as the revelatory dreams he received. They thought that by doing away with Joseph, the dreams would also die with him. How remarkable is the correspondence between this and what we know of our Saviour's experience! The Jewish leaders thought that doing away with the Saviour would end all associated with Him! The high priest at the time of Christ actually thought that by having Christ killed it would be better for the nation as a result.²¹⁸⁸ Of course he was only thinking in connection with the Roman occupation. He was totally unaware that his outburst was, in fact, prophetic.²¹⁸⁹

2184 Genesis 37:19.

2185 Matthew 9:11,34; 12:2,34; Luke 19:37-40; John 5:16-23.

2186 John 3:4,9.

2187 Matthew 28:11-15.

2188 John 11:49,50.

2189 John 11:49,50; 18:14.

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37:21,22.

Now in amongst the brothers, Reuben the eldest comes to hear of their talk. It would seem that Reuben was not among the main group of brothers when this talk began, and when he comes on the scene he sought to deliver Joseph *“out of their hands”* by saying that they ought not to kill him.²¹⁹⁰ Reuben then counselled that they should *“shed no blood,”* and instead they should throw him into a pit in the wilderness, but they were not to *“lay a hand on him.”*²¹⁹¹ Reuben commanded respect as the eldest. He operated as he did because he sought to rescue Joseph from his brothers delivering him *“out of their hands”* so that he could *“bring him back to his father.”*²¹⁹² What, then, are we to make of this accurate historical record? What does it teach us? Well perhaps this reflects the repeated occasions when our Saviour was in danger of arrest and death (from a human point of view) during His ministry on earth. On one occasion the people were so indignant with what they heard of the Lord's teaching, that they attempted to throw Him off a cliff!²¹⁹³ They were unsuccessful, of course, for this was not yet His hour.²¹⁹⁴ But then on another occasion the Jews sought to stone Him, although again they were unsuccessful once more.²¹⁹⁵ Like Reuben, there were also those who sought to argue His case even though they were weak and impotent. For example, we reflect on the fact that Pilate's wife had a dream and told her husband:

Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.²¹⁹⁶

[4] Judah suggests they sell Joseph whilst Reuben is away. (Genesis 37:23-28).

37:23.

We have already noted earlier at verse 3 of this chapter, that the garment Jacob gave to Joseph was a royal robe which might have been gorgeously embroidered but was really a long flowing coat with long sleeves reaching down to the wrists and ankles. By such, Jacob was identifying Joseph as set apart, a royal (priestly) son.

And so as Joseph reaches the brothers they *“stripped Joseph of his tunic.”* It is notable that the text repeats the word *“tunic”* which reflects the Hebrew (*“they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic ..”*). The focus is upon attempting to remove the very thing that so irritated these brothers – Jacob's love for

2190 Genesis 37:21.

2191 Genesis 37:22.

2192 Genesis 37:22.

2193 Luke 4:29.

2194 John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20.

2195 John 8:37; 10:31.

2196 Matthew 27:19.

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Joseph.

Twice we read in the New Testament of someone being stripped of their robes. First we read of Christ being stripped and then being forced to wear *“a scarlet robe,”* after which the soldiers mocked Him.²¹⁹⁷ But then second we read in Luke of the parable of the good Samaritan in which a man was *“stripped ... of his clothing”* before being wounded and left half dead.²¹⁹⁸ To be stripped of clothing is to be forced into open shame, to be humiliated. But in the case of Joseph the coat was his badge and his status as Jacob's chosen one. The brothers sought to remove this position in Jacob's heart by removing the splendid coat. To humiliate, to cast down, and to remove all dignity in the eyes of men, Christ was de-robed and crucified. But what a tragic mistake! For He was ever His Father's only begotten and beloved Son.

37:24,25.

Having de-robed their younger brother, the brothers then threw him into a pit which is described as being empty as *“there was no water in it.”*²¹⁹⁹ The pit, of course, represents the dungeon of the earth, the realm of the dead. Zechariah in his prophecy speaks of rescue from such a place referring to it as *“the waterless pit”*:

As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.²²⁰⁰

And so the Saviour entered death.²²⁰¹ The brothers seem to have no care nor concern for what they had done, as we then read straight away that *“they sat down to eat a meal.”*²²⁰² How unbelievably callous! When Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, and all the Jewish leaders had secured the Saviour's execution, I do not imagine such an event occasioned any change in their regular dietary habits and their feasting.²²⁰³

As the brothers were eating they saw a group of *“Ishmaelites”* coming from Gilead. These were traders who were on their way from Gilead, the land of the precious balm, to Egypt to sell their wares. It must have been some company as we read that they had *“camels,”* and that these bore *“spices, balm, and myrrh.”*²²⁰⁴ As we have noted elsewhere, Gilead was renown for its precious balm, but myrrh was also a

2197 Matthew 27:28-31.

2198 Luke 11:30.

2199 Genesis 37:24.

2200 Zechariah 9:11.

2201 See Matthew 12:40.

2202 Genesis 37:25.

2203 The soldiers who crucified Jesus sat down and watched: Matthew 27:36.

2204 Genesis 37:25.

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product of the land of Canaan, and this was used as a perfume and for embalming mainly in these times.²²⁰⁵

37:26,27.

At this point, as they could see the distant Ishmaelite traders, Judah makes a suggestion. He sees the opportunity to make some money.²²⁰⁶ We cannot help but recall the fact that a disciple with a similar name sold our Saviour to the Jewish authorities. The names *“Judah”* and *“Judas”* both mean the same thing: “let him be praised” speaking prophetically of the worship due to the Lord, our Saviour.²²⁰⁷ Both sold a brother for a sum of money. It matters little that these events do not track in exact order the details of our Saviour's life, for He was sold by Judas and then crucified. The point here is that his brothers valued Joseph in terms of what they could get out of him, (a sum of money), and this is precisely what Judas did with Christ.

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests **15** and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. **16** So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.²²⁰⁸

In verse 27 we discover even deeper hypocrisy and deception. The brothers had initially wanted to kill Joseph but were stayed from such an action by Reuben. Here they are simply concerned to make a profit but are not really concerned about the life of their brother. He would be taken by Ishmaelites and traded as a slave, so his prospects were not at all that good. They were, in effect, sending Joseph to an early death, although they were not actually causing his demise. And yet they console themselves that such an action (from which they sought monetary gain) was better than laying their hands on him themselves, because *“he is our brother and our flesh.”*²²⁰⁹ This reminds me of Pilate washing his hands and yet securing Christ's crucifixion, or of the Jews not wanting to defile themselves in going to Pilate to secure Christ's death, and asking him to do the dirty work because they were not able to pass a sentence of execution themselves. Such duplicity is sadly a common part of life but it ought not to be.²²¹⁰ And so his brothers all agreed to this perfidious action.

2205 Esther 2:12; Psalms 45:8; Proverbs 7:17; Song of Solomon 3:6;5:13; 4:6,14; 5:1; John 19:39.

2206 Genesis 37:26.

2207 Genesis 29:35.

2208 Matthew 27:14-16.

2209 Genesis 37:27.

2210 Matthew 27:24; John 18:28-32.

37:28.

In verse 28 we read of Midianite traders rather than Ishmaelites and this might suggest some confusion. We then discover that Joseph is actually sold off to the Ishmaelites. And then we learn that it was the Midianites who sold him to Potiphar in Egypt.²²¹¹ Finally, when the story reverts back to Egypt after a detour in chapter 38, we discover that Potiphar purchased Joseph *“from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.”*²²¹² How are such facts to be resolved?

Well in the first place, it would appear that there was probably a long line of traders walking the route amongst which Ishmaelites and Midianites could be observed. The way in which the narrative speaks of Ishmaelites first and then Midianites gives this impression of a long band of traders passing by. It was when the brothers saw the Midianite traders that they were prompted to act. They gather Joseph up out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites who were then approaching. But then in amongst these were Midianites and later on it is possible that Joseph was sold a second time to these men before he reached Egypt, and then maybe a third time before he finally arrived. Joseph would have been quite a catch as a young man in his prime.

But then second, we should recall that Midian was a son of Abraham by Keturah, whilst Ishmael was a son of Abraham by Hagar.²²¹³ After giving Isaac all that he had, Abraham then sent his concubines and their children far away to the east:

“But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.”²²¹⁴

So it would seem that Ishmael and Midian became intermingled. The explanation would then be that these two terms had become interchangeable.

Joseph is *“lifted”* out of the pit and here we see a picture of the resurrection. In that the order of events seems awkward here with Joseph being cast down into the pit and then being raised up to be sold, we are not to be overly concerned. Looking simply at the action of the brothers, they intended Joseph to die and figuratively speaking he did by going down into the pit. But at another level we see their intentions of profiting from Joseph and so they sell him to the Ishmaelite traders. Looking at the events in this alternative way we see a different picture of the type, namely, Judas' betrayal. The two strands of prophetic revelation are overlaid. In the one strand we see death and resurrection, but in the other we see the betrayal of Christ by Judas.

2211 Genesis 37:36.

2212 Genesis 39:1.

2213 Genesis 16:1f; 25:1f.

2214 Genesis 25:6.

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Considering the value paid for Joseph (twenty shekels of silver), we find a curious correspondence of this value in Leviticus chapter 27. This chapter speaks about the valuation of people who are consecrated by vow to the Lord. A man between the ages of twenty and sixty was valued at fifty shekels, but a boy aged between five and twenty was only valued at twenty shekels.²²¹⁵ Recall that at the start of this new section we were told that Joseph was seventeen years old, and thus fits in nicely with what we learn from Leviticus.²²¹⁶ And so Joseph is now on his way into Egypt.

[5] Reuben returns and the brothers lie to their father. (Genesis 37:29-36).

37:29,30.

Then we discover that whilst the brothers have been busy selling Joseph off, Reuben has been elsewhere, although we do not know what he was doing. Reuben returns and coming to the pit he discovers that Joseph was nowhere to be seen.²²¹⁷ Can we not see in this detail the history recounted by Luke after the resurrection when the women came to an empty tomb?²²¹⁸ Tearing his clothes as a sign of sorrow and grief, Reuben *“returned to his brothers”* and pours out his heart. What was he to do now?²²¹⁹ From these brief details it would appear that the pit was some distance from where the brothers had their meal and were tending the sheep. Reuben, it seems, is far more concerned than his brothers. The term *“lad”* reinforces the young age of Joseph, but Reuben is distraught and believes that Joseph is now dead (*“the lad is no more”*).²²²⁰ How would Reuben as the eldest bear the news to his father?

37:31-36.

Together the brothers take Joseph's special coat and dipped it in the blood of a *“kid of the goats.”*²²²¹ This was then sent to Jacob.²²²² In this act can we not see the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ as the blood of the scapegoat, a sin offering, presented to the father? The question the brothers pose to their father was a hideous lie.²²²³ Jacob can do no other than conclude that Joseph has died at the hands of a *“wild beast,”* for he instantly recognised the torn coat.²²²⁴ Jacob is now distraught and it showed.²²²⁵ To lose the son of his great love Rachel must have been hard to bear, to say the very least. His sorrow is

2215 Leviticus 27:3,5.

2216 Genesis 37:2.

2217 Genesis 37:29.

2218 Luke 24:1-4. Note: the differing accounts have been very well collated by **Geoffrey R. King** in his book: *“The Forty Days” (From Calvary to the ascension)*.

2219 Genesis 37:30.

2220 Genesis 37:30. See Jeremiah 31:15 for a similar expression of loss of life.

2221 Genesis 37:31.

2222 Genesis 37:32.

2223 Genesis 37:32.

2224 Genesis 37:33.

2225 Genesis 37:34.

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greater than those around him can deal with, for *“he refused to be comforted”* of them.²²²⁶ The narrative ends with a statement which would be unknown to the brothers and Jacob. Joseph is now in Egypt and had been sold by the Midianite traders *“to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.”*²²²⁷ Presumably these Midianite traders were on their way to Egypt and so had purchased Joseph from the Ishmaelites to whom the brothers had initially sold him.

Joseph lands up as servant or slave to a man who was both *“an officer of Pharaoh,”* and also a *“captain of the guard.”*²²²⁸ Clearly this man had some prominent position within Egypt. Perhaps not in the top tier, but certainly among the well-to-do of that society. His name is linked to the Egyptian religion.

2226 Genesis 37:35.

2227 Genesis 37:36.

2228 Genesis 37:36.

Chapter 48.

Judah and Tamar. (38:1-30).

Analysis.

#38 1 It came to pass at that time that

Judah departed from his brothers,
and visited a certain Adullamite whose name *was* Hirah.

2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name *was* Shua,
and he married her and went in to her.

3 So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.

4 She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan.

5 And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah.
He was at Chezib when she bore him.

6 Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name *was* Tamar.

7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord killed him.

8 And Judah said to Onan,

“Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother.”

9 But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother.

10 And the thing which he did displeased the Lord; therefore He killed him also.

11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law,

“Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown.”

For he said,

“Lest he also die like his brothers.”

And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

12 Now in the process of time

the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died;
and Judah was comforted,
and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

13 And it was told Tamar, saying,

“Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.”

14 So she

took off her widow's garments,
covered *herself* with a veil and wrapped herself,
and sat in an open place which *was* on the way to Timnah;
for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she *was* a harlot, because she had covered her face.

16 Then he turned to her by the way, and said,

“Please let me come in to you”;

for he did not know that she *was* his daughter-in-law.

So she said,

“What will you give me, that you may come in to me?”

17 And he said,

“I will send a young goat from the flock.”

So she said,

“Will you give *me* a pledge till you send *it*?”

18 Then he said,

“What pledge shall I give you?”

So she said,

“Your signet and cord, and your staff that *is* in your hand.”

Then he gave *them* to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.

19 So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood.

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20 And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her.

21 Then he asked the men of that place, saying,

“Where is the harlot who *was* openly by the roadside?”

And they said,

“There was no harlot in this *place*.”

22 So he returned to Judah and said,

“I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this *place*.”

23 Then Judah said,

“Let her take *them* for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her.”

24 And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying,

“Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she *is* with child by harlotry.”

So Judah said,

“Bring her out and let her be burned!”

25 When she *was* brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying,

“By the man to whom these belong, I *am* with child.”

And she said,

“Please determine whose these *are*—the signet and cord, and staff.”

26 So Judah acknowledged *them* and said,

“She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.”

And he never knew her again.

27 Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins *were* in her womb.

28 And so it was, when she was giving birth, that *the one* put out *his* hand; and the midwife took a scarlet *thread* and bound it on his hand, saying,

“This one came out first.”

29 Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said,

“How did you break through? *This* breach *be* upon you!”

Therefore his name was called Perez.

30 Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet *thread* on his hand.

And his name was called Zerah.

We are now treated to an interlude to the main account which centres on the history of Joseph. But this is by no means a distraction, nor is it mere space-filling after thought – perish the thought! It is rather rich with instruction for the Christian. Judah had been the ring-leader in the plan to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelite/Midiane merchants.²²²⁹ Now we find that Judah has “*departed from his brothers.*”²²³⁰ In these simple words we see a man who has fallen away from all that is true, to pursue his own agenda.

The account of Genesis 38 is self-contained and is one long historical record of Judah's family and life having left his brethren. We shall follow it under the following five stages that the history follows:

[1] Judah falls away. (Genesis 38:1-5).

[2] Judah's family grows but not in favour with God. (Genesis 38:6-11).

[3] Tamar resorts to play the harlot with Judah. (Genesis 38:12-19).

[4] Tamar is more righteous than Judah. (Genesis 38:20-26).

[5] The birth of Tamar's twins. (Genesis 38:27-30).

2229 Genesis 37:26,27.

2230 Genesis 38:1.

[1] Judah falls away. (Genesis 38:1-5).

The opening phrase: *“it came to pass at that time”* suggests that what we are about to read occurred either during what went before, or very shortly thereafter.²²³¹ Thus this time was probably shortly after Joseph was sold. Now we must note that there were only only twenty two or twenty three years between this event when Joseph was seventeen and their eventual journeying to Egypt with Jacob when Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old.²²³² This is just enough time for Judah to become a grandfather through Perez's sons.²²³³

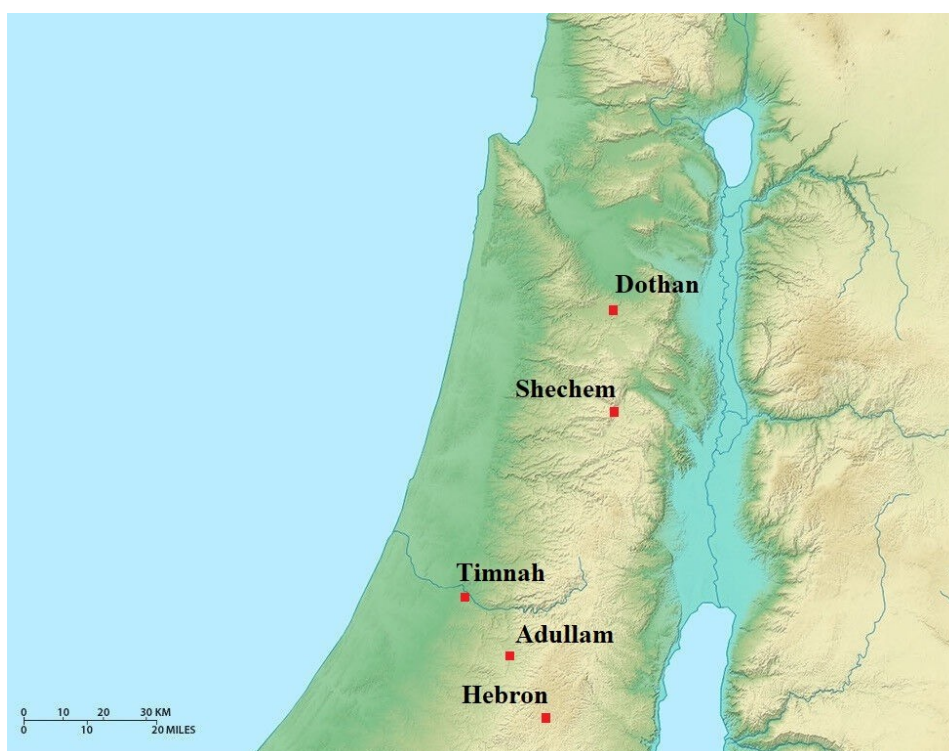


Figure 35: Locations connected with Judah's departure.

38:1.

And so we discover that *“Judah departed from his brothers.”*²²³⁴ The word rendered *“departed”* really means “went down” or “descended.” Given the location (which we shall consider shortly – see figure 35) this makes sense as the region Judah settled in was on the lower slopes of those hills. Thus Judah “went down” because it was towards the sea, and the road was actually a descent from the hill

2231 Genesis 38:1.

2232 Joseph would be thirty nine at this point. He was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh before the seven years of plenty and then the two of famine which would bring Jacob and his sons down to Egypt. See: Genesis 41:46; 46:12; 47:9,28.

2233 Genesis 46:12.

2234 Genesis 38:1.

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country of Judah into the Shephelah, or lowland, in which Adullam was situated. However the main point in this account is that Judah left his brethren, and so drifted from the family, and hence departed from the place of God's blessing. Now Adullam was a royal city of Canaan which lay about 22.5 miles (36 km) west south west of Jerusalem, 10 miles east south east of Gath, and about 10 miles north west of Hebron (figure 35). It lies in the great valley of Elah, which formed the highway from Hebron to the country of the Philistines.

And so Judah comes to a *“certain Adullamite”* by the name of Hirah. Now in this passage we have a selection of names, the meaning of which are important (see table 48.1).

Table 48.1: Meanings of various names in Genesis 38.

Name.	Meaning.	Further information.
Adullam	Justice for the people.	See: Joshua 12:15; 15:35; 2Chronicles 11:7; Nehemiah 11:30; Micah 1:15. Later David would dwell in the cave of Adullam 1Samuel 22:1; 2Samuel 23:13; 1Chronicles 11:15.
Hirah	A noble family.	The root in this name is used of nobles who were adorned in splendid apparel, but also of their purity of descent, for the root has the idea of whiteness. ²²³⁵
Shua	Wealth.	
Er	Awake, watchful.	
Onan	Strong OR Iniquity.	The name signifies, to experience much trouble or to have much vigour.
Shelah	Petition, thing asked for (prayer).	
Chezib	False, lying, deceptive.	May also indicate a deficiency in water because the root word is used of failing brooks in hot climes, ²²³⁶
Tamar	Palm tree.	

Adullam was a royal city with nobility and significant wealth. Having left his brothers Judah first visits Hirah the Adullamite. Now the word *“visited”* actually means “settled,” or “turned aside to.” He may have come across Hirah somehow, and then decided to settle near to this man.²²³⁷

38:2-5.

And so Judah comes across a young woman by the name of *“Shua”* whose name means “wealth.”²²³⁸ Judah marries this catch of Adullam, and soon the first son was born and named *“Er,”*

2235 Jones. P154

2236 Jones. P87.

2237 Genesis 38:1.

2238 Genesis 38:2.

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followed in quick succession by “*Onan,*” and then “*Shelah.*”²²³⁹ The last named son (“*Shelah*”) was born in “*Chezib,*” the name of which means “false,” “lying,” or “deceptive.” The names and circumstances of this departure indicate that Judah stands for one who has back slidden. The focus of this region (from the meaning of the names) is of wealth, power, and deceit – all hallmarks of what this world has to offer.

[2] Judah's family grows but not in favour with God. (Genesis 38:6-11).

38:6,7.

And so in the process of time Judah finds a wife for his son “*Er*” presumably from among those of this region, whose name is “*Tamar.*”²²⁴⁰ But for some reason, Er “*was wicked in the sight of the Lord*” and so “*the Lord killed him.*”²²⁴¹ Read baldly we are horrified. If anyone else were to consider another **wicked** in their personal view, would we accept them taking the life of this person? Of course not! But we forget both God and ourselves in nature. God is pure, good and righteous. He never does anything untoward, evil or out of true. All He does is good always. We forget also that we are created beings and that the day of our death has been appointed for us by this good and righteous Creator God.²²⁴² Further we forget just how wicked we are.²²⁴³ I am struck by the way Matthew records the healing of the paralytic man in chapter nine of his account. Whereas Luke and Mark give us detail, in Matthew we are simply presented with the paralytic man before the Lord.²²⁴⁴ On seeing the man's friends' faith, Jesus simply states that the man's sins had been forgiven. And then without a moment to draw breath, the Lord knowing the thoughts of those around Him who were saying in their hearts that He was blaspheming, Jesus then asks them the question: “*For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’?*”²²⁴⁵ Immediately following this the Lord raises the man from his bed of paralysis with a word to demonstrate the fact that He had “*power on earth to forgive sins.*”²²⁴⁶ What is so striking here is that presented with a man who was utterly helpless and in need of others to carry him, the Lord pronounces him forgiven. He fully intended to heal the man, of course, but He attends to the most important thing first – forgiveness. This is our greatest need. We stand before the Lord as helpless, hopeless, and hapless. We stand before the Lord as guilty and condemned sinners. In seeing the Lord take the life of Judah's firstborn son Er we bow to His wisdom. God knows the thoughts and actions of man,

2239 Genesis 38:3,4,5.

2240 Genesis 38:6.

2241 Genesis 38:7.

2242 Hebrews 9:27.

2243 Jeremiah 17:9.

2244 Matthew 9:1f; Mark 2:1f; Luke 5:17f.

2245 Matthew 9:5.

2246 Matthew 9:6.

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and He knew the wickedness of this man and the havoc he may have created. He knows also the right course of action for all events. Always remember that God is good. He knows the point at which there is no return for a person, and Er must have been hopelessly lost, erring greatly in his sin with no thought of repentance or of seeking God.

38:8.

Judah then tells his second son “*Onan*” to take his responsibility of continuing on the family name of the firstborn. This custom is described latter in detail.²²⁴⁷ From what we read here in Genesis 38:8 it would appear that this custom was ancient. Again we do not suppose that Judah borrowed the idea from his pagan neighbours, nor that he invented it himself. Since the concept was enshrined in the latter Mosaic record of Deuteronomy, we believe that the Lord revealed such a custom to the patriarchs and that this was then enshrined in law by God through Moses. We have no record of when this practice was revealed to the patriarchs save for this incident that we are studying here and now. But since the law encapsulates the very nature of God, as well as the whole duty of man, we cannot accept that the Lord would be backward and simply accommodating what had been normal custom and practice amongst fallen men of the world. Everywhere in Scripture we are shown that God has a perfect plan in operation, which has been from the very beginning. And so Judah tells Onan to do his duty as brother and provide a son for Er.

38:9,10.

Onan was, it appears, just as wicked as his brother Er. Rather than remonstrate with his father and act in integrity, he appears to have married Tamar but was the first recorded in Scripture to practice contraception. Thus during sex with Tamar, the moment he reaches climax and was about to ejaculate, Onan withdrew and “*emitted on the ground.*”²²⁴⁸ Now Onan “*knew that the heir would not be his*” and would in-point-of-fact be his deceased brother's.²²⁴⁹ Thus his action was essentially deceitful. He had obeyed Judah in marrying Tamar, but he had no intention of carrying out the intended purpose of such a union. It also appears that he had some disdain or (possibly) hatred for his deceased brother, because he did not want to “*give an heir to his brother.*”²²⁵⁰ Now whether Tamar was aware of this and passed the information on, or whether God alone knew we cannot be certain. But it is very clear from the text that in his deceit his actions and heart were revealed to the Lord, for what he did “*displeased the Lord,*” and as a consequence the Lord “*killed him also.*”²²⁵¹ It would appear that Er and Onan were both wicked men who could know no repentance.

2247 Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

2248 Genesis 38:9.

2249 Genesis 38:9.

2250 Genesis 38:9.

2251 Genesis 38:10.

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38:11.

In the opening verses of Genesis 38 we are told that Judah's wife Shua had three sons one after the other. First Er, then Onan, and finally Shelah.²²⁵² It would seem that there was little time between each conception and birth, so that Shelah would be (perhaps) two years junior to Er and a year younger than Onan. Thus what we discover in verse 11 is rather surprising. Seeing that the Lord had killed Er because he was wicked, and then seeing that the Lord had killed Onan because of his deceptive self-interest, Judah is worried about losing his third son Shelah. So Judah tells Tamar to wait, for he is very worried that Shelah would *“also die like his brothers.”* What Judah actually says to Tamar may have had an element of truth in it. It may have been that Shelah was not yet 'of age' as far as Judah was concerned. However the main thrust of his speech is to order Tamar to wait. He has not discarded her, for she remained with Judah in his household. Judah's action is very much like those who put off things with excuses, but always leave the ones put off thinking they will get what is due shortly. It is rather like the attractive girl who gives a young lad hope that he has a chance with her but is given excuse after excuse for not coming out on a date. Or the hopeful person who wants to make it in the film business and hangs around the set doing all they can to get noticed but never quite makes it. Tamar is left hanging in hope.

[3] Tamar resorts to play the harlot with Judah. (Genesis 38:12-19).

38:12.

And so Tamar is in Judah's house waiting for Shelah to take his responsibility. Verse 12 begins with an interesting phrase: **וַיָּרְבוּ הַיָּמִים**, which can be rendered: *“and in the greatness of days”* suggesting that some considerable time has passed. It is a phrase unlike the more usual phrase based on the verb “to be” which is often rendered as “and it came to pass” or “and it was.” Thus some time has elapsed and it would appear that Judah's command to Tamar to wait has been pressed too far. This length of time is beyond what may have been expected for Tamar to wait,

And so after these long or many days, Judah's wife Shua dies. Judah has forgotten Tamar and her situation and is rather self-absorbed with his own feelings and loss. We read that *“Judah was comforted”* and that he *“went up”* to those of his company who were shearing the sheep at *“Timnah”* where his close friend *“Hirah the Adullamite”* resided.

38:13,14.

Judah does not inform Tamar of his plans but she hears from someone who *“told”* her that her *“father-in-law”* was going north west to shear sheep at Timnah.²²⁵³ And so it was that Tamar took

2252 Genesis 38:3,4,5.

2253 Genesis 38:13.

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advantage of this situation.²²⁵⁴ We are told of three actions she takes and the reason for her actions. From what transpires it seems as though Judah was taking his sheep north to Timnah, and Tamar goes ahead of him to put her deceptive plan into action. Tamar discarded her widow's garments and then covered and wrapped herself completely “*with a veil*” in order to disguise herself.²²⁵⁵ Then she sat down “*in an open place*” on the road to Timnah, knowing that Judah would be passing along any moment.²²⁵⁶ This designation “*open place*” is not the best translation of the Hebrew, although it gives the force of what Tamar was doing. A selection of translations are shown below:

NKJV	NASB	YLT	ESV
sat in an <u>open place</u> which <i>was</i> on the way to Timnah.	sat in the <u>gateway of Enaim</u> , which is on the road to Timnah.	sitteth in the <u>opening of Enayim</u> , which [is] by the way to Timnath.	sat at the <u>entrance to Enaim</u> , which is on the road to Timnah

The Hebrew reads thus:

וַתֵּשֶׁב בַּפֶּתַח עֵינַיִם

and she sat in the entrance

Most translators think that the Hebrew word עֵינַיִם suggests a town on the way to Timnah. The expression then would be: “*and she sat at the entrance to ‘ênayim.*” The actual meaning of this Hebrew (עֵינַיִם) word is “two fountains” according to *Davidson*, and it occurs also in a contracted form in Joshua 15:34.²²⁵⁷ The Hebrew root for this word is עֵין ‘*ayin*, which means “eye,” and the Hebrew word: עֵינַיִם ‘*ênayim* is a dual which would signify “two eyes.” Thus Tamar sits by a town that was probably furnished by a double fountain (or dual spring), fully veiled and covered from head to toe with only her two eyes appearing. Although she is in full view in an “*open place*” as the NKJV has it, and is looking out with her two eyes which is all that could be seen of her, she is sitting at a place where two other eyes (the Lord's) are watching as well. Tamar's action has been taken because she knew that despite Shelah's coming of age (“*was grown*”), he was not given to her as wife.²²⁵⁸

2254 Genesis 38:14.

2255 Genesis 38:14.

2256 Genesis 38:14.

2257 *Davidson*. P597.

2258 Genesis 38:14.

38:15-19.

Verse 15 reads as follows:

וַיִּרְאֶה יְהוּדָה וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לְזוֹנָה כִּי כִסְתָּהּ פָּנֶיהָ

and when he looked Judah he thought she to/for a harlot because she had covered her face

And so it was that Judah came by, and seeing the disguised Tamar requests her services assuming her to be a *“harlot.”*²²⁵⁹ The word for *“harlot”* here (זֹנֶה *zānāh*) is simply that which draws our attention to fornication or adultery. The same word is used again in verse 24 when Tamar's pregnancy was discovered. Now Judah made this assumption *“because she had covered her face,”* so presumably at that time prostitution was acceptable culturally but not respectable or something to be openly flaunted.²²⁶⁰ Judah is direct with Tamar, and our text simply adds that he did not know to whom he was speaking.²²⁶¹ Such is the low point to which Judah has fallen having *“departed from his brothers.”*²²⁶² It is probable that Judah missed the intimacy he knew with Shua, and was simply gratifying his bodily desires. Such a carnal attitude is shameful but all too well known amongst men.

Tamar asks what Judah was prepared to pay, and so Judah offers the promise of a *“young goat”* from his flock, which was presumably following along some distance away.²²⁶³ Not trusting him she asks for a *“pledge,”* to which Judah responds by asking what such may be.²²⁶⁴ Tamar now seizes the opportunity and takes advantage by getting Judah to part with his *“signet,” “cord,”* and *“staff.”* The signet was a ring or seal by which a person could identify themselves or set their seal to any agreement or contract. The *“cord”* was simply the means by which the signet was kept. This was a personal item. In modern times we do not have signets or seals, but we do have credit cards and driving licenses which are kept in personal wallets or purses. The *“staff”* was his tool of trade as a shepherd. Thus in these three items we have Judah's identity, his personality and his profession. In effect, all that he was or possessed was encapsulated in these items. Judah must have been very desperate, for he readily gave them to her and then almost immediately we discover that Tamar has conceived by him.²²⁶⁵ At this point we cannot help but have in mind the teaching from the book of Proverbs 7. Judah having departed from his own family has now fallen into the ways of this world, and in so doing will be confronted permanently with the fruits of his fall. Sin always brings forth consequences. Tamar is now bearing Judah's son but this will

2259 Genesis 38:15,16.

2260 Genesis 38:15.

2261 Genesis 38:16.

2262 Genesis 38:1.

2263 Genesis 38:16,17.

2264 Genesis 38:17,18.

2265 Genesis 38:18.

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turn out for great blessing. Such could not have been expected, but the grace of God is always a marvellous thing to behold. Before we get to the blessing, however, Judah has to be brought to confession and repentance. In the meantime Tamar goes back and re-clothes herself with the garb of a widow.²²⁶⁶

[4] Tamar is more righteous than Judah. (Genesis 38:20-26).

38:20.

Judah, having satisfied his lusts, now seeks to retrieve his signet, cord, and staff given as pledge by presenting the agreed payment to the harlot at the roadside. Judah was not honest enough to go himself but sends *“his friend the Adullamite,”* which we presume was Hirah although he is not named here. Presumably there was some secretive element to this. Judah probably asked Hirah to settle up with the harlot so that he would be spared the publicity, and presumably his friend knew how these awkward things were done. How like a deceptive person to get another to do the dirty work! Judah was seeking to be honourable, only within this world's orb and jurisdiction. He wanted his signet, cord and staff and was willing to pay up, but he was not willing for this to be openly known. There is no thought of God nor of His watchful eyes.

Hirah tried to locate the harlot but was unable to find her, and this suggests either that harlotry was not practised a lot in those times or regions, or that the location was an unusual one for a harlot. In that Hirah was willing to act for Judah it seems likely that harlotry was not uncommon, and so this rather suggests that the place chosen by Tamar was not the normal place for harlots. Tamar was simply seeking to trick Judah into making her conceive, she was not seeking to become a harlot. We do not condone her actions at all, but we do recognise that she was not, in actual fact, a harlot in the regular sense of that word.

38:21,22.

Verse 21 continues with Hirah seeking for the harlot. As she was nowhere to be seen he made enquiries of *“the men of that place.”*²²⁶⁷ His question reflects the nature of Tamar's display, for he asks where the harlot was *“who was openly by the roadside.”*²²⁶⁸ Again the NKJV is not perfect as a translation but does give a sense of what is meant. Literally we have:

2266 Genesis 38:19.

2267 Genesis 38:21.

2268 Genesis 38:21.

אֵיהָ הַקְדָּשָׁה הוּא בְּעֵינַיִם עַל-הַדָּרֶךְ

where [is] the ritual harlot she in/with/by 'ênayim upon the road

We have already noted that the name of the town ('ênayim), signifies two eyes looking on which reflects Tamar's appearance (all that could be seen were her eyes), and the fact that another was looking on. In verse 21 it would appear that Hirah is making direct reference to the appearance of Tamar for all that could be seen were her eyes. Thus we could render verse 21 as follows:

where [is] the ritual harlot she with **two eyes** upon the road

The word for "*harlot*" used by Hirah is different to the one used by Judah. Here the word signifies a ritual prostitute or one unclean. The male form signifies a sodomite devoted to some false god. The men of that region respond by saying that there were no such prostitutes in that place. Having failed to locate her after some enquiries, Hirah returns to Judah.²²⁶⁹ Judah's Adullamite friend reports that he could not find this ritual prostitute and, furthermore, that the people of that region were insistent that "*there was no harlot*" in that region.²²⁷⁰ I wonder if the people were indignant at the suggestion? We cannot be sure but it is very clear that that area was not a "red-light" district!

38:23.

And so Judah resigns himself to having lost his signet, cord, and staff. His resignation is not without concern. He does not want these to be discovered, and it would appear that he thinks that the harlot has disappeared from that place, and hopefully all evidence that he had strayed with it. As far as he is concerned he has done what he could to pay her for her services, but she is nowhere to be found so she may "*take them for herself*" because Judah does not want to "*be shamed.*" The emphasis, it seems, is on keeping things quiet and 'hush-hush.' This is always the case with sin. We do not like sins to be revealed. We may commit them with no one to see, but God sees and sooner or later sins will be in evidence by the sorry fruits they bring.

38:24.

And so it comes to pass after three months when Tamar can no longer conceal her growing womb, that the truth is about to surface. Judah is informed that Tamar is pregnant, and this, it is assumed, must have been as a result of her playing "*the harlot*" because "*she is with child by harlotry.*" The words for

2269 Genesis 38:22.

2270 Genesis 38:22.

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harlot and harlotry here (זָנָה *zānāh*) are the same as found in verse 15 which is just the act of fornication or adultery, and not the ritual prostitute term used by Hirah in verse 21. On hearing this news Judah becomes indignant. She must be brought forth immediately (*“bring her out”*), and the penalty for such action on her part must be allowed its course (*“and let her be burned”*). At this point we recognise the righteousness of Judah's statement in verse 24. All sin must be punished and in a family called to be God's representative to bring in the Messiah, the promised one, it is reprehensible that one among them would be with child by anything but pure means. This action on the part of Judah reflects the teaching of the law which will be revealed via Moses later on. Again we see that what is presented here as the norm is that which God has revealed from the very beginning. Tamar's action was wrong. We cannot condone her action. But what else could she do humanly speaking? Of course this is our great problem. We are always limited by the human angle, by what we can see, and by how our human reason is lead. Tamar ought to have called out to the Lord to answer this situation like Hannah would do much later in history when she was bewailing her barren state.²²⁷¹ But what example and lifestyle was she being presented with in Judah and his family at this point? Tamar was from a pagan background and she knew nothing of righteousness and the ways of God.

38:25.

And so Tamar is *“brought out.”* It would seem from these words that she was about to face her execution. She was brought to a place where judgement could be carried out. At this point Tamar sent a message to Judah which amounts to a confession. Tamar confesses that she is with child by the man who owns *“the signet and card, and staff.”* It would then appear that Judah is brought to the scene. The way in which Tamar presents her case is quite forceful and rather dramatic. There she is, facing certain death, and suddenly she asks Judah to *“determine”* or to examine and to recognise the three belongings she has by whom she has become pregnant. It is rather like the courtroom scene where the defence brings in their final witness which deals a death blow to the prosecution's case. Tamar simply presents them to Judah before all and effectively asks: “to whom do these belong?”

38:26.

Judah is confronted with his sin. The good thing here is that Judah *“acknowledged”* the three items as belonging to him. Did he have any choice? The three items were personal to him so it would have been folly to deny that they were his. Nevertheless he readily owns up and he declares Tamar to be *“more righteous”* than he had been. Is righteousness a varied thing? Can Tamar be said to be *“more righteous”* than Judah? Surely all wrongdoing and sin, however varied in extent and depth, is wrong and

2271 1Samuel 1:1f.

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unrighteous? I think the point surely is that Judah is not really saying that Tamar's actions were righteous or more righteous in some way, but that he had been more ***unrighteous*** than Tamar. We cannot condone Tamar's actions. But Judah was surely more at fault because he was a child of Jacob whom God had appeared to on several occasions, and his action of withholding Shelah from Tamar was the catalyst to the unfolding events in this chapter. Judah thus confesses too. He had sinned by not giving Tamar to Shelah as wife, as well as laying with Tamar. The end of verse 26 is rather curious. It is simply saying that Judah knows that he cannot take Tamar as his wife.

[5] The birth of Tamar's twins. (Genesis 38:27-30).

And so after the nine months of pregnancy were complete, Tamar gives birth but it comes as something of a surprise because there were twins in her womb.²²⁷² The actual process of giving birth to twins appears rather complex. In this case we discover that one of the boys extends his hand and on seeing this the midwife ties a ***“scarlet thread”*** around his wrist to identify him as the firstborn.²²⁷³ But almost as soon as she had done tying the thread, the boy drew his hand back and the other boy burst through the birth canal ***“unexpectedly.”***²²⁷⁴ The midwife is astonished at this seeing it more as a ***“breach”*** or a ***“break though”*** than a birth.²²⁷⁵ The second to be born comes out in a rush and breaks through. The first put forth his hand upon which a scarlet thread is wrapped but then withdraws. And so the second to be born is named ***“Perez”*** which means “breach.”²²⁷⁶ And then the firstborn came forth who had the scarlet thread on his hand and he was named ***“Zerah,”*** which name means “rising (of light)” or, in other words, “the joy of parents.”²²⁷⁷ In this name we see prefigured the resurrection.

Now in Matthew chapter 1 (which details the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Abraham) there is this entry at verses 2 and 3:

2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. **3** Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram.²²⁷⁸

From which we learn that although Zerah was the firstborn who bore the scarlet thread, Perez was the one through whom the royal line of the Messiah was to proceed. Thus in both boys we have reflected aspects of the gospel story concerning the Saviour. What are we to make of this incident of Tamar's giving birth to Perez and Zerah?

2272 Genesis 38:27.

2273 Genesis 38:28.

2274 Genesis 38:29.

2275 Genesis 38:29.

2276 Genesis 38:29.

2277 Genesis 38:30.

2278 Matthew 1:2,3.

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The scarlet thread is surely an emblem signifying redemption and rescue. Consider another harlot Rahab who was entreated to tie the scarlet cord (by which she let the spies down out of Jericho) into her window as a mark to prevent her harm in the soon coming battle.²²⁷⁹ Or what of the fact that scarlet thread was a chief component in the various tabernacle dressings?²²⁸⁰ Scarlet robes signified luxury and royalty.²²⁸¹ Scarlet is the colour that depicts sin.²²⁸² And so we have a child who bore the scarlet thread on his hand, which fact reminds us of the Christ who is described as the Son of God's right hand and whose life was ever given to bringing in redemption by His blood. And then also we have the boy who burst through and made a breach to enter this world. He was the one through whom the promised Messiah would come as we saw in Matthew 1:3, but he prefigures the fact that the Son of God made a breach into this world in the incarnation, or as Isaiah expressed it in prayer:

Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! ²²⁸³

Thus we see in faint reflection, the Christ who bore the scarlet thread upon his hand, doing what we could not do, bearing sins and taking the punishment upon Himself, was also the one who broke through into this world making Himself of no reputation in order that He could bring about redemption. Christ is both *“Perez,”* or “breach,” the one who broke through and was incarnate, and *“Zerah,”* or “rising,” the one who rose from the dead to new life. How remarkable the grace of God who brings to Judah who had left his brethren two boys that signalled the coming redemption!

2279 Joshua 2:18,21.

2280 Exodus 25:4; 26:1,31,36; 27:16; 28:5,6,8,15,33; 35:6,23,25,35; 36:8,35,37; 38:18,23; 39:1,2,3,5,8,24,29.

2281 2Smaule 1:24; Matthew 27:28.

2282 Isaiah 1:18.

2283 Isaiah 64:1a.

Chapter 49.

Joseph and Potiphar. (39:1-23).

Analysis.

#39 1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt.

And Potiphar,

an officer of Pharaoh,
captain of the guard,
an Egyptian,

bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

2 The Lord was with Joseph,

and he was a successful man;

and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw

that the Lord *was* with him
and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.

4 So Joseph

found favour in his sight,
and served him.

Then he made him overseer of his house,

and all *that* he had he put under his authority.

5 So it was,

from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had,
that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake;
and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

6 Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand,

and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

7 And it came to pass after these things

that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph,
and she said,

“Lie with me.”

8 But he refused

and said to his master's wife,

“Look, my master

does not know what *is* with me in the house,
and he has committed all that he has to my hand.

9 *There is* no one greater in this house than I,
nor has he kept back anything from me but you,
because you *are* his wife.

How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

10 So it was,

as she spoke to Joseph day by day,
that he did not heed her, to lie with her *or* to be with her.

11 But it happened about this time,

when Joseph went into the house to do his work,
and none of the men of the house *was* inside,

12 that she caught him by his garment, saying,

“Lie with me.”

But he left his garment in her hand,
and fled and ran outside.

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- 13 And so it was,
when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside,
14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying,
“See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us.
He came in to me to lie with me,
and I cried out with a loud voice.
15 And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out,
that he left his garment with me,
and fled and went outside.”
16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home.
17 Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying,
“The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me;
18 so it happened,
as I lifted my voice and cried out,
- 19 So it was,
when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying,
“Your servant did to me after this manner,”
that his anger was aroused.
- 20 Then Joseph’s master
took him
and put him into the prison,
a place where the king’s prisoners *were* confined.
And he was there in the prison.
- 21 But the Lord
was with Joseph
and showed him mercy,
and He gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.
- 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand
all the prisoners who *were* in the prison;
whatever they did there, it was his doing.
- 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was* under *Joseph’s* authority,
because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made *it* prosper.

As with many passages in Genesis the events of this chapter form a single complete unit and record one historical event, but for convenience we shall consider them under the following three headings:

- [1] Joseph enters service under Potiphar and is blessed by the Lord. (Genesis 39:1-6a).
- [2] Joseph is tempted but escapes and is falsely accused. (Genesis 39:6b-18).
- [3] Joseph is imprisoned but is still blessed by the Lord. (Genesis 39:19-23).

[1] Joseph enters service under Potiphar and is blessed by the Lord. (Genesis 39:1-6a).

39:1.

We return now to the history surrounding Joseph in Egypt. At Genesis 37:36 we were informed that “*the Midianites had sold*” Joseph to “*Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.*” Here at the beginning of Genesis 39 in the first verse we read that “*Joseph had been taken down to*

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Egypt,” and also that *“Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.”* We have already commented on the fact that Midian was a son of Abraham by Keturah and thus half-brother to Ishmael, and that these sons of Abraham were sent away by the patriarch eastward away from Isaac so that they would inhabit *“the country of the east.”*²²⁸⁴ Whilst the two tribes may have been distinct to some degree there being sent together by Abraham rather leads to them being closely identified. Perhaps what may have happened is that the brothers saw both Ishmaelite and Midianite traders in a camel train and perhaps Joseph was sold several times amongst these traders before eventually reaching Egypt.

Potiphar is described for us in great detail in verse 1. The name *“Potiphar”* means either “priest of the bull,” or, “belonging to the sun,” or, “whom Ra gave,” and so the Egyptian religious connection is strong.²²⁸⁵ Egypt was very religious, and its political and economic realms were governed by their beliefs in various gods and goddesses. Now this man is described in three ways. He was *“an officer of Pharaoh”* by which we understand that he held some prominent position in Pharaoh's court and government. The word *“officer”* is actually the Hebrew word: סָרִיס *sārîs*, which signifies a eunuch. To ensure purity amongst the officers of state those given high office would be castrated. We see this designation in the official treasurer from Ethiopia who visited Jerusalem and was marvellously converted on his return through the ministry of Philip the evangelist, for he is termed *“a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians.”*²²⁸⁶ It is probable that such a high position gave much privilege so that the need for castration was a small price to pay, at least for the man. Perhaps this fact gives us some understanding as to why Potiphar's wife behaved as she did (?).

Potiphar is also called *“captain of the guard,”* by which we learn that he was probably in charge of the prison house and of the executions. The word Hebrew word translated as *“captain”* is often given as *“prince,”* and stands for the head or chief in charge of something. The Hebrew word for *“guard”* is: טָבַח *tabāḥ*, which comes from a root which means “to slaughter” or “to kill,” and thus the word stands for an executioner or a butcher. Potiphar was thus the commander of the prison house and in charge of the executioners. Finally we are also told pointedly that Potiphar was *“an Egyptian.”* Literally the Hebrew reads: *“a man of Mizraim.”* Now Mizraim was the second son of Ham and the founder of Egypt.²²⁸⁷ This addition might seem redundant but as ever we know that the Holy Spirit never wastes ink! The point of this is to simply emphasise the fact that Joseph was in Egypt and was under Egyptian rule, chiefly the commander of the prisons and executions.

We have noted elsewhere that Joseph was not at fault. Most often this young man is viewed by

2284 Genesis 25:2,6.

2285 Ra was the sun god.

2286 Acts 8:26,27.

2287 Genesis 10:6,13.

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commentators and preachers as a spoilt and over-indulged brat because Jacob “*loved him more than all his children.*”²²⁸⁸ His brothers hated him and on account of the revelatory dreams he was given they hated him even more.²²⁸⁹ But none of this was Joseph's fault. If any were to blame it would surely be Jacob who constantly seems to do little or nothing to influence situations. Joseph now finds himself sold to the chief executioner and commander of prisons. On the face of it, this does not seem like a promising outcome! But with God situations are always altered for the better.

39:2.

Thus in verse 2 we read that despite the difficult and rather unpromising circumstances that Joseph finds himself in through no fault of his own, nevertheless “*the Lord was with*” him. What an amazing and most wonderful thought. We may want to rush on and consider how it is that God is also with us, our Immanuel, but let us pause and reflect on what this meant for Joseph at such a time. His brothers hated him, and even though Jacob loved him greatly, was minded to rebuke Joseph for relating his second dream with such vigour. Outwardly Joseph's lot is bad, but the Lord is “*with him.*”

What does it mean for someone to be ***with*** you? First I suggest it means that they are associated with you. For example, imagine that you and your wife have been invited to an event. You go along and in the course of time you and your wife get separated as you engage in different conversations. Then someone comes along and begins to ask about you, whom you are and so on. At some point you make known that you are married and you point to your wife and say something like this: “I am with her” or, “she is with me.” To be with someone is to be associated with them. The association may vary in depth and significance. For example, you may have your money with a certain bank or an account with a service provider with some well known brand. But you may change your allegiance. For the moment you are ***with*** that bank or service provider but that is not necessarily permanent. So second I want to suggest that the idea of being ***with*** someone in the sense of our text is also matter of identity. You identify with that person or group as matter of agreement. To be with someone like this is to be in agreement with them. Imagine some difficulty arises and a new solution to the problem must be sought, One person suggests one course of action, and another a radically different scheme. Then you are asked what you would suggest. You review the two ideas on the table and you decide that you are with the first person's idea. You are identifying with them and are in agreement with them on this issue. Now this idea of the Lord identifying with Joseph and being alongside him is, of course, on a much higher plane. We do not suggest that the Lord merely agrees with Joseph as though Joseph had something especial about him, nor do we suggest that he identifies with him as one would belong to a football club or some other grouping. But this idea of coming alongside and forming a union with someone must be the essence of this idea of

2288 Genesis 37:3.

2289 Genesis 37:4,5,8.

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the Lord being *“with Joseph.”* God is Father and He knows all things and He is right in all things, but He comes alongside Joseph to be united with him, not in pampering him, nor in making things smooth for him, but in being one with him in truth, purity and beauty.

And so when we realise that God is also with us as Christians let us remember that it is only because He has drawn us from the world and given us new (godly) desires. He has changed us and brought us into His kingdom where righteousness dwells. Where the Lord sees His godliness, His truth, and His beauty and honesty and so on, there is where He can come alongside and identify with and agree with.

The fruit of this union between God and Joseph is success (*“he was a successful man”*). This is not worldly success, but the success born of faith and truth. It is an advance and a progress of that which is true and righteous. Because Joseph was God's man, the things of God (His truth and righteousness) are seen as the out-workings or fruits of faith. Where there is godliness and true trust in the Lord, then there is also (as a necessary consequence) righteousness displayed. Paul talks about a *“labour of love”* and a *“work of faith,”* and he also wrote about the fruit of the Spirit as being *“all goodness, righteousness, and truth.”*²²⁹⁰ Verse 2 ends by informing us that Joseph *“was in the house of his master the Egyptian.”* This statement is given to remind us where we are – Egypt. But it is also given to us to suggest that Joseph was advancing and prospering spiritually speaking. A similar thought comes in Daniel chapter 6 where Daniel is advancing in power on account of the fact that there was an *“excellent spirit”* within him.²²⁹¹ Joseph was being blessed because *“the Lord was with Him,”* and was thus a blessing to all around him.

39:3,4.

Verse 3 continues this same theme of blessing, but here we note that the blessings of being united with the Lord are evident or visible. Potiphar could actually observe the plain fact that *“the Lord was with”* Joseph.²²⁹² And this was evident because it was the Lord who *“made all he did to prosper in his hand.”*²²⁹³ Such prosperity only comes to those who are truly united, or truly *“with”* one another. In observing these details we are at once drawn to consider Christ and His experience as recorded for us in John's account. We learn from there that the Father was with the Son of God so that all the Son did was in honour to the Father, was in agreement with the Father, and was on account of love for the Father.²²⁹⁴ Now on account of this prosperity at the direction of the Lord, Joseph was favoured by Potiphar whom he served so that Joseph was *“made overseer of his house,”* to the extent that everything Potiphar had was

2290 Ephesians 5:9. See also: 2Corinthians 9:10; Philippians 1:11; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:18.

2291 Daniel 6:3.

2292 Genesis 39:3.

2293 Genesis 39:3.

2294 John 3:35; 5:19,20,30,43; 8:29; 10:17; 17:1.

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under Joseph's authority.²²⁹⁵

39:1-3 – review.

Taking a step back we can also see that Joseph's experience acts as prophecy concerning Christ. And so just as Joseph was brought down to Egypt which stands for this world, so Christ stepped down from heaven into this earth of sin and degradation.²²⁹⁶ Also just as the Lord was with Joseph so that all he did was successful, so too in greater manner and in a much more glorious way, the Lord Jesus was with His Father and with the Holy Spirit so that nothing was lost and all was accomplished which God had prepared beforehand would be done.²²⁹⁷ Such wonderful success which can be seen, is also the testimony of the church throughout the ages. We are accustomed in our day to consider all things in decline and this is true (sadly). But taking a larger view we can see that wherever the gospel advances there are great benefits in its wake. Look simply at the fruits of righteousness in our own nation. How many good things have come about as a result of godly and faithful trust in the Lord. We might mention the care of children and the elderly, the help afforded to the sick and those who flee tyrannical regimes. Or what of the benefits to those in work by godly philanthropists, or the abolition of slavery and other remarkable outcomes from godliness and righteousness expressed? How does this compare with the way the world traverses time and the fruits it brings? Where are wars from? Where does vice and sin originate? How is it that there is oppression and violence in the world? Do these stem from faith? Do these come from goodness and righteousness, or from a godly disposition? How absurd! They come from sinful selfish men and their warped and depraved minds. They come from rebellion and wickedness and evil and yet they are celebrated by the world. How absurd!

39:5,6a.

Look how blessing comes upon the world! In verse 5 we learn that as a result of the Lord being with Joseph and of him being given authority in Potiphar's house, then the Lord also began blessing *“the Egyptian's house”* too.²²⁹⁸ But note that this blessing is incidental. It is not for the house of Potiphar, but *“for Joseph's sake”* that blessing comes.²²⁹⁹ In the same way blessings are poured abroad in the world as a result of true godliness and righteousness lived out by faith, but this comes so that the believers are able to continue to sow, plough and reap. That is why we pray for our leaders – so that the gospel may advance. That is why we pray after the pattern the Lord taught us – that God's will may be done on earth. Remember that God is building His church, and His kingdom is the only one that will never end nor be

2295 Genesis 39:4.

2296 Genesis 39:1.

2297 Genesis 39:2.

2298 Genesis 39:5.

2299 Genesis 39:5.

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destroyed. All the while the kingdom of God is growing on the earth, blessings will be spread to all around us. Of course there are times when things look very bleak indeed, and there are places on earth where all appears to be very dark. But step back and see the goodness of God as His truth spreads, and His goodness is carried forward. Where there are several, few or many righteous, there the Lord is at work, and those around who are not yet in the kingdom get to benefit from the blessings the righteous bring through faith. Let the world know that it lives on borrowed mercy, and it is living on borrowed time. When the righteous are gone what then? If no new righteous are born from above, or no new people of faith are brought forth, then the end is very close at hand. Nineveh repented at the preaching of the reluctant prophet Jonah, but after only a matter of a hundred years or so all those righteous ones were taken to glory, and what was left was ripe for judgement.²³⁰⁰

All the while that Joseph was in Potiphar's house so the blessings flowed.²³⁰¹ The “*blessing of the Lord*” rested upon all that went on both in house and field.²³⁰² In other words, the arrangements in the house, such as the family affairs, the organisation of life and so on, and the crops and animals of the field that provided wealth and sustenance, were under the direct blessing of God for Joseph's sake. When Christ came into the world, the world reaped tremendous blessing, not just in the manner of souls saved, but in all sorts of other incidental ways besides. Where has prosperity and advance come from if not from the grace of God? Is it in the ingenuity of man to advance and make a success of things? By no means! Look at Genesis 11:1f, and consider the days before Noah entered the ark. The testimony of God through Scripture is that man, left to his own devices, makes a complete mess and muck of things. Isn't this the point and testimony of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes? Let no man think that the fruits and blessings all mankind benefit from have come from man's own prowess, strength, and ingenuity. It has all come as the result of God's grace. Where the righteous dwell, blessings are felt by all. Oh how we ought to give thanks to the Lord for His immense mercy and goodness to all mankind! Not only has He saved forever the righteous who live by faith, but He has also enabled the world to benefit alongside, but all for the sake of the believer!

