

Then Jesus answered and said to them... “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;”

“And These Are They Which Testify of Me”

Sermons on Genesis
Deceiving The Deceiver
Genesis 29

With Study Questions

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Deceiving The Deceiver

Genesis 29

I. Points of Emphasis

Again, there are very few points of difficulty so let us start our study with a brief examination of the chapter.

Lifted Feet

So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. ² And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well's mouth. ³ Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth (Genesis 29:1-3).

There seems to be a cheerful connotation to the journey of Jacob. He literally *lifted up his feet* as he proceeded. And who wouldn't? After all, God had just appeared to him in a grand vision. His five hundred mile journey (likely by himself) was now something he could bear. As a husband, father, or pastor, it is easy to grow discouraged—especially when I consider my own behavior. Sometimes a simple note of encouragement changes the psychological course of the entire day.

Jacob comes upon shepherds. There was apparently some agreement with the shepherds to water flocks together.

Rachel's Coming

And Jacob said to them, "My brethren, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." ⁵ Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." ⁶ So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep." ⁷ Then he said, "Look, *it is still high day; it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them.*" ⁸ But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep" (Genesis 29:4-8).

Jacob had been instructed to marry from Laban's family. Here he familiarizes himself with the locals who know Laban. Some commentators suggest that Jacob is trying to work out a situation where he can be alone with Rachel. This may very well be the case. Conniving seems to run in the family.

Jacob Kisses Rachel

Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰ And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. ¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father (Genesis 29:9-12).

Jacob seems to be acting a bit impetuously. He is obviously very attracted to Rachel. Perhaps he impressed her by moving the stone. And with no courting or pre-marital counseling he hauls off, kisses her, and starts wailing. He must have been a pretty emotional guy. Rachel, similar to Rebekah's response to Abraham's servant, runs to tell her father.

Seven Years For Rachel

Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. ¹⁴ And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month. ¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages be?" ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance. ¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter." ¹⁹ And Laban said, "*It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.*" ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her (Genesis 29:13-20).

Jacob and Laban meet and seem to hit it off. Laban determines not to take advantage of Jacob by having him work for free. Jacob offers to work for seven

years for Rachel, the younger daughter. This may have been in place of a dowry. There is some guessing as to the comments regarding Leah's eyes. There may have actually been a physical defect. Regardless, Rachel is described as the more beautiful one. She is also the one Jacob loved. Seven years seemed like nothing because of the love he had for her.

Behold it was Leah

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." ²² And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. ²³ Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. ²⁵ So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ "Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years." ²⁸ Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. ²⁹ And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. ³⁰ Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years (Genesis 29:21-30).

His seven years are up and he is ready to marry Rachel. Laban pulls a fast one. Veils and intoxication may have aided in the deception. Either way, Jacob wakes up with Leah instead of Rachel. There is some question as to whether or not Laban's reference to the custom of the older marrying first was legitimate. Even if it were, Jacob should have been informed. To fulfill her week was probably a marriage festival of seven days (Judges 14:12). And although Jacob had to work another seven years for Rachel, he didn't have to wait another seven years for Rachel. It seems Laban simply wanted the marriage festival to conclude before his deception was unveiled.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah

When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. ³² So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me." ³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has

therefore given me this son also.” And she called his name Simeon. ³⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore his name was called Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing (Genesis 29:31-35).

Laban had forced Jacob into polygamy. Of course Jacob could have backed out, but he loved, and had promised to marry Rachel. Laban’s deceit affected both Jacob and Rachel in a negative way. Here we see the sad situation of Leah, who was unloved. God graciously grants her four sons and the nation of Israel is underway.

II. Primary Point

I don’t want to read more into this story than what is there. But let us not forget the preceding chapter. Jacob had participated in an act of deceiving his own father and was fleeing, for his life, from his brother. He had an encounter with God which seemed to greatly encourage him. He also finds the girl of his dreams. He must have been feeling quite good about life. Many years have gone by. Then he finds himself on the wrong end of yet another deception.

Divine Retribution

We read in Numbers, and elsewhere in Scripture, “**...and be sure your sin will find you out**” (Numbers 32:23). The Lord unveils for us, yet another example of His Divine retribution. Let us all take note of the words of Solomon,

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

There are consequences for sin. We think because those consequences don’t come immediately, that they will never come. We’re mistaken. And if we think that grace means we can sin with impunity, we’re also mistaken. We shall see many in the Scriptures who are objects of God’s grace clearly suffering for disobedience. Sometimes it is immediate. Sometimes it takes generations. A.W. Pink makes note of some observations worth mentioning.¹

Jacob deceived his own father to secure that his brother would serve him and not vice-versa. Yet Jacob is deceived and ends up serving his deceiver for twenty years (Genesis 31:41).

