

JANUARY 13

Genesis 28:1-29:35

Genesis 28

Vs. 1-5 Apparently Isaac recognized that things had worked out as *God wanted them* and that the promise was to go to Jacob. You have to assume that Isaac had always known this, since Rebekah was told that the elder would serve the younger. It is worth considering what Isaac could have done to have worked with God. I suppose the parents could have talked with the boys as they were growing up and told them what God had said to Rebekah and Abraham, etc. Esau would still be a nation, as promised. I can't imagine that if they had really prayed and sought God, it would have turned out any worse than this.

I know that Jacob is the hero of the story and that Esau is the bad guy, but when they meet 20 years later, guess who looks well adjusted and guess who is a nervous wreck with a totally dysfunctional family.

As disciples, it is better to be honest. If God is sovereign and good, we can be open and communicate honestly. God is not mocked.

Vs. 6-9 This portion of the story always saddens me. I know Esau was a gnarly, snorting, burping guy who married women of that same inclination. I know he didn't respect the promise. I'm good there. But it seems here, that his parents had never fully communicated their desires. Or, they never thought through what they wanted for the kids. So, Esau messed up with his wives and now they want Jacob to do better. When Esau finally sees what his father desired, he tries to comply; but because of the animosity created here, he goes to another line of Abraham. I don't get the feeling he was a rebellious son. He wanted leadership and when he saw what Isaac really wanted, he did it. Communication in leadership, in family and disciple-making, is important. The other option is being awakened by the jolts and collisions in a drifting life.

Vs. 10-17 This was pure grace on God's part. Since Jacob was the son who esteemed the promise to Abraham, God renewed this promise with Jacob. Notice in v. 14 that the redemptive part of the promise is restated; that is, God's blessing of Abe/Isaac/Jacob would lead to blessing of all the nations. This promise is still part of the first promise to Adam and Eve. Jacob would need faith in this promise to make it through the educational process God was going to take him through the next 20 years.

Vs. 18-22 I know there is a positive aspect of Jacob's response toward God, but I sense some conniving in this. Jacob seems to make a conditional promise to God, "If you do this, then I'll serve you." Abraham believed and obeyed. Notice too that in the conditions of v. 20, this sounds very much like Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25, "*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.*" As disciples, instead of seeking those things, we are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seeking to serve and please God was not foremost on Jacob's agenda.

Genesis 29

Vs. 1-12 Being blessed by God and having the promise confirmed did not spare Jacob from dysfunction, injury and justice. Notice that just like his dad, Jacob found his wife at a well.

Vs. 10-12 Obviously Jacob was overcome with emotion because he was running for his life and was meeting long lost relatives. But since Jacob was going to marry Rachel, the crying and kissing on the first meeting doesn't seem like the right "move" on his part. But maybe she said, "You had me when you moved the stone."

Vs. 13-14 I see this as being very ironic. Jacob explains what he did back home to Esau, and Laban says, *Surely you are my bone and my flesh*. They were both swindlers, but now Jacob had met his match.

Vs. 15-20 Jacob actually worked seven years for Rachel before the marriage. This means there was a lot of longing by Jacob and a lot of plotting by Laban.

Vs. 21-27 How much does someone have to drink not to know who he's having sex with? I don't want to know. This happened with Lot too. They must have had some potent wine back then.

Laban had been planning this for a long time. Notice Laban's words to Jacob in v. 26. This is a reference back to what Jacob did to Esau. Laban has gotten to know Jacob and apparently felt justice was due. It's hard to scream for justice when you have done the same thing to others. Jacob was "had" and Laban was just a bigger rat. God was allowing Jacob to feel what his brother had felt. And the fun wasn't over.

Jacob had to wait seven days, until after the honeymoon with Leah was over. I'll bet that was a pretty grim week for everyone. Jacob had never been on the receiving end of lying, plotting and deception.

Vs. 28-30 Then Jacob married Rachel, promising to work another seven years for her. Imagine the joy this created between sisters.

Vs. 31-35 I have a lot of questions here, but by the time I get to heaven to ask them, I probably won't want an answer. I imagine that Laban made sure that Jacob divided his time between the two women. Did they have separate tents? They must have and I'm sure they did later. Now you have the "baby wars" with God blessing Leah over Rachel. Later, not in this text, Jacob gets the maids too! Cool, right? I'll bet it was hell on earth. It must have made his relationship with Esau look like a Hallmark © moment. He was getting justice and, believe it or not, it would still get worse.

Notice the first round of Leah's sons ends with Judah. In spite of Jacob's favoritism (like his father's) and love for Joseph above his other sons, Judah, the son of the unloved wife, becomes the line of blessing. Notice too, that there is a difference with how Leah names the first three boys and how she names Judah. The first three names seem to reflect something about her fighting to win Jacob's love. The naming of Judah seems to be her simple praise and gratitude to God.

