

## Genesis 29-30

### "Jacob Goes To School"

Last week we touched the tip of the iceberg. That of the inflexible, inexorable, inescapable law that God has ordained; the law of "sowing and reaping." The world calls it "poetic justice", or "karma", you know, "What goes around comes around."

But the bible acknowledges it as a law that *God* put in place *spiritually* that's no less real than the law of gravity *physically*. We read it in Vs like **Proverbs 26:27** which reads, "*Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.*" & Again, "*Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, He himself will fall into his own pit; But the blameless will inherit good.*"<sup>1</sup>

We see it all throughout the pages of scripture. Pharaoh put out a decree that all the male children of the Hebrews were to be slain, & in time his own son was slain in 10<sup>th</sup> plague that God brought upon Egypt. Ahab had Naboth slain through false accusation & the dogs licked his blood. God sent Elijah to Ahab w/the message that dogs would lick his blood as well & that's exactly what happened. Paul was party to stoning Stephen to death & later on he was dragged outside the city of Lystra, stoned & left for dead. The bible is filled w/examples.

It's simply a universal law that God has established & cannot be escaped. If you sow corn, you reap corn, if you sow wheat you reap wheat. Sensing a pattern? Sow lies, deceit & manipulation; guess what you'll reap? Lies, deceit & manipulation. Here's what the bible says, "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*"<sup>2</sup> Which is why the bible encourages us to do good as often as we have opportunity. We don't want to be reaping of the flesh, but of the Spirit.

Jacob has spent years sowing to his flesh; he's manipulated his brother, lied to & deceived his father... God has forgiven him (we noted that last week), but he will still reap the consequences of his actions. God will bless him (ultimately) w/a large family & material *prosperity*, but not apart from discipline, which will bring spiritual *maturity*.

Surely one of the lessons of *Jacob's* life is that *we* should consider *carefully* the decisions *we* make in *our* journey through life. What are we doing & why are we doing it? Decisions display character & define destiny.

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Pr 28:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Ga 6:7-8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 1-6

As our time concluded last week we were noting a couple of characteristics of true conversion (Jacob having encountered God at Bethel). They were worship & works.

Once you've had a life changing encounter w/the living God (I'm not sure that there's ever an exception) you will want to in some way worship Him who has delivered you from death, forgiven you of your sin & given you new life. Somehow & in some way you will want to display gratitude, thanksgiving & love; you will express your heart to Him in *worship*.

You will also allow this new life to be seen in your *works*, show me your faith w/out your works & I'll show you my faith *by* my works (that's what the bible says [James]). God had given Jacob new life, promised to guard him, guide him & provide for him. **In return Jacob said, "You've given me life, you can *have* my life" & he vowed a tithe (or a 10<sup>th</sup>) of all that God blessed him with. It was an expression of faith, obedience worship. We should have no problem giving a tithe to *God* if we truly trust that God will provide *for us*, it's an expression of faith, obedience & worship.**

Characteristics of true conversion: our worship, our works... here's a 3<sup>rd</sup>, our *walk*. It's found in Vs 1, "So Jacob *went on his journey...*" More literally it should be rendered, "So Jacob *lifted up his feet*" the idea is that he was moving w/enthusiasm. When he arrived in that place (Luz) he was down, on the run, in fear for his life. **When he left he was a new creation, he called the place Bethel (the house of God), he'd encountered the Living God & had received assurance of His presence w/him, His protection, preservation, & promise to complete the work that He'd started in Him. That He (God) would never leave him (Jacob) nor forsake him.** Here's the point; he came to that place one way, he left another. That's what God does in our lives, we may come to this place one way, (down, depressed, in fear, feeling isolated), but once we encounter the Living God we leave another.

To keep it brief let's put it like this. The characteristics of true conversion will manifest themselves in our worship, in our works, & in our *walk*. The way you lead your life will change. Oh you won't enter into sinless perfection (that's called heaven). There's still a lot to learn throughout life's journey, we'll see that w/Jacob as well (he gets taken to school by uncle Laban). But your walk, your lifestyle will change.

Here's a few Vs that you might write down & look up later (Eph 4:1-3, Col 1:9-12, & 1 Thess 2:10-12).

Wherever you see that word “walk” appear just insert in your mind the words, “lead a lifestyle”. That’s what your “walk” is before the Lord; it’s the lifestyle that you choose to lead as you move forward in your relationship w/Him.