Now things were going so well that Potiphar was ignorant of any details, for Joseph was clearly a faithful and reliable man. Potiphar only knew what was put in front of him for his meals.²³⁰³

2300 Compare the book of Jonah with the book of Nahum.

2301 Genesis 39:5.

2302 Genesis 39:5.

2303 Genesis 39:6.

[2] Joseph is tempted but escapes and is falsely accused. (Genesis 39:6b-18).

39:6b,7.

The opening statement of verse 6b might fit well with the end of the last section as a concluding statement, but I have considered that it serves better here as the introduction to this section. Joseph was seventeen when he was sent to Egypt, but we have no idea how much time has elapsed to this point in the narrative, but whatever age he was he was certainly a very handsome young man. And after some (unknown) period of time Potiphar's wife *"cast longing eyes on Joseph."*²³⁰⁴ We have noted that Potiphar was an eunuch as he held high office and perhaps as a result of his elevation to such heights his wife was unfulfilled sexually. Nevertheless she does wrong in desiring the young man. She is open with her advances. There is no doubt what she craves for, because she simply asks Joseph to have sex with her.²³⁰⁵

39:8-10.

Joseph's response is both immediate and reasoned. The first word of verse 8 is the action of Joseph's refusal or unwillingness, but then immediately after this we find his verbal response. His statement begins with the word *"behold"* translated in the NKJV as *"look,"* suggestive of an arrest to the passion and lust displayed by Potiphar's wife.²³⁰⁶ He then tells her that her husband has handed over everything in the house (and in the field) into Joseph's hands and he is totally unaware of the details that go on. Joseph has been given full responsibility and her husband trusts him completely. Joseph is second to no other than the master himself, and nothing has been withheld from Joseph's care with the exception of his wife.²³⁰⁷ Joseph rounds off his reasoning with a rhetorical question. Given this level of faith and trust, how would it be possible for him to do such a wicked thing which he describes as *"great wickedness,"* and it is certainly such because it would be a *"sin against God"*?²³⁰⁸ Uppermost in Joseph's mind is his standing before the Lord. The Lord was with him, so how could he do such a thing as this? In Joseph's resisting temptation we are reminded of Christ's victory over Satan as recorded in the gospel accounts. Where Adam failed to obey in paradise taking the forbidden fruit coaxed by Satan, Christ succeeded in the wilderness against the same evil one in glorious victory. Just as Satan left Christ for a season, this resisting of Potiphar's wife's advances succeeded for a time. But then we discover that she was persistent, for she *"spoke to Joseph day by day,"* by which we are to understand that she was continually tempting him.²³⁰⁹ But it was as she was doing this continually, tempting him in all manner of

2304 Genesis 39:7.

2305 Genesis 39:7.

2306 Genesis 39:8.

2307 Genesis 39:9.

2308 Genesis 39:9.

2309 Genesis 39:10.

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ways, that Joseph continued to resist. We read that “*he did not heed her*” and he refused to do as she requested, even going so far as to avoid her company (“*or to be with her*”).²³¹⁰ This resistance was not simply commendable (done because he did not want to “*sin against God*”) but illustrated in prophetic manner the sinless nature of Christ who though tempted in all points as we are, yet He did not sin.²³¹¹

39:11,12.

It was only matter of time before an awkward situation arose. And so in verse 11 we read that “*it happened about this time,*” which phrase may be better rendered as: “*it happened on a certain day,*” for the Hebrew word used here is the word for day. On this particular day it so happened that no other man was around in the house when Joseph entered “*to do his work,*” and so he was alone with Potiphar's wife in the house.²³¹² Potiphar's wife seizes her opportunity and grabbed him by his outer garment insisting that he have sex with her.²³¹³ Now Joseph responds immediately by leaving behind his outer cloak or garment, and running as fast as he could from the house.²³¹⁴ Such an action was highly commendable on the part of Joseph. We do not know what type of garment this was except to say it was probably an outer cloak or cape. It was not the special long-sleeved coat his father had given him, so the loss of this cloak may not have worried him a great deal. *Matthew Henry's* comments are worthy of repeating here:

Potiphar's wife showed that her heart was fully set to do evil. Satan, when he found he could not overcome Joseph with the troubles and the frowns of the world, for in them he still held fast his principle, assaulted him with pleasures, which have ruined more than the former. But Joseph, by the grace of God, was enabled to resist and overcome this temptation; and his escape was as great an instance of the Divine power, as the deliverance of the three children out of the fiery furnace. This sin was one which might most easily beset him. The tempter was his mistress, one whose favour would help him forward; and it was at his utmost peril if he slighted her, and made her his enemy. The time and place favoured the temptation. To all this was added frequent, constant urging. The almighty grace of God enabled Joseph to overcome this assault of the enemy. He urges what he owed both to God and his master. We are bound in honour, as well as justice and gratitude, not in any thing to wrong those who place trust in us, how secretly soever it may be done. He would not offend his God. Three arguments Joseph urges upon himself. 1. He considers who he was that was tempted. One in covenant with God, who professed religion and relation to him. 2. What the sin was to which he was tempted. Others might look upon it as a small matter; but Joseph did not so think of it. Call sin by its own name, and never lessen it. Let sins of this nature always be looked upon as great wickedness, as exceedingly sinful. 3. Against whom he was tempted to sin, against God. Sin is against God, against his nature and his dominion, against his love and his design. Those that love God, for this reason hate sin. The grace of God enabled Joseph to overcome the temptation, by avoiding the temper. He would not stay to parley with the temptation, but fled from it, as escaping for his life. If

2310 Genesis 39:10.

2311 Genesis 39:9; Hebrews 4:15.

2312 Genesis 39:11.

2313 Genesis 39:12.

2314 Genesis 39:12.

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we mean not to do iniquity, let us flee as a bird from the snare, and as a roe from the hunter.²³¹⁵

The apostle Paul gives us some ready advice concerning temptation. Such temptation is common to man, but the Lord also gives us the way of escape, and in Joseph's case it was necessary to slip out of outer cloak and flee for his very life.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.²³¹⁶

The concept of fleeing from sin, or from the world is also frequently found in the Scriptures. Immediately following the above quoted statement of Paul we hear him saying: *“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”*²³¹⁷ Earlier in the same epistle Paul exhorted the Corinthians to *“flee sexual immorality.”*²³¹⁸ Paul also entreated Timothy to *“flee these things”* among which were the love of money and the pursuit of foolish arguments, and then also to *“flee also youthful lusts.”*²³¹⁹ And so we see the need for believers to flee from sin just as godly Joseph wrestled himself from the clutches of an immoral woman. Once fled from sin, the positive or flip side is to pursue holiness, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, peace, all of which come from the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit.²³²⁰

39:13-15.

Joseph is now outside away from Potiphar's wife but he has left his cloak in her hands.²³²¹ Potiphar's wife comes to realise what has happened and in her pique at being rejected she hatches a plan to get Joseph into some serious trouble.²³²² The men of the house were outside so she calls them and spins her lies.²³²³ Here is what she claims:

“See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us.

He came in to me to lie with me,

and I cried out with a loud voice.

15 And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out,

²³¹⁵ **M. Henry.**

²³¹⁶ 1Corinthians 10:12,13.

²³¹⁷ 1Corinthians 10:14.

²³¹⁸ 1Corinthians 6:18.

²³¹⁹ 1Timothy 6:11; 2Timothy 2:22.

²³²⁰ 1Timothy 6:11; 2Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 12:14; 1Peter 3:11.

²³²¹ Genesis 39:12.

²³²² Genesis 39:13.

²³²³ Genesis 39:14.

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that he left his garment with me,
and fled and went outside.”

First she calls into question her husband's choice of Joseph as overseer (*“he has brought in ...”*). She refers to Joseph as *“a Hebrew”* who has come simply to *“mock”* them.²³²⁴ In this way she belittles Joseph and her husband. Joseph has actually done nothing but good for Potiphar and his household, but Potiphar's wife now accuses Joseph of gross impropriety, the sin of rape. Then she continues by stating that when Joseph heard her crying out he left his garment behind and fled outside. All of this is untrue but whom could challenge her word? Notice how Potiphar's wife fabricates her falsehood. Whereas we read *“but it happened ...”* in verse 11 and then follows the events as they actually occurred, Potiphar's wife changes everything by saying: *“and it happened ...”* in verse 15. She had grabbed Joseph by his garment so that he left it to flee, but she lies by saying that Joseph fled and left the garment when he heard her cry out.

39:16,17.

Having spun her yarn to the household she determines to keep hold of the “evidence” (Joseph's outer garment) until Potiphar returned.²³²⁵ Once Potiphar comes home she retells her story. The writer gives us a synopsis of what she said to him. We are told that *“she spoke to him with words like these”* by which we are to understand that she was very vocal and effusive in her accusations.²³²⁶ In her complaint there is more than a mere suggestion that this was all Potiphar's fault. She speaks of Joseph as *“the Hebrew servant whom you brought to us,”* by which she makes out that he was of no account, and it was all Potiphar's doing.²³²⁷ Falsely accusing Joseph is one thing, but besmirching your own husband's character for bringing in the one you are falsely accusing is the height of mischief. And then she reiterates her false accusations claiming that Joseph attempted rape and so she cried out causing Joseph to flee leaving his garment behind. The garment she clung to in order to seduce Joseph is the garment she now claims that Joseph left behind in order to flee from her. Now what will Potiphar make of all this? It would appear from the way that his wife speaks to him that they are not on the best or most intimate of terms. Up to now Potiphar has been content to allow Joseph full and complete reign within and without his house. Now comes this accusation from his own wife so what will he do?

2324 Genesis 39:14.

2325 Genesis 39:16.

2326 Genesis 39:17.

2327 Genesis 39:17.

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[3] Joseph is imprisoned but is still blessed by the Lord. (Genesis 39:19-23).

39:19.

Potiphar hears the story made up by his wife and the ultimate result is that *“his anger was aroused”* but for what reason? It would appear that he was angry with Joseph because he places him in the prison, but is this all there is to the story? Potiphar heard all the *“words”* which she spoke but did he believe her fully? Consider the punishment inflicted upon Joseph. Apparently for attempted rape the punishment in Egypt was very severe, and may have included an incredible number of beatings. According to one writer:

*Rape was punished by death. In the case of foreigners this punishment was sometimes commuted to exile. The violation of a free woman was punished by mutilation of the male offender, on the alleged ground that the crime involved three great wrongs: Insult, defilement and bastardy.*²³²⁸

39:20.

But Joseph is simply incarcerated in the prison where *“the king's prisoners were confined.”* This term *“prison”* is only used here and in the next chapter.²³²⁹ The Hebrew word is: **בֵּית הַסֹּהַר** *bêt hassōhar*, and it means simply “the round house.” Presumably it was a tower at one corner of the house from which escape was impossible. It is not pushing things too far to say that Potiphar is boiling with rage at the situation that has arisen, but he is by no means convinced that Joseph was at fault. To preserve the peace and to keep face, Potiphar is constrained to put Joseph away but he cannot bring himself to deal the due punishment to his steward. Verse 20 is rather interesting seen in this light, for twice we read that Joseph was placed in prison. Why the repetition? Is it to emphasise the point? That would hardly seem likely. Or was it rather to show the strange turn of events? Where death may have been expected, Joseph is merely incarcerated. The prison where Joseph is incarcerated was in the *“house of the captain of the guard,”* or, in other words, in Potiphar's house.²³³⁰ It is to be noted that the title *“captain of the guard,”* occurs six times in Genesis.²³³¹ On the first two occurrences the title is associated with Potiphar's name, but in the last four we simply have the title. That these are also Potiphar, Joseph's original master, is clear, but why is he not named? Perhaps the simplest explanation for this lack of name is that Potiphar was keeping a low profile as far as Joseph was concerned. Potiphar was the chief commander and so whilst the prison was within his house, he probably had little to do with the running of the day-to-day prison affairs.

2328 **James Bronson Reynolds.** *Sex Morals and the Law in Ancient Egypt and Babylon.* Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology. Volume 5. Issue 1. Article 4. 1914. PP20-31. P22.

2329 Genesis 39:20,21,22,23; 40:3,5.

2330 Genesis 40:3.

2331 Genesis 37:36; 39:1; 40:3,4; 41:10,12.

39:21-23.

Now Joseph was in prison as an innocent man, and his master (it seems) is not entirely convinced of his guilt. In this we see an echo or reflection of another ruler who was not convinced of the guilt of another innocent man. Three times Pilate declared that he could find no guilt or wrong in Christ.²³³² In such circumstances we discover that the Lord was still *“with Joseph”*!²³³³ He does not leave those whom He loves! Wherever we may find ourselves, if we are the Lord's loved and known by Him, then know for certain that He is with you (Immanuel), and that He will never leave nor forsake you. Not only was the Lord with Joseph, but he also *“showed him mercy,”* withholding from him any hardships and difficulties he might have faced had the full force of the Egyptian law been brought to bear upon his shoulders. And then we read further that just as with Potiphar, the Lord gave Joseph *“favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”*²³³⁴ This official would have been under Potiphar who was the chief commander (the *“captain of the guard”*). Once again we learn that Joseph's faith is strong, and as a result of God's grace and mercy Joseph is elevated to a position of authority within the prison. This was a place where Pharaoh sent those who had failed and committed crimes in his sight. And here we discover once more that Joseph was in charge! The keeper of the prison handed over all the prisoners into *“Joseph's hand,”* so that the keeper did not even concern himself with *“anything that was under Joseph's authority.”*²³³⁵ All of this came about *“because the Lord was with him,”* and because in all that Joseph did *“the Lord made him prosper.”*²³³⁶ Wherever a true believer goes there is the Lord with him to support and prosper whatever he does. It may not appear so but the fact of the matter is that it most definitely is so.

2332 John 18:38; 19:4,6.

2333 Genesis 39:21.

2334 Genesis 39:21.

2335 Genesis 39:22,23.

2336 Genesis 39:23.

Chapter 50.

Joseph, the butler and the baker. (40:1-23).

Analysis.

#40 1 It came to pass after these things

that the butler
and the baker
of the king of Egypt
offended their lord,
the king of Egypt.

2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers,
the chief butler
and the chief baker.

3 So he put them
in custody
in the house of the captain of the guard,
in the prison,
the place where Joseph *was* confined.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them,
and he served them;
so they were in custody for a while.

5 Then
the butler
and the baker
of the king of Egypt,
who *were* confined in the prison,
had a dream,
both of them,
each man's dream in one night
and each man's dream with its *own* interpretation.

6 And Joseph
came in to them in the morning
and looked at them,
and saw that they *were* sad.

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who *were* with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying,
"Why do you look *so* sad today?"

8 And they said to him,
"We each have had a dream, and *here is* no interpreter of it."

So Joseph said to them,
"Do not interpretations belong to God?
Tell *them* to me, please."

9 Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him,
"Behold, in my dream a vine *was* before me, **10** and in the vine *were* three branches; it *was* as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. **11** Then Pharaoh's cup *was* in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

12 And Joseph said to him,
"This *is* the interpretation of it:

The three branches *are* three days. **13** Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. **14** But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. **15** For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and

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also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.”

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph,

“I also *was* in my dream, and there *were* three white baskets on my head. 17 In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.”

18 So Joseph answered and said,

“This *is* the interpretation of it:

The three baskets *are* three days. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

20 Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.

22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23 Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

We left Joseph in prison, but in an elevated state because the *“Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.”*²³³⁷ Now we are introduced to two other inmates and their stories. As with many other parts of Genesis the narrative runs seamlessly but we shall splice it up into two rather uneven parts as follows:

[1] An introduction to the two new inmates. (Genesis 40:1-4).

[2] The two inmates have significant dreams which Joseph interprets with God's help. (Genesis 40:5-23).

The second section falls into four naturally distinct phases as follows:

[a] The two have their dreams and Joseph asks them why they are sad. (Genesis 40:5-8).

[b] The chief butler relates his dream and Joseph interprets it. (Genesis 40:9-15).

[c] The chief baker has his dream and Joseph interprets it. (Genesis 40:16-19).

[d] The conclusion for the two inmates but Joseph is forgotten. (Genesis 40:20-23).

[1] An introduction to the two new inmates. (Genesis 40:1-4).

40:1,2.

In ancient Egypt the king of Egypt was serviced by a variety of advisers and courtiers who were there to do his pleasure. We have already been introduced to the *“captain of the guard”* (Potiphar), and now in the first verse we are shown two more significant persons who ministered to the king. The *“butler”* was responsible for the king's dress and appearance, whilst the *“baker”* was in charge of his dietary needs. We learn later in verse 2 that these were the *“chief butler,”* and the *“chief baker,”* so that they had a range of subordinates under their authority. We cannot consider these men to be ministers of state but they were very important to the king, and this fact indicates the central feature of Egypt

2337 Genesis 39:23.

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presented for us, namely, its carnal and earth-centred nature. The king is particularly interested in his appearance and his belly!

Thus after some time both of these chiefs *“offended”* the king of Egypt. Notice that we have the title *“the king of Egypt”* put here twice for emphasis in verse 1. The word given here in the NKJV as *“offended”* is the word most often used to stand for sin, the root meaning of which is “to miss the mark.” Thus both servants failed to meet the king's standards and by such displeased their king. Now clearly this stands in stark contrast to God in heaven against whom all have offended by not doing what is required. Here the king of Egypt has called these two chiefs to account for their missing the mark in their duties.

In verse 2 the title switches to *“Pharaoh”* which name is linked with the sun-god of Egypt Ra. Some suggest it means “the son of the sun (Ra)” whilst others suggest it signifies “the mouth of the sun-god.” Whichever is the case we see here one who reigns over the world as a worshipper of the sun through whom (it was supposed) all things derive. These two were also (like the captain of the guard) סָרִיס *sārîs*, which word signifies eunuch or one castrated. But they had both caused Pharaoh to be *“angry”* in such a way as to display rage, for the word has the idea of blowing one's top as we say, or of bursting with rage.

40:3,4.

As a result of this rage Pharaoh placed them into the prison house of Potiphar.²³³⁸ We get three descriptions of this prison, and then we are told that this was also *“the place where Joseph was confined.”*²³³⁹ The point being that what may appear to be happen-stance or coincidental is nothing of the sort, because the sovereign God is moving all things according to His divine plan. The two miscreants were placed *“in custody,”* by which is meant that they were under watch and observance in a confined space.²³⁴⁰ The location is given as *“in the house of the captain of the guard,”* by which we understand that this was Potiphar's house.²³⁴¹ And then we are also told that it was *“in the prison”* which statement indicates the בֵּית הַסֵּהר *bêt hassōhar*, or “round house” (tower) we noted that Joseph had been sent to. However the Hebrew is rather expressive. The preposition used in connection with this third phrase is not the one we might expect. Instead we see the preposition: אֶל *’el*, which means “towards” or “to” indicating motion, and which is linked both with the previous designation, and the round house by horizontal lines called “maqṣef” which serves effectively as a hyphen. The key phrase is:

2338 Genesis 40:3.

2339 Genesis 40:3.

2340 Genesis 40:4.

2341 Genesis 40:3.

בֵּית שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים--אֶל-בֵּית הַסֵּהָר

the house of the captain of the guard towards the house of round

By this we come to understand that the two chiefs are placed “*in*” custody “*in*” the house of Potiphar (under his charge), and are taken towards the “*prison,*” or roundhouse (tower).²³⁴² Thus we get a sense of the *process* of imprisonment as the Hebrew unfolds.

Once locked up we discover that “*the captain of the guard*” (Potiphar) charges Joseph with their care and oversight.²³⁴³ It is noteworthy that Joseph *serves* them and we are then told that these two were “*in custody for a while,*” although for how long we are not told.²³⁴⁴

[2] The two inmates have significant dreams which Joseph interprets with God's help. (Genesis 40:5-23).

As we intimated earlier this longer piece comes in a series of four parts.

[a] The two have their dreams and Joseph asks them why they are sad. (Genesis 40:5-8).

40:5,6.

And so in the course of time the chief butler and the chief baker each have a dream.²³⁴⁵ Now it is not unusual at all for people to have dreams. Personally I rarely remember my dreams but there are those in my family who recount their dreams daily! So what are we to make of the fact that these two officers of Pharaoh have a dream? Well it is important to note that the text tells us that each dream had “*its own interpretation.*” This phrase indicates that these were no ordinary dreams. This truth is reinforced by the fact that these dreams disturbed both men.²³⁴⁶ They both seemed to be angry rather than sad, as the word has the thought of “boiling up.” Joseph comes to them in the course of his duties and saw the two of them looking sad and miserable.²³⁴⁷

40:7,8.

In verse 7 we discover again that these were “*Pharaoh's officers*” and they were with Joseph in custody. So Joseph asks the two why they were sad. Both men respond by saying that they had a dream, but what worried them was that there was “*no interpreter*” of their dreams.²³⁴⁸ Again we see that these

2342 Genesis 40:3.

2343 Genesis 40:4.

2344 Genesis 40:4.

2345 Genesis 40:5.

2346 Genesis 40:6.

2347 Genesis 40:6.

2348 Genesis 40:8.

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were no ordinary dreams for both men were worried. We should note that Nebuchadnezzar in the time of Daniel had a dream that disturbed him.²³⁴⁹ These dreams are clearly intended to convey something, but does this mean that all dreams are such forms of revelation? I think to ask that question is to answer it. We all know that dreams are movements of the mind during sleep and that we churn over events in our minds seeking to make sense of things that we have seen and observed. But when the Lord comes and delivers His message by a dream then this is clear and distinct. In both cases here there is no changing scenes or weird and absurd situations.

Both men declared to Joseph in verse 8 that they had this dream which was cogent and understandable, and the evidence for this is that they recognised that each of their dreams could be interpreted. They thus made sense. Now Joseph responds by telling the two chief officers of Pharaoh that interpretations *“belong to God.”*²³⁵⁰ The one who gave the dream has the interpretation. He made each man to dream something specific to them, and He will also bring about the meaning and significance. And so Joseph requests that they relate the dreams to him. Now here we are not told precisely how Joseph would bring the revelation or interpretation of each dream. We learn from Daniel's experience in the second chapter of his work that he (along with his friends) earnestly sought the Lord for the interpretation, and God graciously granted this to Daniel. But here Joseph points to the fact that God alone owns the interpretation, so we must assume that Joseph also prayed for this as well, otherwise how was he to interpret each dream?

[b] The chief butler relates his dream and Joseph interprets it. (Genesis 40:9-15).

40:9-11.

The chief butler takes the lead and reveals the elements of his dream to Joseph.²³⁵¹ It is significant that the dream in both cases relates to the position held by each man. In this case the butler dreamt of a vine which had three branches that brought forth grapes, and from these he gathered some and pressed them for Pharaoh's cup before giving the prepared drink to the king.²³⁵² The dream is straight forward and readily understandable. Before we examine the interpretation it is noteworthy that although we read that Noah planted a vineyard from which he became drunk after the flood, this is the first time we read of a vine in Scripture.²³⁵³ Later the imagery of a vine will be employed to show forth Israel as a nation that God had planted and was cultivating, and then in the New Testament of Christ the *“true vine”* of which

2349 Daniel 2:1.

2350 Genesis 40:8.

2351 Genesis 40:9.

2352 Genesis 40:9,10,11.

2353 Genesis 9:20.

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all believers are branches.²³⁵⁴

40:12-15.

Joseph interprets the dream by telling the chief butler that after three days he will be restored to his position by Pharaoh.²³⁵⁵ And then he makes request of the chief butler that he put in a good word for Joseph before Pharaoh, so that he may be released because he was innocent.²³⁵⁶ What is significant in his speech is the way he describes his origins. He states that he was *“stolen away from the land of the Hebrews.”*²³⁵⁷ In what way, we ask, was Canaan *“the land of the Hebrews”*? Well it was only by the promise of God given first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and then Jacob. Recall that Eber was one of the longest lived of the patriarchs and so those of his family were named after him as *“Hebrews.”*

[c] The chief baker has his dream and Joseph interprets it. (Genesis 40:16-19).

40:16,17.

Buoyed up by what he has heard, the chief baker relates his dream having seen that Joseph gave the chief butler a *“good”* interpretation of his dream.²³⁵⁸ His dream was similar to that of the chief butler, and this is surely another indication of the dreams divine origin. The chief baker's dream also contained the number three, but this time there were three *“white baskets”* on the chief baker's head, and in the top one were *“all kinds of baked goods,”* which, although provided for Pharaoh, are instead eaten by some *“birds.”*²³⁵⁹ Now in that this dream relates to the baker's position (as did the dream of the chief butler) we might not be surprised. Their tasks and offices were something often on their minds. We are not surprised that the chief butler in worrying about his lot in prison was given a dream about vines, grapes and drink for Pharaoh, and we are equally unmoved by the fact that the chief baker dreamt about baked goods which he might have prepared for the king.

40:18,19.

The interpretation from God for the chief baker is not favourable. He is told that in three days he would be executed, hung on a tree so that birds could peck at his flesh.²³⁶⁰

2354 Psalm 80:8,14,15; Isaiah 5:1f; John 15:1f.

2355 Genesis 40:12,13..

2356 Genesis 40:14,15.

2357 Genesis 40:15.

2358 Genesis 40:16.

2359 Genesis 40:16,17.

2360 Genesis 40:18,19.

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Review.

But standing back from these two individuals we cannot help but note that the vine was a plant that produced grapes for drinking irrespective of man's ingenuity, whilst baked goods were from the effort of man's works through making the flour, kneading the dough and so on. On the one hand we have a “naturally” produced product which is crushed to make a drink, which signifies the blood of the Saviour, and then we have in stark contrast to this, something which comes as the result of man's efforts and ingenuity which forms bread and food. We cannot help but see here Joseph in the midst of two sinners (those who had fallen foul of Pharaoh) and to one who proffered the crushed grapes would be reinstatement (or resurrection) but to the other who offered from his own works execution (and thus judgment). Joseph is like Christ crucified as-it-were between two sinners one of whom would be saved in paradise and the other not.²³⁶¹ How remarkable is our God!

[d] The conclusion for the two inmates but Joseph is forgotten. (Genesis 40:20-23).

40:20-22.

And then three days after they had their dreams it happened to be Pharaoh's birthday so he had a grand party for all his “*servants,*” and we are told that “*he lifted up the head*” of both incarcerated officers.²³⁶² At this point both seem to be somehow “*lifted up,*” and as yet we see no distinction between the two, but then the great difference is explained in verses 21 and 22. The chief butler was “*restored,*” but the chief baker was “*hanged.*”²³⁶³ This was just as Joseph had interpreted. Both had their heads lifted up, but one was given his old position back and so placed in honour, whilst the other had his head literally lifted up unto death and was dishonoured. Can we not see here a representation of that final day when all will be raised for judgment? Those who have rejected the Saviour will be raised to be punished eternally in hell, whilst those who have received the Saviour and embraced Him wholly will be raised to eternal life.

40:23.

Unfortunately for Joseph the chief butler forgot to say anything about what Joseph had done in connection with himself and the chief baker. How should we interpret this? Well known unto God are all His ways and His plan is perfect. It was not yet time for Joseph to be raised up. It was simply time for these two officers of Pharaoh to come across Joseph, and for their affairs to be openly shown as a part of God's revelation. To one restoration and blessing, and to the other judgement and execution. These may

2361 Luke 23:32,39-43.

2362 Genesis 40:20.

2363 Genesis 40:21,22.

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have been the actions taken by Pharaoh for the purposes he decided, but ultimately Pharaoh is operating under the sovereign will and direction of the Lord God. Pharaoh is not a puppet, for he is acting from his own will and purpose, but this does not prevent the will of God from being performed. In the great wisdom and economy of God the chief butler was to be favoured and the chief baker was to be executed and the Lord alone knows why. We rest content in the knowledge that *“it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”*²³⁶⁴

2364 Hebrews 9:27.

Chapter 51.

Joseph and Pharaoh. (41:1-36).

Analysis.

#41 1 Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. **2** Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. **3** Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river. **4** And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows.

So Pharaoh awoke.

5 He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. **6** Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. **7** And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads.

So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was* a dream.

8 Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.

And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but *there was* no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.

9 Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying:

“I remember my faults this day. **10** When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, *both* me and the chief baker, **11** we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream. **12** Now there *was* a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his *own* dream. **13** And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him.”

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it.”

16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “*It is* not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: “Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. **18** Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. **19** Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. **20** And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. **21** When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning.

So I awoke.

22 Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. **23** Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, *and* blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. **24** And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads.

So I told *this* to the magicians, but *there was* no one who could explain *it* to me.”

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do: **26** The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one. **27** And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. **28** *This is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. **29** Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; **30** but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. **31** So the plenty will not

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be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. **32** And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

33 “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. **35** And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. **36** Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

Two years pass since the chief butler and chief baker had their God-given dreams, and now it is the turn of Pharaoh the king of Egypt to be moved in mind by God who has determined to bring forth His revelation. First we read of Pharaoh's troubling dream and his attempt at understanding it using the wisdom of Egypt (Genesis 41:1-8). Then second Pharaoh is informed of Joseph by the chief butler and God reveals through Joseph the meaning of Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:9-36).

[1] Pharaoh's dream cannot be understood using worldly wisdom. (Genesis 41:1-8).

41:1-4.

All our lives are in God's hands. He is sovereign over all personal choice and decision. Such is the teaching of many Scriptures, but the following from Proverbs seems a fitting comment on what we have here in Genesis 41:

The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord, *like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.²³⁶⁵

This by no means obliterates personality, nor does it remove, nor do away with, our responsibility. The king is responsible for his thoughts and actions, but after two years the Lord decides to move the king's heart and mind by giving him a two-fold dream.²³⁶⁶ There is no build up to the dream, for it is related to us straight away. Pharaoh was standing by the river, which we presume must be the Nile.²³⁶⁷ The word for “*river*” here is apparently of Egyptian origin, and stands for the Nile or one of its many tributaries, or any of the channels dug for irrigation purposes. The word “*suddenly*” which opens the English of verse 2 is the word often rendered as “*behold.*” Thus what Pharaoh sees is an appearance of “*seven cows*” who are described in three ways as shown below:

2365 Proverbs 21:1.

2366 Genesis 41:1.

2367 Genesis 41:1.

Table 51.1: The seven fine cows of Pharaoh's dream. (Genesis 41:2).

<i>NKJV translation.</i>	<i>Hebrew.</i>	<i>My translation.</i>
fine looking	יְפֹת מַרְאֶה	Beautiful of form
fat	וּבְרִיאת בָּשָׂר	And fat of flesh
and they fed in the meadow	וַתִּרְעֶינָה בְּאֶחוּ	And they pastured in the bulrushes

These were beautiful specimens, ones fit for a show, they were full of meat and flesh, and pastured and fed amongst the bulrushes. After this comes seven further cows of a very different description:

Table 51.2: The seven lean cows of Pharaoh's dream. (Genesis 41:3).

<i>NKJV translation.</i>	<i>Hebrew.</i>	<i>My translation.</i>
ugly	רְעוּת מַרְאֶה	Bad (evil) in appearance
gaunt	וְדַקוּת בָּשָׂר	And thin of flesh
and stood by the <i>other</i> cows on the bank of the river	וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה אֶצֶל הַפְּרוֹת עַל-שֹׁפֶת הַיָּאָר	And stood by the cows on the bank of the river

So we have seven cows which are prized and beautiful specimens busily eating amongst the bulrushes and then emerging from the river. This is followed closely by seven cows which are the polar opposite to the first seven, who are thin with little flesh also arising from the river and standing by the first seven. Then in verse 4 we discover that these thin and flesh-less cows devour the seven fine looking fat specimens, at which point Pharaoh awakes.

41:5-7.

After receiving this vision Pharaoh awakes. But then he goes back to sleep and dreams again and this time the dream, whilst similar, centres on grain rather than cows. Again we have that word “*behold,*” which is translated as “*suddenly*” in the NKJV, signalling a sudden or memorable point. This time seven heads of grain arose on a single stalk and these are described as being “*plump and good*” and so were full of goodness.²³⁶⁸ After this came seven heads which were diametrically opposite in form to the firsts seven. These were “*thin*” and they were “*blighted by the east wind,*” and these thin heads (somehow) swallowed up and consumed the fat and full heads.²³⁶⁹ At this point Pharaoh awoke and recognized that “*it was a dream.*”²³⁷⁰

2368 Genesis 41:5.

2369 Genesis 41:6,7.

2370 Genesis 41:7..

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41:8.

When fully roused and up and about that morning, we discover that *“His spirit was troubled”* so much that he *“sent and called”* for all his advisers. These are described as *“magicians”* and *“wise men.”* The former were sacred recorders or ones who made records of magic and divined sayings. These were skilled in sacred writing. The latter were those merely skilled in various arts and sciences. Our text tells us that he requested that *“all”* of both types of adviser (magicians and wise men) should report to him to give advice. This was not a normal meeting where Pharaoh met with ministers or advisers on a regular basis, for every one of the advisers was to be present. After Pharaoh related the two dreams he must have expected some help and aid from his advisers, but instead we discover that there was *“no one who could interpret”* the two dreams for the king. Such is so true even in our day. What are we to derive from this? I think there are several points to be made.

First there is no one who can fathom the meaning of the dream that Pharaoh had truly received. People may be able to make sense of ordinary dreams to a degree, but even then we are tentative and uncertain. Someone dreams of falling off a cliff face or of being swept in the sea, for example, and this might be because they face treacherous times ahead either physically or psychologically. But when a dream comes from God and is thus a piece of revelation which simply cannot be discovered, (because it has its origin beyond creation), there is no one who can make sense of it.

Second we learn that the various types of adviser in Egypt, whether they be simply gifted ones in various branches of knowledge and expertise, or whether they are amongst those whose focus is the sacred texts and sayings which are revered by the nation, none are able to divine the meaning of revealed dreams. This point is so vital today. How much effort is wasted by seeking advice from earth-bound men and women who know nothing of God and of His word and message? Whether they be scientists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, archaeologists, psychologists or whatever else may be venerated and esteemed amongst men, none of these amount to a hill of beans when it comes to ultimate truths.

How we need to really learn this lesson that earthly knowledge and wisdom is but chaff and dust in comparison to the gold and rubies of God's truth given freely in His word and by His Spirit!

[2] Pharaoh's dream is interpreted by God through Joseph. (Genesis 41:9-36).

41:9,10.

Since all the advisers were present, the chief butler was also amongst the company.²³⁷¹ Seeing that those tasked with giving advice could offer nothing, the chief butler is stirred to remember that which he

²³⁷¹ Genesis 41:9.

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had selfishly forgotten.²³⁷² Perhaps reminding Pharaoh of his misdemeanours was not a wise thing to do, and so he had kept silent about Joseph for the duration. But now might it not be to his advantage to speak of Joseph if what Joseph had done for him some two years before could be repeated here? And so the chief butler recalls the events of his incarceration.²³⁷³

41:11-13.

The chief butler relates to Pharaoh the fact that he and the chief baker had been imprisoned and both had disturbing dreams which, although each had its interpretation, these were unknown to either man.²³⁷⁴ And then he remembers that there happened to be *“a young Hebrew man”* in the prison with them.²³⁷⁵ He had forgotten Joseph's name but had remembered what Joseph had done. In that Joseph is described as a *“young”* man we understand that not many years have passed. We noted in an earlier section that the price gained for Joseph by the brothers was twenty shekels and from Leviticus 27:5 that this was the valuation for males from the ages of five to twenty years old. Joseph was thus still a young man. He is termed an *“Hebrew”* which was the term Potiphar's wife used of him scathingly, but it was also the term which he used to show from whence he came.²³⁷⁶ This, as we noted above, signals a trust in the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Prior to this the term was only used of Abraham in Genesis 14:13.

Joseph is also referred to as *“a servant of the captain of the guard.”*²³⁷⁷ He was the one tasked to aid and serve these two incarcerated officers. Now the chief baker speaks of this *“young Hebrew man,”* who was *“a servant of the captain of the guard”* as one who *“interpreted”* the dreams of both men, and that these interpretations came to pass.²³⁷⁸ The chief butler gave no indication that Joseph spoke on behalf of the Lord, nor did he suggest that such interpretations came by way of God's revelation.

41:14,15.

On hearing this testimony Pharaoh *“sent and called Joseph.”*²³⁷⁹ The call was obviously quick and immediate because Joseph was in no fit state to appear before Pharaoh, and thus Joseph was rushed to Pharaoh having shaved and changed his clothing.²³⁸⁰ Given that Pharaoh had arisen in the morning and gathered his advisers this may indicate that it was still early on, or that Joseph was not in the habit of rising that early. Perhaps dungeon life ran on a different schedule to life in the palace? Pharaoh tells

2372 Genesis 41:9.

2373 Genesis 41:9,10.

2374 Genesis 41:11.

2375 Genesis 41:12.

2376 Genesis 39:14,17; 40:15.

2377 Genesis 41:12.

2378 Genesis 41:12,13.

2379 Genesis 41:14.

2380 Genesis 41:14.

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Joseph that he has had a dream for which none could interpret and says that he had heard that Joseph could. In actual fact he puts it like this: *“I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.”*²³⁸¹ From this we see that Pharaoh does not appear to be aware of whom Joseph is, and neither does it seem that he understands anything about God or that God had given him this particular dream. All we are informed of in the text is that *“Pharaoh had a dream,”* and that in the morning *“his spirit was troubled”* so that he called for every wise man and magician to attend to him.²³⁸² After this when the wise of Egypt had nothing to say and the chief butler spoke up, all we are then told is that there was *“a young Hebrew man”* in the prison house and that *“he interpreted”* dreams.²³⁸³ So nowhere in Pharaoh's thoughts and experience is there any concept of God revealing to him. He has been disturbed and his troubled spirit has sought immediate help from all the sources he knows of, and now when these have failed, he turns to a prisoner who, he is told, has the ability to interpret dreams.

41:16.

Now at this point as Joseph is being brought to Pharaoh and as he hears what Pharaoh has to say, there must have been the great temptation in Joseph's mind to accept that yes he could interpret the dream because of his gifting, but he does not do this. Instead Joseph answers Pharaoh by denying that he had any ability or power. He says at first: *“it is not in me”* to give Pharaoh an answer. This is wonderful. Speaking from the point of view of Joseph as a mere man this is always the case. We can of ourselves do nothing but only that which we are enabled and empowered of God so to do.

I am reminded of the occasion where the Lord was asked by one man what he should do to gain eternal life. In his question the man refers to the Lord Jesus as *“Good Teacher.”*²³⁸⁴ The Lord responds immediately to this appellation with these words: *“why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.”*²³⁸⁵ All three gospels record these words in the same way, and it seems that the purpose of the Lord's question (for which He did not expect a reply) was to move the man to recognise Him as God in the flesh. In other words, the man was right to call the Lord *“Good Teacher,”* but such a statement must also therefore imply that He was God too. Now in the course of the Lord's walk on the earth it is clear that He operated in union with the Father and the Spirit. Christ declared openly that He did not walk and work on His own authority and will, for He only did what the Father asked of Him.²³⁸⁶ Joseph confessed that apart from God he could do nothing, for without God he would be in just the same predicament and inability as the magicians and wise men of Egypt found themselves in. It was only that

2381 Genesis 41:15.

2382 Genesis 41:1,8.

2383 Genesis 41:12.

2384 Matthew 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18.

2385 Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19.

2386 John 5:19,30,38; 8:28,29; 12:49.

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God had revealed and blessed him with the interpretation, that he could offer Pharaoh any help. With Christ, however, we know that He is not simply a man but is also fully God, and yet in the gospels we see Him coming under the authority and will of the Father. It was not that He could not do anything, but that He was doing all as the Son of God in communion with the Father.

And so Joseph denies that the power resides within him as though he were better than all the magicians and wise men, for he adds: *“God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”*²³⁸⁷ God alone can do this because it was God alone who gave the dream to Pharaoh in the first place.

41:17-24. Pharaoh relates the dream.

Pharaoh pays no attention to the details Joseph relates and simply recounts the dream to him.²³⁸⁸ It appears from this that Pharaoh can think of nothing else. This dream, this double dream, has gripped him and he desires nothing else but some interpretation for it. Now it is instructive to view the two accounts of this double dream – the one given to the magicians and wise men at first light, and the one related to Joseph. The essential details are the same. The two accounts tally perfectly. What is different is slight emphases here and there (table 51.3).

Table 51.3: Pharaoh's dream twice told.

	The dream as given at first. (Genesis 41:1b-7).	The dream told to Joseph (Genesis 41:17b-24).
Part 1	And behold, he stood by the river. 2 Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the <i>other</i> cows on the bank of the river. 4 And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows.	I stood on the bank of the river. 18 Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 19 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. 21 When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning.
	So Pharaoh awoke.	So I awoke.
Part 2	5 He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. 6 Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. 7 And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads.	22 Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. 23 Then behold, seven heads, withered , thin, <i>and</i> blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. 24 And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads.
	So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, <i>it was</i> a dream.	

In the account given to Joseph Pharaoh suggests that the second set of seven cows were not just *“ugly and gaunt,”* but were excessively so.²³⁸⁹ He refers to these as *“poor and very ugly and gaunt, such*

2387 Genesis 41:16.

2388 Genesis 41:17-24.

2389 Genesis 41:3.

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ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.”²³⁹⁰ Then further we learn that the ugly and gaunt cows do not just consume the fat ones, but that after having consumed them the ugly and gaunt cows were no different, *“for they were just as ugly as at the beginning.”*²³⁹¹ Clearly this feature of the dream came to Pharaoh with greater force as he relates it to Joseph. Concerning the second instalment there are minor inconsequential differences such as would be expected on retelling such a dream. However Pharaoh cannot help but again emphasise the poor state of the second set of seven heads of grain. These were not simply *“thin”* and *“blighted by the east wind,”* but were *“withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind.”*²³⁹² Then, we discover that these devour the *“seven good heads”* instead of *“the seven plump and full heads.”*²³⁹³

These differences serve to show us that this is a real eye-witness account and that Pharaoh is particularly concerned about the second set of seven cows and heads. The poor nature of these seem to have been particularly acute and noteworthy. Whatever they represent they are the worst form of ugly and blighted you might imagine. Pharaoh ends his story to Joseph by reiterating the failure of his advisers: *“So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”*²³⁹⁴

41:25-32. Joseph (through God) interprets the dream.

Joseph now relates the interpretation. We note here that there does not seem to be any delay between Pharaoh completing his account and Joseph responding. The situation is very different in the case of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar as recorded in Daniel chapter 2. In that case the dream was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar but not related or given by the king to anyone at all. Daniel and his three friends implore the Lord for help and the Lord revealed both the dream and its interpretation to Daniel. But here we discover that the dream having been made public is at once interpreted by Joseph. This is remarkable. I say that because we are being lead to consider again the fact that Joseph is a type of Christ. Now Joseph does not take the glory to himself. He acknowledges that God was behind this dream and in its interpretation (*“God has shown”*).²³⁹⁵ And yet hardly has Pharaoh finished speaking than we find Joseph making his response. What are we to make of this? It would seem that as the dream was being told that God revealed this to Joseph. This was not a gift that Joseph possessed as though he were more able than any other. Rather it was that God was making known the interpretation as Pharaoh was relating the details. Now in this we can see a faint depiction of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. In John's account of the life of Christ we find repeated references to the relationship between Father

2390 Genesis 41:19.

2391 Genesis 41:21.

2392 Genesis 41:23.

2393 Genesis 41:7,24.

2394 Genesis 41:24.

2395 Genesis 41:25.

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and Son. For example in John 5 we get these statements made by our Lord:

19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. **20** For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. **21** For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. **22** For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, **23** that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him. ... **26** For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, **27** and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. ... **30** I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”²³⁹⁶

What we see in Genesis with Joseph is but a pale reflection of the depth we are reading of in John concerning Christ and God the Father. But that Joseph has been commissioned of his father Jacob, and that as a result has found himself in Egypt in difficult circumstances, we can see in this revelatory experience one who is (at least) close to God.

Joseph informs Pharaoh that the two-part dream is in fact telling the same thing, (*“the dreams of Pharaoh are one”*).²³⁹⁷ But as soon as he can Joseph attributes the revelation to God. it was God who gave this dream to him, and now it is God revealing precisely what the dream intended to convey. Joseph now unravels some of the details. The number seven occurring in both dreams signifies a period of seven years. A complete time. As Pharaoh is so anxious concerning the second set of sevens (ugly cows and thin heads of grain) Joseph homes in on the significance of these ugly cows and empty headed grains as signifying or representing famine. He then states that prior to this there will be seven years of abundance which he describes as *“seven years of great plenty.”*²³⁹⁸ The words signify great and copiousness or a great satisfaction. The abundance is as great and magnificent as the time of famine is terrible and empty. For when the time of famine comes the times of plenty will be forgotten so that the famine of the second seven years will be *“very severe.”*²³⁹⁹ The details of the dream are sparse but very clear. Seven years of abundance will be followed by seven years of intense famine which will *“deplete the land.”*²⁴⁰⁰ Now in relating this interpretation we see something of the means by which the Lord brings His revelation to us. In the analysis above I have simply shown the words Joseph spoke to Pharaoh as a block of text indented slightly to the right. However a deeper analysis is shown below:

2396 John 5:19-23,26,27,30.

2397 Genesis 41:25.

2398 Genesis 41:29.

2399 Genesis 41:30,31.

2400 Genesis 41:30.

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The dreams of Pharaoh *are one*;

God *has shown* Pharaoh what He *is* about to do:

26 The seven good cows *are* seven years,
and the seven good heads *are* seven years;

the dreams *are one*.

27 And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years,
and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind *are* seven years of famine.

28 This *is* the thing which I *have spoken to* Pharaoh.

God *has shown* Pharaoh what He *is* about to do.

29 Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt;

30 but after them seven years of famine will arise,
and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt;
and the famine will deplete the land.

31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for
it *will be* very severe.

32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God,
and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Joseph highlights the fact that the two dreams Pharaoh had were in fact the same in essential meaning and that the dream was repeated because this was not only “*established*,” that is, was a certain truth, firm and not to be altered, but that further it will come to happen almost immediately.²⁴⁰¹ It will occur speedily or with haste. The YLT suggests the following translation for this last part of verse 32: “*surely the thing is established by God, and God is hastening to do it.*” The word rendered “*thing*” in verse 32 is the word very frequently given as “*word*.” It indicates both the word spoken and the thing about which was spoken. Notice here that Joseph is speaking about what God has established and about what God will shortly cause to occur. God has spoken and He has revealed. He has done so first to Pharaoh by giving him the two dreams which are one and the same message. But then in the midst of Joseph's speech we read these words: “*this is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh.*”²⁴⁰² Again the word given as “*thing*” in what Joseph says in verse 28 is the word very frequently translated as “*word*.” Thus the word that Joseph has spoken to Pharaoh in relating the interpretation of the dream given to Pharaoh by God is the very word which God has established and will shortly bring to occur. The words Joseph speaks to Pharaoh – the interpretation of the dreams – are the very words of God.

41:33-36. Joseph gives advice.

Now having interpreted the dream – although only by means of God's help and not from his own ingenuity – Joseph next proceeds to suggest a course of action. Again we offer further analysis of these verses to show the imperatives Joseph utters:

2401 Genesis 41:32.

2402 Genesis 41:28.

- 33 “Now therefore,
let Pharaoh
select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.
34 Let Pharaoh do *this*,
and let him appoint officers over the land,
to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.
35 And let them
gather all the food of those good years that are coming,
and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh,
and let them keep food in the cities.
36 Then
that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in
the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

By what means did Joseph come by this course of action? Was it something he decided out of his own heart and mind? Or was it something revealed to him by the Lord? Well the passage follows on seamlessly from the interpretation and so the natural thought is that it is part of God's revelation through Joseph to Pharaoh. Later we will read that Pharaoh refers to Joseph as “*a man in whom is the Spirit of God.*”²⁴⁰³ It would seem from this, and from what we have just been saying, that Joseph was speaking divine wisdom. Once again we see the parallel and prophetic illustration of the Saviour who spoke only what the Father told Him to speak, but in doing so whatever He uttered came from His own mouth and heart.²⁴⁰⁴ When the Lord Jesus spoke, He spoke that which the Father had given Him because He was one with the Father. Here Joseph speaks what he has heard of God although it is not presented to us as a prophetic revelation in words and phrases we see later on in the prophets, such as “*thus says the Lord,*” for example.²⁴⁰⁵

Further the instructions given to Pharaoh seem to follow on naturally from the dreams and their interpretation as given by God. Why else would the Lord God reveal to Pharaoh about seven years of extreme abundance followed by seven years of extreme dearth? It is a natural thing having received such information to begin to see that the excess of the years of plenty ought to furnish the lack and dearth of the years of famine. In a sense these words are the natural corollary of the dream and its interpretation. And so Joseph issues five imperative commands which involve the supreme one Pharaoh, and, then also, those to whom Pharaoh may delegate responsibility. Pharaoh is advised strongly to select one man who would oversee the whole provision for Egypt. This was to be a “*discerning and wise*” man.²⁴⁰⁶ This would be a man of mental acuity and wit, and a man of depth who would be able to govern the various people involved. Then this one selected must be of such a character as to be able himself to select and

2403 Genesis 41:38.

2404 John 8:28; 12:49,50; 14:10.

2405 Isaiah 7:7; 22;15; Jeremiah 2:5; 4:3,27; Ezekiel 3:27; 5:5 etc.

2406 Genesis 41:34.

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appoint others termed “*officers*” who would range the land.²⁴⁰⁷

Joseph then suggests that one fifth or 20 percent of each year's crop in the years of abundance would be kept over and stored.²⁴⁰⁸ Now each of the first seven years were years of over supply or abundance. Twenty percent of this produce which is in excess of a 'normal' year must carry them through the seven years of famine. It is not likely, of course, that such would result in them having fourteen normal years. This means that they were being entreated to be careful in the years of abundance, not to over indulge, and that they must then tighten their belts in the seven years of famine. Once these men were in place, their task was to gather twenty percent each year and store this “*under the authority of Pharaoh,*” and so this was an official requisition or taxation.²⁴⁰⁹ This food was to be kept in the various cities of the land. This stored food was to be a “*reserve*” to be used during the seven years of famine.²⁴¹⁰ It is likely then that the years of famine were not totally without produce. And so this arrangement was set up to ensure “*that the land may not perish during the famine.*”²⁴¹¹

2407 Genesis 41:34.

2408 Genesis 41:34.

2409 Genesis 41:35.

2410 Genesis 41:35,36.

2411 Genesis 41:36.

Chapter 52.

Joseph takes the lead. (41:37-57).

Analysis.

- 37 So the advice was good
in the eyes of Pharaoh
and in the eyes of all his servants.
- 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants,
“Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?”
- 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph,
“Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”
- 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph,
“See, I have set you *over all the land of Egypt*.”
- 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.
- 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him,
“Bow the knee!”
- So he set him *over all the land of Egypt*.
- 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph,
“*I am Pharaoh*, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in *all the land of Egypt*.”
- 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah.
And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On.
So Joseph went out *over all the land of Egypt*.
- 46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.
And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout *all the land of Egypt*.
- 47 Now in the *seven plentiful years* the ground brought forth abundantly.
- 48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in *the land of Egypt*, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.
- 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable.
- 50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.
- 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh:
“For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.”
- 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim:
“For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”
- 53 Then the *seven years of plenty* which were in *the land of Egypt* ended,
- 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said.
The famine was in all lands, but in *all the land of Egypt* there was bread.
- 55 So when *all the land of Egypt* was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread.
Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians,
“Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.”
- 56 The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians.
And the famine became severe *in the land of Egypt*.
- 57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands.

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Our text forms a single unit but can be spliced into two parts. In the first we have Joseph exalted (Genesis 41:37-46), and in the second we have Joseph carrying out God's plans (Genesis 41:47-57). It is to be noted that Pharaoh features more in the first part than the second, and this is obviously because of the circumstances of Joseph's call and commission. However we might be permitted to see in this that whilst the first section speaks of Pharaoh's commission of Joseph, the second speaks of Joseph's carrying out the intended commission. Seen in this way we can discern a reflection of the Father commissioning the Son, and the Son executing the wished of the Father.

[1] Joseph exalted. (Genesis 41:37-46).

We begin by reaffirming the historical nature of the text before us. All the events recorded here occurred in real space and time. We must continually assert this simple fact because so many discount the history and leap to either myth and legend, or assume that a spiritual approach alone is worthy. Whilst the spiritual meaning is key, we must always ground this on the real historical events which have occurred. Now sometimes these correspondences between the events we are reading and the gospel record of our Saviour seem coincidental. Sometimes people may say even that they are far-fetched. However we believe in the God who rules in sovereign power over all things, and He is perfectly capable of allowing man his free course all the while working His perfect and unchanging plan out in glorious beauty. I might add here a caution again against taking ancient Near East cultures as the lens through which to view ancient documents. There are many reasons why relying on ancient Near East studies is not a good idea, but I proffer just three significant ones for you the reader to ponder. First there is no such thing as “an” ancient Near East culture. There are, in fact, many which encompass different locations and even times. These are not all the same and to reduce them to a single unified form by extracting a few common themes is to eradicate all meaning from each one. Second, these ancient Near Eastern cultures are all pagan. This fact seems to escape the mind and thought of many scholars and academics. How in the world can we interpret God's Holy Word using the dust, dirt, and detritus that emanates from ancient Near East cultures? I do not say this in any way as a superior modern as though our current culture is any way better than ancient Near East cultures. Rather my point is that interpreting Scripture from what amounts to a worldly perspective is always bound to fail. The unbeliever, be he ancient Near East or modern American, British or Asian is bedevilled by a mind bathed in secularism and godlessness. Then third, and perhaps most importantly of all, the Lord Himself has spoken and given us clear instructions in His word on how we ought to read and study His word. Is God not able? Does God need a hand? How absurd! The God who stepped down into our world needed no secretary or appointments clerk. He needed no PR man or support network. He spoke and now we listen and obey!

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41:37,38.

What Joseph suggested, which we have assumed was inherent within the revelation and interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, seemed to be good advice in the minds of both Pharaoh and all his attendants.²⁴¹² This must have been quite a surprise, and must also have been quite a momentous occasion. Joseph had been hurried from the dungeons and was in some state of dishevelment. But now having interpreted the dreams from God and made a suggestion for action, he is being listened to, and that for the first time. His brothers and even his father rejected the dreams and revelation given him, but now a pagan king, Pharaoh, has stooped to listen to what this man has to say. May we not see in this a reflection of the fact that the Lord Jesus was never heeded by His own, by the Jewish leaders, but was listened to by outcasts and sinners and those deemed unfit to be associated with the kingdom of God?

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. **11** He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. **12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: **13** who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.²⁴¹³

He did not come for the righteous but to seek and to save the lost.²⁴¹⁴ After telling the chief priests and elders in the temple the parables of the two sons and the wicked vine dressers, He declared that they had now lost the kingdom:

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.²⁴¹⁵

And so we are treated to a remarkable confession from the lips of Pharaoh.²⁴¹⁶ Whereas his own brothers hated him vehemently, Pharaoh asks rhetorically: *“can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”*²⁴¹⁷ Joseph was one in whom the Spirit of God resided. We note a similar expression in connection with Daniel. He is described as one who had an *“excellent spirit,”* and Darius the king spoke of him serving God continually.²⁴¹⁸ Joseph has simply relied on the Lord. He has heard the Lord's instructions and has patiently waited until that point where he might speak. When given the opportunity he speaks from God and here he is now exalted. We do not expect the world to laud us or the gospel, but here in this one way the exaltation of Joseph is set for us as a picture of the exaltation of Christ in glory.

