

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE MISSION

GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 1 Reading : Genesis 1

v1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Before all else, God was there. The world was planned, designed, measured, created by Him. We cannot really know what this means; what work God did before He created our world; or how many other worlds there might be beyond the reach of telescopes and space probes. We can only wonder—and worship.

v2 The earth was shapeless, empty, dark! How long had it lain like that? Why was it so desolate? What happened? Men may dig, probe, measure, study, guess, but in the end only God really knows.

v3-5 Day 1 Consider the power of God! The Word was spoken: it was done "and there was light"! Without it there is no life. Light and dark are opposed: like day—night; summer—winter; beginning—end; life—death. Jesus said "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" John 8:12. Without Him the world is in darkness.

Our world was dead—God gave it light and life. Then, when the time was right He gave His only Son Jesus to be "the light of the world" for another new beginning. Here is the Gospel in Genesis.

v6-8 Day 2 When God spoke chaos went away. "He is not a God of disorder" 1 Cor. 14:33. He created order in heaven and earth. We cannot work in a state of disorder, and there have been world disasters caused by a lack of order in thought, planning or action. Spiritual disorder can lead to disorderly lives—and spiritual disaster. See 2 Thess. 3:6-15.

v9-13 Day 3 Before the gathering of waters into separate places, there was no dry land—no life as we know it. Without space above the earth, there was no air to breathe. Without water under the earth there would be no wells; no water to drink. We see the design, planning, orderliness of God's Creation. Without light, air, food, water, we cannot live. God made all those things. Then—a fresh green carpet of grass, covering the bare brown earth: then "the herb yielding seed"—year by year—and the tall spreading trees with roots to hold the soil together; with branches and leaves for shade—and fruit for food. "And God saw that it was good".

v14-19 Day 4 Sun, moon and stars appeared; bringing days, months, years, the changing seasons. The sun rises each day—set in its course by the command of God—giving life, growth, food. Night brings the blessing of sleep—renewing strength and hope with each new dawn. The moon and stars relieve the blackness of night. It all shows God's loving provision for us. There is no natural life without the sun—there is no spiritual life without "the Sun of righteousness"—See Mal.4:2.

v 20-23 Day 5 Then both sea and air were filled with a billion wonderful forms of life! Imagine it—God and His angels creating endless colour, variety, size, shape, delicacy or power! Job 38-41. "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy"! Job 38:7. The song of praise rose again at the

birth of Jesus Luke 2:8-14. There is joy for us too, when we turn from our sins Luke 15:10. When Jesus returns to "sit on the throne of his father David", we hope to join in that song.

v24-31 Day 6 Then came man! v27 says it so simply: yet we are the most amazing creatures. How can anyone imagine that the world "just happened"? When we consider the human body, or even a simple flower—it is beyond understanding! David says it beautifully in Ps.139:13-18; "I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Your works; I know that very well".

So God prepared a world of perfect order, set to continue down the ages. He had clothed the earth in green beauty—grass, herbs, flowers, trees and bushes—all bearing seeds and fruit in themselves—year by year.

The waters were filled with multitudes of living creatures—of every imaginable sort. The air was filled with birds—of every size, colour and variety—with thousands of different voices and songs.

v24-25 Day 6 Then came the creation of the animals—"The beast of the earth after his kind—the cattle after their kind—and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth after his kind: "And God saw that it was good". Now everything was ready for the final creation.

v26-28 "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth". What a wonderful creature this man was! What honour was given to him: likened to God and to His angels—able to communicate and to respond to his Creator—having dominion over the earth and every living creature! His work was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. He was to care for all this wonderful world in which God had placed him, and for all the creatures over which God had given him dominion.

v29-30 God created man, and spoke to him, and taught him. He gave him every herb of the field, and all the fruits of the trees for his food. For the animals also—every green herb for meat

v31 At the end of all His work, especially the creation of man "God saw everything that He had made—and behold—it was very good".

This was the beginning of the creation which will only be completed and perfectly fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ—when He returns to set up God's Kingdom on earth. Then at last "God will be all, and in all".

QUESTIONS

1. What did God do at the very beginning? V1
2. What was the earth like, before our creation began? v2
3. What did God say when He "started work"? v3
4. How many days did God work, in this chapter?
5. Make a list of the work that God and His angels did on each day.
6. In whose image was man created?
7. What work did God give to man? v26-29
8. What food did God provide for man?
9. What food did God provide for the birds and beasts?
10. What did God see, when He looked at His work at the end of each day?

Two questions to really make you think::

11. What do we learn about God in this chapter?
12. What does creation teach us [See Romans 1 v 20]

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LESSON 2 Reading : Genesis 2

v1-3 God rested from all His work. He blessed the 7th day and made it holy; a day of rest after 6 days of work; to give thanks and worship, to teach the children about God. Read Ex.20:10-11 It was God's command.

v4-7 More about creation. It did not rain at that time: "streams came up from the earth and watered the face of the ground" (NIV). v7 the creation of Adam—which means 'of the ground'. "God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being"—in the image of God, but of dust, not divine material! "The breath of life" just means that if we breathe we live—if we do not breathe we die. Air is a mixture of gases blended by God, to provide all that we need for healthy living (with food, drink and exercise).

Adam was made from dust—and every beast of the field, every fowl of the air v19. They all came from dust. God breathed life into them all. Read ch.6:17 and ch.7:21-23. God links man and beast together with the same breath of life—He makes no difference between them in that way.

v8-15 Where was Eden? how big was it? where are the four rivers? Pison and Gihon cannot be found; Hiddekel is the Tigris; the last is Euphrates. They are in Mesopotamia (Iraq), running out into the Persian Gulf. So the garden was between Iraq and the Mediterranean. God planted in the garden all that Adam could possibly need, and put him in the garden to take care of it. It was a "paradise", from the Ancient Persian, "a beautiful garden". God gave Adam life, work, rest, responsibility, beauty and peace.

v16-17 These verses hold the key to the history of the world, and to our search for salvation. If Adam obeyed, he would continue to live in Eden, if he disobeyed, he would begin to die. There was no misunderstanding. The statement is plain. He would be a dying soul. "The soul that sins, it shall die" Eze.18:4. The Bible knows nothing of immortal souls.

v18-20 "It is not good for man to be alone"—we know the truth of that! Adam was kept busy seeing, studying and naming every creature, but still he was alone. God could provide for all his needs. Remember that in times of distress. God knows our needs and will provide—if we trust Him—all that we need for eternal life. Read Ps.37:1-7 and Matt. 11:28-30.

v21-25 The first operation. No scars, no stitchmarks! Woman was of the bone and flesh of the man. The human family is all one flesh. Imagine how Adam felt when at last he had a companion to share the wonderful garden—the daily work, the beauty of nature—and the companionship of the angel of the Lord, "in the garden in the cool of the day" ch.3:8. An important law is shown in v24. See Matt. 19:3-6. Marriage was to be between one man and one woman—for life. When we read v25, we long for Jesus to return, and to bring such purity and peace to the earth again!

QUESTIONS

1. What two things happened on the seventh day? v2-3
2. How was the ground watered before there was rain? v5-6
3. What did man become when God breathed into his nostrils? v7
4. What was in the middle of the garden? And where was Eden? v9-14

5. What did God command Adam not to do? v16-17
6. What would be the result of disobedience? v17
7. What would man become if he disobeyed? See Notes on v16-17.
8. Read v18. What did God do about it first of all in v19-20?
9. Describe the creation of the woman. v21-23
10. What was the important law shown in v24?

Two questions to help you to think about God and our life:

11. Why do you think God chose to make man? What is man's purpose in life?
12. Is it only God who can give and take away life? Why is this important?

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LESSON 3 Reading : Genesis 3

Adam and Eve were pure and innocent. They looked after the garden in the daytime, and in the evening they had the company of the angel of the Lord who walked with them "in the garden in the cool of the day". They had not chosen to love and serve God: they knew nothing else. If they were to serve Him freely—they would have to know that there were two ways; two choices—God's way—or their own way!

v1-7 The serpent gave them the chance to show their love for God. He showed Eve the two choices. He knew what God had said in ch.2:17, for he used that word surely v4. How much did he understand? He could speak and reason. (Did all animals speak at that time)? The Bible only says he was more crafty than the rest. Why did Eve stay by the tree—and where was Adam? Eve knew what God had said. She should not have been there!

We need to learn from her mistake. Jesus told his disciples to keep out of the way of temptation Matt.5:27-30. See Prov.4:14-15.

v6 Could there be a sillier reason for throwing away life? The garden was full of trees which were good for food, and pleasant to the eyes; and the angel could supply all the knowledge they wanted. What a waste! They got no pleasure from it. They had wanted to be like gods knowing good and evil. They threw away life. And what did

they know? "they knew that they were naked"!—and they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves!

Look again at the lie in v4 "You will not surely die". His word against God's Word. Sadly, this lie is still taught. People say "death is not the end, but the beginning—in the moment of death the soul flies up to realms of heavenly bliss" which is the same as saying "you will be like gods"! Men will not believe that God meant what He said to Adam—"You will surely die!" "You will return to the dust".

Eve's nature was passed on to her children. The Bible is full of men and women who turned from God for foolish reasons—e.g. Esau, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" Gen.25 and Heb.12:16; and Naaman the Syrian who nearly threw away healing for pride; and Gehazi the servant of Elisha, who threw away everything for greed 2 Kings.5. Do we do the same?

v8-13 They hid in fear and shame. The Lord simply said "Where are you?" They had to come out to face Him and explain themselves. We have to come out of our hiding places to confess and ask forgiveness—not close our eyes to guilt. Shame followed guilt. Adam blamed both God and Eve. She blamed the serpent—a familiar human failing! We all do it!

v14-15 The serpent had been the highest of the animals; Now it would be the lowest, crawling on its belly in the dust—hated, feared, despised; a symbol of sin! The evil that it brought would be called—the tempter; that wicked one; Satan; devil; all that is evil, that opposes God and destroys. God made a promise of hope on that dreadful day—for a seed of the woman to bring salvation and to destroy sin v15. A crushed head means death! A bruised heel is painful but not fatal. The "seed of the woman" was to be Jesus. He would bruise SIN in the head. He would be "wounded" but not destroyed. By His perfect life of obedience, even unto the death on the cross, he would destroy the power of sin and bring salvation.

v16 The woman would share with the rest of creation, the curse of death. Pain, sorrow, tears and trouble would be added. She would be ruled over by her husband. What a world of misery and humiliation have come from those words! But God gave her hope: in the weariness and pain of childbearing in a world turned

upside down, she could set her mind on the hope of the son who would

save them. With each son, she would wonder if this might be the one! Sadly, Eve did not see that hope fulfilled.

v17-19 Adam was blamed for listening to Eve. Not that a man should never listen to his wife—but Eve had tempted him—and he had not considered God's command. He was the one to whom the command was given, and Eve was in his care. He had chosen to disobey. "Dust you are, and to dust you will return". Since that time, men and women have sinned continually: proud; self willed; rejecting God; refusing to accept their true nature. See Job 14:1-2-Ps.103:14-16; Ps.146:3-4; Ecc.9:4-6; Isa.40:15-17. This is man's natural state. Repentance is the only way to salvation.

We are all of

v20 says that all people come from Adam and Eve. one blood.

v21 Adam and Eve had tried to cover themselves with fig leaves—which would wither in a few days—giving them a taste of their own mortality! God provided a cover for their nakedness. Animals were killed—their blood was shed! Imagine the shock to Adam and Eve—the first sight of violent death—and it was all their fault! They knew that they deserved to die. The blood was shed to cover their sin. God had given a covering—but nakedness was still there underneath. Sacrifice covered sin—but sinfulness was still there. Skins wear out: coverings must be renewed. There would be more sins; more sacrifice; more blood shed to remind them of their guilt. Many lambs died—but they brought no lasting salvation. See Heb.9:22 and Heb.10:4.

There was only one way to bring salvation and only God could provide it. The seed of the woman was the Lord Jesus Christ—the

Son of God. He was ... "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29. At the Last Supper Jesus said—"this is my blood of the new testament, shed for many for the remission of sins" Matt.26:28. See Rom.5.12-21.

v22-24 Now that man knew good and evil, he would have a great urge to choose evil! The Way to the tree of life was kept from sinful man—but kept for "the one who would be worthy" Rev.5:12. It was taken from man in Genesis. It will be given back again in Rev.2:7 and Rev.22:1-5. We come full circle—from Genesis to Revelation—God's plan fulfilled!

Note You may have wondered why the "voice (or sound) of the Lord God" is called the "angel of the Lord" in the notes. John 1:18, 1 John.4:12 1.Tim.6:16 and Ex.33:20 tell us that "No man has seen God at any time". We know that the angels are God's, messengers: they are God's ministers. When an angel came to one of God's servants, he spoke with the authority of God and is sometimes referred to as if he were God. So when the "Voice of God walked in the garden"—the only sensible way to understand it is as "the angel of the Lord".

QUESTIONS

1. What had God said to Adam in ch2:17?
2. What was the serpent's lie? v4-5
3. How did Adam and Eve try to cover their nakedness?
4. What did they do v8-10—and why did they do it?

5. How was the serpent cursed? v14-15
6. What was Eve's punishment? v16 .
7. What early promise of salvation was in v15-16?
8. What was Adam's punishment? v17-19
9. How did God cover their nakedness? v21 Three questions to help you to think about your own life:
10. What is the result of us all being Adam's descendants?
11. What should we do when we are tempted to sin?
12. How can we get back to the fellowship with God which Adam and Eve lost by their sin?

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LESSON 4

Reading : Genesis 4 & 5

CHAPTER 4

4 v 1-5 We might imagine a small family all alone in the world: but a woman can have a baby every year for many years. Eve was healthy, undamaged by sin and disease.

God greatly increased her conception; so there could be more than 50 children in 50 years. Adam lived 930 years "and had sons and daughters ch.5:4-5! They grew up—married—had children—hundreds of different personalities. Imagine the rivalries and jealousies! God gave laws to Adam and Eve. They knew that they deserved to die, but the sacrifice of a lamb was accepted in their place. v3 Cain thought the harvest from the sweat of his brow was as good as Abel's lamb! He forgot the Law of God and the meaning of the slain lamb. He brought a gift but did not admit sin. Abel brought of the firstborn of his flock. "The Lord accepted Abel's offering". Abel obeyed—Cain chose his own way. The division into two types had begun—Sons of God—and sons of men!

4v6-19 God gave Cain the chance to repent—but Cain struck out at the innocent one—as we often do when in the wrong! v9 is like ch.3:9—the quiet question, to which Cain must give an answer. He refused to take the blame. He showed self pity at his punishment. Do we see ourselves here? God was more merciful than Cain had been to Abel! We don't know what mark God put on Cain. There is something familiar about v16—like Judas who went out from the presence of his Lord—and it was night—John 13:21-30!

4v19-24 Lamech broke the pattern of one man, one wife—and committed the second murder. Evil spreads! One sin leads to another. In these verses we are introduced to nomadic tent dwellers who measure wealth by the size of their flocks, and to the beginnings of music and craftsmen of all sorts.

4v25-26 A new son—a new beginning. By the time Seth himself had a son, men had become divided into—"the sons of God" and "the sons of men".

CHAPTER 5

A record of the important descendants of Adam. Each man had sons and daughters, but only one son is recorded each time.

v5 Note the length of life in those days—Adam lived for 930 years.

v21-24 Enoch—a man of whom no evil is recorded. He walked with God

v27-32 Methuselah, the oldest man - 969 years. He was the father of Lamech, who begat Noah—another new beginning in God's plan and purpose.

QUESTIONS Chapter 4

1. Read ch.3:15 what would Eve think when her first son was born?

2. What did Cain bring for an offering? v3
3. What did Abel bring? Which one was acceptable to God? v4-5
4. What did Cain do then? How was he punished? v8-15
5. Who and what were (1) Jabal: (2) Jubal: (3) Tubal Cain? v19-22
6. Who was Seth? How were men divided in his days? See Notes on v25-26.

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

7. What do we learn from Cain and Abel?
8. We do not have to give animal sacrifices to God, but what should we give Him?

QUESTIONS Chapter 5

How many years did Adam live?

From which of his sons did the line run in this chapter? v3-5

What was special about Enoch's character? v21-24

How old was Methuselah when he died? v27

What did Lamech say when Noah was born? v29

How many sons were born to Noah?

To which "division of men" did the men in this chapter belong?

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LESSON 5

Reading: Genesis 6

v1-8 The daughters of men led the sons of God into wrong ways—as Eve offered the fruit to Adam—and he took it!) The sons of God became sons of men! - "But Noah found favour in the eyes of God". "He walked with God" like his great-grandfather Enoch. 2 Cor.6:14-18 warns us to keep away from temptation - "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; come out from among them; be separate; touch no unclean thing ..."

v5-12 Consider God's loving care in creation. How great was God's grief and anger at the darkness and evil in the earth. Think of the violence in our world: wars, suffering, oppression, starvation. The earth cries out for the return of Jesus, and the destruction of sin and wickedness.

v13-17 God told Noah what He was going to do—and why! His faith would be severely tested in the years to come. He would need all God's help to work patiently, faithfully year after year. It would be his duty (as with all God's servants) to warn his neighbours of God's judgment; to beg them to repent and seek His forgiveness. God provided plenty of time v3. Noah was around 480 years old at the start of this story, and 600 when the flood came. At the end of the time there would be no turning back. If men would repent, they would be saved—but if not, they would have to face God's judgment! The same is true for us today. "... now is the day of salvation" 2 Cor.6:2: "God ... commands all men everywhere to repent" Acts. 17:33-31. Read the parable of the ten virgins Matt.25:1-13.

The NIV gives the measurements of the Ark as 450ft.(140m) long, by 75ft. (23m) wide, by 45ft.(13.5m) high; a 3 storey vessel. It was a huge task for Noah and his sons! Gopher wood is thought to be either cedar or cypress. There was plenty of both in that area. It was to be coated inside and out with pitch—bitumen—a tarry substance found naturally there. Bitumen comes from crude oil. Iran, Iraq, and down to the Persian Gulf is one of the great oil regions of the world. This is one of the hundreds of hidden facts which prove the truth of God's Word, and give pleasure to the Bible student. v16 Noah was to leave about half a metre space at the top, under the roof, for light and air.

v18-22 God made a covenant with Noah: that he and his family would be saved from the destruction that was coming upon the whole earth. Only eight people would be saved out of the possible millions of inhabitants. God knew the end from the beginning: He knew that not one of them would listen to Noah: not one would repent. But still, in His mercy He gave them the time, and He gave them the faithful preacher. (The Bible Concordance translates "covenant" as "league". The dictionary gives "pact, bargain, agreement, contract, bond"). God also made provision for saving the living creatures; and He reminded Noah that he would need to collect sufficient food for both men and beasts. How could Noah and his sons possibly collect all these creatures, and the food, and attend to the building of the Ark? v20 suggests the answer, "two of every sort shall come unto you, to keep them alive". The food could be collected and stored by the four wives.

QUESTIONS

1. How much time did God give men, in which to repent? v3
2. In what way was Noah different? V8-9

3. What did God say about the earth in v11 -13
4. Describe the Ark. v14-16
5. How many people were to go into the Ark?
6. What was Noah to take into the Ark? v19-21
7. What lesson should we learn from v1-2? 2 Cor.6:14-18

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

8. What important lesson comes to us in verse 24?
9. Read Luke 17 v 20-36. What do you think Jesus is teaching us in verse 26?