Jacob makes his way toward Haran (some 500 miles away from his home) & now he finally arrives at a well & there are a few different flocks but they’re all being watered from the same well. Btw, there may be various flocks around (Baptists, Pentecostals, Non Denominational fellowships, etc...) but we’re all to water from the same “well”, we’re to drink deep from the well, the “waters” of God’s Word. Paul the apostle said that like this, *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”*<sup>3</sup>

Now we’ve spoken before of the fact that we’re to trust in the providential care of God in our lives. As we trust in *Him*, He will be faithful to take care of & lead us. Here Jacob arrives at a well & what do you know, it “happens” to be the well by which the flocks of Haran are being tended to. The bible is clear (Prov 3:5-6) that we’re to trust in the Lord w/all our heart & lean *not* on our own understanding, but in all our ways we’re to acknowledge, or look to Him & He *will* direct our path, lead us in the way we’re to go.

Vs 7-14

So we note that the Lord led Jacob right where he was supposed to be. It’s not a coincidence, it’s not an accident (he just stumbled upon this place), it was an appointment. God was directing his steps.

Now we don’t know if the shepherds that were there were full grown men, or 3, 12 yr old boys, but Jacob wasn’t about to let that heavy stone keep him from impressing Rachel. So he goes up to that well (adrenaline pumping) rolls away the stone, waters her sheep, kisses her (not romantically, but in the fashion of a greeting) & lifts up his voice & weeps for joy. (She was probably wondering what in the world this weirdo was doing ☺).

He tells her who he is, she runs to tell her dad who runs to meet him & he tells him the whole story. Exactly what is involved w/the “whole story” we don’t know. In Vs 13 we’re told that he told Laban “all these things”. No doubt that he came from a wealthy family, that Isaac & Rebekah were still alive & prospering.

He may’ve told him that he needed to stay w/him because his brother wanted to kill him but on the way to Haran God revealed Himself to him & promised to prosper & be w/him.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Co 12:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Laban, (remembering the wealth of Abraham & hearing of the continued prosperity of his family) says, “Surely you’re my bone & my flesh”. He’s thinking, “I just won the lottery!” So he invites Jacob to stay w/him.

It will turn into 20 yrs of drudgery, affliction & deception. Jacob’s getting ready to go to school. Having sown to the wind, he’s about to reap the whirlwind & through these life lessons God will produce perseverance in him & develop his character. He will use these tough times to help him grow as a man of God. Write it down, look it up, Romans 5:1-5. Don’t despise the chastening of the Lord, God will use tough times to produce patience & perseverance in us, to build our character & mature us as men & women of God.

### Vs 15-20

Back in Vs 15, it may sound like a nice offer offering to pay Jacob to work for him. In reality Laban was saying, “Your free room & board has run its course, it’s time to pay rent.” ☺ In essence he’s telling him that if he wants to stay longer it’s going to be as a servant, not as a guest. You begin to find out what kind of servant you are when you begin to be treated like one... The terms?

Jacob says, “You have 2 daughters, I want to marry the younger one, I’ll serve you for 7 yrs if you’ll give me her hand in marriage.” We read that she was beautiful in form & appearance, but Leah (the older) had “delicate eyes”. Nothing wrong w/her form ☺, but something lacking in appearance, whether eyes were bad, or she was hard on the eyes... we don’t know. But it’s noted that the issue was w/the eyes.

In reality this was Jacob’s offer of a dowry. He was from a wealthy family, but when he left home he came w/nothing. A dowry would demonstrate a man’s ability to provide for the daughter & essentially sealed the deal between the father & the bridegroom. “You want my daughter, what’s it worth to you?” If they agreed, the deal was done.

Jacob said, “I’ll serve you for 7 yrs for her.” That was huge, he showed his hand, he was desperately in love w/this girl & Laban was gonna take full advantage of that.

But check this out; Vs 20 demonstrates the principle you’ve no doubt heard: “true love waits.” Jacob stayed away from her & honored her for 7 yrs before they were married.

Love is patient, lust is pressure, love waits, lust won’t. Love gives, lust takes, lust says, “now”, love says, “no”. Jacob is on cloud 9 just waiting for his wedding day. It’s been said that happiness consists of having someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to; Jacob had all three. 7 yrs flew by.

### Vs 21-26

Don't think for a minute that Jacob didn't realize that he was learning the lesson of reaping what he'd sown. In that culture the bride would've been heavily veiled. Laban (not letting the opportunity to get Leah married [into a wealthy family nonetheless]) deceives Jacob into believing that she is the younger, & he doesn't realize what he's done till it's too late & it can't be taken back.

