1:2 Moses wrote Genesis, presumably during the 40 years wandering. He therefore wrote it in a context- of explaining things to Israel as they stumbled through that wilderness, wondering who they were, where they came from, where they were headed. This explains why there are so many links within the Pentateuch- e.g. the Spirit “flutters” over the waters in Gen. 1:2, just as God like an eagle [a symbol of the Spirit] “flutters” over Israel in bringing about their creation as a nation (Dt. 32:1). The point is, what God did at creation, He can do at any time in re-forming our lives into a new creation. Those baptized into Christ are “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). This process of making us new means that the creation of life, the huge expenditure of energy out of God which happened at the natural creation, is ongoing in our lives today.

The earth being “without form and void” (Gen. 1:2) uses a phrase elsewhere used to describe the judgment that has come on an order of things (Jer. 4:23; Is. 24:10; 34:11). It may be, therefore, that there was a previous creation on earth which was destroyed in judgment. Hence the command to “replenish the earth” (1:28).

1:12 God created matter. All that exists was made by Him; and by faith we believe that things which now exist were not made from what already existed apart from God. The Genesis record of creation, however, emphasises how God brought order out of chaos. He brought this present world of beauty and order out of a darkness that brooded upon a sea, and from an earth that was “without form and void”, the Hebrew images behind the words implying ‘a chaos’. The frequent references to the earth and sea ‘bringing forth’ (e.g. Gen. 1:12,24) use a Hebrew word which means ‘to let something which is within to come out’. The present world was created by a re-organization of things which existed in some form before. This means that when our own lives, or the collective life of God’s people, appears to be in chaos- then we can in faith reflect that God has brought beautiful order out of chaos, and He can likewise powerfully bring order to what seems hopeless.

1:26 *let us* - The Hebrew construction here is a “communicative plural”, implying God conferring with His council. To assume that God is speaking to Jesus here is a desperate assumption. The Bible doesn't teach that Jesus literally existed before His birth. The Hebrew word *elohim* translated “God” here literally means 'mighty ones', and here refers to the Angels. The Angels were the agents of creation (Job 38:7). The word *elohim* is translated “Angels” by many translations in Ps. 8:5. The Hebrew construction used here has been described as “a plural of deliberation”, whereby an individual may use a plural to describe his or her decision. Take David’s words in 2 Sam. 24:14: “Let us fall into the hand of the Lord…but let not me fall into the hand of man”. Ezra 4:18 has a King saying: “The letter ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me”. In Is. 6:8 we read the same of God Himself: “Whom shall I [singular] send, and who will go for us?”. And this would enable us to better understand God’s decision making in Gen. 11:7: “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their speech. So “Let us make man…” may refer to God’s personal self-deliberation in making human beings; to a Semitic reader of the original, it would emphasize the vast passion which God Almighty put into this decision. And it therefore follows, that He passionately wishes to have a very definite purpose with us, that He so loves us, and wishes only our eternal good.

*in our image, after our likeness*- We aren't in God's mental likeness, because His thoughts are so far above our thoughts (Is. 55:9). But the “our” refers to the Angels, and whenever they appear on earth, they have appeared in human form. God is a real, actual person, existing in Heaven but everywhere present by His Spirit. Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the angels. James 3:9 speaks of “...men, which are made in the similitude of God”. Our creation in the image of God means that we can infer something about the real object of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous of which we cannot conceive. Ezekiel saw God enthroned above the cherubim, with the silhouette of “the likeness of a man” (Ez. 1:26; 10:20); it is God Himself who is located above the cherubim (2 Kings 19:15). All this has a practical import; because we are in the image of God, because it is imprinted on every part of our bodies, we must give that body to God, just as men were to give the penny which had Caesar’s image on it to Caesar (Lk. 20:25). The Hebrew word tselem, ‘image’ is in modern Hebrew ‘photograph’. God is personal and He has a concrete, actual form and being.

2:7 The ‘soul’ refers to the person, body or self. The famous ‘Save Our Souls’ (S.O.S.) clearly means ‘Save us from death!’ The ‘soul’ is therefore ‘you’, or the summation of all the things that make up a person. It is understandable, therefore, that many modern versions of the Bible (e.g. the N.I.V.) rarely use the word ‘soul’, translating it instead as ‘you’ or ‘the person’. The animals which God created are called “living creatures...every living thing that moves” (Gen. 1:20,21). The Hebrew word translated “creatures” and “living thing” here is *nephesh*, which is also translated ‘being’; for example in Gen. 2:7: “...and man became a living being”. Thus man is a ‘soul’ or ‘living being’, just as the animals are ‘souls’ or ‘living beings’. The only difference between mankind and animals is that man is mentally superior to them; he is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and some men are called to know the Gospel through which the hope of immortality is opened up to them (2 Tim. 1:10). As regards our fundamental nature and the nature of our death, there is no difference between man and animals.

2:17 The serpent was a beast of the field which God had made (Gen 3:1). Yet out of the ground [Heb. adamah- earth, soil] God formed all the beasts of the field, including the serpent (Gen. 2:17). So the serpent was likewise created by God out of the ground- it wasn't a pre-existing agent of evil. Note the snake, as one of the beasts of the field, was “very good” (Gen. 1:31)- hardly how one would describe the serpent according to the orthodox reasoning.

2:21 Woman was created from the side of Adam, not from his head nor from his feet.

2:24 *cleave-* Mt. 19:5,6 interpret this as meaning that God “joins together” man and woman in marriage; not simply at the wedding, but throughout their life experience together. It’s therefore going against God’s work to break apart what He has tried to join together.

3:1 The serpent was an animal, created by God. The words ‘satan’, ‘lucifer’ and ‘devil’ don’t occur in the entire book of Genesis. Adam, and not the serpent, was the means by which sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). The Bible doesn’t teach that the satan exists as a personal being who sinned in Heaven and came to earth.

3:3 Eve had been told by Adam that they must not even touch it, although this is not what God had told Adam (Gen. 2:16,17 cp. 3:2,3). Adam turned to Eve and as it were wagged his finger at her and said 'Now you see that tree over there in the middle, don't you even touch it or else there'll be trouble, O.K.'. She didn't understand, he didn't explain that it was forbidden because it was the tree of knowledge, and so she was deceived into eating it- unlike Adam, who understood what he was doing (1 Tim. 2:14). Why didn't Adam tell her more clearly what God had said? Maybe he was disillusioned with the wife God gave him; he didn't have intercourse with her as he had been asked, he separated from her so that she was alone with the snake. Gen. 3:12 seems to reflect more than a hint of resentment against Eve and God's provision of her.

3:15 The descendant of the woman was to be a specific individual- Jesus. He was literally “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). He was the son of Mary, although God was His Father. Thus He was the descendant of the woman but not the descendant of a man, as He had no human father. This descendant of the woman was to be temporarily wounded by sin, the serpent - “you shall bruise his heel”. A snakebite on the heel is normally a temporary wound, compared to the permanence of hitting the snake / sin on the head, which Jesus did in His death.

3:21 Sin results in death (Rom. 6:23), i.e. a pouring out of the blood, which carries the life. For this reason the Israelites were expected to pour out blood each time they sinned, to remind them that sin resulted in death. ”... according to the law (of Moses) almost all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22). Because of this, Adam and Eve's covering of themselves with fig leaves was unacceptable; instead, God killed a lamb (Rev.13:8) to provide skins to cover their sin (Gen. 3:7,21). Similarly, Abel's sacrifice of animals was accepted rather than Cain's offering of vegetables, because he appreciated this principle that without shedding blood there could be no forgiveness and acceptable approach to God (Gen. 4:3-5).

3:24 The cherubim have Angelic associations. They were to keep “the way” to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24), whereas the keeping of the way is later said to be in the control of Angels- e. g. in Gen. 18:19 the Angels decide Abraham will keep “the way of the Lord”, implying they were the ones guarding it.

4:10 In another figure, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10). There is no immortal soul, we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

4:16 “Went out” is the language of Judas going out (Jn. 13:30), Cain '“went out” (Gen. 4:16), as did Zedekiah in the judgment of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:4; 52:7). Esau went out from the land of Canaan into Edom, slinking away from the face of his brother Jacob, sensing his righteousness and his own carnality (Gen. 36:2-8). Even in this life, those who leave the ecclesia 'go out' after the pattern of Judas, condemning themselves in advance of the judgment by their attitude to the ecclesia (1 Jn. 2:19 cp. Acts 15:24). The unrighteous flee from God now, as they will then (Hos. 7:13). The ungrateful servant “went out” and condemned his brother- thus condemning himself (Mt. 18:28).

4:26 The early chapters of Genesis highlight the fact that there were these two sorts of people; the descendants of Seth called themselves “by Yahweh’s name” (Gen. 4:26) and comprised the righteous “sons of God”, the seed of the woman. By contrast, the descendants of Cain, are described as being associated with murder and instituting polygamy (Gen. 4:23 & 19), the art of weapon production (Gen. 4:22) and entertainment (Gen. 4:21). The names of these people imply that at this time they started an alternative , apostate, system of worship to replace the true worship of God, which angered God; e.g. Cain named a city after Enoch, whose name means “dedicated”; Irad means “eternal city”; Mehujael means “God combats”; Lamech means “Overthrower” (of the truth ?). The sons of God marrying the daughters of men in Gen. 6:2-4 would therefore describe the inter-marriage of these two lines, so that only Noah and his family were the “seed of the woman” at the time of the flood.

5:29 Shall comfort us- did Noah's parents expect Noah to be the child who would do all the hard menial work for them, so that they would suffer less from the curse placed upon the ground in Eden? This might explain why Noah had children when he was 500, far older than others of his time (Gen. 5:32- Noah's father had had his first children at 182, Gen. 5:28; Seth had his first child at 105, Gen. 5:6; Enos at 95, Gen. 5:9; Cainan at 70, Gen. 5:12; Mahaleel at 65, Gen. 5:15; Jared at 162, Gen. 5:18; Enoch at 65, Gen. 5:21; Methuselah at 187, Gen. 5:25); Gen. 6:18 implies that Noah only had three sons, whereas for people with such long life spans we'd have expected him to have had far more than that. He only had three children- for he prepared the ark to save “his house” (Heb. 11:7) and Gen. 7:1 is quite clear: “Go into the ark, you and all your household”- his whole household was his wife, three sons and their wives. Period . Perhaps we get the picture of a man who was the underdog, the farm worker, the sidekick of the family, whose own family life was delayed and limited by this background. Perhaps he turned to alcohol for comfort (hence Gen. 9:21). But it was he whom God chose to save, he alone who was righteous in that generation which perished. It was the quiet, broken man who was saved. The Hebrew word for “Comfort” occurs later, when we read how God “repented” that He had made man (Gen. 6:6,7). Lamech's desire for 'comfort' was fulfilled but not as he imagined; not through his son being his personal slave, but rather in God changing His mind about humanity and making a new start. We get what we desire, in essence; and so we need to desire the right things.