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LESSON 6

Reading: Genesis 7

Noah and his sons worked year after year—building a boat on dry land and preaching repentance—and not one convert! Imagine the curiosity and laughter as the years passed. Noah stood alone for God. Many servants of God stood alone against indifference, laughter, hatred, attack. This was made complete in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

v1-3 "The animals went in two by two" but there was a difference between clean and unclean. It would be seven pairs for clean animals and birds. Adam's family had known about sin offerings and sacrifices. Now we see that they had also been taught about clean and unclean creatures.

v4 God gave a last warning—just seven days more! No one had repented. Animals, birds and food were there. Noah had to get them into the Ark, ready for forty days of rain. What a sight it must have been! Hundreds of people might have come to see this "madman" and his family, filling the strange vessel with animals and food—day after day for a whole week! It is possible that the people had not seen rain. In the beginning, a mist (or streams) came up from the ground to water the earth ch.2:5-6. The lesson comes down to our day. We have not seen the return of Jesus, but the Day of the Lord will come—and our time will have run out!

v5-10 "Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him". Lamech his father, died when Noah was 595 ch.5:30. We may wonder if he helped in the work. Although he had sons and daughters besides Noah—not one of them was saved (unless Noah's sons married Lamech's daughters).

v11-12 Many parts of the world have tremendous storms, hurricanes, cyclones and monsoons, causing the most devastating floods. Thousands of lives are lost in landslides and mudslides caused by the rain; but this was more terrible than anything we could imagine!

v13-24 Only eight people out of all mankind went into the Ark. Note v. 16 "the Lord shut him in". Would Noah have opened the door in pity when the waters began to rise? From v17 the waters rise verse by verse, until "Only Noah and his family were alive" v23. It was the end of life outside the Ark—but a time of testing inside. They floated on an endless sea for five months! They had no idea when they would see dry land again. Week after week—month after month—their faith was tested!

v15 & 21-23 Man and beast are linked together - "all in whose nostrils was the breath of life". See Ps.49:20.

See also: 1.Pet.3:20-21 Noah and his family were saved by faith and obedience and water: so are we. The principles of salvation were set out at the very beginning. They remain firm and true throughout Scripture. Read Rom.6. Noah and his family were safe in the Ark: and we are safe in Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. How many pairs each of "clean" beasts and birds went into the Ark?
2. How many "unclean" beasts?
3. Why do you think "God shut the door"?
4. How old was Noah when he went into the Ark? v11

5. How was this great and terrible flood produced? V11-12

6. For how many days did it rain?

7. What happened to all living creatures outside the Ark? v21-23

8. How are men and animals linked in this chapter? v15 & 21-23

9. For how long did the waters "flood the earth"? v24

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. How can we be 'in an ark' like Noah? Look at 1 Peter 3v21 and Hebrews 11 v 7.

11. It seems that the animals came to Noah: he didn't have to go and round them up. Do we need to learn to trust and obey God and not worry?

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LESSON 7

Reading: Genesis 8

v1-4 In all the horror and destruction of the flood, God's eyes were on Noah. Ararat is in Eastern Turkey, north of Mesopotamia (Iraq). The flood began on the 17th day of the 2nd month. It rained 40 days and nights. The earth was flooded for 150 days—5 months! We know nothing of that time, but just imagine it! They were people like us. How were the animals fed and cleaned? Did they partly hibernate? Deut.29:5-6—God provides.

v5-13 Another 3 months wait before the tops of the mountains appeared! Then another 40 days v6! Then two very different birds were sent out, a raven and a dove. The large, scavenging bird of prey, and the gentle, home-loving dove. The raven went free but the dove returned. Another 7 day wait. This time the dove came back with an olive leaf in her beak. The trees were above the water and they were alive. The earth would be fit to live in. Yet another 7 days! The dove went out a third time and did not return. The dove with the olive leaf was a sign of hope to the family. It is still a symbol of peace, the end of strife—when someone "holds out the olive branch"!

v14-19 By the 1st day of the 1st month of Noah's 601st year, the earth was dry. They must have been so relieved to see the sky clear above them and solid earth beneath. But they still had to wait nearly another 2 months! At last, on the 27th day of the 2nd month—God let them out of the Ark. They had endured a whole year and ten days in that Ark—but it was their salvation, safe in the vessel that God provided. We are called to walk in

the "strait and narrow path" - 'In Christ—the Ark that God provided—safe in The way of salvation'. They came out to another new beginning.

v20 Noah made a sacrifice of thanksgiving and worship. God had spared their lives though they were sinners too. God does not take pleasure in the death of the creatures He has created—but He does take pleasure in the loving obedience of his children. If we offer our hearts to Him and try to overcome sin and walk in His ways, a "sweet smell" rises to Him. It was God's pleasure then—and it is His pleasure now! Read Ps.51. The sacrifice was the sign of their love for God. Obedience is the token of our love for God. What was true for them, is true for us too.

v21-22 God knew that man would always turn to evil -"the inclination of his heart is evil from childhood". He did not want to destroy them again. There would have to be another way. v22 is very beautiful—"As long as the earth endures—seedtime and harvest—and cold and heat—and summer and winter—and day and night—will never cease". God's covenant still stands. "This is what the Lord says: He who created the heavens—He is God. He who fashioned and made the earth—He founded it. He did not create it to be empty—but formed it to be inhabited. He says I am the Lord—and there is no other" Is.45:18.

QUESTIONS

1. Where did the Ark come to rest?
2. When were the tops of the mountains seen? v5
3. What happened in v6-9?
4. What happened in v10-12?

5. What happened in v13-14?

6. How long were they in the Ark altogether? See Notes v14-19.

7. What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the Ark? v20

8. What did God promise in v21-22?

9. What way did Peter say Noah's salvation was like ours in 1 Peter 3 v 20-21 ?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. Although God knows our hearts are evil, does that mean we should go on doing evil in our lives? What should we do?

11. What do we learn from Noah's life?

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LESSON 8

Reading : Genesis 9

v1-7 See Gen. 1:28. It was a new beginning. God gave the same blessing—the same command—to spread out and fill the earth. One thing would be different: fear was added to man's dominion over the other creatures. Man would become a hunter—the animals would be his prey! In Eden, man and beast ate herbs and the fruits of the trees. Now, "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you". Many animals also became meat eaters and began to prey upon others. One thing was forbidden in this new diet: the eating or drinking of blood! Life was in the blood; it was therefore very precious. They had to remember the first shedding of blood when God Himself provided Adam and Eve with skins to cover their sin. We remember the greatest shedding of blood—the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Heb.9:28. The principle of a life for a life was set out here. God set the standard because men could not be trusted to treat each other fairly.

v8-17 God made an everlasting covenant with man and beast, that He would never flood the earth again. He gave the rainbow as a sign of the truth of His word. It seems that this was a new sign—which supports the idea that it may not have rained before—(ch.2:5-6).

v18-29 Once again, we see the division between good and evil—between blessing and cursing. We also see the foolishness of drinking too much wine! v18 gives a hint of trouble to come—"and Ham is the father of Canaan". Many years passed between v18 and v20. By now, Shem, Ham and Japheth had grown up families. We know this because Noah cursed Canaan and no grandfather would place a great curse upon a young child. Canaan was the youngest son of Ham, so all this happened many years later.

The account of Noah's vineyard, his drunken sleep, and the behaviour of his sons, contains a small mystery. Noah blessed Shem and Japheth v24-27; but in spite of what most people seem to think, he did not curse Ham. He cursed Canaan the youngest son of Ham. v24 says "when Noah found out what his youngest son had done to him..."—but Ham was his middle son. However Canaan was his youngest grandson—and in the Bible records—"sons and grandsons" are usually just called "sons". In Gen. 14:14, Lot the nephew of Abram was referred to as "his brother". So, probably, it should have said "When Noah found out what his youngest grandson had done to him, he said "Cursed be Canaan" We do not know exactly what Canaan did to his grandfather. We only know that he was cursed. But, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were among his descendants!—and we know what Sodomites are!

Palestine—the land of Israel, was previously called the land of Canaan.

From Shem, Ham and Japheth, came the three main divisions of the peoples of the world. But in the early days, before men were scattered all over the earth, they would have intermarried; so the divisions of these family groups is not as sharp and clear as some people think.

QUESTIONS

1. What did God tell Noah and his sons to do in v1?
2. What new thing came into the relationship of man and beast? v2
3. In what way was their diet changed? v3
4. What did God say about men who commit murder? v6

5. What was the "token" of God's covenant with Noah? V12-16
6. Who was blessed by Noah, and who was cursed? V25-27
7. How long did Noah live after the flood? How long altogether? v28-29

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

8. We may not be tempted to commit murder. But look at Jesus' words in MatthewS v 21-22. What does this teach us about how we should behave?
9. How do you think a faithful God who keeps His promises wants us to behave in our everyday lives?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 9

Reading: Genesis 10

V1 Shem, Ham and Japheth were the sons of Noah. All nations came from them. Here is an outline of the nations from Smith's Bible Dictionary.

v2-5 JAPHETH. They went north and west to Asia, Europe and America. They became the Western nations. Then they spread out all over the world.

v6-20 HAM Some went to Babylon. Canaan was one of these. Some went south west to Egypt, Ethiopia and Africa—wherever the black races live. "Ham" meant warmth and blackness. Ancient Egypt was known as "the Land of Ham".

A son of Gush (eldest son of Ham) was great in his day -Nimrod a mighty hunter. He built a kingdom which became Babylon - Gen.11. The NIV says he built Nineveh, a city well known in Scripture. Mizraim (Egypt), the second son of Ham was the ancestor of the Philistines, who lived in the land of Canaan. They were great in the days of David (the shepherd boy who became King of Israel, a man after Gods own heart). Some of them were giants. Remember the story of David and Goliath 1 Sam. 17.

The sons of Canaan are well known in Scripture. They always opposed God. They always hated Israel. God said the Jebusites, Amorites, Gergashites and Canaanites would be destroyed—and their land given to the children of Abraham of the tribe of Shem. v19 shows what sort of people the sons of Canaan were—among his descendants were Sodom and Gomorrah!

v21-31 SHEM. The Shemites moved to Mesopotamia, part of Ancient Babylon (Iraq). From there, in Ur of the Chaldees, God called Abram to leave home and family, to go to a land that God would show him. From him came both Jews and Arabs—Shemites—or Semitic races. God divided men into two main groups; the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, and all the rest; Jews and Gentiles. Later, the Gentiles divided into two groups—"black" and "white". This division caused endless bloodshed and misery—mostly brought on the black, by the white. In God's kingdom, all that will be changed—"God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or any more pain; for the former things are passed away" Rev.21:4. There will be no more divisions. They are done away in Christ: Gal.3:26-28 Jew, Gentile; bond, free; male, female; black, white; for "as many as are baptised into Christ, have put on Christ—you are all one in Christ Jesus".

God had told Noah and his family to "be fruitful and multiply, and refill the earth". God would not expect them to split up and move apart at once. They must have felt very much alone. When children were born, they would have needed each other. But what happened to Noah in ch.9, shows that it would have been wiser to obey God and move apart when their children grew up! Disobedience to God always brings trouble to man!

QUESTIONS

1. How many sons did Noah and his wife have? What were their names?
2. What was the general area of the world inhabited by
 - a) The sons of Japheth?

b) The sons of Ham?

c) The sons of Shem?

3. What races did Shem, Ham and Japheth become?

4. What two divisions of men did God later make?

5. What other division did men later make?

6. Who was Nimrod?

What was his first kingdom?

7. Which evil cities were built by the descendants of Canaan?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

8. Does God only call people who are from one race? Look at Acts 17 v 26-27 and 2 Peter 3 v 9.

9. What can you learn for your life from this lesson?

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LESSON 10

Reading : Genesis 11

In ch.11 we see that the sinfulness for which the earth was flooded, was still there! After the death of Noah, men chose evil rather than good. In fact ch.9 showed that something was very wrong, even while he lived.

v1-4 We do not know what the "one language" was. It was created for man by God. Did it disappear—or does it still exist? The land of Shinar is in Babylonia (Iraq), north of Ur of the Chaldees where Abraham was born. This was the land of Nimrod the mighty hunter, who built the kingdom of Babel Gen. 10:10. The people decided to settle there, and stay together instead of obeying God's command to spread out and fill the whole earth. They said "Come, let us make bricks, and bake them thoroughly. They had bricks instead of stone; and bitumen for mortar"—as Noah used to water proof the Ark. Lesson 6 spoke of crude oil in that area. They understood architecture, design and building. They would build a huge city and tower so that they would not be scattered over the world! They would "reach up to heaven". They would "be like God" as the serpent said in ch.3:5.

v5-9 God and His angels saw the people and heard their words—and knew their thoughts. They watched the building of the city. The people thought they could do as they pleased. They forgot the flood and the death of all life on earth, except for Noah and his family in the Ark They were the children of Noah—but they had learned nothing!

Imagine the confusion when God changed their language—and the workmen could not understand each other! The work stopped—and the tower stood there—in the middle of the plain—a monument—not to man's greatness, but to his utter failure to "reach up to heaven" "to be like gods". We should take the lesson to ourselves. God gives us free will; but we are responsible for what we do! Babel or Babylon means 'confusion' because God. changed their language. It also means 'Gate of Bel' (or Baal, god of the Canaanites). So Babylon is the place where false gods are worshipped.

v10-25 These verses follow the line of Arphaxad the son of Shem. He was not the eldest son. Men give honour to the firstborn—but God looks on the heart. God made another new beginning. This must have been one of the very few families who still served God after the tower of Babel.

v26-32 God chose Abram and Sarai for His special people. Gen 20:12 shows that Abram and Sarai were closely related. Nahor married the daughter of his brother Haran. (There were probably few people in Ur who served the Lord). Terah and his family left Ur—travelling up the fertile valley of the Euphrates for hundreds of miles, until they came to Haran, north east of Canaan, and stayed there until Terah died. "Sarah was barren; she had no child" v32. This was very important to them—and to God's purpose, as we shall see in the following chapters.

QUESTIONS

1. How many languages were there at the beginning? v1
2. What did men decide to build? What materials did they use? v3-4
3. What was to be the purpose of this building? v.4.
4. What did God do about it? What happened to the tower? v6-8

5. What did God force men to do? v9
6. Which son of Noah did God choose, to make a new beginning? v10
7. Who did God finally choose for the new line? See Notes on v27
8. Where was Abram's family home? v28
9. What are we told about Sarai? v30
10. To which city did Terah and his family travel? v31

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. Look at Acts 2 v 1-12. Can you see God was doing the opposite here from what He did at Babel? Why was that?
12. In Acts 8, 9 and 10 we see people from Shem, Ham and Japheth all accepting Christ's salvation. What act is it which brings all races together again?

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LESSON 11

Reading: Genesis 12

v1-3 See Neh.9:7 Isa.41:8 and Jas.2:23. He was called “the friend of God.”

God made promises which looked forward to Jesus—and eternal salvation.

1. I will make of you a great nation.
2. I will bless you.
3. I will make your name great.
4. You will be a blessing.
5. I will bless those who bless you.
6. I will curse those who curse you.
7. All nations on earth will be blessed through you.

Nothing would be left to chance. God said "I will". Abram could safely put his life in God's hands. The promises were eternal. The seventh blessing is still future—when all people on the earth shall be blessed in Christ the seed of Abraham Rev.22:1-5. The Gospel had been preached to Adam and Eve—to Noah and his family—and now to Abram and Sarai.

Abram's descendants did become a great nation—Israel. God blessed and guided them. He cared for them. He also punished them for their sins: but He did not take away the promises. Israel is still with us—but where are their enemies—Babylonians, Assyrians, Ancient Egyptians, Goliath's Philistines? The Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perrizites? All gone! Many people have never even heard of them—but everyone knows Israel.

v4-9 Abram had great faith. He was 75 years old and Sarai was barren! He came down east of the River Jordan. See map on back. The dotted line gives the possible route from Ur to Haran then down through Syria, to the ford at Jabbok. Abram would need an easy crossing with all his company. He came to Shechem and the Rain of Moreh. v6 "the Canaanite was living in the land". Canaan was cursed by Noah, but judgment had not yet come. God told Abram that this was the land of Promise v7. It would be taken from the Canaanites and given to his seed. Abram built an altar to the Lord as a token of his obedience and worship. He went south to camp between Bethel and Ai. Again he built an altar, and called on the Name of the Lord.

v10-13 A famine drove Abram south into Egypt, where there was plenty of food. Sarai was very beautiful v11. Abram feared that he would be killed for her. Abram had such faith in God that he had uprooted himself twice! But now his faith seemed to fail. We can take courage from this.

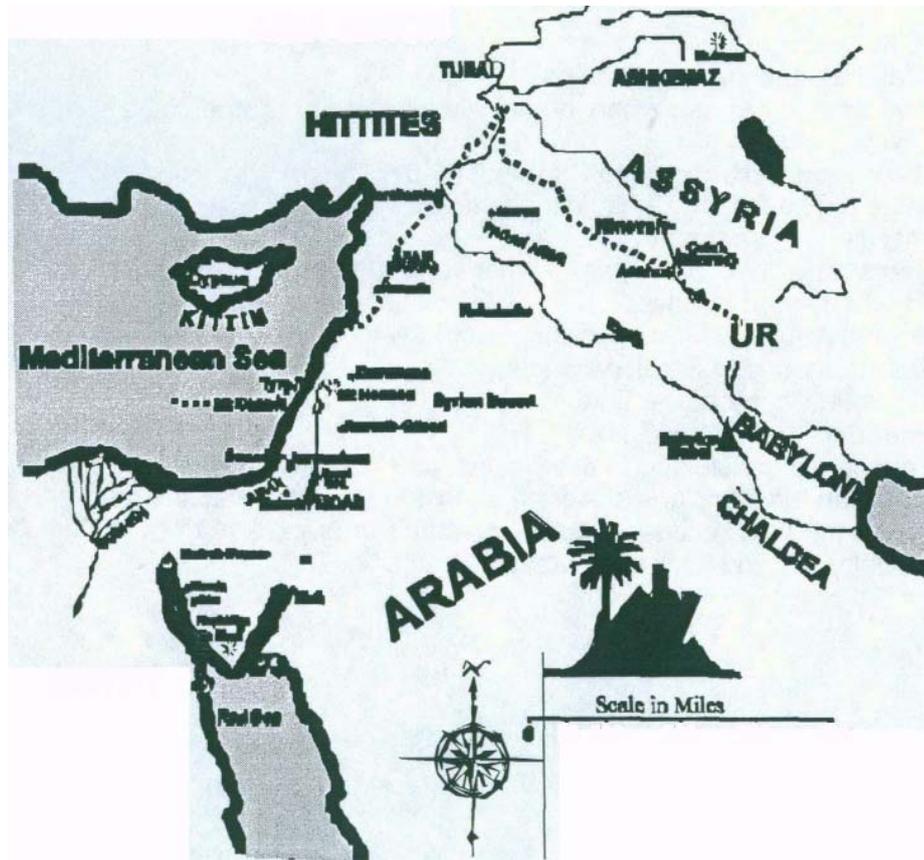
v14-20 Abram's fears were justified. Sarai was taken by Pharaoh. Abram gained much wealth from being the "brother" of this great beauty—but he could not rescue her. Only God could do it! Pharaoh was angry and Abram was sent away—far richer than when he went! They returned to Canaan, to which God had led them and promised to give it to Abram and his seed for an everlasting possession. He did not try to leave it again.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the seven promises of God? v2-3
2. How old was Abram when he left Haran after his father died? v4
3. Who went with him to go to Canaan? v4-5
4. Where did he first make camp in the land of Canaan? v6
5. What did God say to him? v7
6. What special thing did Abram do there and at Bethel? v7-8
7. Why did they go to Egypt?
8. Why did Abram say Sarai was his sister? v11-13
9. What happened to Sarai? v14-15
10. What did Pharaoh give to Abram? v16
11. How did God rescue Sarai?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

12. How can the blessings of Abram apply to us? See Galatians 3
13. Although God rescued Abram we can see telling lies got him into trouble. Do you think God wants us to tell lies?



Possible Route of Abram's Early Travels

MIDDLE EAST

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LESSON 12

Reading: Genesis 13

v1-4 They went up from Egypt, into the south of Canaan again. Lot was still with them. Abram was now very rich in cattle and goods and silver and gold. He travelled north—back to the place between Bethel and Ai where he had built an altar. He sacrificed and worshipped the Lord there.

v5-13 Flocks and herds use a great amount of pasture and water. Besides Abram, there was Lot and his cattle, and the Canaanites and Perizzites. Overcrowding breeds trouble. Serving the Lord does not take our problems away. Dealing with them builds character. Abram was humble and peaceable. He was the elder, the leader—he could have sent Lot away—it was Abram who had been called by God! But that was not his way v8-9. They were in high country, with a good view of the land. Lot was offered the choice and he took it. He chose the land that looked best, on the other side of Jordan—outside Canaan. It was perfect. It reminded him of Egypt v10! There were cities too, Sodom and Gomorrah; plenty of company and comfort. It looked as though Lot had chosen the best place. But "the men of Sodom were wicked—and great sinners before the Lord" v13! It is a lesson to us to act prayerfully and carefully when we choose our way in life.

v14-18 At last Abram had left all his father's house ch.12:1. Now God told him more about the Promises. Abram must study the land, and travel north, south, east and west—for God would give it to him and his seed for ever. God would make his seed as the dust of the earth—too many to be counted! Acts 7:5 says "He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground—But God promised to give it to him and his descendants,—though at that time he had no child"! So the promise is still future. Abraham will have to rise again. Resurrection is shown here in Genesis. But now, God's faithful men and women sleep in the dust—while the call comes to us Heb. 11:39-40. See also 2 Pet. 3:9 and Dan.12:2.

