



The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 49



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV=Literat Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV=Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

JACOB LABORS FOR RACHEL

Gen 29:21 "And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her." ²² And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. ²³ And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. ²⁴ And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. ²⁵ And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? ²⁶ And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. ²⁸ And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. ²⁹ And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. ³⁰ And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. ³¹ And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. ³² And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. ³³ And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. ³⁴ And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing." (Genesis 29:21-35)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

At the conclusion of the seven years Jacob agreed to serve in exchange for Rachel being his wife, he asks that his wife be given to him. The years had passed swiftly because of the strong love he had for Rachel. Now, at last, they were completed. However, his faith would be sorely tried again.

Laban gathers together, and makes a great feast for, "*all the men of the place.*"

It appears that it was a kind of diversionary tactic to hide what he was about to do. Without Jacob knowing it, brought Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel.

In the morning Jacob discovers he had been given Leah, and registered his objections with Laban, charging that Laban had beguiled him. Laban explains that it was their custom to first give the oldest daughter – something he had not made known when the agreement had been made between him and Jacob. Thus Jacob enters into another test.

After fulfilling seven years of labor for Rachel, Jacob asks for his wife. Laban gave him Leah instead, setting the stage for some arresting circumstances. – Given O. Blakely

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Laban then affirmed that he would, after the fulfillment of one week, also give Rachel to Jacob, but that he would have to work seven years more for her. This he did, also giving his own handmaid Bilhah to be Rachel's handmaid. Rachel, however, was barren. This appeared to be yet another interference with the fulfillment of the promise of God to Jacob: *"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen 28:14).

Leah bears Jacob four sons, and then *"left bearing,"* or *"stopped having children."* ^{NIV}

This begins a series of events in which God was very present, yet that are very mysterious – particularly in view of what has been made known in Christ Jesus.

A DIAGNOSIS OF THE TIMES

Although I have mentioned this before, it is necessary to again draw attention to the times during which all of these events took place. **This necessity is owing to the manner in which the events recorded during these times have been assessed by men.** Their reasoning has brought them to certain conclusions which have required them to sit in judgment upon Abraham,

Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob. The particular events to which I refer are as follows. A brief explanation is given for each item. The details of the explanation are provided in our earlier lessons.

- ▶ Abram apparently not leaving immediately when he was called by God (Gen 11:31-12:1). THE HOLY SPIRIT WITNESSES THAT ABRAM DID LEAVE WHEN GOD HAD CALLED HIM (ACTS 7:2-4; HEB 11:8). HE ALSO AFFIRMS THAT GOD BROUGHT HIM OUT OF UR OF THE CHALDEES (GEN 15:7; NEH 9:7).
- ▶ Abram taking Lot with him when he set out to go to Canaan (Gen 12:4). THE SPIRIT DOES NOT CRITICIZE ABRAM FOR TAKING LOT. IN FACT, LOT'S POSSESSIONS INCREASED WHILE HE WAS WITH ABRAM (GEN 13:5). LATER, WHEN ABRAHAM DELIVERED LOT, MELCHIZEDEK TOLD HIM GOD **HIS** ENEMIES INTO HIS HAND (GEN 14:20).
- ▶ Abram telling Sarai to say she was his sister (Gen 12:13,19; 20:2). TECHNICALLY, SARAI WAS ABRAM'S HALF SISTER (GEN 20:12). ALSO, THE SPIRIT NEVER ASSESSED THIS MATTER AS A TRANSGRESSION.
- ▶ Lot choosing the area of Sodom (Gen 13:10-11). LOT DID NOT CHOOSE SODOM BECAUSE OF ITS DEPRAVED CULTURE, BUT SOUGHT THE LAND THERE FOR HIS FLOCKS (GEN 13:10). THE SPIRIT TESTIFIES THAT LOT WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN, AND THAT HE WAS VEXED BY THE FILTHY MANNER OF LIVING FOUND IN SODOM (2 PET 2:8-9).
- ▶ Abram inquiring, if Eliezer could be counted as his heir (Gen 15:2). AT THE TIME, GOD HAD NOT YET REVEALED THAT ABRAM WOULD HIMSELF BEGET THE PROMISED HEIR.