5:32 500 years old- the flood came when Noah was 600 (Gen. 7:11), yet he spent 120 years preparing it (Gen. 6:3). So it's possible that he wasn't married when the call came to build the ark; he'd have explained his life mission to his wife, and she'd have been his first convert. Alternatively, if he were already married at 480, they had many years of barrenness in their marriage. Given the long lifespans in those days, this would've been very hard to take. Yet he didn't take another wife. He was “moved with fear”, 'reverently apprehensive' at what God told him, and prepared the ark in order to save his family (Heb. 11:7). Yet he began doing this before he had any children, and perhaps before he was married. He had faith that he would one day have a family, in accordance with God's invitation to make an ark in which to save his family.

6:2 “Sons of God” is used concerning men, especially those who know the true God (Deut. 14:1; Hos. 1:10; Lk. 3:38; Jn 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1). Lk. 20:35-36 says that the angels do not marry. See on 4:26.

6:3 *120 years*- Knowing the destruction that would come on all except Noah, God waited in the hope that more would be saved. He as it were hoped against His own foreknowledge that more would BE saved (1 Pet. 3:20). Peter says in 1 Pet. 3:19 that Christ through His Spirit preached to the people of Noah’s day. In 2 Pet. 2:5 he says that Noah was a preacher of, or [Gk.] ‘by’ righteousness to the people around him. Yet in 1 Pet. 3:19 Peter says that Christ preached to those same people through His Spirit. The resolution surely is that although Noah had never met the Lord Jesus, he lived according to the same Godly spirit as did Jesus; and this was his witness to his world. In this sense the spirit or disposition of Christ was found in all the Old Testament prophets (1 Pet. 1:11).

6:4 The Hebrew word for “aggressive men” or “giants” in Gen. 6:4 is also used to describe the sons of a man called Anak in Numbers 13:33. Freak human beings of unusual size or strength are sometimes born today, but it does not mean that their parents were angels. We are not specifically told that these men were the children of the “sons of God”. “There were aggressive men…and also after that…the sons of God came in to the daughters of men”.

6:5 The days of Noah are a type of the last days of AD70, and of the last days before Christ’s return: “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be” (Mt. 24:37).

7:1 *all your household*- his entire family consisted of his three sons. He therefore had no daughters and it would seem that his sons had no children. This tiny family size must be significant- for in those long lived ages, most women would have likely had over 50 children. Again, it was the small, broken and despised who were chosen of God. It seems that Noah's daughters in law only started bearing after the flood.

7:7 *in the face of*- seems to imply that he waited until the very last minute. It seems this was not due to any lack of faith, but rather because of the urgency and desperation he felt in appealing to others to come into the ark with him. He truly was a remarkable “preacher of righteousness “ (2 Pet. 2:5). Our knowledge of this world’s future means that as we walk the streets and mix with men and women, our heart should cry out for them, no matter how they behave towards us, and there should be a deep seated desire for at least some of them to come to repentance and thereby avoid the judgments to come.

7:23 Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him- Noah is the focus of salvation, but in him and with him his family were saved. Likewise our salvation is by being “in Christ”.

8:3 *in going and returnin*g- this is the language of the surges of huge tidal waves, caused by the underwater eruptions of the “fountains of the deep” being broken up (Gen. 7:11; 8:2). Being in the ark must've been a very rocky ride; the boat would've been tossed and thrown most of the time. And so it is with our ride in Christ.

8:4 seventeenth day of the seventh month- Israel left Egypt on the 14th day of Abib, the seventh month which became the first month in their new calendar; they likely crossed the Red Sea on the 17th day of that month. So perhaps it was on the very same day that the ark rested. Israel's passage through the Red Sea typified baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), just as Noah's passing through the flood waters did (1 Pet. 3:19-21). Note that this was the same day that the Lord Jesus was resurrected- He died at Passover, 14th Abib, and resurrected three days later, 17th Abib.

8:20 Built an altar- This was on Noah’s initiative. There had been no altars stipulated previously. God had asked Noah to build an ark, and now Noah of his own volition builds an altar. As we mature in Christ, we no longer simply follow commands but take our own initiative in God’s service. Noah’s first reaction may have been to build a house for himself and his family; but he put God first and built an altar.

8:21 Said in His heart- We may never know in this life God’s feelings in response to our sacrifices. We can touch the heart of God, we tiny mortals on earth…

9:6 As James 3:9; the fact humans are made in God's image means we should perceive the value and meaning of persons, from not killing to holding the door open for people... Defacing God’s image earns death. In what ways can we destroy the image of God in others apart from by killing them? Any form of dehumanizing surely does the same. Because we are made in God's image, we should therefore not kill other humans (Gen. 9:6). James says the same, in essence, in teaching that because we are in God's image, we shouldn't curse others. To curse a man is to kill him. That's the point of James' allusion to Genesis and to God as creator. Quite simply, respect for the person of others is inculcated by sustained reflection on the way that they too are created in God's image.

9:25 Canaan- Noah thrice rails against Canaan (:26,27). Why, seeing that the shame had been done to him by Ham, Canaan's father? This seems a classic example of transference- people often focus their anger not against the one who has hurt them, but against that person's relative, family or cause. We should deal with persons directly, perceiving the value and meaning of the human person; and not deflect the relationship onto others as Noah appears to have done. The curses placed by Noah have no fulfilment [contrary to many racist and misguided attempts to force such a fulfilment]. The story ends with a huge spiritual anticlimax, although later reference to Noah shows that he was judged faithful overall.

 9:29 *And he died-*  In the myth of Utnapishtim, the one who survives the flood  is turned into a hero and becomes a god. But of course Moses’ inspired record is different. The flood story ends with Noah dying- not becoming a god. And Noah not only remains human, but he remains very human- because he goes out and gets blind drunk after he comes out of the ark. Moses’ point is surely to show that real human lives really do intersect with Almighty God’s work, words and actions.

10:2 This chapter lists 70 Gentile nations as being the descendants of Noah. The Hebrew word *eretz* translated “land” is the same word translated “earth”. The flood was likely a flood of the land promised to Abraham rather than of the whole planet. These 70 descendants of Noah all lived within the Middle East rather than throughout the entire world. The original purpose of Genesis was to explain to the Israelites in the wilderness where they had come from and the context of the nations amongst whom they found themselves.

10:9 The Hebrew could mean “the mighty hunter against the Lord”. The Hebrew for 'Nimrod' is related to 'Gibbor', the title of Christ used in Is. 9:6. Nimrod appears to be a prototype anti-God and anti-Christ, and for this he was well known even then.   Gen. 10:10,11 shows his characteristic of building cities in the Babylon/Assyria area.   Seeing that “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Gen. 10:10), it is not unreasonable to assume that when “a man said to his neighbour, Come, let’s make bricks” to build the tower of Babel, this man was Nimrod (Gen. 11:3).

10:25 *earth divided*- probably a reference to the division of the peoples recorded in Gen. 10:32 and then in chapter 11, rather than a reference to plate tectonics.

11:15 The genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. Thus both Arpachshad and Shelah each lived 403 years after the births of the eldest sons; Shelah, Peleg and Serug were each 30 when their first sons were born. Abraham and Shem both had sons at 100 years old (Gen. 11:10). And it is the very nature of Christian fellowship that God has arranged that our human lives likewise have elements of amazing similarity of pattern.

11:31 Terah and his family departed “to go into the land of Canaan”. These are the same Hebrew words as in the command to Abram: “Get you out of your country” (Gen. 12:1). We can therefore conclude that Abram received this call to quit his country, but didn't obey it, until some unrecorded situation led his father to announce the family's emigration to Canaan. Abram was therefore very slow to obey the call. Note too that the command to Abram had been to leave his land and also his “relatives and... father's house”. This he didn't do- for he left Ur with his father and brothers, i.e. his kindred. His brother Haran died, and his father then died in Haran, where they temporarily lived on the way to Canaan. We see here how God seeks to almost make us obedient. And Gen. 15:7 records that it was God who brought Abram out of Ur- even though Abraham failed to rise up and be obedient in his own strength, God manipulated family circumstances to make him obedient to the call; and in essence He does this for us too.

12:3 Grammatically, this can be read as passive (“be blessed”) or reflexive “bless themselves” (as RSV), implying those blessed have to do something to appropriate the blessing. In this we see how God will play His part, but we must play our part. And yet the covenant in Gen. 15 was one way, unconditional, from God to us. It's as if *His* part in our salvation is so much greater than our response. Yet there is still an obvious element of choice which we have to make. The way Gen. 12:1-3 is structured implies that Abraham receives an unconditional blessing, yet he therefore is to go forth and “be a blessing”. And it's the same for us- and note how the “blessing” is interpreted as forgiveness in Acts 3:27-29. We are to forgive and generally bless others, in all forms of gracious generosity, as God has blessed us.

12:5 Abram had “gathered” much in the years of staying in Haran (Gen. 12:5). According to Jewish tradition, Abraham stayed 23 years in Haran. All he had to go on was a word from the Lord which he'd received some years ago whilst living in Ur. There's no reason to think that Angels regularly appeared to him and kept urging him to leave, or that he could read the Lord's word in written form as we can. Presumably that one word which he received worked in his conscience, until he said to the family “Right, we're quitting this nice life for a wilderness journey to some place I don't know”. We can underestimate the power of “just” one word from the Lord. We're so familiar with possessing His entire word in written form that we can forget the need to be obedient to just one of those words, to the extent of losing all we once held dear.

