

In the Beginning

Studies in Genesis

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Jersey Shore Baptist Church

Pastor Phil Erickson

December 16, 2015 (revised from original Sunday School Series started in January 2008)

Chapter Twenty-Nine - Jacob and His Wives

Memory Verse – Genesis 29:20

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

Introduction

In chapter 28 Jacob met the Lord. Here in chapter 29, Jacob will begin his journey with the Lord. God will teach Jacob many things in his time spent in “the land of the east”. He will be a much different person when he departs than when he had arrived. We will learn here in this chapter that “whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap”, in that Jacob, whose name means “supplanter” or “trixter”, will be tricked himself by his Uncle Laban.

J. Vernon McGee had this to say about Jacob’s reaping:

Examples of this principle run all the way through the Scriptures. For instance, Pharaoh slew the male children of the Hebrews, and in time his son was slain by the death angel. Ahab, through false accusations, had Naboth slain and the dogs licked his blood. God sent His prophet Elijah to Ahab with the message that, as the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, they would lick the blood of Ahab. And that was literally fulfilled. You remember that David found this to be an inexorable law which was applicable to his own life. He committed the terrible sins of adultery and murder. God forgave him for his sin. Yet, the chickens came home to roost. He reaped what he had sown. His own daughter was raped and his son slain. Even Paul the apostle felt the weight of this law. He had given his consent at the stoning of Stephen. Later, Paul was taken outside the city of Lystra and was stoned and left for dead.

Jacob is the classic illustration of this inflexible law. Jacob had lived by his wits. He was rather cocky and clever. He had practiced deceit. He would stoop to use shady methods to accomplish his purpose. And he was proud of his cleverness. But he will reap what he has sown.¹

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 120). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I Jacob's Beloved - Rachel (vs. 1 - 12)

It is interesting that Jacob's first meeting with Rachel is very similar to the meeting that took place between Abraham's servant and Jacob's mother Rebekah. Both of these meetings took place near the well where sheep were being watered. No doubt, Rebekah had told Jacob her story of how she first learned of her husband Isaac. It is probably no coincidence that Jacob came to this well.

A Jacob Waits for Rachel's Arrival.

B Jacob Waters Rachel's Sheep.

Notice the phrase in v. 12 – “her father's brother”. Actually, Jacob was Laban's nephew. The Hebrew doesn't make as many distinctions as we make in English. In the Bible, if you were related to someone in any way, you were referred to as a brother.

II Jacob's Bargain with Laban (vs. 13 - 20)

When Abraham's servant came to find a bride for Isaac, he came with gifts for the bride and the bride's family. Here it appears that Jacob has no gifts to give Laban, so he must serve him for seven years.

A Jacob Abides with Laban for One Month as a Guest.

During his visit, Laban must realize that God's hand of blessing is upon Jacob; and he desires to keep him around.

B Jacob Agrees to Stay for Seven Years as a Servant.

III Jacob's Brides - Leah and Rachel (vs. 21 - 30)

A Jacob Learns the Principle of Sowing and Reaping

Remember that Jacob dealt less than honestly with his brother and his father. Now after serving faithfully for seven years for Rachel, Jacob discovers that Laban had tricked him by giving him Leah instead. Now the trickster is being tricked himself. Notice that the reason that Laban gives for this has to do with rules regarding the firstborn daughter. Laban stated that the elder sister had to be married before the younger sister could wed.

Wiersbe says:

The man who deceived his father was deceived by his father-in-law, and the man who passed himself off as the firstborn son now receives Laban's firstborn daughter to be his wife. It's an inescapable law of life that we eventually reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8). God in His grace forgives our sins when we confess them (1 John 1:9), but God in His government allows us to suffer the painful consequences of those sins. This

disappointment was just the beginning of the harvest for Jacob.²

B Jacob Labors for Seven More Years

Notice the phrase – “fulfill her week” – The word, “week”, in the Bible means “seven”. It could be seven days or seven years. Does the Scripture mean, fulfill Leah’s seven day wedding feast, or is it referring to the seven years that Jacob would have to wait until he got the wife that he wanted? I think it’s the former.

IV The Births of Leah’s Boys (vs. 31 - 35)

Notice the phrase in v. 31 – “Leah was hated”. This does not mean that Jacob despised Leah, it simply means that he preferred Rachel, or that he rejected Leah when compared to Rachel.

Jacob now has two wives: one he desired, and one he did not. This practice of marrying two sisters was outlawed later on. (Leviticus 18:18) God never intended for man to marry more than one woman. We will see in this family the problems that are caused by polygamy. God said that man should cleave unto his wife, not wives. Jacob probably would have neglected Leah altogether had it not been for the fact that Rachel was barren at this point, and Leah could give Jacob children.

- A Reuben – means behold a son - “the Lord hath looked upon my affliction”
- B Simeon – means heard - “the Lord hath heard that I was hated”
- C Levi – means joined to - “my husband will be joined unto me”
- D Judah – means – praised - “now will I praise the Lord”

These are the first of the 12 sons of Jacob which become the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will learn about Jacob’s other children in future chapters; but let’s consider these first four. Reuben is the oldest, which should entitle him to the birthright. However, we know that all of the kings of Israel, save Saul, come from the tribe of Judah; and, of course, Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. Why is this? Genesis 49:1 – 7 gives us the answer. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi all did things that would cause them to lose this inheritance. Reuben slept with his father’s concubine. Simeon and Levi slaughtered the inhabitants of Shechem (or Shalem – Genesis 33:18) because of the actions of one man. (See Genesis 34) These actions had long term consequences. We must remember that our actions will affect future generations.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). *Be authentic* (p. 39). Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub.



