

JANUARY 14

Genesis 30:1-31:16

Genesis 30

Vs. 1-13 If this had been a comedy, Jacob would have been the comic hero, having women thrown at him. Actually this had to have been poison to the family and all of the relationships. Years later, after Rachel's death, Reuben will lose his firstborn right, by bedding Bilhah. Bilhah was Rachel's maid and the mother to Dan and Naphtali. She was also his father's wife. That act was one of ego and resentment, making a statement in the family regarding what he thought of these baby wars and whose branch was superior. Even then, years later, the unloved wife was still being fought for.

Vs. 14-21 The point of this story has to do with God taking a part in these wars on behalf of Leah. The mandrakes were supposed to have some power for pregnancy and were looked at as an aphrodisiac. Who knows how old Reuben was at this time. He could have been 9 or 10. This event was probably impressed on his mind. Anyway, Leah apparently hadn't been with Jacob for a while and the Lord blessed her with two more sons and a daughter. She should have been the wife of honor. And God did it. Incidentally, Leah will be the only one of these women who is buried in the family burial plot with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah.

V. 18 This verse is a shocker. Not only were the emotions of Leah and Rachel damaged in having to share the same husband, but because of the "baby wars," they also damaged themselves by giving their maids to Jacob. Look at what Leah says as she names Issachar. God was making up for her loss and what she had endured. This is very sad.

Vs. 22-24 Rachel will only have two children, Joseph now, and Benjamin at her death. Joseph will be a much honored child and God will make him a blessing to Israel. Benjamin will be the line of Israel's first king.

You might wonder, as I do, how long all of this has taken and where we are in Jacob's life. If you look at chapter 31, vs. 38 and 41, you'll see the entire time breakdown. I'm thinking that Joseph's birth came at the 14-year point. Jacob would have fulfilled the years for his wives. The next verses will be a summary of those final six years.

Vs. 25-43 Since Jacob knew Laban well, he had to come up with some way to have his herds immediately identifiable. Had Laban been a good guy, he would have just given Jacob what he needed and sent him on his way. This entire episode reeks of dysfunction and conniving.

V. 34 I don't know much about sheep and goats, but apparently the speckled ones were rarer than the solid colored ones. Notice that Laban really expected he had the better end of the deal.

Vs. 35-36 Then crafty old Uncle Laban removed the striped, speckled, and spotted, three days away.

V. 37 God was helping Jacob. That would have been enough. If Jacob had sat down with his family and told them to watch how God would bless them, he would have taught the children faith and brought a spiritual element into the family. Instead, Jacob helped Jacob, too. The sticks had nothing to do with genetics. This was all God's work and it would have happened without Jacob's conniving. Jacob was teaching his family that while it might be true that God was there, God helps those who help themselves. And Jacob got a few ulcers for all of his trouble. Plus, his kids were learning not to trust the Lord.

Genesis 31

Vs. 1-2 Now these accusations from Laban's sons might have come anyway, but since Jacob was doing "stick tricks," these guys associated Jacob's growth with Jacob, not with God. In a way,

Jacob stole the glory from God by being so involved in the process. I'm convinced God would have given him all of this without his effort, and everyone would have seen it was God. Jacob would have looked innocent.

V. 3 It was at this point of animosity and threat that God tells Jacob to return.

Vs. 4-16 This is Jacob's pep talk to his family to get the support of Leah and Rachel to leave.

V. 7 This is something we didn't see in the last chapter. Apparently Laban saw that things were going too well for Jacob. Laban knew that God was blessing Jacob (30:27), but in this war with Jacob, Laban thought his own skill at trickery could win the day.

Vs. 11-12 In all of this God revealed to Jacob that it was really His working to give Jacob the victory.

V. 13 This was the Lord's call to Jacob to return.

Vs. 14-16 If you have no other mission in life to unite you, nothing unites you better than a common enemy. Laban's treatment of Jacob united the girls against Dad. Notice that the words of Rachel and Leah are only bitter. Life in the present was all they could see. There is nothing regarding the promise. The plan of redemption is forgotten here.

Unfortunately, this reminds me of a lot of churches. They are concerned about the sin in the world and the democrats and abortion. They are united against a common enemy. But the love of Christ and the compassion for the lost are not what softens their hearts to follow Christ into the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples. They sound OK and their services look Christian, but they, like Jacob's family, are lost on earth.

Matthew 10:1-25

This isn't really the calling of the Twelve. Matthew is simply telling us who they were as Jesus' sends them out to preach. Luke is more chronological. The selection of the Twelve was really just before the Sermon on the Mount.

Vs. 2-4 Jesus sent them out in twos. Notice the groupings. Jesus sent the brothers out together. In John 1:45, Philip called Nathan (Bartholomew) to come see Jesus, so they were good friends. Then you have two rag-tags, Thomas and Matthew. Next comes the father-son team. These guys are interesting because it appears that James was the brother of Matthew, whose father was also Alpheus. Thaddeus is called "Judas, the son of James," in Luke 6:16. It appears that Thaddeus was the son of one of the two James who followed Jesus and the most likely candidate for his father would be James, the son of Alpheus. It looks like Matthew's brother and nephew were part of the Twelve. Finally, comes Simon the zealot (patriot) and Judas the traitor.