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Moody Press, 1922), pp. 258-261.

Jacob had cheated the first-born out of a blessing. On what he thought would be the happiest day of his life, he wakes up and “behold, it was Leah” the firstborn. As we read in Job,

**Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble
reap the same (Job 4:8).**

God pulls back the curtain time after time. **“So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, ‘Every son who is born you shall cast into the river’” (Exodus 1:22).** And a mere fourteen chapters later we read, **“Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained” (Exodus 14:28).**

As Korah caused a cleft in the congregation of Israel, God made a cleft in the earth to swallow him and his followers (Numbers 16:32). Ahab caused Naboth to be slain and the dogs came and licked up his blood (1 Kings 21:19). Haman prepared a gallows for Mordecai but was hanged upon it himself (Esther 7:10). Even Saul of Tarsus consented unto the stoning of Stephen and was later stoned himself (Acts 14:19).

How much more clearly we see this with the Patriarchs. When Laban tricked Jacob he also tricked Rachel who later feels quite comfortable deceiving her own father (Genesis 31:35). Jacob who had deceived his father with the skins of the kids of goats (27:16) is later deceived by his own sons who dipped the coat of Joseph in the blood of a kid of the goats (37:31). It goes on and on. The author of Hebrews assures us every transgression and disobedience receives **“a just reward” (Hebrews 2:2).**

One might complain that they have seen the wicked prosper, and prosper until death. Please let me remind you what the apostles teaches,

But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32).

It is preferable to be temporally judged (that is, on earth) than to face judgment in eternity. Let us also consider the teaching of Jesus in Luke 16. The rich man lamented over the lost state of his five brothers. And who is to say that the reprobate will be not be lamenting through all eternity because of the spiritual reprobation of his posterity? As the Psalmist writes,

For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more (Psalm 37:10).

As the rich man lamented over his five brothers, the wicked may very well lament over the void they leave in history and the absence they bequeath to

eternal life. God will not be mocked. There is Divine retribution and it is to be feared.

...and [they] said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand” (Revelation 6:16,17).

Judah

But lest I leave us all in despair, let us take a last glance at the text. Although chapters and verses (that is, their numbering) are not inspired, they are at very least providential (since God orders everything). And a mere verse or two from God’s retribution of Jacob, we read of Leah giving birth to sons. And the chapter ends with the birth of Judah.

Judah is first mentioned here and will be mentioned 839 more times before you finish reading the Bible. You will see Judah listed in both Genealogies of Jesus. And sixty-five books later we see the name, Judah, for the second to the last time.

But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” ...⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:5,9,10).

From Judah would come the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who is Christ the Savior. Divine retribution is not something that simply disappears with time. It doesn’t go away like a cold or bad weather. In this particular song, which is sung to the Lamb (an animal symbolic of sacrifice), they praise the Lamb because He has redeemed man to God by His blood. Blood is life. The blood, or life, that man is required to forfeit—something we plainly see as the culmination of the due course of every man’s existence, is imbibed by this descendant of Judah.

The Divine retribution that God must inflict, in order to stay true to His own nature, is poured out on Christ on the cross. And we escape this retribution, not because God has forgotten or time has mended, but because we take refuge in Him—the promised seed—the Christ—the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Questions for Study

1. Jacob seemed encouraged as he proceeded on his journey. Why do you suppose that was and what could you do to encourage others on their journeys (page 2)?
2. Discuss the encounter Jacob has with Rachel. Were his actions appropriate (page 3)?
3. How was Jacob deceived (page 4)?
4. What is Divine retribution (page 5)?
5. Why do some people think that Divine retribution will never reach them (page 5)?
6. Discuss some of Pink's observations regarding Divine retribution (pages 5,6).
7. How would you answer the objection that some people live their whole lives without facing the consequences for their actions (pages 6,7)?
8. Who was a descendant of Judah (page 7)?
9. What has the Lion of the Tribe of Judah done (page 7)?
10. Does God still punish sin (page 7)? How?
11. How can men escape Divine retribution (page 7)?