2412 Genesis 41:37.

2413 John 1:10-13.

2414 Matthew 18:11; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10.

2415 Matthew 21:43.

2416 Genesis 41:38.

2417 Genesis 41:38.

2418 Daniel 6:3,16,20.

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He spoke as a *“faithful witness”* declaring only what the Father told Him.²⁴¹⁹ He discharged fully His charge and commission and the Father has highly exalted Him giving Him the name above all others.

41:39-41.

And so on the human level Joseph is exalted to the highest position in the land below Pharaoh himself. There would be none above him save Pharaoh, to whom alone he would answer. All others must honour Joseph. Now in like manner Christ Jesus is exalted to the highest place of all, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.²⁴²⁰

Notice here Pharaoh's continued confession. Joseph spoke from God. He did not pass himself off as a wise person above all the others. He merely acted as God's mouthpiece and this is what Pharaoh has picked up. He says *“inasmuch as God has shown you all this.”*²⁴²¹ We take from this statement that God had not only told Joseph the interpretation of the dream, but also the plan to store food in readiness for the severe famine. Thus Pharaoh has accepted that Joseph was God's man, for God had declared these things to him, and he had not devised them himself. Pharaoh goes on to make the logical conclusion that one who hears God and speaks for Him must be *“discerning and wise”* in truth.²⁴²² Joseph stands in opposition to all the wise men and magicians in Egypt. They could not offer any advice, but Joseph has and he has brought such advice direct from the word of God. This is true wisdom and Pharaoh acknowledges such.²⁴²³ Thus Pharaoh places Joseph as ruler over his house and people.²⁴²⁴ They will be governed only through Joseph's *“word.”*²⁴²⁵ He is not merely a servant of the house, but ruler of the house. By and through his word the people will be ruled and governed. Isn't this a wonderful picture for us of our Saviour's rule and governance? He walked this earth and did nothing but supreme good in teaching and healing, and now we see Him highly exalted at the Father's right hand ruling and governing by His word! Not everything is yet subject to His rule, even though He commands all and everything everywhere as sovereign over all. There are still those who defy and disobey (which He allows but employs for His good ends and purposes), but one day soon all will be subject to Him in perfection. He is no despot nor tyrant! He is one who rules in love, grace, and mercy, but will not let evil nor sin go unpunished. And so Pharaoh openly confesses publicly that Joseph was to be ruler *“over all the land of Egypt.”*²⁴²⁶ This public appointment points towards the open and public demonstration of the exaltation of the Son of God of whom we read that He was:

2419 John 5:19; 8:38; 12:49,50; Revelation 1:5.

2420 Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1.

2421 Genesis 41:39.

2422 Genesis 41:39.

2423 See 1 Corinthians 1:18f.

2424 Genesis 41:40.

2425 Genesis 41:40.

2426 Genesis 41:41.

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declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.²⁴²⁷

Christ has always been the *“Son of God,”* but at His resurrection He is openly declared as such by the Father.

41:42-44.

Next Pharaoh gives Joseph the adornments of office and authority.²⁴²⁸ He has been given Pharaoh's signet ring so that he may authorise instructions as if from Pharaoh himself. Joseph's hand now adorned with Pharaoh's signet ring would, in effect, be Pharaoh's hand. What Joseph decreed, Pharaoh decreed. He also has the cloak of authority too which was of *“fine linen,”* and then finally the great badge of office, the *“gold chain”* that would adorn Joseph's neck.²⁴²⁹ In this way his authority was ever visible. By these signs Joseph is now admitted to the royal house. It is significant that the Levites would later wear linen clothes, and this suggests purity and separation. In the case of Joseph he has been selected to be a part of the royal court and these garments show forth his new status. We noted in commenting on Joseph's special coat given him by his father Jacob, that this prefigured Christ's exalted state depicted in the book of Revelation where He is adorned with *“a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.”*²⁴³⁰ Such a garment speaks of priestly and kingly authority. Joseph is thus restored to honour. But he is not simply given his position as the beloved of his father Jacob, but instead he is ruler *“over all the land of Egypt,”* or, in other words, the entire world.²⁴³¹ It seems significant that these words (*“over all the land of Egypt”*) are repeated for us as if to emphasise the fact that Joseph is commander of all Egypt which stands here as representing the entire world.²⁴³²

Joseph was given the second chariot, and as he went out throughout the land of Egypt the command was given for all *“before him,”* to *“bow the knee!”*²⁴³³ One day all in heaven and earth will bow the knee to Christ:

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, **11** and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.²⁴³⁴

2427 Romans 1:4.

2428 Genesis 41:42.

2429 Genesis 41:42.

2430 Revelation 1:13.

2431 Genesis 41:43.

2432 Genesis 41:41,43.

2433 Genesis 41:43.

2434 Philippians 2:9-11.

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The affirmation of authority continues into verse 44. None *“in all the land of Egypt”* may so much as *“lift his hand or foot”* without the consent of Joseph.²⁴³⁵ All now was consigned to Joseph's jurisdiction. And in the same way believers are under the rule and governance of Christ. We dare not raise a hand or lift a foot except at His command! Is this constraining to you dear reader? Is this irksome and trying to your independence? So be it. We ought not to be independent. The Lord is love. The Lord is good and perfect. Why ever would we want to do anything without His consent and approbation? We need to meditate upon these words of the Saviour:

Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”²⁴³⁶

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.²⁴³⁷

If the Son of God could do nothing of Himself but only that which the Father gave Him, whom are we to do otherwise? Note again that Christ says these words twice. This indicates that these are serious and necessary words. I fear that in our weak Christianity we are guilty of only doing the will of God if we deem it fit! How absurd! We are servants. We are ambassadors, His representatives! How dare we take it upon ourselves to do as we wish!

41:45,46.

To cement his position, Pharaoh next changes Joseph's name. He would now be known as *“Zaphnath-Paaneah.”*²⁴³⁸ There is some debate about the meaning of this name but several suggestions have been offered including: “saviour of the age (world),” “revealer of secrets,” or possibly, “God speaks, He lives.” It would appear that the name was originally Egyptian and has been transliterated into Hebrew, hence the difficulty of understanding its meaning. There is no doubt but that Pharaoh gave the name to Joseph in view of what Joseph had ***done*** in revealing the meaning of the dream. And it seems clear also that Pharaoh had in view something about Joseph's importance in averting the disaster of famine. ***Jones*** had this to say:

“Saviour of the age,” or “revealer of a secret.” ... There are two classes of interpreters of this name, the one deriving it from the Egyptian, the other from the Hebrew language. ... An Egyptian name, imposed upon Joseph by Pharaoh, on the occasion of his interpretation

2435 Genesis 41:44.

2436 John 5:19.

2437 John 5:30.

2438 Genesis 41:45.

of that monarch's dreams. When we consider the salvation he wrought for the world by his good providence, we at once confess to the propriety of the Egyptian derivation and interpretation; and further, when we reflect that Joseph was a type of the Messiah – that his temporal deliverance by the bread that perishes, on the payment of a price, typified the spiritual redemption of the world by that living Bread which came down from heaven, and which all may partake of without money and without price, we cannot but conclude, independent of etymological grounds so far as we at present know, that it must be the true one. The Hebrew interpretation simply states the fact that he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, and loses sight of its typical meaning, which should not be disregarded when that is supported etymologically. For although Pharaoh imposed this name on Joseph, yet it was not irrespective of Divine control and direction; for He who sent him into Egypt ordained that he should be so called, since he was to be in a temporal sense “a saviour of the world”; or, as he himself expresses it to his brethren (Ge. 45.5 with 50.20), “God did send me before you,” “to save much people alive.” We have, therefore, strong reasons for concluding the first interpretation to be the true one – etymologically, circumstantially, and typically.”²⁴³⁹

Jones, thus, opted for the Egyptian derivation, “saviour of the age (world),” but the Hebrew meaning must also be in view to a large degree because without the revelation from the Lord there could be no deliverance. Now given that Joseph is a type of Christ, both ideas are surely to be taken as significant, for Christ certainly came to save and was indeed the “bread of life,” but He also came to reveal and to declare the very nature of God.²⁴⁴⁰ The Hebrew name for “*Zaphnath-Paaneah*” is: צָפְנַת פַּעֲנֵה. The first part is to be derived from the Hebrew word: צָפַן *šāpan*, which means:

“I. To hide, conceal – II. To lay, treasure up ... – III. To keep back, restrain – IV. To lie hid, lurk.”²⁴⁴¹

This indicates clearly that in the Hebrew mind the name had something to do with Joseph being a revealer of secret or hidden things. It is also worth noting that the Hebrew name “*Zephaniah*” (which in Hebrew is: צְפַנְיָה *šʿpanʿyāh*) uses the same underlying root with the divine name added at the end. The name “*Zephaniah*” means “Jehovah has treasured” or “whom Jehovah has hid.”

Now Joseph was given a wife who was called “*Asenath*,” and who was daughter of “*Poti-Pherah*” who was a “*priest of On*.”²⁴⁴² The name of this woman means: “who belongs to Neith,” and “Neith” was, among other things, the goddess of wisdom and a creator. The name “*Poti-Pherah*” means “He whom the Ra gave,” or “priest of the sun.” Now some suggest that this man was none other than Potiphar who was Joseph's original master, but it seems unlikely that these two characters are the same (see table 52.1).

2439 **Jones**. P369. See also **Davidson**. P649.

2440 Matthew 18:11; John 6:33,35,48,51; John 1:14,18; 14:6-9.

2441 **Davidson**. P649.

2442 Genesis 41:45.

Table 52.1: Comparison of the names Poti-Pherah and Potiphar in Hebrew.

<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>Name in NKJV</i>
פּוֹטִי פֶרַע	pōtî pera‘	Poti-Pherah
פּוֹטִיפָר	pōtîpar	Potiphar

Now this woman “*Asenath*” and her origins are mentioned here without any other information. There are extra-Biblical accounts which tell of various stories associated with Asenath, but these do not appear to have any validity. The question arises here is: why did the godly Joseph marry a pagan woman who was daughter to the priest at On? Of course we ought to recognise that Joseph was not in any position to select a wife. He probably did not have any say in the matter. Nevertheless we learn later that two tribes in Israel would come from this union, but we shall defer comment on that until we reach the relevant verses. Taking a step back, it seems that this speaks to us of the wonder that Christ, the Son of God has taken as His bride the church of called-out ones who had been part of this fallen world and simply of fallen Adam of old. Now that the relationship between the Lord and His people must be pictured as a marriage we have many Scriptures for proof. Take for example the prophecy of Jeremiah where the Lord is calling Israel to repentance:

14 “Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. ... **20** Surely, *as* a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” says the LORD.²⁴⁴³

Or consider the experience of Hosea with Gomer. The prophet's own marriage is put before us as representative of illustrative of the relationship between the Lord and His people. At one point in the prophecy of Hosea we are informed of a future betrothal which will be one of perfection:

19 “I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; **20** I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.”²⁴⁴⁴

In the New Testament Paul, (writing to the Ephesians in exhorting men and women who are married), demonstrates a clear connection between human marriage and the union of Christ and His bride. Marriage between a man and a woman is therefore an image of Christ's union with His bride the church.²⁴⁴⁵ And then from Ezekiel we learn of the pagan origin of Israel of old:

²⁴⁴³ Jeremiah 3:14,20.

²⁴⁴⁴ Hosea 2:19,20.

²⁴⁴⁵ Ephesians 5:22-33.

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and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: “Your birth and your nativity *are* from the land of Canaan; your father *was* an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.”²⁴⁴⁶

Now we reckon, of course, that the true church is comprised of all who have **true** faith in the Lord and His work, whether they be of the Old Testament or the New. The Lord is not ashamed to call those who truly trust in Him **“brethren”** as He has redeemed us from every tribe and nation, praise His name!²⁴⁴⁷ Thus Joseph went throughout all the land of Egypt as the ruler who was second in command under Pharaoh.²⁴⁴⁸

In verse 46 we are informed of Joseph's age when **“he stood before Pharaoh,”** and this is another significant feature of the narrative, for he was **“thirty years old”** at this juncture. Luke in noting Christ's age when He began His public ministry tells us that he was **“about thirty years of age.”**²⁴⁴⁹ This was the age for men who took up service as priests and ministers in the old economy.²⁴⁵⁰ And then we are informed that **“Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh,”** and then again we are informed for the second time that he **“went throughout all the land of Egypt.”**²⁴⁵¹ These details are highlighted because they lead us to consider the very sending of the Son of God who left the **presence** of His Father in glory to enter this world of sin. In typical fashion, Joseph departs from the company of the king of Egypt so that he can traverse the land of Egypt.

[2] Joseph carrying out God's plan. (Genesis 41:47-57).

Having seen the exaltation of Joseph and his commissioning by Pharaoh, we now turn to the work he has been sent to do.

To begin with we must note that the time span considered in these verses is only the seven years of abundance and the start of the seven years of famine, because in verse 54 we read that **“the seven years of famine began to come.”** There are phrases which indicate that the famine spread (**“was over all the face of the earth”**) and that it developed (**“the famine became severe”**), but nowhere do we reach the conclusion of the seven years of famine in this text.²⁴⁵² We will discover later in Genesis chapter 45 that only two years of famine have passed before Joseph is revealed. In that same year Jacob, on hearing that Joseph was still alive, brings all his family down to dwell in Egypt at the grand age of one hundred and thirty years of age.²⁴⁵³

What these seven years of abundance indicate, therefore, is the gospel age. This number of years

2446 Ezekiel 16:3.

2447 Hebrews 2:11.

2448 Genesis 41:45.

2449 Luke

2450 Numbers 4:23,30,35 etc.

2451 Genesis 41:46.

2452 Genesis 41:56.

2453 Genesis 45:6; 47:9.

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(seven) stands for a complete or perfect age. In this age there is an abundance of grain and food for all the world.

The text before us may be split into two parts. First we have the seven years of plenty which encompasses verses 47 to 52. Then in verses 53 to 57 the famine begins to bite and this has an effect on the whole world because other countries came to Egypt for food.

[a] *The seven years of plenty. (Genesis 41:47-52).*

41:47-49.

The opening statement of verse 47 tells us that *“the ground brought forth abundantly.”*²⁴⁵⁴ The literal translation reads thus:

and the earth made in the seven years copious handfuls.

This rather suggests that the normal operations of the earth under God's direction yielded much more than each person could consume or take hold of. As the years of abundance begin, Joseph takes the lead. In verse 48 we are not to assume that Joseph himself did the manual work. Rather it was his lead and direction, his project management. As the head of all, second only to Pharaoh, Joseph directs that all the crops grown in Egypt (*“he gathered up all the food”*), would be stored in each city or region.²⁴⁵⁵ Thus the food that each city grew was to be stored up within that city.

The amount of food or grain that was produced was so abundant (*“as the sand of the sea”*) that Joseph stopped measuring it.²⁴⁵⁶ This is noteworthy. The amount produced would necessarily have been finite, but presumably he did not have the resources (staff) to recount the weight of grain as they were gathering it all in. The prime task was, of course, to gather in all that was produced. In this we can see a picture of the gospel and of our great commission. The task before us is to gather in the grain, to gather in the harvest. We are not to be concerned with numbers! Then also see that the use of terms to express the growing amount (*“sand of the sea”*) seem to point us back to the many promises given to the fathers.²⁴⁵⁷ The world laughs at the church and its weakness and small numbers, but the promise to us is that there will be gathered an *“immeasurable”* number so that John could record in the last book of Scripture:²⁴⁵⁸

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

2454 Genesis 41:47.

2455 Genesis 41:48.

2456 Genesis 41:49.

2457 Genesis 41:48. See: Genesis 22:17; 32:12.

2458 Genesis 41:49.

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clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,²⁴⁵⁹

Now notice that in this historical account the only person referred to is Joseph. This is rather striking as it is certain that he had many to help him since he was second in command. When we look at the effort of the church in the gospel age we rather focus on which evangelist gathers in more, or which churches grow the biggest, but the truth is that it is still “the Saviour of the world,” that is our Lord and the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, who is doing the work. Yes he employs His workers, but the work is always God's, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians who were guilty of focusing on the great names:

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.²⁴⁶⁰

41:50-52.

In these verses we learn about Joseph's family. During the plentiful years “*before the years of famine came*” Joseph had two sons by his wife Asenath, whom is again described to us as “*the daughter of Poti-Oherah priest of On.*”²⁴⁶¹ This woman is mentioned three times in Scripture and each time the description is the same.²⁴⁶²

אֲסֵנַת בַּת-פּוֹטִי פֶרֶעַ כֹּהֵן אֵן

Asenath daughter of Poti-Phera priest of On

The names all signify Egyptian deities (the goddess Neith and the god Ra). And by this we are meant to understand that Joseph's wife was most certainly a pagan woman steeped in the worship proffered by Egypt, (i.e. the world). However we read nothing at all about her. Thus unlike other pagan women we come across, such as Ruth the Moabitess and Rahab the woman from Jericho, we are left completely in the dark about her character and her beliefs so it is unwise to make any suggestions on such. What we are meant to take from this is that Joseph's wife was a pagan woman and in the same way, Christ's bride is a woman born in a godless world.

Now Asenath bore to Joseph two sons. The word for “*born*” is singular so it is possible that these were actually twins.²⁴⁶³ These two sons would later form two tribes of Israel. The firstborn was named “*Manasseh*” which means: “causing to forget,” or “one who forgets,” whilst the second son was named “*Ephraim*,” which means: “double ash-heap,” or “I shall be doubly fruitful.” The meanings for each

2459 Revelation 7:9.

2460 1Corinthians 3;6.

2461 Genesis 41:50.

2462 Genesis 41:45,50; 46:20. In Genesis 41:45 an alternative spelling is given for On: **וֹן**.

2463 Genesis 41:50.

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name are given in the text. Regarding the firstborn, Joseph called him “*Manasseh*” because the Lord God had enabled him to forget all the sorrow and difficulty he had faced back home with his father.²⁴⁶⁴ Then the second was named “*Ephraim*” because the Lord God had enabled Joseph to be of great use and benefit during his time as a captive within the borders of Egypt.²⁴⁶⁵ In these two sons we can see a picture of the effect of the gospel upon us. As we come to faith in the Lord He causes us forget the “*toil*” and our “*father's house*.” We no longer consider ourselves as of this world. Whilst we seek to honour parents, our adoption into the family of God takes precedence. But we have forgotten the toil of sin and the sorrows and labour of this earth because Christ has born them all for us. Can we not see here a statement which corresponds to Christ's call to us:

Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁴⁶⁶

Having turned from sin, and having forgotten what has passed because Christ's death has dealt completely with sin, we now seek through God's strength and help, to be fruitful in this world of sin and “*affliction*” in which we are strangers.²⁴⁶⁷ Asenath bore Manasseh and Ephraim. The church too brings forth those who turn from sin and forget this world, and then seek to follow the Lord being fruitful in this world. What a glorious picture of the work of Christ in the world!

[b] The famine begins. (Genesis 41:53-57).

41:53.

And then the “*seven years of plenty*” come to an end. This reminds us very clearly that the gospel age is finite. It is a seven-year period typically, suggesting a perfect and complete age. But then there will come a day when Christ will return and there will be no more opportunity for salvation and repentance. There is coming that day which is everywhere in Scripture termed “*the day of the Lord*.” This motivates us to treat every day as a day of opportunity, for “*now is the day of salvation*,” for tomorrow may be too late.²⁴⁶⁸

Now in the historical record of the life of Joseph here, we note that there are precisely seven years of famine, just as there were exactly seven years of plenty. Again the number seven signifies a perfect and complete period of time. In the record it is exactly seven years, but how should we view this period in gospel terms? I do not think we can take it that history records a long (complete) period of gospel blessing

2464 Genesis 41:51.

2465 Genesis 41:52.

2466 Matthew 11:28.

2467 Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 3:13,14.

2468 2Corinthians 6:2.

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followed by an equally long (complete) period of dearth. However if we consider other Scriptures we may see things more clearly. For example, the book of Judges suggests a kind of cyclic view of history. A difficulty and trouble through sin arises, God raises up a judge to rescue the people of the land, the land has blessing all the while the judge is alive and perhaps for some time after, and then the people fall into sin again, and then a new cycle begins.²⁴⁶⁹ In this scenario a period of blessing coincidental with the time of a judge is followed by a period of 'famine' when the judge dies and the people sin once more. The Lord knows the period in each case. Historically the time frames are all different. But the time allowed for sin to ripen unto judgment, or for the blessing to end because of sin, are all complete and are perfectly known unto the Lord who rules in sovereign power. Might we not then suggest that in the world today one land or group knows the blessings and revivals of the Lord for a period, and this is then followed by dearth and famine because of sin? In the UK we have known immense blessings from the gospel. Consider, for example, the blessings that resulted from the great preaching tours of the evangelists in the 1700s. Or what of the revivals that occurred in the nineteenth century? These were followed by a century of struggle and unrest in which there were two world wars and then great upheavals throughout the world occasioned by the sin of colonialism and empire building, as dependent nations fought for independence. All through the twentieth century there was a gospel witness, and there still is in this twenty-first century, but this was a time of great famine compared to the period before in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

41:54,55.

Now in this historical piece we discover that the famine was not just confined to Egypt but was *“in all lands.”*²⁴⁷⁰ In contrast, in Egypt because of God's grace and revelation, *“there was bread.”*²⁴⁷¹ By this we learn that the blessing of spiritual bread comes only by grace and revelation. The word of God is the revelation of God. It is our task to take this revelation and spread it far and wide as a seed which will bear fruit in God's time. The grace of God is where we stand and it is the only means by which famine may be turned to abundance and then to life.

The famine arrived just *“as Joseph had said,”* not because he knew something others did not, but because God had revealed such to Pharaoh (who did not understand it), and God gave the understanding to Joseph.²⁴⁷² Now it was not long after the abundant years ceased that all the people who were *“famished”* and hungry in Egypt started coming to Pharaoh their king for help and rescue, but Pharaoh immediately points the starving to Joseph.²⁴⁷³ Pharaoh tells the famished Egyptians two things.²⁴⁷⁴ They

2469 Judges 2:11-19.

2470 Genesis 41:54.

2471 Genesis 41:54.

2472 Genesis 41:54.

2473 Genesis 41:55.

2474 Genesis 41:55.

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are to:

[1] Go to Joseph.

[2] [Do] whatever he says to you.

In the same way we point those who are famished and hungry for meaning or rescue to the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world. He alone can quench the thirst or satisfy the hunger of needy people. But there is an important second thing that must happen. It is no good going to Joseph and stopping at that. The famished must go to Joseph, for only Joseph can help, but then they must also do as he says. In the same way we point the lost, the weary, and the troubled to the Lord Jesus who having issued the call to come to Him, then goes on to say:

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”²⁴⁷⁵

It is particularly noteworthy that Mary the mother of Jesus at the occasion of the wedding at Cana uses very similar wording. Seeing that there was a famine of wine at the feast which was an embarrassment, Mary informs her son telling Jesus that they had no wine left. Jesus reprimands His mother gently but His mother turns to the servants nearby and says:

“Whatever He says to you, do *it*.”²⁴⁷⁶

And then graciously the Lord Jesus performed a great miracle and gave them the best wine they had ever had! But the key point in this event is that the servants had to do whatever the Lord asked them to do. The Lord Jesus could have simply spoken a word as He did at creation and there would have been wine aplenty. But He did not do that. Instead He instructs the servants to do something. They had to gather water and fill up the six stone water-pots, and then they had to draw some out and give it to the master of the feast.²⁴⁷⁷ In the same way we call people to come to the Lord Jesus but He issues His particular instructions. A person will not benefit unless they take the yoke of Christ and get hitched to Him.

2475 Matthew 11:29,30.

2476 John 2:5.

2477 John 2:6-8.

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41:56,57.

As time passes the famine grew worse so that it was *“over all the face of the earth.”*²⁴⁷⁸ This reminds us that all have indeed sinned and the whole world lies in the sway of the wicked one. There is no paradise or Eden or safe haven on this planet.²⁴⁷⁹ And so Joseph made available all the food they had gathered in the years of plenty and he *“sold to the Egyptians.”*²⁴⁸⁰ Here is a conundrum. Joseph sold this grain and food to the starving Egyptians, and yet we know that the gospel comes freely. How then can it be sold? Two thoughts emerge. In Isaiah 55 we read a great gospel address by the prophet in which he says:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.²⁴⁸¹

You may not have the money but you must still come and buy. The great thing is that the gospel has this price tag: £0.00 or \$0.00! But a second thought that springs to mind is that repentance and faith requires that we count the cost. We must part with all we have. The gospel is freely given but the price is forsaking this world completely. This idea of payment might be better viewed as a transaction. In exchange for my life of sin the Lord is willing to give me freely His righteousness. I cannot receive the righteousness of Christ if I still cling onto my own ways and my own sinful life. The Lord explained this in a number of ways, but the parables given in Luke chapter 14 drive this point home nicely:

25 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, **26** “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. **27** And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. **28** For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish it — **29** lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, **30** saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? **31** Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? **32** Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. **33** So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”²⁴⁸²

There were many who wanted to follow Christ but who did not count the cost. One wanted to follow but wanted to wait until his father had passed, whilst another wanted to first go and say goodbye to his household. In both cases the Lord told them that they needed to follow Him ***immediately*** without making

2478 Genesis 41:56.

2479 Romans 3:23; 1John 5:19.

2480 Genesis 41:56.

2481 Isaiah 55:1.

2482 Luke 14:25-33.

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provision for anything else.²⁴⁸³ Then also we could look to the parable of the merchant who finds a pearl of great price, or the man who finds treasure buried in a field. In both instances we read that the men sold all they had to gain the pearl or treasure.²⁴⁸⁴ To gain Christ you must forsake the world. There is thus a price to pay but the gospel is still given to us freely.

Now the famine grew worse still so that it “*became sever in the land of Egypt.*”²⁴⁸⁵ And then we read that “*all countries*” outside of Egypt were affected and went to Joseph in order to “*buy grain*” on account of the fact that the famine was now “*severe in all lands.*”²⁴⁸⁶ This sets us up for what will transpire in Genesis 42.

2483 Luke 9:57-62.

2484 Matthew 13:44-46.

2485 Genesis 41:56.

2486 Genesis 41:57.

Chapter 53.

Jacob sends his sons for food. (42:1-38).

Analysis.

#42 1 When

Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt,

Jacob said to his sons,

“Why do you look at one another?”

2 And he said,

“Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.”

3 So Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

4 But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said,

“Lest some calamity befall him.”

5 And the sons of Israel went to buy *grain* among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

6 Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land.

And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed down before him with *their* faces to the earth.

7 Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them,

but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them.

Then he said to them,

“Where do you come from?”

And they said,

“From the land of Canaan to buy food.”

8 So Joseph recognized his brothers,

but they did not recognize him.

9 Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them,

“You *are* spies!

You have come to see the nakedness of the land!”

10 And they said to him,

“No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.

11 We *are* all one man’s sons;

we *are* honest *men*; your servants are not spies.”

12 But he said to them,

“No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land.”

13 And they said,

“Your servants *are* twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan;

and in fact, the youngest *is* with our father today,

and one *is* no more.”

14 But Joseph said to them,

“It *is* as I spoke to you, saying, ‘You *are* spies!’

15 In this *manner* you shall be tested:

By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

16 Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you;

or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!”

17 So he put them all together in prison three days.

18 Then Joseph said to them the third day,

“Do this and live, *for* I fear God:

19 If you *are* honest *men*,

let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house;

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but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

20 And bring your youngest brother to me;
so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.”

And they did so.

21 Then they said to one another,
“We are truly guilty concerning our brother,
for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us,
and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

22 And Reuben answered them, saying,
“Did I not speak to you, saying,
‘Do not sin against the boy’;
and you would not listen?
Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.”

23 But they did not know that Joseph understood them,
for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself away from them and wept.
Then he returned to them again, and talked with them.
And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

25 Then Joseph gave a command
to fill their sacks with grain,
to restore every man’s money to his sack,
and to give them provisions for the journey.

Thus he did for them.

26 So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there.

27 But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack.

28 So he said to his brothers,
“My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!”

Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another,
“What is this that God has done to us?”

29 Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying:

30 “The man who is lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31 But we said to him,
‘We are honest men;
we are not spies.

32 We are twelve brothers,
sons of our father;
one is no more,
and the youngest is with our father this day in the land of Canaan.’

33 Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us,
‘By this I will know that you are honest men:
Leave one of your brothers here with me,
take food for the famine of your households, and be gone.

34 And bring your youngest brother to me;
so I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men.
I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”

35 Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man’s bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36 And Jacob their father said to them,
“You have bereaved me:
Joseph is no more,
Simeon is no more,
and you want to take Benjamin.
All these things are against me.”

37 Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying,
“Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you;
put him in my hands,
and I will bring him back to you.”

38 But he said,
“My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone.

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If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.”

Up to this point we have been focusing on Joseph and mainly with his situation in Egypt. There was a slight digression to consider Judah's departure from his brethren in Genesis 38, but by and large our thoughts have been centred on the story of Joseph from Genesis 37:2 right up to Genesis 41. At Genesis 42 we return to the land of Canaan and to Jacob and Joseph's brothers. Our text can be split into four parts as follows:

- [1] The famine bites in Canaan and the brothers are sent to Egypt. (Genesis 42:1-5).
- [2] The brothers meet the governor Joseph who speaks roughly to them. (Genesis 42:6-20).
- [3] The brothers know their sin and guilt. (Genesis 42:21-25).
- [4] The brothers return to Canaan with grain but also with their money! (Genesis 42:26-38).

[1] The famine bites in Canaan and the brothers are sent to Egypt. (Genesis 42:1-5).

We start by reminding ourselves that Joseph is the “saviour of the age,” and so is a type of Christ. In this account we have the brothers going down to Egypt seeking bread so we must view this event both in its historical details as something that truly happened, but then also in its spiritual sense as well. With regard to the latter we observe that the brothers are in a state of famine and so represent unbelievers who seek to be filled.

42:1.

The famine was beginning to get tough. In some way Jacob “*saw*” that there was food in Egypt. Perhaps he met with others in the area who had already been down to Egypt to get supplies? We do not know how he came by this information but he is made aware that there is food aplenty in Egypt. This is the initial awakening. When someone hears that there is something of some significance or value amongst that group away down the street who are called “Christians,” this is the initial stirring towards faith. A person may see another in a state of peace and tranquillity who before was a heap of mirthless anxiety, and they begin to note that this person has been attending a youth group attached to a church or has been going along to a Christian meeting. It begins to awaken a sense of great need and a possible solution.

Now stirred by his observations Jacob speaks to his sons. Why were they just looking “*at one another*”? The key words here in verse 1 are the words “*saw*” and “*look.*” They are both the same in Hebrew and suggest observation. What were the brothers doing? They were looking at one another. This is ever the situation in the world. People look to others for help. They tend always to look to their relatives, but then also they look outside the family but always to the help which man can bring. When

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people are ill they immediately rush to the doctor and seek his help.²⁴⁸⁷ If in a crisis over money people turn to the banks, and if they won't help they rush to the lottery or the loan sharks. Sinful, fallen human beings naturally turn to one another for help. But Jacob questions this. What help will come from simply looking at one another? Can mankind really help in time of famine? Is there a saviour in the world in connection with problems, ills, difficulties, and troubles? I do not say that we ignore the help of others, nor do I say we should not seek the help of others. But what I do say is what Jacob seems to imply in his question. Can mankind ultimately help man in distress? The answer is obvious. No! History screams at us that the help of man is weak at best and hopeless in reality.

3 Do not put your trust in princes, *nor* in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help. **4** His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish.²⁴⁸⁸

Sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils; for of what account is he?²⁴⁸⁹

5 Thus says the LORD: “cursed *is* the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. **6** For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land *which is* not inhabited.”²⁴⁹⁰

The teaching of Scripture is very clear on this matter. The Lord looked for a man who could help but there was none, and so His own arm provided our salvation.²⁴⁹¹ The teaching of Scripture is equally clear on the fact that the world hates the message that God brings and will do all in its power to seek its own salvation and rescue, or make its own way in life.²⁴⁹²

42:2.

And so Jacob relates to his sons that he had come to know that Egypt had grain. And so he tells the sons to go down to Egypt and procure grain in order that they “*may live and not die.*” Obviously the famine was severe and there was danger of physical starvation, but clearly this is put for us as a signal to see that we also need the food of the gospel that we might not die eternally.²⁴⁹³

2487 Please do not misunderstand me here. I do not advocate ignoring doctors. I suggest the first thing to do when ill is to pray and cry out to the Lord. A trip to the doctor may well be necessary but this is never to be the first thing you do when ill.

2488 Psalm 146:3,4.

2489 Isaiah 2:22.

2490 Jeremiah 17:5,6.

2491 Isaiah 59:16; 63:5.

2492 John 17:14; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 1:18.

2493 Deuteronomy 8:3; John 6:68.

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42:3-5.

And thus the ten brothers of Joseph set out to Egypt.²⁴⁹⁴ However, Jacob did not permit Benjamin, Joseph's brother, to go because he was frightened that some misfortune may come to him.²⁴⁹⁵ Jacob is still grieved at the loss of Joseph whom he believes to be dead. He cannot bear to lose Benjamin the only surviving son (so he thought) of his dearly departed wife Rachel.

Now it is significant here that Jacob kept Benjamin behind. We have noted already that this was probably because of his great love for Rachel, but recall that the name *“Benjamin”* means “son of my right hand.” This was the most precious thing left to Jacob and he was not prepared to part with him. At this point then we see that Jacob is not in a position to yield all in his search for sustenance. We have also noted in an earlier comment that in a personal sense Jacob was probably converted when he wrestled with the *“Man”* at Peniel (or shortly thereafter), and we are not casting doubt on Jacob's personal salvation here.²⁴⁹⁶ But the Holy Spirit has recorded these events to show forth the gospel of Christ, and in this case Jacob is put forth as one who desperately needs food, but is not yet prepared to yield his whole life for it, as is suggested in all the calls Christ made to people when called to follow Him.²⁴⁹⁷

The sons of Jacob set off to Egypt for food but it appears that they did not go alone, for we read that they went *“among those who journeyed,”* and so a large caravan or train of people were on their way south for a similar purpose.²⁴⁹⁸

[2] The brothers meet the governor Joseph who speaks roughly to them. (Genesis 42:6-20).

42:6.

The word *“governor”* signifies a person who had rule and authority, and so it probably came with the ability to pass judgment as well as authority to command affairs. The root for this word means “to domineer” and from what follows, Joseph probably had to withstand some opposition and those who did not want to come under his rule. Joseph was thus not merely a project manager, but a true potentate who ruled supremely. Where the text tells us that Joseph *“sold to all the people of the land,”* we are not to imagine that he alone made the sales, but that he was over all the sale of food that had been stored up. We do not know what size the population of Egypt was, nor of the populations of the surrounding nations, but it is surely not possible for Joseph to act as salesman to all who came for food?

And so in the course of time Joseph's brothers (bar Benjamin) come and they *“bowed down before him with their faces to the earth.”* And so we have the beginning of the fulfilment of the dreams that

2494 Genesis 42:3.

2495 Genesis 42:4.

2496 Genesis 32:22f.

2497 Luke 14:25-27.

2498 Genesis 42:5.

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Joseph had received.²⁴⁹⁹

42:7.

Now Joseph saw the brothers and immediately *“recognized”* them but he did not reveal himself to them at this point. In similar fashion it is clear that the Saviour knew what was in man's minds, but He did not simply declare His true Being and nature at once.²⁵⁰⁰ He rather spoke to the multitude in parables, and when demons declared whom He was He commanded that they be quiet on the matter.²⁵⁰¹ The business of making known the truth about Himself needed very careful thought and action. But the brothers did not recognize Joseph either although the text only implies this. Isn't this also the case with unbelievers when they are brought to consider Christ? They do not recognize the Lord as the second Adam. They may see Him as a potentate, an austere man, and as one who rules, but they do not yet see Him as their own brother who came from heaven's glory to deal with their problem of sin and rebellion.

Now Joseph acts both as *“a stranger”* to the brothers, and he also *“spoke roughly to them.”* The NASB renders the second set of words as: *“spoke to them harshly,”* whilst the YLT puts it like this: *“speaketh with them sharp things.”* This seems awkward. Would the true Saviour of the world come and act as a foreigner with rough and harsh words? Did not the Lord come with grace and with lips of grace? We shall return to this theme in a moment. From the point of view of the history, Joseph had not seen these brothers who sold him for about twenty years. The last time he saw them they hated him greatly enough to want him dead but ended up selling him off for a profit. It is small wonder that Joseph does not simply reveal himself to them straight away. He might have wanted to boast and wallow in glory before them but he does nothing like this. Here he was in charge of Egypt giving out food for all for sale, and here they were humbly asking for food. But instead Joseph does not reveal himself to them because he had no assurance that they were any different from when he had last seen them. Were they still wicked men who would have slain their own flesh and blood? Joseph probably adopted such an attitude of harsh speaking to them not from any thought of revenge, but so as to get at the depth of their hearts and to discover what was the state of their minds.

But how then should we see these words in connection with the Saviour? Well it is very true that Christ was one who came with *“gracious words”* and He came to seek and to save the lost sinners and outcasts.²⁵⁰² However He also came with words of authority which could not be answered, and to the Jewish leaders He came with strong words indeed even on occasion pronouncing *“woe.”*²⁵⁰³ The Lord did not rebuke and pronounce *“woe”* to such simply to show them up, but to reveal their minds and hearts in

2499 Genesis 37:10.

2500 Matthew 9:4; John 2:25.

2501 Matthew 13:3,34; Mark 3:11,12.

2502 Luke 4:22; 19:10.

2503 Matthew 7:29; 23:1f; Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32.

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order that they may see the folly of their ways. And so Joseph asks where they are from and they respond that they were *“from the land of Canaan”* and had come down to purchase supplies.

42:8,9.

And then we are informed once again that *“Joseph recognized his brothers,”* and the text adds that the brothers *“did not recognize him.”*²⁵⁰⁴ We have already commented on these ideas earlier, but it is noteworthy that this idea is repeated for us. We are meant then to take note of this fact. Recognition does not simply entail recalling facial or bodily features. It is interesting to realise that the disciples understanding of Christ developed over the course of time. The acknowledgement of Christ's identity as the promised Messiah was indicated by Peter's confession on behalf of the twelve, but it was not really complete, or perfect.²⁵⁰⁵ Thus they did not recognize Christ as Christ fully immediately, and they did not come to this recognition of the Lord as Christ in a complete sense until after the resurrection.

Then all of a sudden, having remembered the dreams he had when he was a young lad, and on recognizing his brothers, Joseph makes an accusation: *“you are spies!”*²⁵⁰⁶ From the point of view of Egypt this was not an unreasonable thing to assume because they were repeatedly spied upon it appears from those on the other side of the Red Sea. Joseph has made this accusation that they had *“come to see the nakedness of the land”* in order to stir them into some form of response concerning their lot in Canaan.²⁵⁰⁷ Uppermost in Joseph's mind must have been whether his father were still alive, and (perhaps more importantly) whether his brother Benjamin were still alive too because there were only ten of them present on this occasion.

42:10,11.

The brothers' response is emphatic. They respond with a firm *“no,”* then speak to Joseph respectfully calling him *“my lord.”*²⁵⁰⁸ And then they state three things about themselves and conclude with a flat denial of Joseph's accusation (*“your servants are not spies”*).²⁵⁰⁹ Twice we hear them refer to themselves as *“your servants”* thus bringing into sharp focus the dreams that Joseph had when he was seventeen. The first two statements are a matter of fact, but the last is open to debate. They had indeed *“come to buy food,”* and they were *“all one man's sons,”* but were they *“honest men”*?²⁵¹⁰ Most people consider themselves honest and upright, but the events that are about to transpire will unravel their sin in connection to Joseph their brother soon enough. It is interesting to see how they express their uprightness.

2504 Genesis 42:8.

2505 Matthew 16:16,23.

2506 Genesis 42:9.

2507 Genesis 42:9.

2508 Genesis 42:10.

2509 Genesis 42:11.

2510 Genesis 42:10,11.

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The text uses the plural pronoun “we” twice which sandwiches the Hebrew word for “*honest*” thus:²⁵¹¹

נָחֵנוּ כִּנְיִם אֲנַחְנוּ

we honest ones we²⁵¹²

You may imagine them all standing there looking at one another in perplexity saying “no we are not spies, we are all just seeking for food,” and challenging one another to reaffirm their honesty and innocence.

42:12,13.

But Joseph is not deflected by this and replies with a “no” of equal force.²⁵¹³ He insists that they have come to spy out the land to see its weaknesses and vulnerable spots. And so to respond to this the brothers then proffer further information. It would seem from these exchanges that Joseph is effectively asking them to prove their identity. Why should he believe they are not spies? If they were to come to Egypt they must demonstrate their honesty and their integrity. And so the brothers then offer further information explaining who they really were.²⁵¹⁴ No one of the brothers takes a lead at this point. Again they refer to themselves as “*your servants*” and they outline the fact that their father had twelve sons, the youngest being left behind in Canaan with their father and another who “*is no more.*”²⁵¹⁵ This is highly significant. The brothers had conspired to kill Joseph and it was only Reuben who saved him from being lynched, suggesting he be placed in a pit from which he could not escape. Reuben was not present when the nine brothers sold Joseph off to the passing traders. Thus Reuben, Benjamin and Jacob thought that Joseph was in fact dead, but the other nine brothers knew that he had actually been sold. The statement here that (Joseph) was “*no more*” may be a half-truth (the nine did not actually know that he was “*no more*”), but it may equally be the conclusion they came to having sold him off to the passing traders.²⁵¹⁶ How would a young seventeen year old green-behind-the-ears lad cope in the world of Egypt and commercial slave trading? They must have assumed that he would not have survived the hardships of being a slave for very long.

2511 Genesis 42:11.

2512 נָחֵנוּ is an abbreviated form of: אֲנַחְנוּ.

2513 Genesis 42:12.

2514 Genesis 42:13.

2515 Genesis 42:13.

2516 Genesis 42:13.

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42:14-16.

Joseph is not convinced by the ten brothers' claims and makes it very plain that as governor in Egypt they are to be considered as spies until proven otherwise.²⁵¹⁷ And so Joseph sets a test. This is non-negotiable. We may paraphrase what Joseph says in verses 15 and 16 as follows:

You will tested in the following way:

(by the) life of Pharaoh if you are to leave here it will only be on this condition that your younger brother is seen here. Send forth one of you to get your brother to bring him back here and meanwhile you shall be kept in prison so that your words may be tested to see if the truth is with you. Otherwise (by the) life of Pharaoh you will be seen as spies.

Joseph begins and ends with an oath “*by the life of Pharaoh*” which was probably the highest form of attestation that could be made in Egypt. We must remember that Joseph is governor in Egypt and the brothers only know him as such. This is a straight forward way of telling these men that they cannot lie nor dissemble to Joseph the governor of Egypt. They are instructed to prove their statements by bringing the son that remained with their father. He must be seen by Joseph to show that their words were true.

42:17,18.

Now to let this judicial declaration sink in, Joseph has the ten brothers placed in prison for three days.²⁵¹⁸ Why three days? Well this would be sufficient for them to wrangle the details amongst themselves and come to a realisation that they were in quite a fix. After three days, or (to be precise) at “*the third day*” Joseph speaks to them again.²⁵¹⁹ His opening statement is remarkable. This is the first time Joseph has confessed before his brothers whilst they were in Egypt that he feared God. He issues a command which will enable them to “*live.*”²⁵²⁰ Their very lives depend on obedience to this command. The Hebrew for this opening statement is shown below:

זאת עשו וחי
this do and live
את-האלהים אני ירא
God I fear

2517 Genesis 42:14.

2518 Genesis 42:17.

2519 Genesis 42:18.

2520 Genesis 42:18.

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Joseph presents to the brothers an old covenant view point. Life is dependent upon obedience.²⁵²¹ In order for them to come out alive they must obey Joseph's commands. Now this is true even today. Life is dependent upon obedience. The great problem is that no one anywhere or at any time can obey and thus earn life, with the wonderful, glorious exception of the Lord Jesus. Since Christ has accomplished the demands of the old covenant, having obeyed all and has thus been given life as a result, we can benefit on the basis of faith in Him and His finished work. Thus the gospel, the new covenant scheme, turns things around. It says to us: “live and you shall do this.” In other words, we are brought to new life in Christ ***in order that*** we might be obedient to the Lord.

Joseph has declared to the brothers that he feared God.²⁵²² This must have been very strange to their ears. The governor of a foreign land, where sun worship and other forms of idolatry were the norm, was declaring his allegiance to the true God. This is but the opening of revelation to the estranged brothers. Now taking a step back we must see that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ whilst He is desiring of us to receive the truth and to come close, must take time and deal with us in steps, here a little, there a little. In the New Testament we hear the Lord say: *“come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden ...”* and we are apt to conclude that it is a simple thing simply to do so, rather like purchasing a packet of sweets.²⁵²³ Elsewhere we discover that the Lord calls people to follow Him and to take up their cross, and on one notable occasion He calls people to make a meal of Him (*“I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you”*).²⁵²⁴ On hearing such words and such a call, many walked away.²⁵²⁵ At some point we must be confronted with our true state and condition. We not only have sinned and trampled upon what God requires, we have offended God in many other ways. Coming to Christ for forgiveness means a radical change of allegiance. It will no longer be *“I”* that live but *“Christ”* who *“lives in me.”*²⁵²⁶ Thus the old covenant with its demands of obedience must come first. The law was given to show us our great need. We must obey the law. That is non-negotiable. But we cannot obey the law because of our sin. What can we do? Well praise to the Lord! Christ Jesus our substitute has done all on our behalf. But that does not mean we can benefit and run off and then be free to do as we please. Not at all! What it means is this. Christ has taken the penalty due for all my sins. I can fully receive this act of Christ's if I now take the righteousness of Christ (His perfect life) as mine. We quoted Christ's words from Matthew 11:28 earlier (*“come unto Me ..”*) but they go on with an important statement we need to heed: *“take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ...”*²⁵²⁷ We have been set free from the yoke and burden of sin, but we are now hitched to His yoke. There is no such thing as an independent

2521 See Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12.

2522 Genesis 42:18.

2523 Matthew 11:28f.

2524 Matthew 10:38; 16:24; John 6:53.

2525 John 6:66.

2526 Galatians 2:22.

2527 Matthew 11:29.

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Christian, for those who have bowed the knee to Christ are now His bond-slaves and servants.

42:19,20.

And so Joseph has issued a command which must be obeyed. If they truly are “*honest*” men then they will be able to keep this command.²⁵²⁸ Thus Joseph tells them the precise instructions of what they must do expressed in four statements.²⁵²⁹

[1] Let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house.

[2] But you, [the rest] go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

[3] And bring your youngest brother to me.

[4] So your words will be verified, and you shall not die.

On a human level what Joseph demands is quite reasonable. He could have had them all executed as an example of how Egypt would treat suspected spies. But spiritually what we see is the Lord testing the heart to see whether it has given a true report. If we come to Christ with sin in our hearts, or with duplicity, or in hypocrisy, we can never expect anything at all from Him. God desires “*truth in the inward parts.*”²⁵³⁰ This statement came from the lips of David who openly confessed to the Lord about his terrible sins. What the Lord requires of us, therefore, is truthful and repentant hearts that look to Him for rescue. If when we come to the Lord we come half-heartedly, or we smuggle in some half-truths, or hold onto things which we ought not to, then we will not receive from Him. He does not demand us to be perfect or righteous in order to come to Him – He knows that is not possible and for that reason He came to die in our place. But He does expect that if we come to Him we are open and honest with Him confessing the truth. Joseph had not seen his brothers for twenty years or more. He did not know whether they were still bitter, dishonest, or whether they had changed in any way. This episode is given to us to show that when a person comes to the True Governor of the world, then they are required to speak truth concerning their lot and state. Often a test will be required not at all to demonstrate to God the truth of their heart, but to show openly that they have come in honesty and integrity. The text ends in verse 20 with these words: “*and they did so.*” There was really no other option and so they complied with Joseph's demands. But such demonstrates obedience. From whence has this come?

2528 Genesis 42:19.

2529 Genesis 42:19,20.

2530 Psalm 51:6.

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[3] The brothers know their sin and guilt. (Genesis 42:21-25).

42:21,

In verse 21 we are brought to hear the conversation that went on between the brothers following Joseph's demands. Later we learn that they were speaking in Hebrew and had relied on an interpreter to speak to the governor (Joseph) and so had assumed that the governor (Joseph) would not be able to understand them.²⁵³¹ The initial words of verse 21 indicate that there were probably several people talking among the ten brothers at once. What we get here is a summary or a conclusion. They recognised that they were *“truly guilty”* in the matter of their brother. This was something they were now certain of. They recall twenty years before the very *“anguish of his soul”* when he begged them to not deal with him in such a wicked way. And now as a consequence of them not paying heed to Joseph as a young lad, and his cries for mercy, they are now experiencing *“distress”* which *“has come upon”* them. The same word is used to represent Joseph's *“anguish”* and the brothers' *“distress.”* It simply means trouble, distress, adversity. Thus because they had inflicted distress upon Joseph, they were now experiencing the same anguish in return.

42:22.

And then Reuben speaks up and reminds the brothers of his remonstrating with them over *“the boy.”* Reuben argued with them not to harm Joseph, but the brothers *“would not listen,”* and as a consequence *“his blood”* is now required of them. They did not know that Joseph was alive and because of their current difficulties they conclude that the wrong they had done to Joseph was now being recompensed onto them.

42:23-25.

Now the brothers thought that all of this conversation was private, and they were unaware that Joseph could understand what they were saying.²⁵³² Hearing their confession, which was just among themselves, Joseph is now moved with emotion and moves away so that he could weep. This marks a stage in the brothers' spiritual lives. Joseph then returns to them and bound Simeon *“before their eyes.”*²⁵³³ Joseph's estimation of his brothers is now very different. He commands that the brothers' sacks be filled with grain, that each man's money is given back to him in each man's sack, and that they be given *“provisions for the journey”* back to Canaan.²⁵³⁴ These provisions were probably given to ensure

2531 Genesis 42:23..

2532 Genesis 42:23.

2533 Genesis 42:24.

2534 Genesis 42:25.

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that it would be unlikely that each man would discover the returned money. In these actions we can see that Joseph had a great deal of affection for his brothers. It is also notable that Joseph gives each man his money back so that the grain is *freely* given. Such is the gospel which may require us to count the cost and leave the world, but never demands payment.

[4] The brothers return to Canaan with grain but also with their money! (Genesis 42:26-38).

42:26-28.

And so nine of the brothers set off with their donkeys loaded with grain.²⁵³⁵ When they reached an *“encampment”* somewhere along the route for a break, one of the brothers opened the sack to give the donkey some food, and on doing so discovered the money.²⁵³⁶ We are not told who opened the sack and discovered his money, but we are told that he then informed his brothers.²⁵³⁷ On hearing this news the hearts of the brothers *“failed them and they were afraid.”*²⁵³⁸ They must have assumed that such a discovery might be used against them if it became known, to show that they were spies, or, at least, dishonest swindlers. At the end of verse 28 we are given a flavour of their fear. They spoke to one another, probably with some animation and angst, and began to lay the blame on God! Now they knew that they had acted honourably in regard to procuring the food. We assume this on account of their response here. If they were unscrupulous they might have thought themselves fortunate or blessed to have some of the money as well as the food. They do not express such a view. Rather they are now afraid and in fear of what might happen to them were this fact to become known. They had declared themselves to be *“honest men”* before the governor of Egypt (Joseph) so what will become of this testimony?²⁵³⁹

42:29-34.

The brothers eventually arrive back home to Jacob in Canaan and were eager to relate all that had transpired.²⁵⁴⁰ Uppermost in their minds was the fact that the *“lord of the land”* was harsh with them and thought them to be spies.²⁵⁴¹ Now in that Simeon had been left behind there was some explaining to do to their father Jacob. And so they told Jacob exactly what they had said to the governor in Egypt. Their confession (as a group of brothers) was as follows:²⁵⁴²

2535 Genesis 42:26.
2536 Genesis 42:27.
2537 Genesis 42:28.
2538 Genesis 42:28.
2539 Genesis 42:11,19.
2540 Genesis 42:29.
2541 Genesis 42:30.
2542 Genesis 42:31,32.

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We are honest men.

We are not spies.

We are twelve brothers.

Recall that when they met Joseph, he recognised them instantly calling them spies, but they did not recognise him.²⁵⁴³ Their confession then was as follows:

We *are* all one man's sons.

We *are* honest *men*.

Your servants are not spies.²⁵⁴⁴

It is notable here that the brothers are forcefully declaring their honesty and integrity. And yet there is a niggling problem. Under the scrutiny of the governor of Egypt (Joseph) the brothers faced difficult questioning, and this brought to their memory the harsh way they had dealt with their younger brother Joseph (*"We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us"*).²⁵⁴⁵ It is no good proclaiming innocence in a matter when underneath there is unconfessed sin. Yes the brothers were worried about the money in the sack discovered on their journey home and how this was none of their doing. But what lies beneath the surface is the sin they had committed against Joseph, and, ultimately, against God.

Now after they related the details of what they had said to the governor of Egypt, and in particular the details concerning their family situation, they then continued with how the governor of Egypt dealt with them.²⁵⁴⁶ There were no arguments to be had. The governor of Egypt made stipulation. It is instructive to make a comparison between what Joseph said and how the brothers relate this to Jacob (see table 53.1).

There is no real difference between the two reports as shown in table 53.1, but there are some interesting emphases. The brothers do not tell Jacob that the governor of Egypt was a man who feared God. Neither do they say to Jacob that Joseph's word to them was binding, almost covenantal (*"do this and live"*).²⁵⁴⁷ This is interesting because the brothers have not yet realised that their very lives are at stake here. They were afraid, but they did not see this yet as a life and death situation. It is notable that at the end of Joseph's actual speech he says: *"so your words will be verified, and you shall not die."*²⁵⁴⁸ What

2543 Genesis 42:8,9.

2544 Genesis 42:11.

2545 Genesis 42:21.

2546 Genesis 42:31,32.

2547 Genesis 42:18.

2548 Genesis 42:20.

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is presented to them is a matter of life and death. The famine was very severe at this point. Joseph was governor of Egypt and had the power to feed or withhold food. None could lift a hand nor move a foot without his consent.²⁵⁴⁹ The brothers do not report any of this to Jacob. Instead their focus was upon their integrity (twice they mention that they were *“honest”* men) and the possibility of *“trade.”*²⁵⁵⁰ By this we note that the brothers' minds are very earth centred and not heavenly minded.

Table 53.1: Comparison between Joseph's actual words and how these are reported..

What Joseph said (Genesis 42:18b-20).	What the brothers told Jacob (Genesis 42:33,34).
Do this and live, <i>for</i> I fear God.	
If you <i>are honest men</i> ,	By this I will know that you <i>are honest men</i> :
let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house;	Leave one of your brothers <i>here</i> with me,
but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.	take <i>food for</i> the famine of your households, and be gone.
And bring your youngest brother to me;	And bring your youngest brother to me;
so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.	so I shall know that you <i>are</i> not spies, but <i>that</i> you <i>are honest men</i> .
	I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.

42:35,36.

After they had told Jacob the details of what transpired in Egypt we next discover something of a surprise. Earlier one of the brothers had discovered the money in his sack and this caused consternation, but now in the process of unloading their food supplies they come in for a shock. The text is rather emphatic. The word *“surprisingly”* of verse 35 is more frequently rendered as *“behold!”* which indicates an arrest to the attention. This further discovery was unexpected to say the least. On seeing that each and every man had his money returned, the brothers together with Jacob *“were afraid.”*²⁵⁵¹

Jacob's response is one which we have come across before. Recall Jacob's response to Simeon and Levi's action with regard to Dinah:

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.”²⁵⁵²

2549 Genesis 41:44.

2550 Genesis 42:33,34.

2551 Genesis 42:35.

2552 Genesis 34:30.

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Jacob appeared very self-obsessed on that occasion and he is no less self-concerned here:

And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.”²⁵⁵³

I have translated the Hebrew text of Genesis 42:36 as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם
and he said unto them Jacob their father
אֶתִּי שָׂכַלְתֶּם
(namely) me you have bereaved
יֹסֵף אֵינּוֹ וְשִׁמְעוֹן אֵינּוֹ וְאַתָּה בְּנִימָן תִּקְחוּ
Joseph he is not/nothing and Simeon he is not/nothing and (namely) Benjamin you want to take
עָלַי הֵיוּ כָּל־זֵה
upon me are all these things.