Vs. 5-8 This mission was only directed toward Israel. Notice that they were to preach everywhere as they went, and look at what the message was. Imagine today if you just said to someone that God is coming and all men will have to give account for their lives. This is a basic message and "icebreaker." Finally, He reminded them that the power was from God and they shouldn't do anything for pay.

V. 9-10 The word *acquire* can mean they were to take nothing and they were to receive nothing. The money belts were to remain empty at all times. That is also seen in not taking a bag, an extra shirt or sandals. Notice that Jesus mentions they should take no staff and then says *the laborer deserves his food*. Since a walking staff wasn't necessary for a journey, the staff might have been "the staff of life," bread.

Jesus sends them out with nothing. Why? The focus is to be on the mission and looking to God. They needed to learn that God would provide. This is almost impossible to learn here, in the western world, where we have so much and can get a line of credit when we need it. We are so

surrounded by all manner of distraction that you wonder how God ever teaches us this focus and dependence. Many never get it and never develop as disciples.

Vs. 11-15 Notice that Jesus doesn't teach them how to attract a crowd or craft the message for men's ears. To be fair, they had heard Jesus preach and do this enough, so that they had the basic pattern of what to do. Rather than focus them on technique, Jesus was getting them to see that God would go before them. Neither acceptance nor rejection was to be seen as their fault. Their only responsibility was to go and to preach that very simple message in full dependence on God. They would be used as God's tools to make men accept or reject Him.

Vs. 16-22 Welcome to following Jesus! Notice that God is in charge of all of this. It is not the result of poor preaching. In fact, it might be the result of good preaching.

V. 18 This is God's doing.

Vs. 19-20 This is the context of this verse. Many Sunday school teachers claim this verse to make up for poor class preparation. ☺

Vs. 21-22 I understand *the one who endures to the end will be saved*, as referring to being saved from the emotional damage and damage to one's faith that would occur if a person caved in, denied Christ and hid to avoid pain. Even today, those who live a lukewarm Christianity often get hurt because they don't take seriously the danger involved in following Christ in this life. Their faith is uninformed and ineffectual; their marriages and families suffer, and there is no fruit. They live knowing that more is promised, but their only purpose is theoretical and centered on Sunday morning. They are the seed sown among the thorns. During times of persecution, that kind of faith will hurt you and the effect of caving in and hiding will damage you.

V. 23 This is a funny way for God to plan their itinerary, but if you look at Acts, this is exactly what happened to Paul.

Vs. 24-25 This is interesting. Jesus has already used this illustration with the disciples, showing them that if they were "log ridden" disciples, they would produce the same. Here, this illustration is used both to encourage them and to take the edge off of their pride and trust in technique. If Jesus Himself was not believed on or followed by all, they shouldn't expect to do any better than the Son of God, God Himself.

Is this really discipleship? Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, *all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*. A godly life involves living for the mission in the harvest, sharing the message with the lost, becoming and making disciples. This will automatically bring persecution (and reward). The fact that our lives are so quiet and peaceful on this planet of death is almost an indictment against us as disciples.

Psalm 12:1-8

David had been a trusted and famous soldier in King Saul's army. He had been a regular in the palace and had known many of the high officials. David was the king's son-in-law. Now he was on the run and living in caves. Those whom he knew were now lying about him to the people. The people he had saved in battle were betraying him to Saul. The entire city of priests, families and all, had been viciously slaughtered by Saul; and the people passively accepted it. David was still running.

V. 1 It could be that *the godly one* referred to here was the high priest who died along with his entire family and village. (1 Samuel 22:16-23)

Vs. 2-4 This would have been the actions and motives of those who served around King Saul. Every man was dishonest and lying and flattering and living as if God were either dead or absent. After all, God did nothing when this high priest and his family were killed.

Vs. 5-6 But David knew better. God is not mocked and injustice is never hidden from Him. God was already moving. But David's hope was in the sure Words of the Lord.

Vs. 7-8 In all of the confusion David knew that God would protect him.

David held on to the promise made to him by God and he drew close to the Word of God. David didn't give into despair but he hoped in the Word. That is what "saved" him from damage.

We usually don't sense the pressure of living in a world that is totally marinated in sin. It is a part of everything and is closer to us than our noses. To say this seems objectionable and like something the religious would say. But when you read in Romans 3:10-12, *None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one* - you realize this is reality. Our hearts and lives are fragile because of this. Only the love and grace of God, and His Spirit, sustain us. While wanting to stay true to God (understanding by His grace alone, what "true" is), as disciples, we need to have compassion on those who are lost and have no clue. They want us to be like them so they can feel better about themselves, not realizing they are really dead in their sin. God will guard us, if we let Him, by hearing His Word and doing it. Only then can we reach out to help those who are lost.

Proverbs 3:13-15

Do we really believe that wisdom from God is something to strive after and that it is *more precious* than anything on this silly planet?

This sounds like Jesus talking about the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, both of which are really claiming Him as Savior and Lord. Is He precious enough to us to forsake everything on this planet and follow Him in the harvest, without stuff, dependent on Him alone, totally focused on His mission for us on this dying planet? I think *wisdom* says, "Yes."