So Abram began to travel through the Land of Promise. They went south to the Plains of Mamre in Hebron. It was high land, opposite the Dead Sea. Once again "Abram built an altar to the Lord". This short sentence shows the character of Abram. He was the servant of the Lord—and wherever he was, whatever he did, his first thought was to give thanks to God—to worship—and to give his daily life to the Eternal Creator who had given him such great and precious promises. The Scriptures are written for us—to teach us how to live our lives as we walk towards the Kingdom.

QUESTIONS

1. To which land did Abram return when he left Egypt? See Notes v1-2.
2. To which place did he then travel? What did he do there? v3-4
3. What trouble arose then? v5-7
4. What did Abram tell Lot to do? v8-9
5. What does that tell us about Abram's character? See Notes.
6. Which land did Lot choose? Why did he like it? v10-11
7. What was said in v13?
8. What promises did God now make to Abram? v14-17

9. What did Abram do at Hebron? v18

10. What does that tell us about his character? See Notes,
last section.

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. Where was Abraham promised that his descendants would live for ever? Was it heaven?

12. What should we think about when we have choices to make in our life?

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LESSON 13

Reading: Genesis 14

Lot settled in the plain of Jordan. It was well-watered sheep country.

Sodom and Gomorrah were probably at the south east end of the Dead Sea—(where the remains of ancient cities have been found, which seem to have come to a sudden end)! At the start of Gen. 14. they were rich and comfortable. Lot had always lived with Abram. He knew about God and the promises, and Abram's goodness and faith. We read that Lot was righteous 2 Pet.2:7 but he lacked Abram's faith. He camped by Sodom—then moved into it!

v1-12 Four kings of Mesopotamia (Iraq) conquered the cities of the plain—but after 12 years they rebelled! The four kings came to teach them a lesson! Five kings of the plain went to fight the invaders. Every city had a king. It was a tribal war. The five kings were beaten. Many fell in the tar pits, but some escaped. The raiders looted Sodom and Gomorrah and carried off many people, including Lot's family and all their goods.

v13-24 Mamre (Hebron) was half way down the west side of the Dead Sea. The messenger would go south of the Dead Sea, past Zoar, and up the west side to Hebron (about 80km). See map Lesson 11.

Here, Lot is called Abram's brother, but he was his nephew. See Notes at end of Lesson 9. We know a little about Abram. He was good and humble; he was chosen by God; he was rich. Now we see that he knew how to defend his household. He had allies in the area.

He had 318 servants trained to fight v14. Dan is at the north edge of the land—by the springs and streams where the Jordan rises (opposite Tyre). This event shows Abram's wealth and the size of his household—for he would have to leave enough men to care for the flocks and herds, and guard the women and children.

The King of Sodom had survived. He came to meet Abram on his return v17. But Abram was met by Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem), priest of the most high God—a great man—greater than Abram. He was "King of Salem, King of peace" Heb.7:2. (Jerusalem means Place of Peace). He brought out bread and wine to Abram. (Remember Jesus, and the bread and wine at the Last Supper Matt.26:26-30?) Melchizedek was also a prophet. He knew where Abram had been. He blessed him and said it was God who had given him the victory! Abram saw that this was a very great man of God and he gave him a tenth (tithe) of all the spoils.

Melchizedek is not mentioned before or after - neither his birth nor his death are recorded! He is king of Salem, king of peace, priest of the most high God—with power to bless a man who was the friend of God. He is a symbol of Christ. Abram saw the greatness of this man. David saw the greatness of what he stood for. Ps. 110:1 points forward to Christ: v4 says he is like Melchizedek. The king of Sodom told Abram to keep the goods for himself v21, but Abram was not tempted. "The most High God" provided for all his needs!

QUESTIONS

1. What happened when Sodom and Gomorrah rebelled? v5-7
2. What was the Vale of Siddim full of? What happened there? v8-10

3. What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot?
4. Who came to meet Abram besides the King of Sodom? v18
5. What did Melchizedek bring out to Abram? v1 8
6. How does that remind us of Jesus? See Notes.
7. What did Melchizedek do next? And what did Abram do? v1 9-20
8. What did the king of Sodom say to Abram? How did he answer? v21-24
9. Who is like Melchizedek ~ a priest for ever — in the New Testament?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. Melchizedek knew it was God who had won the battle for Abram. Have you asked God to guide you in your life?
11. Read Abram's words in v 22. Have you committed your life to God the Creator and the Lord Jesus Christ?

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LESSON 14

Reading : Genesis 15

v1-3 "Fear not Abram" God was with him; there was nothing to fear. If God is for us, who can be against us?" Rom.8:31. See Ps.4:8 and Ps.23.

"I am your shield" always—in every way—mental, physical, spiritual. The shield is worn on the arm—to protect the heart and the soft body to withstand the sword and spear and arrow. God is our shield too!

"I am your great reward" God Himself would be Abram's reward! It looks forward to the Kingdom age, and beyond—when "God will be all in all" 1 Cor. 15:28.

Abram was not comforted. He poured out the deep grief in his heart "Lord, what can you give me—seeing I go childless?" And God, who sees the very thoughts of our hearts, had come to answer this need. God knows all our secret fears. Nothing is hid from Him Ps. 139:1-4. So God said "Fear not Abram"—a wonderful answer from the God of all creation—like the strong arms and comforting words of a father—when a child cries out in the night. It can comfort us too in times of distress—"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" Deut.33:27. God spoke to Abram—and He speaks to us; "Fear not".

v4-8 God renewed His promise of a son. v5 "Look toward heaven and count the stars—so shall your seed be". In ch.13:16 God said "I will make your seed as the dust of the earth". The promises look alike: but think about the dust of the earth—"dust you are and to dust you will return". Then think of the stars of heaven! We see two seeds of Abraham—earthly and heavenly! Gal.3:26-29 A new "seed" is added, through the greater son of Abraham—the Lord Jesus Christ. So we too can be seen in Gen.15:5.

v6 "He believed in the Lord and He counted it to him for righteousness". The apostle Paul wrote two whole chapters explaining this—Rom.4 and Gal.3. Abram had such faith that—if God said it—Abram believed it!

v9-12 Abram watched over his offerings. He drove off the birds of prey until evening when a great sleep came on him. "The horror of great darkness" sounds like death! We too must drive away evil all the days of our life—until the sleep of death. Then we rest until Jesus raises us up.

V13-21 God told Abram about the future—the slavery in Egypt—and the return with great riches. 400 years was set for the captivity, and a return in the fourth generation. 'The sin of the Amorites is not yet full"—God is very patient—giving time to repent before He says—"It is enough!" v17 Abram's offering was accepted. God gave the fire and God gave Jesus. The sacrifice was completely consumed—like the life of Jesus, in His Father's service. God made a covenant with Abram v18-21. The description of the land is rather like the Garden of Eden—Gen.2:10-14.

QUESTIONS

1. How did God come to Abram? v1
2. What did Abram say? v2-3
3. How did God comfort him? v4
4. What did God tell him to do? v5

5. How does that differ from the 'sand on the sea shore'? See Notes.
6. Then what did God tell Abram to do? v9
7. How did Abram protect his offering? v11
8. What spiritual lesson can we see in that? See Notes.
9. What did God tell Abram when he was in the deep sleep? v13-16
10. What sign showed that God accepted Abram's offering? v17

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. How can you too share in the promise God made to Abram? [Look at Romans 6 and Galatians 3]
12. Describe how God can be your shield and reward.

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LESSON 15

Reading : Genesis 16

Sarai was closely related to Abram. She was very beautiful, but barren. She shared his nomadic life, his faith, his thoughts, his feelings. She knew the promises, and expected to bear the promised son. Few women are shown in detail in Scripture, but all who come to Him in love are equally precious. All the people shown in Scripture are there "for our learning".—to lead us to God and to salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

v1-3 Sarai knew that the child would come from Abram—but God had not said Sarai would be the mother: so she told Abram to have a child by her maid. She should have left it in God's hands—but Abram and Sarai were only human, as we are. "Abram agreed". To have more than one wife was common in those days, but it was not as God commanded in the beginning.

Hagar was Sarai's Egyptian maid (probably bought while they were there). Sarai does not seem to have thought of Hagar as a person. She would take the child as her own. Hagar's part would be over.

Abram and Sarai had been in the land for 10 years. Abram was 85: Sarai was 75. She had always been barren, and now she was too old. She thought she was doing the right thing. We know the end of this story—but Sarai did not! We sometimes do the wrong thing, because we do not know the end of our story but God does, and He may keep us waiting to try our faith and patience to build our spiritual character and bring us nearer to Him!

v4-9 Hagar conceived—and despised her mistress. She forgot she was a slave. Vanity overcame common sense. She did not understand Abram's great love for Sarai his true wife. We can imagine what went on! And Hagar ran away. How could she live alone, friendless, without food or shelter? She had a wild streak which broke out when she was pregnant. She finally sank down exhausted. The wilderness of Shur is on the way to Egypt north of the Sinai peninsula. See map Lesson 11: a trade route, quite safe for camel caravans, but no place for single travellers on foot. Hagar was probably trying to get back to Egypt. Having lived so long in Abram's household, did she cry out to God? People who live without God will pray when they are desperate. An angel came. She was bearing Abram's child: she was part of future world history. He told her to go back to her mistress.

v10-14 The angel showed Hagar the future—to give her strength to bear whatever her wildness cost her. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time—later, however, it brings a harvest of righteousness for those who have been trained by it" Heb.12:11. Hagar's child would be a son, Ishmael, which means "God shall hear". v12 shows that something of her nature would pass to her son. Beer lahai-rol means 'The well of God who sees me'.

v15-16 We do not know what happened when Hagar returned. She must have told them what the angel said. God sees everything—they would all feel uncomfortable about that—but it tells us to keep on trying, even when we are ashamed of our sins. God has endless patience if we love Him.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Sarai's handmaid? What nationality was she? v1
2. How long had they lived in the land of Canaan? v3
3. What happened when Hagar conceived? v4

4. What did Hagar do when Sarai treated her harshly? v6
5. Where did the angel find her? What did he say? v7-10
6. What was the name of her son? What sort of man would he be? V11-12
7. What name did Hagar give that place? What did it mean? See Notes.
8. How old was Abram when Ishmael was born? v16

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. When things went wrong for Sarai she blamed Abram (v 5) then Hagar. Can you think of times when you have blamed others instead of admitting you were wrong?
10. What can you learn from Hagar to put into practice in your life?

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LESSON 16

Reading: Genesis 17

V1 "Almighty God"—A new name was shown to Abram. God revealed Himself little by little. Early in Genesis God was "Elohim," Mighty Ones: think of God and His angels at Creation when "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy" Job 38:7. In Gen.2:5 He is LORD God the Eternal—"who was, and is, and is to come..." Rev. 1:8. In Gen. 14:19—the Most High God possessor of heaven and earth: there is none higher! In Gen. 17:1 He is the Almighty God who fills every need. So we learn that He is the Creator—the Eternal One—Most High—Almighty God. He could supply all Abram's needs, if he would "walk before Him and be blameless".

v2-8 It was a great honour for Almighty God to make a covenant with him. "I will multiply you greatly" 'you will be a father of many nations"—at 99!—Abram fell on his face! The Eternal God, Creator of the universe, Lord of heaven and earth, who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty made a covenant with one man in all the earth! And that man was Abram!

It had taken great faith for Abram and Sarah to serve God faithfully and steadily year after year—when all around them went their own way. Now at last the promised son was coming! (We see ourselves here if we are in Christ Rom.4:16-25). His name was changed from Abram "exalted father" to Abraham "father of a multitude". It was an everlasting covenant. The land would be an everlasting possession. God would be their God! Try to imagine the wonder and greatness of what the Almighty God was saying to Abraham His friend—and to us—if we are in Christ

v9-14 Abraham and his seed must keep their part too. Circumcision was a token of the covenant. Cain showed how easy it was for a man to forget the meaning of sacrifice Gen.4. This token could not be forgotten. They would be a nation "set apart" "a holy people". Circumcision was to be performed on every male child at eight days old. Later under the Law of Moses, all work was forbidden on the Sabbath Day - except circumcision! It was made a matter of life or death. Cutting off the foreskin was a symbol of cutting off the sins of the flesh. Rom. 2:29 and Col. 2:11-15

v15-22 Sarai "God is Prince" was changed to Sarah "Princess". Now she was brought into the promise. Abram fell on his face again—and laughed with joy—to be a father at 100 years old—and Sarah a mother at 90! It was impossible! Only God could make it happen. Abraham showed his love for Ishmael when he asked God to remember him. The son of promise would not be the son of a handmaid but of the true wife—born by the power of God. Isaac means "Laughter". But Ishmael would be blessed. The long, painful waiting was over! Sarah would have a child the following year.

v23-27 Abraham wasted no time. He circumcised all the males in his household: every single one:—himself, Ishmael, every man—every boy child. God commanded—Abraham obeyed—"on that very day"—a lesson to us!

QUESTIONS

1. What new name did God reveal to Abram? v1
2. What was Abram's new name and its meaning? See Notes v2-8

3. What was Abraham commanded to do as a sign of the covenant? v11
4. At what age was this to be done? Were there any exceptions? v12-14
5. What was Sarai's new name and 'its meaning? See Notes v15-22
6. What promise was given to her at this time? v16
7. What would God do for Ishmael? v20
8. What did Abraham do when God left him? v23-27
9. When exactly did Abram do this? v23

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. What sort of things do you think you need to cut out of your life to please God?
11. Abram is told 'to walk with God and be blameless'. This sound impossible, but should be our aim. Look at Micah 6 v 8. How should you try to do this in your life?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 17

Reading: Genesis 18

v1-3 Those who live in hot countries will know why everyone was resting. It was strange to see travellers walking in the heat of the day—but it was the custom to welcome them. In Heb.13:1-2 the believers were told "Keep on loving each other as brothers" and "Do not forget to entertain strangers—for by doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it! The writer was probably thinking of Abraham!

v4-5 The first thing was water for their feet! They could wait for food if they could bathe their feet and rest in the shade. Jesus said "Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" Luke 7:36-50. See Jhn.13:3-17—so we should also serve each other.

v6-8 Sarah had her part to play. The work was not left to the servants. Abraham chose the best from the herd! He ran—at 99! When it was ready, he himself served them—a lesson to us!

v9-15 The strangers were not ordinary travellers, but angels! Pleasure, excitement, hope and disbelief struggled in Sarah—and she laughed! She was reprov'd—though not unkindly, for her laughter and disbelief.

v16-22 The travellers set off toward Sodom—and Abraham went with them. Lot was in Sodom and Abraham was worried about him; and perhaps he wanted to stay with the angels for as long as possible. The Lord would tell him what He intended to do v17-19. See Amos 3:7. And we know God told Noah what He was going to do to the earth Gen.6. He also tells us what He is going to do—in the Bible. It is His message, His revelation to us. Two angels went on to Sodom; "but Abraham remained before the Lord".

At the end of the notes on Gen.3 we said that the "Voice of God" was the angel of the Lord—that when an angel came to a man, he would speak with the authority of God, and be spoken of as though he were God, because he came in God's place, with God's message. We find it clearly shown in this chapter. Remember "no man has seen God at any time". The "Lord" v22 was the third angel. Whatever angels may be like in the presence of God, when they come down to men they appear as men. Sometimes they are called men—sometimes angels—sometimes the Lord.

v23-33 See how Abraham's pity for his fellowmen, and his love for Lot, made him bold enough to plead with God—"...though I am nothing but dust and ashes". See also the patience of God with those who love Him. From fifty, right down to ten—and still the Lord agreed! Abraham returned to Sarah. We may wonder if he slept at all that night. See Gen. 19:27.

QUESTIONS

1. Who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre? v1
2. What did he see and do in v2?
3. Briefly tell the story from v3-8—in your own words.
4. What lesson can we learn from this?
5. Who were the three men?
6. What was their message for Sarah? What did she do? v10-12

7. Where were the men going when they left?
8. Why did the Lord tell Abraham where they were going? v17-19
9. Who was also taken into God's confidence before this? Gen.6
10. Where did two of the angels go?
11. 'Briefly tell the story of v23-33—in your own words

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

12. Do you have the faith to believe God's promises are for you?
13. What can you learn from the way Abraham talked to God?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 18

Reading: Genesis 19

v1-3 "Lot sat in the gate" an elder, a judge. A matter of dispute or business was brought to the gate of the city to the elders and anyone who wanted to witness it - Gen 23:18, Gen 34:20 and Ruth 4:1-2. Lot, like Abraham, showed respect to the strangers. (We too, should always

do good and show respect to others—to show that we are children of God). Lot was afraid for their safety; he knew the men of Sodom. Perhaps he sat in the gate to warn travellers not to stay overnight. 2 Pet.2:6-8 "Lot... vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds". The Notes on Gen.13 & 14 suggest that he was a good man—but he had a love of comfort. Perhaps he even thought he could change the men of Sodom!

v4-11 The evil in that city is almost beyond belief v5! And v8 is equally unthinkable. Our daughters are very precious to us: we would guard them with our lives. But one of the sad results of the curse on Eve, was the low value placed by men on women and girls. God made Eve to be a help suitable for him—of his own flesh and bone. Paul said "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it" Eph.5:25. That is how God intended men and women to live. v9 They would have killed Lot too. v11 they struggled blindly to find the door!

v12-16 The young men who were to marry his daughters, refused to listen. That left Lot and his wife and two daughters: four in all! At early dawn the angels tried to hurry them, but it was still home and they hung back. The angels had to pull them out of the city! Are we like that too?

v17-22 Did Lot think God could not look after him in the mountains? It was odd that he wanted to go to another city after all that had happened. In His mercy and patience God agreed. Lot went to Zoar—S. of the Dead Sea v22. Zoar means "Little": it became known as Zoar because of what Lot had said v20. ("On the mountains" with God might be too hard for the natural man—but it brings life to the spiritual man).

v23-29 It was probably mid-morning when they reached Zoar. The whole land was destroyed as well as the cities. Zoar was saved—so when v26 says "his wife looked back from behind him," it was not just a glance from inside Zoar—She must have run back towards Sodom. She was caught in the destruction. There are still pillars of salt there—called "Lot's wife". Not ten righteous—not even five! But Abraham was the friend of God; and for his sake He saved Lot. Jesus said "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God" Luke 9:62.

v30-38 At last Lot did as the angel had told him. His daughters did not want their father's name to die out. What they did shows a lack of faith in God! So, the Moabites and the Ammonites were related to Abraham.

QUESTIONS

1. Who came to Sodom in the evening? What was Lot doing? v1
2. What did he say to the visitors? v2
3. What did the men of Sodom do? How did Lot try to calm them? v4-8
4. How did the angels save Lot and his family? v16
5. Where did the angel tell them to go? Where did they go? v15-22

6. How were the cities of the plain destroyed? v24-25
7. What did Lot's wife do? What happened to her? v26
8. Where did Lot and his daughters go afterwards?
9. What were the names of the sons born in the cave?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. What do you think God felt about all the things which went on in Sodom?
11. Do you sometimes stay too long in evil places, instead letting God lead you to salvation? What can this mean in our lives today?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 19

Reading : Genesis 20

v1 Abraham went south to the Negev—near "The Way to Shur" where Hagar fled from Sarai Gen. 16. God had told Abraham to go through the land, for He would give it him Gen. 13:17. Also they had to find fresh pasture and water from time to time. Abraham would probably visit the trade route to meet camel caravans and trade the produce of Canaan—salt, potash, wine, olives, milk, cheese, meat, wool and fruit—in exchange for cotton and linen goods coming up from Egypt. He could also trade with the caravans coming south to Egypt—with perfumes, spices, balm and myrrh from Gilead (east of the River Jordan—south, of the Sea of Galilee). Later, Abraham went north west to Gerar, in the Land of the Philistines. See Map Lesson 11.

v2-7 As Sarah was to have a child—she probably regained her youthful beauty. Why did Abraham say she was his sister after the trouble it caused in Egypt? We don't know. He had 300 fighting men—why didn't he resist? Jesus said "Do not resist evil" Matt.5:38-48 - "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also". "Abimelech" was not a personal name, but a title like "Pharaoh", King of Egypt. In the time of David and Goliath, the Philistines were a warlike nation; but at this time they were peaceable herdsmen. They were descendants of Ham ch.10:14. The knowledge of God had not quite disappeared from the land. In ch.14 we met Melchizedek—and now Abimelech and his people claimed to be righteous. God came to him in a dream because he had not meant to sin when he took Sarah. v6 When anyone does wrong, the Bible makes it clear that the sin is against God. In v7 God made sure that Abimelech would not take revenge on Abraham: "He is a prophet, and will pray for you, and you will live. If you do not restore her—you and your people will die!"

v8-18 Abimelech's anger was mixed with fear. He did not seem to understand that he should not have taken Sarah. It was the same with Pharaoh Gen. 12. Kings were used to taking what they wanted. Their word was law! But there is a greater law—The Law of God. We must understand that too. Abraham's answer v11 was the same as in Egypt. It seems that in those times, kings might kill the husbands of any beautiful women who took their passing fancy! Having seen the ungodly ways of the people of Egypt and Canaan, Abraham had not expected to find the fear of God in Gerar.