12:6 God's promise to Abraham was made more specifically at “the oak of Moreh”- a Canaanite shrine; and it's emphasized that “the Canaanite was then in the land”. It's as if God's invitation to Abraham [as to us] to have a unique relationship with Him was made amidst the calls and presence of many other gods, and in the thick of the Gentile world.

13:9 Here Abraham gives Lot the choice as to what land he would like to live in. Lot was the orphaned nephew of Abraham- such magnanimity would've been unheard of in those societies, for the elder to give the junior dependent such a choice. The elder in the relationship would've chosen the best for himself, and that was that. Abraham's unusual attitude in this matter was a direct outcome of his faith in the promise that the whole land really would one day be given to *him*. If we have the faith of Abraham... we won't fight for our corner in this world. It'll be *so* much easier to 'let go' as Abraham did, and take an attitude to material wealth and possessions which is radically counter-cultural in *our* societies. The way that Lot lifted up his eyes and looked around the land is matched by the way in which God then bids Abraham to likewise lift up his eyes and view the very same territory which Lot had just chosen (Gen. 13:10,14)- and was told that the land which Lot had chosen, along with all other land, would be Abraham's eternally. When God told Abraham at this point “all the land which you *see*, I will give to you, and to your offspring forever” ( 13:15), He was alluding to what He had initially told Abram back in Ur: “ Get you out of… to the land that I will show (s.w. “see” in 13:15) you” (Gen. 12:1). It was as if God was saying: 'Well Abraham, this is it. This is the land I told you about'- and yet the best of it has now been given to Lot! The whole thing could have seemed some kind of cruel, just as many of our life experiences do. Abraham had given up all, made a long and dangerous journey, to receive a land from God- and when he arrives there, the best of it is given to his younger relative. But God's purpose was to focus Abraham's faith upon the fact that he would *eternally* inherit this land. And so it is with many of the twists and turns of our lives which can appear nothing but cruel fate to the unbelieving observer.

14:13 God never let go of Abraham, even when Abraham didn't readily obey what God required of him. He was told to “walk through the land in its length and in its breadth; for [because] I will give it unto you” (Gen. 13:17). But Abraham didn't willingly do this- because perhaps he doubted that he would be given it. It's like saying to a child: 'Come and look at this! I am going to give it to you!', and the child doesn't even want to look. In this context we read of how Abraham “lived by of the oaks of Mamre”- that's stressed twice (Gen. 13:18; 14:13). Instead of travelling around in his land to see it, he tried to settle down. But God brought circumstances into his life which made him travel around the length and breadth of Canaan- thus Abraham had to pursue Lot's captors “unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus” before he recovered Lot (Gen. 14:15). Hobah is in the far north east of Canaan- Abraham had to go all the way there from Mamre in the centre of Canaan. For unknown reasons, Abraham also lived in Beersheba for a while (Gen. 22:19); he had a meeting with the local rulers at Shaveh, near Jerusalem (Gen. 14:17); and at the time of Gen. 16:14 Abraham was near Kadesh Barnea, in the very South of Canaan on the Egyptian border. One wonders whether the attraction of Egypt had led him there once more- in which case it was his own weakness which was used by God to ensure that he travelled to the very south of Canaan. Maybe the record includes all these geographical markers in order to demonstrate how Abraham did indeed travel around Canaan through providentially arranged circumstances, although not it seems as an act of direct obedience to the Divine command to do so.

14:22 Abraham's belief in *God's* blessing of him is reflected in the way he is insistent to the King of Sodom that he will not take any of the spoil, lest anyone should think that man rather than God had blessed Abraham (Gen. 14:22). It could be pointed out that this rather contrasts with his not returning to Pharaoh the things he gave him in return for Sarah becoming his wife (Gen. 12:16). Perhaps Abraham later reflected upon his failure in this incident, realizing he'd not displayed faith in *God's* blessing of him... and learnt his lesson when the same temptation occurred in Gen. 14 to be made rich by the men of this world. Our stumbling response to the same Abrahamic promises often develops in the same way.

15:5 According to Jewish midrash, Abram and his father Terah were leading diviners of the stars in Ur. 'Terah' can mean 'brother of the moon', and Ur and Haran were noted centres of moon worship. In this case, the invitation to Abram to count the stars (15:5) and discern there his future seed was a calling to reject his entire former world-view, to admit his helplessness in counting the stars, to throw himself upon God's grace rather than the strength of his own former education, wisdom, and inherited ability to discern the stars.

15:10 The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony of Gen. 15 was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But here in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). The “blood of the covenant” doesn't mean that the blood of Jesus *is* or was the covenant; the covenant is a set of promises to us, namely the promises to Abraham and his seed. The blood of Jesus is the token of that covenant, the sign that this is all so utterly and totally true for each one of us. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom

16:2 “Abram listened to the voice of Sarai” is framed in the language of Adam hearkening to Eve's voice. We can only take this incident- and the less than honourable treatment of Hagar afterwards- to be another trough in Abraham's faith graph. All historical and cultural evidence from the time points to Abraham's action as being most unusual. In the case of a barren wife, the man chose himself a second wife. It's almost unheard of in contemporary records for a man to have his wife chose him a woman to have a child by- let alone for it to be one of her slavegirls. This historical background provides a window into Abraham's faithful commitment to Sarah- for it's significant that he's not recorded as taking another wife. Instead, his fine faith and character slips up in a moment of weakness by giving in to Sarah for a moment.

16:13 The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide'. When Hagar said “You God see me, she was expressing her gratitude for His provision for her. The fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things.

17:5 Abram means 'high / exalted father', and can mean “he is of exalted ancestry”. Yet Abram's name was changed. He was to be the father of a new family, as 'Abraham' implied, and to sever all connection with his human ancestry and family.  The way ‘Abram’ was changed to ‘AbraHAm’ and ‘Sarah’ to ‘SarAH’ shows how God wishes to mix syllables of His Name with that of men. Jacob was changed to Isra-el, mixing God’s name with that of his father. This is indeed mutuality between God and man- and it demands so much. By baptism into the Name the same process happens to us.

17:5-11. Blessings of many children, a specific seed / son who would bring glory and blessing, and a name change... are all frequently found in records of wedding blessings. In making those promises to Abraham, in mixing the letters of His Name with that of Abram... Yahweh was entering a marriage covenant with Abraham the impotent, the childless, the humanly hopeless. And He does the very same for each of us who are baptized into that same Name and become recipients of the very same promises (Gal. 3:27-29). What was weird and *so* counter-instinctive was the token of the marriage covenant. Abraham was to mutilate his male generative organ as a sign that God would generate him a great seed and family. Our response to what God has promised us requires us to likewise respond in a counter-cultural and counter-instinctive way.

17:7 The Abrahamic covenant is made personally with every member of the seed in “their generations”. The records of the renewing of the covenant to Isaac and Jacob are but indicators that this is the experience of each one of the seed. This means that the covenant love of God and the promise of personal inheritance of the land is made personally, and confirmed by the shedding of Christ's blood, to each of us. God promised Abraham that through Christ, his seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham's multitudinous seed: ”To be a God to... your seed...I will be their God”. The seed is Christ, and the “God” is Yahweh. In Rev. 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

17:8 The idea of eternal life is in the Old Testament as well as the new. The promise of eternal life on earth was given to Abraham and his seed, the Lord Jesus (Gal. 3:8), but applies to all of us who are baptized into Him (Gal. 3:27-29).

17:17 Abraham’s exaltation here is referred to in Jn. 8:56 as Abraham rejoicing to see the day of Christ.

18:2 *three men*- three Angels, who bore the Name of Yahweh (as in Ex. 23:21).

18:12 Sarah murmured that it was impossible for her to have “pleasure” in childbearing. She uses the word *ednah*, related to the word *Eden*. Yet in the events of Gen. 19, she sees how the land around Sodom that was once “like the garden of Eden” (Gen. 13:10) is made barren and sowed with salt so that nothing could grow there (Gen. 19:25; Dt. 29:23). She was being taught that God can give and take away fertility on a huge scale. God uses circumstances and experiences to teach us what is possible for us in His strength.

Sarah is commended for calling Abraham her “Lord” (1 Pet. 3:6). But she said it “within herself” whilst laughing at the improbability of God fulfilling His promise; yet in doing so, when she came to think of Abraham, in her heart she called him “my lord”. So in the midst of her lack of faith in one respect, she also had a commendable attitude to Abraham. God searched her thoughts, He saw her wrong attitudes there deep in her heart, and He saw what was commendable there too; and through Peter He drags this out and reveals it to us all as an inspiration. We should have a similar positive attitude to others, discerning what’s good in them even if it’s surrounded by weakness.

18:23 God is open to dialogue; but a telling example of the limitation of God's potential by men is in Abraham's request that God would spare Sodom for the sake of 50 righteous there. He then lowers the number to 40, and then finally to ten, assuming that surely Lot's family were righteous and would comprise ten righteous. If Abraham had left off praying at, say, forty... then this would have been the limit God set. But Abraham set the limit at ten. But what would have happened if he had gone further and asked God to save Sodom for the sake of one righteous man, i.e. Lot? My sense is that the Father would have agreed. But the city wasn't saved for the sake of the one man Lot, because Abraham limited God's desire to save by the smallness of his vision. His mercy will be upon us according as we hope in Him (Ps. 33:22).

19:3 The Angels who visited Lot in Sodom wanted initially to lodge in the street, but they were persuaded by Lot to change their plans. And who is to say that to some extent this isn’t possible today, too?

19:14 Lot’s sons in law “were to marry” his daughters. Christ perceived that they were marrying and giving in marriage the very day the flood came, and He pointed out the similarities with the Sodom situation (Lk. 17:27-29). Perhaps the very day of the double wedding, they had to leave? With all the build up to the wedding, Lot and his wife would so wanted to have stayed just another day to see the wedding of their two daughters. It is to the girls credit that they both left. But Lot’s wife had invested so much in it emotionally that she just had to look back.