- ▶ Sarah giving her handmaid Hagar to Abram as his wife, to bear him a child (Gen 16:1-3). ALTHOUGH GOD HAD PROMISED ABRAM *"SEED"* THREE TIMES, HE HAD NOT YET REVEALED IT WOULD BE THROUGH SARAI. SHE WOULD NOT LEARN OF HER PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROMISED BIRTH UNTIL THE YEAR BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE (GEN 17:21; 18:10).
- ▶ Abram consenting to beget a child through Hagar (Gen 16:2-3). AGAIN, ABRAM DID NOT KNOW SARAH WAS TO BIRTH TO THE PROMISED HEIR. THAT HAD NOT YET BEEN REVEALED. THE SPIRIT DID NOT WRITE UP ABRAHAM AND SARAH AS HAVING SINNED IN THIS MATTER.
- ▶ Abram seeking for Ishmael's protection (Gen 17:18). ABRAM'S REQUEST WAS NOT FOR ISHMAEL TO BE THE PROMISED HEIR. GOD HAD NOW REVEALED HE WOULD NOT BE THE HEIR. ISAAC WOULD BE THE HEIR (GEN 17:18-19). HOWEVER, GOD PROMISED TO BLESS ISHMAEL BECAUSE OF ABRAM'S REQUEST (GEN 17:20-21). ABRAHAM WAS NOT REBUKED FOR HIS REQUEST, NOR DID THE SPIRIT LATER DECLARE IT WAS A SIGN OF UNBELIEF.
- ▶ Sarah laughing when she heard she was to bear a child to Abraham in her old age (Gen 18:12). ALTHOUGH SARAH WAS GENTLY REBUKED FOR LAUGHING WITHIN HERSELF (GEN 18:15), SHE WAS NOT WRITTEN UP AS AN UNBELIEVER BECAUSE OF IT. IT IS RATHER WRITTEN THAT BY FAITH SHE RECEIVED STRENGTH TO CONCEIVE SEED (HEB 11:11).
- ▶ Isaac saying that Rebekah was his sister (Gen 26:7-9). ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD BE OUT OF ORDER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED GREATER REVELATION, ISAAC IS NOT

Their reasoning has brought them to certain conclusions which have required them to sit in judgment upon Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob.

FURTHERMORE, HE WAS IMPOTENT, AND INCAPABLE OF BEARING CHILDREN.

CRITICIZED BY THE SPIRIT FOR THIS WORD.

- ▶ Jacob purchasing Esau's birthright for some lentil stew (Gen 25:30-34).

ESAU SAID THAT JACOB TOOK AWAY HIS BIRTHRIGHT (GEN 27:36). THE SPIRIT, HOWEVER, CHARGED THE TRANSGRESSION AGAINST ESAU, SAYING HE “*DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT*” (GEN 25:34). THE SPIRIT ALSO WITNESSES THAT ESAU WAS THE “*PROFANE PERSON,*” OR “*GODLESS PERSON,*” ^{NASB} NOT JACOB (HEB 12:16).

- ➔ Rebekah disguising Jacob to appear as Esau, in order that he might obtain the blessing of the firstborn (Gen 27:8-17). ALTHOUGH THE DETAILS OF THIS EVENT ARE RATHER PRECISE, THERE IS NOT A SYLLABLE OF CRITICISM REGISTERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT BECAUSE OF THE INCIDENT.

earth. Furthermore, all of the promises revealed to men had to do with things occurring on the earth. Even in the somewhat vague promise regarding the bruising of the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15), the actual bruising took place on the earth, when Jesus died upon the cross. It was there that His “*heel*” was bruised when He crushed the head of the serpent.

Until this portion there has not been a syllable said concerning anything extending beyond this world.

All of the comparative weaknesses of those early saints was

- ➔ He commanded Abram to leave Ur, and journey to Canaan, and he did (Gen 12:3; Heb 11:8).

- ➔ He commanded Abram to walk through the land, and he did (Gen 13:17,18).

- ➔ God commanded Abram to take Him a heifer of three years old, a she goat of three years old, a ram of three years old, a turtle, and a young pigeon, and he did (Gen 15:9-11).

- ➔ He commanded Abram to circumcise all the males in his household, and he did (Gen 17:11-14,24-27).