Abimelech (like Pharaoh) gave gifts to Abraham and the freedom to settle where he pleased v14-15. He did not blame Sarah for the trouble—v16 (NIV) "you are completely vindicated" : judged blameless). Abimelech and his household had been barren while Sarah was held captive. How long had this affair lasted? They certainly had time to realise that none of the women in the king's household were with child!

QUESTIONS

1. Where did Abraham go after the destruction of Sodom? v1
2. Which tribe lived in Gerar? (Notes v1)
3. Which son of Noah did they descend from? (Notes v2-7)
4. What did Abraham say of Sarah? v2
5. What was Abimelech's dream? v6-7
6. What did Abimelech say to Abraham? What did he answer? v9-13

7. What did the king give to Abraham? v14-15
8. Whose law is greater than a king's law?
9. What did Abimelech say to Sarah? (Notes, last paragraph)
10. What were the Philistines like in Abraham's day? (Notes v2-7)
11. What were they like in David's day?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

12. Do you think God wants us to tell these half truths?
13. What does He want us to do?

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LESSON 20

Reading: Genesis 21

v1-8 The birth confirmed the promises in Gen. 12:1-3. Abraham became the father of the chosen nation—the father of Jesus, through whom all the promises will be fulfilled—leading to Rev.22:1-7.

v9-11 Ishmael had been the only son for 14 years—and Abraham loved him. Did he think he was the heir? Was he teasing spitefully v9? Sarah's words sound cruel v10—but it was true in God's eyes. The son of the bondwoman could not be heir with the son of promise., That is what salvation is all about. There are two sorts of men—those who love God—and those who don't. We saw it with Cain and Abel; and Seth, when there were "sons of God" and "sons of men"; Noah against the rest of the world; and Abraham—called out from his people by God;—and now Isaac and Ishmael.

In Gal.4:21-31 Paul said—the son of the bondwoman born of the flesh, and the son of the freewoman by promise—were a parable of salvation. He spoke of two covenants—(1) with Abraham—leading to life; and (2) Sinai, the Law—leading to death (like the bondwoman who had no place in the promises). Israel had been sons of promise: but they made themselves sons of the bondwoman—by rejecting Christ, and clinging to the Law. In v28 Paul said to the Christians 'You brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise'. v29 says Ishmael persecuted Isaac. v30-31—God sees the wider, eternal view. He sees our hearts. Only those who are "in Christ" can inherit eternal life. So the principles of salvation were shown to Abraham (and us) in Gen.21:9-12.

v12-21 God confirmed Sarah's words—but said that Ishmael would become a great nation—for he was a son of Abraham. Hagar probably went toward Egypt. She did not turn to God, but He provided for them. Her heart was in Egypt—for when Ishmael grew up, she took a wife for him from there. The desert of Paran is in Upper Sinai—south of the Way to Shur. Life is a journey: the world is a spiritual wilderness. As we travel, God provides the water of life. God, who came to Abraham in Gen. 17 as "all sufficient, all bountiful, the gracious giver" will supply all our needs. Jesus said "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Fear not little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" Luke 12:31-32.

v22-34 Abraham was living at Beer-sheba—with a very large camp. Did Abimelech fear his powerful neighbour? He came to make a pact of peace (bringing the captain of his army with him!). Abraham was a peaceable man and swore to be friendly to the king for ever—he was peaceable without a pact—for some of Abimelech's servants had violently taken a well that Abraham dug—yet he had not complained! Abimelech was shamed. Abraham gave gifts to the king, so that he (like the king of Sodom) could not say he had made Abraham rich! v28-30 Abimelech restored the well. (He must have wished he had stayed at home!) Beer-sheba—"The Well of the Oath". Abraham lived in the land of the Philistines for many years. Beer-sheba was in the far south of the land. Later, to describe the boundaries of the land, people would say—"from Dan to Beer-sheba".

QUESTIONS

1. How old were Abraham and Sarah when Isaac was born? v6andch.17:17.
2. When did Abraham make a great feast? v8
3. What did Sarah see at the feast? What did she say? v9-10

4. How did Abraham feel about it? What did God tell him? V11-13
5. What happened in the wilderness of Beer-sheba? v15~19
6. Where did they settle? What did Ishmael become?. v20-21
7. From where did Hagar find him a wife?
8. Briefly tell the story of v22-32—in your own words.

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. We read in verse 20 that God was with Ishmael. If God is with you, does this mean that you will not have any more problems?
10. We see that Abraham had not complained to Abimelech when his well had been seized. What can we learn from that? See Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5 v 38-42.

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LESSON 21

Reading : Genesis 22

v1-5 Isaac grew up. Then God tested Abraham—the most terrible test a man could have. It was only surpassed by God Himself who gave His only son as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Imagine what this test would do to Abraham who was over 110! But he rose early in the morning—and did all the work himself. See John 3:16, God also did everything Himself. No one else could—Is.59:16. Abraham had to kill his only son! In his mind Isaac was already dead. He went for three days and nights in this terrible knowledge. Now think of God's pain when His only son suffered on the cross—and lay three days and nights in the tomb!

Abraham came to Mt. Moriah, a hill north west of Jebus (later Jerusalem, where Solomon's Temple was built - 2 Chron.3:1). It was a very special place—for outside Jerusalem, Jesus the perfect sacrifice was offered—of which Abraham's sacrifice was a parable, a type. Jerusalem was "the City of the Great King" Matt.5:35—and Jesus will reign there, over all nations on earth. v5 "we will come back to you"—what faith! See Heb.11:17-19.

v6-8 Abraham laid the wood on Isaac—they laid the cross on Jesus as He went to the place of sacrifice. "They went on together"—as one. Jesus said "I and my Father are one" John 10:30. "God will provide a lamb for a burnt offering" v8—a sign of Abraham's great faith—and a prophecy!

v9-14 Abraham must have told Isaac everything—for he did not resist!

Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if this cup cannot pass from me unless I drink it—Your will be done" Matt.26:42. Abraham did not hesitate: God had given the promises; God would provide the lamb! But read Luke 2:35 "a sword will pierce your own soul also". Never think it was easy for Abraham! He did not withhold his only son—and God did not withhold His only son! Abraham was called "the friend of God". He called the place "Jehovah Jireh" "The Lord will provide".

v15-19 God renewed the promises to Abraham, linking together "the stars in heaven" and "the sand on the sea shore", natural and spiritual Israel. Then He added "your seed will conquer (possess the gate of) His enemies"—a reference to Christ Gal.3:16. Jesus conquered sin and death for all men! In John 8:56 He said "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: he saw it and was glad". God revealed it to Abraham because he was faithful.

v20-24 Abraham heard from his brother Nahor, who stayed in Ur when Terah Abram and Lot went north to Haran in Syria (Aram). ch.24:10 suggests that Nahor followed them later. Gen.29:4-6 shows that Laban his grandson came to live in Haran. Bethuel (son of Nahor) was father to Laban and Rebekah—about whom we shall read a great deal in the following chapters

QUESTIONS

1. What was Abraham commanded to do in v2?
2. What did he do and when did he do it? v3
3. Where did they go? v2 How long did it take? v4
4. What did Abraham say to the young men? v5

5. What did Abraham and Isaac take with them? v6
 6. What did Isaac ask? What did Abraham reply? v7-8
 7. Briefly tell the story of v9-14—in your own words.
 8. How was this story of Abraham and Isaac, like God and Jesus?
 9. What did God add to the Promises? Notes v15-19
 10. What did Jesus say about Abraham in John 8:56?
- Two questions to help you to think about your own life:
11. What does this chapter teach us about God?
 12. Abraham showed his faith by obeying God. How can we show our faith?

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LESSON 22

Reading : Genesis 23

v1-4 Abraham, Sarah and Isaac lived for many years in Beer-sheba, not far from the South East borders of the land of the Philistines. Later, they travelled 30-40km. north-east to Hebron, where they had lived for many years after their return from Egypt ch.13:18—after Lot left them and went across the River Jordan—to live near Sodom and Gomorrah!

Sarah died in Hebron, aged 127. Abraham mourned and wept for her - so greatly had he loved her! 'At this time Abraham was 137 and Isaac was 37. In the land of promise, Abraham did not even own a piece of land in which to bury her. See Acts 7:5 and Heb.11:39-40.

v5-9 The children of Heth were his nearest neighbours. They were related to Mamre the Amorite, with whom Abraham had made a treaty of friendship ch.14:13. The Hittites suggested he should bury Sarah among the graves of their people. Note that they considered him to be a mighty prince.

Like the King of Sodom, and Abimelech of the Philistines, they seemed to be trying to draw Abraham into their friendship and their debt. Abraham always remained separate—His friendship and alliance was with Almighty God, Creator and Sustainer of the earth and all life upon it. He did not accept any gifts from them—he would buy some land for a burial ground! He asked them to speak to Ephron the Hittite for him—if he would sell him the Cave of Macphelah and its field. This purchase was a long drawn out, very polite business—typical of eastern culture.

v10-16 The Hittites were descended from Heth, second son of Canaan, so they were Canaanites—and related to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah!

v10 The business was done publicly in the gate of the city—(See Notes, Gen. 19). In eastern tradition Ephron offered to give Abraham the cave and the whole field. Abraham insisted on paying the whole price. Ephron told him the worth of the land, though politely dismissing it as nothing! The silver was weighed out in public. The bargaining probably took all day!

v17-20 The men were very businesslike when all the talking was done! The bounds of the land were very carefully measured, described, and recorded. Note that Abraham had to buy a field—in the land that God had promised to him and to his seed for an everlasting possession! In his mortal life he had nothing of it but the field that he bought to bury Sarah in! But God's promises never fail; so Abraham and his seed—and all God's faithful servants—will rise again! In the resurrection when Jesus returns, it will be given to him and to his seed, for an everlasting possession.

QUESTIONS

1. Where did Sarah die? At what age?
2. How old were Abraham and Isaac? (Notes)
3. To whom did Abraham first speak? v3
4. What did they reply? v5-6
5. What did Abraham want to buy? Who owned it? v7-9

6. What did Ephron offer to do? v10-11

7. What did Abraham reply? v12-13

8. What was the price of the land? v14-16

9. How does this chapter show the need for resurrection?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. We can see Abraham was highly thought of because of his integrity. Can you think of ways this can happen in our lives?

11. Abraham had to have great patience, even though God had made promises to him. Do we sometimes expect God to work immediately?

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LESSON 23

Reading : Genesis 24

v1-10 Abraham was 137 and he did not know how much longer he might live. Isaac needed a wife, but not from among the Canaanites! The servant was probably Eliezer of Damascus ch.15:2. Abraham said that God would choose a wife. The hand under the thigh sealed the oath. The servant took plenty of provisions for the journey—and gifts from Abraham to the family - a little lesson to us—to be well prepared for Our Master's Service!

v11-28 A well outside a city was the usual place for a stranger to wait. The servant did not know what to do—so he prayed! Read it carefully. It was answered at once—exactly as he had asked. Note Rebekah's natural kindness and good nature. He gave thanks and worshipped when she said she was of Nahor's family—a lesson in faith, obedience, thanksgiving.

v29-31 We are introduced to Laban, Rebekah's brother. We get a hint of his character. He ran to meet the man when he saw the gold! v31 "I have prepared the house..." We suspect he merely told the servants to do it!

v32-49 First things first! (1) The camels must be seen to. (2) As in ch.18:4, water for the travellers' feet. (3) Food?—but the Lord's work came before food. See Jhn.4:31-34 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me'. The servant told the story that led to his visit, laying great stress on the faith of Abraham and his own prayers and thanksgivings. He asked them to send Rebekah on a long hard journey to an unknown husband!

v50-61 Laban and Bethuel saw that it was "from the Lord", so they could not oppose it. Rebekah was not asked! The servant saw that the Lord had done as Abraham said v7. Now was the time for gifts and feasting! The servant rose early next day to leave, and the family were dismayed! Only now did they ask Rebekah—no doubt hoping she would not want to leave her family so soon. But she said "I will go"—no doubts or fears. She trusted God. The blessing in v60—"may your offspring possess the gate of their enemies" is a prophecy of Jesus ch.22:17. Rebekah took her nurse and her maidens—a sign of wealth.

v62-67 Isaac was living down in the Negev again. He walked out in the quiet of the evening to meditate (about God). We wonder how Rebekah felt on seeing Isaac. No doubt the servant had used the long days of travel to tell her all about Abraham and Isaac—to make her feel less strange. v65 He was servant to both father and son. What does that idea mean to us? And Rebekah—leaving her family to journey in the heat of many days—a bride, going in faith to meet her bridegroom! What does that mean to us? By the eastern laws of modesty, she veiled herself. v66 The servant gave account to his master—as we shall when Jesus returns. Rebekah was given Sarah's tent—a sign of honour, that she was to be mistress of the household. Isaac loved her. It is one of the world's great love stories.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Abraham command his servant to do? v3-4
2. What did the servant take with him? Where did he go? v10
3. Where did he stop? What was the first thing he did? V11-14
4. Briefly tell the story of Rebekah at the well. v15-28

5. What lesson can we take from v26-27?
6. What was more important to the servant than food? v33
7. Did the family consent? What did the servant give them? vSO-53
8. What happened next morning? v54-61
9. Where was Isaac living? What was he doing when Rebekah came? v62-63
10. What did "having Sarah's tent" mean to Rebekah? v67.

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. Do you really think about God's promises when you have decisions to make? What should you do?
12. Are you as good and faithful a servant to your employer if you have one, and to God?

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LESSON 24

Reading: Genesis 25

v1-6 This is the natural seed of ch.17. Rom.4:16-18 and Gal.3:26-28 show the spiritual seed. Keturah means fragrance". 1 Chron.1:32 calls her a concubine—a half-wife. She did not take Sarah's place. Rachel was the mistress of the household Gen.24:67. Keturah had six sons. v6 Abraham had more than one concubine. We do not know how many sons he had altogether. He was old at 100, and ready to die at 137. So God must have strengthened him to become "the father of many nations". He was very rich, so the sons would be well supplied. They went east, of Jordan. Isaac stayed in the Land of Promise. Abraham left everything to Isaac, including the Blessings!

v7-11 Abraham died peacefully, as God promised Gen. 15:15. v9 shows that Abraham had kept in touch (so Ishmael had his portion too). He was buried with his beloved Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. Then God blessed Isaac. The well Beer Lahai-roi must have been a large oasis. It had been enough for Abraham's flocks ch.20. Now it was enough for Isaac's household.

v12-18 Ishmael had 12 sons—12 tribes. He had wealth and importance, as the angel had promised Hagar Chs.16 & 21. He lived 137 years. His children lived by the Way to Shur, towards Egypt. "They lived in hostility towards all their brothers" v18—the nature that came to them through Hagar.

v19-28 Rebekah was barren for 20 years. God teaches His children faith and patience—"always to pray, and not to give up" Luke 18:1. Women who were in God's plan were often barren until God gave them children—as a sign that they were born to serve Him. When she was worried by the struggle inside her, she asked God; and He answered with a prophecy. Two babies: two nations: one stronger—the elder to serve the younger. God often reverses the natural order. So Rebekah gave birth to twins. Esau means "Hairy". Jacob means "Supplanter", taking the place of another by dishonesty or treachery—because he held his brother's heel! Isaac was 60—so Abraham lived until the boys were 15. They were very different! Esau the cunning hunter—bold, fearless, lively! Jacob the quiet one—staying at home—a shepherd—caring for the flocks and herds. Isaac loved to eat "wild" game, and he loved Esau. But Rebekah loved Jacob.

v29-34 Esau cared for nothing but the hunger of the moment. Jacob was a thoughtful man who loved God, and wanted the birthright. The first born was leader and priest of the family. He would receive his father's blessing before he died. Esau was unfit for the work of family priest (like Cain in Gen.4). Jacob saw his chance—and took it! Esau gave up the birthright for a bowl of stew! His character is shown in Heb.12:16-17. It was an insult to God. Rom.9:13 God who knows all things, knew before his birth that he would be unfit to receive the blessings from the Lord. "God does not see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance: God looks at the heart" 1.Sam. 16:7. Cain, Ishmael, Esau—all rejected. It was God's choice. God has the right to choose. But in each case, their actions proved how right He was!

QUESTIONS

1. What did Abraham do with his sons when they were grown up? v6
2. What did he give to Isaac? v5
3. At what age did Abraham die? Where was he buried? v7-9
4. How did God treat Isaac after Abraham died? v11

5. How long did Isaac and Rebekah wait for a child? Notes V19-28
6. What prophecy did God give Rebekah? v23
7. Describe the babies; their names and meanings V24-26
8. What sort of men did they become? v27
9. What was the meaning of the birthright? Notes v29-34

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. Do you blame God if things don't work out as you want, or like Rebekah, do you pray for God's guidance?
11. There are many things in our everyday life we make into idols by putting them before God. Can you think of some? What should we do?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 25

Reading : Genesis 26

v1-6 God said Isaac must stay in Canaan the Promised Land—and not go down to Egypt which is a symbol of sin in scripture. We go down to Egypt into sin and death. We come up to the Promised Land into Life! Isaac had grown up in Beersheba, and there had been a covenant between Abraham and Abimelech, to be kept by their sons Gen.21: so Isaac expected to be well treated. Abimelech was a title like Pharaoh—this was probably the son of Abraham's Abimelech. Philistia was part of Canaan—and God said He would give the whole land to Isaac and to his seed as He had promised to Abraham—pointing forward to Christ Gen. 12:3 and Gen.22:17-18.

v7-11 Isaac did the same as Abraham in ch.20:1-2, also from fear - but Rebekah was not taken. Sarah would not have been forgotten in Gerar! Perhaps this king had been a child then. When Abimelech saw that she was his wife v8, he (like Pharaoh and the other Abimelech) was angry; for he feared the judgment that might have come upon them. (If they had lived according to God's law there would have been nothing to fear!) v10 How lightly they would have regarded it, if Rebekah had been Isaac's sister! Abimelech warned his people not to touch Isaac and Rebekah. We can see why Abraham would not let Isaac take a wife from among the Canaanites!

v12-16 God made Isaac rich and great. The Philistines envied him! They forgot the covenant of peace—and in envy and spite they stopped up the wells that Abraham had dug. Without water, one cannot live. It clearly said that though they could not touch him, they wished him dead! In the end, Abimelech told him to move further away. v17-25 The Valley of Gerar was on the way to Beersheba. Abraham had dug wells there, and they had been filled in too. Isaac re-opened them, and gave them the original names so that no one could say they were not his! But when he dug fresh wells, they were claimed by the herdsmen of Gerar. They had filled in the wells in the area, so they did not need the water! He named the first well Esek (Strife), the second Sitnah (Hatred) - they had not tried to hide their feelings. They let him keep the third well—Rehoboth (Room); for God had made room for him. Later he settled in Beer sheba. God renewed the blessing v24. God often came to His servants after a time of testing—and to us also. "The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" Deut.33:27. Jesus "learned obedience by the things which he suffered"—and so do we Heb.12:1-13.

v26-33 This is just the same as Gen.21:22-32! Isaac showed them kindness—like Abraham. Jesus said "resist not evil: if a man strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" Matt.5:39-48. So Abimelech left Isaac in peace. That very day water was found. He named the well Shebah "An Oath" as a reminder of the treaty. He had come safely through another trial and God had given him water—(a symbol of The Water of Life?)

v34-35 By this time Esau was 40. He took—not one—but two Canaanite wives—"which were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah!"