19:26 This suggests the picture of the wife following behind Lot, filled with remorse at the loss of all she had held dear. Lk. 17:29-33 comments concerning not desiring our “stuff which is in the house” in the day of Christ’s coming: “Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever (like her) shall seek (Greek: 'plot') to save his life shall lose it”. We can infer from this that she plotted and schemed how to save her possessions- i.e. her 'life', seeing that for her, her life did consist of the abundance of the things which she possessed (Lk.12:15). These feelings grew so strong that she paused to take a loving, wistful look at the city. The fire only fell after Lot was in Zoar; therefore the city was looking as it normally did. She was walking “behind him”, so Lot would not have actually seen her turn into a pillar of salt. As he ceased to hear her footsteps behind him he must have guessed what had happened- but now the Angel's words seemed more vital to him: “Don’t look behind you”. Sodom was turned into an area of salt (Dt.29:23; Zeph.2:9); as Sodom was turned into salt by fire, so Lot's wife suffered the same punishment through a bolt of fire striking her and turning her too into salt. The unworthy of the last day will suffer the same punishment as the surrounding world which they failed to truly leave.

19:29 The prayers and loving spiritual concern of the faithful really can have an effect on the salvation of our weaker brethren. Abraham's prayer that Sodom would be saved if ten righteous were found there was unanswered; but God knew the real spirit of his prayer, that Lot should be saved, and that God's justice should be upheld in not destroying the righteous with the wicked. It was this which God recognized and answered, even though Abraham had not specifically verbalized those thoughts in prayer. Our true spiritual love for our brethren will likewise be heard in these last days.

20:3 Throughout the records of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his children there is continual repetition indicating how they tended to commit the same sins- e.g. going into Egypt and lying concerning their wives: 12:13; 20:3,13; 26:7. The sinfulness of sin is that our failures encourage our children to commit the same, and worse.

20:16 Sarah was “reproved” by King Abimelech for going along with Abraham’s lie about her not being his wife. And yet Kings were reproved for her sake, and were not allowed to do anything harmful to her (Ps. 105:14)! And Abraham reproves Abimelech later- for something Abimelech claimed he had not done (Gen. 21:25). The repeat of the word “reprove” is surely meant to indicate that here is an example of Abraham and Sarah being counted righteous because of their faith- when clearly they were not wholly righteous. Abraham, the man who had to be reproved, was used by God to reprove the man who had reproved him… it would have sounded very hypocritical to Abraham’s neighbours. Yet the point was, that God saw him as being righteous.

20:18 This shows that we can suffer the effect of others’ sins, whilst being personally innocent of the specific sin they committed- as has happened with the effect of Adam’s sin.

21:10 Her attitude in implying that Ishmael was not the seed is gently rebuked by God in his subsequent words to Abraham concerning Ishmael: “He is your seed” (Gen. 21:13). And yet Sarah's words are quoted in Gal. 4:30 as inspired Scripture! Here we see the wonder of the God with whom we deal, in the way in which He patiently bore with Sarah and Abraham. He saw through her anger, her jealousy, the pent up bitterness of a lifetime, and he saw her faith. And he worked through that screaming, angry woman to be His prophet. According to Gal. 4:30, God Himself spoke through her in those words, outlining a principle which has been true over the generations; that the son of the slave must be cast out, and that there must always be conflict between him and the true seed. Sarah in her time of child-birth is likened to us all as we enter the Kingdom, full of joy (Is. 54:1-4); and yet at that time she was eaten up with pride and joy that she could now triumph over her rival. And yet Sarah at that time is seen from a righteous perspective, in that she is a type of us as we enter the Kingdom. God's gracious counting of righteousness to Sarah and Abraham is repeated to us daily.

21:34 *lived as a foreigner*- alluded to in Heb. 11:9, which says that Abraham lived in the promised land as a foreigner. He is our example and spiritual father. His characteristics are to be seen in us who have been baptized into Christ and thus become Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3:27-29). Although this earth where we live has been promised to us, it’s our eternal inheritance which we will receive at Christ’s return, yet we now live in our own land as if we’re foreigners.

22:3 *arose and went-*  Abraham was progressively set up by God so that his spiritual growth would be an upward spiral. Initially, he was told to walk / go to a land which God would shew him (Gen. 12:1); when he got there, he was told to “arise”, and “walk” through that land of Canaan (Gen. 13:17). And Abraham, albeit in a faltering kind of way, did just this. But this was to prepare him for the test of Gen. 22:3 in the command to offer Isaac. His obedience this time isn't at all faltering. He “arises” and 'goes' [s.w. “walk”] “unto the place of which God had told him” to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:3). This is exactly what he had been called to do in Ur- to arise and walk / go to a land / place which God would show him (Gen. 12:1). Our obedience in one challenge of God leads us to obedience in others. Circumstances tend to repeat both within and between the lives of God's faithful. One experience is designed to lead us to another. Nothing in our lives is senseless chance. All is part of a higher plan for our spiritual good, in our latter end.

22:18 The blessing is defined as forgiveness of sins and salvation (Acts 3:26,26). We become “in” the seed by baptism into Christ, who is Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3:8, 27-29). All that is true of Christ becomes true of us, if we are in Him. We all wish to be a blessing to others- we see people suffering from their sins, physically damaged by earthquakes, war, famine, and we wish to get out there and help them; yet we are limited by our life situation. By being in Christ, we can be a blessing for others by bringing them to the blessing of salvation and a place in God’s Kingdom on earth.

23:3 Abraham was promised eternal inheritance of the land (17:8)- but he didn’t receive any of it in this life, he even had to buy a plot of land to bury his wife. This point is emphasized in the New Testament because it implies a future resurrection and eternal inheritance for Abraham (Acts 7:5; Heb. 11:13,39,40). Hence we have this laboured account of the purchase of Machpelah. Not only is the presence of the children  of Heth highlighted (23:3,5,7,10,11,12,13,16,18), but the record of Abraham's words demonstrates his appreciation that he was only passing through: “*Entreat* for me to Ephron... the cave … which *he has*...  for the *full price* … me for a possession...*amongst you*  ... Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land... and the field... in all of its borders” (23:9-17 AVmg.). The mention of the borders really rubs it in. Not only was the land promised to Abraham, but he was politically more powerful than the children of Heth; he could have annexed it for himself at ease. The children of Heth were willing to giver it to him for free anyway (23:11). Yet the realization by Abraham of his present position, the humility created by faith, shines through the narrative. This earth is ours, eternally. But we like Abraham live in it as foreigners- for the moment.

24:4 It must be significant that Abraham told his servant to take Isaac a wife from “my country... my relatives” and not from the people “among whom I live”. There were none of Abraham's country or kindred, which he had been commanded to leave, living anywhere near him. He had truly and fully obeyed the command to separate from them! As with many Christian youngsters today, the avoidance of marrying those in the surrounding world just seemed too much to ask. But Abraham knew that a way would be made. As God had *taken* Abram from Ur and Haran and Lot, so God would *take* a woman from there, suitable for Isaac. Faithful parents should do all they can to ensure their children marry within the family of faith.

24:7,8 Abraham told his servant that God would use His Angel so that his mission to find a suitable wife for Isaac would surely succeed. He speaks as if success is certain, and yet he recognizes the possibility that the woman may not be “willing to follow you”. We should have the same positive, hopeful attitude in our enterprises for God, expecting success rather than failure. The Angel prepared in prospect for the success of the mission; but it still depended upon the woman’s freewill. The whole incident in Genesis 24 can be read as typical of the search, through the preaching of the Gospel, for the bride of Christ. The preacher of the Gospel, represented by Abraham’s servant, must go ahead believing that we will succeed (:40,41), just as the shepherd searches for the sheep until he finds it.

24:14 To water even a few camels was a few hours work. It was impossible that a traveller requesting a cup of water would then be offered to have his camels watered. This would have to be from God.

*Your servant… my master*- The servant was aware that his master was also a servant, of God. We shouldn’t think of those ‘above us’ as being too far above us- for as we are to them, so should they be to God. And it’s our standing before Him which is all important.

24:15 He spoke his prayer out loud. In the private, online worlds in which we live, it’s no bad practice to say our prayers out loud, however quietly. This verse is surely alluded to by Jesus when He taught that we should pray knowing that God knows our needs before we ask Him (Mt. 6:8)- before we’ve finished our prayer, the answer has sometimes come along. See on 24:63.

24:21 The servant had asked for this to happen, and it did. And he can’t believe the prayer has been answered- rather like the believers praying for Peter’s release, who disbelieved it could be him knocking at the door (Acts 12:15). We are so similar. It is in those moments that we realize just what a momentous thing it is, to ask something of God, to be performed on this earth. And to realize it actually happened. He did it, for me, a little ant crawling on the surface of a small planet that is hurtling through space, in a remote part of His universe…

24:56 Abraham’s servant said that he walked ‘before Yahweh’ (Gen. 24:40), reflecting how he felt that he was following an Angel. He therefore urges Bethuel: “Don’t hinder me, since Yahweh has blessed my way” (Gen. 24:56). He felt he was on a roll, being led onwards by the Angel- and he didn’t want anything to interrupt that. The sensitive believer will perceive similar situations, time and again, as we seek to follow the leading of the Angel / cherubim before whom we walk. If we walk in step with the Angel, success is assured.

24:58 Rebekah immediately says “I will go” (Heb. *elek*)- just as Abraham had been called to “go” from Ur (*lek*, Gen. 12:1); “and he went” (*wayyelek*, Gen. 12:4). This would seem to suggest an undesigned similarity of character between the family members. Our response to the call of God should be immediate, like the disciples immediately leaving their nets.

24:63 The same thing happened as in 24:15- a man was walking alone, grieving for his mother and praying- presumably for a wife to fill that gap. And the answer to that prayer had already been prepared for quite some time before he had made that request.

25:8 As the reward will only be given at the judgment on Christ’s return, it follows that the righteous and wicked go to the same place when they die, i.e. the grave. There is no differentiation made between them in their deaths. Righteous Abraham was “gathered to his people” (or ancestors) on death; they were unbelieving idolaters (Josh. 24:2).

25:23 God loves to work through the weak, the despised, the last, or in this case, the younger.

25:26 Isaac delayed parenthood until he could have children by a believing woman.