- ➔ He commanded Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son, and he did (Gen 21:12-14).

- ➔ He commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering to him, and Abraham immediately set out to do so. Only an angel was able to restrain him, once his faith was seen (Gen 22:1-19).

- ➔ God commanded Isaac to not go down to Egypt, but remain in the land, and he did (Gen 26:2-6).

There is a clear consistency in the obedience of the patriarchs. Once they knew what was required of them, they did it. Once a revelation was received, they believed it. **Any of their conduct that appears to have been unacceptable was owing to a lack of revelation, not hardness of heart or unbelief.**

The Impediment of Ignorance

In all of this the impediment of ignorance ought to be glaringly apparent. **It simply is not possible for one to conduct his life in wisdom if a fundamental ignorance is present.** We know from the way these patriarchs reacted to the truth they received, that, were they living in our time, they would be premier saints. We know this is true because, “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much*” (Luke 16:10).

What are we to say of those who

In all of this the impediment of ignorance ought to be glaringly apparent. It simply is not possible for one to conduct his life in wisdom if a fundamental ignorance is present.

- ➔ Jacob saying that he was Esau (Gen 17:19). AGAIN, ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE DURING THIS DAY OF GREATER REVELATION, THE DEED WAS NOT IMPUTED TO JACOB FOR SIN. OF COURSE, FOR THOSE WHO HAVE A PENCHANT FOR TECHNICALITY, “*WHERE THERE IS NO LAW, THERE IS NO TRANSGRESSION*” (ROM 4:15).

- ➔ Jacob saying that God had brought the meat that he served Isaac to him (Gen 27:20). ONCE AGAIN, THE ABSENCE OF A CONDEMNING WORD OR THE IMPUTATION OF SIN TO JACOB ON THIS MATTER IS REASON ENOUGH FOR NO MAN TO INTRODUCE CONDEMNATION HERE.

WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED FROM ALL OF THIS?

It is exceedingly difficult for those living in “*the day of salvation*” to comprehend the restrictions placed upon a person’s thinking because of ignorance. To this point in the book of Genesis, the only kind of Divine activity that has been made known is what is taking place upon the earth. Even when God revealed to Jacob the involvement of heaven with earth, it was depicted as a ladder that had been set up on the

owing to a lack of revelation, which necessarily imposed spiritual ignorance upon the people. **Those patriarchs did the best they could under the circumstances, believing every word delivered to them, and acting upon it according.**

With the solitary exception of Adam and Eve, anywhere and everywhere God made Himself known to a person of His choice, His word was believed and obeyed.

- ➔ God made Himself known to Noah, commanding him to build an ark, and he did (Gen 6:14-19; Heb 11:7).

- ➔ He commanded Noah to bring of every living thing a pair into the ark, and he did (Gen 6:19-20,22).

- ➔ He commanded him to stock the ark with food for the animals and his family, and he did (Gen 7:21-22).

- ➔ He told Noah to enter the ark with all of his house, and he did (Gen 7:1,7).

are living in the brightness of Divine revelation, yet remain in a state of spiritual ignorance – unacquainted with the ways of the Lord, and unable to live in an acceptable manner before the Lord? Add to this the fact that God has strategically placed people in both place and time in order that they might seek and find the Lord (Acts 17:26-27).

How do such people appear when we stand them next to the citizens of Nineveh who, after hearing a single message of imminent doom, repented in sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:5-10; Matt 12:41)?

However, God will not react to the ignorance of this generation like He did to that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

We have a situation amidst the churches of this land that is most

fearful. **With an “abundance” of “truth” (Jer 33:6) all about them, they are blind, following the blind, and headed for the ditch of eternal ruin.** Furthermore, the seriousness of their condition is being withheld by the professional clergy of the land. These charlatans have chosen to build religious empires rather than fortify the people of God. They have misrepresented God in such a manner as to lead people to think He is lovingly tolerant of their condition. As a result, we have a people who are nowhere near the spiritual stature of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **God will visit this situation on the day of judgment.** Until then, and make no mistake about it, there is a lot of preaching and repenting that needs to be done. Professed leaders will be held accountable.

Learn! Learn! Learn!

