

GENESIS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 28 as we continue our study through the Word of God. If you remember from our last study, Isaac tried to circumvent the will of God by blessing Esau instead of Jacob, but his secret plan did not work.

You see, Rebekah, Isaac's wife heard what he was going to do and she was not going to let him get away with it. Yes, God said that He would bless Jacob over Esau but Rebekah wanted to make sure this would take place because she loved Jacob over Esau. Thus, she comes up with a plan to deceive her husband into thinking Jacob is Esau and the only reason this could work is because Isaac was blind or nearly blind, he could not see.

And Isaac was fooled, he blessed Jacob thinking he was Esau and as Jacob left his father's tent, in came Esau wanting the blessing. When Isaac saw that he was deceived he began to shake uncontrollably, not because he was deceived, but because he could not circumvent the will of God. You see, Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob.

When Esau hears this he was more than angry with Jacob. You see Jacob not only got his birthright, which Esau sold for some stew, but now the blessing! In fact, Esau is so mad that he wants to kill Jacob and Rebekah wants Jacob to go to her brother Laban's house in Mesopotamia and stay there a few days until Esau cools off. But, as I said last week, those few days lasted 20 years and Rebekah would not see Jacob again on this side of eternity!

Now, to get her husband to not only bless Jacob but to send him away with a blessing, with his approval, we saw last time as we concluded Genesis chapter 27, “**And Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?’**” Genesis 27:46. That is where we will pick up our study this evening, starting in Genesis chapter 28, beginning in verse 1, as Isaac is about to send Jacob away with a blessing.

GENESIS 28

VERSES 1-2

1. Isaac is instructing his son not to follow in the footsteps of his brother Esau who took his wives from the Canaanites, from the world. You see, from the descendents of Jacob the Messiah would come and thus, God wanted there to be spiritual purity in this lineage. Now, let me also say this. That does not mean they were perfect and God did use godly women who were not from the children of Israel to fulfill His plan. In fact, Ruth was the great grandmother of King David and she was a Moabite! Thus, Jacob is to go to Mesopotamia to the house of his uncle Laban, Rebekah’s brother for a wife!

2. Here's the thing for us today. God does not want us to be unequally yoked together. Thus, you are not to date unbelievers, you are not to have that close fellowship with unbelievers, you are not to go into business with unbelievers. But why can't we? Because the unbelievers will be moving in one direction and believers move in another direction. For instance, dating an unbeliever is wrong and chances are you are not going to lift them up but they will bring you down. Yes, they will say whatever you want to hear when you are dating to get what they want, but once you sign that marriage contract, it is a mess! Paul makes this point and he is very clear on this when he tells us in chapter 6 of II Corinthians starting in verse 14, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”** II Corinthians 6:14-18. May we listen and obey for God knows what is best no matter what we may think!

VERSES 3-5

1. Keep in mind that Isaac was not a very godly man and it is only from Hebrews that we learn he blessed Jacob by faith. In Hebrews 11:20 we are told, “**By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.**” The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**[With eyes of] faith Isaac, looking far into the future, invoked blessings upon Jacob and Esau. [Gen 27:27-29,39,40.]**” Yes, he blessed Esau but Jacob was given the blessing of Abraham, which was passed down to Isaac and now to Jacob and Isaac did this by faith. And keep in mind that Jacob did not deserve this; this was God’s sovereign plan!
2. Now, after the blessing Isaac sends Jacob away and he was going to be gone now some 20 years, never seeing his mother Rebekah again!

VERSES 6-9

1. Esau, seeing how his previous two wives did not please his parents, tries once again, maybe trying to impress his parents into giving him a blessing or taking it back from Jacob. But when you walk in the flesh, no matter how hard you try; you will never accomplish anything that will be pleasing to God. Jesus said in John 15:5, “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**” Not that we can’t do anything but apart from Christ there is nothing we can do that He will accept! So Esau goes to the descendants of Ishmael to get a wife, but, like I said, Ishmael was not the son of promise but a son of the flesh and the flesh is drawn to the flesh! He had no understanding of the Abrahamic covenant and he lived in the human level, not the life of the Spirit.