It can be seen in this translation that I have separated out various clauses to show the depth of Jacob's expression. The first four words are simply telling us that Jacob (“*their father*”) was speaking. The first thing Jacob says is “*me*,” but there is emphasis placed on this pronoun by linking it with the sign of the definite direct object marker (את). This word has been highlighted in **yellow**. Jacob begins by saying “(namely) *me* you have bereaved,” where the emphasis is clearly on the “*me*.” Then the very last clause begins with “*me*” again, but this time the compound word is “*upon me*” (עָלַי). Again this word is highlighted in **yellow**, so that what Jacob says begins and ends with “*me*.” We might express what Jacob says as follows: “*me* you have bereaved upon *me* are all these things.”

In between these two ends points we have a series of declarations concerning three of his sons (Joseph, Simeon and Benjamin highlighted in **green**) and it appears that he is becoming more and more forceful as he speaks. First he states: “*Joseph he is not/nothing*.” He has never got over the loss of the son of his beloved Rachel. This was always with him. But then having discovered that Simeon languishes in jail he says: “*and Simeon he is not/nothing*.” It was too much to bear the loss of Joseph but now must he bear the loss of Simeon too? And then he speaks of Benjamin, and here he uses the sign of the definite

2553 Genesis 42:36.

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direct object marker (את) again to emphasis his indignation: “*and (namely) Benjamin you want to take.*” I would imagine Jacob's voice rising with each son named so that with the mention of Benjamin we have a very loud voice indeed. Jacob was inconsolable regarding Joseph who was “*no more,*” and he is now distraught on hearing that Simeon is “*no more,*” so the thought of them taking Benjamin was, quite simply, horrifying. Whilst we might find Jacob's self-pitying expressions distasteful, they do, nevertheless, show the nature of our fallen world. The Lord did indeed subject this world to “*futility,*” but in order that men might turn and seek for the Lord.²⁵⁵⁴

But in Jacob's lament we see no hope at all. He has lost Joseph and Simeon, so he certainly does not want to lose Benjamin too. But here is the problem. The more we hold onto the things we want and what we think we deserve the more we run into greater and greater difficulties.

42:37,38.

In verse 37 we discover one who sounds very much like the apostle Peter. Reuben is determined to do something! Reuben is expressing confidence and bravado which he cannot keep to. But what a startling thing for Reuben to say (“*kill my two sons ..*”)!²⁵⁵⁵ Jacob has expressed his deep distress at losing two of his sons (although unbeknown to him neither is actually lost), so how could Reuben say to his father “*kill my two sons ..*”? Reuben's confidence is misplaced. Saying that he could take Benjamin down and then return was something he could by no means be certain of. Such is the confidence of the flesh. How foolish we are! When the Lord begins to bring home the truths of the gospel which hurt where sin is involved, the flesh rears its ugly head and says “I can do something here, let me do something!”

Jacob responds to Reuben's heartfelt expression with force.²⁵⁵⁶ The word “*not*” comes first in Jacob's reply.²⁵⁵⁷ Literally the Hebrew is as follows:

לֹא-יֵרֵד בְּנִי עִמָּכֶם

Not he shall go down my son with you

We might say: “Not so!” Or, “by no means!” Once again we find Jacob in self-lament and self-concern. If he were to lose Benjamin through Reuben's false confidence, then Jacob would be brought down to the grave in the depths of despair. It is noteworthy that Jacob censures Reuben's attempts at a solution. The words “*along the way in which you go*” speak of a man-oriented and man-made idea or programme.²⁵⁵⁸

2554 Romans 8:20.

2555 Genesis 42:37.

2556 Genesis 42:38.

2557 Genesis 42:38.

2558 Genesis 42:38.

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Whilst we look with impatience at Jacob's self-pity, we cannot but commend him for rejecting the earthly man-made solution Reuben sought to offer.

Chapter 54.

Journey number two. (43:1-34).

Analysis.

#43 1 Now the famine *was* severe in the land.

2 And it came to pass,
when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt,
that their **father** said to them,
“Go back, buy us a little food.”

3 But **Judah** spoke to him, saying,
“The man solemnly warned us, saying,
‘You shall not see my face unless your **brother** *is* with you.’

4 If you send our **brother** with us, we will go down and buy you food.

5 But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down;
for the man said to us,

‘You shall not see my face unless your **brother** *is* with you.’”

6 And **Israel** said,
“Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me *as* to tell the man whether you had still *another* **brother**?”

7 But they said,
“The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying,
‘Is your **father** still alive?
Have you *another* **brother**?’
And we told him according to these words.
Could we possibly have known that he would say,
‘Bring your **brother** down?’”

8 Then **Judah** said to **Israel** his **father**,
“Send the lad with me,
and we will arise and go,
that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones.

9 I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him.

If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

10 For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time.”

11 And their **father** **Israel** said to them,
“If *it must be* so, then do this:
Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

12 Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

13 Take your **brother** also, and arise, go back to the man.

14 And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other **brother** and **Benjamin**.
If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!”

15 So the men
took that present and **Benjamin**,
and they took double money in their hand,
and arose and went down to Egypt;
and they stood before **Joseph**.

16 When **Joseph** saw **Benjamin** with them, he said to the steward of his house,
“Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon.”

17 Then the man did as **Joseph** ordered,
and the man brought the men into **Joseph**’s house.

18 Now the men were afraid because they were brought into **Joseph**’s house; and they said,

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“*It is* because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys.”

19 When they drew near to the steward of Joseph’s house, they talked with him at the door of the house, 20 and said,

“O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food;

21 but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, *each* man’s money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand.

22 And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food.

We do not know who put our money in our sacks.”

23 But he said,

“Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid.

Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.”

Then he brought Simeon out to them.

24 So the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed.

25 Then they made the present ready for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.

27 Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said,

“*Is* your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? *Is* he still alive?”

28 And they answered,

“Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive.”

And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

29 Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said,

“*Is* this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?”

And he said,

“God be gracious to you, my son.”

30 Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep.

And he went into *his* chamber and wept there.

31 Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said,

“Serve the bread.”

32 So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.

33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another.

34 Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin’s serving was five times as much as any of theirs.

So they drank and were merry with him.

We left the family of Jacob with their food and the discovery of their money in their sacks, and now we find that the famine has bitten deep. In Genesis 42 we saw that Reuben's attempts at convincing Jacob to let Benjamin travel down to Egypt with them have fallen on deaf ears. In this chapter we find that the severity of the famine coupled with Judah's pleas to Jacob end up with a return to Egypt.

The chapter falls neatly into two parts as the analysis illustrates with verses 1 to 14 concentrating on Judah's speeches to convince Jacob of what must be done, whilst verses 15 to 34 record the brothers' return to Egypt to get food and bring Simeon home.

[1] Judah's pleas for reason. (Genesis 43:1-14).

43:1-5.

Jacob has told the brothers, and Reuben in particular, that Benjamin will not go down to Egypt.²⁵⁵⁹ But now the famine has become desperate and “*severe*” so that something had to be done.²⁵⁶⁰ And so in the process of time the grain that they had brought back from Egypt was now gone. It is likely that the grain was intended for use to produce crops as well as for food, but now there is nothing left, for all has been consumed. In such a sorry state Jacob commands his sons to return and get “*a little food*.”²⁵⁶¹ Whereas Reuben had remonstrated with Jacob their father in the last chapter, it is now the turn of Judah to speak up.²⁵⁶² Reuben was the firstborn, the eldest son, but Judah would be the one through whom the promise will continue. This is why, I believe, the devil had tempted Judah to suggest that they sold Joseph to the traders, and then had further drawn him away from his brothers and lead him into the sin of which we have read in Genesis 38. But here we discover that Judah has something to say. We have not heard from Judah since the incident with Tamar as recorded in Genesis 38. Now Judah outlines the situation they faced. He reminded Jacob that “*the man*” was earnest and sober with his warning about their return.²⁵⁶³ Twice we read Judah's recollection of what Joseph had said to them: “*You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.*”²⁵⁶⁴ They simply were not to return unless their “*brother*” (Benjamin) was to go down with them.²⁵⁶⁵ Judah remonstrates with Jacob that there was only one condition by which they could get more food. If Benjamin stayed home, they could not go. If Benjamin was allowed to go, well then they could get more food.²⁵⁶⁶ Now Benjamin's name means “son of the (my) right hand.” Jacob was very unwilling to let this son go because, as far as he was concerned, he was the sole remaining son from his dearly loved wife Rachel who had died bringing him into the world. Thus the only condition by which they could procure food was if the “son of the right hand” would go down into Egypt. Is not this a marvellous picture of what was needed for us in our state? We are lost sinners. We have no spiritual food. Where are we to get it? It will come only if Christ, the Son of the Father's right hand, come down into this world.

If we consider the words of Joseph as reported by Judah for a moment we learn that the gaining of food here is coincidental with seeing Joseph's “*face*.”²⁵⁶⁷ They would not gain any food except Joseph allowed it, and to see Joseph's “*face*” they were required to bring and show Benjamin (“the son of the

2559 Genesis 42:38.
2560 Genesis 43:1.
2561 Genesis 43:2.
2562 Genesis 43:3.
2563 Genesis 43:3.
2564 Genesis 43:3,5.
2565 Genesis 43:3.
2566 Genesis 43:4.
2567 Genesis 43:3.

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right hand”). There could be no favour or grace gained unless Benjamin accompany them. This reinforces the thought that our spiritual food requires the true Son of the right hand being present. Without Him there can be no real sustenance.

43:6,7.

At this insistent statement from Judah, Israel (Jacob) responds by questioning why the brothers told the governor of Egypt about Benjamin in the first place. Once again Jacob appears to be very self-centred. Their action is interpreted by Jacob (as Israel) in a personal way: *“why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man ...”*²⁵⁶⁸ This prompts a response from the brothers for we next read that *“they”* answered their father.²⁵⁶⁹ We can imagine the situation here. Judah has taken the lead to speak to their father about what they must do. Jacob (Israel) has made it all personal, and as a result the brothers speak up perhaps one saying one thing and another something else. What we hear in our text is that *“they”* speak in unison, and it would appear from this that their experience was highly unusual. It appears that *“the man”* (i.e. Joseph) quizzed them all *“pointedly”* about their family situation.²⁵⁷⁰ He asks specifically about their father, whether he was *“still alive,”* and also about whether they had *“another brother.”*²⁵⁷¹ Such questions are quite understandable from the vantage point we have as readers of this record, but for the brothers they must have seemed quite invasive (why did this man want to know about their father and any other brothers?). Then further the brothers in unison (although it was probably a communal effort of the brothers each chipping in their own view of the matter) say how could they have possibly known that this man (Joseph) would demand that they bring Benjamin with them if they were to return? The brothers were caught totally unaware. Remember that their sin of selling Joseph lays heavily upon them. They knew that they had done grave wrong in selling him, and now they are being held to account, although in the matters at hand they were wholly innocent. What the brothers did was to speak honestly and openly to the governor of Egypt about their family situation. They did not realise that this would land them in such difficulties.

43:8.

Next in verse 8 Judah takes the lead again. Judah requests from Jacob (Israel) that Benjamin would accompany him and he would take responsibility for him. What he actually says is quite remarkable. I wonder if you picked up on the affirming and confident nature of what Judah says? His speech has three essential components. First there is a command or request, then then there is consequent

2568 Genesis 43:6.

2569 Genesis 43:7.

2570 Genesis 43:7.

2571 Genesis 43:7.

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action that stems from the request being granted, and finally the purpose for this request and action.

Thus first Judah requests as a matter of imperative command that Jacob (Israel) “*send the lad with me.*”²⁵⁷² What do we make of this in spiritual terms? Judah is taking full responsibility. He had been the ringleader in getting Rachel's first son Joseph sold and done away with. This had lead him to depart from his brothers in a flurry of sin. But now he is concerned to do what must be done to gain food, and this means he will be surety for Joseph's younger brother Benjamin. By requesting of his father that Benjamin accompany him, Judah is promising that he will take care of this special son of Jacob's. How Judah has changed! Can we not see here the marks of repentance. Judah hated Joseph and wanted him done away with, but now Joseph's natural brother is the object of his love and concern.

Then we find that Judah is confident of success. He states: “*and we will arise and go,*” which at first sight seems simply to be saying that they will simply go as sent, but is that all it means?²⁵⁷³ The word “*arise,*” as I have mentioned before speaks to us of the resurrection. Judah, through whom the promises were to come, tells Jacob (Israel) that he and Benjamin (the son of his right hand) will arise! And then we discover that this getting up and arising to go as commissioned (sent) is for a great purpose. It is in order that “*we may live and not die*”!²⁵⁷⁴ Well, of course, they were starving because of the severity of the famine. But clearly this is also meant to point us to eternal life. Unless Judah and Benjamin “*arise and go*” then there would be death as an inevitable result. Life depended upon Benjamin (the son of the right hand) going down to Egypt.

But then note further that this hope of life rather than death was not just for Judah and Benjamin, but also for all of them. The text expresses this aspect pointedly.²⁵⁷⁵

גַּם-אֶתְּנוּךְ גַּם-אֶתְּנוּךְ גַּם-אֶתְּנוּךְ

both we and you and also our little ones.

The whole family is included. We see this comprehensiveness expressed in the Newt Testament wherever salvation is offered and spoken of. As a single example consider the occasion where the Philippian jailer was addressed by Paul following the unusual events that occurred in the jail one night. The apostle responded to the jailer's question of what he must do to be saved with these words:

So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”²⁵⁷⁶

2572 Genesis 43:8.

2573 Genesis 43:8.

2574 Genesis 43:8.

2575 Genesis 43:8.

2576 Acts 16:31. See also Acts 11:14; 16:15.

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It was not that the jailer's faith would procure salvation for his whole household, of course, because the soul that sins will die and the faith expressed must be personal.²⁵⁷⁷ However salvation is for one and all.

43:9.

Judah then goes on to give assurances to his father in verse 9. We are to be very careful in our interpretation of God's word but I cannot help but see here a reflection of Christ's mission in Judah's words of assurance. Judah says: *“I myself will be surety for him.”* Is this not incredible? How can Judah be so sure of success? But, I believe, he was saying this as prophetic of Christ Jesus who promised to be our surety, to be surety for his brothers. The word he uses here is the same one Tamar used in requesting a token from Judah when he took her for a prostitute. Tamar requested a *“pledge,”* something she could hold onto to ensure that she was being treated with fairness and justice.²⁵⁷⁸

אִם-תִּתֶּן עֲרָבוֹן עַד שְׁלֹחֲךָ

only if you give (me) a pledge until you send it

But now Judah puts himself as the pledge!²⁵⁷⁹

אֲנֹכִי אֶעֱרָב נָו

I will be his pledge.

Judah effectively guarantees Benjamin's safe return. If he were to fail in returning Benjamin to his father, then his father could require of his hand. Judah promises to return Benjamin and to set him before his father's face.²⁵⁸⁰ How did Judah know he could accomplish this? Of course he could not. But that he was willing to go and be surety for Benjamin we can see a wonderful turn around in his disposition and faith.

Now in greater measure and in more wonderful relief, the Saviour is our guarantor, our surety.²⁵⁸¹ He, with confidence, could say to the Father that He had done all that was necessary. He has acted as our surety guaranteeing our salvation, and now His claim to the fruits and benefits of all that He had done was assured.

2577 Ezekiel 18:4,20; John 1:12,13.

2578 Genesis 38:17.

2579 Genesis 43:9.

2580 Genesis 43:9.

2581 Hebrews 7:22.

43:10.

Judah rounds off his speech with a rebuke for his father. Why had they waited so long? If they had not waited so long they might have been down and back again already. And so Jacob (Israel) replies with these words:

אם-כן אפוא זאת עשו

if so now/then this do

We might paraphrase this by saying: “well if this is the reality then there is only one thing to do.” Jacob (Israel) has seen the truth of what must be done and is now acting in consequence. The inevitability of what was happening leads to only one conclusion. We see in this situation a reflection of our Saviour's prayers in Gethsemane. These bear careful study. It would seem that the Lord made request for the cup to be taken from Him at first but only if this was His Father's will. As He prayed further it becomes clear that what He was about to face was the only thing that could be done, and so He willingly submits to this in love and trust to His Father.²⁵⁸² Obviously on a much lower plain we see here Jacob (Israel) acknowledging the fact that there was nothing else that could be done. They needed food. Egypt was the only place that had food. To go there and bring food back successfully required Benjamin to go down. There simply was no other way.

43:11-14.

And so facing the inevitable and preparing for the only action that could be taken, Jacob (Israel) commands that a “*present*” be sent to “*the man,*” reminiscent of the gifts he prepared for his brother Esau on his return to the promised land.²⁵⁸³ What is striking is the content of this gift at such a time of famine. Three things Jacob (Israel) commands to be taken down. They were to “*take*”:

[1] Various fruits, spices and nuts as a gift (v11).

[2] Double money along with the money that was returned to them (v12).

[3] Benjamin their brother (v13).

Jacob (Israel) commands that they take of the “*best fruits*” that were in their land.²⁵⁸⁴ This present was to make a way through for the brothers. If these brothers could give of their best in search of food, who are we to offer the weak and beggarly left-overs for the Lord? Psalm 29 opens by calling upon the Lord's

2582 Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46.

2583 Genesis 32:13f.

2584 Genesis 43:11.

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people to give of their strength and off their glory for the Lord. We have nothing to offer except that which the Lord has given us, but He requires it of us.

Now Jacob (Israel) commands that “a *little* balm,” and then also “a *little* honey,spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.”²⁵⁸⁵ Although the word “*little*” occurs but twice, I would suggest that it applies to all the products of the land here. Presumably these were extremely precious because of the severity of the famine. So only a “*little*” could be offered. Is there anything significant about these fruits? The balm was medicinal, the myrrh was a fragrant application also used in embalming, but the other fruits were all edible. A range of offerings are thus sent down. If we look at this as the desperate act of starving people in search of food, then the offerings are simply an attempt at getting noticed. The same scenario has played out in desperate situations all over the world. People desperate to escape poverty and regions ravaged by wars give up their prized possessions to gain passage to a safe haven. Stories of people escaping Nazi Germany in the second world war are matched by equally harrowing stories of those who have fled from the Middle East and North Africa in search of pastures green.

They were also to take “*double money*” and then the “*money that was returned*” and Jacob (Israel) suggests that it may have been “*an oversight*.”²⁵⁸⁶ Why double money? Perhaps Jacob thought there may have been an increase in prices due to the famine, or maybe he wanted to rectify any bad feeling that may have resulted from them having the money returned. Later in Israel's history we read the following:

If a man delivers to his neighbour money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double.²⁵⁸⁷

Thus Jacob (Israel) was seeking to make restitution. This shows forth his godly nature even whilst he was struggling with the thought of giving up his beloved son of his beloved Rachel. And so he concedes at last to allow Benjamin to go down to Egypt.²⁵⁸⁸ Jacob (Israel) commands that they take Benjamin and “*arise*” to return to “*the man*,” which language speaks again of the resurrection.²⁵⁸⁹ This is Jacob's final yielding to the Lord. Jacob (Israel) ends by asking for “*mercy before the man*” which can only come from “*God Almighty*,” as he hopes and prays for Benjamin's safety and Simeon's release.²⁵⁹⁰ He concludes with a poignant statement: “*If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!*” which is a true yielding to God and His will, not an acceptance of whatever may befall him, as he has expressed faith and trust in God here.²⁵⁹¹ A very

2585 Genesis 43:11.

2586 Genesis 43:12.

2587 Exodus 22:7.

2588 Genesis 43:13.

2589 Genesis 43:13.

2590 Genesis 43:14.

2591 Genesis 43:14.

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similar form of expression comes from the lips of Esther (“*if I perish, I perish!*”), as she prepared to go to the king unannounced (which was a dangerous thing to do).²⁵⁹²

[2] The brothers take Benjamin to Egypt. (Genesis 43:15-34).

43:15.

Now we see that Jacob's sons (“*the men*”) immediately respond and set off to Egypt. They gathered the gift, their youngest brother, and the necessary monies, and they “*arose*” and travelled down into Egypt where they “*stood before Joseph.*” In their minds these men have done nothing wrong. However they are greatly exercised about the way they had treated Joseph many years before. Whilst we have here normal words expressing simple courses of action, it would seem that on account of Joseph's stature and elevation, they are coming into an august and majestic presence, and so it was needful for them to be adequately prepared. We read and hear a lot about coming into the presence of God *just as we are* and almost in a perfunctory or off-hand manner. This is quite wrong. I do not say at all that a person must clean themselves up and present a righteousness of their own before God, not at all, and such is impossible. In that sense we can come in no other way than as we are in our sinful condition. But often there is this thought of being accepted and almost a matter of my right to come before God for His blessing. Such is hopelessly at odds with both the nature and character of God, and also in all truth and reality. Who dare breeze into the presence of the Queen of England? And she is a mere mortal! She is our head of state and deserves to be treated with respect. So why would we ever think of coming to the Lord in any old way? What should I say then? Well the brothers have prepared a gift, they have taken monies to make reparations for any misunderstandings, and they have what Joseph requested. Thus they stand before the governor hoping for his mercy. In like manner the sinful man who has recognised his desperate condition, that he is famished, and guilty, comes bringing all he has to the Lord. He does not bring this in any pride but is concerned to make things right. Imagine one who all his life had extorted money for example, like Zacchaeus the chief tax collector, who on receiving Christ at his house at the command of the Lord, suddenly declares that he would repay that which he had gained by fraud.²⁵⁹³ The brothers come in hope of mercy, and they come in contrition. They come wanting to make everything right. And so they are enabled to stand before the governor of all the world (Egypt).

2592 Esther 4:16.

2593 Luke 19:8.

43:16,17.

On arriving in Egypt we discover that Joseph “*saw Benjamin,*” but it would appear from the narrative that this was whilst they were some way off, as they do not meet up with Joseph until the midday meal to be held at “*noon.*”²⁵⁹⁴ Now before the brothers actually arrive, Joseph, on seeing his younger brother, commands the steward of his house to prepare an animal for a feast telling him that these men who were approaching were to “*dine with*” Joseph.²⁵⁹⁵ The steward obeyed his master Joseph doing all that was commanded.²⁵⁹⁶ In these brief details can we not see a reflection of the parable the Lord told about the prodigal son? Perhaps it might be better to suggest that the Lord had this incident in view when He spoke this parable.²⁵⁹⁷ Joseph is like the father in the parable and sees the returning band of guilty brothers and what does he do? He makes a feast just like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. Now the correspondences are not exact, of course, but enough is there to show the nature of God being expressed in these events.

43:18-22.

As they approach the brothers are taken into Joseph's house and this causes them to become “*afraid*” on account of the money that was found in their sacks.²⁵⁹⁸ Then we discover that they “*drew near*” to Joseph's steward, from which we discover that they must have been directed with intention by someone (other servants or possibly soldiers?) to go to Joseph's house.²⁵⁹⁹ When they come to the steward they are desperate in their desire and will to confess openly the truth of the situation.²⁶⁰⁰ In verse 20 they begin their speech with a Hebrew word (בִּי *bî*) that is used in making requests and it is always combined with the appellation “my lord,” and so might be rendered as “If it please my lord.” We might imagine someone coming to a person of high office where the correct language is necessary. It is also suggestive of the kind of language used in prayer. They then state that their first journey to Egypt was to procure food, but they are demonstrative about this. The verb “to come down” is used twice to indicate the certainty of what they are saying (“*we indeed came down*”).²⁶⁰¹ We might render it like this: “in coming we came down,” or “we most certainly came down” in order to get food. They are humble in their approach to the steward but insistent concerning their motives. They were not spies! And so they relate what happened when they discovered that their money had been returned to them. Four times the word “*money*” is used in verses 21 and 22 as they are anxious to confess the misunderstanding (as they see

2594 Genesis 43:16,25.

2595 Genesis 43:16.

2596 Genesis 43:17.

2597 Luke 15:11f.

2598 Genesis 43:18.

2599 Genesis 43:19.

2600 Genesis 43:20-22.

2601 Genesis 43:20.

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it).²⁶⁰² They are at a loss to explain the situation, but their eagerness to confess and make repayment is open for all to see. Such is the case with those who are coming to faith – their repentance is real and visible. They know they have done wrong or, as in the case here, that wrong has been done although they are at a loss as to exactly how, and they are eager to make it right.

43:23,24.

What happens next is puzzling because we already know that Joseph had commanded that the money be returned to them and placed in their sacks.²⁶⁰³ Now the steward replies to the brothers with a remarkable statement in verse 23:

Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid.

Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks;

I had your money.

Following open confession and a desire to make things right, all of a sudden everything is washed away. Those wonderful words “*peace*” and “*do not be afraid*” are ones every true believer receives with great joy as they experience the smile of God upon them, and all because of what the Saviour of the world has done.²⁶⁰⁴ Joseph had commanded the money be returned because the gospel is free. The steward had full payment (“*I had your money*”)!²⁶⁰⁵ The only explanation is that Joseph bore the cost. He paid the price for their food and sustenance. The steward continues by suggesting that it was God who had given their treasure.²⁶⁰⁶ What a remarkable thing! One who comes in open confession and who is ready to make all things right, is received and is given peace and assurance! The Lord spoke of those who had left houses, homes, and families to follow Christ and He said that they would receive more both in the age to come and now in the present:

29 So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, **30** who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”²⁶⁰⁷

And then, to make things even more wonderful, Simeon is brought to them, And then the brothers are treated as guests in Joseph's house.²⁶⁰⁸ They received water to drink, the washing of their feet, and food

2602 Genesis 43:9.

2603 Genesis 42:25.

2604 Genesis 43:23.

2605 Genesis 43:23.

2606 Genesis 43:23.

2607 Luke 18:29,30.

2608 Genesis 43:23,24.

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for their pack animals.²⁶⁰⁹ When the Lord receives a sinner they are catered for in full! No half measures. Once adopted into the family of God the new son or daughter is truly accepted as belonging. Now such rarely happens in the world. There is always some further ladders to ascend even when you might think you have been accepted, there are yet more barriers to full accreditation. It happens in the academic world, the world of science, and also in business, but in the kingdom of God, when a person truly enters they are wholly accepted as part of the family. I wonder if we are as accepting in our churches? The father embraced the returning prodigal without so much as a single hesitation. Surely one who embraces the gospel is of the family of God in the same measure as those who may have been walking with God for years?

43:25-27.

There is a sense in which the brothers are not yet acknowledging the blessings they have received thus far, for they are keen to make ready the present they had bought for Joseph.²⁶¹⁰ They are still in that state of uncertainty, and so they gave their present when Joseph returned at noon.²⁶¹¹ Notice that they *“bowed down before him to the earth”* in fulfilment of the dreams Joseph had many years before.²⁶¹² Here is the humility of a truly repentant heart. Now Joseph is not particularly interested in their present for he asks them about how they are, and then makes pointed request concerning their father.²⁶¹³ The present may have been significant in their minds, but to Joseph it was inconsequential. Joseph is far more interested in their welfare and the welfare of their father!²⁶¹⁴ Is this not like a true father who when his errant child returns after doing something wrong and brings a present to appease, is greeted with warmth and love by the father? The father is not really concerned about the present (they do not ignore it of course) but is more interested in their child. Joseph's asking them about *“their well-being”* is no mere small talk.²⁶¹⁵ He is genuinely interested. This is clearly evident in the way in which he continues by asking after the brothers' father. Clearly, on the human level Joseph is concerned to see his father once more.

43:28-34.

The brothers inform the governor (Joseph) of Jacob's well-being and confirm that he is still alive.²⁶¹⁶ Their deference is clear. They bow again and *“prostrated themselves.”*²⁶¹⁷ How remarkable a

2609 Genesis 43:24.

2610 Genesis 43:25.

2611 Genesis 43:26.

2612 Genesis 43:26. See: Genesis 37:6,10.

2613 Genesis 43:27.

2614 Genesis 43:27.

2615 Genesis 43:27.

2616 Genesis 43:28.

2617 Genesis 43:28.

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turn around. These brothers who hated Joseph are now entreating him and doing him homage and obeisance. As the brothers humble themselves, Joseph raises his eyes and sets his gaze upon Benjamin.²⁶¹⁸ He pronounces a blessing upon Benjamin, but is then so overcome with emotion he has to leave.²⁶¹⁹ Can we imagine such a reunion? For more than twenty years Joseph has been apart from his father and his close younger brother, and now he sees him once more. Pause and consider the compassion and love Christ had for His friend Lazarus.²⁶²⁰ The Lord is not just *“not ashamed”* to be known as our brother, He loves us more than we can truly appreciate.²⁶²¹ Joseph splashed some water on his face, pulled himself together and came and ordered the food to be laid out.²⁶²²

Now interestingly we discover something about Joseph and the culture he lived among in Egypt. Notice that Joseph was in *“a place by himself,”* the brothers were *“by themselves,”* and the Egyptians, who are described as those *“who ate with him,”* were, in point of fact, *“by themselves,”* which is explained to us by saying that it was *“an abomination to the Egyptians”* for them to *“eat food with the Hebrews.”*²⁶²³ Were the brothers aware of this governor being a Hebrew? One wonders why it would have been so objectionable for Egyptians to eat with Hebrews, but the curious thing here is that you have Joseph in one area with his brothers seated *“before him,”* and then the Egyptians somewhere else in a separate place.²⁶²⁴ Joseph had ordered the brothers according to age or birthright, and this was astonishing to them, but it did not lead to repentance or delight or realisation of whom he was. He was clearly an odd one! Not sitting with the Egyptians, and knowing the order of birth of the brothers. Whom was this man? They were astonished.²⁶²⁵ In like manner we see the Lord Jesus causing consternation among the peoples. He was a man, that was very clear, just as Joseph is frequently termed a *“man”* in the text, but there was something else about Jesus beyond that.²⁶²⁶ Joseph gave servings to everyone before he received, but to Benjamin he gave a serving that was *“five times as much”* as the serving everyone else received.²⁶²⁷ Why did he give Benjamin so much? Perhaps it was done to see whether the other brothers envied Benjamin and hated him as they had hated Joseph. But we discover that this occasioned no animosity amongst the brothers because *“they drank and were merry with”* Joseph.²⁶²⁸

2618 Genesis 43:29.

2619 Genesis 43:29,30.

2620 John 11:35,36.

2621 John 10:15; Hebrews 2:11.

2622 Genesis 43:31.

2623 Genesis 43:32.

2624 Genesis 43:33.

2625 Genesis 43:33.

2626 Genesis 41:38; 42:30,33; 43:3,5,6,7,11,13,14; Matthew 7:28; 13:54; 22:33.

2627 Genesis 43:34.

2628 Genesis 43:34.

Chapter 55.

Return to disaster? (44:1-34).

Analysis.

- #44 1** And he commanded the steward of his house, saying,
 “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry,
 and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack.
 2 Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money.”
So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.
- 3** As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.
4 When they had gone out of the city, *and* were not *yet* far off, Joseph said to his steward,
 “Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them,
 ‘Why have you repaid evil for good?
 5 *Is* not this *the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination?
 You have done evil in so doing.’”
- 6** So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.
7 And they said to him,
 “Why does my lord say these words?
 Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.
 8 Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks.
 How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house?
 9 With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord’s slaves.”
- 10** And he said,
 “Now also *let it be* according to your words;
 he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless.”
- 11** Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack.
12 So he searched.
He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest;
and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack.
- 13** Then they tore their clothes,
and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.
- 14** So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house,
and he *was* still there;
and they fell before him on the ground.
- 15** And Joseph said to them,
 “What deed *is* this you have done?
 Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?”
- 16** Then Judah said,
 “What shall we say to my lord?
 What shall we speak?
 Or how shall we clear ourselves?
 God has found out the iniquity of your servants;
 here we are, my lord’s slaves, both we and *he* also with whom the cup was found.”
- 17** But he said,
 “Far be it from me that I should do so;
 the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave.
 And as for you, go up in peace to your father.”
- 18** Then Judah came near to him and said:
 “O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s hearing,
 and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you *are* even like Pharaoh.
 19 My lord asked his servants, saying,

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- ‘Have you a father or a brother?’
- 20 And we said to my lord,
‘We have a father, an old man, and a child of *his* old age, *who is* young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him.’
- 21 Then you said to your servants,
‘Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.’
- 22 And we said to my lord,
‘The lad cannot leave his father, for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.’
- 23 But you said to your servants,
‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.’
- 24 “So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.
- 25 And our father said,
‘Go back *and* buy us a little food.’
- 26 But we said,
‘We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man’s face unless our youngest brother *is* with us.’
- 27 Then your servant my father said to us,
‘You know that my wife bore me two sons;
28 and the one went out from me, and I said,
“Surely he is torn to pieces”;
and I have not seen him since.
29 But if you take this one also from me,
and calamity befalls him,
you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.’
- 30 “Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad *is* not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad’s life, 31 it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die.
So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.
- 32 For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying,
‘If I do not bring him *back* to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’
- 33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.
- 34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?”

Genesis 44 recounts the story of the brothers being brought back to Egypt. In the first part (Genesis 44:1-13) we find the brothers departing to return to Canaan, only to be stopped and recalled back to Egypt on account of 'planted' stolen goods. In the second part (Genesis 44:13-34) we find the brothers' return to Joseph to be held to account, and a stirring appeal made by Judah to the governor of Egypt.

The issue of divination and Joseph's strange plan.

Looking at this passage as a whole we cannot help but view Joseph's action as odd, curious, and even underhand when viewed at first glance. First we must consider the whole concept of him owning a cup of divination. What does this mean? How does he view this? Second we puzzle over his plan to send the brothers on their way only to haul them back again on account of a stolen cup which Joseph had planted on the younger brother's baggage.

The cup.

In connection with the word “*divination*,” (נִחֵז *nahēš*), which is found at verse 5 and 15, the

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word indicates the idea of practising divination or soothsaying, but it also seems to suggest learning by experience, or making sense of what is observed. The same word is used of Laban, but rendered in that case as “*learned by experience,*” and as something prohibited in the law where it is put as “*divination*” in Leviticus, or as “*one who interprets omens*” in Deuteronomy in the NKJV.

And Laban said to him, “Please *stay*, if I have found favour in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake.” ²⁶²⁹

You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying. ²⁶³⁰

There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or* a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ²⁶³¹

Now the issue of Joseph practising divination or not has occasioned much thought amongst commentators. Either he simply uses what would have been the expected normal practice for someone in his high position as a means to shake them without revealing whom he really was, or he had fallen into this way by being amongst so many who practised it. Calvin takes the latter view and argues that Joseph had fallen into sin and compromised as he worked amongst the Egyptians:

Whereby indeed, he divineth ... This clause is variously expounded. ... The genuine sense seems to me to be this: that he had used the cup for divinations and for magical arts; which, however, we have said, he feigned, for the sake of aggravating the charge brought against them. But the question arises, how does Joseph allow himself to resort to such an expedient? For besides that it was sinful for him to profess augury; he vainly and unworthily transfers to imaginary deities the honour due only to divine grace. On a former occasion, he had declared that he was unable to interpret dreams, except so far as God should suggest the truth to him; now he obscures this entire ascription of praise to divine grace; and what is worse, by boasting that he is a magician rather than proclaiming himself a prophet of God, he impiously profanes the gift of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless, in this dissimulation, it is not to be denied, that he sinned grievously. Yet I think that, at the first, he had endeavoured, by all means in his power, to give unto God his due honour; and it was not his fault that the whole kingdom of Egypt was ignorant of the fact that he excelled in skill, not by magical arts, but by a celestial gift. But since the Egyptians were accustomed to the illusions of the magicians, this ancient error so prevailed, that they believed Joseph to be one of them; and I do not doubt that this rumour was spread abroad among the people, although contrary to his desire and intention. Now Joseph, in feigning himself to be a stranger to his brethren, combines many falsehoods in one, and takes advantage of the prevailing vulgar opinion that he used auguries. Whence we gather, that when any one swerves from the right line, he is prone to fall into various sins. Wherefore, being warned by this example, let us learn to allow ourselves in nothing except what we

2629 Genesis 30:27.

2630 Leviticus 19:26.

2631 Deuteronomy 18:10.

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know is approved by God. But especially must we avoid all dissimulation, which either produces or confirms mischievous impostures. Besides, we are warned, that it is not sufficient for any one to oppose a prevailing vice for a time; unless he add constancy of resistance, even though the evil may become excessive. For he discharges his duty very defectively, who, having once testified that he is displeased with what is evil, afterwards, by his silence or connivance, gives it a kind of assent.²⁶³²

Far be it from me to disagree with John Calvin, but I am not at all sure that Joseph had fallen in this way. I rather think that his intimation towards divination was something he may have expected of the brothers and he uses it to his advantage. Did they not know his great power? And, seen as a pagan leader, did they not know his position and authority? Now if what Calvin says is more to the truth it does teach us a very valuable lesson. Joseph began well giving glory to God, but was swept along towards the norm in a fallen society and had succumbed to the pressures around him. We are ever to be on our guard. However the same could not be levelled at Daniel who with an “*excellent spirit*” stood against the prevailing press for worship of Darius the king.²⁶³³

Now there are other commentators who take a very different line on this verse. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, for example, make this comment:

Is not this it in which my lord drinketh—not only kept for the governor's personal use, but whereby he divines. Divination by cups, to ascertain the course of futurity, was one of the prevalent superstitions of ancient Egypt, as it is of Eastern countries still. It is not likely that Joseph, a pious believer in the true God, would have addicted himself to this superstitious practice. But he might have availed himself of that popular notion to carry out the successful execution of his stratagem for the last decisive trial of his brethren.²⁶³⁴

Matthew Poole, a seventeenth century theologian and commentator, was also of the opinion that Joseph was not a pagan diviner:

Amongst the several kinds of divination in use among the Egyptians and other heathens, this was one, to do it by a cup or bason, which they filled with water, and put in them plates of silver, or precious stones, in which certain characters were engraven, by which, and some words they used, they called upon the devil, who gave them answer. Joseph did not use this course, nor was a diviner, but the people thought him such a one, and the steward might represent him as such, for the better covering or carrying on his design. ... Others observe, that the Hebrew word oftentimes signifies not to *divine*, but only to *observe* and *discover* a thing, as Genesis 30:27; 1Kings 20:33, and render the place thus, *whereby*

2632 **John Calvin.** *Commentary on Genesis.* Comments on Genesis 44:5.

2633 Daniel 6.

2634 **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown.** *Commentary on Genesis.* Comments on Genesis 44:5. [Robert Jamieson (1802–1880) was a minister at St Paul's Church, Glasgow. Andrew Fausset (1821–1910) was rector of St. Cuthbert's Church in York. David Brown (1803–1897) was a Free Church of Scotland minister at St James Glasgow and professor of theology at Free Church College of the University of Aberdeen].

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*he will certainly observe or discover, to wit, what you are and do.*²⁶³⁵

John Gill, a baptist pastor of the seventeenth century also held that Joseph was not a diviner:

According to our version and others, Joseph is here represented by his steward as a diviner or soothsayer, and so he might be thought to be by the Egyptians, from being such an exact interpreter of dreams, foretelling things to come, and that he made his divinations by the silver cup ... as Joseph never practised any thing of this kind, so neither would he dissemble, or make as if he did ...²⁶³⁶

Gill adds the following thought from verse 15 where Joseph says (according to the NKJV): *“Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?”*

wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? either that he could divine himself, though not by the cup, of which here no mention is made, but in some other way used by the Egyptians; or that he had diviners with him, as Aben Ezra, with whom he could consult, to find out the person that took the cup; or surely they must needs think that such a man as he, who had such great knowledge of things, natural and political, and whose name was Zaphnathpaaneah, a revealer of secrets, would be able to search into and find out an affair of this kind; See Gill on Genesis 41:45; and they might well conclude, that a man so sagacious and penetrating would easily conjecture who were the persons that took away his cup, even the strangers that had dined with him so lately, and therefore could never expect to go off with it.²⁶³⁷

On balance, therefore, it seems best to understand this idea of divination as something that may have been expected of someone in Joseph's position, and not that Joseph actually practised such a forbidden art. Where Joseph then asks the brothers in verse 15 *“Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?”* we are to assume that he was not actually claiming such, but that as someone in his position he had the power to do so. We might further add that on account of his interpreting dreams by the grace of God, that he was alluding to this, although using the common Egyptian terminology.

The plan.

Taking a good step back, what we have from the point of view of the brothers as they return to Egypt under a cloud of suspicion, is another difficulty faced about which they have no explanation. Now although the reader is made aware of the plan from the start, we need to consider the fact that Joseph is still the “saviour of the world” (at least as far as the brothers are concerned), and from the human point of view, Joseph is eager to see how his brothers will now behave. Given Joseph's position in these last

2635 **M. Poole.** Genesis 44:5.

2636 **J. Gill.** Genesis 44:5.

2637 **J. Gill.** Genesis 44:15.

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chapters of Genesis as a type of the Lord Himself, might we not see here the testing of the brothers actions towards their younger brother and the beloved of their father? We dare not accuse God of wrongdoing at all when He tests us to know what is in our hearts, but Joseph's intentions are simply to see what type of men his brothers truly are. Now older commentators have seen in these verses glimpses of the Lord. The seventeenth century minister **Matthew Henry**, for example, comments thus:

Joseph heaps further kindnesses upon his brethren, fills their sacks, returns their money, and sends them away full of gladness; but he also exercises them with further trials. Our God thus humbles those whom he loves and loads with benefits. Joseph ordered his steward to put a fine silver cup which he had (and which, it is likely, was used at his table when they dined with him) into Benjamin's sack's mouth, that it might seem as if he had stolen it from the table, and put it here himself, after his corn was delivered to him. If Benjamin had stolen it, it had been the basest piece of dishonesty and ingratitude that could be and if Joseph, by ordering it to be there, had designed really to take advantage against him, it had been in him most horrid cruelty and oppression; but it proved, in the issue, that there was no harm done, nor any designed, on either side.²⁶³⁸

Joseph had planned this whole ruse to see how the brothers would treat his brother Benjamin and to secure Benjamin to himself. Do we excuse such action or condone it? Certainly not. Joseph had power and it appears he took advantage of this to secure knowledge about the disposition of his long-estranged brothers. What were they really like? But over and above this we can see the Lord God Himself arranging all things according to His good plan, and whilst at times it seems awkward and even contrary to sense or justice from our point of view, we remind ourselves that we do not see the grand picture, nor can we really do so.

Joseph's intention was to demonstrate in like manner to his brothers the experiences he underwent. The brothers had been deceived and had been forced to go down to Egypt. They had been imprisoned and faced the prospect of enslavement. In all of these ways it is clear that Joseph was testing them to see how they would react to unjust trials and difficulties that he himself had faced both at the hands of his own brothers and then whilst he was in Egypt.

[1] Joseph's strange and mysterious plan. (Genesis 44:1-13).

44:1.

And so in verse 1 we see Joseph issuing the command to not only bless abundantly the brothers with “*as much as they can carry*” in the way of food and a return of their money, but then also to place them in danger and harm's way by planting his special cup in the sack of Benjamin. From the human

2638 **Matthew Henry.** *Commentary on the Whole Bible.* Comments on Genesis 44:1f.

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point of view it would seem that Joseph is caught in two ways here. He wants to bless his brothers but he does not really know for sure how they will behave. It is equally probable that he intended to delay them so that he could be with them (and especially Benjamin) some time longer.

If we view this spiritually, we might see the action of Joseph as underhand, but from the brothers' perspective the trials and difficulties they face are all within the sovereign will of God. God never does things in an arbitrary nor in a wicked way, ever. They may seem odd and awkward to us as we undergo them, but that is only because we cannot see them as God sees, we cannot see them truly.

44:2.

What, then, of Joseph's cup? This was obviously special, as Joseph commands the steward to place his *“cup, the silver cup”* in Benjamin's sack. It was not just any cup but the one made from silver and (presumably) of signal importance which would be missed. This would be a test of the brothers. How would they fare on discovering their youngest brother was found with such an important item? Later on we hear Joseph refer to it in an especial way which we shall come to shortly. Thus the steward does all *“according to the word that Joseph had spoken,”* by which we can readily understand too that God's will is acted upon immediately by all His ministering angels and wherever He enables His earthly servants by faith to serve.

44:3-5.

When morning dawns the brothers depart having been *“sent away”* for Canaan.²⁶³⁹ Now no sooner had they left the city and were still *“not yet far off,”* the governor sends his steward to intercept the brothers with a message.²⁶⁴⁰ Notice at the end of verse 4 and within verse 5 the use of the word *“evil”* comes twice in our text. The steward is commanded to show up the (apparent) evil that they had done in stealing Joseph's special cup (which was used to practice divination or make observations). Did Joseph actually use this for that purpose? I think that such an idea is preposterous given his close walk with God throughout all his time in Egypt as we have noted at the beginning of this chapter. However the brothers were of the understanding that this governor was an Egyptian, and so the idea of him having some means by which to divine things may not have seemed odd to them. Remember that they had been under suspicion of being spies. Although Joseph has planted the evidence, he is wanting to test them. How will they respond?

2639 Genesis 44:3.

2640 Genesis 44:4.

44:6-9.

Eventually the steward overtakes the brothers.²⁶⁴¹ This would not have been too difficult because the brothers had pack animals (donkeys) and were going at a much slower pace than one man could travel (whether by horse, chariot, or on a donkey we do not know). The steward delivered the message as received and the brothers all respond (*“they said to him”*).²⁶⁴² You can imagine the horror and the fear. Perhaps Reuben started off and then Judah, but by all accounts all of them respond at once. What we are left with is a series of statements which summarise their united concern. They begin by questioning the steward as to why he would bring such a message. How is it that such an accusation could be made (*“why does my lord ...”*)?²⁶⁴³ They then proceed to declare their integrity and innocence. The very thought of such brothers as these doing such a thing as the steward suggested is preposterous (*“far be it from us ...”*).²⁶⁴⁴ In these opening two statements we have the brothers referring to the steward as *“lord”* and themselves as *“your servants.”*²⁶⁴⁵ This would seem to indicate a marked attitude of humility. They were, of course, wholly innocent of any wrong doing and so their statements are wholly valid. Next they seek to demonstrate their integrity.²⁶⁴⁶ The word *“look”* is frequently translated as *“behold,”* and has the force of arresting the attention of someone. They had returned the money which they had discovered so why would they then seek to steal anything this time around?²⁶⁴⁷ At this point the brothers are unanimous and convinced of their innocence in any matter that the steward was raising. And so they conclude by making a rash statement which will yield yet further problems.²⁶⁴⁸ Being so convinced that the steward had made a mistake they (as brothers together) declare two things. First if it be found upon any of them that person should die, and second the remainder of them would be slaves to the governor.²⁶⁴⁹

44:10-13.

On hearing this declaration of their innocence the steward receives what they say, but modifies the punishment. Only the one in whose sack the item is recovered will suffer, and such will be a *“slave,”* whilst the rest would *“be blameless.”*²⁶⁵⁰ After all the cup would be found in only one sack, so only that one who purloined it ought to suffer punishment. On hearing these words the brothers very quickly got their sacks down onto the ground for inspection.²⁶⁵¹ They each stood there with their sacks ready for the

2641 Genesis 44:6.

2642 Genesis 44:7.

2643 Genesis 44:7.

2644 Genesis 44:7.

2645 Genesis 44:7.

2646 Genesis 44:8.

2647 Genesis 44:8.

2648 Genesis 44:9.

2649 Genesis 44:9.

2650 Genesis 44:10.

2651 Genesis 44:11.

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steward to examine. Remember that Joseph has set this up, and the steward is fully aware of what was going on. However the steward does not go straight to the youngest man's sack (i.e. Benjamin). Instead he begins with Reuben's and works his way down through the brothers to the youngest.²⁶⁵² Can you imagine the scene? The brothers are utterly convinced of their innocence, after all they brought a present to Joseph, returned the unpaid money, and brought double money for new food supplies. All of this gave them confidence that they were being unjustly accused. And so after Reuben's sack is examined and found not to have the cup, and then Simeon's was found not to have it, and then Levi and Judah's sacks showed no sight of it, the brothers were increasingly confident. It may have had the effect of showing up the folly of the steward's accusation in their eyes. But after ten sacks had been cleared the last sack was Benjamin's and there the *"cup was found."*²⁶⁵³ The unveiling of the stolen object in Benjamin's sack was a huge surprise to the brothers, so much so that *"they tore their clothes"* and immediately returned to the city.²⁶⁵⁴ We note here that the "son of the right hand" (Benjamin), is the one who bears the guilt. This reminds us that Christ bore our guilt. He was wholly innocent, of course, as was Benjamin, but He bore the guilt due for our sin.²⁶⁵⁵

[2] Judah's stirring appeal for clemency. (Genesis 44:14-34).

In what follows we have Judah making an appeal on behalf of his brother Benjamin to Joseph who is governor of Egypt and was *"like Pharaoh"* in power and authority.²⁶⁵⁶ In all three men we can see a reflection of Christ and His marvellous being and work. The Lord Jesus will descend (humanly speaking) from Judah, and Judah acts as surety and substitute for his brother, willing to suffer the punishment that was due to Benjamin. Joseph is presented to us here as the *"Man,"* but also as the highest authority in the land, equal in power to Pharaoh (*"for you are even like Pharaoh"*).²⁶⁵⁷ Many have seen in this statement a pointer towards our Saviour's divine and human nature. Joseph is presented to us the only one who has all authority, the man who is the Supreme ruler over all the world. Benjamin shows us Christ both as the Son of the Right Hand, and as the innocent one accused and brought to trial.

Now that the scene has been set, and the trap sprung, what will happen next? Well in verses 14 through to 34 we have an impassioned plea made by Judah, the son of Jacob, who left his brethren but who has come to represent them all. We begin with a lead from Judah as the brothers return to Joseph's house (verse 14) followed swiftly by Joseph's question (verse 15). Then Judah makes his opening confession (verse 16) to which Joseph replies briefly (verse 17), and then we have a final lengthy piece

2652 Genesis 44:12.

2653 Genesis 44:12.

2654 Genesis 44:13.

2655 Isaiah 53:12; 1Peter 2:24.

2656 Genesis 44:18.

2657 Genesis 44:18.

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from Judah again in verses 18 to 34.

44:14-16.

As the brothers enter Joseph's house lead by Judah they all *"fell before him on the ground."*²⁶⁵⁸ Once again we have the fulfilment of the dream that Joseph had some time before.²⁶⁵⁹ Joseph challenges them concerning the incident asking them *"what deed is this you have done?"*²⁶⁶⁰ What had they actually done? Here was the chance to confess what they had done. Ultimately they were guiltless in the matter of Joseph's cup, but were they innocent? No! They still had the matter of their treatment of Joseph so many years ago. They had recognized this in their confessions one to another.²⁶⁶¹ But they needed to be brought to open confession. Here was an opportunity for them.

And then Joseph says something rather remarkable. I am quite certain that as a man of God Joseph was godly and had no reason to engage in the pagan practice of divination. He was one who heard God and was enabled to understand revelatory dreams from the Lord. Why then would he need to practice divination? But here Joseph then points out that they would surely have understood, and even expected, that as a pagan governor that he could *"certainly practice divination."*²⁶⁶² Why did he make such a claim? What was the purpose in this? It would seem that he wanted them to understand that they were being watched, that they could not escape from the truth. We must not emulate Joseph, of course, but the Holy Spirit is intimating that even such worldly pressures have their place in God's economy. The Lord uses even the wicked and untoward to do His perfect work. And so the fact that the brothers might have expected this pagan governor (as they understood at this point) would have some powers (even if they were not real ones) would be such as to make them wary and on their guard.

What we find, however, is a reply from Judah who seems to have taken the lead amongst the brothers.²⁶⁶³ There is no defence. Three rhetorical questions are spoken by Judah as a confession of utter guilt:

What shall we say to my lord?

What shall we speak?

Or how shall we clear ourselves?

They had nothing to say about the facts as they stood. They could not offer any defence. Following this

2658 Genesis 44:14.

2659 Genesis 37:10.

2660 Genesis 44:15.

2661 Genesis 42:21; 44:16.

2662 Genesis 44:15.

2663 Genesis 44:16.

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confession of guilt, Judah reveals the fact that God had uncovered their sin and iniquity (*“God has found out the iniquity of your servants”*).²⁶⁶⁴ Now we have yet to hear the brothers confess concerning their treatment of Joseph. At this point they have come to realise that the accusation of having stolen Joseph's cup cannot be challenged. They were sure of their innocence when the steward issued his challenge, but the fact that the cup was found in Benjamin's sack means that they have no defence. And so Judah speaking for all his brothers confesses and declares that they were one-and-all to be Joseph's *“slaves.”*²⁶⁶⁵ It would seem from Judah's former words, that God was dealing with them for their treatment of Joseph, and further, that Judah reckoned that they were now about to suffer the same treatment they dished out to Joseph. It was Judah who suggested Joseph be sold, and now it seems as though God was bringing this same outcome upon them. The amazing thing is that Judah is presenting himself as a willing substitute for his younger brother Benjamin.

44:17.

On hearing Judah's confession on behalf of them all, Joseph responds by requiring only that the guilty one be punished, (Benjamin), for it would be wrong and unjust to punish anyone else for this misdemeanour.²⁶⁶⁶ It is true of course that it is only the soul that sins that should die, and it is certainly unjust that an innocent one die for the sins of another.²⁶⁶⁷ And yet Christ died for the ungodly paying in full for the sins committed by sinners.²⁶⁶⁸ So how can this be? Well the answer is, of course, that Christ willingly offered Himself in the place of sinners. He voluntarily came and lived the life we could not and paid for sins in full. Besides, Joseph wants the brothers to be put in a situation whereby they could abandon Benjamin to Egypt as they had done to him, and so save their own skins.

44:18,19.

The whole passage relates Judah's recounting of the whole history of their coming to Egypt. In many ways it shows a kind of replay of the events that Joseph himself suffered and now experienced by the brothers. Joseph was harshly treated, taken down to Egypt in innocence, and left for dead. The brothers too have been wrongly accused and now face incarceration in Egypt just as Joseph had. Judah begins by making his approach to Joseph with words of deference and humility. He refers to Joseph as *“my lord,”* who was *“like Pharaoh,”* and then to himself as *“your servant.”*²⁶⁶⁹ He requests a hearing, that he may say *“a word,”* and begs a plea that Joseph would not allow his anger to *“burn against”*

2664 Genesis 44:16.

2665 Genesis 44:16.

2666 Genesis 44:17.

2667 Ezekiel 18:4,20.

2668 Romans 5:6-8; 8:32; 1Peter 2:24.

2669 Genesis 44:18.

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him.²⁶⁷⁰ Judah begins by recalling the fact that Joseph enquired about the brothers' father and whether there was any other brother back at home.²⁶⁷¹ We do not read about this on the first meeting as recorded in Genesis 42:6f. However when the brothers return to Jacob and issue their report they stated that Joseph was pointed in his questions concerning the family back at home:

But they said, “The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, ‘*Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?*’ And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down’?”²⁶⁷²

It would seem, then that Joseph who immediately recognized his brothers on their first meeting, was bent on testing them and seeing of what sort they were.

44:20-23.

Judah then relates how they informed Joseph of the precise nature of their family situation.²⁶⁷³ There is no sense of envy or bitterness here, for only the facts are related. Their father has a son with him whose brother *“is dead,”* so that this one is *“alone ... of his mother's children,”* and their father *“loves him.”*²⁶⁷⁴ Judah reckons that Joseph is dead. And he knows that Benjamin was greatly loved by Jacob. Recall the fact that Judah was the one who wanted Joseph sold. Judah was one who left his brothers and mixed with pagans to such an extent that his first two sons were wicked in God's sight. And then he was of such a character that he ignored his family responsibilities and ended up having grandchildren by his daughter-in-law Tamar. And now we see a dramatic change. Judah continues to recall the events and notes that Joseph requested that Benjamin be brought down so that he could actually see him.²⁶⁷⁵ From the brothers' point of view, they are being tested and asked to prove their words, but from Joseph's point of view, he is wanting to know of Benjamin's true welfare and state. How had the brothers treated him? Joseph, of course, was insistent on this matter despite the fact that the brothers' stated that Jacob would not let Benjamin come down.²⁶⁷⁶ Joseph was not moved by their excuses, and continued to make his demands, because he wanted to know for sure about Benjamin his brother.²⁶⁷⁷

44:24-31.