25:27 By grace, righteousness has to be imputed to us. This happened to Jacob; he didn't make it to the spiritually perfect / mature status with which he is credited right at the beginning (25:27). Job is an identical case; he is labelled “perfect” at the beginning, but at the end of his spiritual growth, he confessed his imperfection.  Jacob is described as “perfect” at a time when he had not even accepted Yahweh as his God (28:21). Quite simply, God counts His beloved children as being far more righteous than they are. The mechanism by which He now does this is through our baptism into Christ, whereby we are counted as if we are Him. Being counted perfect is therefore not simply the bias and ridiculous favoritism of a doting, unrealistic, Divine parent.

25:30 Jacob’s behaviour here was wrong. It’s alluded to in a negative way by Paul when he says that we should eagerly feed even our enemy (Rom. 12:20). Jacob should have believed God’s promise, that he as the younger would be the more blessed (25:23), rather than trying to obtain the birthright in his own strength.

26:6 Isaac chose to live in Gerar, right on the border of Egypt- as close as he could get to the world, without crossing the line. And he thought nothing of denying his marriage to Rebekah, just to save his own skin (26:7). So it seems Isaac had some marriage problems; the record speaks of “Esau his son” and “Jacob (Rebekah's) son” (27:5,6). The way Jacob gave Isaac wine “and he drank” just before giving the blessings is another hint at some unspirituality (27:25). And yet Isaac is counted as one of the faithful fathers; he was made strong out of his weakness, just as we are.

26:11 The Abimelech kings appear far more gracious and honourable than the Abraham family who wandered in and out of their territory; the way Abimelech threatens his own people with death if they touch Isaac or his wife, after Isaac had been deceitful to him, is an example. Yet it was not the nice people of the world, but this wandering, spiritually struggling family whom God loved and worked with.

26:12,13 God hugely blessed Isaac materially right after Isaac’s failure of faith and selfish disloyalty in his marriage. Material blessing isn’t therefore immediately given or withheld on the basis of our righteousness.

26:29 *You are now the blessed of Yahweh-* as if the surrounding people knew about the promises of blessing which Yahweh had made to His people, and they recognized that those promises were starting to have some level of fulfilment even then in the lives of Isaac and his family. In our lives too, God’s promised future Kingdom blessings have a way of starting to come true even now (1 Tim. 4:8).

26:35 Isaac had waited a long time and his family had gone to great lengths so that he could marry a believer. He and Rebekah were understandably disappointed that their son chose to marry unbelieving women from the surrounding world.

27:11 What should Jacob have replied to his mother? It makes a good exercise, and not just for Sunday School youngsters, to write out what he should’ve said.

27:12 *Deceiver*- The rare Hebrew word used here is found elsewhere in Jer. 10:15,16, where it refers to a maker of idols. Again the record is forging the link between Jacob and paganism.

27:13 There are clear allusions to Eve in Eden; the curse came about because of a hearkening to a woman’s voice. Jacob ought to have perceived the similarities of the situation; but he failed to. All human sin is in some way a living out of the Adam and Eve scenario; hence Paul in Romans presents Adam as everyman, and in so many Biblical records of sin (and in our own sins too) we can see allusions to what happened in Eden. We can therefore safely say that if we had been in Eden, we would’ve sinned likewise. The fact we suffer the effect of that sin is therefore not unjust.

27:24 As Jacob deceived his blind father, so he was himself deceived by Laban. “Deceiving and being deceived” may allude to Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13). What goes around comes around.

27:29 *Lord over your brothers*- Isaac had apparently forgotten the Divine promise that the firstborn was to serve the younger. However, the blessing which Isaac was giving wasn’t the same as the Divine blessing of Abraham’s seed. All of the family seem to have forgotten the prime importance of God’s blessing, and rated human blessing far higher. This can so easily happen to us. The Gospel is contained in the promises to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), and we need to continually remind ourselves of their paramount significance in our lives. There was no Divine inspiration in Isaac’s blessings, he was not speaking from God’s mouth to his sons, although the recording of them is inspired.

27:38 The way Esau lifted up his voice and wept is picked up in Heb. 12:17 as a warning to all those who would fritter away their spirituality for sensuality- for they will weep in the same way at the day of judgment, aching from the pain of what might have been. Esau was a type of those who will be rejected at the final judgment- they will beg with tears for a change of mind, but it will be too late. None of us will stand before Christ indifferent- we will all desperately wish for His blessing, and therefore our commitment to Him in this life should likewise be total.

27:46 Rebekah’s apparent zeal against marriage out of the faith was really a cover for her desire to save her son from problems which he had only her to blame for. We really have to search our motives- for we do externally the right thing from quite wrong motives.

28:1 Here and in v. 7 we see the repeated emphasis on the need to marry within the household of faith.

28:4 Isaac perhaps now realized that the fatherly blessing over which there had been so much grief was irrelevant compared to God's blessing.

28:12 Jacob's dreaming of a pagan ziggurat could indicate that subconsciously his mind was in pagan things rather than those of Yahweh. But God worked through that, and transformed the dream into a message from the true God. God with amazing patience works through our weaknesses, lack of faith and misunderstandings to bring us to Him as the one true God.

28:13 God made these unconditional promises to Jacob even though at that time Jacob had not accepted Yahweh as his God (:21), thus showing His grace. God in Christ has forgiven every person their sins and promised them salvation- all they have to do is accept Him in faith. God takes the initiative in grace- He doesn't give us His promises as a 'Well done' for our showing faith in Him. He has taken the initiative and it is for us to respond. Jacob there in his unbelief, or agnosticism, with Angels ascending and descending upon him, was in fact a type of Christ (Jn. 1:51).

28:21,22 Jacob seems sceptical of God's promise- he says that if indeed God does what He promises, *then* Jacob will accept Yahweh as his God and give him a tithe. The offer of a tithe seems very mean- the God who has promised us so very much deserves our all, not just a tenth.

29:2 Meeting a future wife by a well at watering time is what happened to Moses and to Isaac (by proxy). Situations repeat between the lives of God's children and even within our own lives, because the same God is working through His Angels to some kind of pattern and formula in the lives of His children, even if the complete algorithm is currently hid from our understanding.

29:17 As life worked out, it's apparent that Leah was the more faithful to Yahweh and her beauty queen sister wasn't so spiritually minded. But Jacob in his spiritual immaturity was attracted to Rachel after the flesh.

29:25 Why did Jacob only realize whom he had slept with the next morning? One is tempted to assume Jacob was drunk on his wedding night.

*What is this*- very similar words and situation to Esau's cry of pain and disappointment at how Jacob had deceived him. It's not simply that what goes around comes around in a kind of measure for measure dynamic, but rather that God was seeking to educate Jacob as to how Esau must have felt at his behaviour, and to lead Jacob thereby to repentance.

29:33 *has heard*- Yahweh noticed she was hated (:31) and read the situation as a prayer to Him. Sometimes we don't verbalize things in prayer, but God all the same perceives our situation as a prayer to Him.

29:34 Jacob was married to Leah but not “joined” to her, even though God's intention is to 'join' a married couple together (Mt. 19:6). It would seem Jacob like many people today resisted God's attempts to join a couple together.

30:4 Jacob's sleeping with his wives' maids was contrary to the one man: one woman ideal of Genesis. But God tolerated it and used the children conceived as the founding pillars of His people Israel; He worked through the weakness of people rather than turning away in disgust and disappointment at their failures. God does the same with us, and we ought to have a similar hopeful patience in dealing with people who fail.

30:6 It seems that this was a case of Rachel trying to force God's hand rather than Him blessing her. Yet she eagerly interpreted events as meaning God was blessing her, just as we can- we too easily attach positive meaning to our poor behaviour.

30:8 Leah didn't fight back nor have any personal part in wrestling with Rachel; the wrestling was all in Rachel's mind. We can assume others are actively against us and even fighting against us when actually they are just innocent people in the situation they are in, and our wrestling is in fact against God and not them as persons. Jacob learnt the same lesson when he wrestled with the Angel in chapter 32.

30:11 Gad was the name of an idol, the god of luck or fortune. In this name choice we see the pagan influences in the family which God was trying to transform into His people.

30:16 Mandrakes were supposed to be aphrodisiacs. The record is framed to show how meaningless were these pagan beliefs- for if they had really worked, she would have had no need to order Jacob to sleep with her. God's patient working through their misunderstandings is seen later in how He worked through Jacob's belief in the myth of cattle bearing spotted offspring if they conceived in front of spotted rods (:37).

30:37-39 This was a pagan belief with no biological truth in it, but God still worked through it in order to bless Jacob; see on :16. The Lord Jesus did the same regarding the common belief that demons caused illness. His language went along with the idea, although the Bible is clear that demons don't exist and sickness is ultimately under God's control, in order to bring healing and blessing to those sick people. By doing so, He demonstrated that God's power is so far greater than that of demons that effectively, demons have no power and don't actually exist. God worked in the same way through the wrong ideas held by Jacob and his family.

 30:43 *The man*- stressing how Jacob humanly, in a fleshly sense, was blessed by God. Later on he must have reflected how this blessing was by Divine grace rather than because of any truth in the pagan beliefs of themselves, for afterwards he talks of how it was God who graciously gave him the extra cattle (31:9; 32:10).

 31:5 *God of my father*- Jacob only spoke about Yahweh as his personal God towards the end of his life. At this stage he was still relating to Yahweh as the God of his father rather than seeing the personal reality of God as his personal God. Today God works in the same way, to transform for us the God of Sunday School Christianity into our personal Father.

31:9- see on 30:43.

31:19 Teraphim were household gods- Rachel clearly believed in them passionately.

31:36 Jacob must have later reflected how this incident reflected God's pure grace to him, and how falsely self-righteous he had been. All the time in this record we are seeing God continuing to work with people through their weaknesses, to bring them to perceive and believe in Him as the God of all grace.

31:42 *Rebuked you*- There's no evidence God actually did. Again we see a man attaching unwarranted meaning to events, assuming God was more pleased with him than He actually was. His wives made the same mistake in the obtaining and naming of their children.

31:45 Raising up a pillar or standing stone was a paganic ritual which God later forbad for His people (Lev. 26:1 uses the same Hebrew word). Constantly we are being reminded how paganic were Jacob's beliefs at this time.

31:53 The god of Nahor was a pagan deity (Josh. 24:2); Jacob instead swore by the One his father Isaac feared, Yahweh. Even though Jacob hadn't yet accepted Yahweh as his personal God, he recognized theoretically the truth of Yahweh as opposed to any other god; Yahweh was working to transform this theoretical knowledge into a practical, personal reality for Jacob.