These patriarchs are a living demonstration of the effects of spiritual ignorance. This condition was not owing to any unbelief of stubbornness on their part. Rather, it was the necessary consequence of sin separating the people from God. **This is precisely the situation that Jesus came to address, and He did so effectively.** There is no acceptable excuse for ignorance being prevalent within the professed church. There must be a war waged against its presence. Imaginations must be cast down!

WE WILL NOW PROCEED WITH THE TEXT

We Will now proceed with the an exposition of the text, doing so with an acute awareness that **our spiritual intelligence is to be advanced by this record.** The urgency of a proper response to God should be apparent.

GIVE ME MY WIFE

Gen 29:21 ***“And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.”***

GIVE ME MY WIFE

“And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife . . .”

MY DAYS ARE FULFILLED

“ . . . for my days are fulfilled. . .”
Other versions read, ***“My time is completed,”***^{NASB} ***“my time is finished.”***^{CJB} and ***“I have fulfilled my contract.”***^{LIVING}

The “days,” or “time” were seven years – 2,520 days, and 60,480 hours. That was sufficient time to cause an ordinary man to forget, or consider that having Rachel for his wife was not worth such an investment. However, all through this period of time Jacob was thinking about Rachel, loving her, and living in anticipation of the time they would be married.

Jacob kept track of the time, so that he knew the very day he would receive Rachel as his wife. He did not forget to count the days, or allow

distractions to introduce confusion about the matter.

The Type

Here is the secret to keeping the faith, finishing the course, and being ***“faithful unto death”*** (Rev 2:10). It is

missing, time will wear out the individual, and trouble will soon turn his attention to other things.

THAT I MAY GO IN UNTO HER

“ . . . that I may go in unto her.”
Other versions read, ***“I want to lie with***

Jacob kept track of the time, so that he knew the very day he would receive Rachel as his wife. He did not forget to count the days, or allow distractions to introduce confusion about the matter.

living in anticipation of being forever with the Lord! Faithfulness and due preparation cannot be accomplished by mere human disciple, or only doing what we are commanded to do. Throughout the life of the believer Jesus must grow more and more precious, and the anticipation of being forever with Him must become a dominating quest. Where this is

her,”^{NIV} ***“that I may sleep with her,”***^{CEB} ***“I want to sleep with her,”***^{CSB} ***“that I may cohabit with her,”***^{TNK} ***“so as to enter to her,”***^{ABP} ***“I want to marry Rachel now!”***^{CEV} ***“so that I can marry her,”***^{ERV} ***“I’m ready to consummate my marriage,”***^{MESSAGE} and ***“so that I may take her to me.”***^{AMPLIFIED}

Here, I prefer the more modest

If God Himself receives nothing from our affiliation with Jesus, it has no God-honoring purpose. In such a case, it is not possible that it could bring any real advantage to us.

language. The literal rendering of the text is, "I SHALL COME TO HER." ^{INTERLINEAR} The Hebrew word translated "go in" is "bow," which means "TO GO IN, ENTER, COME, GO, COME IN." ^{STRONG'S} This is referring to entering her tent as Rachel's husband. The versions that speak more vividly are supplying an interpretation of the text, not a translation of it. Further, it is not the Spirit's manner to speak in such a way of things related to marriage.

The Purpose of Marriage

Ultimately, the purpose of marriage is realized in intimacy – the two becoming "one flesh." This also translates into mindfulness of one another, and even having the same

mind. **Marriage without personal involvement with one another is no marriage at all.**

The Type

Presently we are betrothed to Christ. During this interim, before the marriage, Jesus is serving the Father, administrating the Kingdom, mediating, interceding, and teaching His people, orienting them for the coming marriage. He is with us, even as Jacob was with Rachel, but not yet in the fullest sense.

The purpose for union with Christ is productivity, or fruit. As it is written, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of

Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, **that we should bring forth fruit unto God**" (Rom 7:4). While it is true that this begins while we remain in this world, the majority of the fruit that will be brought to God will be produced in the world to come.