And so Judah relates the next part of the story, how they insisted to Jacob that without Benjamin

2670 Genesis 44:18.
2671 Genesis 44:19.
2672 Genesis 43:7.
2673 Genesis 44:20.
2674 Genesis 44:20.
2675 Genesis 44:21.
2676 Genesis 44:22.
2677 Genesis 44:23.

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they could not return to Egypt for food.²⁶⁷⁸ Eventually Jacob relents, but the way in which Judah records this turn around is very interesting. Judah relates Jacob's words concerning the reason why he was reluctant for Benjamin to go down. It appears that Jacob was of the view that Rachel alone was his wife and he bore to Jacob two sons.²⁶⁷⁹ This is astounding. It highlights the clear fact that Jacob not only loved Rachel and had a special place for Joseph and Benjamin, but that he did not actually acknowledge as being his true sons the other ten boys born to Leah and the two maids. Is it any wonder that the brothers' hated Joseph? We know that these things are recorded to point us to Christ and that the brothers' hatred of Joseph is typical of the world's hatred of Christ. But, on the merely human plane, Jacob's favouritism, (whether he thought it justified because of Laban's trickery or not), was downright folly, not to say wicked to boot. Judah continues reporting Jacob's words in which he states that his firstborn son was torn to pieces, and if his second son were to go and he were to come to harm, then all that would be left to Jacob would be sorrow and the grave.²⁶⁸⁰ And so if Judah returned to Jacob without Benjamin the unthinkable would result – the death of their father.²⁶⁸¹ The life of Benjamin was *“bound up”* with Jacob.²⁶⁸² Now we are seeing here a dramatic change in Judah. Joseph was hated and disdained, but Judah is now moved with compassion for both his half-brother Benjamin and also for his father.²⁶⁸³

44:32-34.

And then Judah points to something which we are greatly privileged to note. Judah relates the fact that he had become *“surety”* for Benjamin.²⁶⁸⁴ Judah requests of Joseph that he be taken in place of Benjamin.²⁶⁸⁵ And so we have the idea of a substitute, one who will bear the punishment for another. Judah is not coerced into this, nor is he constrained to make this plea. He is doing it on account of his promise to his father. He is doing it willingly. How clearly we can see here our Saviour who gave Himself as a ransom for lost sinners taking their place as surety for their lives! The change in Judah is remarkable as evidenced by the last statement he makes in verse 34. He cannot bear the look on his father's face were he to return with Benjamin left behind. Such a thing would be evil indeed.

2678 Genesis 44:24-26.

2679 Genesis 44:27.

2680 Genesis 44:29.

2681 Genesis 44:31.

2682 Genesis 44:30.

2683 Genesis 44:31.

2684 Genesis 44:32.

2685 Genesis 44:33.

Chapter 56.

Joseph revealed. (45:1-28).

Analysis.

#45 1 Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out,

“Make everyone go out from me!”

So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

2 And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard *it*.

3 Then Joseph said to his brothers,

“I *am* Joseph; does my father still live?”

But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.

4 And Joseph said to his brothers,

“Please come near to me.”

So they came near.

Then he said:

“I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

5 But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6** For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting. **7** And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. **8** So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 “Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him,

‘Thus says your son Joseph:

“God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. **10** You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. **11** There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine.”

12 “And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that *it is* my mouth that speaks to you.

13 So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.”

14 Then he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

16 Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying,

“Joseph’s brothers have come.”

So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well.

17 And Pharaoh said to Joseph,

“Say to your brothers,

‘Do this:

Load your animals and depart;
go to the land of Canaan.

18 Bring your father and your households and come to me;

I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land.

19 Now you are commanded—do this:

Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives;
bring your father and come.

20 Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt *is* yours.”

21 Then the sons of Israel did so;

and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh,

and he gave them provisions for the journey.

22 He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments.

23 And he sent to his father these *things*: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded

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with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey.

24 So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them,

“See that you do not become troubled along the way.”

25 Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father.

26 And they told him, saying,

“Joseph *is* still alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt.”

And Jacob’s heart stood still, because he did not believe them.

27 But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

28 Then Israel said,

“*It is* enough. Joseph my son *is* still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

And then Joseph is made known to his brothers! In this chapter we are witness to the unveiling of Joseph's identity (Genesis 45:1-15), and then we find Pharaoh issuing instructions for Jacob's removal down into Egypt (Genesis 45:16-28).

[1] Joseph's identity made known. (Genesis 45:1-15).

45:1,2.

At the end of Genesis 44 we were witness to Judah's impassioned plea in which he outlined how he was “*surety*” for Benjamin and how he dare not return without Benjamin for fear of seeing “*the evil that would come upon*” Jacob.²⁶⁸⁶ Such words were just too much for Joseph and he could no longer “*restrain himself*.”²⁶⁸⁷ He commands all of his household to leave him in order that he could make “*himself known to his brothers*.”²⁶⁸⁸

It is significant that Joseph wanted to reveal himself to his brothers with no witnesses. First, the shock would be great and this would be awkward with external interference and unnecessary bystanders. Second, it would involve revelation of the details of Joseph's coming to Egypt and Joseph wanted to spare the brothers such shame and ignominy amongst the Egyptians who would certainly have been offended, for Joseph was governor of Egypt. Now Joseph was not ashamed to call these his brothers by this action for he wept so loudly that all the “*house of Pharaoh heard it*.”²⁶⁸⁹ Joseph's outburst of emotion shows forth his true heart and compassion. He was no mere stoic, nor simply a harsh man ruling in sternness. He acted harshly towards the brothers because such was needed. In a more excellent way the Lord Himself deals with us harshly at times to break the hold of sin, the world and the devil. Is not His word sometimes like a hammer which breaks open the heart?²⁶⁹⁰ And of course the Lord Jesus displayed His incredible depth of compassion on various occasions, such as when He was brought to the tomb of Lazarus or when

2686 Genesis 44:34.

2687 Genesis 45:1.

2688 Genesis 45:1.

2689 Genesis 45:2.

2690 Jeremiah 23:29.

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He approached Jerusalem, for example.²⁶⁹¹

45:3.

At this point the brothers must have been nonplussed, and then Joseph reveals that he is their brother and asks whether his father were still alive. Not surprisingly, the brothers were unable to reply because they were utterly *“dismayed in his presence,”* they were trembling and in trepidation at this news. They were confused and struck by this news. Is not the revelation of God to the heart like this? Is it not suddenly a shock to come to know that God is real and awesome? The brothers were speechless and no wonder. Can you imagine that all of a sudden the one whom they were now feeling very guilty about because of their actions twenty years before, and whom they thought had perished, was now before them and had been dealing with them for some time in his capacity as governor of Egypt? There was so much adjustment to be made. These brothers who were usually very vocal, were now at a complete loss for words.²⁶⁹² Is this not true when we come into the presence of the Lord? One who ignores God and who knows nothing of His grace and mercy thinks little of the Scriptures or of a gathering of believers, but when they have met with the Lord they are hesitant to speak and are left without words. It is somewhat like the Queen of Sheba who when Solomon had answered all her questions and she saw all the wisdom of God then *“there was no more spirit in her.”*²⁶⁹³

45:4.

Well Joseph, seeing their consternation, requested that they drew closer to him and this they did. And then Joseph speaks openly. He begins by telling them again that he is indeed Joseph, and to cement that fact in their doubting minds he relays the circumstances of his being in Egypt. It was they who *“sold”* him *“into Egypt.”* This would have convinced them of Joseph's identity because it was something very much in their minds and hearts causing them grief and remorse.²⁶⁹⁴ What follows next from the lips of Joseph is wonderful. We might have expected anger, bitterness, a vindictive heart, or some other response, but what we find is grace.

45:5.

He continues with grace by saying *“but now ... therefore”* striking an empathetic contrast, and then calls on them not to be *“grieved or angry”* with themselves on account of what they did. It is interesting that two very different words are used here. The first (the Hebrew verb is: **עָצַב** ‘*śāb*), indicates

2691 Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; 23:37; John 11:35,36.

2692 Instances where the brothers (*“they”*) all speak are found, for example, at: Genesis 42:10,13,21; 43:7,18,19,28; 44:7.

2693 1Kings 10:5.

2694 Genesis 42:21; 44:16.

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the idea of being in pain, to be vexed or to be in deep sorrow and labour in mind. The second (the Hebrew verb is: **חָרָה** *hārāh*) signifies the idea of being hot with anger, to burn, to be incensed, or to fume with displeasure. They were guilty. They had, as a collective, done this wicked thing. But they were now not to be upset or disquieted over what they had done, and they were not to be angry or in an embittered rage over it. This call not to be grieved nor angry is introduced with a word rendered *“but now”* in the NKJV which has the force of *“at this time”* and so suggests the idea of changing heart or of being converted. They had done wrong in selling Joseph. They were exercised about this and the guilt lay upon their hearts. But now this was to be put away, and they were not to be upset in any way about it all. How could this be? How could they suddenly change? What could deal with the inner thoughts and feelings they had about the wrong they had done? Well clearly Joseph has forgiven them. He is not holding them to account for their deeds. Now such an attitude is commendable. We ought always to forgive people of whatever they do knowing that we have been forgiven of God infinitely more than the wrong we may receive from time to time even if it be ever so vexing and difficult. But then a question remains. Whom but God can forgive sins? Whom can make it so that the sins are dealt with in such a just way that payment be made and mercy be extended? Only God can do this. Only God has made a way whereby sins are paid for in full and mercy extended to those who repent and come to the Lord. Now this question arose on the occasion when a paralytic was brought to Jesus to be healed.²⁶⁹⁵ Jesus began on this occasion by pronouncing forgiveness to the paralytic man, and this caused consternation amongst the leaders.²⁶⁹⁶ But then Jesus demonstrated His authority to forgive on the basis of His raising the man from his paralysis, i.e. He was the Creator God. Now Joseph is presented to us as the governor of Egypt, the saviour of the world. And so he is put here in the place of the Lord Jesus! And so his call for the brothers to be free from guilt, sorrow, and unease of mind is remarkable.

He continues by making a statement of profound importance, and it is one which shows forth that he has not compromised with the Egyptian customs (for example, in the matter of divination we discussed earlier). The brothers sold him to the the Egyptians. That was the truth and reality. But Joseph does not present it like this. He says instead that *“God sent me before you to preserve life.”* What an incredible statement! It is incredible on the human level because Joseph shows no bitterness and no anger at what they had done. He is of the firm opinion that God was in charge, and that God had brought him down to Egypt for a purpose. But then it is also incredible because we cannot help but see here in graphic prophetic form a prophecy of what Christ did for us. God sent Christ into the world to save and preserve life.²⁶⁹⁷

2695 Mark 2:1f; Luke 5:17f.

2696 Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21.

2697 On the idea of Christ being sent into the world see: John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23,30,36,37; 6:39,44,57; 8:16,18,29,42; 10:36; 12:49; 14:24; 17:21,25; 20:21.

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just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.²⁶⁹⁸

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.²⁶⁹⁹

for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost²⁷⁰⁰

Joseph was sent of God so that there would be adequate food supplies in face of the severe famine. Christ came to bring life eternal.

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly²⁷⁰¹

There could not be a more clear connection between Joseph and Christ, the shadow and type showing forth the substance!

45:6-8.

Joseph continues by pointing out what God had revealed to him through Pharaoh's dreams. They had had seven years of abundance, and now they were but two years into the famine with five still to go in which there would be *“neither plowing nor harvesting.”*²⁷⁰² This was, therefore, a very severe famine. Joseph reinforces the fact that it was God who sent him.²⁷⁰³ This idea of being sent was one the Lord Jesus repeatedly mentioned in His ministry which is recorded particularly for us in the gospel of John, (as we have mentioned often in the course of our comments).²⁷⁰⁴ Three times does Joseph emphasise the sovereignty of God and it will be instructive to see here the various statements made side-by-side:

... for **God sent me** before you to preserve life.²⁷⁰⁵

And **God sent me** before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.²⁷⁰⁶

So now *it was* not you *who sent me* here, but **God**; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.²⁷⁰⁷

2698 Matthew 20:28.

2699 Mark 10:45.

2700 Luke 19:10.

2701 John 10:10b.

2702 Genesis 45:6.

2703 Genesis 45:7.

2704 See comments on Genesis 35:10-13 and footnote 2021. John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23,30,36,37; 6:39,44,57; 8:16,18,29,42; 10:36; 12:49; 14:24; 17:21,25; 20:21.

2705 Genesis 45:5.

2706 Genesis 45:7.

2707 Genesis 45:8.

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In the second statement we discover that Joseph was not merely sent to *“preserve life,”* but also to *“preserve a posterity.”*²⁷⁰⁸ It is one thing to save one person's life, but then that person also has the chance, through being saved, of bringing others into the world, and so the saving of a life leads to the saving of other survivors too. Notice that this *“posterity”* is to be kept and preserved *“in the earth.”* That is, survivors who will continue thereby keeping the promises (of a *“Seed”* and so on) alive. In this second statement we are also informed that this salvation of their very lives was in fact by a *“great deliverance.”*²⁷⁰⁹ Salvation by faith in Christ is no small matter! But with respect to Joseph this deliverance of Jacob's family was truly great indeed. Think how it all came about. God in His mercy and grace revealed what was about to happen to Pharaoh, and Joseph was enabled to make sense of what was revealed, and was enabled to enact a plan so remarkable so as to preserve life on the earth. But think how incredible the salvation of Christ is by way of comparison. God has revealed this great plan of redemption from the very beginning and has enabled prophets and godly men to convey it fully to us, and has raised up Israel as the nation prepared to bring forth the one promised! Were it not for Joseph receiving the dreams and then being enabled to interpret Pharaoh's dreams (with all else that went on besides) there would be no salvation. In greater degree, were it not for the Son of God who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and who came in fullness and with complete comprehension as the *“Word of God”* to make know the ways of God and to provide by Himself salvation where would we be?²⁷¹⁰

In verse 8 Joseph speaks again of his being sent of God. This time he reinforces the fact that the brothers were not the real cause of Joseph's going down to Egypt. It was all of God. Three times we read that Joseph was sent, and this points us surely to the fact that the holy trinity is always working in concert and harmony. The Father sent the Son. The Son was willing to be sent. The Holy Spirit agreed to overshadow Mary that she would conceive.²⁷¹¹ Joseph goes even further by saying that he had now been made as *“a father to Pharaoh,”* and, as *“lord of all his house,”* and, as *“a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”*²⁷¹² How shall we understand these phrases? How do we interpret them with regard to our looking at Christ? Well we read in Hebrews that Christ Jesus was *“a Son over His own house,”* and we as true believers are that house.²⁷¹³ We know too that the exalted Christ reigns supreme for He is now seated at the right hand of the Father.²⁷¹⁴ But how do we comprehend the fact that Joseph was *“a father to Pharaoh”*? Well the father is the supreme authority. He was the leader. Pharaoh is under the authority of Joseph. All the kings of this world are under the governance of Christ Jesus. Even when the kings of the

2708 Genesis 45:7.

2709 Genesis 45:7.

2710 John 1:1,14,18; Hebrews 1:3; 10:14 etc.

2711 Luke 1:31,35.

2712 Genesis 45:8.

2713 Hebrews 3:6.

2714 Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 8:1.

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earth rail and rant against God they had better watch out!²⁷¹⁵ What glorious statements! Joseph moved from the dungeon to the most exalted position in all the land of Egypt in order to preserve life, to enable a posterity, and he was supreme ruler over all the land of Egypt, and even *“father to Pharaoh”*! Are we not energised by this history? Can we not see a faint and poor reflection of the glorious truth that Christ Jesus was sent of the Father, was in the dungeon of death on our behalf, and who was raised to new life and seated on the throne, all to bring eternal life and to rule unchallenged and with supreme authority over all?

45:9-11.

Having given the brothers this incredible perspective and true insight into what God had done, despite how it may appear merely on the human level (which we cannot deny), Joseph next moves the brothers to urgent action for he says: *“hurry.”*²⁷¹⁶ This word means literally “flow,” or “to be liquid.” The sense is: do not stop and settle, but get up and go, run, make haste. Is this not the case when once we hear the revelation of God? I mean when we truly hear it. I do not mean when we listen to sermons in a languid and unmoved state, simply offering a nod of politeness as we leave the fellowship! No! When we hear God reveal Himself in such a way there is an urgency needed. Do not hesitate when you hear God speaking. Get up! Arise! And attend to what He is saying.

Joseph commanded them with all haste to get back to Jacob (*“my father”*), with a message from him.²⁷¹⁷ A very interesting phrase is used for the first time in Scripture which is rendered in the NKJV as *“thus says.”* In Hebrew it is:

כֹּה אָמַר

Such a phrase is most often used of the Lord God (see table 56.1). And so here in Genesis 45:9 we have what we might term 'an authoritative' word. We cannot help but view this as an authoritative statement issued by the supreme governor of all the land of Egypt, prefiguring, and pointing towards, the authoritative statements we get throughout the prophets as issued by the Lord. Notice that it is *“thus says your son Joseph.”*²⁷¹⁸ This message that was to be delivered would have required a stamp of authority so that Jacob could be assured of its truthfulness. The authority is vested in the fact that Joseph was the speaker. This also points us towards the idea that when God speaks His word needs no checking, no corroborating, and no help whatsoever. The word of God is self-authenticating. So what does Joseph say?

2715 Psalm 2.

2716 Genesis 45:9.

2717 Genesis 45:9.

2718 Genesis 45:9.

Table 56.1: Frequency of the phrase “thus says ...”

In connection with God, or the Lord.	Linked with a man, king or another person.
401 (of which 39 are in Isaiah, 127 are in Jeremiah, 126 are in Ezekiel, and 43 in the minor prophets – a total of 335 or 83.5%).	23 (of which 1 is in Genesis 45:9, 19 occur in the historical books and 3 in Isaiah (historical portions)).

Well he says one thing concerning the basis of what he commands, that is, he speaks of whom he is. Then he issues a command to come, and finally he proffers two incredible promises. This is not just what Joseph has said for those days long gone, for in making it a record in Scripture, it is indeed also exactly what the Lord Himself says to us today. He declares:

- God has made me lord of all Egypt.²⁷¹⁹
- ... come down to me, do not tarry.²⁷²⁰
- You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.²⁷²¹
- There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine.²⁷²²

Looking at these statements as a whole, what we have here is a call to faith and repentance. Joseph has been elevated and exalted to the highest position possible in Egypt. In the same way Christ is seated on the throne at the right hand of the Father, and so is Lord of all. The call to “*come*” is the invitation to partake of all the salvation and deliverance that Joseph has been enabled to deliver. In the same way the Lord Jesus issues His call to “*come,*” and notice that it is: “*come down to me.*” We are not to be concerned at all with the fact that the call was to come to Egypt, for in reality Jacob is being called to Joseph. In the same way the Lord calls us to come to Him, but it involves a humbling, for we are to “*come down.*”²⁷²³ I cannot but mention the Lord's most wonderful call which we have mentioned on several occasions but I make no apology for repeating it:

2719 Genesis 45:9.

2720 Genesis 45:9.

2721 Genesis 45:10.

2722 Genesis 45:11.

2723 Genesis 45:9.

28 Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” ²⁷²⁴

We must also mention the many calls to follow Christ and to take up the cross, or of the need to humble ourselves because the Lord will not accept a man of pride.²⁷²⁵

Then also we need to note that Joseph's call to Jacob is to act speedily (“*do not tarry*”), because now is the day of salvation, and if we hear the word “*today*” we ought not to harden our hearts.²⁷²⁶ The urgency of the hour is imperative. Obviously the famine was biting hard and so (given his age) Jacob needed to come quickly. But spiritually speaking we do not know when that day of judgment has been appointed for us.²⁷²⁷ The moment we hear God speak to us, the very second we are brought to realise that the thrice holy omnipotent and glorious One has spoken, we ought to run with all speed towards Him for all we are worth.

And then we get two incredible promises. They are couched in terms relevant directly to Jacob and his situation all those millenia ago, but they apply to us too in principle. Joseph promises that Jacob will be in the “*land of Goshen*.”²⁷²⁸ This was a great area fit for pasture and for looking after flocks and cattle. The name is probably of Egyptian origin but may signify the idea of “drawing near.” This would make sense, for in this part of what Joseph says he speaks of Jacob and all his family being “*near to*” Joseph.²⁷²⁹ This is the great promise of salvation! We are not simply rescued from a dire and desperate situation, rather the whole point is that we are restored to be with Christ, to be with God. We are called to come to Christ. We are exhorted to draw near to God.²⁷³⁰ And note the frequency in Scripture with which we hear words like “*I will be with you*” spoken of God to those whom He loves.²⁷³¹ It is in actually knowing Christ that we are saved. To know God and His Son, this is what we are all about.²⁷³² The promise is for Jacob and all his family along with all that he has by way of flocks, cattle and herds. And then we have the second promise given in verse 11. Joseph promises to “*provide for*” Jacob and all his household in order that they would not “*come to poverty*” because there were “*still five years of famine*.”²⁷³³ The word rendered as “*provide*” actually signifies the notion of nourishing. Joseph would ensure that they would be sustained in body. What a marvellous promise! We know that the Lord has

2724 Matthew 11:28-30.

2725 Psalm 34:18; 51:17; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2; Matthew 10:38; 16:24; James 4:6,10; 1Peter 5:5.

2726 Genesis 45:9. See: 2Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:15; 4:7.

2727 Hebrews 9:27.

2728 Genesis 45:10.

2729 Genesis 45:10.

2730 James 4:8.

2731 Isaiah 41:10; 43:2; Matthew 28:20.

2732 John 17:3.

2733 Genesis 45:11.

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provided everything we need to live upon the earth.²⁷³⁴ This primarily concerns our spiritual requirements but it does also mean that the Lord will ensure that we shall be catered for as to our needs.²⁷³⁵

Now there were five more years of famine. The number five according to some signifies grace. This reminds us that God is long suffering with us and waits to have compassion.²⁷³⁶ He could, rightly, call all to a halt and bring judgement down on the earth in an instant. He does not do this, but there is a day set when He will judge all by our Saviour.²⁷³⁷

45:12.

In verse 12 Joseph now speaks to the brothers as a unit. The word “*behold*” is put to arrest attention, so that they are to consider, or take note of. The brothers' own eyes and those of Benjamin have seen that it is truly Joseph's mouth that has spoken to them. They could observe his lips. They could see that it was truly Joseph, and that he was speaking these words of life to them. The idea of seeing a mouth speaking is curious. It is put, I believe, to help us. We cannot see Christ, nor can we observe Him physically, but by means of His word, (the Bible), and through the indwelling Spirit we can truly hear and see all that the Lord has for us.

45:13.

In verse 13 Joseph instructs the brothers to tell their own father concerning all of Joseph's “*glory in Egypt,*” and they were to make haste to bring Jacob down to where Joseph was. Can we not see here the importance of telling all of the glory of God?

Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.²⁷³⁸

Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare His praise in the coastlands.²⁷³⁹

And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.²⁷⁴⁰

How marvellous is the glory of God and of His Word! Who cannot fail to declare His greatness when once they have had their eyes opened? Notice that we cannot pass on the truth and the glory unless we are those who are partakers of Him and have experienced His closeness, for they were to speak and tell what they “*have seen.*” There is no such thing as second-hand Christianity. God does not have grand children.

2734 2Peter 1:3f.

2735 Matthew 6:33.

2736 Isaiah 30:18; 2Peter 3:9.

2737 Acts 17:31.

2738 Psalm 96:3.

2739 Isaiah 42:12.

2740 Isaiah 66:19.

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All must be born again to know Christ and thence to tell of Him.

45:14,15.

The end of this section sees great weeping and emotion. Joseph embraced Benjamin his long lost younger brother and the reunion was wonderful.²⁷⁴¹ How the compassion of Christ is for His people! He wept when He arrived at Lazarus' tomb! What compassion and depth of feeling the Lord has for His people. Do we truly realise this? Are we aware of just how much the Lord loves His people? It is all well and good remembering John 3:16 or Romans 5:8 as texts to help us, but truly ponder them. God so loved us He gave us His one and only Son! God demonstrated in the most public and open of ways His immense love for ungodly sinners by Christ's voluntary death on the cross. These things are incredible, remarkable, astonishing! How we ought to shout them from the rafters. How we ought to sing of them with gusto! A man who has won a young girl's heart runs like a silly loon through the streets singing of his love. We look and smile. But God, the Creator of all things, loves us incredibly more than ever a young man and girl may love! It is truly, only as we realise the depths of love that God has for us, that we can respond and show forth love in reply. It is only as we truly realise that we are fully justified by faith and we have peace with God through all that Christ has done, that as a result, and through His grace, that we find that:

... the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.²⁷⁴²

Having responded to God's love by loving Him wholeheartedly, we are thus enabled to love our neighbours as ourselves. We only love God because of His love for us.²⁷⁴³ This compassion was not just for Benjamin, but for all the brothers.

[2] Jacob is invited by Pharaoh to come down to Egypt. (Genesis 45:16-28).

45:16.

Up to now Joseph has been alone with His brothers. However, the emotion and rejoicing would have resounded throughout the house and so it is unsurprising that *“the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house.”* Pharaoh hears that Joseph's brothers have come down, and this news *“pleased Pharaoh and his servants well.”* And thus Pharaoh makes a command. Joseph is to tell his brothers to organise a caravan to bring their family down. Let us consider the details of what Pharaoh commands.

2741 Genesis 45:14.

2742 Romans 5:5.

2743 1John 4:19.

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45:17-20.

There are two “*do this*” statements, one in verse 17 and the other in verse 19, which is preceded by the imperative: “*now you are commanded*” indicating that this was no mere suggestion. In actual fact, the Hebrew ought to be rendered as “you do this” as the YLT version has it:

and Pharaoh saith unto Joseph, `say unto thy brethren, this do ye: lade your beasts, and go, enter ye the land of Canaan.²⁷⁴⁴

Pharaoh issues a threefold command. First they were to get their pack-animals loaded for departure. Second they were to return to their land (Canaan).²⁷⁴⁵ And third they were to retrieve their father and all his house and bring them to Pharaoh.²⁷⁴⁶ Then we discover that Pharaoh intended to gift to Jacob “*the best of the land of Egypt*,” so that he could “*eat the fat of the land*.”²⁷⁴⁷

The second “*do this*” statement in verse 19 comes with a command. Pharaoh tells them to “*take carts*” for the purpose of carrying the children and wives.²⁷⁴⁸ These were probably wagons or possibly chariots built for the purpose of travel. They were to bring Jacob down with all his house, and Jacob was not to be worried at all about his “*goods*” (possessions) because “*the best of all the land of Egypt*” was his.²⁷⁴⁹ Thus preparations are about to be put in place to bring Jacob back in some style.

45:21-23.

Thence the brothers, who are called here “*the sons of Israel*,” obeyed the command of Pharaoh and Joseph organised for their journey.²⁷⁵⁰ They were first called this back in Genesis 42 as they journeyed down to Egypt the first time to buy food.²⁷⁵¹ This title will appear only two more times in Genesis.²⁷⁵² The first time will be the time when Jacob descended into Egypt, and the second would be when Joseph made those who bore such a name to swear to take his bones back to the land of Canaan. Thus Joseph made provision for the brothers to go and bring Jacob and all the family down to Egypt. In verses 22 and 23 we find a list of some of the provisions made, which include a generous gift of “*three hundred pieces of silver*” and five sets of clothing for Benjamin, whilst each other brother received “*changes of garments*.”²⁷⁵³ For Jacob were provided ten donkeys and ten female donkeys loaded with “*good things of*

2744 Genesis 45:17, YLT.

2745 Genesis 45:17.

2746 Genesis 45:18.

2747 Genesis 45:18.

2748 Genesis 45:19.

2749 Genesis 45:20.

2750 Genesis 45:21.

2751 Genesis 42:5. Genesis 32:32 and 36:31 where the title “*children of Israel*” is provided in the NKJV seem to be statements possibly made by Moses in compiling the book.

2752 Genesis 46:5; 50:25.

2753 Genesis 45:22.

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Egypt” and with *“grain, bread, and food”* for his safe journey down to Egypt.²⁷⁵⁴

45:24-26.

The brothers are despatched with a heartfelt farewell, as Joseph enjoins them to take care and to make sure that they do not become embroiled in any further trouble.²⁷⁵⁵ Given the trouble they have caused, and the trouble that has surrounded them, this may be expecting too much! The brothers depart and arrive in Canaan and then they speak to their father.²⁷⁵⁶ We read that *“they told him,”* but the opening word is rather more forceful.²⁷⁵⁷ It has the sense of “to announce,” “to publish,” or “to declare.” Hardly have they arrived back when they seem to rush to their father and announce the stupendous discovery that; *“Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.”*²⁷⁵⁸ Such a sudden announcement reminds us of the news of Christ's resurrection to various people on that glorious resurrection morning. Now on hearing this we are not surprised to find that *“Jacob's heart stood still.”*²⁷⁵⁹ He simply could not believe them because it all seemed too good to be true. The shock to Jacob is palpable. Was he in danger of a heart attack? Or was this simply a few missed beats of the heart? I think we are meant to understand that Jacob got the surprise to end all surprises. The boy he thought had died when he was seventeen is now not only alive, but is supreme governor over the land of Egypt. This is astounding and we are not at all surprised that Jacob takes time to take it all in.

45:27,28.

It was not until the brothers *“told him all the words which Joseph”* had passed onto them and when he saw the various *“carts”* which Joseph had arranged, that *“the spirit of Jacob their father revived.”*²⁷⁶⁰ It was the word of Joseph that revived Jacob and this was backed up by the promise of a journey provided for. In the same way the word of God revives the soul!²⁷⁶¹ The passage ends with Israel (Jacob) declaring that this was such a superabundant piece of news, for the phrase *“it is enough”* indicates that he could take no more. Israel (Jacob) makes confession that his long lost son Joseph was *“still alive,”* and then declares that he would go to see him before his own death.²⁷⁶² When a beleaguered soul is informed to their health that Christ is alive and not simply a figure of history the revival of life and the flowering of joy is palpable.

2754 Genesis 45:23.
2755 Genesis 45:24.
2756 Genesis 45:25,26.
2757 Genesis 45:26.
2758 Genesis 45:26.
2759 Genesis 45:26.
2760 Genesis 45:27.
2761 Psalm 119:25,107,154.
2762 Genesis 45:28.

Chapter 57.

Israel takes his journey. (46:1-27).

Analysis.

#46 1 So Israel

took his journey with all that he had,
and came to Beersheba,
and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

2 Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said,
“Jacob, Jacob!”

And he said,
“Here I am.”

3 So He said,
“I *am* God, the God of your father;
do not fear to go down to Egypt,
for

I will make of you a great nation there.

4 I will go down with you to Egypt,
and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”

5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba;
and the sons of Israel carried

their father Jacob,
their little ones,
and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him.

7 His sons and his sons’ sons, his daughters and his sons’ daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

8 Now these *were* the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt:
Reuben *was* Jacob’s firstborn.

9 The sons of Reuben
were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

10 The sons of Simeon
were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.

11 The sons of Levi
were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

12 The sons of Judah
were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan).
The sons of Perez *were* Hezron and Hamul.

13 The sons of Issachar
were Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron.

14 The sons of Zebulun
were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

15 These *were* the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the persons, his sons and his daughters, *were* thirty-three.

16 The sons of Gad
were Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

17 The sons of Asher
were Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and Serah, their sister.
And the sons of Beriah *were* Heber and Malchiel.

18 These *were* the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons.

19 The sons of Rachel, Jacob’s wife,

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were Joseph and Benjamin.

20 And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.

21 The sons of Benjamin were Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

22 These were the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons in all.

23 The son of Dan was Hushim.

24 The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

25 These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all.

26 All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all.

27 And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons.

All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

The first twenty seven verses of Genesis 46 describe the departure from Canaan which is preceded by an appearance by God to Jacob, (Genesis 46:1-7), and then we have a list of all those who went down with Jacob into Egypt (Genesis 46:8-27).

[1] Jacob has a vision of God and departs from Canaan. (Genesis 46:1-7).

46:1,2.

And so after hearing that Joseph was still alive, and seeing all the provision Joseph had made for Jacob and his family, Jacob begins to depart from the land of Canaan.²⁷⁶³ Israel's first step along the new journey he is now on was to stop off at Beersheba where he worships God.²⁷⁶⁴ He had left Beersheba many years before to go to Haran, and now on his way into Egypt he pauses to give thanks to God.²⁷⁶⁵ At this site he offers sacrifices of praise and thanks to *"the God of his father Isaac."*²⁷⁶⁶ Isaac was buried by Esau and Jacob many years prior to this.²⁷⁶⁷ And yet Jacob (as Israel) is still calling upon God as the God of his father Isaac. We may draw from this both the idea of the influence of the generations and the need for passing on our faith, and the idea that Isaac is not really dead for God is never the God of the dead but of the living.²⁷⁶⁸

Now as Israel was offering his sacrifices he hears God speaking to him, calling his name.²⁷⁶⁹ It would appear that Jacob receives a vision of God called here *"visions of the night,"* so it was probably late in the evening at dark. The Lord calls him *"Jacob,"* and He calls his name twice.²⁷⁷⁰ Recall that Abraham's name was called out twice at the moment when he was about to plunge the knife into his son

2763 Genesis 46:1.

2764 Genesis 46:1.

2765 Genesis 28:10.

2766 Genesis 46:1.

2767 Genesis 35:29. Esau and Jacob were born when Isaac was 60 and Isaac died aged 180, so the twins were 120 when their father died.

2768 Matthew 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38.

2769 Genesis 46:2.

2770 Genesis 46:2.

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as a sacrifice.²⁷⁷¹ At that point in time the call was an urgent one. So perhaps the Lord is calling Jacob with some urgency. Perhaps Jacob is greatly concerned about the need to go down to Egypt given the terrible consequences faced by his grandfather and father in connection with Abimelech and their dealings with foreign powers? Or it may be because Jacob needed to be arrested in his heart. Sometimes when a person is hailed or called they may not hear the first call of their name, especially if they are engrossed in something. And so the caller repeats the call. It would appear here that God is concerned to bless and encourage Jacob who has had the shock of his life having suffered great pain and sorrow and then, more recently, the difficulties of the famine. The response from Jacob (*“here I am”*) makes use of the word we have often mentioned and which is given frequently as “behold.”²⁷⁷² Thus literally Jacob says “behold I!” It is a ready and obedient response.

46:3,4.

And so the Lord having arrested Jacob's attention begins to offer His encouragements.²⁷⁷³ To begin, the Lord reiterates whom He is. He is *“God,”* the almighty Creator and all-powerful Being that Jacob has known for many years through different experiences throughout his life.²⁷⁷⁴ But He is also *“the God of your father”* (Isaac) thus affirming the idea of continuity.²⁷⁷⁵ God is the God of each person who walks with Him, but we must never forget that there have been those who have preceded us on the way. God may not have grand children but He does have His children in every generation and since He is the same God and never changes, it is necessary for us to remember the connection of family that spreads not just across the globe but back through time as well.

Then God tells Jacob that he is not to be afraid to descend into Egypt.²⁷⁷⁶ He may well have thought it odd and perhaps contrary to all that God had revealed thus far concerning the promises made to him. For example, he was blessed by his father Isaac as he was sent to Padan Aram to find a wife, with these words:

3 “May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; **4** And give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”²⁷⁷⁷

And then when he met with God on the way out to Padan Aram, the Lord promised to return him to

2771 Genesis 22:11.

2772 Genesis 46:2.

2773 Genesis 46:3.

2774 Genesis 46:3.

2775 Genesis 46:3.

2776 Genesis 46:3.

2777 Genesis 28:3,4.

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Canaan to the place where he lay as he received of God, promising him the land for his descendants:

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; **the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.** **14** Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. **15** Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” ²⁷⁷⁸

And then again when Jacob finally returned to the land, we observe that God met with him and blessed him once again. And again there is the promise of the land for his descendants:

9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. **10** And God said to him, “Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob any more, but Israel shall be your name.” So He called his name Israel. **11** Also God said to him: “I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. **12** **The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.**” **13** Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. **14** So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. **15** And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel. ²⁷⁷⁹

Given these firm assurances it would have been very natural for Jacob to hesitate in going down to Egypt. How would this aid and help in securing these promises? And so the Lord encourages Jacob (Israel) in his journey south.

The Lord next gives Jacob His reasons for going down. For it would be there in Egypt that the Lord would raise him up to be “*a great nation.*”²⁷⁸⁰ Israel was to be a nation within Egypt at first. This is important because we read later on that God was to call Israel, His son, out of Egypt, and this would be applied to the Saviour too.²⁷⁸¹ The Lord also promises that He would “*go down with*” Jacob into Egypt.²⁷⁸² This was greatly reassuring for although Jacob had received from the Lord whilst he was in Padan Aram, his major experiences had occurred in the land of Canaan. Now he is being assured of God's close presence as he descends into Egypt. This reminds us that we are in this world. We are still in Egypt (i.e. this world) as-it-were awaiting our final redemption to glory. Now of course we are called into God's kingdom and so we are apart from this world and its kingdom which is under the sway of the evil one. However we live and move in this world which is (typically) Egypt. This assurance of God's presence for

²⁷⁷⁸ Genesis 28:13-15.

²⁷⁷⁹ Genesis 35:

²⁷⁸⁰ Genesis 46:3.

²⁷⁸¹ Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15.

²⁷⁸² Genesis 46:4.

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Jacob is one we know too as our Saviour declared that He would be with us *“always even to the end of the age.”*²⁷⁸³

The Lord's assurances to Jacob here have not altered any of the former promises He had made. God has not forgotten His former promises which we have just noted. He will indeed, that is, of a certainty, *“bring”* him up again.²⁷⁸⁴ Of course this would not be him as an individual, but him as the nation which the Lord has formed. And then Jacob is told that it would be Joseph who would *“put his hand on your eyes,”* by which we understand that Joseph would be with him at the moment of his death.²⁷⁸⁵ How gracious, compassionate, and incredibly thoughtful of the Lord! Jacob can walk down to Egypt in the full knowledge that he is walking in the will of God.

46:5-7.

In verses 5 to 7 we are treated to an extensive description of the journey. It will be instructive to consider these verses by looking at the verbs employed here.

First we read that *“Jacob arose.”*²⁷⁸⁶ Obviously in order to set off on a journey a person needs to get up from any recumbent position they may have been in. This arising always points us towards the whole concept of resurrection. As new born creatures we no longer walk according to the old ways and the old nature. Instead we walk in the newness of the new life God has given. We walk in the power of the resurrection of Christ. We are no longer our own but united with Christ and so whenever I see this word *“arose”* or similar statements, I cannot help but see it as resurrection language. Jacob arises from Beersheba to set off. He is leaving there where God had blessed him but he is leaving with the Lord's blessing and the Lord's presence.

Then next we read that his sons (*“the sons of Israel”*) *“carried”* both Jacob and all the family (the children and wives) on the *“carts which Pharaoh”* had supplied.²⁷⁸⁷ Again there is an obvious physical and temporal sense to these words. Jacob and all his family were to be set upon carts. They were not to walk. But there is a greater sense to these words as well. The word *“carried”* signifies “to lift up,” or “to bear.” In this we note that as Jacob draws near to his final years he is to be afforded dignity and honour. He is to be borne along by the *“sons of Israel.”* There is a sense in which the church of Jesus Christ ought to care for and honour the elders amongst us. Those who have walked with the Lord for many years ought to be carried and borne along. It is instructive that the apostle John speaks of the church in terms of difference in ages. There are *“little children,” “young men,”* and *“fathers”* in the faith.²⁷⁸⁸ All believers

2783 Matthew 28:20.

2784 Genesis 46:4.

2785 Genesis 46:4.

2786 Genesis 46:5.

2787 Genesis 46:5.

2788 1John 2:12-14.

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benefit from the same relationship to God. we are all sons of the living God. There are no echelons nor are their hierarchies in the kingdom of God. However those who have fought the good fight and have proved God's grace in their lives are ones who have shown forth the glory of God. They have no better standing before the Lord, but their witness and testimony is a visible statement to the world of God's grace. This is a tricky matter. Undoubtedly there has been praise and worship given unto men and women wrongly for their walk. This should never be. But equally there have been those who have walked faithfully, even in great service, and great faith, of whom the world is not worthy and who are not honoured in any way at all. Known unto the Lord are His ambassadors and servants and they will gain their reward. But we ought to bless and give due respect and honour to men and women who have walked with God for long times and in difficult circumstances. May God be glorified in our fathers and mothers in the faith!

The third thing we find in these few verses is that they *“took”* all that they had acquired in Canaan into Egypt.²⁷⁸⁹ Now obviously this refers to their livestock, their sheep and so on. This was their occupation and livelihood. But what is meant by this in a spiritual sense? It is a truism to say that a believer came naked into the world and will leave naked as they leave, but this is only as far as the things of this world are concerned. What treasures are we laying up in heaven? What will we bring as we enter heaven? Certainly not our works, nor our efforts. But following along from behind us are all those we have blessed, those we have spoken to and ministered to, and those who have trusted Christ. We walk in faith with God. we have nothing to offer nor to bring to Him by way of merit. We give Him everything and forsake all in this world. And as we walk, we bless. Isaiah frequently pictures newly born creatures as an oasis in the desert, and that is what true believers are.²⁷⁹⁰ They bring shade, a needed drink, the blessing of light as the radiance of God shines through them. What will we take with us? Nothing of this world! But we will take those whom God has saved through our testimony. God gets the glory! We are merely His instruments.

The next two verbs are the same in the Hebrew although they are rendered differently in English. The first comes in the phrase *“and went to Egypt”* and the second comes in the phrase *“he brought with him to Egypt.”*²⁷⁹¹ The essential meaning is “to go in.” Now we note that all of them went to Egypt but also that it was, in point of fact, Jacob who lead them and *“brought with him”* these, his relatives, into Egypt. There was no half-heartedness in their going down to Egypt. We are not to take it here that they were walking into the world, as we would normally understand when Egypt is mentioned. We say this because the Lord assured Jacob that his going down was all within His will. But once a course of action is

2789 Genesis 46:6.

2790 Isaiah 35:1f. See also Psalm 84:6.

2791 Genesis 46:6,7.

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decided upon then it is always best to go in strength and determination.²⁷⁹²

[2] Those who went down with Jacob. (Genesis 46:8-27).

Before we embark on some comments it is worth pointing out that the first part of Genesis 46:8 is the same as the first part of Exodus 1:1.

Genesis 46:8a;

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרָיִמָּה

Exodus 1:1a:

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרָיִמָּה

The translation for these sentences would be:

and these [are] the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt

It seems very clear that Moses used this particular statement of Genesis 46:8a as his starting point for the book of Exodus. From this point onwards we have the people of God, (Jacob and all his descendants), in Egypt. Isaac and Abraham have all passed away, and the children of Israel are now in Egypt as Abraham was informed would happen by God after he had rescued Lot.²⁷⁹³

We note here that the children of Israel are described as being “*Jacob and his sons.*”²⁷⁹⁴ This is not to exclude any females, for the families are reckoned by their heads which are always the males, unless there were no males alive. Verses 8 to 25 list all the sons and grandsons of Jacob alive at that time. It is notable that the order of names of Jacob's sons is different here from what we saw in birth order and different again to the order given in Genesis 35:22b-26 (see table 57.1).

The sons of Leah and Leah's maid Zilpah are listed first, and then the sons of Rachel and Rachel's maid Bilhah are listed last. This order only differs from the previous order given in Genesis 35:22b-26 by placing all those from Leah (either from her or her maid Zilpah) first.

On the subsequent pages I have shown Jacob's descendants as a series of four genealogies, one for each wife or concubine. To have detailed the descendants in one genealogy would have been cumbersome.

²⁷⁹² 1Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17,23.

²⁷⁹³ Genesis 15.

²⁷⁹⁴ Genesis 46:8.

Table 57.1: The sons of Jacob reported in three lists.

Birth order: Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-20.		Order from: Genesis 35:22b-26.		Order from: Genesis 46:8-27.	
Mother	Son	Mother	Son	Mother	Son
Leah	Reuben	Leah	Reuben	Leah	Reuben
	Simeon		Simeon		Simeon
	Levi		Levi		Levi
	Judah		Judah		Judah
Bilhah (Rachel's maid)	Dan		Issachar		Issachar
	Naphtali		Zebulun		Zebulun
Zilpah (Leah's maid)	Gad	Rachel	Joseph	Zilpah (Leah's maid)	Gad
	Asher		Benjamin		Asher
Leah	Issachar	Bilhah (Rachel's maid)	Dan	Rachel	Joseph
	Zebulun		Naphtali		Benjamin
Rachel	Joseph	Zilpah (Leah's maid)	Gad	Bilhah (Rachel's maid)	Dan
	Benjamin		Asher		Naphtali

The following genealogy shows Jacob's descendants through Leah:

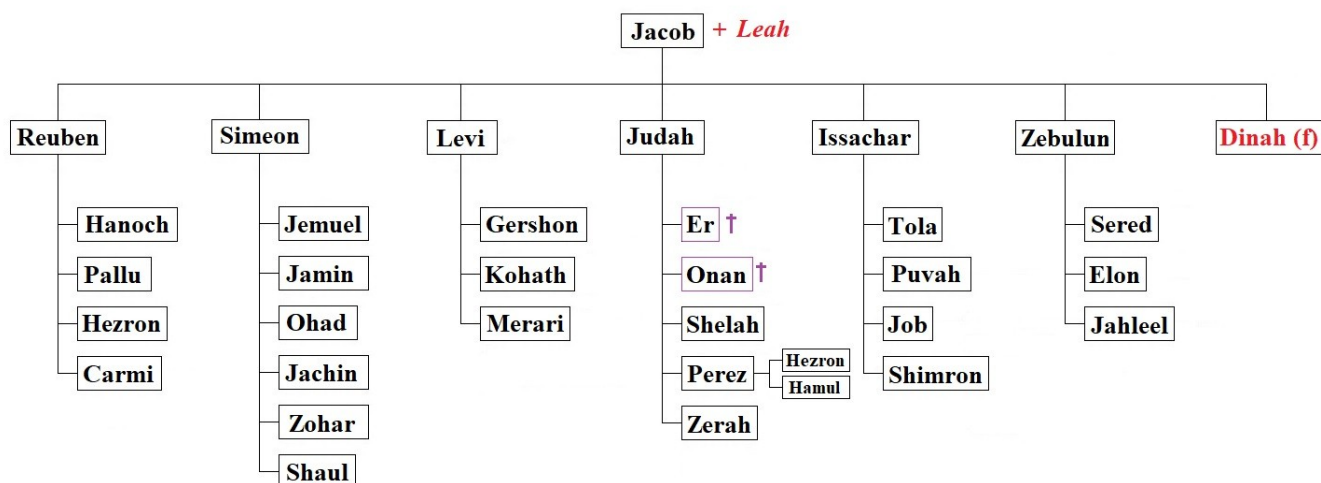


Figure 36: The children of Jacob by Leah.

Note: The 'cross symbol' † signifies the death of the named person.

Right from the start – a devotional commentary on the book of Genesis.

The following three genealogies show Jacob's descendants through Zilpah (Leah's maid), through Rachel, and through Bilhah (Rachel's maid).

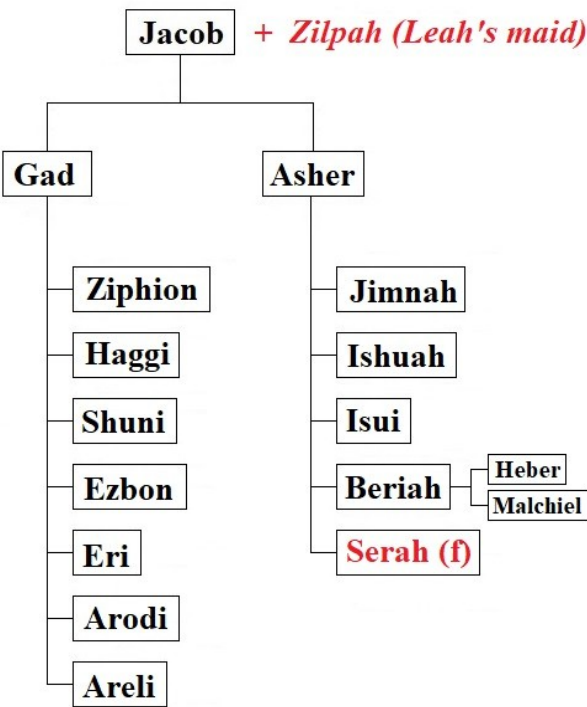


Figure 37: The children of Jacob by Zilpah.

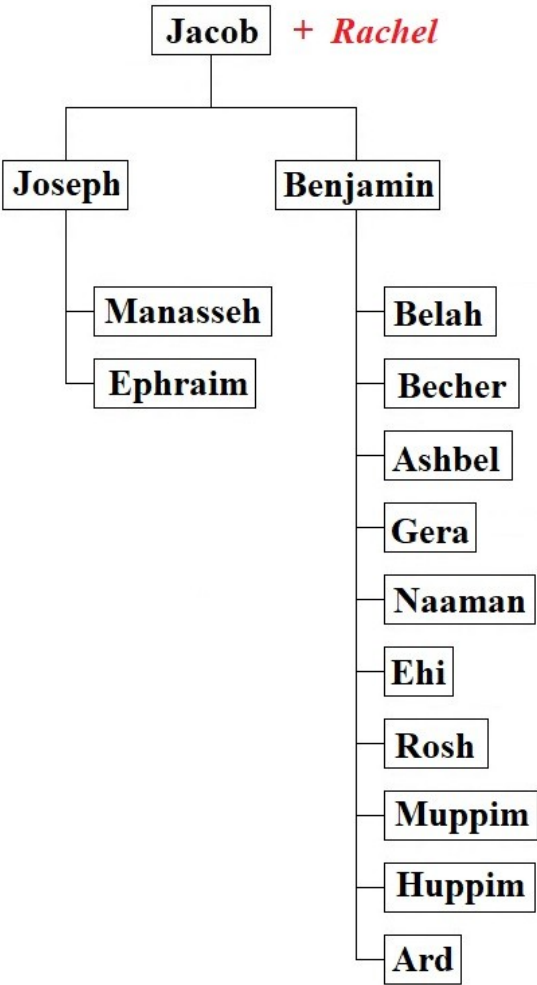


Figure 38: The children of Jacob by Rachel.

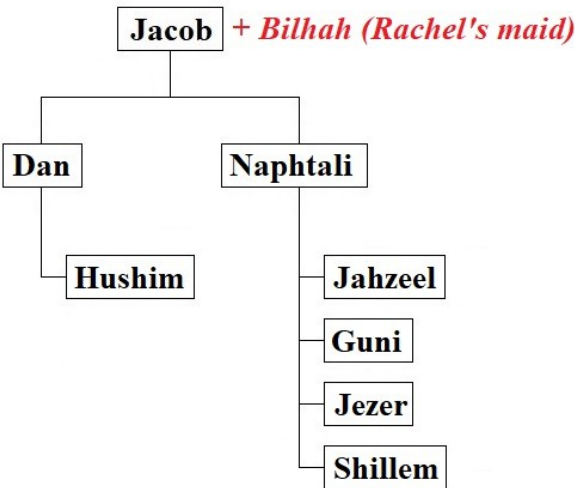


Figure 39: The children of Jacob by Bilhah.

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In verses 9 to 15 we have all the people who came from Leah, Jacob's first wife, namely the six sons and one daughter and all their children (table 57.2).

Table 57.2: Jacob's descendants from Leah.

Son	Grandsons	Great grandsons	f
Reuben	Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, Carmi.		5
Simeon	Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, Shaul		7
Levi	Gershon, Kohath, Merari.		4
Judah	Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, Zerah	Hezron, Hamul.	8
Issachar	Tola, Puvah, Job, Shimron.		5
Zebulun	Sered, Elon, Jahleel.		4
Dinah (f)			
TOTAL:			33

The text of Genesis 46:8 speaks of “*Jacob and his sons*” and so Dinah is not numbered here. Next in verses 16 to 18 comes the sons from Leah's maid Zilpah.

Table 57.3: Jacob's descendants from Zilpah (Leah's maid).

Son	Grandsons	Great grandsons	f
Gad	Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, Areli.		8
Asher	Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, Serah (f)	Heber, Malchiel.	8
TOTAL:			16

And then we get to Rachel in verses 20 to 22. Recall that Rachel died as she was having Benjamin.²⁷⁹⁵

Table 57.4: Jacob's descendants from Rachel.

Son	Grandsons	Great grandsons	f
Joseph	Manasseh, Ephraim.		3
Benjamin	Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, Ard.		11
TOTAL:			14

²⁷⁹⁵ Genesis 35:18.

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Finally we have Bilhah, Rachel's maid in verses 23 to 25.

Table 57.5: Jacob's descendants from Bilhah (Rachel's maid).

Son	Grandsons	Great grandsons	f
Dan	Hushim		2
Naphtali	Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, Shillem.		5
TOTAL:			7

The total number of sons (and grandsons) in these genealogies is: $33 + 16 + 14 + 7 = 70$. Now in verse 26 we are told that *“all the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt”* and who were from his loins, were sixty-six people. We must reduce the number seventy by two, because Er and Onan died, which makes sixty-eight. Then we have to remember that Joseph and his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim were already in Egypt. This brings the number down to sixty-five but adding Dinah who was omitted in the count of sons, makes sixty-six in all. Now verse 27 then brings us back again to the number seventy. We arrive at this number by adding Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's two sons.

Chapter 58.

Arrival at Goshen. (46:28-47:12).

Analysis.

28 Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way* to Goshen.
And they came to the land of Goshen.

29 So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel;
and he presented himself to him,
and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said to Joseph,
“Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive.”

31 Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household,
“I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him,
‘My brothers and those of my father’s house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me.
32 And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.’
33 So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says,
‘What is your occupation?’
34 that you shall say,
‘Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,’
that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.”

#47 1 Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said,
“My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan;
and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen.”

2 And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

3 Then Pharaoh said to his brothers,
“What *is* your occupation?”

And they said to Pharaoh,
“Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers.”

4 And they said to Pharaoh,
“We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan.
Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.”

5 Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying,
“Your father and your brothers have come to you.

6 The land of Egypt *is* before you.
Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen.
And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.”

7 Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh;
and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

8 Pharaoh said to Jacob,
“How old *are* you?”

9 And Jacob said to Pharaoh,
“The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.”

10 So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

11 And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

12 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number in *their* families.

Right from the start – a devotional commentary on the book of Genesis.

Genesis chapter 46 is concerned with Jacob and his family leaving Canaan to go to Egypt. We have looked at the start of the journey where the Lord encourages Jacob to go (Genesis 46:1-7), and then at the details of his descendants who went down with him (Genesis 46:8-27). The end of Genesis chapter 46 describes Jacob's arrival and word of this getting to Pharaoh (Genesis 46:28-34). However I thought it better to connect the actual arrival into Egypt with the important meetings which took place immediately following this. So in this chapter we consider the arrival of Jacob and his family together with the two meetings with Pharaoh, first with five of Jacob's sons (Genesis 47:1-6), and then second with Jacob himself (Genesis 47:7-12).

[1] Jacob arrives in Goshen and Joseph informs Pharaoh. (Genesis 46:28-34).

[2] Five brothers presented to Pharaoh. (Genesis 47:1-6).

[3] Jacob meets Pharaoh. (Genesis 47:7-12).

[1] Jacob arrives in Goshen and Joseph informs Pharaoh. (Genesis 46:28-34).

46:28.