QUESTIONS

1. Where did Isaac go when the famine came? v!2.
2. Where did God forbid him to go? Where was he to stay? v2
3. What did Abimelech see? v8-10. What did he say?

4. How did God bless Isaac? v12-14. How did the Philistines feel?
5. Briefly tell the story of v17-25
6. Who came to Isaac in Beersheba? Why did they come? v26-29
7. How did Isaac behave towards them? v30-31. What does that teach us?
8. What did Esau do wrong? How did his parents feel about it? v34-35

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. If someone wrongs you, as they did Isaac what would you do?
10. What sort of things do you think are important when you are choosing a partner for life, in marriage?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 26

Reading: Genesis 27

v1-5 Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah; 60 when Esau and Jacob were born; and 100 when Esau married. Many more years passed, until Isaac was nearly blind and thought he was dying. He knew Esau had sold his birth right, and was not fit to receive the Covenant Blessing; but he loved him and was determined to bless him—and Esau wanted it desperately! Rebekah heard it! She remembered God's Word Gen.25:23; but like Sarah Gen. 16:22, she tried to "fix it" herself instead of asking God. Do we do that too?

v6-17 It is sad to see such deceit in God's household. Isaac was going to bless the unworthy son; Esau was going to cheat Jacob; Rebekah was going to stop them at all costs; Jacob was going to help her—a divided family who had ceased talking and praying together! Rebekah knew exactly what to do—Isaac's sense of taste would not be as keen as it had been! Jacob was fearful, but Rebekah had once travelled hundreds of miles to a strange land, to marry a man she did not know—and she showed the same strength of mind now! Jacob was the right man to receive God's Blessing but how could they justify cheating? Why didn't they ask God? If we look into our hearts, we know the answer. It is a comfort to know that the great men of God were only human after all—yet God loved them.

v18-27 Isaac knew the voice was not Esau's, and he had not expected him so soon, so Jacob was forced into a worse lie v20. The man who brings God into a lie is on very dangerous ground! Isaac felt the hairy hands - but the voice was still Jacob's. He finally gave in and ate the meal. He was still trying to discover the truth v27—but Rebekah had thought of everything! The smell of the field and the hunter finally convinced him.

v28-29 The blessing was one which might have been given by any wealthy man to his firstborn. It confirmed his place as head of the family - the leader, ruler and priest, who would receive all honour' and obedience. He would have the chief portion of his father's wealth, and the position of honour among the surrounding tribes. It was just what Esau wanted - but it was given to Jacob, with the prayer that God would bless him in every part of his life! He did not give the Blessings of Abraham so he did accept that Esau was not fit to receive the eternal blessing.

v30-40 Imagine Isaac's distress when Esau came in! It would be all the greater because he knew in his heart that he had tried to go against God! He showed this when he said of Jacob—"indeed, he shall be blessed" v33. Jacob's name and nature were linked v35-36. Esau forgot he had willingly sold his birthright, and had tried to cheat Jacob! See God's judgment in Heb.12:16-17; He was godless. "Afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected". They must all have slept badly that night!

v41-46. We are not surprised that Esau planned to kill Jacob after his father's death; nor that Rebekah took charge of the situation again! She very cleverly made the Hittite women the excuse for sending Jacob away, thinking that he would come back in a year or two v44. Perhaps the cost of her deception was that she never saw him again—as far as we know!

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Isaac decide to give his blessing? And to whom? v1 -4
2. What did Rebekah do about it? v6-14

3. Briefly tell the story of v1 8-27 in your own words.
4. What did Esau say about Jacob? v36
5. What did Isaac say when Esau begged for a blessing?
6. What did Esau plan to do to Jacob? And when? v41
7. How did Rebekah plan to keep Jacob safe? v42-45
8. What reason did she give to Isaac? v46

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. Do you think God wants us to tell lies?
10. Can you think of times in your life when you lied to get out of trouble? Would you still do that now?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 27

Reading : Genesis 28

v1-5 Isaac sent for Jacob and blessed him. He used the words of Abraham Gen.24:3. He gave him the Covenant Blessing, and sent him away. So Isaac took charge again, like the man of God he was before. For a little while his spiritual sight was dim—but now he saw God's purpose clearly again.

v6-9 Esau never understood the ways of God. He saw nothing wrong with his wives; but he knew Isaac and Rebekah were upset and Jacob was sent to take a wife from Rebekah's family. So he took a daughter of Ishmael, the rejected "son of the bondwoman" to add to the ones he had already—as if that would make it right! See 2 Cor.6:14-18. Isaac had served God all his life, and taught his sons from childhood—but Esau had not listened!

v10-15 It reads as if Jacob went alone (like the servant in Gen.24 who seemed to be alone, but v32 shows there were men with him). So Jacob too may have had his servants with him. He stopped for the night about 80km from Beer-sheba. A stone pillow sounds uncomfortable! Jacob felt very much alone. His dream showed that God was there. The ladder was a link between heaven and earth. The angels were a link between God and men. We can read—"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him" Ps.34:7 and "their angels always behold the face of my Father in heaven" Matt. 18:10. But Jacob had no Bible and God had not spoken to him before. God gave him the Eternal Blessings of Abraham, and promised not to leave him until all the promises were fulfilled—so Jacob must rise again!

v16-22 Jacob was afraid—it was an awesome place—"the House of God"! His pillow was set up as a pillar and oil poured on it. Oil is in every part of our lives. In Scripture it is a symbol of our spiritual lives. Oil was used in sacrifices in the Law of Moses. It was mixed with flour for offerings. There was "beaten oil" and flour with the daily sacrifice Ex.29:38-44. It was used on a cleansed leper Lev. 14. Leprosy is a symbol of sin. Cleansing was a joyful occasion; "there is joy in" the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents". "God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows" Ps.45:7 , a Psalm of Jesus and the Kingdom. Offerings for sin, Lev.5:11, and jealousy, Num.5:15, had no oil—there was no joy in them! Kings, priests, prophets were anointed with oil—chosen by God for His work—holy, set apart—no going back! God "set His seal" upon them—and us? See 2.Cor.1:21-22. The oil was from the olive tree which was plentiful in the land. It was a symbol of Divine blessing. Ps.52j, Ps.128 and Hos.14:6 (Israel's future blessing). Olive branches were used at the Feast of Tabernacles Neh.8:15.

In the time of Jesus there was a Festival of Light on the last day of the Feast. Lamp stands in the court of the Temple shed light over the city. At this feast, Jesus declared "I am the light of the world" Jhn.8:12. The place where God came to him, was holy in Jacob's eyes. He dedicated it, and himself to God. This was where Abram built an altar to the Lord Gen. 12:8. Jacob pledged a tenth of his wealth to God. The tenth (tithe) was clearly a system of dedication. Bethel means "House of God".

QUESTIONS

1. What did Isaac command Jacob in v1-2?
2. How was the blessing in v3-4 different from ch.27:28-29?Notesv1-5
3. What did Esau notice and do at this time? v6-9

4 Would that put matters right? Why not? Notes v6-9 and 2 Cor.6:14-18

5 Briefly tell the story of v12-15 in your own words.

6 What did Jacob say when he awoke? What did he do? v16-18

7 Name some of the uses of oil in Scripture.

8 What did Jacob call that place? What did it mean?

9 What was Jacob's vow? v20-22

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. If you have children, do you try to teach them to serve God?

11. Do you think Jacob needed to bargain with God? [verse 22] Look at v 15. Is there a lesson there for us?

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LESSON 28

Reading : Genesis 29

v1-8 Jacob probably followed Abraham's route back to Haran—the regular trade route of the time. "He came to the land of the eastern people" - a land of flocks and herds and good pasture. Water was very precious as we saw in chs.13, 21 and 26. It often caused trouble and was very carefully guarded. Here, it was covered with a heavy stone. It needed several men to move it. The shepherds came early—to get first place at the well?) and waited for everyone to arrive before moving it. Jacob was surprised. It was bad management for the sheep to go without food for hours in the middle of the day. Jacob's first thought was for welfare of the sheep.

v9-14 The men were from Haran, and they knew Laban's family well, for they recognised Rachel from a distance. When she came, Jacob rolled away the stone and watered her father's sheep. This gives weight to the idea that Jacob might have had servants with him. v12 reminds us of ch.24:28. Both Rachel and Rebekah ran home to announce the visitor. Laban welcomed him. No doubt he remembered Abraham's servant so many years before - and the rich gifts he brought! Jacob stayed for a month—but gifts are not mentioned this time—and Jacob was soon working for his keep!

v15-20 Laban's two daughters were not alike. Leah the elder, was plain and shy. Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Jacob was over 75. That was middle-aged then. He loved Rachel. No mention is made of her feelings. He did the work he was good at! A shepherd's life is hard; long hours in all weathers: the heat of the day; the cold of the night; little or no rest in lambing time; a constant watch for wild animals; the daily care of the sheep; the search for fresh grass and water; checks for injury, parasites, lost sheep—and many other tasks which only a shepherd would know. David was a shepherd 1 Sam. 17:32-37 & Ps.23. Jesus said "I am the good shepherd" Jhn.10:1-18 & Lke. 15:3-7. Both David and Jesus raised the work of the shepherd to the highest spiritual level.

v21-30 This is the first of many ways in which Jacob was made to feel the shock of betrayal—cheated by those close to him his own family—whom he had trusted! Did he begin at last to understand how his father and Esau had felt? It was just the beginning of a long hard road to the spiritual growth and character building which God, in love, had designed for him. We too follow that road in our walk to the kingdom.

v31-35 Here we see the love and mercy of God towards those whom He has chosen. Leah was unloved—God gave her children—and she thanked Him with all her heart. The names of her first four sons mark the progress of her hopes. Reuben "See a son" shows her joy at bearing the firstborn; at last something good had happened to her! Simeon "Hearing"; God heard her prayers, saw her neglect. Levi "Joined"—she thought surely Jacob would love her now! Judah "Praise"; her heart overflowed with praise for God who loved her—although it seemed that no one else did!

QUESTIONS

1. What was the land called where Jacob stopped? v1
2. What did he see? Why were the flocks gathered? v2-3
3. Which town did they come from? Who came with her sheep? v4-6
4. Why were they waiting? What did Jacob do? v7-14

5. What work did Jacob do? What wages did he ask for? v15-20

6. Briefly tell the story of v21-30 in your own words.

7. How do we see God's tenderness and pity for Leah?

8. How many sons did she have in this chapter?

9. Give the names and the meanings. (Notes)

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. Do you think God wanted any of these people to deceive each other? What does God want of us?

11. Do you think having more than one wife made Jacob's life any better than if he'd had only one?

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LESSON 29

Reading: Genesis 30

v1-13 Leah was not the only one to suffer. Rachel was jealous. She may have been more worldly than Leah. She did not turn to God for help - she seemed to blame Jacob. He had to remind her that God was in charge of their lives. Had youthful beauty made her rather spoilt? Life with her was not all joy! God's chosen people were just as human as we are - and if we love Him, our weaknesses can be forgiven too. Rachel copied Sarah in trying to get children through her maid Bilhah. (Bilhah did not rebel like Hagar!) She had two sons—Dan "Judge"; and Naphtali "Wrestling".

v8 shows the constant tug-of-war between the sisters.

v9-13 Leah was quick to reply! Her maid, Zilpah had two sons—Gad "A troop-1 (Leah already had four sons of her own); and Asher "Happy" - Leah felt she was winning the tug-of-war for her husband's love! Jacob had struggled with his brother in the womb—and later gained the birthright—then the blessing by deceit. He fled for his life because of it. Now he looked for peace and happiness, but found deceit from Laban in his marriage and his wages—and there was constant struggle and conflict in his home. Jacob was learning the hard way! He had two wives and two concubines, it was the accepted way of life—otherwise, many thousands of women would have been unmarried and childless. There was no work for them to do outside the home. At least these women had something in their lives—and men wanted as many sons as they could get as a sign of power, wealth and importance. (Jesus re-stated God's will in Matt. 19).

v14-30 The struggle went on. Mandrakes (love apples) were thought to be an aid to conception. Rachel was desperate to have children—Leah just wanted her husband's love. Rachel had the upper hand and Leah had to hire Jacob for the night! She had two more sons—Issachar "Hire"; and Zebulun "Dwelling" (for she thought Jacob would stay with her)—and a daughter, Dinah "Judged"—like Dan "Judge" v6. At last a son for Rachel—Joseph, "Adding"—for she asked God to add to her another son. Jacob had worked fourteen years without wages. He wanted a life of his own, but Laban had never had such a good, honest, cheap servant! Note the soft words he used v27-28. Laban was old, but he had not lost his cunning. His wealth had greatly increased—whilst Jacob still had nothing.

v31-43 Jacob chose the speckled, spotted and dark sheep and goats as his wages. He would sort them out at once. Laban would be free to check on them at any time. Jacob would still look after Laban's flocks. But Laban took Jacob's sheep and goats, and put them three days journey away in the care of his sons v34-36; so Jacob still had nothing—cheated again! The way he produced speckled sheep and goats seems very odd—but it worked! He only did this with strong animals, and he soon had a good flock - but he fully understood that it was God who blessed his efforts ch.31:8-9.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Rachel do when she was childless? What did Jacob say? v1-2
2. How did she try to get children? v3-8 Gives names and meanings.
3. What did Leah do? v9-13 Give names and meanings.
4. Give the names and meanings of Leah's last three children. v18-21
5. Then what happened to Rachel? v22~23

6. What did Jacob ask for? What did Laban say? v25-28
7. What did he ask for as wages? v31-33
8. How did Laban cheat him that day?
9. How did Jacob get a flock of his own? v37-43 Two questions to help you to think about your own life:
10. What do you think we can learn from all the problems in v 1-22?
11. If people cheat you, how should you behave?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 30

Reading: Genesis 31

v1-3 Jacob worked 20 years for Laban: 7 years each for Rachel and Leah, and 6 years for wages, being continually cheated. Laban became rich through his service, but was never satisfied. He was full of cunning, and could not resist cheating. When his sons began to spread lies about Jacob, and he became hostile, God saw that Jacob had suffered enough. The call came at last. God would take him back safely, as He had promised Gen.28:12-15.

v4-16 Jacob had to arrange for the journey. It would not be easy: Laban would not let him go without a struggle. Rachel and Leah had to go out to him in the field for fear of spies at home. He poured out his troubles—but said he had not been alone all these years—only the presence of God had made his sufferings bearable. v6-7 Laban changed his wages 10 times; but each time God made Jacob's flock stronger! Now the God of Bethel had called him to return to the land of Canaan—and had reminded him of the vow that he had made in return Gen.28:20-22. His wives agreed for once! They knew they would be better off with Jacob than with their father!

v17-24 v17 sounds simple; but it must have been extremely difficult to arrange in secret. v18 Isaac had thought he was going to die ch.27, but he was still alive 20 years later! They escaped when Laban went to shear his sheep; (Was that God's doing?) It was a huge company ch.30:43. They crossed the Euphrates and went south to Gilead, an area S.E of the Sea of Galilee—(now the Kingdom of Jordan)—on the way to the Ford at Jabbok, where he could cross back into the land of Canaan (map Lesson'11). By the time Laban had gathered a small army and set off in pursuit, he was seven days behind. After all he had done to Jacob, he just would not let go! He was told in a dream that he could not fight against God v24.

v25-35 Although he dare not harm Jacob, he was still the same evil man. He tried to bully Jacob. Then he pretended to be the poor wronged father! Then he accused him of theft. Jacob declared his innocence, saying simply and truthfully that he left secretly because he was afraid of what Laban might do. Rachel was endangered by what Jacob said v32. Lies and deceit followed v35—and one lie is usually followed by another!

v36-42 Jacob finally told Laban some much needed home truths! But there was another side to what had happened in the past 20 years. Jacob had been honest, faithful, patient, submissive—trusting in God. He had become a great man of faith—father of Israel—and Christ! See Heb.12:1-17. We walk in the footsteps of these faithful men on our journey to salvation.

v43-55 The pillar of stones marked the covenant of peace. We read of three pillars built by Jacob; (1) at Bethel; (2) this one at Mizpah; and (3) when Rachel died Gen. 35:20. v47 The two names mean the same—"Heap of witness". Mizpah means "watchtower". v54 Jacob offered sacrifices to the Lord his God—then invited his pursuers to a meal! Blessed are the meek! Laban went back to his evil ways; but Jacob and his family went on towards the Land of Promise—and the Lord went with them.

QUESTIONS

1. What did the Lord say to Jacob? v3 & 13?
2. Where did Jacob speak to his wives.

3. How many times did Laban change his wages? v7 So who made him rich?

4. Where was Laban when they ran away? v19 What did Rachel take?

5. What did God say to Laban in a dream? v24

6. What did Jacob build for a "witness" between them?

7. What did Galeed and Mizpah mean? (Notes)

8. What did Jacob do when Laban had finished talking? v54

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. Although his life had been difficult, Jacob knew God had been with him. Do you keep God in your life, even in difficult times?

10. See v 50. Do you sometimes behave as if God is not watching you? What should this verse teach us about our life?

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LESSON 31

Reading: Genesis 32

v1-8 'The angels of God met him'. We do not know how many, or what they said or did, but Jacob recognised them as God's host. Mahanaim means "two hosts or camps". See Ps.34:7. The angels were always there, but in times of need God revealed them - 2 Kngs.6:15-17 and 2 Chron.32:7-8. We may not see them but we know they are with us, for "these things were written for our learning" Rom.15A. Jacob did not know if Esau still hated him, but he was encouraged by the presence of the angels. His message to Esau was that he had become very rich—so he would not be a burden to his family. He had no desire to take anything from them. The answer v5-6 caused him great distress. 400 men! Had Esau's anger burned for 20 years? Jacob knew God was with him—but he made sensible preparations in case of trouble!

v9-12 Read Jacob's prayer carefully. He spoke to God, (the Mighty One, who is to be worshipped). He spoke to the LORD (who was, and is, and will be, the Eternal One). (See notes on Gen. 17 first paragraph). He confessed his own unworthiness, and gave thanks for the blessings he had received - for he had gone out with only his staff in his hand, and had returned with a great company. Now he asked God to save them all from Esau's anger, and to fulfil His promise to make his descendants as the sand of the sea. So he gave praise and thanks; he confessed his unworthiness; he asked for God's care in his daily needs—and for the fulfilment of the promises—which will be the Kingdom of God. It reminds us of the Lord's Prayer.

v13-23 Jacob carefully prepared the gifts for Esau, spreading out the companies to arrive separately. Each company would greet Esau and explain themselves. It would take time, and slow Esau down—and give him time to calm down if he was still angry. It would show a different Jacob - a Jacob who desired to give—and not to take. Then the whole company was sent over the brook and Jacob remained alone. The whole night was before him—and no doubt he intended to spend it in prayer.

v24-32 This is a strange story. How did Jacob come to wrestle with a stranger? How did it start? What was said? Was anything said at all? v24 gives no clue. Who did Jacob think the man was? When did he realise he was an angel? When he touched his hip and it was came out of joint? Jacob, who had suffered in Laban's service for 20 years—who had run away from Esau and was now fearful of meeting him again—yet had the strength and courage to wrestle all night with an angel (he was now over 95); and to demand a blessing before he would let go! See Eph.6:10-18. We wrestle, too, that we may obtain a blessing from the Lord. Jacob was no longer the sly supplanter" but Israel "A prince of God". He had power with God and with men. It was the greatest night of his life! The angel did not give his name. In Jud.13:18 Manoah asked the same question. "He replied, Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding". Penuel means "the face of God". The sun rose and shone upon him as he went, limping but triumphant into the new day—a picture of the final triumph of the saints!

QUESTIONS

1. What did Mahanaim mean? (Notes v1 -8)
2. What do we learn about angels in the notes v1-8?
3. What did Jacob want to show to Esau by his message? v3-5
4. What did the messengers tell Jacob when they returned?

5. What did He do? and why? v7-8
6. How did Jacob plan to turn away Esau's anger? v13-20
7. How did he arrange the rest of the company? v22-23
8. What happened to Jacob that night? v24-26
9. What was his new name, and its meaning? Notes V27-28
11. Why did he call the place Peniel, or Penuel? v30

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. Do you pray to God to thank Him and to ask Him for help?
12. Do you think that after praying there is nothing more to do?