Interesting that he'd been involved in a plot to make his dad think he was the *older*, now he's deceived into thinking Leah was the *younger*. You guys it's the inescapable, irreversible law, eventually we reap what we sow. Listen, God in His *grace* forgives us of our sins (1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins He's faithful & just to forgive us of our sins & cleanse us of all unrighteousness). However God in His *government* will allow us to suffer the ramifications of those sins. We call it the harvest.

You sow the seeds, the harvest will come. This is why it's so critical we sow seeds of good things, not lies, deception, manipulation. Jacob deceived his day, now he stands deceived. He's been caught in his own trap, the tables are turned & having dug a pit, he's fallen into it.

"What have you done to me!" Jacob says. Laban is all, "Oh, I thought I told you, we don't marry off the younger before the older around here. Leah had to be married 1<sup>st</sup> ☺."

The deceiver has been deceived. Oh, the fact that Jacob deceived Isaac didn't derail God's plan for his life, but it greatly affected how & in what way he would experience it. So to w/you & me. God will be faithful to work out His plan for your life, but how you experience that plan may vary depending on the decisions you make. You might wind up under a Laban for 20 yrs while God disciplines you & teaches you a few things. Better to carefully consider your decisions in advance.

### Vs 27-30

Can you imagine waking up the morning after your wedding ceremony & being married to the wrong person! ... It was to be festive week, the bride & groom were treated like a king & queen for the week after their marriage. Ol' Jacob must've felt more like the court jester... Laban had made a fool out of him & there was nothing he could do about it.

Laban says, "I'll tell you what, you finish this week long feast, make Leah happy, then I'll go ahead & give you Rachael to... One condition: it'll cost you another 7 yrs ☺..."

What could he do? Hey, not only was he going to school, now he's entering post-graduate studies.

Now we talked a little bit about polygamy last week. We won't linger on it today. It's not God's heart. He doesn't directly oppose it in the OT, yet we see that in the beginning He created one man & one woman. He showed us His perfect plan in that model. When you get to the gospels Jesus made it clear that was His heart. When you get to the epistles Paul underscores it again when he says that if a man is to be a leader in the church he has to be the husband of 1 wife. God doesn't dig polygamy; & anytime you see it in scripture its wrought w/problems.

Instantly we begin to see issues here. Jacob grew up in a house where favoritism was readily on display & he has no problem making it clear that though Leah is his wife, Rachel has his heart. How do you think that's going to fare?

### Vs 31-32

The man who had grown up in a divided and competitive home is now himself creating a divided and competitive family.

Leah, knowing that Jacob doesn't really love her is just hoping that now that she's had Jacob a son it will turn his heart toward her. She name's him, "Look, a son" or "Reuben". Listen ladies, it could be that your husband doesn't render you the love & affection that you desire/need. I'm not for a second excusing him, but I am saying that the Lord can bless you & meet needs for you that your husband never can. **Isaiah 54:5** says, **"For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name."** God can meet the needs of a hurting wife, needs that may be shamefully being neglected by the husband.

P.S. gals (unmarried), let this demonstrate to you that a man will often times be willing to have sex completely *apart* from love & only a fool would regard the willingness to have sex as proof of love.

### Vs 33-35

Her sad story is on display through the names of her sons. "Look, a son", "God has heard" (Simeon [God, heard her cry]), Levi, "attached", maybe now my husband will be attached to me. Finally, "I'm done thinking these boys will turn his heart to me, 'Judah'," or "Praise", she's come to the point where she's going to focus *on* the Lord & give her praise (& her pain) *to* the Lord. The affliction in her heart caused her to draw nearer to the Lord & even though she was neglected by Jacob, she was blessed by God.

Both Levi (the priestly tribe) & Judah (the kingly tribe, the tribe Christ came through) came from Leah. Let's look at a few things quickly from Ch 30.

## Ch 30

### Vs 1-4

Allow me quickly to isolate the issue here. Each of these girls are suffering from a root problem here, it's the problem of covetousness. Each wanting what the other had. Rachel had Jake's heart (that's what Leah wanted), Leah had Jake's sons (that's what Rachel wanted).

For the 1st time (probably) in her life Rachel *envied* Leah. The bible says, "*A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.*"<sup>4</sup> It's like cancer to your soul; the bible tells us that we're to be content w/such things as God provides. Hebrews 13 tells us to let our conduct be w/out covetousness, again & again throughout the pages of your bible you will find warnings against covetousness. It goes as far even as to say that covetousness is *idolatry*, it puts something other than God as the primary pursuit of your heart/life.