We know very little of the land of “*Goshen*” except what we read here in Genesis. The name means “drawing near.” It was evidently a rich land for pasturing flocks and herds and is described both as the “*best of the land*” for this purpose, and also the land of “*Rameses*” signifying that it was blessed by the sun.²⁷⁹⁶ Now Jacob “*sent*” Judah to show the way. In this simple command we are reminded of Christ Jesus sent of the Father to be “*the way, the truth, and the life.*”²⁷⁹⁷ As such the Lord is our Pioneer or Captain.²⁷⁹⁸ Judah knew the way and lead Jacob, and so in a more perfect way we are followers of Christ our Pioneer. And so Jacob and all his family, lead by Judah, arrive in the land provided for them during the harsh years of famine .

46:29.

Now Joseph was living within Egypt in close proximity to Pharaoh and the court of the king. We do not know precisely where Joseph lived, but now he sets off to meet Jacob his father whom he has not seen for twenty-two years. As the saviour of the world/age Joseph comes to Jacob in his chariot of office. Joseph was styled “*father to Pharaoh*” earlier, and there is the thought here that Joseph whilst being the son of Jacob, was, in actual fact, a spiritual father to his earthly father.²⁷⁹⁹ In the emotional reunion expressed in verse 29 we can see a reflection of the emotion expressed by the father who regained his

2796 Genesis 45:18,20; 47:11.

2797 John 14:6.

2798 Acts 3:15; 5:31; Hebrews 2:12; 12:2.

2799 Genesis 45:8.

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prodigal son:

And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.²⁸⁰⁰

The expression *“fell on his neck and kissed him”* occurs only three times in the NKJV, and whilst we have a slightly different phrase here (*“fell on his neck and wept”*) the thought is the same.²⁸⁰¹ We note here of course, that the earthly saviour of the world/age is the one who fell upon the neck of the one he had not seen in all these years. I am very sure that Jacob was equally moved, but the prime focus is on Joseph's great love and affection for his father. In the same way when there is the reunion of conversion, it is the Lord Jesus who falls upon the neck of the one He has come to save. How we forget this or pass over it! How we ought to recognise that Christ's death for us was not just an expression of great willing and determination, but of immense compassion and love. Whenever a person repents and comes to true faith, there you will see the Lord falling upon the neck of such a one to kiss them with great joy! Notice that this was no mere greet and embrace, for Joseph both *“fell on his neck,”* and also *“he wept on his neck”* for some considerable time (*“a good while”*).

46:30.

As all this was happening Jacob (as Israel) responds with what at first sight appears to be a curious statement. He declares that he is ready to die (*“now let me die”*) on account of the fact that he has now been granted the favour of seeing Joseph's face (*“since I have seen your face”*), and the reason stated for this is that Joseph was *“still alive.”* Jacob was content to leave this world since he now knew that the son he had lost is alive. It is impossible not to see here the joy and excitement felt by the disciples when it was clear that the Lord Jesus was alive after the crucifixion. One who knows the Lord and that He is alive has no care at all for this world. I do not mean that they treat the world in any offhand way or that they disregard normal behaviour, for the one who has seen the Lord cares for the things of the Lord. But this world with all its trinkets, treasures and traps holds no power over such an one.

46:31-34.

Verses 31 to 34 concern Joseph's instructions to Jacob and his household. Remember that Joseph is a type of Christ – as the saviour of the world. Now we discover Joseph speaking to *“his brothers”* and to *“his father's household,”* which expressions stand for the church.²⁸⁰² Christ is not afraid to call us

2800 Luke 15:20.

2801 Genesis 33:4; Luke 15:20; Acts 20:37.

2802 Genesis 46:31.

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*“brethren.”*²⁸⁰³ To begin with Joseph has the authority.²⁸⁰⁴ He states that he will *“go up”* and will *“tell Pharaoh,”* which phrases speak clearly of his authority.²⁸⁰⁵ In the same way Christ has all authority in heaven and earth. It is not that He can now lord it over the Father, and Joseph too is not lording it over Pharaoh, but because of his wisdom (given of God) he is now second only to Pharaoh and even acts as father to Pharaoh.

So what does he say? He informs Jacob and Jacob's household that he will speak to Pharaoh. In a much more exalted way our Saviour comes to the Father and speaks to Him concerning those whom He came to save. He states that these brothers and his house who had been starving in Canaan, have now *“come to me.”*²⁸⁰⁶ As believers we have come to Christ, and in coming to Him He presents to the Father those whom He has saved. Now these brethren and Jacob's house were *“shepherds”* by occupation.²⁸⁰⁷ All believers are, by nature, sheep of God's flock, and, as they grow in grace, they advance and become shepherds in His kingdom. What is meant simply is that shepherds are those who care for the sheep. A believer who enters the kingdom of God is a sheep in need of help and succour. But as this sheep grows, he is enabled to bless others, and to give help and aid to others. We believe in pastors as called officers, but we also believe that all believers are to be shepherds in one sense. They are to watch out for their brothers and sisters. They are to draw them to the Great and Chief Shepherd.

Now when these brothers meet up with Pharaoh, they are to inform him that they were shepherds.²⁸⁰⁸ This predilection to be shepherds and carers for the animals as livestock has a long history as we have seen from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Interestingly we discover that the Egyptians considered such an occupation as an abomination.²⁸⁰⁹ Why this was so we have no idea. However as a type it is quite clearly understandable. The world hates the truth and the way of God. It has no interest in shepherding people, and in bringing them to safe pastures as the Good Shepherd does.²⁸¹⁰ The world finds such things detestable. You may object and reply that the world has its psychiatry, its counsellors, its psychologists and so on, but what are these? Are they true shepherds? Perish the thought! Psychology and counselling are rooted in self and this world. They have no thought towards encouraging sheep (believers) into growing. They rather feed off the flock and trample them, fattening themselves in their supposed support of the sheep.²⁸¹¹

2803 Hebrews 2:11.

2804 Genesis 46:31.

2805 Genesis 46:31.

2806 Genesis 46:31.

2807 Genesis 46:32.

2808 Genesis 46:33,34.

2809 Genesis 46:34.

2810 Psalm 23.

2811 Ezekiel 34:3f.

[2] Five brothers presented to Pharaoh. (Genesis 47:1-6).

47:1-4.

Now having informed the brothers and Jacob of his intentions, Joseph now seeks to carry them out. This whole scene reminds me of Christ in His desire to show His disciples that He needed to go to the Father (His ascension) in order to speak to Him on their behalf. Joseph informs Pharaoh that Jacob and the brothers have now come to Goshen as was promised.²⁸¹² To bring the news to Pharaoh, he took five of his brothers.²⁸¹³ Five is the number of grace and so this speaks of the grace of God in his presentation before Pharaoh. Pharaoh asks the brothers their occupation, to which they reply that they were shepherds as their forefathers also had been before them.²⁸¹⁴ The brothers speak of why they had come (the famine), and they request favour to live and work in the land of Goshen.²⁸¹⁵ Once again this is all a matter of grace. The brothers know they deserve nothing and they are ready to accept that all is in the gift of Pharaoh. In the same way a true believer holds no thought of his (or her) rights. They reckon they are in God's hands from beginning to end. They are His slaves, His to do with as He may please.

47:5,6.

Pharaoh speaks directly to Joseph after this brief interaction with the brothers.²⁸¹⁶ Joseph is their mediator. In the same way Christ is our Mediator who stands in the gulf between us and the Father. Those whom Joseph calls brothers have come to him.²⁸¹⁷ Now the *“land of Egypt”* lies in his sight.²⁸¹⁸ And so because of Joseph's role in redeeming the people, he is enabled by Pharaoh to provide in the land of Egypt. Joseph was ruler over all of the land, and in a much greater way Christ is ruler over the world. Pharaoh states that these whom Joseph has brought, whom have come to him, may have *“the best of the land.”*²⁸¹⁹ Is this not the future for true believers? Christ spoke of giving His disciples a mansion in heaven.²⁸²⁰ Pharaoh requests that among these should be selected those who would care for his flocks too. In this we see echoes of the rewards given to those who have walked in faith on this earth.

2812 Genesis 47:1.

2813 Genesis 47:2.

2814 Genesis 47:3.

2815 Genesis 47:4.

2816 Genesis 47:5.

2817 Genesis 47:5.

2818 Genesis 47:6.

2819 Genesis 47:6.

2820 John 14:2f.

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[3] Jacob meets Pharaoh. (Genesis 47:7-12).

47:7.

Having spoken to the brothers and their father, and having presented the family (five of his brothers) to Pharaoh, Joseph now brings Jacob to the Egyptian king. This event is striking because it is Jacob who blesses Pharaoh and not the other way around. Now in general Joseph is presented to us as the saviour of the world/age but here the imagery alters and Jacob is presented as a believer in God coming to a foreign king. We recall the fact that Melchizedek (king of Salem – later Jerusalem) blessed Abraham when they met. Melchizedek acted the place of a priest to Abraham, and so Jacob is presented as a priest here to Pharaoh, and blesses him. Without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater, and so Jacob must (of necessity) be considered the greater in spiritual terms.²⁸²¹

47:8,9.

Next we discover that Pharaoh asks Jacob his age and Jacob responds in a rather long-winded, and in what *appears to be* a somewhat moaning state.²⁸²² Jacob refers to his age using three statements as follows:²⁸²³

- [1] The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years;
- [2] few and evil have been the days of the years of my life,
- [3] and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

First he states that he was, in fact, one hundred and thirty years of age. He refers to his life (importantly) as a *“pilgrimage.”*²⁸²⁴ This designation is a very important one as we may gather from Genesis and from New Testament books such as Hebrews and Peter's letters. We are not of this world and we are only passing through on our journey to the celestial city.

Then second he refers to his life as consisting of only a *“few”* days which he also describes as being *“evil.”*²⁸²⁵ Nobody lives anywhere near the age to which Jacob has attained, and yet he can say that his days have been few and characterised by evil. Was this a fair assessment? Is Jacob moaning here? I think not. I think it accurate that our days are few indeed, and, in general, are bathed in evil because of this evil and wicked world. To say this and bemoan the fact continually is to be a moaner. However Jacob

2821 Hebrews 7:7.

2822 Genesis 47:8,9.

2823 Genesis 47:9.

2824 Genesis 47:9.

2825 Genesis 47:9.

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has been asked of Pharaoh. Note that Jacob has *“blessed Pharaoh”* prior to this, and he will bless him again shortly, so it seems awkward and odd to suggest that Jacob was merely moaning.²⁸²⁶ In fact I believe he was giving an *accurate* description of life in this world. The Lord has subjected the universe to futility in order that under the strain, the sweat, and the sorrow of life, men (women and children) might seek God and call upon Him for help. The very beginning has taught us that creation was good and then when Adam and the Woman sinned, a curse was brought into the world so that things would be hard for mankind.²⁸²⁷ The third thing he mentions is the length of his life thus far in comparison to his forefathers. Abraham lived to be one hundred and seventy five and Isaac to one hundred and eighty, but from Genesis 11 we learn that the ages of the post-flood patriarchs has been on a steady decline. How far would this decline? Well in Genesis 6 we are informed that mankind's life would reduce to one hundred and twenty years as a maximum life span.²⁸²⁸ And so Jacob is recognising the inherent decline and deterioration that is in-built into the universe because of sin. The apostle Paul notes too that things generally speaking go from bad to worse, and we understand that the only thing which preserves and improves life is the presence of the gospel and the Holy Spirit.²⁸²⁹ Thus Jacob's confession is a necessary corrective to Pharaoh and the world's outlook which is always optimistic and hopeful. Do we not always observe that people generally look on the bright side and ignore the horrors and terrors of the age? Of course to some extent this is a blessing and needful, but it is misplaced. People do not turn to God and place their hope in Him (who is the God of all comfort and hope).²⁸³⁰ Rather they place hope and expectation in all multitude of places which are other than God – the idols of this world. Jacob's corrective is a necessary one. Life is not easy. Life is short. The days of our lives are beset with evil. In what way? Well because, as a general rule, God is rejected, forsaken and ignored. How then can there be any good or blessing if God is treated in such a way? If He who alone brings life, health and peace is cast aside what hope is there?²⁸³¹

47:10-12.

After speaking these words of truth to Pharaoh, Jacob blesses Pharaoh a second time and then leaves Pharaoh's presence.²⁸³² In the last two verses of this section the key words are *“possession”* and *“provided.”*²⁸³³ It was Joseph who was to give this possession and to make provision for Jacob and his sons.²⁸³⁴ Christ alone is the One who has brought us provision and given us an inheritance, a possession in His realms. We learn in verse 11 that *“the best of the land”* was in *“the land of Rameses.”* This was the

2826 Genesis 47:7,10.

2827 Genesis 3Romans 8:20.

2828 Genesis 6:3.

2829 2Timothy 3:13.

2830 Romans 15:13; 2Corinthians 1:3.

2831 Jeremiah 8:9.

2832 Genesis 47:10.

2833 Genesis 47:11,12.

2834 Genesis 47:11,12.

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land of the sun and would feature later in the history recounted in the Exodus. Just as Joseph provided all Jacob's family with bread, so too the Lord would provide manna in the wilderness, all of which points towards the much greater truth that Christ Himself is our bread and life.²⁸³⁵

2835 John 6:32,3,35 etc.

Chapter 59.

Famine intensifies. (47:13-26).

Analysis.

- 13 Now *there was* no bread in all the land;
for the famine *was* very severe,
so that the *land of Egypt* and the *land of Canaan* languished because of the famine.
- 14 And *Joseph* gathered up all the money that was found
in the *land of Egypt*
and in the *land of Canaan*,
for the grain which they bought;
and *Joseph* brought the money into Pharaoh's house.
- 15 So when the money failed
in the *land of Egypt*
and in the *land of Canaan*,
all the Egyptians came to *Joseph* and said,
"Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed."
- 16 Then *Joseph* said,
"Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for your livestock, if the money is gone."
- 17 So they brought their livestock to *Joseph*, and *Joseph* gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys.
Thus he fed them with bread *in exchange* for all their livestock that year.
- 18 When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him,
"We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock.
There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands.
19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land?
Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh;
give *us* seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate."
- 20 Then *Joseph* bought all the *land of Egypt* for Pharaoh;
for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them.
So the land became Pharaoh's.
- 21 And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end.
- 22 Only the *land of the priests* he did not buy;
for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands.
- 23 Then *Joseph* said to the people,
"Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh.
Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land.
24 And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh.
Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones."
- 25 So they said,
"You have saved our lives; let us find favour in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."
- 26 And *Joseph* made it a law over the *land of Egypt* to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the *land of the priests* only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's.

For two years the famine raged, and eventually Jacob and his family came to Goshen in Egypt to be provided for by Joseph. This was the subject of Genesis 46 and the first twelve verses of Genesis 47. There was still five years of famine to come, so what of the rest of Egypt and the surrounding lands? How

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would the next five years progress? This passage of Genesis 47:13-26 serves as an interlude to the main story, for in Genesis 47:27 we revert back to Israel dwelling *“in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen.”* What happens meanwhile in the world (of Egypt) is that things become harder and harder. I believe the main point of this is to show that there can be no hope whatsoever in the world. All we can expect from the world and in the world is hardship, famine and despair. This sounds terrible. This sounds so negative. But we must come to this realisation because the hope and help of man is futile and utterly doomed to disaster.

I say again that I believe that the main point in these verses of Genesis 47:13-26 is to show that efforts within this world are always a terrible failure. It is notable that we have the twin expressions: *“land of Egypt,”* and *“land of Canaan”* in close proximity, which is intended to show the universality of this great famine.²⁸³⁶ Obviously as a picture or illustration the whole history recorded here is given to point us to the infinitely better salvation and deliverance that Christ provides. Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh as messages from God and saved the whole land. But from the point of view of man, of Egypt ruled by a governor, the idea presented is that this world has no real and worthwhile solution. First, as we have seen, there is a failure of bread. Then in verse 14 and 15 we discover that the *“money failed”* too. Then later on in verses 16 to 18 we discover that their livestock and assets were all gone too. Finally from verse 19 and following, the people had to sell themselves and their lands to Pharaoh.

47:13.

And so we learn now that the famine was so bad that there was *“no bread in all the land”* because the *“famine was very severe.”*²⁸³⁷ Only Joseph could provide bread. But the situation was so dire that not only Egypt but Canaan too *“languished because of the famine.”*²⁸³⁸

47:14-17.

After the bread and money failed, the people went to Joseph and pleaded for bread.²⁸³⁹ Their attitude is one of desperation. On the human level there is no thought of God, nor of truth in their hearts. But viewed spiritually, they appeal to the “saviour of the world/age” (Joseph) and do not rely on their own effort. They rely on grace (hence *“give us bread”*).²⁸⁴⁰ Their money has failed them and not enabled them to survive this famine. And so next Joseph tells the people to give away their animals.²⁸⁴¹ On the human level this shows their utter desperation. When a person has no more money and has then sold all his

2836 Genesis 47:13,14,15.

2837 Genesis 47:13.

2838 Genesis 47:13.

2839 Genesis 47:14.

2840 Genesis 47:15.

2841 Genesis 47:16.

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possessions to make ends meet you can be sure that the end result will not be good. Now as Christians we do not rely on the human sphere, on human effort and so on. We trust that God will supply all our need as we focus wholeheartedly on the Lord and His ways, His righteousness, and His mission. But here the Egyptians are failing, and this is a lesson for the world as a whole. Do not trust to the things of this world. Do not rely on money. Do not rely on your cattle, flocks, herds and possessions. They will fail, and they will fail you. Verse 17 repeats the idea Joseph expressed in verse 16 of exchanging livestock for bread twice. The point I think is that possessions do not make the man. These are transient and not eternal. They gave their livestock in exchange for bread “*that year,*” by which we understand a year subsequent to the first two years of famine wherein the brothers were going down to Egypt for food.²⁸⁴² Probably the money failed in the third or fourth year and now the livestock were being used up in the fifth or sixth year. This indicates a measure of desperation, for to use up your livestock was to sell all hope of making a living. Horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, sheep and so forth were all highly useful and necessary beasts for making a living.

47:18.

After this year “*ended,*” the next brought a new challenge. They had used up their money and had sold all their livestock, what were they to do next? Well all that was left was their very persons and the land they dwelt upon. And so now they offer themselves to Joseph wholly. We note the way in which the world takes first a person's money, then all that they possess, and finally their very persons and the place they dwell. This is the way of the world. However we must see equally that the Lord Himself demands our very lives. First we should yield all our money. Next we should give up all our possessions and the means by which we make our livelihoods. Finally we must yield our very lives and the places we dwell in. Such is the demand of God upon the seeking soul!

47:19.

In verse 19 we discover the people requesting that Joseph actually purchase them. They will be “*servants of Pharaoh*” in order that they may have bread to survive. The contrast with the gospel is remarkable. We are to yield up our very lives lock, stock, and barrel unto Him who only desires to bring life and do good. Infinitely better to have God as our master than Pharaoh! They further request the promise of seed in order that they may plant and sow to yield fruit. I wonder of we take the same line of thought in our prayers? Lord wont You give us seed that we may plant and reap? Is there any seed to be had for our land today? Has God passed over our land as an unfruitful and barren wasteland? Does the seed fall upon the soil of our land and die?

²⁸⁴² Genesis 47:17.

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47:20-24.

And so Joseph bought all the land for Pharaoh in order that the people would survive.²⁸⁴³ This is ever the situation. A man must yield himself entirely to the Lord, the governor of all, in order to eat and survive. We either yield to this world and its order and requirements, or we give ourselves to the Lord. Consequent upon Pharaoh now owning the people and their lands, he was free to do as he pleased with them. They were *“moved into the cities,”* and from one end of Egypt to another.²⁸⁴⁴ Do we not realise that to whom we have sold ourselves we yield also the outcome, direction, and purpose of our lives?²⁸⁴⁵ The priests were exempt from this arrangement because they were already under the authority of Pharaoh.²⁸⁴⁶ Now that they had yielded themselves completely to Joseph he was able to provide them with seed so that they could sow and plant for a crop the following year.²⁸⁴⁷ Joseph had purchased them all, but still he is able to provide seed for them. In a more wonderful way, Christ has purchased all true believers. Now as a consequence, the Lord provides *“seed”* for us to. What will we do with this seed? We ought to sow with it in order that we may reap in years to come. In the earthly situation of Egypt the planting of the given seed was so that they may survive but there was a cost. They were to give a fifth to Pharaoh.²⁸⁴⁸ As servants of the living God we know that the first-fruits and the best of all we make and produce are the Lord's. Having given up our lives we are no more than servants of the living God. What we do, what we make, what we produce is all the Lord's and so we offer to Him the best and the finest for the furtherance of His cause knowing that all we have has been given by Him.

47:25,26.

And so the people of the land confess that Joseph had truly *“saved”* them.²⁸⁴⁹ Notice that they continue not on the basis of effort nor on works, but by grace. They state: *“let us find favour”* in Joseph's eyes.²⁸⁵⁰ Our progress in the faith is never by self-effort nor by works. We operate on the basis of grace – the unmerited favour of God, and we are simply servants of God. Note how often Paul speaks of this status in his letters. Joseph thence enacted a law in Egypt that of all the land, one fifth of its produce or fruit was Pharaoh's with the single exception of the priests.²⁸⁵¹

2843 Genesis 47:20.

2844 Genesis 47:21.

2845 Romans 6:16.

2846 Genesis 47:22.

2847 Genesis 47:23.

2848 Genesis 47:24.

2849 Genesis 47:25.

2850 Genesis 47:25.

2851 Genesis 47:26.

Chapter 60.

Jacob blesses Joseph's sons. (47:27-48:22).

Analysis.

27 So **Israel** dwelt
in the land of Egypt,
in the country of Goshen;
and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.

28 And **Jacob** lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years.
So the length of **Jacob**'s life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

29 When the time drew near that **Israel** must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him,
"Now if I have found favour in your sight,
please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me.
Please do not bury me in Egypt, **30** but let me lie with my fathers;
you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

And he said,
"I will do as you have said."

31 Then he said,
"Swear to me."
And he swore to him.
So **Israel** bowed himself on the head of the bed.

#48 1 Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told,
"Indeed your father *is* sick";
and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2 And **Jacob** was told,
"Look, your son Joseph is coming to you";
and **Israel** strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

3 Then **Jacob** said to Joseph:
"God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, **4** and said to me,
'Behold,
I will make you fruitful and multiply you,
and I will
make of you a multitude of people,
and give this land to your descendants after you *as* an everlasting possession.'
5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.
6 Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.
7 But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when *there was* but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

8 Then **Israel** saw Joseph's sons, and said,
"Who *are* these?"

9 And Joseph said to his father,
"They *are* my sons, whom God has given me in this *place*."
And he said,
"Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."

10 Now the eyes of **Israel** were dim with age, *so that* he could not see.
Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

11 And **Israel** said to Joseph,
"I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"

12 So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.

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- 13 And Joseph took them both,
Ephraim with his right hand toward **Israel**'s left hand,
and Manasseh with his left hand toward **Israel**'s right hand,
and brought *them* near him.
- 14 Then **Israel**
stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger,
and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.
- 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said:
"God,
 before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has fed me all my life long to this day,
16 the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
 bless the lads;
let my name be named upon them,
and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."
- 17 Now when Joseph
saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim,
it displeased him;
so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.
- 18 And Joseph said to his father,
 "Not so, my father, for this *one is* the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."
- 19 But his father refused and said,
 "I know, my son, I know.
He also shall become a people,
and he also shall be great;
but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he,
and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."
- 20 So he blessed them that day, saying,
 "By you **Israel** will bless, saying,
 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'"
- And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.
- 21 Then **Israel** said to Joseph,
 "Behold,
 I am dying,
 but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.
22 Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite
 with my sword and my bow."

Having considered the general picture, that is, the effect of famine upon the world (Egypt) as a whole, we are brought back to consider Jacob and his family in Goshen. This section of Genesis describes just two things.

[1] An overview of the time spent in Goshen from coming down to Jacob's death. (Genesis 47:27-31).

[2] Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons before he dies. (Genesis 48:1-22).

It will be seen here that the details of life in Egypt over the seventeen years between arriving and the death of Jacob are passed over. What is far more important is the blessing given to Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph's sons). In the next chapter (Genesis 49) we find further prophetic blessings poured forth on the sons of Jacob. Here, our focus is upon Joseph and his two sons. Why does this come first? Well recall that Joseph was Jacob's special son by Rachel his loved wife.

[1] An overview of the time spent in Goshen from coming down to Jacob's death. (Genesis 47:27-31).

47:27.

Jacob is referred to here in the main as *“Israel,”* that is, by his new name. This name represents, of course, the nation that God is growing and would eventually call out of Egypt in the future. It is to be observed that he is also called *“Jacob”* on four occasions, even though the name *“Israel”* predominates.²⁸⁵²

Now Israel, and all his posterity, dwelt in Goshen and were singularly blessed. This is the contrast to all that we read earlier in Genesis 47:13-26 which focused upon how the world as a whole was faring. In contrast to the whole world losing their possessions (their livestock and herds), Israel *“had possessions.”* Literally the Hebrew reads: *“and they had possessions there,”* that is, in that place, the land of Goshen. Those who are the Lord's are blessed indeed. When the people were on the verge of entering the promised land Moses outlined the blessings they would know on obedience to the voice of the Lord.²⁸⁵³ They would be fruitful, they would know God's provision, and they would know blessing whether in the city or in the country. But not only did they still have possessions, but also they *“grew”* and to such an extent that they *“multiplied exceedingly.”* This would appear to be an abnormal and unexpected growth. We have been told that to begin with there were seventy persons in total from Jacob. There will be two hundred and fifteen years of Israel being in Egypt from the time of Jacob's descent until the time of Moses' leading the nation out again at the Exodus. The four hundred and thirty years referenced in Exodus 12:40,41 is made up of this two hundred and fifteen years in Egypt and the two hundred and fifteen years from Abraham's call as recorded in Genesis 12 to Jacob's descent into Egypt described in Genesis 46. In the two hundred and fifteen year period of Israel being in Egypt the Lord would grow them to such an extent that it could number around six hundred thousand men capable of bearing arms.²⁸⁵⁴ Now at this point we are not told of further offspring of Jacob's sons, only that the newly forming nation were increasing in size rapidly.

47:28

In verse 28 we are simply told that seventeen years had passed since Jacob came down to Egypt and he is now one hundred and forty seven years old. In his one hundred and forty seventh year Jacob dies. And so as the time for his departure drew near, in that last year of his life, he could see and observe the growth of his peoples. It is pointless to speculate about how many there were but it is highly likely that now his grandsons were bearing children. Jacob knew he was about to die. But before this he must do

2852 The name *“Jacob”* occurs at: Genesis 47:28(x2); 48:2,3. The name *“Israel”* occurs at 47:27,29,31; 48:2,8,10,11,13(x2),14,20,21.

2853 Deuteronomy 28:1-7.

2854 Exodus 12:37.

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two things. First he sought the promise of Joseph that he would be buried in Canaan in the cave of Macphelah where Abraham and Isaac were buried. Then second in this passage, he desired to bless the children of Joseph.

47:29-31.

And so he calls for Joseph and makes a special request.²⁸⁵⁵ Again the call is on the basis of grace (*“if I have found favour”*).²⁸⁵⁶ Jacob requests that Joseph place his hand beneath his thigh as we noted with Abraham's steward.²⁸⁵⁷ This is a binding and a solemn charge. Jacob is not content with this action alone, which would be rather like taking an oath in court, and so he requests that Joseph *“deal kindly and truly”* with him.²⁸⁵⁸ Deceit has been the backdrop and atmosphere of Jacob's life, and this can be seen in the way his sons have acted. Most of them acted deceitfully with regard to the selling of Joseph. Joseph himself was not altogether honest in his dealings with the brothers as they came to Egypt. Jacob has come a long way. But he knows that deceit is destructive. If lies are the order of the day where is truth? What can be done? Jacob needs Joseph to be kind, merciful, and gracious to him, and to deal faithfully and truthfully in this issue he is about to raise. His one request is that he would not be left buried in Egypt.²⁸⁵⁹ Instead Jacob wanted to be carried out from Egypt and buried with his fathers *“in their burial place.”*²⁸⁶⁰ Why? Well I believe that this is because of the promise with regard to the land. The promised land was never meant to be a permanent place of dwelling forever – it rather signifies or points towards the new heaven and earth. However the patriarchs knew that the future, as far as they were concerned, was wrapped up in the Lord's promise to Abraham of the land where the nation may dwell. It was not yet possible for Jacob to see the full outcome of these promises as we see and experience them today, with Christ's death and resurrection and the blessings that came forth as a result of this one great act. Jacob knows that God had promised the land to them. They are now all in Egypt and have been there for seventeen years with a promise of going back. And so he ensures that Joseph, who (presumably) is still the governor and high official over Egypt under none but Pharaoh, promises to organise his burial in the cave of Machpelah that Abraham bought to bury Sarah his wife.

Joseph agrees but Jacob demands that he make an oath, and on receiving such he *“bowed himself on the head of the bed,”* by which phrase we understand that he takes his rest.²⁸⁶¹ Jacob knows that Joseph will do what he required and was thus at peace.

2855 Genesis 47:29.

2856 Genesis 47:29.

2857 Genesis 24:2,9.

2858 Genesis 47:29.

2859 Genesis 47:29.

2860 Genesis 47:30.

2861 Genesis 47:30,31.

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[2] Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons before he dies. (Genesis 48:1-22).

48:1,2.

It cannot have been too long after Jacob secures the promise from Joseph concerning his burial that Jacob eventually arrives at the point of his death.²⁸⁶² Joseph is informed that Jacob is sick and so he brings Manasseh and Ephraim to him.²⁸⁶³ On being informed that Joseph is on his way, Jacob (Israel) *“strengthened himself”* and made himself sit up on his sick bed.²⁸⁶⁴ The word indicates the idea that he tied himself or bound himself to sit up and be presentable. Rather like a hoist or a stick used to bear weight. Spiritually we note that believers are enabled to strengthen themselves in the Lord.²⁸⁶⁵ The Lord supplies all the needed strength and aid through Christ's great work and by the Spirit, but we must avail ourselves of this strength. Such is the plain teaching, for example, of Ephesians 6:10f, where we are exhorted to stand and to take up the full armour that God supplies. It think also that Jacob knows he is drawing to the final day and he has a task to do and so strengthens himself to attend to it.

48:3-7.

In verses 3 to 7 we get a wonderful testimony of Jacob spoken to Joseph. Joseph's sons are not yet the focus of attention. Jacob begins with God (**אל שדי** *'el šaday*).²⁸⁶⁶ This is the God of might and strength. The one who can supply all. Now Jacob recalls the Lord's appearing to him as he fled from Esau's wrath. It was at *“Luz”* in Canaan which he then renamed as *“Bethel.”*²⁸⁶⁷ It was at this point that Jacob heard the Lord's blessing for him, the promise that he would be *“fruitful”* and would *“multiply,”* so that he would be made *“a multitude of people,”* and, further, that he would receive the land he was fleeing from *“as an everlasting possession.”*²⁸⁶⁸ Here, in full, is the reason why Jacob wanted to be buried in Canaan and not in Egypt. Jacob knew he was going to be blessed with many sons and descendants but he did not know how this would come about! It is remarkable that God uses even our sin to bring about His wonderful purposes. Notice here that God's intentions are always pure and good. We, on the other hand, are anything but. Our sin causes all sorts of trouble and difficulty, as Jacob's did and which is set here for us as an example. And yet none of the sin Jacob indulged in (his deceit and indifference to Leah, for example) stopped God's blessing him with abundance. True his sons were in need of great work (as evidenced by what we have been studying) but the Lord made true His promise of great abundance in descendants.

2862 Genesis 48:1.

2863 Genesis 48:1.

2864 Genesis 48:2.

2865 1Samuel 30:6.

2866 Genesis 48:3.

2867 Genesis 48:3.

2868 Genesis 48:4.

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It was important that Jacob begin with God, and it was necessary for him to recall the promise and goodness of God now being worked out. How we ought to follow this lead. Start with God, recall His promises and give thanks for their outworking, despite the heartaches and difficulties which we experience on account of sin. And so Jacob next turns to the sons of Joseph.²⁸⁶⁹ It would appear from verse 8 that he is not aware of their presence. He is just speaking to Joseph concerning them at this point. Jacob declares that these two boys born to Joseph in Egypt by Asenath the daughter of the priest of On, were to be considered his own sons, that is, as part of his blessed family. Joseph has shone through in godliness throughout these events, and despite his being married to a foreign wife of pagan origins, it would appear that his sons were brought up in the ways of the Lord. I believe this is the force of Jacob's announcement here. These two grandsons were to be considered as Jacob's just as Reuben and Simeon were his too. The mention of Reuben and Simeon is noteworthy. These were his first two sons in birth order, but they were sons of Leah, not Rachel (as Joseph was). We see in this too the reconciliation of Jacob over the twelve sons and his first wife Leah whom he did not love. It is significant also that Jacob reverses the order of names. In verse 1 Joseph brought with him *“Manaaseh and Ephraim,”* but in verse 5 Jacob speaks of these two sons as *“Ephraim and Manasseh.”* Other offspring to be born were not to be included amongst Jacob's own sons.²⁸⁷⁰ And so a special place is being set for Ephraim and Manasseh.

In verse 7 Jacob recounts the events of Rachel's death although no mention is made of Benjamin here. Perhaps the point is that Joseph's mother was lost to Joseph but there is no cause for worry because she died beside Jacob *“in the land of Canaan on the way.”*²⁸⁷¹ Rachel was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, the house of bread. In other words, Rachel was not lost. She was in Canaan the land of promise. What-is-more, she was *“on the way,”* by which we may understand that she was a true pilgrim, a true believer.²⁸⁷² It would seem here that Jacob is comforting Joseph about his mother and their mutual loss.

48:8-11.

At this point in the conversation Jacob (Israel) caught sight of Joseph's two sons but he did not immediately recognise them, for he asks *“who are these?”*²⁸⁷³ We learn a little bit later that Jacob had eyesight trouble so this lack of recognition is understandable. Joseph responds by saying that the two boys were his sons that *“God”* had provided and given in this place. Their names, as we noted earlier, are significant. The name *“Ephraim”* means “doubly fruitful,” whilst the name *“Manasseh”* means “making to forget.” Such names are more than fitting for the promised land where they would be extremely fruitful

2869 Genesis 48:5.

2870 Genesis 48:6.

2871 Genesis 48:7.

2872 Genesis 48:7.

2873 Genesis 48:8.

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and would be enabled to forget all their past woes. On noting their presence Jacob requests them to be brought closer for a blessing.²⁸⁷⁴ In verse 10 we are informed that *“the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see,”* and this fact brings to remembrance the occasion where Jacob deceived his father Isaac (*“when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see ”*).²⁸⁷⁵ It seems clear that Jacob has been brought to the very beginning, to the point where he made a very foolish choice and now he is about to bless his progeny in a godly and righteous way. Whereas he forced the birthright and blessing, (that he knew was his through prophecy), by means of deception, now he was about to bless his grandsons in full view and with perfect spiritual vision. The younger was to be honoured above the older. Jacob first kisses and embraces both boys.²⁸⁷⁶ Here he is done with favouritism which was the engine that caused the friction and duels in the first place. By embracing both he shows that what he is about to do is not through favouritism but is from God. Jacob had come to the point where he thought he would never see Joseph again, but now in God's wonderful grace he can now bring a blessing to Joseph's sons.²⁸⁷⁷ It was all God's grace.

48:12-14.

Joseph presents both boys *“from beside his knees”* and then he *“bowed down with his face to the earth.”*²⁸⁷⁸ Joseph had a dream that Jacob and his other sons would bow down to the earth before him, but now Joseph does the same towards Jacob. Is this merely the honour due to the aged? I think not. Jacob is the father and thus holds the authority. It is a simple fact that the lesser is always blessed by the greater.²⁸⁷⁹ In verse 13 we are given precise details of how Joseph presented his sons to his father. Ephraim was presented to *“Israel's left hand,”* and Manasseh was presented to *“Israel's right hand,”* for Joseph expected his older son to get the blessing. But Jacob (Israel) knew that this would be how Joseph would present the two boys and so he crosses his hands over so that his right hand rested on Ephraim the younger son, not Manasseh, and his left hand rested on Manasseh the older son, not Ephraim.²⁸⁸⁰ This was a deliberate action, (*“guiding his hands knowingly”*), and probably as a result of God's revelation.²⁸⁸¹ The younger is to be preferred before the older.

48:15,16.

Having arranged his hands in this way Jacob pronounces his blessing on *“Joseph”* not on the two

2874 Genesis 48:9.

2875 Genesis 27:1.

2876 Genesis 48:10.

2877 Genesis 48:11.

2878 Genesis 48:12.

2879 Hebrews 7:7.

2880 Genesis 48:14.

2881 Genesis 48:14.

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sons. The two sons are to be honoured as tribes in Israel, but the blessing is upon Joseph their father.²⁸⁸²

Three statements are made by Jacob, and these declare what the Lord had done with him over the years. The first two start with the divine name of God (הָאֱלֹהִים). The third statement begins with the term “*The Angel*” and so can be none other than a reference to the various Christophanies Jacob encountered. Because it is difficult to render the last of these three titles without the definite article the NASB supplies one for the divine names in the first two statements, whereas a literal version like the YLT simply put “*God.*” In my rendition I have opted to use the definite article because it seems that Jacob is being demonstrative.

V15

הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְכוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק--

The God to the face of whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked

הָאֱלֹהִים הָרֹעֶה אֹתִי מֵעוֹדִי עַד-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה

The God who has fed me continually up to this day

v16

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגָּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל-רָע

The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil

This God, this Angel, this divine Messenger, has done three marvellous and wonderful things. In the first place this God is the same God before whose face Jacob's father (Isaac) and grandfather (Abraham) walked. There is a strong sense of continuity. This was no new and different experience. It was no new and different religion or philosophy that Jacob was following. It was as if he had said: 'remember the stories of old when God walked with Abraham and Isaac.' Well I too am walking with this same God. Now it is so vital that we establish a similar continuity. The trouble is there are so many versions and variations of what is termed “Christianity” today. How do we display this continuity? There is also a danger of being hidebound to a tradition which deadens. We might identify with a particular denomination the history of whom we admire greatly. But as we read Genesis and the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we are struck by the fact that each of these men were very different, and yet the same God walked with each of them. We are not to get over-worried about traditions, denominations, and so forth. It will be that we identify with various peoples who have gone before who walked in different denominations. What is important is that we identify with those who truly know and experience the same

2882 Genesis 48:15.

God.

The second statement continues this theme of continuity but applies it personally. God is always the same. He never changes. And it is this feature of His character which we often miss personally. Now this God has been with Jacob all along his travels and journey. God has been faithful and has supplied Jacob's needs up to this point. How blessed he was! God had been so patient with him that despite his failures (deceit, vacillation, favouritism and so on), the Lord never left Him nor abandoned Him. This same promise was given by the Saviour just before He ascended into heaven.²⁸⁸³

The third statement is the pinnacle of Jacob's confession. When Jacob met with his two wives in the field as he was planning to leave Laban he reported to them that it was *“the Angel of God”* who spoke often to him.²⁸⁸⁴ Now Jacob confesses that it was this Angel, this God, who not only provided for him continually, but also who had (more importantly) *“redeemed”* him *“from all evil.”*²⁸⁸⁵ We could take this to mean a once for all redemption, or a redemption in different circumstances. Christ died for sinners once for all time, but the application of His redemption occurs throughout a lifetime. Christ's redemption of us was complete at Calvary and so we are justified by faith, but we are being sanctified throughout our life.

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.²⁸⁸⁶

This is a true and wonderful testimony. Can we say the same? Has this God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob been our redeemer throughout all life's travels supplying all our need? How important it is to know personally the God of old. It is no use speaking words which we borrow from another. We need to know the Lord for ourselves, and as we walk with Him we discover others who are walking with the same God. Their particular paths and circumstances are different to ours, but the same God, with the same character and attributes, deals with us in truth and faithfulness. So it is out of this confession of trust in the true God that Jacob can declare a blessing upon the two young men (*“bless the lads”*). The blessing comes in the form of an imperative command. 'May it be' or 'let it be so that' is the form of expression used. There are two *“let”* statements, the first of which has a double application. First Jacob declares that the sons of Joseph would bear his name. In other words they are to be considered as his sons and in his family. And then second, they are to be included amongst those too of his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. This indicates that they were to be like these patriarchs, but how? Well it would appear that Jacob is wanting them to be as Abraham and Isaac in regard to their faith and walk with God. May they too be those who walk with God. The second *“let”* statement is a continuation of the promise poured upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. May they be an abundant and greatly fruitful peoples.

2883 Matthew 28:18-20.

2884 Genesis 31:11.

2885 Genesis 48:16.

2886 Hebrews 10:14.

48:17-20.

Now before this blessing was being pronounced by Jacob, Joseph seeing his father's hands cross over, was *“displeased”* with this.²⁸⁸⁷ Literally this phrase reads: “and it was evil in his eyes,” and thus he considered what his father did was wrong. It did not fit with how he viewed things. And as a consequence he set about changing things by taking his father's hand from Ephraim's head to place it upon Manasseh's head whom was his firstborn and so ought to receive the main blessing. As he was doing this he attempts to correct Jacob:

לֹא-כֵן אָבִי כִי-זֶה הַבְּכֹר שְׁמִים יְמִינְךָ עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ.

not so my father for this [is] the firstborn place your right hand upon his head.

Manasseh was the firstborn and so ought to have received Jacob's right hand. But Jacob stops Joseph's actions.²⁸⁸⁸ Jacob opens by saying *“I know my son I know”* which has the force of saying that what Joseph had said was true, but now things were to change. In other words, the older were always the ones who receive the blessing, that was true and Jacob knew this. But now Jacob was set on blessing the younger above the older. The older would indeed be blessed but the younger more so. Joseph should not worry on account of Manasseh. Ephraim was to outdo Manasseh in fruitfulness, just as his name declared.

Thus Jacob blessed Joseph's sons on that day.²⁸⁸⁹ He ends his blessing by declaring that by these two sons Israel would bless (*“by you Israel will bless”*). There then follows a statement of blessing which might be said over those to whom blessing would come. May the Lord bless others as He had done to Ephraim and Manasseh.²⁸⁹⁰

48:21,22.

Now Jacob (as Israel) turns to speak directly to Joseph.²⁸⁹¹ Jacob would soon depart this world, but Joseph must recognise that God was still concerned with bringing them back to the land of promise, *“the land of your fathers.”*²⁸⁹² Even though the land of Canaan was still occupied by the various Canaanite peoples, it was, nevertheless, the land of promise and the land of Jacob's forefathers. This was, perhaps, necessary for Joseph had now been in the land of Egypt for nearly forty years, and his sons only knew Egypt. It would be very tempting for Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh to remain and settle permanently in the land of Egypt. This would not be good for God had a purpose for Jacob's twelve sons. Thus they must

2887 Genesis 48:17.

2888 Genesis 48:19.

2889 Genesis 48:20.

2890 Genesis 48:20.

2891 Genesis 48:21,22.

2892 Genesis 48:21.

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be the subject of this particular blessing. The question of how long it would be before they should return is a difficult one to establish. As we have noted elsewhere, the period of time between Jacob's descent and Moses' leading the people out was two hundred and fifteen years. But could they have returned sooner? If we re-consider the prophecy given to Abraham in Genesis 15, it might have been understood that there was to be a period of four hundred years of persecution which started from Isaac's being mocked by Ishmael.²⁸⁹³ From that point until Jacob's descent would be exactly one hundred and eighty five years.²⁸⁹⁴ Thus the four hundred year period of Genesis 15 would end at that point when the people were lead out of Egypt by Moses. So it may have been that Jacob and others knew of this prophecy.

In verse 22 Jacob declares that Joseph was to receive an extra portion above that of his brothers. The word *“portion”* is close in sound and thought to the name of the city Shechem where Dinah was incarcerated after being raped, and which Simeon and Levi exacted such a great slaughter. Now that occasion Jacob condemned. So the occasion referred to here is some other (unknown) time.

2893 Genesis 15:13; 21:9

2894 Isaac would have been five years old when he was weaned, and Jacob was not born until Isaac was sixty. Jacob was one hundred and thirty when he went down to Egypt. Thus $55 + 130 = 185$.

Chapter 61.

Jacob's prophecy. (49:1-33).

Analysis.

#49 1 And Jacob called his sons and said,

“Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days:

2 “Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.

3 “Reuben,

you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. **4** Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled *it*— he went up to my couch.

5 “Simeon and Levi

are brothers; instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place. **6** Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. **7** Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

8 “Judah,

you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise; your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down before you. **9** Judah *is* a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? **10** The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people. **11** Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. **12** His eyes *are* darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

13 “Zebulun

shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He *shall become* a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.

14 “Issachar

is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; **15** he saw that rest *was* good, and that the land *was* pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear *a burden*, and became a band of slaves.

16 “Dan

shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. **17** Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward.

18 I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!

19 “Gad,

a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last. **20** “Bread from Asher *shall be* rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.

21 “Naphtali

is a deer let loose; he uses beautiful words.

22 “Joseph

is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a *well*; his branches run over the wall. **23** The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot *at him* and hated him. **24** But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty *God* of Jacob (from there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), **25** by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you *with* blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. **26** The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

27 “Benjamin

is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.”

28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel, and this *is* what their father spoke to them.
And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.

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29 Then he charged them and said to them:

“I am to be gathered to my people;
bury me with my fathers

in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah,

which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan,

which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife,

there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife,

and there I buried Leah.

32 The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth.”

33 And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons,

he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

This chapter describes Jacob's parting blessings to his twelve sons and his instructions concerning his death, followed by his passing. The first section comes in verses 1 to 27, and the final act occurs in verses 28 to 33.

[1] Jacob calls an assembly of his twelve sons and blesses them. (Genesis 49:1-27).

Although there is continuity throughout this section, we must observe that in verse 18 Jacob makes an exclamation which breaks his prophecy concerning the two sons. Prior to this we have prophetic words concerning Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar and Dan. After this interjection on verse 18 we have prophetic words concerning Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin.

The two Hebrew words given as “*gather*” in verses 1 and 2 are slightly different in meaning. The first suggests the idea of joining from different places. The second has the meaning “to take or grasp with the hand” and suggests a meeting that has purpose and intent, that is, an assembly. At the end of this section in verses 29 and 33 we have the word “*gathered*” and the Hebrew word used here is the same as the first word meaning to join a group or company.



Figure 40: The location of the 12 tribes.

49:1-3.

Clearly Jacob is concerned for the future of his twelve sons who will form the nation Israel. It is to be noted first that the order in which the sons are listed is different again from the three listings we have

already seen (see table 61.1). Jacob tells us his purpose immediately. He wants to inform his offspring about what shall come about concerning them *“in the last days.”*²⁸⁹⁵ That this message is very important is clear from the commands to *“gather,”* and from the repeated calls to pay attention closely as indicated by the words *“hear,”* and *“listen”* in verse 2. We are a long way in time from the nation Israel occupying the promised land, but it appears clear that Jacob is a prophet and speaks from God about his sons and their futures. A map of the location of the twelve tribes is shown in figure 40.

Table 61.1: Listing of the sons of Jacob.

Birth order: Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-20.		Order from: Genesis 35:22b-26.		Order from: Genesis 46:8-27.		Order from Genesis 49:3-27.	
Mother	Son	Mother	Son	Mother	Son	Mother	Son
Leah	Reuben	Leah	Reuben	Leah	Reuben	Leah	Reuben
	Simeon		Simeon		Simeon		Simeon
	Levi		Levi		Levi		Levi
	Judah		Judah		Judah		Judah
Bilhah (R)	Dan		Issachar		Issachar		Issachar
	Naphtali		Zebulun		Zebulun		Zebulun
Zilpah (L)	Gad	Rachel	Joseph	Zilpah (L)	Gad	Bilhah (R)	Dan
	Asher		Benjamin		Asher	Zilpah (L)	Gad
Leah	Issachar	Bilhah (R)	Dan	Rachel	Joseph	Zilpah (L)	Asher
	Zebulun		Naphtali		Benjamin	Bilhah (R)	Naphtali
Rachel	Joseph	Zilpah (L)	Gad	Bilhah (R)	Dan	Rachel	Joseph
	Benjamin		Asher		Naphtali		Benjamin

Apart from the obviously historical importance of these details, why has the Lord shown these details near the end of the book of Genesis? It would seem that Jacob as the father of the burgeoning nation of Israel wants to gather and assemble them for instruction. The instruction is in the form of prophecy, which is revelation from the Lord God. Now in putting it all like this we can see a picture of the church. We gather together to hear what the Lord has to say in and through His word as preached by men empowered by the Holy Spirit. The emphasis here in Genesis 49 is hearing and listening to prophecy. When we gather, we also sing, praise, pray and fellowship, so we have not yet got a complete picture or illustration of the church, but the most important reason for our gathering is to hear what God has to say.

In what follows we shall stick to what has been said of each son and our comments will by no means be exhaustive. I have included the relevant text for each son to help the reader. More is said

²⁸⁹⁵ Genesis 49:1.

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concerning some sons than others, and two are singled out for an extensive treatment (Judah and Joseph). Is God partial or unfair in doing this? By no means! God is wise and good. To some much is expected. To others their walk with God while no less wonderful, may not have great significance to the whole. We tread carefully in saying these things. Recall that a little maid of Israel had an incredible influence on the commander of the Syrian army in the days of Elijah!²⁸⁹⁶

48:3,4. Reuben.

3 “Reuben,

you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. 4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled *it*— he went up to my couch.

Jacob begins with his firstborn. The firstborn was the one to whom the blessings of the father were usually transferred. The reasons for this are given here by Jacob. The firstborn is described in four ways in verse 3. He is:

- my might and
- the beginning of my strength,
- the excellency of dignity and
- the excellency of power.

The firstborn is the best as far as this world is concerned. It comes from the strength of the man whose strength is forever failing on account of the curse due to sin. The first things we do as mature men are often the most vigorous and energetic and thence our second, third and later actions are never quite the same. Now in Genesis 4 we learnt that Abel gave of his firstborn in worship to the Lord. This principle is shown in Hannah who gave back Samuel the first son she bore. We ought therefore to give of the first fruits to the Lord because this is the best. But, as far as this world is concerned, the firstborn can never be that which brings in salvation. It had to be a second “Man” whose origins were also divine.

However we have observed that the firstborn is more often overlooked by the Lord. Abraham, for example, was not the firstborn of Terah, for Terah had his first son aged seventy but Abraham was born when Terah was one hundred and thirty.²⁸⁹⁷ Although Isaac was truly Abraham's only son (by Sarah) he was not actually Abraham's firstborn, Ishmael (by Hagar) was. Isaac's twin sons were Esau and Jacob but Rebekah received prophecy from the Lord that the older would serve the younger.²⁸⁹⁸ So we note that the

2896 2Kings 5:2,3.

2897 Genesis 11:26,32; 12:4.

2898 Genesis 25:23.

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firstborn is often overlooked. Why is this? I believe it is indicative of the fact that it was not the first Adam, whom we might style as the firstborn of this creation who would inherit the promises, but the second (and last) Adam, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁸⁹⁹ Thus in all these instances of the firstborn being passed over, we are being shown forth this simple idea that the second Adam would be the one through whom the blessings would come.

Now Reuben, although Jacob's firstborn, was of an unstable character.²⁹⁰⁰ He is described as being like *“water;”* by which we must understand the fluid nature of water. It does not assemble itself into a unified form but is spread and scattered and without structure. Although the firstborn was to be *“the excellence of dignity and the excellency of power”* in a natural sense. According to some, the first phrase (*“the excellence of dignity”*) relates to the priestly function, whilst the second (*“the excellency of power”*) to that of rule and governance. Reuben was not excellent and would not excel, Why? Well Jacob reminds Reuben that he took Bilhah, Rachel's maid, as wife shortly after Rachel died.²⁹⁰¹ Such an act of defiance and rebellion is hardly the stuff of excellence, for Jacob records that in doing so, Reuben had *“defiled”* his own father's bed.²⁹⁰² It is noteworthy that the tribe of Reuben did not excel. There are no great men or leaders who stem from this tribe.

49:5-7. Simeon and Levi.

5 “Simeon and Levi

are brothers; instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. 7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

It is interesting that Simeon and Levi are mentioned together. They were, of course brothers, but then Reuben, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun were also sons of Jacob by Leah. There is only one incident we have recorded where Simeon and Levi acted together, and this was in the incident concerning Dinah their sister, to which Jacob here refers.²⁹⁰³ Jacob sternly censured these brothers for their actions against Shechem. Their actions were certainly cruel. Jacob describes them as possessing *“instruments of cruelty”* which were found in their houses.²⁹⁰⁴ Some have this inner hatred and bitter anger. It is something which can, of course, be forgiven, but it is a terrible thing to behold. So much so that Jacob declares that his own soul would not like to be among them when they take council together, neither would he want his honour to be joined in their company.²⁹⁰⁵ Jacob notes that it was in *“anger”* and in their *“self-will”* that they

2899 1Corinthians 14:45,47.

2900 Genesis 49:4.

2901 Genesis 35:22.

2902 Genesis 49:4.

2903 Genesis 34:25,30.

2904 Genesis 49:5.

2905 Genesis 49:6.

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killed. They slew Shechem out of uncontrolled anger and rage, but they *“hamstrung an ox”* through sheer self-will.²⁹⁰⁶ It may have been customary to hamstring horses in times of war. The horse was a military asset giving a great advantage over foot soldiers. However the ox was a beast of peace. It was used primarily in the preparation of fields to receive seed. To hamstring such an animal shows great cruelty. Jacob then curses their anger and wrath. He curses because their anger was *“fierce,”* and their wrath was *“cruel.”*²⁹⁰⁷ Their response was inappropriate and over the top. There was need to deal with Shechem but their actions were excessive and way beyond what was required. Now as a consequence of their cruelty and bitter anger, they were not to be seen as separate and individual, but were to be divided in the land and nation and were to be scattered throughout. Simeon was to be contained within the tribe of Judah, and Levi was not to have a separate location but dwelt in various cities spread throughout the land.

Thus far we have Reuben who was unstable and who defiled his father's bed, and Simeon and Levi together who were excessively angry so that they acted with fierce cruelty.

49:8-12. Judah.

8 “Judah,

you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise; your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. 9 Judah *is* a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes *are* darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

When we come to Judah we find a rather lengthy prophecy. We recall that Judah's history thus far has been rather interesting. He was the one who suggested selling Joseph whom all the brothers hated, and then he departed from his brothers and married into the pagan culture ending in the disaster of getting his daughter-in-law Tamar pregnant. But then we have observed a dramatic change as he acted as surety for Benjamin, and made an impassioned plea on his behalf. Judah took the lead in dealings with Joseph in Egypt in the latter stages and he is presented here as the one through whom the promise of the Messiah would come.

And so with Judah we find a most marvellous description of one to whom praise is due. Judah's name means “praised” and so this was prophesied even at his birth. It would appear from the history we have read, that Judah rather excelled amongst the brothers, to such an extent that they praised his efforts. But typically we can see a prophecy of the Messiah. He alone is the one whom His brethren shall praise. He too is the only one who can by virtue of His own power and knowledge destroy all enemies so that His

2906 Genesis 49:6.

2907 Genesis 49:7.

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brethren will *“bow down before”* Him.²⁹⁰⁸ Judah is also described in great detail as a lion. He is a young lion (*“a lion's whelp”*), an ordinary *“lion”* as grown, and then also as an *“old lion”* as the AKJV has it, or (possibly) a *“lioness”* as the YLT or the HCSB has it. The lion is, of course, the king of beasts. Several characteristics of lions are displayed here, He is the one who catches prey and after being satiated lies down with none who dare *“rouse him”* in utter contentment.²⁹⁰⁹ Now this representation is given clear explanation in verse 10. Judah will be the one who holds the sceptre and will rule *“until Shiloh comes.”*²⁹¹⁰ It would be some long years yet before Israel would have a king, but when they eventually came after the false start with Saul, they would all come from the tribe of Judah in expectation for the Messiah, the true son of David. Now there is debate about the meaning of the title *“Shiloh.”* Some suggest it has the meaning of peace or tranquillity. Others opt for something like “he whose it is,” or “that which belongs to him” which ideas point to the one who is to come. It is probable that both ideas are intended. Christ Jesus is described as being *“our peace,”* and He most certainly is the one expected or sent of the Father on mission.²⁹¹¹ The statement: *“until Shiloh comes”* indicates the general understanding amongst the patriarchs that there was coming One who would bruise the serpent's head.²⁹¹² And to this one would be *“the obedience of the people.”*²⁹¹³ Notice that it is *“people”* here and not simply the people of God or Israel.