VERSES 10-12

1. This is not your Best Western or even your Motel 6, he had a rock for a pillow as he was on the run from his brother Esau and he was seeking a wife from his people. Isn’t it interesting that in the darkest, coldest, difficult times in our lives, God is still there and He speaks to us, and most of the time He has to bring us to that point for us to listen!
2. You can debate this among yourselves but prior to this point Jacob did not walk with God, he did not have that relationship with him, he was one who walked in the flesh and not the spirit. And now he sees this ladder stretching up into heaven and there are angels ascending and descending upon it. And out of this Jacob understood that he could have access to God.

Jesus expounded on this in John 1:51 where we are told, “**And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’**” In other words, Jesus is that ladder for us to access God, He is the One who unites God and man. And Folks, this is important. It is not that Jesus just shows us the way to heaven, but He said, “. . . **‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**”

John 14:6. You see, HE IS THE WAY!

VERSES 13-15

1. Did Jacob deserve this blessing from the Lord? Absolutely not, but God extended grace to him and gave to him that which he did not deserve! Notice what the Lord tells Jacob in verse 14 here:

- He will have companionship with God – I am always with you
- God will provide safety for him – I will keep you wherever you go
- God will guide him – I will bring you back to this land
- God guarantees him this – I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoke to you

“Prior to Bethel, where Jacob was ‘surprised by joy’ and ‘transfixed by awe,’ he had no personal contact with God. Everything had come to him second-hand.” (Daily Notes of the Scripture Union). Yes, Isaac blessed Jacob but now God speaks to him and he hears it from the mouth of God having this assurance, “**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**” Philippians 1:6. And folks, so do we have that assurance. God will continue His work in us until He completes it!

VERSES 16-19

1. Today, as you hear people having an encounter with God, it is almost blasphemous. You may hear them say things like, “The Lord and I were walking together, talking and He was showing me things. We were like good-buddies as we walked and talked!” How foolish! God is the creator of heaven and earth and at least Jacob recognized that fact and we see him have this reverential fear of God. He rejoiced in the presence of God. And he worshiped the true and living God! Keep in mind that Jacob’s walk with the Lord is just beginning, he has a long way to go. Yes, God was with him there but God was also there in Beersheba, He is wherever we go for as David said, **“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?”** Psalm 139:7. Many do that today, God is here or God is there when His presence fills the universe and the big problem is they are not seeking him as we saw with Jacob!

2. So Jacob, after having this encounter with God, changes the name of the city from Luz, which means separation to Bethel, which means house of God. Think about that. At one time Jacob was separated from God but one day a ladder appeared giving Jacob access to God and there is no longer separation as he entered the house of God – he entered Bethel! That is true with us folks, and we will talk more about this on Sunday, but it is only through Jesus Christ that we can have fellowship with God; He is the ladder or that bridge builder to God!

VERSES 20-22

1. Jacob is still Jacob, supplanter, heel-catcher, dealer and-so-on. Here he is dealing with God, if God blesses him with these material things, then he will serve Him. I told you, he was young in the Lord. Jacob is going to learn submission, to submit to God and trust in Him and the Lord will use his uncle Laban to teach him these lessons. In fact, before he truly surrenders, he will wrestle with God. But again, it will take some time but he will grow!

2. Now, let's contrast the promises of God given to Jacob here in Genesis chapter 28 and Jacob's vow. You see, one is god-centered and the other is man-centered.

GOD'S PROMISE – GENESIS 28:15

- I am always with you
- I will keep you wherever you go
- I will bring you back to this land
- I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoke to you

JACOB'S VOW – GENESIS 28:20-21

- If God will be with me
- If God will keep me
- If He will guide me in the way I am going
- If He gives me bread and clothing
- If I can come back to my father's house

God already promised him those things and yet, for Jacob, it was “If” God will do this then he would serve Him! He is challenging God, making a deal with God. Look, God promised and he was to believe and walk by faith! Thank God He is so gracious and merciful to us. He does not call it quits with Jacob but was molding and shaping his life just as He is doing with each of us. Folks, He does not give up even though we might give up on ourselves. As I have said, **“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”**

Philippians 1:6.

