

Blessed Genesis 30:25-34,41-43

April 7, 2024

(Prepared by John Black using LifeWay's ETB material.)

Last Sunday we had the privilege of studying John's recording of, what is for many, the pivotal event of the Easter story, the discovery of the empty tomb.

Today we are back on our journey through Genesis and find Jacob still dealing with his loving, kind, and trustworthy uncle Laban.

Someone bring us up to date; why is Jacob at uncle Laban's? Remember a few Sundays back Jacob and his sweet, honest mother, Rebekah had deceived her husband Isaac, Jacob's father, out of older brother Esau's patriarchal blessing. That ticked off Esau and he was ready to kill Jacob, so Rebekah sent Jacob to her brother, Laban. On his journey, Jacob encountered the Lord during the night at Bethel and the Lord promised to be with Jacob and eventually bring him back home. Basically, it was the same blessing God had given Abraham and Isaac.

Arriving at Laban's home, Jacob quickly falls in love with Rachel and agrees to work for her father, Laban, for seven years so he can marry Rachel. Seven years later there is a marriage and wedding celebration. The next morning Jacob discovers that Laban had switched his older daughter, Leah, for Rachel. I wonder if Jacob recalled the deceit he and his mother had played on Isaac.

Jacob is still in love with Rachel, so he agrees with Laban to work another seven years for the right to marry her. Jacob worked fourteen years to marry Rachel and another six years for his own flock. During those years Jacob, with Leah and two friendly concubines, had ten sons and a daughter. Rachel finally had a son, Joseph, and Jacob's twelfth son, Benjamin, was born to Rachel after they returned to Canaan. This gets us just a little ahead of where our lesson starts today but we can see God blessing Jacob as these twelve sons formed the basis of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is God fulfilling his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to bless them with many descendants.

Achoo! What do you say when someone sneezes? Kazoontite! Don't sneeze on me! Do you have the Chinese virus? Bless you! **What are you saying when someone sneezes and you say, "Bless you?"** I say "bless you" but I really don't know what it means or what good it does. **What is the blessing you are giving them? What is a blessing you have received after sneezing?** A sneeze blessing can mean anything from "Good grief I felt that clear over here" to "Gosh I hope you are not coming down with something." The blessings from God in Genesis are a major theme and are purposed to bestow favor or to fill with benefits. We are seeing God blessing some of the characters we are studying. As we bring this truth to our world today, we must understand that one of the reasons God blesses us is so we can be a blessing to others.

Read Genesis 30:25-30 "Past"

With the birth of Joseph to Rachel, Jacob now has twelve children, two wives and two concubines. He is ready to go home to Canaan and appeals to Laban to "send me on my way."

Why had Laban found favor with Jacob and wanted him to stay? The longer Jacob stayed and worked; the more Laban prospered. Jacob was making Laban a wealthy man.

Did Laban really learn by "divination" that the Lord had blessed him because of Jacob? I doubt it. No! Using signs, spells, and omens are spooky ways to discern the future. Sorcery, Ouija boards, and witchcraft are things God does not want us fooling with.

Like Laban, people today look for a source that will give them whatever they want to hear. That source can be taking the scripture and reinterpreting it to make it say what you want it to say. We must not twist God's truth to fit our agenda. As with Laban, when doing this we physically ignore God and do our own thing.

Did Jacob trust Laban's offer of "Name your wages?" No! How could he! Jacob had already worked fourteen years under obligation to Laban, he knew Laban was sneaky and deceptive, and he figured he was trying to put him under obligation again.

How did Jacob preface his demands to Laban? He knew he had the upper hand. He reminded Laban of how he had served him and how the herds had grown. He pointed out that Laban had very little before he came but now his wealth has increased. Seems Jacob is saying to Laban, "I have done all this for you, now it is time I do something for my family."

"Read Genesis 30:31-34 "Present"

How did Jacob's actions show a growing faith and dependance on God? We know that years ago he had used his wits and mother to deceive his father. Now, at least fourteen years later he has, himself, been deceived, has matured, and has learned a lot. He is starting to lean more to the truth than his own schemes. Laban, being Laban, is trying to deal with Jacob's mind. Jacob is trusting God, counting on God to bless him with the speckled and spotted animals.

Why was Laban so quick to jump on Jacob's offer? Laban thought this was a great deal for himself. There were fewer spotted, speckled, and dark animals in the herds so Jacob would get fewer animals and Laban would be left with the most.

What do you find most interesting in verse 33? Is Jacob concerned with his honesty? Is he really concerned with his integrity? True the spotted animals would produce spotted animals and provide a good check on his honesty. I wonder what his father and brother thought about his honesty and integrity. It may not have been a far reach to have more honesty and integrity than his uncle/father-in-law. I think the point here is that Jacob is growing and maturing in his walk with the Lord, just as we should today.

Before we get to our next verses, let's look at verses 30:35-36. These verses tell us that the same day they agreed to Jacob's proposal Laban separated out the animals that were multicolored and moved them three days away from the rest of his flocks. His sons alone would be responsible for these animals; Jacob would continue watching the rest (vv. 35-36). At that point, Laban's flocks were made up of only the white sheep and dark goats; Jacob would get only the few multicolored sheep and goats born from those flocks in subsequent generations. If Laban's plan worked, Jacob would never become wealthy enough to live with his wives and children. Wouldn't Laban be a fine uncle/father-in-law!

Read Genesis 30:41-43 "Future"

How did the ultimate success of his flocks and the increase in his wealth relate to the branches Jacob placed in the troughs? Jacob's mating methods for sheep and goats seem strange and they may have been an ancient cultural practice or superstition. However, the success of his flocks and increase in wealth came from God, not from striped branches. Jacob trusted God and that is what led to God's blessings.

How did Laban's plan to set up Jacob for failure fare? Jacob's flock grew stronger, while Laban's flocks diminished.

What was the promise God made to Jacob two Sundays ago at Bethel? The Lord's promise at Bethel to bless those who blessed Jacob and to curse those who cursed him was being fulfilled (28:14). I believe this same promise will bless Israel today.

Other than sneezing, how do we get God's blessings today? Just as Jacob received blessings when he trusted God, we too get blessings when we trust God.

We have seen God's promises throughout Genesis with God's blessings and faithfulness being major themes.

Why would knowing the blessings and faithfulness of God been important in Biblical times? The characters in Genesis had been dead hundreds of years when Moses wrote Genesis. Moses wrote Genesis for the people he was leading through the desert. They needed to be reminded on a regular basis who God was, and what God said, and why He was reliable, and why they could trust Him. Moses needed to keep the folks focused and

obedient so they could understand what they were supposed to be doing and how they were supposed to be living as they made their way to the promised land.

So, here we are a few thousand years later, in similar situations. Just like the Israelites, we get discouraged, distracted, we forget what God has done, forget who He is. We need to have these stories placed in front of us on a regular basis just like the Israelites. We must remember that God's blessings are more than "sneeze blessings." The same God who watched over and blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is watching over us with an abundance of blessings yet to come.