31:54 Eating bread together was a sign of agreeing to a covenant. It is behind the idea of the breaking of bread service, whereby God and His children state their mutual belief in each other and acceptance of God's covenant with us- which is quite simply to save us from our sins and give us eternal life in His Kingdom because we are in Christ.

32:2 'Mahanaim' means 'two camps'. The army of Jacob's enemies was matched by an invisible army of Angels which were on Jacob's side, weak in faith as he was. We must remember that each life crisis, each time we seem hopelessly outnumbered, is in fact a Mahanaim situation for us.

32:4 wrestled. The Angel came to Jacob with the desire to kill him, as Esau (whom the Angel represented) approached him in the same spirit. It was by Jacob's desperate clinging on to God, his pleading, his intense prayer (Hos. 12:4) that he changed God's intention, after the pattern of Moses in later years. We know from Hos. 12 that Jacob became aware that he was wrestling with an Angel, not just a man. His wrestling is therefore to be understood as prayer and pleading, although doubtless it started as a physical struggle with an unknown stranger, who he later recognized as an Angel. Jacob wrestled / struggled in prayer with the Angel. Jacob's night of wrestling is a cameo of the experience of all who would be counted among the Israel of God- for “there He spoke with us” (Hos. 12:4). The Bible presents prayer as a struggle, not something we do half asleep in the comfort of our beds (Job 33:13; Heb. 12:4; Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:12). Through this, Jacob learnt the real import of the promises. He realized that all his life, he had been wrestling with God, his Angel, and he now came to beg his God for the blessing of forgiveness, implying he had repented. The Hebrew for “wrestle” can mean both to wrestle and also to cling on to. He started wrestling, and ended up clinging on to the Angel, desperately begging for salvation and forgiveness. His great physical strength (remember how he moved the huge stone from the well, 29:2) was redirected into a spiritual clinging on to the promises of forgiveness and salvation. And this will be our pattern of growth too.

32:10 The Hebrew word for “staff” here suggests a magical, pagan stick associated with fertility, coming from a root meaning 'to germinate'. The same word occurs when we read that Jacob put the animals before the “rods”; it seems this is an intensive plural for 'the great rod', i.e. his staff. Yet, fascinatingly enough, at the very point when Jacob leaves home to start his wilderness journey with only (in his eyes) his pagan staff to bring him good luck, God as it were takes a snapshot of him, and asks Israel to leave Egypt with a staff in their hands- a strange request, surely, unless it was intended to drive their minds back to Jacob, asking them to emulate his example.   Jacob and idolatry go together. But now Jacob begins to realize that all he had in life was from God, and not from his staff.

32:31 Jacob’s limping would’ve reminded him for the rest of his life of his brokenness and dependence upon God’s grace to walk life’s journey.

33:3 Jacob's new appreciation of the blessing of forgiveness is reflected by the way in which he effectively tells Esau that he is handing back to him the birthright, the physical blessings. The way he bows down seven times to Esau is rejecting the blessing he had obtained by deceit from Isaac: “Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you” (27:29). His experience of the blessing of God's grace was sufficient for him, and he rejected all else. See on 33:11.

33:5 *Graciously given*- Jacob is beginning to understand that his blessings of family and wealth were a gift of God’s grace and not achieved, as he had thought, as a result of his own hard work and pagan practices. The grace of the one true God is being subtly contrasted with the works-based mentality of paganism.

33:11 The Hebrew words translated “take (away)” and “blessing” are exactly the same as in 27:35,36, where Isaac laments that Jacob had taken away Esau’s blessing, and Esau repeats those same words. Now Jacob is saying: 'I have experienced the true grace of God, I stand forgiven before Him, I saw His face in His representative Angel , I therefore have all things, so I don't want that physical, material, temporal blessing I swindled you out of'. This is why Jacob pointedly calls Esau his “Lord” in the record. He was accepting Esau as the firstborn. Because God had dealt graciously with him, he felt that he had “all things”. All he needed was God’s grace, and he had that. Rev. 21:7 appears to allude to Jacob by saying that he who overcomes [by wrestling?] shall inherit “all things”. We are all to pass through Jacob’s lesson; that material advantage is nothing, and God’s grace is everything. Truly could Jacob later say, after another gracious salvation, that there God had appeared to Him, had been revealed to him [RV] in the experience of grace (35:7).  See on 33:3.

34:2 The story clearly shows the danger of young people from believing families mixing with unbelievers in an uncontrolled environment- what begins as curiosity can very quickly descend into serious failure with lifelong consequences.

34:16 Marriage out of the Faith reflects a lack of appreciation of covenant relationship. If Dinah had married Hamor, this would have been a covenant relationship which would have resulted in the people of God and the surrounding world becoming “one people” (Gen. 34:16,22). Through baptism, we are the seed of Abraham, we are the people of God, we have been selected to undergo a few years preparation now, so that when the Lord comes we may enter His Kingdom.

34:30 So true to our experience, even after the night of wrestling Jacob slipped back at times into the old way of thinking. His pathetic bleating of 34:30 is a case of this: “I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house”. Just note all those personal pronouns. God had promised to go with him, and the whole tenor of all the promises was that there would come a singular seed from the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who would become a great house, or nation. But in the heat of the moment, all this went out of the window. Our faith in the implications of God’s promises to us- we who through baptism have the same Abrahamic promises made to us- can likewise easily become obscured by the immediate pressures of this world.

35:2 These household teraphim would have been the property deeds to Laban’s property, but because of what God had promised him, Jacob was willing to resign all that hope of worldly advantage (35:3). ”Foreign gods” would’ve sounded strange to Jacob’s family- the gods they worshipped would’ve been local Canaanite gods, yet Jacob speaks as if the local world around them was actually a foreign country. He thus shows how we who are in the family of faith should live even in our own land as if we are visitors from abroad in a foreign land (Heb. 11:13).

35:4 Jacob was outnumbered and surrounded by angry enemies, whom his sons had foolishly provoked. He turns to God and throws away all his human wealth, which he might have used to placate his angry enemies. And somehow, it all worked out for him- because there’s no record that his enemies did in fact take revenge against the small and vulnerable Jacob family.

35:7- see on 33:11.

35:10 The record continues to sometimes refer to Jacob as “Jacob” rather than as “Israel”. This reflects how Jacob didn’t fully believe in nor accept that new name which God had given him. We are baptized into God’s Name, and yet we too can doubt or forget the wonder of this, and likewise fail to identify ourselves as God identifies us.

35:11 Seeking to imitate God isn't always a recipe for an easy life now for us as humans. The Hebrew word translated “Almighty”, Shaddai, is rooted in the word shad, meaning breast, and has the sense of fruitfulness. Thus “God said unto [Jacob], I am God Almighty [shaddai]: be fruitful [like me] and multiply”. It seems Jacob sought to obey this by invitation to be like God by having a child in his old age by Rachel- and yet, perhaps due to her age, she died in that childbirth, in that seeking to imitate the Father.

36:2 It is again emphasized that Esau married outside of the family of faith. One reason for the extended genealogy of Esau in this chapter is perhaps to prove that, and to demonstrate that his children and descendants were also not in the family of faith (e.g. Edom, Amalek)- for some of the names here we encounter in later Scripture in a negative context.

36:6 The situation is similar to the division between Abraham and Lot for the same reasons (13:6). Esau should’ve learnt from that example, just as we should learn from Biblical precedent; for situations in our lives are so often a repetition of a situation which in essence has been recorded in the Bible.

36:31 The fact there were kings in neighbouring Edom before there were kings in Israel shows the accuracy of the later record that the Israelites wanted to have a human king so as to be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8:5,20). Genesis 36 often mentions the various kings of the tribes surrounding the Israelites; it must’ve been unusual for a nation like Israel to have no king. The reason was that God was their true King. We too have no visible human leadership, the Lord Jesus is the head of the church and our God, the King of His people, is in Heaven and not on earth. But like the world around us, we can like Israel wish for a human, visible leadership. Yet this is a rejection of God as our true King.

36:33 Jobab is identified with the Job of the book of Job according to Jewish tradition. Several of the names we find here in Genesis 36 also occur in the book of Job. The books of the Bible aren’t always in chronological order; it would seem that the book of Job is set in the times of the patriarchs. If the identification of Jobab with Job is correct, we can learn that even someone from an unspiritual background, a descendant of Esau, can still rise above it and become a believer, pleasing to God.

#### 37:3 There seems to have been something unusual about the Lord’s outer garment. The same Greek word *chiton* used in Jn. 19:23,24 is that used in the LXX of Gen. 37:3 to describe Joseph’s coat of many pieces. Josephus uses the word for the tunic of the High Priest, which was likewise not to be rent (Lev. 21:10).

37:9 It must have taken Joseph quite some courage to explain the dreams to his brothers; hence we read: “He dreamed… *and*  told it”. The Lord Jesus at age 30 must’ve had the same courage when He began His ministry. This is our struggle, to tell forth the things revealed to us.

37:18 “When the husbandmen saw  the son [=Jesus], they said among themselves (i.e. conspired), This is the heir; come, let us kill him” (Mt. 21:38). Mt. 21:38 is quoting the LXX of Gen. 37:18. Joseph is a type of Jesus in so many ways.

37:22 At least two of his ten persecutors were unhappy about what they were doing , and said so (37:22,26; 42:22). Perhaps the whole group egged each other on to adopt an attitude none were totally happy with in their conscience; this is how group dynamics work once sinful, jealous behaviour becomes acceptable to the group in principle.

37:28 So similar to Christ’s betrayal for pieces of silver.

37:30 What do you think Reuben said to Jacob at the time of v. 35, to comfort him over his ‘dead’ son whom Reuben knew not to be dead? Do we always have to tell the truth to people in grief, or are we justified in simply seeing things from their perspective in order to comfort them?

37:32 As Jacob in his youth had deceived his father, so now his sons do to him.

37:34 Jacob tore his clothes to connect with how Joseph, as he thought, had been torn (:33). This is a fine prefigurement of the (easily overlooked) pain of God the Father at the cross*.*

37:35 The Hebrew word *sheol* is translated in some Bibles as “hell”, in others as “the grave”. *Sheol* isn’t a place where only bad people go after death- for Jacob and Joseph were believers, and are spoken of as being in *sheol*, simply meaning ‘in the grave’.