Verse 11 describes the rich and plentiful nature of Judah's land. There are two statements both of which are emphasised by a couplet. The situation is so amazing that one could leave one's donkey tethered to a vine without bother, and these were not just ordinary vines but *“choice”* vines. Judah and his offspring could wash their very *“garments”* or *“clothes”* in the plentiful supply of wine which is here described as *“the blood of grapes.”* The idea, then, is that Judah was a plentiful place for vines and for donkeys and their colts. The main idea is of plenty, but the image of vines, wine, and this as *“blood”* must surely lead us to consider the whole concept of sacrifice and offering. We have already come across the idea of pouring out a drink offering with Jacob, and although there is no direct indication of sacrifice here, the vine and wine feature prominently in Scripture as representative of the blood of the Saviour.²⁹¹⁴

Verse 12 describes the effect upon the people of this richness and abundance. The word *“darker”* indicates brilliant or darkly flashing in a good sense. It is not that the people had become drunk, but that they had become full of life and vigour. Then also Judah's teeth (representative of the people), are *“whiter than milk,”* by which is meant that from the fruits of the land come goodness and purity. In some places

2908 Genesis 49:8.

2909 Genesis 49:9.

2910 Genesis 49:10.

2911 Ephesians 2:14.

2912 Genesis 3:15.

2913 Genesis 49:10.

2914 Genesis 35:14.

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the Hebrew word “*eyes*” are used to indicate fountains or springs.²⁹¹⁵ And so the eyes and teeth may signify the fountains and pasture-lands which produce the food. From such a land comes pure and vigorous food such as brings vigorous life. Spiritually speaking the gospel alone brings life and vigour, for it is pure and wholesome, and it is life and health and strength.

49:13. Zebulun.

13 “Zebulun

shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He *shall become* a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.

Although most maps of the locations of the twelve tribes show Zebulun inland east of Asher which borders the Mediterranean, Joshua 19 informs us that Zebulun's lot extended “*towards the sea*”:

10 And the third lot goeth up for the sons of Zebulun, for their families; and the border of their inheritance is unto Sarid, **11** and their border hath gone up towards the sea, and Maralah, and come against Dabbasheth, and come unto the brook which [is] on the front of Jokneam.²⁹¹⁶

Our text has not been translated in the best way, and ought to read as follows: “*Zebulun shall dwell towards the haven of the sea.*” Irrespective of where Zebulun would later be located, here we learn that this tribe was to be the place where ships would find a safe place, and, in particular, through the reference to “*Sidon,*” we understand that Zebulun will be like the warehouse or distribution centre for trade from other lands.

Spiritually speaking, we note that ships at sea were subject to tempest and storm and needed places of rest and repose. In the same way the believer is in need of places of safety and refuge (the Lord Himself) from the storms of life. Zebulun was such a safe haven, and there are brothers and sisters who provide such shelter and safety.

49:14,15. Issachar.

14 “Issachar

is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; **15** he saw that rest *was* good, and that the land *was* pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear *a burden*, and became a band of slaves.

The men of Issachar seem to have been strong and industrious. Donkeys were beasts of burden carrying loads, so a “*strong donkey*” was obviously greatly valued especially in husbandry and farming.²⁹¹⁷ The phrase “*lying down between two burdens*” suggests that they were capable of carrying a

2915 Genesis 16:7; Numbers 33:9; Deuteronomy 8:7.

2916 Joshua 19:10,11, YLT.

2917 Genesis 49:14.

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double load for some length of time on a long journey such as would need a break or rest period.²⁹¹⁸ The land they were to occupy was indeed a fertile land, and so is described as *“pleasant.”*²⁹¹⁹ Verse 15 has been variously interpreted, but the sense seems to have been that Issachar were content to bear burdens, to do hard labour, and then to take their ease. There are those who are the workhouses of a society, who do all the manual labour, and who then take their ease having done their work. As Solomon once wrote:

The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.²⁹²⁰

The last part of verse 15 indicates the idea of becoming tributary, or of becoming slaves to taskmasters. The idea seems to be that Issachar was content to work very hard in the land which was so *“pleasant,”* and was content to act in a servant-like manner.²⁹²¹ **John Gill** made the following remark on verse 15:

*And he saw that rest was good,.... Not the house of the sanctuary, and attendance there, and the service of that, ... nor the rest of the world to come, the happiness of a future state, ... but rather, ... the part and portion of the good land allotted him; he saw that a quiet industry exercised in a diligent cultivation and manuring his land was preferable to the hurry of a court, or the fatigue of a camp, or the dangers of the seas.*²⁹²²

There are some commentators who reprove Issachar for being so servile and disinterested in the affairs of court, but given the nature of Christ and the importance of service such an assessment seems very harsh. There are those who are content to bear burdens and let others take care of government, rule, and wisdom. To a great extent our society enslaves its people by keeping wages low and by governments abrogating responsibilities to itself (education, health, and so forth), so that people are left working hard just to make ends meet. But such is not in view here, I believe, for elsewhere we read that *“the sons of Issachar”* were in fact those who *“had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.”*²⁹²³ Such a description does not lend itself to a heart content to let others think on their behalf. I rather think that Issachar became examples of hard work and service for the nation.

49:16,17. Dan.

16 “Dan

shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward.

2918 Genesis 49:14.

2919 Genesis 49:15.

2920 Ecclesiastes 5:12.

2921 Genesis 49:15.

2922 **J. Gill.** Genesis 49:15.

2923 1Chronicles 12:32.

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Dan's name means “judge,” but the only notable person from Dan was Samson who judged Israel in the days of the Philistines dominance for twenty years.²⁹²⁴ The mention of serpents and vipers in verse 17 has been taken to indicate that this tribe would be accustomed to operate on the basis of cunning and deceit. Notable in Danite future history would be their forcible adoption of Micah's idolatry as recorded in Judges 18. That this involved deceit and trickery may be a fulfilment of this prophecy of Jacob's. Later when the kingdom was divided, Jeroboam set up one of the idolatrous calves in Dan.²⁹²⁵ The prophet Amos spoke of Dan as a centre of idol worship.²⁹²⁶ It is particularly notable that the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the listing given in the book of Revelation.²⁹²⁷

49:18. An interjection.

18 I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!

Having come to the tribe of Dan, Jacob pauses and makes an exclamation. Some connect verse 18 with the prophecy concerning Dan, but this does not seem to fit at all. It is thus better to consider this a break in the prophetic utterances on the twelve tribes. Jacob declares his trust and hope in the salvation of the Lord. We look back at what Christ has done and we look forward to Christ's return for the full redemption of the body. Jacob trusted in God in just the same way as we do. It is customary among many to consider that those who existed before Christ's coming were unaware of the details of how Christ would accomplish the promise first announced incidentally to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. I take a very different line. Although it is clear that before Christ the prophets and patriarchs would not have had as clear a picture as we do today, I am convinced that those who had true faith, the faith of Abraham, and the faith we possess, believed in the same gospel which is focused on Christ and His once for all time atonement. We look forward to the day of salvation. Jacob here looks forward too. First to the coming of the Messiah promised and thence to the consummation of all things in the final judgement. Perhaps the thought of Dan as judge brought Jacob to consider this final day when all would be put in order, and all would be made right. **John Gill** made this comment on Genesis 49:18:

Jacob finding his spirits faint and flag, stops and breathes awhile before he proceeded any further in blessing the tribes; and as he found he was a dying man, and knew not how soon he should expire, expresses what he had been thoughtful of and concerned about in time past, and still was; that he had been waiting and hoping for, and expecting a state of happiness and bliss in another world, where he should be saved from sin and Satan, and the world, and from all his enemies, and out of all his troubles; and this he firmly believed he should enjoy, and hoped it would not be long ere he did; and especially he may have a regard to the Messiah, the promised Saviour, and salvation by him he had knowledge of,

2924 Genesis 49:16. See: Judges 16:31.

2925 1Kings 12:26-30.

2926 Amos 8:14.

2927 Revelation 7:5-8.

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faith in, and expectation of; who may be truly called the salvation of God, because of his contriving, providing, and appointing, whom he had promised and spoken of by all the prophets; and whom in the fullness of time he would send into the world to work out salvation for his people.²⁹²⁸

49:19. *Gad.*

19 “Gad,
a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last.

Little is said of Gad. The name has a dual meaning. It can mean “fortune,” and is the name of a god to which Isaiah alludes.²⁹²⁹ It can also mean “a troop” suggesting a large company of soldiers. The text is highly alliterative with the consonants “g” and “d,” the basis of the name “*Gad*” repeated throughout:

גָּד גָּדוּד יִגְדֹּן וְהָיָא יִגְדֹּן עָקֵב

Gad a troop shall tramp upon him but he shall triumph at last

gād g^edūd y^egūdenū w^ehū’ yāgud ‘āqēb

Now Gad will suffer the onslaught of a troop which will “*tramp upon him.*” Given that Gad would settle on the east side of Jordan this tribe would be exposed to many attacks and the incursion of plunderers. 1Chronicles 12:8 would intimate that at least some of this tribe were more than fit for battle and aided David in his struggles.

However, in the providence and oversight of the Lord, they would be enabled to defeat their enemies. Our text states that Gad would “*triumph at last,*” which phrase suggests a final eventual victory like the one believers would gain as over-comers when the Lord returns.

49:20. *Asher.*

20 “Bread from Asher *shall be* rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Again we read only a little concerning Asher. Literally rendered we have the following:

מִמֶּלֶךְ-שִׂמְנָה לֶחֶמוֹ וְהָיָא יִתֵּן מִעֲצֵי-מֶלֶךְ

from Asher fat/rich bread and he shall give delights of a king

After the conquest Asher would inhabit the coastland by the Mediterranean which would include Mount

2928 J. Gill. Genesis 49:18.

2929 Isaiah 65:11.

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Carmel south of Tyre and Sidon. This region was to be very fruitful and productive, especially in wheat.²⁹³⁰

49:21. *Naphtali.*

21 “Naphtali
is a deer let loose; he uses beautiful words.

Again little is said of Naphtali. Translators offer two different assessments of the six Hebrew words we are given in table 61.2:

Table 61.2: Comparison of various translations of Genesis 49:21.

NKJV	NASB	OJB (Orthodox Jewish Bible)	ESV	YLT	NIV
Naphtali <i>is</i> a deer let loose;	Naphtali <i>is</i> a doe let loose;	Naphtali <i>is</i> a doe let loose;	Naphtali <i>is</i> a doe let loose	Naphtali [is] a hind sent away,	Naphtali <i>is</i> a doe set free
he <i>uses</i> beautiful words.	he <i>utters</i> beautiful words.	he <i>giveth</i> goodly sayings.	that <i>bears</i> beautiful fawns.	who <i>is</i> giving beauteous young ones.	that <i>bears</i> beautiful fawns.

The first three words are translated the same, but two different ideas are suggested for the last three Hebrew words. My translation is as follows:

נַפְתָּלִי אֵילָה שְׁלֹחַהּ--הַנָּתַן אִמְרֵי-שֹׁפָר
Naphtali a deer set free, he gives sayings of beauty

There appears no clear reason why modern versions opt for “*fawns*” in translating the Hebrew word אִמְרֵי, which, according to all the lexicons I have studied, signifies the verb: אָמַר, which means “utterance,” “speech,” “saying,” “word,” or “command.” It is the most usual word used to introduce someone speaking as in “*thus says ...*” Perhaps modern translations opt for this departure because the two thoughts are dislocated. However that ought never to be the guide to translation. The LXX (Septuagint) has a very different rendering still and suggests that the sentence ought to be: “*Naphtali is a spreading terebinth, which shoots forth goodly branches.*” This rendition is arrived at by providing different pointing (vowels) to the Hebrew consonants, but such a proposal discredits the Hebrew text and should be dismissed.

Now in contrast to Gad, who suffered plunderers and acted slowly, Naphtali was swift of foot,

2930 Deuteronomy 33:24; 1Kings 4:16.

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light and active as a deer or hart that skips on the mountains. The hind or gazelle was used as representative of a warrior in swiftness and skill in motion.²⁹³¹ But then Naphtali was the tribe which was also noted for giving words of pleasure or beautiful sayings.²⁹³² We have no further understanding of this, but understand that Naphtali were most likely a tribe of goodly songsters and poets. It is to be noted that the Messiah is likened to a hind or a hart in various places. That he was one who gave good words or beautiful sayings is demonstrated with abundance by the New Testament.²⁹³³ Christ is compared to the hind of the morning Psalm 22:1 in title Song 2:9; 8:14

49:22-26. Joseph.

22 “Joseph

is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a **well**; his branches run over the wall. 23 The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot *at him* and hated him. 24 But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty *God* of Jacob (from there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), 25 by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you *with* blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. 26 The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

That which is spoken of Joseph exceeds all that was prophesied about the other sons with the exception of Judah. In fact it looks as though Judah and Joseph have been singled out and the others simply referred to in passing. This is not the case in fact, of course, for a single word spoken from God is rich indeed. However we need to consider the fact that more is spoken here of Joseph and about the same was spoken concerning Judah. Why is this? We have noted already the dramatic change in Judah's faith and behaviour, and we have seen how godly Joseph was in the face of a pagan environment (Egypt). It would seem that these two were singled out because of their great faithfulness, as examples to the rest.

What is spoken of Joseph can be split up into two parts. First, in verse 22 we have a description of Joseph as being abundantly fruitful. Then second, in verses 23 to 26 we have a description of how Joseph is attacked by those who wield their arrows, and also how he is strengthened in such a trial by God.

To begin with, we discover that Joseph is **“a fruitful bough”** or a branch upon which much fruit has grown.²⁹³⁴ Notice that this description is repeated and so is sure and certain. If the tree is a vine, then we are to view this as one which has copious bunches of grapes. Whatever the tree type, we are to see this as one bearing a great deal of fruit. Now in the second description of it we are told the reason why it was so fruitful. It was because it was **“by a well.”**²⁹³⁵ We cannot help but think of Psalm 1 here in which the man who loves the law of God (the words spoken by the Lord) is likened to a fruitful tree that has been planted by the waters. The last statement in verse 22 is rather obscure. What does the wall signify or

2931 2Samuel 2:18; 1Chronicles 12:8; Psalm 18:33; Habakkuk 3:19.

2932 See; Deuteronomy 33:23; Judges 4:6,10; 5:18

2933 Psalm 22 title; Song of Solomon 2:9; 8:14.

2934 Genesis 49:22.

2935 Genesis 49:22.

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indicate? Perhaps the idea is simply that it is a tree which spreads abroad and becomes a benefit and blessing in other parts (that is, in another region owned by another person).

Verses 23 to 26 describe Joseph as one assailed by enemies. We have looked at Joseph's journey in some detail and conclude that he was wrongly treated for his love of God, and the revelation he was given. His brothers hated him. He was disdained by Potophar's wife because he would not succumb to her charms, and he was overlooked by those whom he helped (Pharaoh's Chief Butler). When people shoot out the lip and hurl insults it does grieve.²⁹³⁶ As believers we know that we will receive such hatred. It is unjustified. But the Saviour faced greater opposition and in this world we will know tribulation, because the message we love and bring demands humility and cuts across the pride of man. And so in verses 24 to 26 we discover how Joseph was enabled to withstand these attacks. Joseph's bow was strong (*“remained in strength”*) and Joseph's arms and hands were strengthened (*“made strong”*).²⁹³⁷ God has provided for us in battle. We think of the armour of God as described for us by Paul in Ephesians 6:10f. We think also of David's testimony:

Blessed *be* the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, *and* my fingers for battle—²⁹³⁸

Now Joseph's bow *“remained”* strong, by which we understand that the armour God provides never fails.²⁹³⁹ But then we note that the Lord makes Joseph's arms and hands strong too. This shows us that we are intended to take up the armour, to take up those things God has provided, and to use them. We cannot be passive and pray that God will do everything for us. We are, perhaps, so afraid of works and self-effort that we err towards an inactive stance. What we must do is to rely wholly and completely upon the Lord. However we are to take up arms and to wield our swords (the word of God) and exercise faith, knowing that unless the Lord helps and undergirds us all will be to no avail. We err if we sit back and passively expect God to do everything for us like a newborn baby. We err too if we run on ahead and try to do things in our own strength like a spoilt brat or a rebellious teenager. In this passage the weapon of our warfare is the bow. The arrows we shoot are to cut down the enemies that oppose us, the devil, the world, our sin. These are directed words that pierce through and destroy all arguments and pretensions against godliness.

But then, in a most wonderful way, we are instructed here in verses 24b and 25a how it was that the bow remained strong, and how the arms and hands of Joseph were made strong too. It was all by the great help of God. It was by the *“hands of the Mighty God of Jacob,”* who is also described as the *“God*

2936 Genesis 49:23.

2937 Genesis 49:24.

2938 Psalm 144:1.

2939 Genesis 49:24.

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of your father,” and as *“the Almighty.”*²⁹⁴⁰ God, the Creator, the Almighty and powerful God who can do all things. It was by His hands. Now God does not have a body. Only the incarnate One who was made flesh does. Jacob wrestled with God and knew the strength of God's touch. God, by His Spirit, can strengthen and can aid in ways unimaginable. He is not stumped by enemies nor by difficulties. How we ought to trust Him!

Within this amazing teaching concerning how it is that God helps us, we learn more about the Lord, for He is here described by two further titles or epithets. He is described first as *“the Shepherd.”* Such a title is not unusual for us who know Christ and are familiar with John 10 and Psalm 23. However recall that to the Egyptians, shepherds were an abomination and hated. Rachel was the first to be termed a shepherd (shepherdess), but then it is not really until we come to the point of Jacob's descent into Egypt that the term *“shepherd”* is used.²⁹⁴¹ In this title we learn that the Lord is clearly willing to enter in to our condition and state whereby we are despised because of our love for God. But obviously the main teaching from this title is the great care and love that God showers upon those whom are called His flock. How we love the thought of Christ as our Shepherd! The second title is also remarkable in that it is found first in Genesis. Again the concept of God as the rock or the chief cornerstone is one we are familiar with in both Old and New Testament writings.²⁹⁴² However the designation *“Stone of Israel”* is remarkable.²⁹⁴³ God is the stability, the foundation, the very ground upon which Israel, and all true believers must be based. These two titles speak to us of our corporate relationship to God and thus are the beginnings of teaching concerning the church, the gathered out ones. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are to us Shepherd (a living guide and helper), and Stone (the ground and foundation of our very lives).

Then we learn that within all this battle (wielding our bow in the strength of the Lord and fending off the arrows from the enemy) there is (to be received and experienced) great blessing! God will not simply come to our aid as a father helps the child who is learning to ride a bike, for He will also *“bless you with blessings ..”*! God is not simply a Helper but a wonderful Father, Friend, Husband, Shepherd Notice how many times the word *“bless,”* or *“blessings”* come in these verses.²⁹⁴⁴ There are blessings:

of heaven above

of the deep that lies beneath

of the breasts and of the womb

2940 Genesis 49:24.

2941 This is not to deny the fact that Abraham and Isaac tended sheep and cattle, but simply to note that the term *“shepherd”* does not appear until later in the book of Genesis.

2942 See, for example, Exodus 17:6; Deuteronomy 32:4; Daniel 2:34,45; 1Corinthians 10:4; 1Peter 2:4,5,7,8.

2943 Genesis 49:24.

2944 Genesis 49:25.

These statements remind us of Paul's exclamation in his letters:

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8²⁹⁴⁵

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! **34** “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counsellor?” **35** “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” **36** For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.²⁹⁴⁶

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— **19** to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.²⁹⁴⁷

It is far beyond our experience and knowledge! God has blessed abundantly! How can we be so weak and pathetic in our grasp of these things? There are blessings of, and from, the heavens, and there are blessings from the very depths below, or, in other words, from one extreme to the other. We cannot envisage the incredible breadth, depth, height nor extent of the blessings that God is willing to shower on those who love Him! Then further it is described as “*the blessings of the breasts and of the womb,*” by which we understand the intimate and beautiful milk of life and the whole idea of new life.²⁹⁴⁸ Joseph had two sons, Ephraim whose name we have already learnt means “doubly fruitful,” and Manasseh whose name means “making to forget.”

As if this were not enough we are then told that the blessings which Joseph was to know exceeded or “*excelled*” (that is surpassed) the blessings that their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and others received. The extent of these blessings was to “*the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.*”²⁹⁴⁹ It is impossible to imagine how far this is. We might like to say in our culture: *to the furthest star in the most distant galaxy*. Such a plethora of blessing which is deep beyond compare was to be on the head and crown of Joseph. And they were to be rained down on him and his head because he had been “*separate from his brothers.*”²⁹⁵⁰ What should we understand by this thought? I think the point is that of holiness and consecration. Whenever a man or woman is given to God completely and wholly, their separation from this world is always attended by further and greater blessings.

2945 Romans 8:38,39.

2946 Romans 11:33-36.

2947 Ephesians 3:18,19.

2948 Genesis 49:25.

2949 Genesis 49:26.

2950 Genesis 49:26.

49:27. Benjamin.

27 “Benjamin
is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.”

Benjamin too seems to have been a very warlike tribe as the description here indicates.²⁹⁵¹ Those from the tribe of Benjamin were distinguished archers and skilled in the use of slings.²⁹⁵² Wolves, by nature in this fallen world, are fierce animals. They seem to hunt prey alone for their own consumption and once satiated then continue with others in the night. The idea seems to be of a continual and persistent hunting, from morning to night. It is to be noted that Saul of Tarsus was of the tribe of Benjamin.²⁹⁵³ He was the one who hunted the church before the Lord intervened in his life.²⁹⁵⁴

Thus we have some prophetic words about each of the twelve tribes of Jacob.

[2] Jacob gives burial instructions and is then gathered up to his people. (Genesis 49:28-33).

Having dispensed a personal blessing to each individual son, and hence tribe, Jacob comes to the end of his life. He has passed on the blessing and ensured that his testimony was well known and understood. There are three references to the word “bless” in verse 28 (*“blessed”* comes twice and *“blessing”* once), which indicates that all which comes to Israel via Jacob comes from the holy trinity. It is God alone who blesses, and this blessing is from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Having dispensed the blessing individually to each one, Jacob next *“charged them,”* by which we see that he commanded them to do what he asks.²⁹⁵⁵ He commands that when he dies, he is to be buried in the cave of Machpelah which Abraham purchased for the burial of his wife Sarah.²⁹⁵⁶ It appears that not only Sarah, but also Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah have all been buried there. Rachel, Jacob's second wife and the wife he loved, was buried close to Bethlehem (Ephrath) having died in childbirth with Benjamin.²⁹⁵⁷ Now that he has given his blessing from God having assembled his twelve sons, he is now ready to be *“gathered”* to his people. This thought helps us understand that the church is much more than an assembly of the living faithful in this world, for it includes *“the spirits of just men made perfect,”* and all the hosts of angels in heaven too.²⁹⁵⁸ Such a description of death reassures us that truly the Lord considers the death of His saints as very precious indeed.²⁹⁵⁹ And so having issued this command to his sons Jacob *“drew his feet up*

2951 For instances where Benjamin demonstrated warlike nature see: Judges 3:15; 10:9; 19:1-20:48; 1Samuel 13:1f.

2952 Judges 20:16; 1Chronicles 8:12,40; 2Chronicles 14:8; 17:17.

2953 Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5.

2954 Acts 9:1f.

2955 Genesis 49:29.

2956 Genesis 49:30,31.

2957 Genesis 35:16,19.

2958 Hebrews 12:23.

2959 Psalm 116:15.

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into the bed” and his life came to the end, so that he was *“gathered to his people.”*²⁹⁶⁰

²⁹⁶⁰ Genesis 49:33.

Chapter 62.

Jacob buried in Machpelah. (50:1-13).

Genesis chapter 50 comprises two main events, namely, the death of Jacob, and then the death of Joseph. Jacob died aged one hundred and forty seven in the year 2315 AC (1644 BC). Joseph was thirty nine when Jacob came down into Egypt in his one hundred and thirtieth year. Jacob lived for seventeen years in Egypt, so Joseph was fifty six when Jacob died. Thus another fifty four years elapsed before Joseph's death which would be in the year 2369 AC (1590 BC). Since the length of time between Jacob's descent into Egypt and Moses return with Israel (the redeemed nation) was a period of two hundred and fifteen years, this would be the year 2513 AC (1446 BC) which was only one hundred and forty four years after Joseph's death.

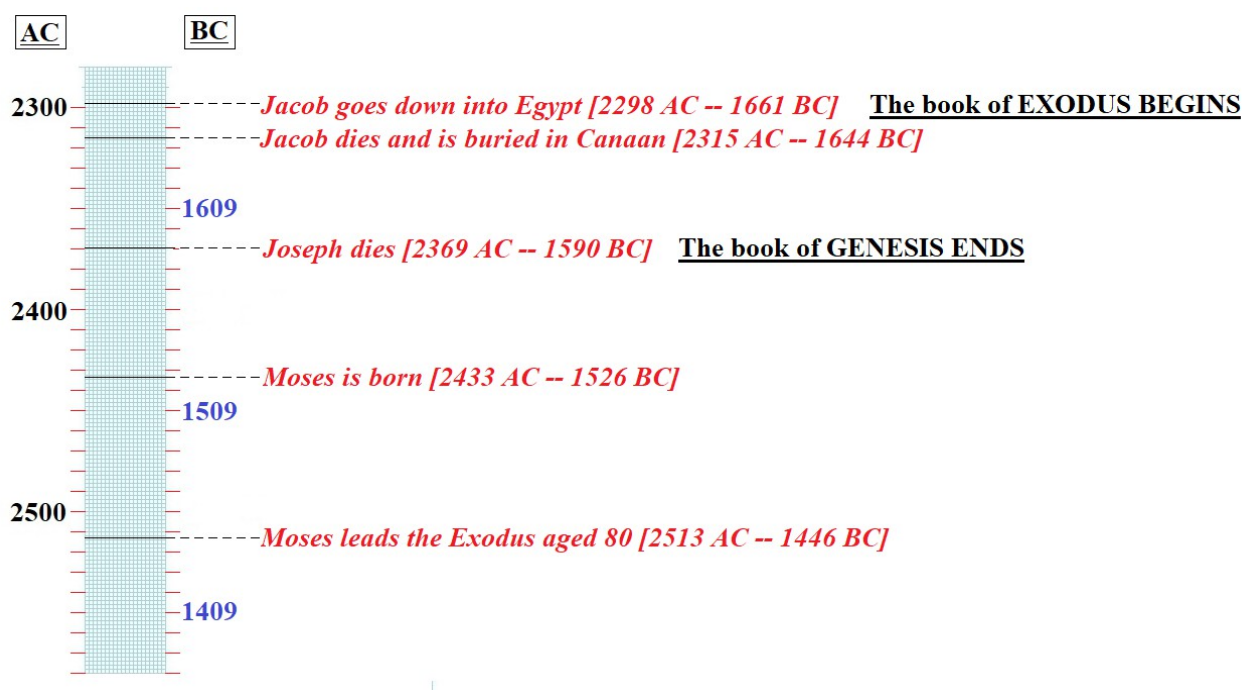


Figure 42: Connections between Joseph and Moses.

Genesis 50 will thus be considered in two chapters here in this work. In this chapter we shall consider the death and burial of Jacob, and in the next we shall conclude with the end of Joseph's life.

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Analysis.

#50 1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him.

2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father.
So the physicians embalmed Israel.

3 Forty days were required for him,
for such are the days required for those who are embalmed;
and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

4 Now when the days of his mourning were past,
Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying,

“If now I have found favour in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying,

5 ‘My father made me swear, saying,

“Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.”

Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.”

6 And Pharaoh said,

“Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.”

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up

all the servants of Pharaoh,

the elders of his house,

and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

8 as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house.

Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen.

9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering.

10 Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which *is* beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation.

He observed seven days of mourning for his father.

11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said,

“This *is* a deep mourning of the Egyptians.”

Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which *is* beyond the Jordan.

12 So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them.

13 For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

The end of Genesis 49 concludes with these words *“he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.”*²⁹⁶¹ Jacob is thus gathered to his people and then immediately we read here in Genesis 50:1 that Joseph weeps. Such an event is one recorded in countless ages in all lands. I am reminded of the occasion where the Lord Jesus on reaching the tomb of Lazarus wept.²⁹⁶² Death, despite faith and God's goodness, is never a good thing, for even the Son of God could weep over a dear friend's death, even though He knew He had power to bring him back to life. Although we know that *“precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,”* nevertheless the very concept of death is horrible and ought always to bring tears.²⁹⁶³ Now all of the brothers were present at this occasion in which Jacob blessed his twelve sons, and it is inconceivable that the other brothers stood aloof. People are different and some are moved to tears spontaneously whilst others grieve in depth beyond tears. However the Holy Spirit has singled out Joseph as the one who weeps precisely because he represents the saviour of the world/age. This is how the Lord Jesus felt about death. It truly is a horrible affair. Such a thought

2961 Genesis 49:33.

2962 John 11:35.

2963 Psalm 116:15.

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brings into sharp focus and relief the command issued to Adam in the garden of Eden. Recall that the Lord God had told Adam that he was not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for if he did then *“in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*²⁹⁶⁴ Adam was totally unaware of the devastation and horror that his disobedience caused. We ought to remember then, that God does not give out warnings needlessly, nor without cause. In physical death there is the separation of body from soul, that is, all that is incorporeal. Spiritual death is far, far worse, for this is the separation of the incorporeal soul from all the blessing and favour of God. The soul that sins will die and experience the terror and horror of God's wrath forever.²⁹⁶⁵

50:1-3.

Joseph has had seventeen years with his father Jacob which he may not have thought he would ever get. On the death of his father, Joseph *“fell on his father's face and wept over him, and kissed him,”* showing the depths of emotion he had for his father who had loved him so.²⁹⁶⁶ It is very interesting that Joseph's emotions are here on display, but not the other brothers. It cannot possibly be that the others were less moved as we have already noted so why does the Holy Spirit mention Joseph's outburst? I repeat that the main point is to show forth the depth of love and compassion that our Saviour has for His people. I am reminded of the time when Jesus eventually reached the tomb of Lazarus. Jesus was well aware of the this man's death and He knew what He was going to do, but nevertheless on approaching the tomb we discover the Saviour in tears!²⁹⁶⁷

Joseph is still the governor in Egypt, and so he issues a command for *“his servants the physicians”* to prepare Jacob's body for its burial.²⁹⁶⁸ The Hebrew word given here as *“physicians”* actually has the root meaning of “to sew together” or “to mend.” We ought to remember here that despite the good our physical doctors and physicians may do, they can never mend the soul back to its body.²⁹⁶⁹ Here these servants of Joseph were merely embalming Jacob's body following their customs and practices. According to our text this process was a lengthy one, requiring forty days to complete.²⁹⁷⁰ We are not given the details here. Egyptian mummies have been recovered in archaeological investigations and presented to us in museums all over the world. Whether Jacob was treated in the same way as these Egyptian royals is not entirely clear. The burial customs of Egypt were, of course, wrapped up in their mythology and religious belief. Joseph accorded Jacob due honour and esteem in Egypt, but that does not indicate a compromise with the religion of the land. Whether we bury a body, or cremate it, or embalm

2964 Genesis 2:17.

2965 Isaiah 2:10-21; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Mark 9:44,46,48.

2966 Genesis 50:1.

2967 John 11:35.

2968 Genesis 50:2.

2969 Luke 8:43.

2970 Genesis 50:3.

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and mummify it, is neither here nor there. At the very least, due respect and honour must be accorded to the deceased, for they were men (or women) made in the image of God, and have now stepped into the arena where judgement must be passed.²⁹⁷¹ Thus mourning for Jacob lasted for seventy days which serves to indicate the great honour afforded to the patriarch.²⁹⁷²

50:4-9.

At the conclusion of the embalming process and the days of mourning Joseph humbly (*“if now I have found favour in your eyes”*), requests of Pharaoh that he be enabled to take his father's bones back to Canaan to be buried in the cave of Machpelah which Abraham purchased to bury his wife Sarah.²⁹⁷³ Joseph's approach to Pharaoh indicates a significant degree of separation between Joseph and Pharaoh. Joseph appeals to *“the household of Pharaoh”* that his request be made *“in the hearing of Pharaoh,”* by which we observe that there was some formal protocol to be endured.²⁹⁷⁴ Although Joseph was still governor in the land and second only to Pharaoh, the Pharaoh was supreme and held in great honour.

Joseph reports to Pharaoh (via the household) that Jacob had made Joseph take an oath that he should bury his father in the grave which he had dug for himself in Canaan.²⁹⁷⁵ We learn later that this was the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had purchased from Ephron the Hittite.²⁹⁷⁶ But here we are informed that Jacob dug the grave for himself. What we are to understand is that the cave which Abraham bought needed to have sections dug out for burial. Now Joseph requests that he go and bury Jacob in Canaan and then he would return to Egypt.²⁹⁷⁷ Pharaoh accedes to this request and so Joseph sets about to carry out the task.²⁹⁷⁸ The occasion of Jacob's burial in Canaan was indeed a grand affair. Not only Joseph and his brothers, but *“all the servants of Pharaoh,”* along with *“the elders of his house,”* and, *“all the elders of the land of Egypt”* were in procession to Canaan.²⁹⁷⁹ The young and their mothers (presumably) with the animals remained in Goshen.²⁹⁸⁰ The grandeur of this procession was enhanced by *“chariots and horsemen”* so that it is described as *“a very great gathering.”*²⁹⁸¹

Why such a grand affair? Well clearly from the human angle we observe that this was none other than Joseph's father. Joseph was governor of Egypt and Jacob was an exalted one by virtue of his age and on account of God's blessing upon him. But spiritually we see here the care and love with which a person

2971 Hebrews 9:27.
2972 Genesis 50:3.
2973 Genesis 50:4,5,13.
2974 Genesis 50:4.
2975 Genesis 50:5.
2976 Genesis 50:13.
2977 Genesis 50:5.
2978 Genesis 50:6,7.
2979 Genesis 50:7,8.
2980 Genesis 50:8.
2981 Genesis 50:9.

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who loved God and walked with Him is brought to the next world. We certainly will not have such a retinue and procession at our deaths (although some have great gatherings at their funerals), but know for sure that God Himself will welcome the faithful ones with His great welcome!²⁹⁸²

50:10-13.

Now the entourage eventually arrives at the border of Canaan, for we read that they reach *“the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan.”*²⁹⁸³ This probably means that they were on the east side of the Jordan, for after their mourning we read that the brothers then carried Jacob *“to the land of Canaan.”*²⁹⁸⁴ The *“threshing floor of Atad”* is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture. We are thus at a loss as to its significance from a temporal point of view. The name *“Atad,”* means a bramble, thorn or buckthorn, and so indicates some worthless or useless plant which has come about as a result of the fall and the curse on the ground due to mankind's sin.²⁹⁸⁵ A threshing floor was a patch of ground usually enclosed with a small wall where the grain could be threshed using a threshing sledge which was used to separate the wheat from the chaff. The mixed grain and chaff or husks were then winnowed which entailed lifting the whole up into the air so that the wind would blow away the light chaff and husks, but the heavy grain would fall back to the floor. This agricultural process serves well as a fitting symbol for the final judgement of all, where the (righteous) wheat is separated from the (wicked) chaff.²⁹⁸⁶ And so the procession halts at the *“threshing floor of Atad”* which speaks to us of the judgement upon the curse. Where there had been thorns and brambles, now there is the place of judgement.

The whole entourage *“mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation.”*²⁹⁸⁷ At this site, Joseph *“observed seven days of mourning for his father.”*²⁹⁸⁸ Now Jacob had been embalmed, a process which took forty days, and was then mourned for seventy days.²⁹⁸⁹ Why such further lamentation and mourning? It would appear that seven days was the period for fasting and mourning for the dead in Hebrew culture.²⁹⁹⁰ All of this great mourning and procession was done in full view of the Canaanites who lived in this region, and they observed the proceedings concluding that such was a very special occasion signalling that someone very important had died.²⁹⁹¹ On making this observation the name of this place (*“the threshing floor of Atad”*) was now to be called *“Abel Mizraim,”* and this site is again located as being *“beyond Jordan,”* or, in other words, on the east side of the Jordan outside the main region known

2982 Matthew 25:21,23.

2983 Genesis 50:10.

2984 Genesis 50:13.

2985 Genesis 3:17-19; Judges 9:14; Psalm 58:9.

2986 Psalm 1:4,5; Isaiah 41:15.

2987 Genesis 50:10.

2988 Genesis 50:10.

2989 Genesis 50:3.

2990 1Samuel 31:13.

2991 Genesis 50:11.

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as the promised land.²⁹⁹² Now the name “*Abel*” means “vanity” or “breath” and is similar to the word used frequently in Ecclesiastes and rendered most often as “*vanity*.”²⁹⁹³ “*Mizraim*” is the name for Egypt. The whole name (“*Abel Mizraim*,”) would then signify or indicate “the vanity of Egypt,” or, “Egypt is but a breath.” The point being that this world is but a vapour, or is transitory and vacuous. Jacob was a true believer and he has left this world of vanity.

And so after the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad or Abel Mizraim, and thus having left this world's vanity, Jacob's bones are carried by his sons into Canaan – the land of (future) promise – signifying his entrance into eternal rest.²⁹⁹⁴ The sons of Jacob buried their father in the cave that Abraham bought which is clearly identified here for us so that there could be no doubt. He was buried together with his father and grandfather, and so was “gathered to his people,” and in what we may refer to as “*Abraham's bosom*.”²⁹⁹⁵

2992 Genesis 50:11.

2993 Ecclesiastes 1:2 etc.

2994 Genesis 50:12.

2995 Luke 16:19-31.

Chapter 63.

Joseph dies. (50:14-26).

Analysis.

- 14** And after he had buried his father,
Joseph returned to Egypt,
he and his brothers
and all who went up with him to bury his father.
- 15** When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said,
"Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."
- 16** So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying,
"Before your father died he commanded, saying,
17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph:
"I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you."
Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father."
And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.
- 18** Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said,
"Behold, we *are* your servants."
- 19** Joseph said to them,
"Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God?
20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.
21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."
- And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.
- 22** So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household.
And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.
- 23** Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third *generation*.
The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.
- 24** And Joseph said to his brethren,
"I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."
- 25** Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying,
"God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."
- 26** So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

The book of Genesis began with the creation of all things which the Lord God could describe as being "*good*," and "*very good*," but now at the end of the book we are focused very much upon the subject of death. All along the way the plan of redemption announced after the fall in Genesis 3:15 has been revealed in some detail here and there. But we are not yet at the completion of the history of the world and its final redemption, and so it is necessary for the end of this work to conclude with the reality of death. We have considered the death of Jacob, and we will come in the end to the account of Joseph's death, but before we reach this, we must first consider the immediate aftermath of the passing of Jacob. Thus these last thirteen verses can be split into two sections.

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[1] The aftermath of Jacob's death. (Genesis 50:14-21).

[2] Joseph's latter years and his death. (Genesis 50:22-26).

[1] The aftermath of Jacob's death. (Genesis 50:14-21).

50:14-17.

The burial of Jacob is attributed to Joseph even though all the brothers were involved.²⁹⁹⁶ In the same way our death and burial is something which Christ Jesus our Saviour is very much concerned with. And so Joseph and his brothers all go back to Egypt as Joseph had promised Pharaoh.²⁹⁹⁷ At this point the brothers begin to express concern that Joseph may take a different view of them, now that his father had died.²⁹⁹⁸ Recall the attitude of Esau concerning Jacob after he had stolen the blessing. Esau declared that on the death of his father Isaac he would kill Jacob his brother.²⁹⁹⁹ Would the same thing happen here? Of course from what we have learnt of Jacob and Joseph in these last pages of Genesis, the brothers ought not to have worried, nor to have thought such a thing possible. Nevertheless they sought for assurance. This is something many believers have need of in this wicked and evil world. We may know that God has done all and has provided such a great salvation, but from time to time we need His assurance that these things are truly so. The brothers know their past sin (*“for all the evil which we did to him”*), and so they express the thought that Joseph may after all come to hate them for such actions.³⁰⁰⁰ It is not likely, given what we know, but the enormity of what they had done weighs heavily upon their consciences. It is ever the case that we know our sin, despite the fact that all has been dealt with eternally by the Saviour. We stand washed, forgiven, and justified, but then the consequences of our sins live on. We cannot undo what we have done. And so we cannot be sure that those whom we may have wronged may then exact retribution themselves. So what should the brothers do? What did they do? Well they sent a message to Joseph. The text of Genesis 50:16,17 can be arranged like this:

16 So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying,

“Before your father died he commanded, saying,

17 ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph:

“I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.””

Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.”

And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

2996 Genesis 50:14.

2997 Genesis 50:5.

2998 Genesis 50:15.

2999 Genesis 37:41.

3000 Genesis 50:15.

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At the heart of these two verses we have their appeal based upon what their father Jacob had said to them to tell Joseph after he died.³⁰⁰¹ The appeal that Jacob states and which they report is humble. It begins with a unified plea *“I beg you,”* and continues with *“please”* and a request for forgiveness for the sin and evil that they had committed.³⁰⁰² And so the brothers speak for themselves by saying: *“now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.”*³⁰⁰³ Again the appeal is humble (*“please”*) but what is more notable in their statement is the way in which they refer to themselves. They call themselves *“the servants of the God of your father.”*³⁰⁰⁴ This is remarkable. The brothers are confessing that they are now servants of God, and, to be specific, the God of Jacob their father. Now their request for forgiveness is an evidence of their new state as servants of God. Who but one concerned with truth and all that God demands would ask for forgiveness in this way? If they had no thought of God nor of being servants of God, they would not have sought such forgiveness, they would have carried on with no care and no concern. On hearing this appeal Joseph weeps.³⁰⁰⁵ He had already pointed out that it was really God who brought him down to Egypt even though the mechanism was by means of the brothers' hatred.³⁰⁰⁶ Many years has passed since that occasion (at least seventeen) so Joseph is saddened by their appeal.

50:18-21.

On seeing Joseph weep, the brothers *“fell down before his face”* and declared that they were truly Joseph's *“servants”* as the dreams he had had when he was seventeen indicated.³⁰⁰⁷ Joseph's response is, quite simply, magnificent and suits as a type of the response of the Saviour to all those who come to Him in repentance seeking forgiveness. Twice he declares that they should *“not be afraid.”*³⁰⁰⁸ Fear is the opposite of faith and the only antidote to such is *“perfect love”* of which Joseph's is an example, for it shows forth the love of God.³⁰⁰⁹ Now Joseph also declares that he is not God. This is the second time he has stated openly and clearly that he is not *“in the place of God,”* the first being when he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams.³⁰¹⁰ Now Joseph's trust in the sovereignty of God does not displace his understanding that the brothers' actions were truly wicked. The two facts (the brothers selling Joseph into Egypt and God's determination that Joseph be there) are not incompatible. They may be to some who have no understanding of God and are bound to a reductionistic, simplistic, linear view of life. But to one who has been given the revelation of God, these things whilst not fully understandable (our minds are so limited)

3001 Genesis 50:17.

3002 Genesis 50:17.

3003 Genesis 50:17.

3004 Genesis 50:17.

3005 Genesis 50:17.

3006 Genesis 45:5.

3007 Genesis 50:18. See: Genesis 37:5-11.

3008 Genesis 50:19,21.

3009 1John 4:18.

3010 Genesis 50:19. See: Genesis 41:16.

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nevertheless are understandable as intended by God. As Moses wrote:

The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are* revealed *belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.³⁰¹¹

Now the reality was that the brothers intended harm and evil upon Joseph (*“but as for you, you meant evil against me”*).³⁰¹² At one and the same time, and without any involvement in the evil perpetrated, God intended his presence in Egypt *“for good.”*³⁰¹³ The intention of Joseph's being incarcerated by God's express will and purpose was that *“many people”* would be saved and alive.³⁰¹⁴ Whatever God does is always good. Thus Joseph reiterates what he had already spoken to his brothers when he was revealed unto them all those years ago. What they meant for evil, God intended for good.³⁰¹⁵ In a much more wonderful and astounding way Peter declared that those who crucified the Saviour by their wicked hands, and so were responsible for a heinous crime, were nevertheless under the sovereign rule of the Lord:

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.³⁰¹⁶

And the great purpose of this was not simply to preserve life in times of famine, but to secure everlasting salvation for all who call upon the Lord. Joseph reiterates the need for them not to fear and then encourages them that he will provide for them and their families.³⁰¹⁷ The whole section concludes with these words: *“and he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”*³⁰¹⁸ Such are the words of comfort and strength to the one who turns and repents. The Lord is life and love. When God demonstrated such incredible love by sending His Son to die, how can we not thence also understand that God loves us incredibly so?

[2] Joseph's latter years and his death. (Genesis 50:22-26).

The book of Genesis concludes with the last years of Joseph and ends with him *“in a coffin in Egypt.”*³⁰¹⁹ We have noted that whilst the book begins with creation that was good, it ends with death because the full story is not yet complete. Whilst there have been many signs towards the coming Messiah and the gospel, and many indications of faith, there is still a long way to go. Now such a situation is the

3011 Deuteronomy 29:29.

3012 Genesis 50:20.

3013 Genesis 50:20.

3014 Genesis 50:20.

3015 Genesis 45:7,8.

3016 Acts 2:23.

3017 Genesis 50:21.

3018 Genesis 50:21.

3019 Genesis 50:26.

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same for all of us. We occupy a brief period of time. And whilst we occupy the period that God has allotted to us, it is our privilege to show forth the goodness of God right up to the point of our death.

And so Joseph dwelt in Egypt with Jacob's household until he reached the age of one hundred and ten years.³⁰²⁰ Joseph saw Ephraim's children's, children's, children (*"to the third generation"*).³⁰²¹ In contrast Joseph saw the children of Manasseh's son Machir, that is his grandchildren by Manasseh. This piece of information shows how it was that Ephraim was doubly fruitful, for there were at the time of Joseph's death a great deal more of Ephraim's descendants than Manasseh's. Whom did Ephraim and Manasseh marry? We are not told but it is likely that they took daughters of Jacob's sons.

Eventually Joseph comes to the end of his life.³⁰²² He speaks to *"his brethren"* which is probably not simply the sons of Jacob but the wider community of the sons of Israel. Joseph tells them that the Lord would *"surely visit"* them and would bring them up out of Egypt to the land of Canaan which He had promised *"to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."*³⁰²³ Now we have already noted that Genesis 15 indicates a four hundred year period from the time of Isaac's weaning, which would coincide with the two hundred and fifteen years from Jacob's descent. The Lord had already determined the precise length of time for their stay in Egypt. But is it possible that the return could have been sooner? What was it that kept the children of Israel in Egypt given the promises of God? In God's sovereignty we know that there would be two hundred and fifteen years from Jacob's descent, but we also know that this does not excuse the will of man. Should the children of Israel have left sooner? This is almost impossible to say. But I rather suspect they ought to have done, and I say this on account of Joseph's testimony here in verse 24. It would, of course, take some time for the children of Israel to be brought to their knees by the hard bondage of Egypt but ought they have not responded in faith sooner?

Now Joseph also seeks an oath from the *"children of Israel,"* requiring that when God would *"surely visit"* them, then his bones must be carried up to the land as well.³⁰²⁴ The text ends with Joseph's death, his embalming in the Egyptian way, and his being placed in a *"coffin in Egypt."*³⁰²⁵ It is notable here that Joseph was not interred in the ground or in a tomb, for he expressly requested by oath that his bones be carried to Canaan when the Lord visited them to bring them back. By this means it seems likely that Joseph expected the visit from God sometime sooner than it would eventually come. They would have to wait for another one hundred and forty four years before that time.

3020 Genesis 50:22.

3021 Genesis 50:23.

3022 Genesis 50:24.

3023 Genesis 50:24.

3024 Genesis 50:25.

3025 Genesis 50:26.

Appendices.

The details of the appendices for this work are shown below.

<i>Number.</i>	<i>Details.</i>	<i>Page.</i>
1	References to Genesis in Isaiah.	7 [24]
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3	A brief word on genealogies.	39 [117]
4	The Nicene and Athanasian creeds.	146 [419]
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7	Discussion on flood chronology	251, 266 [728]
8	Flood stories in the news.	269 [732]
9	A brief comparison of the faith of Abraham compared to that of Lot.	407 [1094]
10	A. W. Pink. The spiritual significance of the names of Jacob's 12 sons.	559 [1645]

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Appendix 1: References to Genesis in Isaiah.

The following are some references to Genesis in the book of Isaiah. The highlighted phrases show the connection to Genesis.

Table A1.1: References to Genesis in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah.	Text.
40:21	Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning ? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth ?
41:4	Who has performed and done <i>it</i> , calling the generations from the beginning ? ‘I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I <i>am</i> He.’”
41:26	Who has declared from the beginning , that we may know? And former times, that we may say, ‘ <i>He is righteous</i> ’? Surely <i>there is</i> no one who shows, surely <i>there is</i> no one who declares, surely <i>there is</i> no one who hears your words.
42:5	Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it.
43:13	Indeed before the day was, I am He ; and <i>there is</i> no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?
43:27	Your first father sinned , and your mediators have transgressed against Me.
45:7	I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these <i>things</i> .
45:9	Woe to him who strives with his Maker ! <i>Let</i> the potsherd <i>strive</i> with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’
45:12	I have made the earth , and created man on it . I—My hands—stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.
45:18	For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens , who is God, who formed the earth and made it , who has established it, who did not create it in vain , who formed it to be inhabited: “I <i>am</i> the Lord, and <i>there is</i> no other.”
45:19	I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, ‘Seek Me in vain’; I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.
46:10	Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times <i>things</i> that are not <i>yet</i> done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,’
48:3	I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did <i>them</i> , and they came to pass.
48:5	Even from the beginning I have declared <i>it</i> to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed <i>it</i> to you, lest you should say, ‘My idol has done them, and my carved image and my moulded image have commanded them.’
48:7	They are created now and not from the beginning; and before this day you have not heard them, lest you should say, ‘Of course I knew them.’
48:12.13	12 Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I <i>am</i> He, I <i>am</i> the First, I <i>am</i> also the Last. 13 Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; <i>when</i> I call to them, they stand up together.
48:16	Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I <i>was</i> there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me.

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Appendix 2: Red shift data translated into distances.

The wavelengths of spectral lines can be measured first on earth (rest wavelength) and then from the galaxy (observed wavelength). The data gathered is a measured quantity and so is a direct observation. The red shift (usually given the symbol z) is then calculated using the following formula: *red shift, (z) = (observed wavelength / rest wavelength)-1*

Table A2.1: Redshift data.

LINE	REST WAVELENGTH	OBSERVED WAVELENGTH	REDSHIFT
H _α	6562.8 Angstroms	8100 Angstroms	0.234
O III	5006.8 Angstroms	6150 Angstroms	0.228
O II	3727 Angstroms	4550 Angstroms	0.221

The average redshift value for this galaxy is $(0.234 + 0.228 + 0.221)/3 = 0.228$.

To work out how far the galaxy is away from us two operations need to be carried out and each requires a specific assumption to be made,

First, it must be assumed that a positive redshift value implies that the object is receding from us. The formula used to work out the velocity is: *velocity = redshift x speed of light ($v = zc$)*. Thus, using an average value for redshift of 0.228, the velocity for the galaxy would be $v = 0.228 \times 3 \times 10^5 \text{ km/s} = 6.84 \times 10^4 \text{ km/s}$.

Second, we need to make another assumption that a galaxy's velocity is related to its distance from us by Hubble's law: *velocity (km/s) = H x distance (Mpc)*. H is the Hubble constant (65 km/s/Mpc). Thus the distance of this galaxy in Mpc would be $d = 6.84 \times 10^4 \text{ km/s} / 65 \text{ km/s/Mpc} = 1052 \text{ Mpc}$. Now 1 Mpc = 3.2×10^6 light years. Therefore the distance = $1052 \times 3.2 \times 10^6 \text{ light years} = 3366.4 \times 10^6 \text{ light years}$

So a redshift value of 0.228 (a measured quantity) may be stated as a distance of 3.4×10^9 light years. However the distance value is based on two assumptions and these may, or may not be, correct.

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Appendix 3: A brief word on genealogies.

We have already discussed the fact that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 cannot contain any gaps. In this brief note I want to demonstrate what would happen if there had been omissions in these genealogies. We know that the age of each patriarch is given at the birth of the next listed (whether these be father to son is immaterial), and the number of years that each patriarch lived after the birth of the next named person is also recorded. If there were any mistakes in either of the first two figures listed for each person, then the total number for their age at death would not tally up.³⁰²⁶ As we have already noted, the formula given in Genesis 5 would seem to suggest that there can be no breaks in the times and dates recorded. If names have been omitted, say from an original supposed longer list, this would mean some reconstruction of ages would have to have taken place.

Let us suppose, for example, that there were in fact another generation between Mahalalel and Jared and this has slipped out of the text in transmission. Here first is the original text as we have it:

Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared. After he begot Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died. Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.³⁰²⁷

And here is what the supposed text might have been with the original missing name reinserted.

Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot NAME 1. After he begot NAME 1 Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died. NAME 1 lived XXX years, and begot Jared. After he begot Jared NAME 1 lived YYY years, and had other sons and daughters. So all the days of NAME 1 were ZZZ years; and he died. Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.

It can be seen clearly from this that it is not a simple matter for one name to have simply slipped out. There must have been *three* omissions from the text. The first must have occurred where the missing name slips out in connection with Mahalalel, (i.e. “NAME 1. After he begot NAME 1” has slipped out). The second would have occurred after the entry for Mahalalel ends, (i.e. “NAME 1 lived XXX years, and begot” is removed). And the third omission must have occurred in connection with Jared (i.e. “NAME 1 lived YYY years, and had other sons and daughters. So all the days of NAME 1 were ZZZ years; and he

³⁰²⁶ Unless of course the mistake in one figure is exactly matched by the mistake in the second!

³⁰²⁷ Genesis 5:15-20.

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died” is omitted). Apart from this, the text concerning Jared highlighted in green (“**Jared. After he begot Jared**”) would also have had to be moved to the section which concludes the entry on Mahalalel (highlighted in blue). These rearrangements are no mere slip of the pen or of the eye. They involve doctoring and re-writing.

One other issue on genealogies needs to be considered and this concerns the record found in Luke chapter 3. Luke records the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 in his demonstration of the human origin of the Lord Jesus. However, there is a difference between what is found at Genesis 11:12-14 from what is recorded in Luke 3:34-36 as can be seen below:

12 Arphaxad lived thirty-five years, and begot **Salah**. **13** After he begot **Salah**, **Arphaxad** lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters. **14 Salah** lived thirty years, and begot Eber.³⁰²⁸

34 *the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech.*³⁰²⁹

Apart from the slight change in spellings, it can be seen that the account in Luke 3 also adds the name “*Cainaan*” between “*Arphaxad*” and “*Salah*” (“*Shelah*” in Luke). In Luke's account all we have in reality is a list of names. It is to noted that the NKJV adds the words “*the son*” in each case so literally the text would read:

34 of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, of Terah, of Nahor, **35** of Serug, of Reu, of Peleg, of Eber, of **Shelah**, **36** of Cainan, of Arphaxad, of Shem, of Noah, of Lamech.³⁰³⁰

This can be seen by viewing the Greek text which is shown below:

34 τοῦ ἰακώβ τοῦ ἰσαὰκ τοῦ ἀβραὰμ τοῦ φάρα τοῦ ναχώρ **35** τοῦ σαρούχ, τοῦ ῥαγαὺ τοῦ φάλεκ τοῦ ἔβερ τοῦ σαλὰ **36** τοῦ καϊνάν, τοῦ ἀρφαξὰδ τοῦ σὴμ τοῦ νῶε τοῦ λάμεχ

In other words the account in Luke simply has the two words “*of Cainan*” (or τοῦ καϊνάν in the Greek) inserted at the beginning of verse 36. The reason for this extra name “*Cainan*” in Luke's account is because the Septuagint translation (often referred to as the LXX) of Genesis 10:24 and 11:12,13 also includes this name “*Cainan*.”³⁰³¹ Now, Genesis 11:12-14, according to the NIV version reads as follows:

3028 Genesis 11:12-14.

3029 Luke 3:34-36.

3030 Luke 3:34-36.

3031 The Septuagint or LXX is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament made in the third century BC in Egypt.