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LESSON 32

Reading: Genesis 33

vl-11 Jacob placed Rachel and Joseph at the rear of the company., in the safest place. The handmaids would expect nothing else; but Leah was the elder sister and first wife. She had borne him six sons. She should have been given first consideration. It was a very public humiliation. It was typical of her lifelong suffering. The Scriptures constantly show us that it is through suffering that the children of God are tried and purified—like gold in the furnace Acts 14:22. We pray that we may come "limping but triumphant into the dawn of God's Kingdom—(Notes ch.32:31). 'They that wait on the Lord will renew their strength: they will mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not faint Isa.40:31. This time, Jacob did not run away or try to hide. He went ahead of the company. He bowed down to the ground, as the younger brother before the elder—no longer concerned with birthrights or earthly blessings; secure in the knowledge that he was blessed by the Lord of heaven and earth - an eternal blessing. Perhaps Esau too had been half afraid of this meeting; for there were only tears of joy when at last they came face to face. Jacob's family also showed great respect and reverence for Esau. We see that Esau had no need to hate Jacob. He had plenty of this world's goods and 400 men to follow his leadership. Worldly success was all he had ever wanted. Jacob insisted that he accept the gifts. Perhaps he thought it would keep Esau from remembering his earlier resentment.

v12-16 Jacob was clearly uneasy still. Perhaps the 400 men made him unsure of Esau's real feelings—especially when he wanted to leave some of them with Jacob. v13-14 What Jacob said was quite true—but we can see that he would be happier when Esau had returned home! Seir "Rough,

Wooded" was a hilly region S.E. of the Dead Sea—also called Edom "Red" Gen.25:30. Later, the Edomites were a constant "thorn in the flesh" to Israel, as though Esau's hatred never really ended; like the descendants of Ishmael—the Arabs—who hate Israel to this day.

V17-20 Although Jacob had said he would follow Esau to Seir. he did not do so. He stayed at Succoth near the Ford Jabbok. They needed a time of peace and quiet to recover from all the anxiety and distress of the past weeks! Succoth means "booths or shelters". Later, they crossed over the River Jordan into the Land of Canaan and came to Shechem—as Abraham had done so many years before—Gen. 12. Jacob bought some land from the sons of Hamor—Hivites—sons of Canaan Gen. 10:15-19. (They were later to be destroyed for their wickedness. See Ex.34:11, Deut.7:1-6 and Josh.3:10).

The verses show God's judgements, although He gave them plenty of time to repent! Jacob was a "prince of God" and Abraham was "the friend of God" but they were still strangers in the land which God promised to them and to their seed for an everlasting possession. Here again, resurrection is preached in Genesis—as confirmed in Heb.11:13 and 39-40.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Jacob divide up his family? v1-2
2. What did he do then? v3
3. How did Esau greet him?
4. Why do you think Esau was no longer angry?

5. Why do you think Jacob made him accept the gifts?
6. Where did Esau live? What were his descendants called? (Notes v12-16)
7. What did Jacob do when Esau left? v17
8. Where did he buy a piece of land? v18-19
9. Write out the words of Heb.11:39-40.
11. Was the Gospel preached only in the New Testament? If not, where did it begin?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. If you have had a disagreement with someone, are you ready to show humility and settle the problem, even if you were in the wrong?
12. In verse 20 we see Jacob finally recognises that God is his God, not just the God of his fathers. In what way have you accepted God as your God?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 33

Reading: Genesis 34

Many years had passed since Jacob left home in fear of his brother Esau. The record gives a mere outline of events, and sometimes many years pass between one chapter and the next. This is a summary of Jacob's life from his arrival at Haran, to the time when he settled in Shechem on the land he bought from the sons of Hamor—to show how his family developed, and how his sons and his daughter Dinah grew up. Jacob was 75 when he came to Haran (in Syria) to visit his uncle Laban. He worked 7 years and was given Leah (by treachery), and Rachel for whom he worked another 7 years: (14 years for his two wives). In that time, Leah had 6 sons; the handmaids had 2 each, and Dinah was born "afterwards" ch.30:21. Then at last, Rachel had Joseph. So Joseph and Dinah were the youngest. They were probably between 6 and 8 years old when Jacob fled from Laban, so if Dinah was old enough to go out visiting the women of Shechem in Ch.34, then at least 10 years must have gone by since Jacob returned to the land.

v1-7 We don't know how often she had visited, and whether she was well known in the Ruler's household. Jacob was a wealthy man, and descended from Abraham and Isaac. After 10 years he would be well acquainted with the chief men of Shechem. The story is so short, that it is easy to imagine all this happening suddenly on the first visit—but it probably didn't. A girl alone was not safe, even in those days! He was Prince of Shechem. We remember Pharaoh and Abimelech when they saw Sarah! Abraham and Isaac were well justified in their fear of close contact with the Canaanites! "He loved her afterwards" and wanted to marry her. That did not make it any less terrible for Dinah at the time. Jacob said nothing—but Leah probably said plenty! We are not told of

Dinah's feelings. We are told the things important to salvation—but it is for us to make the people come alive; to feel their joys and sorrows, to find lessons to help us in times of trouble. The rape of a young girl is a terrible thing. She may never get over it. Her family will feel all the rage of Simeon and Levi. Only faith and prayer can prevent them from seeking revenge. Our troubles are meant to build faith and character: to bring us nearer to God.

v8-19 Hamor wanted an alliance, and Jacob could ask any price! We see trouble ahead in v13. It was true they could only marry in circumcision, but not true that they meant to become one people! They did not mention God, faith, worship, separation or the Promises. Shechem did not delay! (like Abraham ch. 17:26). "He was more honourable than the house of his father" v19. Only God knows if he would have been truly converted - but the others had their eyes on Jacob's flocks and herds v23 (like Laban!)

v25-31 Simeon and Levi were Leah's second and third sons. Later on, God commanded the nation of Israel to destroy the wicked nations around them, to carry out God's judgments; but these two killed for human revenge and they did not repent. See Jacob's judgment on them in Gen.49:5-7.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Dinah? Where was she going?
2. What happened? What did Shechem ask Hamor to do? v2-4
3. How did Jacob and his sons react? v6-7

4. What did the sons of Jacob tell Hamor? v13-17
5. What are we told about Shechem? v19
6. Why did the others agree to circumcision? v20-23
7. What did Simeon and Levi do on the third day?
8. What did Jacob say? Did they repent? v30-32

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. God does not shut His eyes to the terrible things people do. What sort of things are in this chapter?
10. What do you think we should learn from this chapter?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 34

Reading: Genesis 35

v1-7 Jacob was upset by his sons' revenge, and afraid of the people of the land. He must have spent hours in prayer, and God answered. He was to go to Bethel where Abram had built an altar Gen. 12:6-8, and where God appeared to Jacob when he fled from Esau Gen.28. It was to be a time of separation from the world—a time of meditation. v2-4 Idol worship had crept even into the family of Jacob. v7 He called the altar El-Bethel. Bethel is "the House of God" so it was "The God of the house of God". He could not find words enough to express the holiness of this place!

v8 In ch.31:18 Jacob had set off to go to his father, but there is no mention of Isaac in the chapters, as if Jacob did not go to him—but he may have done, for Rebekah's nurse died and was buried at Bethel. Allon Baccuth is "the oak of weeping". She had been as a mother to Rebekah all her life, and they wept for her. (Rebekah's death is not recorded).

v9-15 At Bethel, Jacob remembered the night when he wrestled with the angel at Penuel and was re-named Israel. He relived the night when God had revealed Himself to him. It was a time of prayer and meditation. We too need such times to bring us nearer to God and Jesus. The change from "Supplanter" "Deceiver" to "Prince of God" came after the years of trial and suffering, and Laban's tyranny. He overcame his nature by meditation and prayer—and painful effort! We can see the lesson for us in that!

v16-20 They went south towards Ephrath (Ephrath) Bethlehem. Gen.30:24. Rachel had prayed that God would give her another son; and now He did. We may pray long and hard for something we want. If the answer is "No" we must

have faith to accept it. If the answer is "Yes", we rejoice! But the thing we desire may bring sorrow and pain. For Rachel it brought death. It is better to pray that God will give us that which will bring us safely into His Kingdom. Rachel had loved life and could not bear to leave it: she called the child Ben-oni, "son of my sorrow". Jacob named him Benjamin, "son of my right hand". The "right hand" has always been special. We say an important helper is our "right hand man"! In some countries the right hand is for eating and "honourable" duties—but the left hand does "all the dirty work". Most people are right handed. The master craftsman's assistant is on his right hand side. The Lord Jesus sits at God's right hand" Mrk.16:19, Lke.20:42 and many other places in the Bible. Rachel's pillar was referred to in Lesson 31.

v21-29 Reuben was Jacob's firstborn and should have been his "right hand, man", but he never was. Did v22 show his resentment? It was a terrible way to "get even" with his father, and it suggests he thought Bilhah was a thing to be used. This sprang from Eve's disobedience in Eden—Gen.3. Again Jacob heard it, but said nothing. He gave his judgment in Gen.49: v3-4. They went to Mamre where Abraham had lived—where Sarah died and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah Gen23. Isaac wanted to be buried with his parents. Jacob and Esau were there with him when he died, aged 180. Jacob was 77 when he went to Haran—and 97 when he returned. He was now 120. So he had been back in the land about 23 years. That gives us some idea of the length of time which can pass in the space of a chapter or two.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jacob leave Shechem? Where was he told to go? V1
2. What did he tell his household? v2-4

3. Why did the people of the land not attack them? V5

4. Where were they going when they left Bethel? v16

5. Tell the story of v16-20.

6. Write out the names of Jacob's sons.

7. How long did Isaac live? Who buried him, and where?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

8. Do you think we can still have idols in our lives today, things we put before God?

9. What sort of things might these be?

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LESSON 35

Reading : Genesis 36

v1-9 We take a last look at Esau in Genesis. He had three wives and six sons. He usually lived in Mt. Seir ch.32:3, but he seems to have returned to Canaan when his father was old and frail. The brothers were both there ch.35:29. After he was buried, Jacob and Esau would divide when he died the inheritance. They were already rich in cattle and goods and people—and their camps became too large for the land to bear, along with all the other inhabitants; so Esau returned to Mt. Seir. He seemed to accept that Jacob was to have the Land—and the Promises. Had wealth and age brought wisdom and tolerance at last? As with Ishmael, the rejected son of the handmaid, it would be easy to feel sorry for Esau; but we have to seek to know God's will—to try to see mankind from His point of view—not our own. Esau and Jacob had the same teaching from childhood; the same reasons to love and serve God; but Esau's heart was turned away from God. He chose the world. His nature was not checked by any conscience towards God. We can see God's judgment in Mal. 1:2-5, Rom.9:13 and Heb.12:16. We need to remind ourselves of our weakness and sin—our need for God's forgiveness and guidance - through daily reading, meditation and prayer. The lives of Esau and Jacob give us the chance to stop and think about life—and salvation. Esau always pleased himself: Jacob sometimes pleased God, and sometimes not—but he was willing to learn. How do we measure up? We remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, for our sakes, always pleased God His Father—and in his perfect sacrifice—in life and death—brought the hope of salvation! Seir was south east of the Dead Sea: a rocky area, full of dens and caves - a good place for men who lived by hunting and warfare; easily defended! The rock was red sandstone; just right for Esau, named Edom (Red). A man named Seir "Rugged", an early settler, gave his name to that rocky land. The inhabitants were Horites (descended from Hori, Seir's grandson). His name seems to be connected with the caves they lived in. They may have been descendants of Canaan, like all the other inhabitants of that area. They were later driven out by Esau Deut.2:12 and the land renamed Edom. The area is now a great tourist attraction in Southern Jordan, visited for the magnificent beauty of the rich red colour of the rocks, and the carved palaces of Petra. In the time of Jesus, Edom was also known as Idumea, and the Roman conquerers appointed the Idumean Herods as rulers over the regions of Israel. So for a time—Esau ruled over Jacob!

v10-14 Adah was a Hittite: Aholibamah a Hivite: both descended from Canaan who was cursed by Noah. Bashemath was a daughter of Ishmael, the rejected son of Sarah's handmaid, Hagar. Timna (a daughter of Seir) was concubine to Eliphaz, a son of Esau. She bore Amalek, whose descendants were the Amalekites—the sworn enemies of Israel in later generations. (They were cursed by God for their wickedness). So in the end, Esau was completely tied in with the world. He is not mentioned again in Genesis. When he is mentioned in the NT.—it is as a warning!

QUESTIONS

1. Who were Esau's parents? Who was his twin brother?
2. What was said about Esau before he was born? ch.25:23
3. Why were his wives a "grief of mind" to his parents? ch.26:34-35
4. Where was Esau living when Jacob returned from Haran? ch.32:3
5. Where was Esau living when his father died? ch. 35:27-29

6. Why did he return to Seir? ch.36:6-8

7. What other name did Esau have? What did it mean? (Notes on Seir)

8. What did the Edomites do to the Horites in Mt. Seir? Deut.2:12

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. Do you spend your life pleasing yourself, or trying to please God?

10. How can we learn from Esau and Jacob to make us more pleasing to God?

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LESSON 36

Reading : Genesis 37

v1-4 Joseph was only 17. The brothers would be angry when he brought home a bad report. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other children, because he was the son of his old age and of Rachel. "He made him a coat of many colours" and "his brothers hated him". The working clothes were plain. A specially woven, colourful garment would be worn by the head of a family and his heir to set them apart. The heir had the birthright and authority over his brothers, and was priest of the family. Reuben was the firstborn: he would expect to hold this honour. His brothers agreed; but Reuben was not worthy ch.35:22. Jacob knew Joseph's character, and that he would walk in the way of the Lord. Also, Jacob had chosen Rachel when he saw her at the well. He thought of her as his real wife and Joseph as his firstborn. Human birth does not count with God—see 1 Sam. 16:6-13.

v5-11 Joseph's dreams suggested that he would rule over his family; even his parents v9-10. (Rachel was dead, so this hints at resurrection). The brothers said he was proud and arrogant; but "his father kept the matter in mind". He knew it might be a message from God. The first dream was about corn. Without corn there was no bread: without bread they could not live. So Joseph was to rule over their means of life. In the next dream, sun, moon and stars are in the heavens, far above mankind. They are used in Scripture to show kings, rulers; so Joseph would be their king. Also, the first dream was about the earth: remember God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 13:16 "seed as the dust of the earth". The second dream was of heaven Gen. 15:5 "seed as the stars of heaven". Natural and spiritual Israel—all to bow before one King—The Lord Jesus Christ. The dreams were part of the

Gospel message. Joseph was a picture parable, a "type" of Jesus. v12-22 Jacob was living in Hebron v14. See ch.35:27 and Map Lesson 11. When dislike is hidden it festers like a boil. When it bursts—it spills its poison everywhere v18-20. Note the spite in their words! The dreams had eaten into their minds like acid! Reuben saved Joseph's life.

v23-28 How cruelly they stripped him of his special coat and threw (not lowered) him into a pit and sat down to eat, ignoring his cries ch.42:21. A camel train of Ishmaelites from Gilead, also called Midianites, was on its way to trade in Egypt. Ishmael was the son of Hagar; Midian was son of Keturah. All Abraham's sons except Isaac, lived east and south of Canaan. They probably intermarried. Gilead—the area south east, of Galilee (Notes on ch.31). They carried spices, balm and myrrh for which Gilead was famous. See Jer.8:22 & 46:11. They sold him for 20 pieces of silver! Jesus was betrayed by one of his own disciples (Judas) for 30 pieces of silver!

v29-36 Imagine Reuben's dismay at finding him gone! The others had no conscience about dipping the special coat in goats blood and giving it to Jacob. He was old and Joseph was the "apple of his eye". It is a wonder the shock did not kill him—but it was all in God's plan of salvation. What grief is in the words "in mourning I will go down to the grave to my son". v36 These few words cannot express Joseph's terrible suffering!

QUESTIONS

1. What two dreams did Joseph have? v5~9 What did they mean?
2. Where did the brothers go with the flocks? v12-17 3 What did they say when they saw Joseph coming?

V18-20

4. What did they do with Joseph at first? v23-25
5. What did Judah suggest they should do with him? V26-28
6. For what price was Joseph sold? To whom does that point forward?
7. What did they do with his coat? v31 -33
8. To whom was Joseph sold in Egypt?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. Do you think God was pleased with the hatred, jealousy, anger and deception in this chapter?
10. What should we learn from all this?

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LESSON 37

Reading : Genesis 38

v1-12 Judah (Praise) was Jacob's 4th son. When he was born, Leah said "Now will I praise the Lord". In ch.49:8-12 Jacob said "...your brothers will praise you"—a prophecy of Jesus, who came from Judah. This chapter shows the human line of Christ. Shuah "Prosperity" was a Canaanite. We know nothing of her character. She bore three sons—Er "Watcher", Onan "Strength" and Shelah "Peace". These verses cover a long time. We do not know the nationality of Tamar "Palm". Er was wicked and God slew him. It was the custom for the next son to take the widow—the children would be his brother's and receive the dead man's name and inheritance. Onan would not fulfil this custom. He took Tamar—but refused to provide seed for his dead brother. God caused him to die also. Tamar was sent back to her parents until the third son grew up. The years went by—Shelah grew up, and Shuah died. After the period of mourning, Judah did what most people do—found work to take his mind off his grief. v12—Adullam south west of Jerusalem. Timnah was a village near by. Later, God gave this area to the tribe of Judah (when the nation of Israel returned from Egypt).

v13-23 Judah ignored Tamar v14. He was not a very godly man; and he was afraid of losing Shelah if he was married to Tamar v11. We cannot judge what Tamar did: God did not comment. If she had waited some years in her widowhood for Judah to fulfil his promise she would feel insulted by his neglect—the laughingstock of her neighbours? "the woman who was death to her husbands"? She made sure to get clear evidence of the man whose child she was to bear. Judah was tempted. His wife was dead; mourning was over; he was starting to live again. He showed the human weakness by which we too may be tempted. We pray that God will keep us from sin.

v24-30 Women have been unfairly treated in society ever since the curse in the Garden of Eden. A man could have as many wives as he could afford: he could do as Judah did on the way to Timnah. But a woman caught in a sin was put to death. Judah, who saw nothing wrong in his own behaviour, was enraged when he heard that Tamar was with child. He actually said—"burn her to death!" Later, in the Law of Moses, God decreed that the man and the woman should die by stoning. This penalty was not often carried out. Jhn.8:1-11 Jesus did not allow the sin—but he forgave it. Judah admitted his fault when he saw the tokens which he had given her. It was a poor beginning to the line of Christ! This is shown throughout Scripture. Rich and poor; high and low; kings and harlots—all sorts of men and women took part in preparing for the Saviour of mankind! That was how God planned it. No man can say Christ is not for him—because He is too high, too grand, or too rich! Jesus was born in a stable, among the animals. He was visited by shepherds—and Wise Men (Kings?). And Jesus was "tempted in everyway, just as we are" Heb.4:15—so that He can help US. And "As He himself suffered when He was tempted—He is able to help those who are being tempted" Heb.2:18. In the same way, he came from all the types there are in human nature—so that He might save all the types there are! What a wonderful way God deals with mankind! God's love is limitless, His mercy everlasting. Once again, the firstborn was "passed over" v27-30. The second child—who came out first v28-29, was Pharez "A breach". It was through him that the line of Christ came.

QUESTIONS

There is only one question on this lesson: What should we learn from this chapter?

Instead consider the wonderful provision God made for us in Christ Jesus. Read Ps.103, to see how great

is God's mercy to those seek Him; and Ps.139—He knows us through and through.