38:1 Judah fell into sin whilst separate from his brothers. Keeping together with others in the family of faith is part of our armoury against sin.

38:10 Sins of omission are all the same as bad as sins of commission.

38:15 Tamar is listed in the New Testament genealogy of Jesus as one of His descendants. Yet like many in His genealogy, she was somewhat non-standard- she had acted as a prostitute. The Lord Jesus had so many strange people in His gene bank, yet He never sinned. We can’t therefore blame our sins on our ancestry or background situation.

38:19 Was Tamar right to have done this…?

38:24 Condemning others for sin when ourselves guilty is exactly what happened with David (2 Sam. 12:6). This phenomenon is because we realize on some level that we have sinned, and that sin must be punished. But if we don’t admit our sin, we earnestly wish to punish that sin whenever it occurs in others. This explains the huge hypocrisy often observed in religious people. We can only guard against it by seriously confessing our sins, regularly, daily; and living a continually self-examined life.

38:25 Judah and his brothers sent Joseph's blood stained coat to Jacob. It's recorded that they invited their father to “Examine it, please, whether it is your son’s coat or not”. He recognized it…” (37:32,33). The very same Hebrew words are used in 38:25,26 in describing how Tamar sent to Judah saying “*Examine, please*, whose these are… And Judah recognized them and said...'. The whole point of the similarities is to show how God sought to teach Judah how his father Jacob had felt. Note the parallels between the he-goat in Gen. 37:31 and the “kid of the goats” of Gen. 38:17-20; “and he refused to be comforted” of Gen. 37:35 is a designed contrast with how “Judah was comforted” (Gen. 38:12).

38:30 This is part of a theme in Genesis of the firstborn not enjoying the full status of being firstborn- all part of God’s preference to work with the underling and the weak.

39:6 There is an undoubted link between sexuality and spirituality (witness the typical meaning of the Song of Solomon). The Hebrew text here could suggest that it was Joseph's spiritually attractive personality that mesmerized Potiphar's wife; and what good living, socially aloof Christian office worker has not experienced the attention this attracts from colleagues of the opposite sex?

40:7 The sensitive reader will perceive that Joseph had a strong fatherly image, even from a young age (40:7; 41:43; 45:8). The Lord Jesus likewise; hence He referred to the disciples as His children when they were in the same peer group. This is understandable in that He is the supreme manifestation of *the*  sovereign Father.

41:9 *Sins* - The chief butler felt that he had committed a very serious sin in allowing the busyness of daily life and his demanding job to make him simply forget Joseph’s need and tragedy. Perhaps an intensive plural is being used here- as if to mean ‘my very great sin’. To forget others’ need due to the busyness of our lives is a great sin.

41:45 *Zaphnath-paaneah*- 'Saviour of the world', or 'bread of life'. Christ was given a new name on ascension (Phil. 2:6-9; Rev. 3:12).

Joseph's wife had to forget all about her pagan past (41:45 = Ps. 45:10 = Dt. 21:13), especially her father's house. Joseph alluded to what she had gone through when he spoke of how he too had forgotten all his past suffering and his father's house (41:51). What a pair they were! Both had broken free of their pasts and were dedicated to the new life together. As such they typify the relationship between Christ and His bride.

41:51 *God*  (this is important) made Joseph forget all his “ toil”, his mental sufferings. This was a miracle; no amount of steel-willed suppression of his past could have made Joseph paper over all the pain. But God did a psychological miracle upon him. Has God done the same to Christ now in His glory, as He will to us one day soon (Rev. 21:4)? Yet Christ will be factually aware of His sacrifice and the associated pain. God presumably did not obliterate Joseph's memory cells, but He made him “forget” the pain. This is surely what God has done to Christ, and what He will do to us: take away the pain on a psychological level whilst still leaving a factual awareness. Is it too much to suggest that even now, God is ready and willing to do something like this?

42:17 The brothers suffer in prison for three days to prod their conscience about Joseph- typical of a three year tribulation of Israel in the last days to bring them to accept Christ? We get the impression that Joseph changed his plans for them several times; he recalled them when already on their journey etc. - Does this show that he hastened the day of revelation to them from purely emotional considerations- and will the Lord do the same with His Israel?

42:21 “The anguish of his soul” and pleas for deliverance were ignored by the brothers- typical of Christ’s ‘travail of soul’ (Is. 53:12), ignored by Israel (Is. 53:1-4).

42:24 Joseph wept (this is recorded seven times in the record). He must have found it hard to prolong the agony of not revealing himself to them immediately; he was motivated by a desire to make them see the enormity of their sin, for their spiritual good rather than his own vindication- Joseph as a type of Christ makes his story prophetic. This is a stunningly deep prophecy of the intensity of Christ's feelings, as the mighty Son of God, towards His wayward people in the last days. He was a man of sorrow in his mortal life, and will still have an element of this characteristic in the future.

43:14 God Almighty. Jacob's perception of God was as very powerful, One who can give undeserved grace to men like Jacob's sinful sons. He uses a term he has not previously used: *El-Shaddai*, the Almighty El. Using new terms for God reveals a deepening of understanding of Him. We likewise will grow in our knowledge of Him through the trials of life.

43:14 In 35:11 God encourages Jacob, fearful he would lose all his family to attacks from neighbouring tribes, to be fruitful and multiply; because a nation…*shall* be from you, and kings *shall* come out of you. If he played his part, the promises would be fulfilled. But at the time it seems Jacob wanted to cut and run, forgetting about having any more children. “If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved” sounds more like depressive fatalism than firm faith in the promises that his seed would eternally fill the earth. Our faith in the implications of God’s promises to us likewise goes up and down, crushed at times by the immediacy of circumstances.

43:16 Joseph celebrates their repentance with a meal together, at which they sit in their proper places – typical of the marriage supper of the lamb, with each in his proper place (Lk. 14:10; 22:30; Rev. 19:9).

“Slay… and make ready” for the meal- This is the basis of the prodigal son parable (45:14,15 = Lk. 15:20); the father = Christ; prodigal = repentant Jews, wanting to be servants and nothing else.

43:34 The desperate desire of Joseph for them to relax with him and accept his forgiveness led him to make them drunk so as to ease their relationship (43:34 Hebrew). This otherwise unethical act reveals the earnestness of his desire for them to be relaxed with him and open themselves to him. The Lord will have the same basic desire with us at the judgment.

44:5 As Joseph claimed to use his cup in order to discern people, so the Lord Jesus uses His cup to know His people. Our attitude to Him at the breaking of bread service reflects us to Him. He closely watches our hearts as we take His cup.

44:13 The repetition of circumstance in our lives is not only to teach us, but to make sure that we learnt the lesson- for what teacher doesn't give pupils exercises to practice the theory they've learnt? It seems that Joseph, acting on God's behalf and as a type of Christ, manipulated circumstances so that his brothers would have *deja vu* experiences. Thus he sets things up to tempt them with freedom if they again betray their younger brother (Benjamin) and are thoughtless to their father's pain. The united, frank and open response of the brothers (44:13,16,17) showed how they had indeed learnt their lesson.

44:18 “You are even as Pharaoh” reflects something of Christ’s relationship with God. He isn’t God Himself personally, but He performs all the functions of God.See on 50:19.

44:20 *Is dead*- The brothers had repeated that lie so many times that they came to believe it. This is the problem with lying and denial of sin- we end up believing it.

45:1 That Joseph could not refrain himself implies he planned to drag out the process of spiritually refining his brothers, but his love for them caused him to cut it short- “For the elects sake the days shall be shortened” by Christ (Mt. 24:22).The same Hebrew word is used in Is. 42:14 about how God can no longer refrain Himself in the last days. Joseph as a type of Christ means that his brothers also have significance. The brethren meeting Joseph at the end has many echoes of the judgment seat of Christ. The whole purpose of the painful process which led up to that meeting was for the benefit of the brethren, to make them realize the enormity of their sin and the greatness of Joseph's grace. Likewise the judgment is for our benefit; the outcome is known to God beforehand. Does the (emphasized) emotionalism of Joseph at this time indicate anything about Christ's attitude then?

45:4 The brothers slunk away from Joseph's physical presence, as the rejected will at the final judgment (1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.). This suggests that those accepted at the judgment seat will go through all the emotions of the rejected; they will realize that rejection is what they deserve. Those who judge (condemn) themselves now in their self-examination will not be condemned then. No wonder both Joseph and the Lord Jesus will need to persuade their brethren that actually, it’s all OK, God’s love is greater than the barriers created by our sins.

45:7 *A great deliverance -* Heb. 2:3 “that great salvation” through Christ. Israel saved, all the surrounding world also blessed with deliverance from the famine- the scenario will be repeated in the last days. The judgments are to make Israel repent, but in that time of trouble the whole world suffers.

45:20 The news that Joseph was alive and glorified was received rather like that of Christ's resurrection: initial disbelief, but then the family of Jacob who believed it rose up and left all they had to go to be with Joseph; God’s people in AD70 and the last days are likewise bidden leave their stuff and go to be with Christ (45:20 cp. Lk. 17:31), remembering the lesson of Lot’s wife who was more concerned with her “stuff” than leaving it all once the day of the Lord finally came.

45:24 The wonder that was ahead of them should have made petty differences disappear. The same should be true within the family of God now.

46:3 Jacob's nervousness of going down into Egypt was doubtless due to his recollection of Abraham and Isaac's tales of spiritual woe concerning it. God appeared to Jacob concerning this, with the words: “Jacob, Jacob... fear not to go down into Egypt” (46:2,3). The double repetition of a name is usually a rebuke; but for what? Possibly for still being influenced in his spirituality by the specter of his forefathers, rather than personally reflecting on the implications of God's word to Abraham, that his seed would have to live in a Gentile land for a period before they could be led into the promised land (15:13).

46:29 At the end, Jacob as it were had come to repentance. Joseph falls on his neck and weeps for him, just as the Father does to the repentant prodigal.