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“When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber”³⁰³²

The LXX version, according to the footnotes at Genesis 11:12,13 of the NIV reads thus:

“When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Cainan. And after he became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber”³⁰³³

Following the LXX adds another 130 years to the birth dates of the patriarchs from Salah (or “*Shelah*” in the NIV) onwards. There can be no doubt, however, that the LXX version is in error. It is inconceivable to imagine how the corruption would have occurred if the LXX version was the original. As can be seen by comparing the two translations above, a complete reconstruction must have happened if the Hebrew text is in error.³⁰³⁴ It is to be noted here that it has been assumed that the earliest copies of the Hebrew text we have date from the Middle Ages, so that the LXX is a much older text.³⁰³⁵ This is why many prefer the LXX to the Hebrew.

To illustrate, let us suppose that the text of the LXX preserves the original, and that a copyist omitted the section containing those words that have been emphasised in orange highlights in the LXX version, ending at “...*father of.*” That is, let us assume that he omitted the words:

Cainan. And after he became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, he became the father of

What he would have copied would then read:

“When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber”

But this is a hopeless mix and certainly does not agree with what the Hebrew text says. In the first place we have the names “*Shelah*” and “*Cainan*” inexplicably side by side with no sense as to where the name

³⁰³² Genesis 11:12-14, NIV.

³⁰³³ NIV footnote at Genesis 11:12,13.

³⁰³⁴ I am well aware of course that what is important is to consider what changes may occur in the actual Hebrew text itself. I would imagine that the changes there would be equally serious if not more so.

³⁰³⁵ This statement can be challenged. The Hebrew text was faithfully copied with incredible precision and care by the Masoretes so that the Hebrew text we have is the original text.

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“*Cainan*” has come from (“*Shelah, Cainan*”). We must then assume that the Hebrew copyist changed the name “*Cainan*” back to “*Arphaxad*” to preserve the sense.

*“When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, **Arphaxad** lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber”*

So one slip, the omission of a large slice of text now becomes two through the change of “*Cainan*,” to “*Arphaxad*.” But this is still not what we have in the Hebrew which, to remind the reader, runs like this:

*When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, **Arphaxad lived 403 years** and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber*

If the LXX version is the original, then somehow the words “*Cainan lived 330 years*” must have been transformed into the phrase “*Arphaxad lived 403 years.*” Thus a further alteration must have occurred, (making three errors in total), to make “*330 years*” become “*403 years.*” This series of transformations seems not only highly unlikely, but also utterly incredible.³⁰³⁶ I believe that the LXX is at fault, and that the name “*Cainan*” should be deleted from Luke 3:36 in our Bibles.

³⁰³⁶ It should be noted that the transformation from an original Hebrew to the LXX by insertion of the name “*Cainan*” is equally problematic, but it is well known that the LXX translation is at fault in various other places.

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Appendix 4: The Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.

The Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed was first formulated to deal with the errors promoted by the leader of a Christian community in Alexandria, Egypt, by the name of Arius (c.250 - 336 AD) who denied the deity of Christ. Philip Schaff (1819-1893), an evangelical church historian much of whose work is available online through the website *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, documents the development of this important creed.³⁰³⁷ The original form produced in 325 AD at the council of Nicea was colated to combat Arius's idea that Christ was not divine. Parts in brackets are those omitted in the received text.

We believe in one God, the FATHER Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father; by whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth];

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the HOLY GHOST.

[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]³⁰³⁸

The creed was modified and extended at the council of Constantinople in 381 AD after further debate to include greater detail and clarification. In Schaff's presentation he identified the additions in the modified form by use of italics:

We believe in one God, the FATHER Almighty, Maker of *heaven and earth, and of* all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord JESUS CHRIST, the *only-begotten* Son of God, begotten of the Father *before all worlds* (æons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down *from heaven*, and was incarnate *by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary*, and was made man; he *was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate*, and suffered, *and was buried*, and the third day he rose again, *according to the*

3037 <https://www.ccel.org/>

3038 <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.iv.iii.html>

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Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

*And in the HOLY GHOST, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*³⁰³⁹

In modern use the latter modified form is often employed and referred to as the “Nicene Creed” an example of which is provided below:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.³⁰⁴⁰

The Athanasian Creed.

There is dispute about who penned what is known as the Athanasian Creed but the essential point is that it affirms the doctrine of the Trinity, and it gives prominence to the dual nature of Christ. Although for many centuries people considered this formulation to have come from Athanasius (c.296-373 AD) who was the great champion against Arius for Trinitarian doctrine, modern scholars are convinced that it was written after Athanasius' death.³⁰⁴¹ Although the true author of this formulation is unknown, its first appearance comes in southern Gaul (France) in the late fifth century AD through the preaching of a

3039 <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.iv.iii.html>

3040 <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/nicene.creed.html>

3041 <https://www.1517.org/articles/the-athanasian-creed-and-its-importance>

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Christian leader by the name of Caesarius of Arles (c.468 – 572 AD).³⁰⁴² Many scholars believe that the content has been influenced by the writings and thought of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (396 – 430 AD).

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic [universal] faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty.
14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
18. And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;
20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say; There are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.
25. And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another.
26. But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.
31. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world.
32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

3042 <https://scriptoriumdaily.com/caesarius-of-arles/>

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33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
34. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.
35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.
36. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.
37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
39. He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God, Almighty;
40. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
42. And shall give account of their own works.
43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.³⁰⁴³

Essentially the Athanasian Creed was a restatement and clarification of all the earlier statements made by groups of believing Christians. It sought to combat the heresies of Nestorius, who argued for a two person view of Christ, and Arius, who denied the deity of Christ and thence the Trinity. For many the Athanasian Creed promotes the essential teaching of the Christian faith. However there have been other formulations, statements of faith, and confessions following these and throughout the ages. In mentioning these two earliest ones we simply want to assert two truths. First we have brothers and sisters in Christ in former times who wrestled with the truths of Scripture and how to apply them in their particular day. We can rejoice when we read of their struggles and their coming to the truths we too dearly hold. I urge the reader to consider reading and studying church history for blessing and benefit. But second, I mention these because we have a duty to consider the truths of Scripture for *our day* and for the issues we come across in our time, especially those issues which have arisen anew, (evolution, genetics, etc.). Unless we apply the Scriptures to the issues of our day we will not be faithful to the Lord. So as a second exhortation, may I urge the reader to consider the truths our forefathers affirmed and to see these in our so-called scientific age? Who will make restatements concerning the nature of man, for example, so muddled and perverted in modern thought by his new ideas?

3043 <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/athanasian.creed.html>

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Appendix 5: The danger of cities.

The story of the Tower of Babel reinforces the importance of God's command to spread across the earth rather than to aggregate in settlements. However there is a continual tendency amongst mankind to do exactly the opposite. But is it not obvious that conglomerating into smaller spaces leads inevitably to an increase in sin? Violence and violent crime are more likely in city centres than in the rural spaces of a country. Corruption is always attendant where there are many, and mob culture and mass hysteria don't occur when people are dispersed. Writing on violence in urban centres Gizewski and Homer-Dixon explain the problem of cities:

“Nevertheless, cities will probably be the locus of much of the future conflict and violence in the developing world, particularly in the context of economic recession and readjustment, declining state capacity, and growing demands for democratization. When urban areas and states face converging economic and social pressures, power and privilege centred in the city will be challenged. Although rural-urban migration will continue and will, in many cases, magnify the social and economic problems of cities, it seems likely that the participants in urban violence will be urban born.”³⁰⁴⁴

The various triggers for violence (economic, social, political and so on) are clearly more prevalent in a city location than in a rural setting. That sexual misbehaviour increases in a city is plainly obvious to all (and exemplified perhaps by Sodom and Gomorrah) but an investigation on five African cities came to the following conclusion:

“The study affirms that, although risky behaviour varies across the five cities, slum residents demonstrate riskier sexual behaviour compared with non-slum residents. There is earlier sexual debut, lower condom usage and more multiple sexual partners among women residing in slum households regardless of setting, suggesting a relatively uniform effect of urban poverty on sexual risk behaviour.”³⁰⁴⁵

Writing about the urbanisation of America one web-writer states:

“Although murder was rare in the nation in the late 19th century, rates rose in cities. Robbery and theft were commonplace, and prostitution flourished more openly than before.”³⁰⁴⁶

3044 **Peter Gizewski and Thomas Homer-Dixon.** “Urban Growth and Violence: Will the Future Resemble the Past?” <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/pcs/eps/urban/urban3.htm> .

See also: <https://homerdixon.com/urban-growth-and-violence-full-article/> and: <https://homerdixon.com/urban-growth-and-violence-will-the-future-resemble-the-past/>

3045 **Meredith J. Greif, F. Nii-Amoo Dodoo, and Anuja Jayaramn.** “Urbanisation, Poverty and Sexual Behaviour. The Tale of Five African Cities.” In Urban Studies. Volume 48. Issue 5. Pages 947-957. Article first published online: August 18, 2010; Issue published: April 1, 2011. <http://usj.sagepub.com/content/48/5/947.abstract>

3046 http://www.countriesquest.com/north_america/usa/people/urbanization_of_america/growth_of_cities.htm

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When we look around today at our world with the increasing emphasis on city life it cannot but make us think how far mankind has strayed and alienated himself from God. We clan together in groups and cities, seemingly fortifying ourselves against *that day*, but oh how pitiful it all is, as Isaiah records concerning the judgment to come upon the earth:

10 The city of chaos is broken down; every house is shut up so that no one may enter. **11** There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine; all joy turns to gloom. The joy of the earth is banished. **12** Desolation is left in the city and the gate is battered to ruins. **13** For so it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the gleanings when the grape harvest is over.³⁰⁴⁷

3047 Isaiah 24:10-13, NASB.

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Appendix 6: Outline for a sermon on Hebrews 11:7.

What I present here is simply an outline for a sermon on the life of Noah. It seems to me that the details we are given in Hebrews 11 lend themselves to the formation of simple messages. Although I have never repeated a sermon, preferring to start from scratch each time I preach, I have spoken on this text several times, and it is one I have in my 'back pocket' as-it-were for occasions and opportunities that might be sprung upon me! The text of this verse from the NKJV reads thus:

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear,
prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and
became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

The text has very natural divisions as can be seen from the analysis which follows:

By faith Noah,
 being divinely warned of things not yet seen,
 moved with godly fear,
 prepared an ark for the saving of his household,
 by which
 he condemned the world
 and became heir of the righteousness which is according to
 faith.

Table A6.1: Hebrews 11:7 – a sermon outline.

<i>Relevant text</i>	<i>Points.</i>	<i>Brief notes.</i>
<i>By faith ...</i>	[1] The importance of <u>True Faith.</u>	Hebrews 11:1f describes this.
<i>... being divinely warned of things not yet seen ...</i>	[2] The importance of <u>Revelation.</u>	Genesis 6 describes two pieces of revelation one given universally to all in Genesis 6:3,7 and one specifically to Noah in Genesis 6:13f.
<i>... moved with godly fear ...</i>	[3] The importance of <u>Fearing God.</u>	This is all about motivation. What is godly motivation? Where do we start on any enterprise?
<i>... prepared an ark for the saving of his household ...</i>	[4] The importance of <u>Salvation.</u>	Keeping the 'main thing' central (salvation). What do we build in our lives? How vital it is to begin with the family!
<i>... by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.</i>	[5] The importance of our <u>Legacy.</u>	How we are seen in the world is not important but remember that following Christ implies leaving the world. The message of the cross is a condemnation upon all man-made self-effort. The believer has an eternal inheritance described as “righteousness” (i.e. heaven) and this is acquired only by faith.

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Appendix 7: More on flood chronology.

An alternative view.

In commenting on the flood story at Genesis 7 we simply gave an outline of the events and times based on our understanding of the text. We noted there that there is often back-tracking where the story progresses for some time and then goes back a bit to add further detail. In our discussions of the bird story in Genesis 8 we argued that this fitted in time-wise at the end of the forty days of rain and we emphasised the fact that the forty day period was the only time when rain fell and the fountains of the deep were in operation.

But here we need to acknowledge that others take a different point of view. As a young believer I was greatly influenced by the book: ***The Genesis Flood*** penned by two authors (***John C. Whitcomb*** and ***Henry M. Morris***) whom I have greatly respected and whom I have heard speak at the Metropolitan School of Theology at different times. The book they published in 1961, I read in 1977. In it they give a timetable for the events of the flood year and this is shown in table A7.1 below.

Table A7.1: The Chronology of the Flood (after Whitcomb and Morris).³⁰⁴⁸

EVENT	DAYS	TOTAL
There were forty days during which rain fell.	40	40
Throughout another 110 days the waters continued to rise making 150 days in all for their “prevailing” (7v24).	110	150
The waters occupied 74 days in their “going and decreasing” (AKJV margin). This was from the 17 th day of the seventh month to the 1 st day of the tenth month (8v5). There being 30 days to a month, the figures in days are 13 plus 30 plus 30 plus 1.	74	224
Forty days elapsed before Noah sent out the raven (8v6-7).	40	264
Seven days elapsed before Noah sent out the dove for the first time (8v8). This period is necessary for reaching the total and is given by implication from the phrase “other seven days” (8v10).	7	271
Seven days passed before sending out the dove for the second time.	7	278
Seven days more passed before the third sending of the dove (8v12).	7	285
Up to this point 285 days are accounted for, but the next episode is dated the 1 st of the first month in the 601 st year. From the date in 7v11 to this point in 8v13 is a period of 314 days: therefore an interval of 29 days elapses.	29	314
From the removal of the covering of the ark to the very end of the experience was a further 57 days (8v14).	57	371

Thus the usual way of understanding the chronology of the flood is to assume that each mention of a date or a number of days follows successively and so is cumulative. Whitcomb and Morris made this assumption but they are not alone. However there are three serious problems with taking the text in a

3048 **J. C. Whitcomb** and **H. M. Morris**. *The Genesis Flood*. 1961. Baker Books. P3. These authors reference others who suggest the same view.

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strictly chronological sense as Whitcomb and Morris do. First as we noted in our comments on Genesis 8 the details of Noah's sending out the birds makes little sense if it occurred when the mountain tops could be clearly seen. According to this chronology Noah sent the raven out on day 264 after the flood began and then a dove on day 274, but earlier on we discover that the mountain tops could be seen on day 224.³⁰⁴⁹ Since the flood waters were receding at this period it is likely that even more ground surface would be seen when Noah released the birds so for the text to tell us that:

... the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth.

seems problematic. How can the dove find no resting place, and how can the water be upon *“the face of the whole earth”* if the mountain tops were visible some forty seven days earlier? The problem is resolved if we understand that the writer is going back when he refers to the bird story. It is noteworthy that the bird story begins with a reference to the forty days (*“so it came to pass, at the end of forty days”*).³⁰⁵⁰ This mention of the forty days is clearly a sign that the writer is returning back to the end of the forty days of rain.

The second major problem with taking the flood events as being recorded strictly chronologically concerns the repeated references to the forty days in the text. This time period is mentioned four times at Genesis 7:4,12,17 and Genesis 8:6. The first occasion describes what the Lord intended to do:

For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.³⁰⁵¹

A few verses later we get a record of the event as it was happening, and in this text there is an emphasis on the dates and times:

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. **12** And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. **13** On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark—³⁰⁵²

We are told precisely the date when the rain and the fountains began in Genesis 7:11, (it was on the 17th day and the 2nd month of Noah's 600th year). Then in Genesis 7:12 we are informed that the rain would last for forty days and nights. Finally we are informed that it was *“on the very same”* as mentioned in

3049 See: Genesis 8:5,9.

3050 Genesis 8:6.

3051 Genesis 7:4.

3052 Genesis 7:11.

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Genesis 7:11, that the eight people who were saved entered the ark. These dates and time lengths are exact. Forty days means exactly forty days. And then as if to cement this period of time in our minds we read of the same period of time in Genesis 7:17: “*now the flood was on the earth forty days.*” Finally, we come to the same period mentioned at the events which record Noah sending out the birds as we mentioned a moment ago:

So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.³⁰⁵³

I am quite certain that Noah, having been told that the flood rain would last for forty days and nights, would have been ticking the days off as they happened. Remember that Noah had built the ark and organised animals and food! He did not do this alone or from his own initiative, of course, for it was the Lord who revealed to him what to do. But we cannot simply imagine that Noah was some backwater imbecile incapable of the simplest thought! The moment the rain stopped Noah would have worshipped God! God has once again kept to what He said. There would be forty days of rain and so, just as the Lord said, there was forty days of rain. What then would Noah do the moment the rains ceased? Isn't it obvious that he would open wide the window and send out the birds at this point? So the repeated reference to a forty day period is given to help the reader understand that the text is not strictly chronological. Let me reiterate here that the text is historical and it is broadly following the events, but just as people naturally backtrack to retell events in more detail when recounting significant events, so the writer has done here in Genesis.

A third problem with a strict chronology is that we have to accept that the Lord only “*remembered Noah*” not when the rains ceased after forty days, (which we might expect and which would be natural), but after 150 days from the start of the flood, or 110 days after the rains ceased (following the ideas expressed by Whitcomb and Morris).³⁰⁵⁴ This is untenable. As we have already pointed out, three times prior to this we have been told that the rain would last for exactly forty days, no longer and no shorter.³⁰⁵⁵ Genesis 7:11 informs us that the windows of heaven and the fountains of the deep poured forth on the *same* day. Thus when the rains began the deeps opened on the same day. In Genesis 8:2 we are expressly informed that both “*the fountains of the deep,*” and also “*the windows of heaven*” were both stopped on the same day so that “*the rain from heaven was restrained.*” Given that the rain lasted precisely forty days, the ceasing of the fountains must have occurred at the same time as the text of Genesis 8:2 tells us, so that both must have finished at exactly the same time, at the end of the forty days. Thus “*God*

3053 Genesis 8:6.

3054 Genesis 8:1.

3055 Genesis 7:4,12,17.

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remembered Noah” when the rains and the fountains ceased.³⁰⁵⁶ In fact the act of God's remembrance (of being mindful of Noah) was coincidental with Him stopping the rains and the fountains. We say this because Genesis 8:1f describes the action of God in restraining the rains and the fountains.

We must also recognise that the Scriptures only refer to one period of one hundred and fifty days. The one hundred and fifty days of Genesis 7:24 are the same period referred to in Genesis 8:3. The first considers the time period up to the one hundred and fifty days have been reached, and the second considers the one hundred and fifty days as a new starting point. Thus Genesis 7:17-24 speaks of the period from the end of the rain after forty days to the one hundred and fifty days. Then Genesis 8:3f speaks of the one hundred and fifty days as the beginning of the next phase in the flood year. We can be sure of this because according to Genesis 7:11 the flood began on the 17th day of the 2nd month of Noah's 600th year, whilst Genesis 8:4 (immediately after mentioning the one hundred and fifty days) speaks of the ark resting on the 17th day of the 7th month of Noah's 600th year. This is exactly one hundred and fifty days after the flood began.³⁰⁵⁷ This is yet another reason why the verses preceding Genesis 8:3,4 (which give us a date one hundred and fifty days after the flood began), must precede the one hundred and fifty day period. Consequently we must understand Genesis 8:1,2 as coming before the end of the one hundred and fifty days, and the natural point to locate these verses is after the rain stopped on day forty after the flood.

Further details on flood chronology.

In the commentary I did not give a full explanation of how I came to the chronology presented there, so here I want to show some of my thought processes. In the first table (A.7.2) I have given the text of Genesis 7:17 to Genesis 8:16 and highlighted it to show various times, dates and significant points. From this we have the following chronology:

Genesis 7:11-17a describes the forty days of rain.

Genesis 17b-24 describes the period from the end of the forty days of rain up to day 150 when the waters prevailed on the earth

Genesis 8:1,2 back tracks to the end of the 40 days when God remembers Noah.

Genesis 8:3,4 mention the 150 day as a point when the waters begin to decrease.

Genesis 8:5 cover the period from day 150 to day 224 when the waters decreased and the mountain tops were seen.

Genesis 8:6-12 then back tracks again and tells us of the period after the 40 days when the rain has stopped and Noah despatches his birds.

Genesis 8:13 speaks of day 314 when the waters were dried up and Noah removes the ark's covering.

Genesis 8:14 records the end of the flood a year and ten days after it started (57 days after Noah removes the covering).

3056 Genesis 8:1.

3057 Assuming a month always lasts thirty days.

Table A7.2: The Genesis text analysed for dates.

TEXT.	Dates.	D	M	Y
11 In the <u>six hundredth year</u> of Noah's life, in <u>the second month</u> , the <u>seventeenth day of the month</u> , on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12 And the rain was on the earth <u>forty days</u> and <u>forty nights</u> .	From day 0 to day 40.	17	2	600
		27	3	600
13 On the <u>very same day</u> Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark— 14 they and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. 15 And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which <i>is</i> the breath of life. 16 So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in.	Day 0.	17	2	600
17 Now the flood was on the earth <u>forty days</u> . The waters רָבָה increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18 The waters גָּבַר prevailed and מָאֵד greatly רָבָה increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. 19 And the waters גָּבַר prevailed מָאֵד מָאֵד exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. 20 The waters גָּבַר prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. 21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. 22 All in whose nostrils <i>was</i> the breath of the spirit of life, all that <i>was</i> on the dry <i>land</i> , died. 23 So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who <i>were</i> with him in the ark remained <i>alive</i> . 24 And the waters גָּבַר prevailed on the earth <u>one hundred and fifty days</u> .	From day 0 to day 150.	17	2	600
		17	7	600
#8 1 Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that <i>were</i> with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters שָׁכַךְ subsided. 2 The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also נִסְכָּם stopped, and the rain from heaven was נִלְאָה restrained. 3 And the waters שׁוּב--שׁוּב receded הָלַךְ continually from the earth. At the end of the <u>hundred and fifty days</u> the waters הִסָּר decreased.	From day 40 to day 150.	27	3	600
		17	7	600
4 Then the ark rested in <u>the seventh month</u> , the <u>seventeenth day of the month</u> , on the mountains of Ararat. 5 And the waters הִסָּר decreased הָלַךְ continually until the <u>tenth month</u> . In <u>the tenth month</u> , on the <u>first day of the month</u> , the tops of the mountains were seen.	From day 150 to day 224.	17	7	600
		1	10	600
6 So it came to pass, at the end of <u>forty days</u> , that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. 7 Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had יָבֵשׁ dried up from the earth. 8 He <u>also</u> sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had הָלַךְ receded from the face of the ground. 9 But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters <i>were</i> on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. 10 And he waited <u>yet another seven days</u> , and again he sent the dove out from the ark. 11 Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf <i>was</i> in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had הָלַךְ receded from the earth. 12 So he waited <u>yet another seven days</u> and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him any more.	From day 40 to day 61.	27	3	600
		4	4	600
		11	4	600
		18	4	600
13 And it came to pass in the <u>six hundred and first year</u> , in the <u>first month</u> , the <u>first day of the month</u> , that the waters were הָרַב dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was הָרַב dry. 14 And in the <u>second month</u> , on the <u>twenty-seventh day of the month</u> , the earth was יָבֵשׁ dried. 15 Then God spoke to Noah, saying, 16 “Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you.	From day 314 to day 371.	1	1	601
		27	2	601

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The new chronology has now been organised into table A7.3:

Table A7.3: A New Chronology for the Events of the Noah's Flood.

Date			Days after flood begins.	Event.	Scripture.
Day	Month	Year ³⁰⁵⁸			
17	2	600	0	Flood begins.	7:11
				End of rains.	7:12; 8:2
27	3	600	40	Noah opens window and sends out the raven.	8:6
4	4	600	47	Dove sent out	8:7
11	4	600	54	Second time dove sent out. Returns with olive leaf.	8:10
18	4	600	61	Dove sent out third time and does not return.	8:12
17	7	600	150	Waters decreased.	8:3
				Ark rests above the mountains of Ararat.	8:4
1	10	600	224 ³⁰⁶⁰	Mountains become visible.	8:5
1	1	601	254 ³⁰⁶¹ OR 314 ³⁰⁶²	Noah removes covering.	8:13
27	2	601	310 OR 370	Earth dry. Noah leaves the ark.	8:14-19

Following the revised chronology the reader might have spotted what appears at first sight to be a problem. On day 54 according to the new chronology the dove found an olive leaf, but the mountain tops would not become visible until day 224 some 170 days later. Is this reasonable? Well first we need to remember that the perspective of the story is from the ark. I believe that Noah's sons were recording the events, and so from their view point the mountains would be so far away as to be invisible. However the dove could have flown way beyond their ability to see.³⁰⁶³

Another feature of the account is the record of the waters and their strength, their increase and their decrease. We dealt with this theme extensively in the commentary but the next table (A7.4) shows my original understanding of words used to describe what is happening with the waters throughout various points in the narrative.

³⁰⁵⁸ That is, of Noah's life.

³⁰⁵⁹ The bird story follows immediately after the rains ceased, not after the mountains became visible, otherwise the birds would have had no problem finding land.

³⁰⁶⁰ This means that a period of 170 days elapsed between the dove returning with an olive leaf and the sighting of the mountain tops.

³⁰⁶¹ Assuming that the old world solar year was ten months of 30 days each. No eleventh and twelfth months are mentioned in the text.

³⁰⁶² Assuming a 360 day year of twelve months each lasting 30 days. The eleventh and twelfth months, although not mentioned, may still have been in existence at this time.

³⁰⁶³ These birds were hardy and could fly great distances. See Psalm 55:6-8 and Jeremiah 48:28. Also referred to as a "*pigeon*" – see Leviticus 1:14; 5:7; 12:6,8; 14:22,30; 15:14,29; Numbers 6:10. Homing pigeons are known to have the ability to fly at elevations of 600 to 1000 feet and speeds of between 30 to 60 mph. They can fly anywhere up to a thousand miles and the record for a US army corps signal pigeon was 2,300 miles according to Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Table A7.4: A look at words signifying a decrease in the waters of the flood.

DAY	VERSE	ENGLISH ³⁰⁶⁴	HEBREW ³⁰⁶⁵		MEANING ³⁰⁶⁶
40	8:1	Assuaged Subsided	7918	“shâkak”	“to bow, stoop down” “to lower itself, abate” “to settle down, subside”
47	8:8	Abated Receded	7043	“qâlal”	“to be light” “to be lessened” “to b diminished”
54	8:11				
150	8:3	Abated Receded	2637	“châçêr”	“to lack,” “to diminish” “to lessen,” “to fail” “to want”
150 – 224	8:5	Decreased Decreased			

Thus from day 40 to day 150 the waters were subsiding and becoming diminished but they were still strong on the earth (“*prevailed*”).³⁰⁶⁷ From day 150 to day 224 the waters now decrease or fail and reduce to a greater extent. From this it is evident that whilst the waters were very strong for the first 150 days, they were only rising with vehemence for the first forty days (Genesis 7:17-20). Between day 40 and day 150 there was a gentle decrease all the while the flood was still strong on the earth (Genesis 7:24; 8:1-3). At the 150 day point the waters start to decrease and fall somewhat more rapidly.

3064 AKJV. NKJV in blue.

3065 J. Strong.

3066 J. Strong. Wilson.

3067 Genesis 7:24.

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Appendix 8: Flood stories around the world.

The record of local floods the world over is quite a story. In the UK we have records of flooding all over the land but perhaps none so bad as that which occurred in 1953 in East Anglia, where 307 people died and 40,000 were made homeless.³⁰⁶⁸ Countries like Bangladesh have suffered terrible flooding owing to the deforestation of the mountainous regions to the north.³⁰⁶⁹ We might also mention the terrible floods that occurred in the Philippine islands in 1991 killing some 5,000 people.³⁰⁷⁰ In 1992 there were terrible floods in France. Even though only 30 died, there was a great deal of damage including the destruction of bridges and the ruination of some 30,000 homes.³⁰⁷¹ The newspaper reports of the French floods make very interesting reading. Even in such a small “local” flood as this, the destructive power of the flood waters is awesome:

“The floods devastated the town and its surroundings, sweeping away 50 houses and camp sites, and turning the area into a huge mud swamp. ... Another witness said he had seen at least 50 cars carried away on the floods ... Everyday objects were turned into huge, deadly projectiles and hurled by the power of the flood waters. Trees pierced houses and vehicles lay in jumbled piles in fields of mud.”³⁰⁷²

There have been formal studies on the frequency of floods in Europe:

“During the last three decades (1973 – 2002), the reported number of disasters* caused by floods has dramatically increased in the UN European Macro-Region**, from 31 in the period 1973 – 1982 to 179 during the last decade ... Floods caused a total of 264 disasters during the whole period.”³⁰⁷³

Looking further afield, we note that more than one million people died as a result of the terrible flood of

3068 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2013/jan/31/devastation-east-anglia-1953-flood-in-pictures>

3069 <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/147057/intense-flooding-in-bangladesh>

3070 Daily telegraph report Wednesday November 13th 1991. 5000 dead. 120,000 homeless. Independent report November Saturday 9th 1991: “Survivors of this week’s floods in Ormoc in the Philippines search in the drizzle yesterday for reusable items. At least 5,000 people are now thought to have died. The stench of death pervades the city. Dozens of decomposing bodies float offshore; others are on the streets among twisted cables and fallen trees.”

3071 Daily telegraph report Thursday 24th September 1992.

3072 Daily telegraph report Thursday 24th September 1992.

3073 <http://www.em-dat.net/documents/Publication/FLOOD-EUR.pdf>

Three decades of floods in Europe : a preliminary analysis of EMDAT data. Philippe Hoyois, Debarati Guha-Sapir. WHO collaborating Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Catholique University of Louvain.

* The EMDAT criteria for a disaster are : at least 10 deaths (persons confirmed as dead and persons missing and presumed dead) or 100 affected (people that have been injured, left homeless or requiring immediate assistance during a period of emergency, i.e. requiring basic survival needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation and immediate medical assistance after a disaster) or request for national or international assistance.

** The United Nations Macro-Region for Europe is subdivided into four European Region : Eastern Europe : Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine; Northern Europe : Channel Islands, Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom; Southern Europe : Albania, Andorra, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Gibraltar, Greece, Holy See, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, FYR Macedonia, Yugoslavia; Western Europe : Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland.

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the Huang He (Yellow River) in 1931. Although somewhat man-made by the government for military reasons, seven years later in 1938 another half a million died from floods at the same river. Some estimate the total death in this area of China at 7 million over the past 150 years.³⁰⁷⁴ In 1975 following heavy rainfall into the Ru river, the Banquian Dam collapsed, killing a further 230,000 people. Nearly a quarter of a million died as a result of the tsunami in the Indian ocean on boxing day 2004. There have been floods at regular intervals in every major region and continent of the world, caused by rainfall, tsunami and hurricanes.³⁰⁷⁵ Apart from the awful loss of life by drowning and then by disease and lack of clean water, the damages to property and infrastructure are also colossal. A 2007 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that coastal flooding alone does some \$3 trillion in damage worldwide.³⁰⁷⁶ One writer has listed ten of the most devastating natural disasters since 1900 (see table A8.1) and there are many websites that list floods through each decade including the most recent European, Japanese, Chinese, Australian floods not to mention the frequent floods in places like Bangladesh.

Floods of such devastation whether they cause the loss of tens, thousands, or millions of lives cannot compare to the 'Great Flood' as recorded in the Bible in Genesis 6 to 9. Yet if the flood of the Bible was just a local affair, surely that means that God has lied! I cannot for the life of me understand why the likes of **BioLogos** and many others continue to promote a local flood view given this one piece of evidence that demands to be heard. If the flood of Noah's time was merely a local affair, then God is a liar. We must accept that what Genesis records is true, and that the flood was a global affair. God has promised that He would not destroy the earth again by the waters of a flood. This promise, like all the others that He has made, He has kept. There have been many devastating local floods since the time of Noah, but there has never been another universal deluge that covered the entire planet. So important was this promise given to Noah, that the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Scriptures has seen fit to repeat it in the book of Isaiah, where we read the Lord's words:

For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.³⁰⁷⁷

The word for "*earth*" here is the same as that found in Genesis 1:1. The implication of the many 'local' (but nonetheless devastating) floods since Noah's time is obvious. What the text tells us in Genesis 6 to 9 is true. The whole world was destroyed by water.³⁰⁷⁸

3074 This river has flooded numerous times in history killing a large number by drowning and consequential diseases.

3075 For one listing of the ten worst 'natural disasters since 1900' see <http://blog.chron.com/sciguy/2010/01/ten-deadliest-natural-disasters-since-1900/>

3076 <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/natural-disasters/floods-profile/>

3077 Isaiah 54:9, AKJV.

3078 There are many, many other arguments in favour of a global flood, one of which is Peter's testimony referred to earlier in 2Peter 3:3-7, so the reader should be assured that what occurred in Genesis 6 to 9 was global and universal.

Table A8.1: Ten worst 'natural disasters' since 1900.³⁰⁷⁹

Disaster	Details
[1] 1931 Chinese floods. (estimated 3.7 million deaths)	The summer flood along the Yangtze River during July-August 1931 was the most severe, with over 51 million people affected (one quarter of China's population). An estimated 3.7 million people died due to disease, starvation or drowning. (source: NOAA). 1938 floods not included as they were partially caused by China's nationalist government in an attempt to halt the rapid advance of Japanese troops.
[2] 1970 Pakistan cyclone (300,000 deaths)	On Nov. 12 a moderately strong 115-mph hurricane's 20-foot storm surge, cresting with a high tide, struck East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and killed approximately 300,000 people. Initial reports were that more than 1 million died but those estimates were later proven to be too high. (source: National Hurricane Center)
[3] 1976 Tangshan earthquake (255,000 deaths)	Official casualty figure is 255,000 deaths. Estimated death toll as high as 655,000. 799,000 injured and extensive damage in the Tang-Shan area. Damage extended as far as Beijing. This is probably the greatest death toll from an earthquake in the last four centuries, and the second greatest in recorded history. (source: US)
[4] Super Typhoon Nina (229,000 deaths)	This storm contributed to the failure of the Banqiao Dam after 41 inches of rain fell in a single day, more than the area receives during a typical year. (source: NOAA)
[5] 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami/earthquake (227,898 deaths)	This is the third largest earthquake in the world since 1900. In total, 227,898 people were killed or were missing and presumed dead and about 1.7 million people were displaced by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in 14 countries in South Asia and East Africa. The tsunami caused more casualties than any other in recorded history and was recorded nearly worldwide on tide gauges in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.
[6] 1920 Haiyuan earthquake China (200,000 deaths)	There were large numbers of landslides and ground cracks throughout the epicentral area. Some rivers were dammed, others changed course. Seiches from this earthquake were observed in 2 lakes and 3 fjords in western Norway. Although usually called the Kansu (now Gansu) earthquake by Western sources, the epicenter and highest intensities are clearly within Ningxia Autonomous Region. (source: USGS)
[7] 1923 Kwantō earthquake Japan (142,800 deaths)	Extreme destruction in the Tokyo – Yokohama area from the earthquake and subsequent firestorms, which burned about 381,000 of the more than 694,000 houses that were partially or completely destroyed. Although often known as the Great Tokyo Earthquake (or the Great Tokyo Fire), the damage was apparently most severe at Yokohama. (source: USGS)
[8] 1991 Bangladesh Cyclone O2B (138,000 deaths)	Another cyclone struck the Chittagong region in Bangladesh in 1991 killing over 138,000 people and causing damage in excess of 1.5 billion dollars. The tropical cyclone devastated the coastal area southeast of Dacca with winds in excess of 130kts and a 20 foot storm surge. (source: NOAA)
[9] Turkmenistan earthquake 1948 (110,000 deaths)	Extreme damage in Ashgabat (Ashkhabad) and nearby villages, where almost all brick buildings collapsed, concrete structures were heavily damaged and freight trains were derailed. Damage and casualties also occurred in the Darreh Gaz area, Iran. Surface rupture was observed both northwest and southeast of Ashgabat. (source: NOAA)
[10] Flooding in Vietnam 1971 (100,000 deaths)	A severe flood of the Red River in North Vietnam killed an estimated 100,000 people, but because the Vietnam War was going on at the time there has been little information known about the event. (source: NOAA)

³⁰⁷⁹ Data taken from the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
<http://blog.chron.com/sciguy/2010/01/ten-deadliest-natural-disasters-since-1900/>

Appendix 9: A brief comparison of the faith of Abraham compared to that of Lot.

Although not the first thing to be revealed to us, Abraham is spoken of as a *“prophet”* by the Lord.³⁰⁸⁰ This is clearly evident because the Lord appeared to Abraham at different times, and *“the word of the Lord”* came to him, which statement is one we discover frequently in the prophets.³⁰⁸¹ The Lord spoke directly to Abraham on various occasions and what was revealed to him has been passed down to us today.³⁰⁸² Chiefly, this prophetic revelation concerned the covenant and promise which was given over a passage of time from his call right up until the moment he was asked to sacrifice his only son.³⁰⁸³ But nowhere In Scripture do we read of Lot receiving the Lord or hearing God's voice audibly. This is not to say that Lot is thereby a lesser man, because the Lord God has selected only certain men to receive His word in direct form. It is the same with regard to apostles – only those who were with the Lord Jesus and who saw the risen Christ could be apostles. Further, only certain men are called to be shepherds and pastors. Such calling is given of God alone. It is not simply a male prerogative but something given of God alone.

Now Abraham is also referred to as the *“friend”* of God.³⁰⁸⁴ This friendship is seen in several places. For example, when Abraham is in some despair after rescuing Lot, the Lord comes with words of great comfort and reveals more to him concerning the promise.³⁰⁸⁵ Also on the occasion when the Lord told him that Sarah would indeed have a son Abraham's response was to laugh and he requested that Ishmael would live before the Lord. There is no censure from the Lord here and it seems as though Abraham is at once joyous and somewhat uncertain but clearly honouring to the Lord.³⁰⁸⁶ Then also we see this friendship with God in the conversation the Lord has with Abraham about what He was about to do to Sodom because of their wickedness.³⁰⁸⁷

When we come to consider Lot, we are aware of a very sharp difference in character and disposition from the text in Genesis. However we must begin our assessment of Lot with a reference from the New Testament, for Lot is referred to by Peter as a *“righteous”* man.³⁰⁸⁸ In fact Peter refers to Lot as *“righteous”* three times.³⁰⁸⁹ Now whereas Abraham believed the Lord and so his faith was credited to him as righteousness, Lot knew the mercy and favour of the Lord as illustrated by the two angels grabbing him, his wife and two daughters when he *“lingered”* on being told to flee, delivering them from the

3080 Genesis 20:7.

3081 Genesis 12:7; 15:1f; 17:1; 18:1.

3082 Genesis 12:1,7; 13:14; 15:7; 17:1; 18:10,13,17,20,26,30,31,32; 22:11,16.

3083 Genesis 12:1f; 15:1f; 17:1f; 22:1f.

3084 Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23.

3085 Genesis 15:1-20.

3086 Genesis 17:17-21.

3087 Genesis 18:17-33.

3088 2Peter 2:7,8.

3089 2Peter 2:7,8.

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city.³⁰⁹⁰ Lot recognised this mercy and favour in saving his life.³⁰⁹¹ Abraham's faith can be seen in his obedience. He was obedient to the Lord's commands, for we read that he *“departed as the Lord had spoken to him.”*³⁰⁹² Abraham obeyed the Lord when he was told to circumcise all the males in his household acting on this instruction immediately.³⁰⁹³ Abraham obeyed the Lord in the matter of casting out Hagar and Ishmael at Sarah's suggestion after Ishmael mocked Isaac, even though it was *“displeasing”* to him.³⁰⁹⁴ In graphic contrast, all we read of concerning Lot is that he *“went with”* Abraham – thus following his uncle's example.³⁰⁹⁵ Lot's faith is shown by him recognising the angels who came to Sodom, and his seeking to rescue them and provide hospitality for them instantly.³⁰⁹⁶ It is also evident when he remonstrates with the wicked men of Sodom where he says *“do not do so wickedly,”* and in the statements Peter uses of Lot where we learn that that *“righteous man”* was both *“oppressed”* by the wickedness of the city and *“tormented”* in soul through what he observed.³⁰⁹⁷ Notwithstanding the fact that Lot was a true believer, we discover that he compromised and failed in his approaches. He displays the type of characteristics of new believers who continue to rely on their own strength. For example, Lot attempted to use reason alone with the wicked people of Sodom, but failed to effect any change and needed rescuing by the angels himself.³⁰⁹⁸ Lot was severely compromised in his righteousness, for whilst he sought to preserve the angels dignity and safety, he did not see the error in offering his virgin daughters to the wicked men of Sodom.³⁰⁹⁹ When the moment came to flee, Lot hesitated because of his love for the things of this world.³¹⁰⁰ Lot further demonstrated his compromising nature and his desires for comfort by asking to go to Zoar – a little place where there would be comforts and perhaps recognition – because he could not flee to the mountains in fear of some unknown evil.³¹⁰¹

Abraham was by no means perfect because he displayed fear and lied twice about his relationship with Sarah sinning greatly in such acts.³¹⁰² Abraham also failed to take a lead when Sarah suggested that Hagar act as a surrogate, and then when Hagar was with child he failed further when Sarah complained of being despised in her maid's eyes, by saying to Sarah: *“Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.”*³¹⁰³ Now even given such sins we also see Abraham in repentance. Thus when he returns

3090 Genesis 15:6; 19:16.

3091 Genesis 19:18,19.

3092 Genesis 12:4.

3093 Genesis 18:23-27.

3094 Genesis 21:12-14.

3095 Genesis 12:4; 13:5.

3096 Genesis 19:1-3.

3097 Genesis 19:7; 2Peter 2:7,8.

3098 Genesis 19:7,9,10.

3099 Genesis 19:8.

3100 Genesis 19:15,16.

3101 Genesis 19:18-20.

3102 Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18. Originally her name was *“Sarai”* but more often known as *“Sarah.”* Her name changed at Genesis 17:15.

3103 Genesis 16:6.

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from Egypt after sinning concerning Sarah for the first time we find him going back to the altar that he had made at Bethel.³¹⁰⁴ Then also when the Lord told Hagar to return to her mistress, we discover that Abraham must have repented because he names Hagar's son "*Ishmael*" just as the Lord had revealed to Hagar.³¹⁰⁵

In the unfolding events of Genesis 12 and following we see a great deal of difference between Abraham and his nephew Lot. Abraham was very gracious to Lot when their possessions became too much and caused trouble, preferring Lot's needs before his own.³¹⁰⁶ In amazing contrast we learn that Lot based his choice upon what his eyes saw, and "*chose for himself*," thus acting selfishly.³¹⁰⁷ Then further, Abraham "*dwelt in the land of Canaan*" moving about in tents, whilst Lot "*dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom*."³¹⁰⁸ Later we discover that Lot moved into Sodom, but even when he was captured and then rescued by Abraham, he still returned to live in the city of Sodom.³¹⁰⁹ Eventually we learn that Lot becomes one of the leaders or judges of Sodom for we read that he sat "*in the gate*."³¹¹⁰ Abraham's rescue of Lot from the northern confederacy of kings lead by Chedorlaomer illustrates the fact that Abraham not only believed in the Lord but passed on what he knew to his household for he lead three hundred and eighteen "*trained*" men.³¹¹¹ Later we read of the Lord's assessment of Abraham's faith working itself out. The Lord knew Abraham expressly so that Abraham would pass on his faith to his children.³¹¹² On returning with Lot and all the people and goods, Abraham is told by Melchizedek that his victory was from the Lord: "*blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand*."³¹¹³ To outsiders Abraham appears to have the blessing of the Lord, as the Lord promised him at the start.³¹¹⁴ In stark contrast Lot appeared to have very little or no influence over his married daughters and their husbands, nor over his two virgin daughters, nor over his wife.³¹¹⁵ Finally Abraham demonstrated his faith in the Lord by doing what was required of him by the Lord despite the fact it seemed contrary to the promise – the sacrifice of Isaac.³¹¹⁶

3104 Genesis 13:1-4.

3105 Genesis 16:1-16.

3106 Genesis 13:8,9.

3107 Genesis 13:11.

3108 Genesis 13:12.

3109 Genesis 13:10,11; 14:12,21.

3110 Genesis 19:1,9.

3111 Genesis 14:13-16.

3112 Genesis 18:19.

3113 Genesis 14:18-20.

3114 Genesis 21:22 – cf. 12:1-3.

3115 Genesis 19:30-38.

3116 Genesis 22:1-19.

Appendix 10: A. W. Pink. The spiritual significance of the names of Jacob's 12 sons.

“We are fully satisfied, however, that the words uttered by the respective mothers of these twelve sons on the occasion of their births, is not without some special significance, and it behoves us to inquire prayerfully into the Spirit’s purpose in so carefully preserving a record of them. Jacob’s first son was born to him by Leah, and was named Reuben, and upon giving her son this name she said, "Surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction" (Gen. 29:32). The second son was also borne by Leah and was named Simeon, and her reason for thus naming him was as follows, "Because the Lord hath heard that I was hated" (Gen. 29:33). The striking resemblance between these two utterances and what is recorded in Exodus in connection with the sufferings of Israel in Egypt is at once apparent. First, we read that "God looked upon the Children of Israel" (Ex.2:25). Then, unto Moses He said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt" (Ex. 3:7). Then, corresponding with the words of Leah when Simeon was born, He adds, "And have heard their cry" (Ex. 3:7). It is surely something more than a mere coincidence that at the birth of Israel’s first two sons their mother should have spoken of "affliction," which she said the Lord hath "looked upon" and "heard," and that these identical words should be found in the passage which describes the first stage in the national history of the Children of Israel who were then "hated" and "afflicted" by the cruel Egyptians. When the Lord told Moses He had seen the "affliction" of His people Israel and had "heard" their cry, did He not have in mind the very words which Leah had uttered long years before! Jacob’s third son was named Levi, and at his birth his mother said, "This time will my husband be joined to me" (Gen. 29:34). Again these words of the mother point us forward to the beginning of Israel’s national history. When was it that Jehovah was "joined" to Israel, and became her "husband"? It was on the eve of their leaving Egypt on the night of the Passover when the lamb was slain and its blood shed and sprinkled. Then it was Jehovah was "joined" to His people—just as now God is joined to us and becomes one with us only in Christ: it is in the Lamb slain, now glorified, that God and the believing sinner meet. And then it was that Jehovah entered into covenant relationship with the chosen Nation, and became their "Husband.” Note how this very word is used in Jeremiah, and mark how this reference points back to the Passover night: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah: Not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an Husband unto them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:31,32). Jacob’s fourth son was Judah, and upon his birth the mother said, "Now will I praise the Lord" (Gen. 29:35). As Leah’s words at Levi’s birth point us back to the Passover, so her words at Judah’s birth carry us forward to the crossing of the Red Sea, where Israel celebrated Jehovah’s victory over their foes in song and praised the Lord for their wondrous deliverance. Then it was that, for the first time, Israel sang: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in

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praises,doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). Mark, too, that the Psalmist when referring back to this momentous event said, "And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words: they sang His praise" (Ps. 106:11, 12). Next comes Dan, and upon his birth Rachel said, "God hath judged me" (Gen. 30:6). If the line of interpretation and application we are now working out be correct, then these words of Rachel, following those of Leah at the birth of Judah, which as we have seen carry us, prophetically, to the Red Sea, will bear upon the early experiences of Israel in their Wilderness wanderings. Such, indeed, we believe to be the case. Do not the above words of Rachel, "God hath judged me," point us to the displeasure and "wrath" of God against Israel when, in response to their "murmuring" He sent the "quails," and when again they provoked His wrath at the waters of Massah and Merribah? At the birth of Jacob's sixth son Rachel exclaimed, "With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed" (Gen. 30:8). How strikingly this corresponds with Israel's history! The very next thing we read of after that God "judged" Israel for their sin at Merribah was their conflict or "wrestling" with Amalek, and again be it particularly noted that the self-same word used by Rachel at the birth of Napthali is used in describing the "wrestling" between Israel and Amalek, for in Exodus 17:11 we read, "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." Surely it is something more than mere coincidence that the very word used by the mother of Napthali should occur twice in the verse which records that in Israel's history which her words prophetically anticipated; the more so, that it agrees so accurately with the order of events in Israel's history. The utterances of the mother of the seventh and eighth sons of Jacob may be coupled together, as may also those connected with the birth of his ninth and tenth sons. At the birth of Gad it was said, "A troop cometh" (Gen. 30:11), which perfectly agrees with the order of Israel's history, for after the Wilderness had been left behind and the Jordan crossed, a "troop" indeed "came" to meet Israel, the seven nations of the Canaanites seeking to oppose their occupation of the promised land. The words of the mother of Asher, the next son, "Happy am I" (Gen. 30:13), tell of Israel's joy following the overthrow of their foes. Then, the words of Leah at the birth of Jacob's ninth and tenth sons, namely "God, hath given me my hire" (Gen. 30:18), and "God hath endued me with a good dowry" (Gen. 30:20), tell of Israel's occupation of the goodly inheritance with which Jehovah had "endowed" them. Then, just as there was a break or interval before the last two sons were born, and just as these two completed Jacob's family, and realized his long cherished desire, inasmuch as they were born to him by his beloved Rachel, so her words, "The Lord shall add to me another son" (Gen. 30:24), and "The son of my sorrow" changed by the father to "Son of my right hand" (Gen. 35:18), would point to the completion of Israel's history as an undivided nation and the realization of their long cherished desire, in the giving to them a King, even David, to whom was "added" only one "other," namely, Solomon; and the double sentence uttered at Benjamin's birth was surely appropriate as a prophetic intimation of Solomon's course so bright, yet so

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dark—for while in his reign the Kingdom attained its highest dignity and glory (the position signified by the "right hand"), yet, nevertheless, from the time of Solomon's coronation began Israel's sorrowful decline and apostasy. Thus we have sought to show how the utterances of the mothers of Jacob's twelve sons were so many prophetic intimations of the course of the history of the Nation which descended from them, and that the order of the sayings of these mothers corresponds with the order of Israel's history, outlining that history from its beginning in Egypt until the end of the undivided Kingdom in the days of Solomon, for it was then the history of Israel as a nation terminated, the ten tribes going into captivity, from which they have never returned, almost immediately after. To complete the study of this hidden but wonderful prophecy, particular attention should be paid to the way in which Jacob's sons were grouped under their different mothers, for this also corresponds exactly with the grouping of the outstanding events in Israel's history. The first four sons were all borne by Leah, and her utterances all pointed forward to one group of incidents, namely, Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the Egyptians. The fifth and sixth sons were borne by a different mother, namely, Bilhah, and her utterances pointed to a distinct series of events in Israel's history, namely, to their experiences in the Wilderness. The seventh and eighth sons were borne by Zilpah, and the ninth and tenth by Leah, and their utterances, closely connected yet distinct, pointed, prophetically, to Israel's occupation and enjoyment of Canaan. The eleventh and twelfth sons were separated from all the others, being borne by Rachael, and so also that to which her words at their births pointed forward to, was also clearly separated from the early events of Israel's history, carrying us on to the establishment of the Kingdom in the days of David and Solomon. In drawing this article to a close, one or two reflections upon the ground we have covered will, perhaps, be in place: First, What a striking proof of the Divine inspiration of Scripture is here furnished! Probably no uninspired writer would have taken the trouble to inform us of the words used by those mothers in the naming of their boys—where can be found in all the volumes of secular history one that records the reason why the parent gave a certain name to his or her child? But there was a good and sufficient reason why the words of Jacob's wives should be preserved—unknown to themselves their lips were guided by God, and the Holy Spirit has recorded their utterances because they carried with them a hidden, but real, prophetic significance; and in that recording of them, and their perfect agreement with the outstanding events in the history of Israel, in which, though centuries afterwards, these prophetic utterances received such striking fulfilment, we have an unmistakable proof of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Second, What an object lesson is there here for us that nothing in Scripture is trivial or meaningless! It is to be feared that many of us dishonour God's Word by the unworthy thoughts which we entertain about it. We are free to acknowledge that much in the Bible is sublime and Divine, yet there is not a little in it in which we can see no beauty or value. But that is due to the dimness of our vision and not in anywise to any imperfection in the Word. "All Scripture" is given by inspiration of God, the proper nouns as much as the common

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nouns, the genealogical lists equally as much as the lovely lyrics of the Psalmist. Who would have thought that there was anything of significance in the meaning of the names of Jacob's sons? Who would have supposed that it was of first importance that we should note the order in which they were born! Who would have imagined there was a wondrous prophecy beneath the words used by the mothers on the occasion of them naming their sons? Who! Each and all of us ought to have done so. Once we settle it for good and all that there is nothing in the Bible which is trivial and meaningless, once we are assured that everything in Scripture, each word, has a significance and value, then we shall prayerfully ponder every section, and expect to find "hid treasures" (Prov. 2:4) in every list of names, and according unto our faith so it will be unto us. Third, What a remarkable illustration and demonstration of the absolute Sovereignty of God is found here in Genesis 29 and 30! What a proof that God does rule and overrule! What a showing forth of the fact that even in our smallest actions we are controlled by the Most High! All unconsciously to themselves, these wives of Jacob in naming their babies and in stating the reasons for these names, were outlining the Gospel of God's Grace and were prophetically foreshadowing the early history of the Nation which descended from their sons. If then these women, in the naming of their sons and in the utterances which fell from their lips at that time were unknown to themselves, guided by God, then, verily, God is Sovereign indeed. And so affirms His Word, for OF HIM, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." (Rom. 11:36)."

Endnotes.

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Bible Versions Abbreviations used.

<i>Abbr.</i>	<i>Designation.</i>	<i>Abbr.</i>	<i>Designation.</i>
AKJV	Authorized King James Version.	LEB	Lexham English Bible.
ASV	American Standard Version.	MEV	Modern English Version.
BRG	BRG Bible.	MSG	The Message.
CEB	Common English Bible.	NASB	New American Standard Bible.
CEV	Contemporary English Version.	NABRE	New American Bible Revised Edition.
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible	NCV	New Century Version.
CSB	Christian Standard Bible.	NET	New English Translation.
DRA	Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition.	NIV	New International Version.
DT	Darby Translation.	NKJV	New King James Version.
EHV	English Heritage Version.	NLT	New Living Translation.
ERV	Easy to Read Version.	NLV	New Life Version.
ESV	English Standard Version.	NOG	Names of God Bible.
EXB	Expanded Bible.	RSV	Revised Standard Version.
GNT	Good News Translation.	TLB	The Living Bible.
GNV	1599 Geneva Bible.	TLV	Tree of Life Version
GW	God's Word to the Nations.	VOICE	The Voice.
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible.	WEB	World English Bible.
ICB	International Children's Bible.	WYC	Wycliffe Bible.
ISV	International Standard Version.	YLT	Young's Literal Translation.

Useful websites:

<i>Website.</i>	<i>Address.</i>
Bible Gateway.	https://www.biblegateway.com/
Blue Letter Bible.	https://www.blueletterbible.org/
Bible Hub	https://biblehub.com/
Greek TR	https://www.logosapostolic.org/bibles/textus_receptus/greek_textus_receptus_index.htm
Mechon-Mamre Hebrew Bible	https://mechon-mamre.org/
Qbible.	http://qbible.com/
Scripture4All	https://www.scripture4all.org/

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Other works available:

A number of other works are available in PDF format on request. Please contact: Mike Viccary at thedoc.mike@gmail.com

“Evolution: A house of cards.” This work is a critique of evolution from a chemist's point of view. It also includes critical examination of 17 authors who ride roughshod over the early chapters of Genesis.

“Hearing what God has spoken.” A consideration of the doctrine of Scripture and how to study, and meditate on God's word.

“Sin, Science, and Salvation.” This work considers the nature of modern science and its relationship to truth and to the Scriptures.