GENESIS 29

VERSES 1-3

1. In the English we miss the impact of Jacob’s actions here. It says, **“So Jacob went on his journey”** or it can read **“And Jacob lifted up his feet.”** Let me put this in our vernacular with a recent movie that if you have kids or are a kid like me, you will know. Jacob had “HAPPY FEET!” In other words, he left Bethel with joy in his heart and a bounce in his step and he arrived at the destination that the Lord wanted him to be, he arrived in the area of Mesopotamia. What changed in Jacob? I mean, he is on the run from his brother who wants to kill him and now he has happy feet? His heart changed with the Lord and that affected his outward actions. Jacob was not perfect, but God was working and he was growing! You want happy feet, then walk with the Lord and you will go out with joy and have a bounce in your step as you follow Him!

2. Let me kind of put things into perspective for you in regards to Jacob. When Jacob left Beersheba for Haran he was 77 years old. He spent 20 years serving his uncle Laban. He was 33 years back in the land of Canaan. And he spent the remainder of his life in Egypt, 17 years. Jacob lived 147 years and as we shall see, his life is important in God bringing together the nation of Israel. And here, we see Jacob at a well, the place Rebekah, his mother was introduced by the servant of Abraham to Isaac who would become her husband. And now, this is the place where Jacob will meet his wife, at a well in Haran.

VERSES 4-10

1. So as Jacob arrives at this well there are shepherd boys there at the well and as he meets them he inquires about Laban, if they know him. And they say they know Laban, he is doing well and in fact, his daughter Rachel is coming. And it would seem like Jacob is trying to get rid of these shepherd boys so he can meet Rachel without their interference. And Rachel comes with her father's sheep, to water them. Now there is this heavy stone covering this well and Jacob, seeing the situation, flexes his muscles and lifts the stone up, trying to impress Rachel. You know guys, "Which way is the beach?" as you flex your muscles to impress the girls. Those were the days when I had a 6-pack stomach, rock solid, not its grown into a kegger! Well, that is Jacob here, trying to impress Rachel as he is looking for a wife from the family of Laban and here she is! Again, it just shows the sovereign will of God and as we walk in obedience to Him there are those blessings!

VERSES 11-14

1. Here God orchestrates things and it is amazing, but we shouldn't be amazed, He is God! And Rachel must have thought about her aunt Rebekah and how the servant of Abraham came for her to bring her to Isaac and now God brought Jacob to her. And Laban, the father of Rachel is excited, he sees this as a moneymaker, a good thing for him and God will use this man to teach Jacob some valuable lessons, as we shall see.

VERSES 15-20

1. Laban has two daughters. The older one is Leah and it says that her eyes were delicate. Now some feel that she was blue eyed instead of having the more acceptable brown eyes in that culture, so she was looked down upon, she was not married. It could be that but I think there is more to it than that. You see, we are told that Rachel was beautiful and thus, Leah was not and Jacob fell head over heels for Rachel. Thus, instead of working for wages, he was willing to work seven years to marry Rachel and those years went by quickly because he was in love!

2. Keep in mind Jacob came from a wealthy family but he left with nothing. Thus, working for seven years was a dowry, which was above normal for a dowry. Jacob didn't want to lose out and Laban saw that he could take advantage of the situation.

3. In our society today we see that true love does not wait and it really is not true love then, it is true lust! You see, if you love someone then, **“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. . . .”** I Corinthians 13:4-8a. Ladies, if someone tells you they love you and they want to have sex with you before marriage, drop them! That does seem harsh, but if they can't wait, then they don't love you. Don't mix up love and lust, that is what the world does. You see, true love waits as God has told us! Jacob waited seven years before he was married to Rachel, before the marriage was consummated. Now it is time for the wedding, but Laban has other ideas, as we shall see!

VERSES 21-25

1. Jacob was caught in his own deceptions – he deceived his father Isaac, he cheated his brother Esau, and now Laban was doing to him what he did to others. It is just as Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:7, **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”** The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap.”** That is what was happening to Jacob here, God was teaching him some lessons of faith and how his sin looks when others are doing it to him!