Rachel cries out to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!" Jacob rightly responds (not the anger but the words) "am I in the place of God!" Here's my point, don't look to your pastor, or to your spouse, or to your friend to meet the barrenness, emptiness or lack in your life. The reality is that God alone can meet the deep need of your heart & fill the void that you hope someone or something else will. The solution for your lack isn't found in man, it's in the Son of Man, J.C.

If you're looking to someone or something else you'll find yourself in a desperate & despondent place. Only Christ (intimacy w/Him, dependency upon Him) can satisfy your soul.

If it looks a little like Abraham & Hagar here, that's because it's the same situation, again just because the bible records it, doesn't mean the bible condones it. You guys we serve a gracious & merciful God, & He may *move* in a situation, that doesn't mean He *approves* of the situation.

### Vs 5-13

Again the life stories written in the names of their sons. Rachel believed she was vindicated when her maid had a child so she named him "Judge" or Dan. Then her maid had another child, "Naphtali" thinking she'd "wrestled" w/her sister & won.

It's like some weird poker game, Rachel begins w/one wife, beautiful & loved. Leah bids a wife & raises 4 sons. Rachel raised a concubine & 2 more sons.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Pr 14:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Leah raises her another concubine & 2 more sons, plus 2 more sons of her own & throws in a daughter (we'll see that in a minute). Then she stands w/1 wife, 1 concubine, 6 sons & daughter. Can I just tell you, that no one is the winner when envy/jealousy & covetousness is at play... (Gad or "a troop" was born, as well as Asher, or "happy")

#### Vs 14-21

The mandrake was thought to be an aphrodisiac & contain the ability to enhance a woman's fertility. Rachel had no biological children & so when she saw Rueben (who had to be around 7) bringing some mandrakes to his mom she begged Leah to give them to her. Leah was like, "Jacob already spends all his time w/you, now you want my mandrakes?" Rachel was all, "He can sleep w/you tonight!" Leah said, "It's a deal".

Meanwhile Jacob's ego is doing fine 😊. However rather than Rachel conceive Leah conceived & had another son whom she named "wages" he came at the price of mandrakes "Issachar" & then she had Zebulun or "dwelling". Now Jacob had more than one daughter, however Dinah is the only one mentioned by name because she'll pop up a little later & this tells us who she is (her name means "judgment").

#### Vs 22-24

Interesting isn't it. All she wanted was a child of her own & when she finally got it. Did it satisfy? No, she wanted more. "Joseph", God will add. This is just typical human nature. If we just got *this*, or had *that*, *then* we'd be happy, but when we finally get it we're not satisfied, we want more. The flesh is never satisfied. That's why we're to crucify the flesh & follow after the Spirit.

#### Vs 25-28

Jacob says, "Laban, I have a family of my own now, cut me loose it's time for me to head back home." Laban says, "Listen, I've been blessed since you've been here, what will it take to get you to stay, what kind of raise are we looking at here?"

#### Vs 28-36

Jacob says, "I don't want a raise. I'll stay here for a while longer & here's what we'll do. Take all the speckled & striped among the flock & separate them. Then over time we'll just let them do what they do & when I leave I'll take only the speckled & striped that come out of the ones you leave w/me."



The truth is that Jacob is stacking the deck against himself & Laban knows it, that's why he jumps on it. Jacob in essence says, "Let's just leave it in the hands of God." What a great resolve, he's learning.

### Vs 37-43

Now people wonder if this was some kinda superstitious move on Jacob's part (kinda like the mandrakes). Prenatal manipulation or what? I don't know the bible doesn't say. At the end of the day we do our best & commit the rest. Do the best we know how, honor God & trust Him to do the work. We'll discover in Ch 31 that Jacob was well aware that his blessing was coming from God, not a work of his own.

20 yrs earlier Jacob arrived w/a staff, now he's going to leave w/a large family & enormous material prosperity. God took him through the school of affliction & in the end He blessed him. Not because Jacob was so great, but because God is so great & so gracious...

### Prayer Points:

God we humble our hearts before You today & acknowledge both Your greatness & Your graciousness. We thank You for Your provision in our lives, even when we're somewhere out there in left field You're watching over us & taking care of us. We trust in You, make us more like Jesus.

That's where it begins. It begins by humbling ourselves & surrendering to Jesus. He died upon the cross for our sins, was placed in that tomb & 3 days later rose from the dead that we might have life in His name. He will cleanse you of all your sin & make you brand new, believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.