I do not believe this is generally understood by professing believers. They do not think of themselves as, through Jesus, producing fruit unto God. Some have been taught that "fruit" is confined to, what is referred to as "winning souls." Notwithstanding, bringing forth fruit unto God is the purpose for our affiliation with Jesus, and we will be judged on the last day with that in mind. Those who lack understanding in this matter should diligently seek to obtain it. **If God Himself receives nothing from our affiliation with Jesus, it has no God-honoring purpose. In such a case, it is not possible that it could bring any real advantage to us.** The truth of the matter is that such religion is pretense.

LABAN GIVES LEAH TO JACOB

"²² And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. ²³ And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. ²⁴ And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid."

LABAN MADE A FEAST



"And Laban gathered together all

the men of the place, and made a feast..."

It is generally understood that this was a traditional marriage feast, common in the East.

➡ **SAMSON'S SEVEN DAY WEDDING FEAST:** "So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within **the seven days of the feast**, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments" (Judg 14:10-12).

➡ **ESTHER'S FEAST:** "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she

*obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even **Esther's feast**; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king."* (Est 2:17-18).

➡ **THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST.** "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" (Matt 22:2-4).

➔ **THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB.**
"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Rev 19:9).

I therefore conclude that this was the kind of feast Laban prepared – a **marriage feast**. Furthermore, it was understood to be in honor of Rachel.

LABAN BROUGHT LEAH TO HIM

" . . . And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. . . ."

Fully convinced he was receiving Rachel as his wife, Laban now deceived Jacob, bringing him Leah as his wife instead. He would not recognize it was Leah because of darkness, and her being veiled as well.

Although there is no word against Jacob for presenting himself as Esau,

Although there is no word against Jacob for presenting himself as Esau, and although the circumstances here are by no means identical, I do not doubt that at some point, Jacob recalled how Isaac had blessed him, thinking he was blessing Esau.

and although the circumstances here are by no means identical, I do not doubt that at some point, Jacob recalled how Isaac had blessed him, thinking he was blessing Esau. I say this because of the sensitivity of Jacob.

LABAN GAVE HIS DAUGHTER ZILPAH

" . . . And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid."

It was customary for the wife to have a special handmaid – a female slave who attended to the needs of the wife, serving her. For Rebekah, it was

the same woman who was her *"nurse"* when she was young – Deborah (Gen 24:59; 35:8). Sarah's handmaid was Hagar (Gen 16:1), who is also referred to as a *"bondwoman,"* or *"slave woman"* ^{NIV} (Gen 21:10).

In this case, Zilpah was Laban's own *"maid"* – *"his maid."* Jewish writings say of her, *"AND LABAN GAVE HER ZILPAH HIS DAUGHTER, WHOM HIS CONCUBINE BORE UNTO HIM."* ^{TARGUM OF JONATHAN} I do not place a lot of stock in Jewish uninspired writings. Suffice it to say, Zilpah was one of Laban's slaves. **She will play a significant role in the formation of the nation of Israel.**

BEHOLD, IT WAS LEAH

" 25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? 26 And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn."

IT WAS LEAH

"And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah . . ." Other versions read, *"there was Leah,"* ^{NIV} *"there she was--Leah,"* ^{CEB} *"he was with Leah,"* ^{CJB} *"he realized it was Leah,"* ^{GWN} and *"in the morning [Jacob saw his wife, and behold, it was Leah!]"* ^{AMPLIFIED}

There is a sense in which this world is the realm of delusion, often yielding things we did not expect. Often this kind of disappointment is realized every day – we receive something we did not order, buy, or in some way think

we have procured. However, who can imagine a greater disappointment than awakening to find your wife is not the person you thought it would be!

Part of the reign of mortality is the element of surprise, – the unexpected; and often it yields great disappointment. The unexpected, being disconcertment, bewilderment, and being startled – **it is all part of the environment of death.** In the glory, none of this will occur, and to the degree that we live by faith, such occurrences are reduced significantly. **More and more those in Christ learn what to expect, even though they will not be totally free from the unexpected until they put off the mortal coil of the flesh.**

WHAT HAST THOU DONE UNTO ME?

" . . . and he said to Laban, What

is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? . . ."

Jacob immediately knew this was the work of Laban. He did not blame Leah, as though she had supplanted her sister. Laban had brought Leah to Jacob under the pretense that it was Rachel.