2. Instead of Laban giving Rachel as a wife to Jacob, he gives Jacob Leah. Now how in the world did Jacob not pick up on this? Because the wife was fully veiled until she was finally alone with her husband and the marriage consummated. Now, if it was dark out, then it could be very possible for Jacob to be fooled! The deceiver is deceived!

3. Remember that just because Jacob deceived his father and cheated his brother, God’s plan did not change for him. What did change or what God was going to do with Jacob is discipline him and teach him some lessons. Jacob, in a sense, went to the school of hard knocks, and folks, how many of us have attended that school? I bet most if not all of us at one time or another! In saying that, did it justify Laban’s actions? Absolutely not but God would use this schemer to teach Jacob, the heel-catcher, deceiver some lessons!

VERSES 26-30

1. Laban's answer to why he did this is simple. That was not the way they did business, the older daughter is always married first and then the younger. Now, he didn't tell Jacob this but let Jacob work for him for seven years and when those years were up, the cat is out of the bag and Jacob is fooled, he is married to Leah and not Rachel. Laban is not a nice guy!

2. Jacob is still in love with Rachel and Laban tells Jacob to fulfill her week, that is the honeymoon period you might say, and then he can marry Rachel. But here is the kicker; he would have to work for him another seven years if he wanted to marry Rachel. Yes, after a week he married Rachel, but now he had to work another seven years to get the woman he wanted in the first place. You see, you do reap what you sow and Jacob was learning that at the school of hard knocks.

3. We see polygamy here, is God saying it is okay? Not at all! Then why doesn't he condemn it? First of all let me say this. The book of Genesis lays down the foundation for marriage, a man and a woman and Jesus reaffirms that as He says in Matthew 19:4-6, **“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”** Then why doesn't God say this is wrong? He did back in Genesis and now He is just speaking of what is transpiring here, he is not condoning polygamy!

4. And here is the problem. Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah and how do you think Leah felt? She felt horrible. She wanted nothing more than to be loved and all she will get is the physical love and not the emotional relationship. Folks, that can also happen in marriage, where you are married but you love something more than you love your spouse! Don't let that happen. And men, I will hit you on this one. Make sure your wife feels that she is the most loved person in the world because she is the daughter of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus, don't mess with her, her father is watching and you should be watching over her. Love her as God commanded you to do!

VERSE 31

1. Leah was a victim in all of this and thus, God comes to her aid and opens her womb and keeps the womb of Rachel closed. God was going to minister to her even though Jacob, her husband should have been doing that!

VERSE 32

1. Leah is excited to have a child with Jacob because she thought he would love her now. But he is not going to love her anymore than he did before. He still loved Rachel more! Yes, he will have sex with Leah but he won't love her. There won't be that emotional tie like he had with Rachel. Again, this is very sad.

2. The first child born to Leah she calls Ruben, which means, "behold, a son." She sees that the Lord has blessed her and she longs for the love of her husband.

VERSE 33

1. The second child born to Leah she calls Simeon, which means, "hearing." She is hoping he will see that God has heard her prayers and blessed her and Jacob would love her now, but that does not happen.

VERSE 34

1. Leah is fertile to say the least. Her third son is named Levi and his name means, "attachment." You see, Leah still feels that Jacob will come around and be attached to her in an emotional way, that he would love her more than just with the act of sex!

VERSE 35

1. The fourth son born to Leah is called Judah, which means, “praise.” No longer is the focus on herself or what she is missing but upon the God who has given her these children and thus, she will praise Him in spite of the situations she is in! How about you, can you take your eyes off of what you don’t have and praise the Lord for the blessings that He has bestowed around you? He wants you to!

2. As I close this evening, think about this. The two greatest tribes of Israel were not born to Rachel but to Leah. They are Levi, which was the priestly tribe and Judah, which was the royal tribe from which the Messiah would come. Folks, I don’t care how ugly you think you are, how uneducated you think you are, how unworthy you think you are, how unqualified you think you are – God sees you as beautiful and will do great things in your and through you for His glory! May you never forget that! It is as we are told in II Chronicles 16:9, “**For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. . . .**”

God is looking for faithful people who love Him. Are you willing to step forward to bear much fruit? God wants you to, He is looking!