That God chooses Judah to be the preeminent son will seem strange when we get to chapter 38. Quality-wise, you wonder why God chose Judah. He wasn't the firstborn and he doesn't receive the blessing. He was definitely a better man than his father in a couple of important ways, which you could hunt down now if you're interested. We'll talk about this when we get there.

Grace is seen in God's patience in working with Jacob. The family Jacob makes is not healthy. Then God takes the unloved wife and gives her children, until she no longer feels any of the hurt and she turns her heart to God and praises Him. That son of praise will have a quality of faith and sacrifice that God will bless with the line of the kings of Israel and the Savior of mankind.

Matthew 9:18-38

Vs. 18-26 Matthew is summarizing these events to show Jesus' power to heal and how the word about Jesus was getting out so that people knew God's power was in Him to heal.

In order for a ruler of the synagogue to come to Jesus, there would have been a desperate need, since Jesus didn't have the "right" credentials. Yet, he had heard enough about Jesus and His power to know he could approach Him.

V. 20 Likewise, this woman had heard much about Jesus and she literally reached out in desperation. From Mark and Luke we know that the ruler's daughter was at the point of death,

but not yet dead. I always wonder how the father felt. Jesus was on His way and then this "stupid," unclean woman touched Him, and then Jesus had to waste time with her. It was during this time as Jesus was speaking with the woman that someone arrived and said the daughter was dead. (See Luke 8:49.) How could a loving God let this happen? How could Jesus be so distracted and calloused?

As disciples, we learn that waiting is the rule, not the exception, in following Christ. This was a divinely arranged malfunction. The result was that both Jesus and His Father received more glory; and the parents, the daughter, and the three disciples would never be the same. Was it "worth the wait?" God thought so, and then, after a short delay, so did they.

Vs. 27-31 This was great faith on the part of the blind men. How did they figure out to call Jesus with the messianic title, "Son of David?" They may have been blind, but they saw something that others were missing. Notice that their faith was genuine. Jesus prefaced His healing on what it was that they held in their hearts. We shouldn't be too hard on these guys for not obeying. Hardly anyone paid attention to Jesus' instructions to keep quiet. I always laugh at this one because Jesus says to the blind men, "*See that no one knows about it.*"

Vs. 32-34 This event is important because it is the first time you see this "explanation" of Jesus' healing power. The people thought it was obvious that God was with Jesus, so the authorities had to come up with an explanation that would lead the people away from Jesus. First we'll hear the Pharisees and scribes making this accusation. Later, it will be on the lips of the masses.

Vs. 35-38 You could preach a sermon on these verses. Note the reasons in vs. 35-36 that cause Jesus to say vs. 37-38. God in veiled glory was walking among those He created to be the object of His love and kindness. It is safe to say that you will not have vs. 37-38 be real in your life as a disciple, if you don't have vs. 35-36. The key is compassion for the lost. The more you are with the lost, trying to help them with the gospel, the more compassion you have. Without those two things, you don't passionately pray the prayer and seek to make disciples.

Notice that the prayer is not for the harvest, it is for harvesters; that is, disciples who will make disciples who will make disciples, living their lives in the fields, following Jesus. Not many people feel the desperate compassion for lost people to beg the Lord of the harvest to send more and more laborers into the fields.

Psalm 11:1-7

Vs. 1-3 I'm sure that many people must have threatened David. Many more must have mocked him and spoken down to him. He was a servant running from his master. But because his hope was in God, he knew that he didn't have to fear and that the foundation of his hope could never be touched or shaken.

Vs. 4-7 This is an interesting picture. The Lord tests men to see what they are, righteous or wicked, obedient or disobedient. In v. 7 it says that God Himself is righteous, so it is natural that those who share His heart will see His face.

What speaks to me out of this psalm is the play between vs. 3 & 4. The wicked are right. We have no hope if we have no foundation, but the Lord is real (just unseen) and is enthroned where nothing can shake the foundations of life and hope. This mindset is hard to hold on to when it seems like God is not present and things are spinning out of control. The disciple of Jesus is constantly being trained in the harvest to be steady and confident, because his hope is in the One who is unshakable.

Proverbs 3:11-12

I'm reminded of what the writer of Hebrews says, *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does **not** discipline?* (Hebrews 12:7)

The Lord Himself is making us disciples, so we can reach and guide others. All of the waiting and learning and lessons of faith are for our benefit and theirs. Blessed is the disciple (man or woman) who, unlike Jacob, is a quick learner and close follower of the coming King.

It's interesting how all these readings complement one another. Tomorrow we continue to see God's discipline of Jacob.