47:9 Jacob speaks of his life as a “pilgrimage”, using the same word used about Abraham and Isaac (17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1). Thus he showed his connection with them; they became in spiritual not just emotional terms the centre of his thinking. Jacob speaking of how his life had been a “pilgrimage” shows that he realized that this life was only a series of temporary abodes. The same word is translated “stranger” with reference to the patriarchs' separation from the tribes around them (17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1). Jacob's attitude that the things of this life were only temporary, that we are only passing through, is identified in Heb. 11:10-16 as an indicator that Jacob shared the faith of Abraham and Isaac

At 130, Jacob seems to have felt that the fact he had not lived as long as his father and grandfather had, indicated that he had not received so much blessing as they had; he saw length of years in this life as being significant (47:9), rather than allowing the prospect of future eternity make present longevity fade into insignificance. And yet in his final 17 years, he grew quickly; he was not spiritually idle in those last 17 years of retirement. For at the very end he could say that his blessings had exceeded the blessings of his ancestor (49:26).

48:3 *God Almighty*- Jacob's perception of the power of God, this one Almighty *El*,  is growing. Ex. 6:3 says that Yahweh appeared to Jacob “by the name of God Almighty”, so presumably this Name was declared to Jacob at the vision in Bethel; for this, Jacob says, was when God primarily “appeared” to him. And yet he is only recorded as using this name 50 years later. It took 50 years for the fact that God really is ALL mighty to sink in, and for him to come out with this publicly.

48:4 Jacob’s personal grasp of the wonder of the promises at the end is revealed here. God never actually said all this to Jacob; Jacob is quoting the promise to Abraham of Gen. 17:8 and applying it to himself. And with us too, a personal grasp of the wonder of it all, that it really applies to me, is a mark of that final maturity we fain would achieve.

He seems to have perceived the spiritual danger his children were in, living in the luxury of Egypt. The promises of being fruitful and being given a land were being fulfilled, in a primary sense, in Israel's experience in Egypt (48:4 cp. 47:27). Joseph was given the land of Egypt (41:41), using the same words as in 45:18; 48:4 concerning how the true land -of Canaan- had been given to Abraham's children. Jacob's children were given a possession in Egypt (47:11), and therefore Jacob emphasized that their real possession was the eternal inheritance of Canaan, not Egypt (48:4; 49:30; 50:13). Thus Jacob at the end realized the importance of warning God's people against the world, against the temptation of feeling that God's present material blessing of us with a foretaste of His Kingdom means that in fact we lose our enthusiasm for the true Kingdom, in its real, material sense. Like Paul in his final flourish of 2 Timothy, Jacob saw the need to warn God's people, to point them away from the world, and towards the future Kingdom. Jacob saw that his people, like him in his earlier life, would be tempted to see God's promises on an altogether too human and material level.

48:5 At the very end, Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons as the firstborn is seen as an act of faith (48:5; Heb. 11:21). Yet on another level, Jacob was taking the blessings away from the firstborn who was the son of the wife he disliked, and giving those blessings to the son of his favourite wife, who was not the firstborn. This was quite contrary to the will of God as expressed in Dt. 21:17. At best we can say that God allowed one principle to be broken to keep another (although what other?). At worst, Jacob was simply showing favoritism, and yet at the same time he foresaw in faith the Messianic suggestions in Joseph's experience, and therefore made Joseph's sons the firstborn. God saw the good in Jacob at this time, and counted this to him, and recognized and worked with Joseph's decision to make “the son of the hated” the firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1), even though this may have been contrary to God's highest intentions. Likewise God worked through Jacob's paganic use of poplar rods and mandrakes. The way Jacob insisted on blessing Ephraim as the firstborn again seems to show some kind of favoritism and a desire to see his grandson living out his own experience, i.e. the younger son who fought his way up and received the blessings as opposed to the rightful heir. Ephraim becomes a code-name for apostate Israel throughout the prophets. And yet God accepted Jacob's preferential blessing of Ephraim and repeated this in Dt. 33:17. We learn from this at the very least that human motivations are sometimes hopelessly mixed.

48:8 There was a unity, a mutuality, between Jacob and God at the end. No longer did he see God as someone else's God, not even just his father's God. The lessons of Jacob's name change were finally learnt. Thus he asks Joseph to bring his sons to him, so that he may bless them; but when he gives the blessing, he states that this is God blessing them (48:8,9,15,16); he saw God working through him.

48:11 Jacob's final appreciation of God's grace, the way he does far above what our works should deserve, is indicated by his comment that “ I never thought I would see your (Joseph's) face: and behold, God has let me see your seed also” (48:11). The Hebrew word translated “thought” is 74 times translated “pray”, and only once “thought”; the idea is surely: 'I never prayed to see you again, I didn't therefore have the faith in the resurrection which I should have done, just as I didn’t believe your mother could be resurrected when you spoke of her coming to bow before you (37:10); but God in His grace has done exceeding abundantly above all I asked or didn't ask for, and showed me not only your face in this life, but also your children'. God likewise does for us abundantly more than we pray for or imagine (Eph. 3:20), and our generosity to others should have this feature to it.

48:15 At age 130, Jacob mumbled to Pharaoh: “Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life”, as if every day had dragged (47:9). But at the very end, 17 years later, he more positively speaks of the Angel that had redeemed him from all *evil* (48:15).

Jacob’s reference to how Abraham and Isaac 'walked before' his God (48:15) is a reference back to 17:1; 24:40. Jacob had meditated upon these records, in whatever form they were preserved, and now bubbled out with reference to them. Those same promises concerning the Lord Jesus and his Kingdom should become the centre of our thought as we reach spiritual maturity. “Let my name be named upon them (Joseph's children), and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac” (48:16) indicates that he saw an equivalence between them and him; he saw they were “heirs of the same promise” (Heb. 11:9). Jacob came to realize that those promises made to them were the very basis of *his* faith too, as well as theirs, and he knew therefore that he would be resurrected with them into the glory of God's Kingdom. And so he wanted to be buried with them; he didn't reject them, but he came to understand that the promises were gloriously true for him on a personal level.

48:16 It is so easy to under-estimate the amount of work the Angels are doing in our lives; Jacob recognized that his Angel physically fed him all his days, and that it was not just at the crises in his life that the Angel had been present; he describes the Angel as “ever redeeming me” (Gen. 48:16), as if the whole process of life is one continual redeeming process by the Angel, as He designs trials for us which will perfect us in order to gain redemption, as well as physically redeeming us more times than we realize.

*Redeemed me*- At the end, Jacob spoke of God as his redeemer (48:16), which is the first Biblical reference to the concept of redemption. This was not the only area in which Jacob was a paradigm breaker (consider how he coined the word abiyr to describe God's mightiness). The Hebrew for “redeem” is taken from the idea of the nearest kinsman. Jacob at the end of his days is surely saying that now he saw God as closer than his family. We really have a lot to learn here. God comes before family. The new convert who sacrifices family ties for allegiance to Christ realizes this full well. God's Truth must never become a social and family affair, but rather a candlestick burning with the fire of the Spirit. Christians mustn’t merely follow parental expectation and the norms of their social network.

48:22 “*My* sword and with *my* bow” indicates that Jacob's old self-reliance was still not totally gone; his sense that through his own effort he could bring about the fulfillment of God's promises for him. In this area, the weakness of Jacob remained. These very words are alluded to in Josh. 24:12 and Ps. 44:1-6, where the Spirit says that the land was given to Israel *not* on account of their bow and sword. Although Jacob can look forward to being in God’s eternal Kingdom, he died with some weaknesses, just as we do; and we have to accept this fact in our coping with irritating or immature fellow believers. In some spiritual areas both they and we will never quite ‘get there’ in this life.

49:2 In 49:2,7,24 Jacob mentions his old and new names ('Jacob' and 'Israel') together, as if to show that now he finally accepted and believed the wondrous change that God had wrought in him. First of all, he doesn't seem to have accepted his name change, and needed God to remind him of it again (32:28; 35:10). To accept, really accept, the Name we called upon ourselves at baptism (Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-14) is difficult.

49:14 Jacob's achievement of a true humility is evident in his last words. The way he blessed his sons in Gen. 49 indicates this; he saw Isaachar's greatness in the fact he was a humble servant. He learnt the lesson of that night of wrestling; his natural strength was not to be gloried in, neither was this to be his true greatness.

49:18 Jacob's hope of the future Messiah was the hope of his life; ‘Jehoshua’, the Hebrew form of ‘Jesus’, means ‘Yahweh’s salvation’.

49:25 *God of your father*- Finally, Jacob got there. He says three times the same thing; God is my God, Yahweh will be *my* rock, *my* stone, yes, He is the personal God of your father Jacob, He is almighty to save. That promise made 70 years previously in semi-belief, he had now fulfilled. He had made Yahweh his God. He was not only the God of his father and grandfather. The God who can do all things, not only physically but more importantly (as Jacob now realized) *spiritually*, was now Jacob’s very own God.

50:10 *Seven days*- as in v. 3, it seems emphasized that the Egyptians mourned for Jacob longer than did Jacob's own sons [40 rather than 70 days]. Perhaps this shows that mourning, as all emotions, is counted by its intensity rather than its external appearance.

50:11 *The Egyptians*- the sons of Jacob weren't Egyptians, but sometimes the family of faith appears as the world, as Egyptians. Our separation from the world doesn't mean that we externally look different to them; faith in one sense is an internal matter visible only to God, who alone sees the heart.

50:14 This was a huge expense of effort, to bury Jacob in Canaan rather than Egypt. It shows that even if we have all the best of this world, as Israel had Goshen, our heart should be in the promised land which is yet to come and shall be eternally ours.

50:16 There's no record that Jacob ever said this. But instead of taking up the issue of dishonesty, Joseph instead concentrates on assuring his brothers of God's grace. We don't need to 'take up' every issue and establish an agreed version of events in order to forgive our brothers.

50:19 The Hebrew can also be rendered:”Fear not: for I am in the place of God”. Joseph’s relationship with God and with Pharaoh demonstrates how Jesus operates as God functionally, without being God Himself in person. See on 44:18.

50:20 Forgiving others doesn't mean that we justify or mitigate the real evil that has been done to us. This needs to be recognized, but we are to perceive that God works through the evil intentions of others, to do us good in our latter end.

50:25 Like his father, Joseph's heart was in the land of promise, even though he had spent the majority of his life in the wealth of Egypt.