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 38

Reading : Genesis 39

v1-6 The record says nothing of Joseph's feelings, but think about it—he beloved son of his father; always close to him; learning all the ways of God and the promises. He had worn the coat of the chief son; had the dreams of future greatness. Then in a moment it was all gone. Stripped of the coat; cast into a pit; shown the full force of his brothers' hatred—sold to passing merchants. He may have had to walk all the way to Egypt, chained to prevent escape; displayed for sale, and bought by Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. v2 makes it sound so simple, but it was not simple for Joseph! It was a time of great suffering. What would we do if we were sold by our own brothers? Would we have faith in God? Would we work willingly and honestly for the man who bought us? Would we rise to a place of honour by sheer strength of character—be so trusted that our master would keep no account of his goods; or our hearts so pure that God would make all our work to prosper? This would not happen in a month, or even a year. Joseph bore it patiently. He put his trust in God. In the early days he must have wept; but he must also have prayed, and His faith did not fail—"and the Lord was with him". It is a reflection of Jesus; rejected by his brethren; stripped; beaten; sold for 30 pieces of silver. They said "we will not have this man to reign over us" Luke.19:14. They cried "Crucify him!" And God let Him suffer and die. But then He rose again—and "sat down at the right hand of God"—a blessing to all men!

v7-12 Joseph's character had triumphed so far. He was not spoilt by the good things of his early life: he was not embittered by misfortune. He was utterly trustworthy in his master's service: and yet there was more trouble in store for him. v10 The temptation continued day after day. v9 If he betrayed his master the sin would be against God. We made this point in Lesson 19 when dealing with Abimelech's dream Gen.20:6.

v13-23 There is a saying "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned"; and Potiphar's wife took full revenge for Joseph's refusal. Potiphar did not give Joseph the chance to defend himself. So, totally innocent, faithful to the Lord his God; thrown into prison and condemned: once again Joseph stands as a "type" of Jesus. We wonder if Joseph's faith wavered at all? Did he have moments of despair? We know that his faith triumphed - and God gave him favour with the keeper of the prison. Once again, it would not have happened all at once. Joseph must have worked long and hard for that trust. He is a great example to us when we suffer trials and temptations. He reflected the faithfulness of our Lord in all His suffering. One small point about Potiphar. He was an important man and he would be no fool. Did he really believe Joseph to be guilty? He could have had him put to death. Perhaps he knew his wife—but took the easy way out!

QUESTIONS

1. To whom was Joseph sold in Egypt?
2. How did he get on in his master's household? v2-6
3. How did Joseph answer Potiphar's wife when she tempted him? v8-9
4. What did she do when he refused her? v13-18
5. What did Potiphar do when he heard her story?
6. How did Joseph get on in prison? v21-23
7. In what ways did Joseph's life reflect the life of Jesus? (Notes)

8. Why do you think God let him suffer unjustly?

9. Why do you think Joseph prospered, even in slavery and prison?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. What does Joseph's behaviour in this chapter teach us?

11. What qualities must we try to develop in our lives to show our faith?

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LESSON 39

Reading : Genesis 40

We do not know how long Joseph worked for Potiphar, or how long he spent in prison, but it must have been a good many years. He remained honest, upright, hardworking and utterly trustworthy in all that he did. ch.39:3 says "his master saw that the Lord was with him"—so he had spoken of his faith in the living God to those around him. He trusted in the Lord, and in the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When our faith is tried, the example of Joseph will help us; for we shall see that his faith was not in vain in the end.

v1-4 The honour of serving Pharaoh brought great responsibility. The chief butler (cupbearer) and the chief baker had to be men of the highest quality. They prepared all his food and drink. It must be healthy, and pleasing to his taste. Most importantly, it must not be poisoned by his enemies! Somehow, the chief butler and the chief baker offended Pharaoh: perhaps he had a stomach upset—and thought someone had tried to poison him. They were put in Joseph's prison until the king should decide what to do with them—and Joseph was told to look after them.

v5-23 These dreams were from God; they had clear meanings. Most of our dreams are just a jumble of thoughts that are already in our minds. Often they are nonsense—reflecting the way we feel. If we are happy and sure of ourselves we have good dreams: if we are troubled—we have bad ones. The two men were upset by their dreams. Their lives were in danger, and they thought the dreams were a sign; but good or bad? They did not know! Joseph said interpretations belong to God. Daniel said the same when he stood before Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his dream Dan.2:17-28.

The chief butler and the chief baker would know that Pharaoh's birthday was in three day's time and they might be judged then; so the "threes" in the dreams may have meant this. The good dream of the butler and the bad dream of the baker, may have come from a knowledge of innocence or guilt. Read v14-15 again. Joseph had patiently endured all the sufferings that came upon him after his brothers threw him into the pit at Dothan: but he took the opportunity to look for escape when he saw the chance. Remember when God told Jacob to go back to the land ch.31—Jacob had to make the arrangements to escape from Laban. He had to take sensible action in case Esau was still angry ch.32. We too, whilst believing in God with all our hearts and praying daily, must make decisions for ourselves, knowing that He will guide our actions, and lead us safely to His Kingdom. We must not sit down and do nothing, saying that God will provide. That is not true faith. Faith and action go together, hand in hand. God gives the answer that is best for us—if we ask Him! On the third day Pharaoh gave judgement on his servants. He restored the butler and hanged the baker—but "the butler did not remember Joseph!" That was God's answer—but it must have been very painful for Joseph.

QUESTIONS

1. Who offended Pharaoh? v1-3: What did he do to them?
2. Who looked after them?
3. Why were they extra sad one day? v5-8
4. What was Joseph's answer to them? v8
5. What was the chief butler's dream, and its meaning? v9-13

- 6 What did Joseph ask him to do when he was free again?
- 7 What was the chief baker's dream, and its meaning? V16-19
- 8 What happened to the two men on the third day after the dreams?
- 9 What happened about Joseph's request to the chief butler? v23

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. What does Joseph's behaviour in prison teach us about how we should behave?
11. Do we accept disappointments without blaming others? Do we understand that God does not always give us what we ask for?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 40

Reading : Genesis 41

v1-24 Two full years passed after the chief butler was restored to his high position. We often think that surely we have suffered enough! But God knows when the time is right. We must trust Him Heb.11:6. v8 It was no wonder Pharaoh was upset when he awoke. Picture the scene at the river bank: the thin cattle opened their mouths—and swallowed the fat ones! Pharaoh had two dreams with the same idea—good was swallowed up by bad, and the end was—nothing! And, the dreams took place by the river. The Nile was the source of life to Egypt. Both cattle and people were fed by its waters: the fields gave rich harvests. What could it mean? The wise men were no help. Then the butler remembered Joseph! "They brought him quickly out of the dungeon!" Men move fast when authority speaks. Joseph shaved and changed his clothes. A wash and change is obvious. The shaving had to do with Egyptian custom. When not at war the Egyptians were clean-shaven. Note Joseph's words in v16. God will give the answer.

v25-52 The dreams were God's message. Both were the same. Two lots of seven years—the good to be swallowed up by the bad—lost—forgotten! The repetition meant that it was certain v32. Being told in advance, they could use the good years to prepare for the bad. God gave Joseph wisdom to understand the dreams and the way to save Egypt

v33-36. Pharaoh would never find a wiser man than this—who could interpret dreams by the word of God and not boast; who could save Egypt; to whom he could give power without fear of treachery! Pharaoh named him Zaphnaph-paaneah "Revealer of Secrets". He married the daughter of a priest/prince.

Joseph had received all his father's love, and the knowledge of God. He had been chief son and priest of the family. He had known the life of a shepherd, caring day and night for the flock whose very life depended on him. He had been given dreams of greatness. He had known love, hatred, betrayal; slavery, trust, temptation; accusation, imprisonment. He had seen his request for freedom forgotten for two years! He kept his faith and became great through suffering. Through all those years God had been preparing him to be a saviour. This reflects the life of Jesus.

Joseph carefully stored food for the famine. Nothing was wasted. Every city was ready. There is an echo of ch.22:17 in v49 "corn as the sand of the sea—it was without number". Joseph had two sons, who became two of the tribes of Israel: Manasseh "Forgetting"; Joseph forgot the suffering; and Ephraim "Fruitful"; the years of suffering had borne good fruit!

v53-7 The famine was "in all lands" but only Egypt was ready. When all the food was used up, Pharaoh sent the people to Joseph, with the order to obey him! He opened the storehouses and sold the corn. People from all lands came to Joseph that they might live.

QUESTIONS

1. For how long was Joseph in prison after the butler was released?
2. Briefly retell Pharaoh's two dreams? v2-8
3. What happened when Pharaoh awoke? v9~ 14
4. What did the dreams mean? What advice did Joseph give in v33-36?

5. What did Pharaoh do? v37-45

6. How did Joseph prepare for the years of famine? v46-49

7. Name Joseph's sons and their meanings. (Notes)

8. What did the Egyptians do when the food ran out? V55-56

9. Who else came to seek food in Egypt? v57

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. In verse 16 we see Joseph's humility, telling Pharaoh that it was only through God's power he could do this. What has God done in your life?

11. Are there times when we think we ourselves are very clever? Is there a lesson here for us?

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE MISSION

GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 41

Reading: Genesis 42

v1-8 God's preparation of Joseph as a saviour was not just to save the Egyptians who did not serve Him, and who had made their own gods. He had the larger, eternal plan in mind. Joseph would be the saviour of his own family, the seed of Abraham—with whom God had an everlasting covenant Gen. 15:13-16. That part of God's plan was about to begin.

Jacob was impatient with his sons when the food stocks ran low v1. "Why do you keep looking at each other? There is food in Egypt; go down there and buy some". But he kept Benjamin at home for fear of losing this last son of Rachel. v6 "they bowed with their faces to the ground—just as Joseph had dreamed all those years before! The brothers had been adults when they sold him. They would not have changed much. Joseph knew them at once—but they were not looking at a youth now. After seven years of plenty and a year or two of famine, Joseph was nearing 40: all they saw was a great Egyptian Governor—before whom they willingly bowed down!

v9-28 Joseph remembered his dreams, and their hatred and rejection. He wanted to know if they were still as wicked as when they sold him into slavery. He pretended they were spies, and treated them harshly. Note that they had not forgotten Joseph v13—"one is no more". They seem to have assumed that he was dead. His demand to see their younger brother would show their true characters—was their hatred now directed against Rachel's other son? v21-22 shows that they were deeply ashamed of what they had done. During the three days in prison they must have talked to one another more than they ever had at home, with their

families around them. At last, they really faced up to what they had done to their own brother. Thinking that Joseph was an Egyptian—they spoke their true thoughts. It was an emotional moment for Joseph; but he kept up the pretence, and put Simeon in prison until they came again with Benjamin. One more test was to put their money back in the sacks! What fear when one of the sacks was opened on the journey! They felt some of the anguish that the young Joseph had known when they vented their hatred on him.

v29-38 They told Jacob everything—and how, in their eagerness to show they were not spies, they had spoken of Benjamin. When they found their money still in the sacks, they were all afraid. Jacob was angry. He had lost his beloved Joseph; Simeon was in prison; and they wanted to take Benjamin from him too! He was too old to bear this new trouble after all his sufferings. v37 Reuben cannot have thought his offer would be of any consolation to Jacob! It was probably meant to show what great care he would take of Benjamin—and typical of his rather uncontrolled nature. But Jacob would not be persuaded. One more loss, especially of Benjamin, would kill him: and there the matter had to rest, for the time being.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was sent to buy corn in Egypt? vt-3
2. Why was Benjamin left at home?
3. What did the brothers do when they came before Joseph? v5-7
4. Of what did Joseph accuse them? v9-14
5. What must they do to prove they were not spies? v15-16

6. How long were they in prison?

7. What did the brothers say to each other? v21-22

8. What happened to Simeon?

9. What did Joseph do with their money? How did they feel? v25-28

11. What did Jacob say when they had told him everything? v38

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

11. Do you have any guilty feelings about something you have done in the past?

12. What should we do when we know we have done something wrong?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 42

Reading: Genesis 43

v1-14 This famine was worse than the ones Abraham and Isaac had known. Jacob did everything he could to resist sending Benjamin to Egypt; but he had to give in when the food began to run out! v8-9 Judah spoke in a far more simple and direct manner than Reuben ch.42:37. Judah offered himself as surety for Benjamin's life. Judah had changed! (His greater Son, Jesus did give His life for the life of the world). v12 They took two lots of money, so as to return the silver that had been put back in their sacks. They also took a gift for the Governor, of the fruits of their land which had been stored, and were not affected by the famine v11. Jacob's words in v13-14 are very sad—an old man, in danger of losing all that he held dear in life. Ch.37:2 speaks of the evil report that Joseph brought to his father concerning the brothers. We do not know what it was, but this extra test of the money in the sacks, suggests that Joseph wanted to know if they were now honest. Perhaps they had been cheating Jacob in their dealings with the flocks when Joseph was with them. It is a possibility; something to think about. It reminds us to be honest in our dealings, for God sees everything that we do. Nothing is hidden from His eyes.

v15-25 Imagine Joseph's feelings at seeing Benjamin after so many years! But the testing of his brothers was not yet complete. The arrangement for them to dine at his house only filled them with greater fear v18-22! When their attempts to return the money was refused, they suspected a plot to enslave them. Did they think of the young Joseph whom they had robbed of his priestly coat, and sold into slavery? They had certainly thought the trouble in Egypt was punishment for the sin ch.42:21-22. Simeon's release would be small consolation. All they could do was to prepare their gifts in the hope that the Governor would accept them. There is no mention of prayer by any of the brothers—only a fearful expectation of punishment. And these were the great grandsons of Abraham, the friend of God!

v26-34 Joseph accepted the gift—but his real interest was in asking after his father and looking at Benjamin who was a child when he last saw him. We can imagine his feelings if we think of it as happening to us. If we feel the joy, sorrow, laughter, grief and tears of others, we might try to copy the love and patience that God and Jesus have shown to us. Our troubles and sorrows are meant to make us more understanding towards our fellowmen. See Heb.2:14-18. We must try to follow his example, and not be like the servant in Matt. 18:23-35; or the Pharisee in Luke. 18:9-14. Joseph's tears in Genesis take us forward—to the Gospel of love in the New Testament. That is the power and glory of God's Word. v32 "Hebrew" comes from Eber a descendant of Shem in the line of Abraham ch.11:14. v32 Egyptians would not eat with Hebrews—shepherds were detested in Egypt Gen.46:34; and it was a religious custom to eat separately from foreigners.

The brothers were seated in order of age, which caused astonishment—perhaps fear? Benjamin was rightly seated last as the youngest—but was more highly favoured at the feast than his older brothers. Another test?

QUESTIONS

1. Why would the brothers not go down to Egypt again to buy food? v1-8
2. What did Judah offer to do? v9
3. What gift were they to take with them? v11

4. What money were they to take? v12
5. What did the brothers think when they came to Joseph's house? v18
6. What did the steward say when they offered the money?
7. What did Joseph ask? v27-28
8. What did Joseph do in v29-30?
9. What happened in v32-34?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. Are you always totally honest, knowing God sees you when others don't? Think about it!
11. What do you think about Joseph testing his brothers as he did?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 43

Reading: Genesis 44

v1-13 So the brothers feasted and drank freely with him" ch.43:34. Then Joseph prepared the final test v1-2. Imagine the dismay of the brothers,—just when they thought they were safe after all! So sure were they of their innocence, that they made a very rash promise v 9. Again, they were dealt with from the eldest to the youngest—until there was the cup, in Benjamin's sack! They had said that the guilty one should die! This was the final test. They had got rid of Joseph all those years ago, without a second thought. Would they now be glad to get rid of their father's next favourite son? v13 answers that question.

v14-17 Joseph's pretended anger offered them a chance to save themselves and to leave Benjamin to be put to death. Judah had become the leader by this time. Reuben was the eldest, but we know that he was not given the honour of the firstborn. He was unreliable. He was at the mercy of his own desires ch.35:22. He was not willing to commit murder ch.37:21-22—but he was not able to stand up to his brothers as the eldest should, to make them do what was right. (No wonder both God and Jacob had chosen Joseph!) He had also made the foolish suggestion that his own sons could be killed if any harm came to Benjamin. But Judah came forward to plead for Benjamin. Joseph reduced the death penalty (which the brothers themselves had set)—to slavery for Benjamin—and complete freedom for the brothers. Would they settle for that, and be prepared to go back and try to explain it to their father? It was the final test of character.

v18-34 See how carefully Judah built his defence before the Governor—giving him the honour and glory due to the one who was even as the king; going through the story step by step to show that they had been caught up in a net, like animals in a trap from which they could not escape. They were innocent—but they could not prove it. He sought to show that the situation was not of their making. He laid great stress on Jacob's age, his love for this last, precious son, who had already lost his mother and brother. Joseph must have been deeply upset at this story, but he had to know whether or not they were now clean from the evil which had festered in their hearts before. Judah twice spoke of the "other brother" who was supposed to be dead, but stopped short of confessing what had happened to him. He pleaded that Jacob would surely die if he lost Benjamin. He took the blame for it (with his brothers), offering himself as a slave if only Joseph would let Benjamin go back to his father; for he could not bear to see the effect of the loss on Jacob v30-34. This was what Joseph wanted to hear! The brothers had been put through every test—made to suffer; been offered the chance to steal; and to betray their young brother; and they had not taken it! We too suffer, and are tested—so that we may learn to overcome. Jesus also Heb.5:8. See Rev.2:7 and Rev.3:19-22.

QUESTIONS

1. Why would the brothers be happy when they first set off for home?
2. What did Joseph tell his steward to do? v1-2
3. What did the steward do next morning? v4-6
4. What did the brothers reply? v7-9
5. In whose sack was the cup found? v12
6. Who came forward to plead with the governor? v14-16
7. What would happen to Jacob if Benjamin did not return?

8. What did Judah offer in return for Benjamin's freedom? v33

9. How can Joseph's story help us in our search for salvation?

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. How do you think our character is tested in every day life?

11. What lessons can we learn from the brothers?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 44

Reading: Genesis 45

v1-5 The time had come for Joseph to reveal himself to his brothers. It was too private and personal to be witnessed by the Egyptians. The life and work of Joseph has many echoes in the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He promised that He would come back again and reveal Himself to His faithful servants—bringing salvation and immortality in His Kingdom Matt.25:10,21,23,34. That will be a private and joyful time before Jesus and the saints begin the great work of taking the kingdoms of this world, and transforming them into—"the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ—and He will reign for ever and ever" Rev. 11:15-18.

Joseph assured his brothers that everything that happened to him, had been part of God's plan for the salvation of His chosen people. All the hatred and betrayal—the suffering and temptation—the long years of testing—were God's preparation for the time of honour, power and glory that Joseph now enjoyed. He was raised up to be a saviour to his family, the seed of Abraham. More than that—he had become the saviour of "all the world" ch.41:57.

We can see in this, just an echo, a pale reflection, of the eternal work of Jesus. Never let anyone tell you that the Gospel of salvation is only to be found in the New Testament. It has all been pictured in the pages of Genesis.

Read the chapter slowly. Think about Jesus and us—and forgiveness and salvation. Think of the preparation; the lifetime journey of faith and obedience, and the glory at the end of it.

v6-20 This was only the second year of the famine; there were five more to come v6,11. Joseph had prepared them a place near him. See John. 14:1-3. Goshen was in the East, by the Nile delta—away from the main Egyptian cities; as near to Canaan as possible; ready for their return to the land which God promised to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession! They would be kept from close contact with the Egyptians and their way of life and worship. They would never forget that they were different. See the spiritual idea there. It was good pastureland where Pharaoh kept his own cattle ch.47:6. v16-20 See Pharaoh's love for Joseph!

v25-28 Note the careful preparations Joseph made for his brothers and their families—and for the comfort of his aged father—for whom this would be a tremendous upheaval. v24 Joseph knew all about human nature, and his brothers in particular! (Another echo of Jesus - John 2:23-25). Try to imagine Jacob's shock and disbelief and dawning joy.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the first thing Joseph asked his brothers? v3
2. How did the brothers react?
3. Briefly tell the story of v4-15
4. How did Pharaoh react? v16-20
5. What did Joseph give to the brothers? v21-22
6. What did he send to his father? v23

7. What advice did he give the brothers before they set off? v24

8. What happened when they told Jacob? v25-28

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. Joseph is quite amazing in seeing God's hand in his life, in v 5-8. Are you willing to see God in your life, even if your life is not easy?

10. What do you think Jesus will say to you when he returns to the earth?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 45

Reading: Genesis 46

v1-7 Try to imagine how Jacob felt as he set off to meet his long lost son. v1 His heart turned to God in joy and thankfulness. We so often turn to God when we are in trouble—and then forget to give thanks when the good times come. See 1.Thess.5:18. Abraham had lived in Beer-Sheba for many years, and worshipped the Lord there Gen.21:33-34. Isaac grew up in Beer-sheba, and returned there when Jacob and Esau were young, it was there that Esau sold his birthright—and there that Jacob deceived Isaac and gained the blessing. It was from Beer-Sheba that Jacob set off on his long journey to Haran (when God came to him at Bethel). It was a journey of 21 years of struggle, that changed him from Jacob the Supplanter—to Israel—the Prince of God.

