

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 6 (February 3-9, 2013)

We will continue to see how God's sovereign plan for The Jews and Christians unfolds through the life of Jacob.

Sunday -- February 3 (Genesis 29:14-30)

Laban, the brother of Rebekah, offers Jacob a salaried position on his sheep ranch (v.14-15). His nephew doesn't have to think very hard before naming his wages. In one month's time, Jacob has fallen in love with Rachel, the beautiful younger daughter of Laban (v.16-18), so he agrees to work seven years in exchange for her hand in marriage. The time flies by for Jacob because he is so much in love (v. 19-20). Verse 20 may be the most romantic verse in the Bible! The tables are about to turn on Jacob whose **name** means, "He deceives." Laban switches daughters and sends the older one, Leah, to the honeymoon tent (v.21-24). Jacob, the master of deception, finds out how it feels to be manipulated (v. 25). The rest of the text (v. 26-30) tells how they resolve the initial problem. However, as verse 30 implies, more problems are on the horizon. We will continue the story tomorrow.

Monday -- February 4 (Genesis 29:31-35)

God often blesses those who are scorned by others (v. 31). Leah gives birth to a son and names him Reuben. She states (v. 32), "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." That's the wrong motive for having a child. Later, she gives birth to Simeon stating, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, He gave me this one too." Again, that's the wrong motive for having a baby (v.33). Her third son arrives causing her to exclaim, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Once again she appreciates the new birth for the wrong reason. This child, she names Levi (v.34). Finally, she gives birth to **Judah** who is the bloodline to Jesus Christ (v.35). She correctly states, "This time I will praise the Lord." I pray that you, also, will learn to give God the praise for all events that ultimately bring glory to our Lord.

Tuesday -- February 5 (Genesis 30:1-24)

Rachel, the beautiful younger daughter of Laban, now finds herself jealous of her older sister Leah. She expresses her frustration to Jacob by a command, "Give me children, or I'll die!" Her husband correctly attributes each child to be a gift from God (v. 1-2). The sisters each give their maidservants to Jacob in order to produce a family through them (v. 3-12). Don't miss the self-centered attitude each girl displays following the birth of four more sons (v. 6, 8, 11 & 13). The two rivals make a bargain (v. 14-15) that brings about the arrival of Leah's fifth son (v. 16-18). The unloved wife conceives again and gives birth to a sixth son causing her to give glory to God before expressing yet again a desire for her husband to love and honor her (v. 19-20). After giving Leah a daughter (v. 21), God finally answers Rachel's prayers by giving her a son, Joseph. His name means, "may he add," a request that will eventually cost Rachel her life (see Genesis 35:16-18).

Wednesday -- February 6 (Genesis 30:1-43)

I would like for you to read this entire chapter today so that you will understand the whole story. The text tells how two deceivers (Jacob and Laban) try to outmaneuver each other. The only difference between the two dishonest men is the fact that God, in His sovereignty, has chosen the sinful man Jacob to receive His undeserved blessings. You could probably build a case that Laban is more dishonest than Jacob, but our Lord does not keep score that way. Once you break any **one** of His commands, you require His **grace** to restore you. Jacob's method of gaining for himself all the strong animals works only because **God** causes it to be successful (Don't try that at home). At any rate, this chapter sets the stage for God's will to be done.

Thursday -- February 7 (Genesis 32:1-21)

You will benefit by reading chapter 31 prior to starting today's devotions, especially v. 3 when God **commands** Jacob to return to the land of his brother Esau, who wants to kill him. As we begin Genesis 32, we see angels accompanying God's chosen servant on his journey (v. 1-2). Jacob sends a non-threatening message to Esau to test the waters. He is alarmed by the report that his brother is approaching with 400 men (v. 6). In great fear, Jacob divides his family into two groups (v. 7-8). Finally, he prays, reminding God that he is following **His** command to go back to his homeland (v. 9). He asks for protection (v. 10-11) and, once again, claims God's promise (v. 12). He then tries to buy his brother's affection with his gifts (v. 13-21). Sad to say, many people try the same method with God, who cannot be bought!

Friday -- February 8 (Genesis 32:22-32)

The story in today's text is probably familiar to most of you. Jacob gets his family and possessions across the water (v. 22-23) and then finds the time to be alone with God (v. 24). I don't know whether this Heavenly visitor is an angel or Jesus, Himself. I know only that most of us, like Jacob, have experienced times of "wrestling with God" (v. 25). Jacob demands to receive a blessing from the One who sent him on this journey (v. 26). Don't miss the Lord's question, "What is your name?" He admits that his name is Jacob, **the deceiver** (v. 27). Only by **grace** does God give him a new name, Israel, which means, "He struggles with God." The nation of Israel has always struggled with God, but someday they, too, will overcome (v. 28). Have you admitted that your name (character) is also filled with deceit? Have you allowed Jesus to give you a new name, known only to Him? (See Revelation 3:17)

Saturday -- February 9 (Genesis 33:1-4; 35:1-15)

We will conclude the study of Jacob with today's two passages. I want you to read 33:1-4 to show the beautiful forgiveness that takes place when God's will is followed. Chapter 35 reiterates the Lord's plan to pass along to Jacob His promises made to Abraham. Our Lord commands him to build an altar of worship in Bethel (v. 1). Jacob wisely tells his household to get rid of the foreign gods they brought to worship because he is going to build an altar to the one true God (v. 2-5). He obeys and renames the town El Bethel, which means "God of Bethel" (v. 6-7). Our Lord identifies Himself as El-Shaddai, which means "God Almighty." He then repeats His promise previously given to Abraham and confirmed with Isaac (v. 11-13). Jacob worships at the stone pillar and names the place Bethel, "House of God" (v. 14-15). All of us, like Jacob, need a "House of God," a location where we can experience our Lord's Presence!