Now Jacob was leaving the Land of Promise—not knowing what the future held. He stopped at this special place to worship. He turned to God and He answered him. God (Elohim, Great) who is to be feared and worshipped; the God of Abraham and Isaac; the God of all creation; the only God -would be with him in the land of false gods—and bring him up again—a great nation v2-4. In Lesson 26 to go "down" into Egypt was a symbol of worldliness and sin. To come "up" out of Egypt was a symbol of salvation.

v8-27 The families are set out according to their mothers. v6 The sons of Leah and their children (and Dinah) were 33. The 2 sons of Zilpah and their children were 16. The 2 sons of Rachel and their children were 14. The 2 sons of Bilhah and their children made 7—70 altogether. The wives were not counted—nor the servants, maidservants and

herdsmen—with all their families. It was a great company—together with flocks and herds. v28-34 Jacob sent Judah on before them, to make the arrangements—(not Reuben). Leah's fourth son was now the leader. Jesus descended from the line of Judah, so it was right that Judah should become the chief son and helper of his father, and leader of his brothers (like Jesus). v30 Jacob would be happy to die, if he could see his beloved Joseph as the saviour. Lke.2:25-32 Simeon was content to die when he had seen the saviour of the world. When you read the Old Testament always look for the Gospel of Salvation—look for Jesus. He was there in every part of God's work with mankind.

v31 Joseph knew that Abraham had been called to be separate—even from his own kindred—called out to be God's family; God's nation. They must remain separate even here in Egypt. They would be "swallowed up" if they mingled and intermarried. He meant to keep them apart. The Egyptians did have flocks and herds, but herdsmen and shepherds were usually the poor—or foreigners. One meaning of their word for shepherd was "disgrace" so Joseph used this to keep his family away from them. Jacob must say that his people had been herdsmen and shepherds for generations! Then Pharaoh would be very glad to let them live at the far edge of his land!

QUESTIONS

1. What did Jacob do at Beer-sheba? v1
2. What lesson can we learn from that? (Notes)
3. What did God tell Jacob? v2-4
4. How many sons did Jacob have?

5. How many were in Jacob's family besides wives? v27

6. Who was Jacob's "right hand man" now? v28

7. What did Jacob say to Joseph when they met? v30

8. How did Joseph plan to keep his family separate? v31-34

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

9. Does Jacob's joy remind you of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son? [Luke 15 v 11-32] How can we bring joy to our Heavenly Father?

10. In what way are God's people to keep separate from the world?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 46

Reading: Genesis 47

v1-12 Everything went according to plan. Jacob's family settled in the land of Goshen with Pharaoh's blessing. Shepherds were detested by the Egyptians, but Pharaoh received them kindly for Joseph's sake. He even offered to make them rulers over the care of his own cattle, such was his desire to please Joseph. God receives us kindly for Jesus' sake—though our sinful state is detestable to His righteousness. See Is.64:6 "all our righteousness is as filthy rags": Hab.1:13 "God cannot look upon evil". v7 Jacob took a sad view of his 130 years. When we remember the story of his life, he certainly had suffered! It will be forgotten in the Kingdom. See 2 Cor. 11:23-30, 2 Tim.4:5-8 and Heb.12:1-13. See how a simple verse in Genesis can lead us to Christ? It can help us as we struggle with our troubles and sorrows—when we are weary of sufferings. The message is "never give up, never lose faith: pray always, giving thanks even for our pains, for they can lead us to the Kingdom" Heb.12:11 v11 Rameses was in the same area of the Nile delta as Goshen.

v13-26 The people bought corn till all their money was gone. Then they traded with horses, cattle, flocks, herds and asses—then with land. It all went into Pharaoh's treasury. No one seems to have objected, because Joseph was quite literally their saviour: but we may feel that it was not fair—now the people had nothing! The answer lies in the fact that the land was held by family groups—and each group was a law unto itself! There were constant local wars and no proper national government. Joseph gathered the kingdom together under the central rule of Pharaoh. He also gave them corn—to plant their fields when the famine was over. Without him they would all be dead. They still had their lands

and their animals, and they still farmed as they had before—but now they kept four fifths of their produce—and gave one fifth in tax to Pharaoh. So it made no difference to their daily life, except that there was no need for strife between neighbours! There was a governor to whom they could appeal for justice; there was storage provision in case of future famine; there was plenty for all. It was the best thing that ever happened to Egypt!

v27-31 The family grew and prospered. Jacob lived another 17 years to the age of 147. v29 It was the same binding oath we saw in ch.24:2. Abraham made his servant swear not take a wife for Isaac from among the women of the land. Jacob made Joseph promise not to bury him in Egypt. He must be buried in the land of Promise with Abraham and Isaac. He must be "taken up out of Egypt" (another hint of resurrection and salvation!) v31 "Jacob worshipped as he leaned on the top of his staff" (margin—Israel bowed down at the head of his bed). Note the steadiness of Jacob's faith. In whatever circumstances he found himself—in trouble or ease—in sorrow or joy—whether bedridden—or able to walk with the aid of a staff—he was always true to his custom of worshipping God. . f

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Pharaoh let them settle in Goshen? ch.46:34
2. What did Pharaoh offer to the most able of the brothers? v6
3. What did Jacob say to Pharaoh? v8-10
4. Briefly tell the story of v13-21.

5. What arrangement did Joseph make when the famine was over? v23-26

6. How long did Jacob live in Egypt? How old was he? V27-28

7. What did he make Joseph swear to him? v29-31

8. What was the custom in making an oath? v29

9. Who else did this, and when? (Notes)

Two questions to help you to think about your own life:

10. Do you always worship God, whatever the difficulties?

11. Do you talk to your family about God's promises?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 47

Reading : Genesis 48

v1-14 Jacob was dying and Joseph was sent for. He took his two sons with him, Manasseh (Forgetting) and Ephraim (Fruitful).—v2 "Jacob rallied his strength and sat up on the bed". He still had God's work to do, although he was near to dying. Jesus said "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" Jhn.9:4. While there is breath in us, we must serve God. It will be time enough to rest when we "fall asleep in Jesus" to await the resurrection.

Jacob spoke of his calling to be the father of God's people, and of the promise to inherit the land for an everlasting possession v3-4. Perhaps the boys knew the story off by heart! Their grandfather would never tire of telling them of the love and care of the God of all creation—of the promises—of the hope of resurrection. He claimed Ephraim and Manasseh as his sons. He spoke of his beloved Rachel, and how he had buried her near Ephrath (Bethlehem). (Remember how she named her baby Ben-oni "Son of my sorrow"—because she was dying, and would not see her sons grow up: no doubt she wept) Matt.2:16-18 refers to Rachel weeping. It makes sense when we think that she died in such sorrow near Bethlehem. v13-14 Jacob blessed the younger above the elder, as we have often seen before. He was almost blind, and could not see his grandsons clearly—but he crossed his hands in order to put his right hand upon Ephraim's head!

v15-22 Jacob blessed Joseph. Indeed, Joseph was already blessed by God. He had been given the great work of saviour to his brethren; and he was made a type of the perfect saviour, who would come to be the redeemer of the world ~

that is, of all would hear, and repent, and be baptised, and follow Him. Joseph is remembered for the great work he did in his day, and is not numbered amongst the tribes of Israel. His two sons take his place. Through them he was to have a "double portion" (two tribes) in Israel. v16 shows Jacob's close relationship with the Angel. The word angel is usually written with a small "a", but here it had a capital "A" as with a personal name—suggesting a close, longstanding relationship.

Joseph automatically tried to correct Jacob, when he saw the "mistake" v17-18—(although he himself had been specially chosen, being a younger son). Jacob refused, saying that Ephraim was to be the greater—but God would also bless Manasseh (not as in the case of Esau). They would be symbols of prosperity—"God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!" Note—Ephraim's name was first! Jacob prophesied their return to the land of promise v21. v22 Joseph was given a special portion of land as a mark of honour; a piece of land which was already Jacob's, gained at great cost! The other sons would not have any inheritance—until hundreds of years later when God would lead their descendants "up out of Egypt" in a great deliverance. Josh.24:32 records the burial of Joseph in the place that Jacob had bought in Shechem. The area north and south of Shechem became the portion of Ephraim and Manasseh after the return from Egypt. See John.4:5—Sychar is Shechem (Jesus sat on Jacob's well and preached salvation to the Samaritan woman and the people of her town).

QUESTIONS

1. What message came to Joseph? v1 Who went with him to see Jacob?
2. What did Jacob do, and why? (Notes v2)

3. What did Jacob say about Joseph's two sons? v5-6
4. How does the NT. link Rachel with the birth of Jesus? (Notes v7)
5. What does v10 tell us about Jacob in his old age?
6. What did Jacob do when Joseph brought his sons to him?v14.
7. What did Jacob say about Ephraim and Manasseh? V19-20.
8. What important prophecy did Jacob make? v21. Two questions to help you to think about your own life:
9. What should our life's work be?
10. What can we learn from Jacob's life?

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GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 48

Reading : Genesis 49

The sons gathered together to receive Jacob's last words; his thoughts on their characters; and a prophecy of how their tribes would develop.

BENJAMIN (Son of the right hand) Second son of Rachel. There is a note of savagery here. We are used to thinking of him as a tender young lad—the last little one of Jacob's old age, who needed to be protected by his older brothers. There was obviously another side to his character—"the ravenous (hungry) wolf, hunting down his prey! In the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the plunder" (spoils of war).

EPHRAIM and **MANASSEH** whom Jacob had claimed from Joseph as his own, are not mentioned here; but they appear as tribes in the later history.

REUBEN (See a son) the firstborn who should have been his father's pride and joy: "unstable as water" doomed to failure. Jacob rebuked him openly for the incident recorded in ch.35:22. No doubt Reuben had hoped that the matter would be forgotten. Our sins can be forgiven if we repent; but we must live with the consequences—sometimes for the rest of our lives! **SIMEON** (Hearing). **LEVI** (Joined) See ch.34:25-31. Violence was in their natures. Jacob said "they are brothers"! They joined forces to get their way by violence. Jacob withdrew himself from their actions: he cursed their anger. Their tribes must be scattered in Israel, to control them.

JUDAH (Praise) Judah's character developed during the story of Joseph. In ch.37—while Reuben watched the sheep, Judah stopped the others from killing Joseph, by appealing to their next strongest passion—the money they could make by selling him instead. In ch.38 he publicly admitted the wrong he did to Tamar. In ch.43 he made himself responsible for his brother's safety. In ch.44 He made the moving plea to the Governor for Benjamin's freedom, offering himself as slave in his place.- ch.46 Jacob sent Judah on ahead to arrange for their settlement in Goshen. He would be praised by his brothers—and have the mastery over his enemies—a lion among men. Judah was the royal tribe. From him came—"the one to whom the kingdom belongs: the obedience of the nations is his"—Christ. v11 perhaps shows a time of peace and plenty when "The King" comes.

ZEBULUN (Dwelling) Leah's sixth son. v13 (AV) makes a play on his name, "Zebulun shall dwell..". His land would be in the N.W, stretching up to Sidon. (Tyre and Sidon are in Lebanon). His interest would be in ships.

ISSACHAR (Hire) because Leah "hired" Jacob for the night with her son's mandrakes ch.30: Leah's fifth son—placed after his younger brother. He sounds solid, unimaginative, hardworking, uncomplaining, content. Would he be easy prey, and always be made to serve those with more ambition?

DAN (Judging) first son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. He would be a judge among his people. v17 refers to something in his nature. One would need to beware when dealing with him! As a serpent he would catch his enemies off guard and bring them down. Jacob said "I look for your deliverance O Lord". Did the mention of the serpent remind Jacob of the burden of sin, and the promise of a saviour—in Gen.3:15—and in his words to Judah?

v28-33 Jacob ended his judgments and his blessings. Only one thing was still to be said. Abraham was

called by God and given great and precious promises concerning the land and the nation that would come from him. His son Isaac was the son of promise, provided by God to a barren woman who was too old to bear. He was offered in symbol on a hill outside Jerusalem (Moriah) by a father who was ready to give his only son at God's command! Jacob himself was called by God, and saw a vision of angels ascending and descending upon a ladder to heaven. He suffered long and patiently, and became a Prince of God. His beloved Joseph had become a great man of God through suffering—the great saviour of his time! Now Jacob was about to die; and he was determined on one thing—he must be buried in the land of the Promises. He would sleep with his fathers until the day when those promises would be fulfilled. He said "I have waited for thy salvation O Lord" v18. So ended the life of one of God's great men. His sons were wealthy, and comfortably settled near the E. border of Egypt—well cared for by Joseph. It was the beginning of the nation of Israel.

GAD (A troop) First son of Zilpah, Leah's maid. A prophecy of trouble to come (using his name Troop AV) but a promise of victory at the end. The Map in lesson 49 shows the land given by God to the tribes of Israel, after He brought them "up out of Egypt" and into the Promised Land.

ASHER (Happy) Second son of Zilpah, Leah's maid. A promise of wealth -especially in the fruits of the field. Wealth is not always a blessing! Too much ease and comfort can lead to indifference to others. Later, in the times of the Judges, Ash er was rebuked for not coming to the aid of the other tribes as they fought for their lives and freedom Jud.5:17.

NAPHTAU (Westling) Second son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. A prophecy of freedom "a hind (female deer) let loose". There is nothing more graceful than a deer, running upon the hills. The last phrase is not clear. NIV "that bears beautiful fawns": AV "he giveth goodly words". There is a hint of wisdom and good counsel—and of bearing good fruit. Their land was around Galilee, where Jesus grew up and spent much of His ministry.

JOSEPH (Adding) First son of Rachel. This blessing overflows with love. His father added blessing upon blessing. 'God also added blessing upon blessing after the years of trial and suffering. Read these verses carefully. They look forward, as always with Joseph, to the greater saviour our saviour. Joseph gave life, not only to his family, but to all Egypt and those who came to him to buy food, from all the nations around. The perfect saviour gives the hope of Eternal Life to those who come to Him—from all over the world—in all the ages, even until now.—v26..."Let all these rest upon the head of Joseph; on the brow of the prince among his brothers". This only applies in its very fullest sense to Jesus!

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jacob call his sons together? v1-2
2. Briefly What were the faults of his first three sons? v3-7
3. What was to be Judah's chief blessing?v 8-12 and Notes.
4. Where was Zebulon to settle? What would his interests be? v13
5. What do v14-15 suggest about Issachar? (Notes)
6. What was said about Bilhah's first son, Dan? v16-17
7. What was said about Zilpah's first son, Gad? v19
8. What Bible prophecies do you know which will change your life?

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE MISSION

GENESIS COURSE

LESSON 49

Reading : Genesis 50

v1-6 It would be some time before they could go to Canaan to bury Jacob. The Hebrews did not embalm their dead, but the Egyptians did, so Joseph ordered it. Many different accounts have been given of the methods used, so we do not know exactly how Jacob was embalmed; but wines and perfumes were used to clean the body, inside and out. Myrrh, cassia, frankincense, aromatic herbs, cedar oil, were used for washing and soaking, to preserve the body. This took 40 days. The mourning period was 70 days. Joseph was Governor of Egypt, and very great in the land, but he was still a servant of Pharaoh. He had to ask permission to bury his father in Canaan.

v7-14 The Egyptians had mourned for Jacob. He was wealthy—and wise, and was held in honour by all who knew him! But as the father of Joseph the saviour of Egypt—he had been given great reverence! We see this in the company that went up with Joseph and his brothers to the land of Canaan—the servants and elders of Pharaoh, and all the elders of Egypt. Of Jacob's family, only the children were left in Egypt with the servants and the flocks and herds. It must have been a great sight to see v9! They probably followed the route which Jacob took when he came to Egypt—17years earlier. The threshing floor of Atad v10 was probably a large open space near the cave of Machpelah, Abraham's burial place. It is hard for us to imagine the loud, bitter lamenting—for 7days! It certainly impressed the inhabitants of the land! They called the place Abel Mizraim—"the mourning of the Egyptians". So Jacob was buried with Abraham and Isaac.

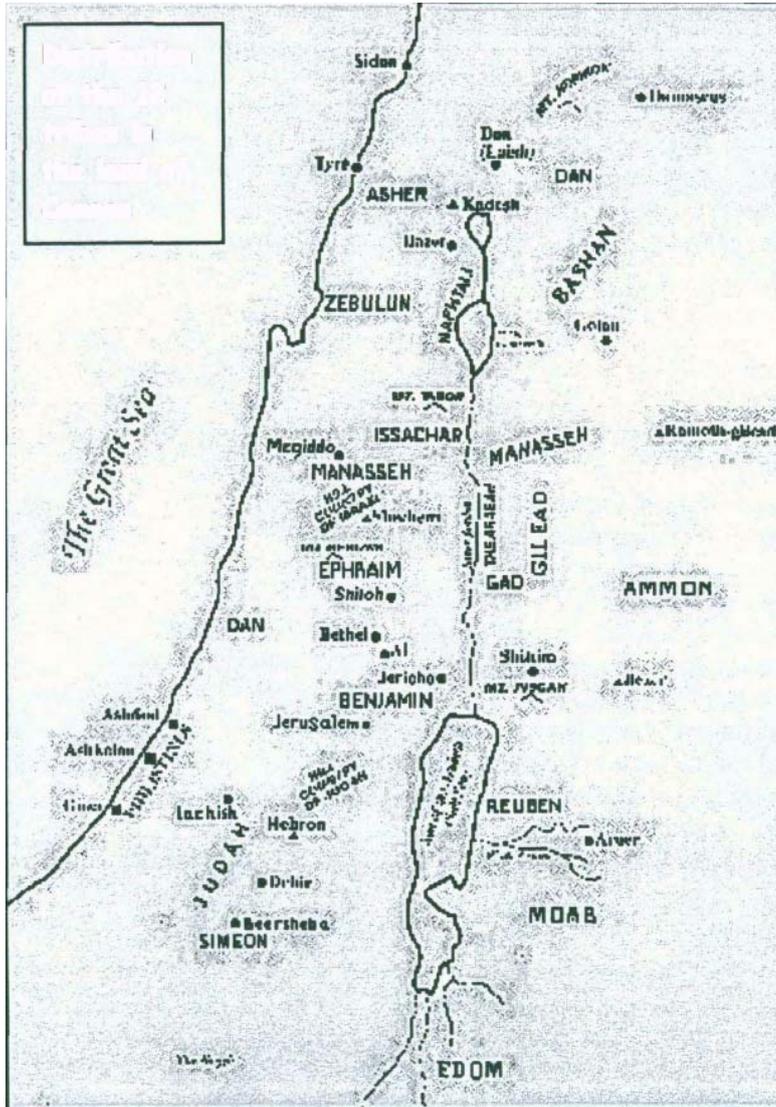
v14-21 See how the fear of the brothers came to the surface again when their father was gone—seventeen years after Joseph told them it was the purpose of God bringing salvation—and they must not blame themselves—and after all his kindness and care for them and their families! It must have been very painful to Joseph. That should tell us that giving way to anger or spite is never worth it: the guilt will haunt us for the rest of our lives. v17 Did Joseph weep because he pitied their fear; or because they still did not trust him after all he had done for them? John 12:37-38 and Matt.23:37-38. The Jews did not trust Jesus either. v19 it is God's place to judge, not ours. v16-17 shows that the brothers had eventually confessed their sin to Jacob. It does not say when—or what Jacob said!

v22-26 Joseph seems to have died before his brothers v24. He died quite early by the standards of those days. He prophesied their return to the Land of Promise. He made them swear that his bones would be taken up out of Egypt. So he died and was embalmed and placed in a coffin, to wait for the return to the land. It is a little "type" of resurrection.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Egyptians mourn for Jacob?
- 2.. Who went with Joseph to bury Jacob? v7-9
3. Where was he buried? v12-13
4. Why were the brothers afraid? v15-17
5. Why do you suppose Joseph wept? v17
6. What answer did he give them? v19-21

7. How long did Joseph live?
8. What did he prophesy before he died? v24 10. ~ What did he make his brothers swear? v25
9. What have you learned about God and His relationship with His people from Genesis?
10. What lessons have you learned that will help you lead a better life?



Map: Distribution of the 12 tribes in the land of Canaan

END.