What Hast Thou Done Unto Me?

This was a personal offence. Laban had done something unjust to Jacob. It may have been similar to what Jacob did to Isaac, but it was by no means identical. God had chosen and loved Jacob, while he had hated Esau (Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:13). He had revealed to Rebekah that the elder would serve the younger, which meant the birthright had to pass from Esau to Jacob. Also, Esau was a fornicator and a profane, or godless, person. This situation differs vastly from Jacob's.

In this case a clear agreement had been made to serve Laban for seven years in order to obtain Rachel as his wife. Laban had made the stipulation, and Jacob had agreed to it – to work seven years for Rachel. After the agreement was made, Laban determined to do something else, to which Jacob had not consented.

Did Not I Serve For Rachel?

The clear arrangement was that Jacob was laboring for Rachel: *"I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter"* (Gen 29:18). **There was nothing ambiguous about the proposal, and Laban agreed that it was the best thing to do:** *"It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me"* (Gen 29:19). No mention was made of Leah, and there was no reason for Jacob to expect for her to be brought into the consideration.

Why Have You Beguiled Me?

Ordinarily, this would be considered a difficult question to answer. Precisely how do you explain beguilement, deception, or misrepresentation?

The flesh will think of a way to answer this question, for Laban is a type of the flesh. The answer will not be thoroughly honest, for honesty has no part in beguilement.

IT MUST BE DONE SO IN OUR COUNTRY

"... And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn."

Bible students have disputed about the legitimacy of Laban's statement. Some say he told the truth about the custom, yet are unable to provide adequate substantiation for that claim. I choose to view Laban's claim as a deliberate lie. Following are my reasons for doing so.

➔ If his statement was legitimate, then why was there no objection to preparing a feast for the men which was to accompany giving Rachel to Jacob. If the practice did, in fact,

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

"It is still the custom not to give the younger in marriage before the older, unless the latter be deformed or in some way defective." ALBERT BARNES

"The same custom exists among the Indians (Rosenmüller; cf. Roberts, 'Oriental Illustrations,' p. 34), Egyptians (Lane), and other Oriental countries (Delitzsch)." PULPIT COMMENTARY

"... but it does not appear there was any such custom, and it was a mere evasion; or otherwise, why did not he inform him of this when he asked for Rachel? and why did he enter into a contract with him, contrary to such a known custom? and besides; how could he have the nerve to call the men of the city, and make a feast for the marriage of his younger daughter, if this was the case?" JOHN GILL

"Yet we see him pretending that he has an honorable defense for his conduct, because it was not the custom of the country to prefer the younger to the elder." JOHN CALVIN

"This was a custom at Mesopotamia; but Laban took care to conceal it from Jacob till after he had given him Leah. The words of Laban are literally what a Hindoo would say on such a subject." ADAM CLARKE

"A perfectly worthless excuse; for if this had really been the custom in Haran as in ancient India and elsewhere, he ought to have told Jacob of it before." KEIL & ELITZSCH

"We have reason to think there was no such custom of his country as he pretends; only he banters Jacob with it, and laughs at his mistake ... But if there had been such a custom, and he had resolved to observe it, he should have told Jacob so when he undertook to serve him for his younger daughter." MATTHEW HENRY

violate what was done among those people, then surely someone would have spoken up.

- ➔ At the time Jacob said he would labor for Rachel for seven years, why was not this custom cited at that time?
- ➔ Laban agreed to the arrangement Jacob put forward – to serve Laban *"for seven years for Rachel,"* his *"younger daughter"* (Gen 29:18).
- ➔ The Holy Spirit provides no editorial remark that would justify what Laban did.

I therefore conclude that Jacob's s remark was true: Laban had beguiled

him.

I also conclude that this was a form of reaping what Jacob had sown when he presented himself as Esau. Even though the record does not impute that to Jacob for sin, it is still God's manner to render a harvest for certain things, even though He was working through them. **Allow me to cite one example of this.**

When David numbered Israel, the higher view of the matter is stated in this way: *"And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah"* (2 Sam 24:1). Yet, when David numbered Israel **as he was moved by God to do,** *"David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly"* (2 Sam 24:10). It is written, *"For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee"* (2 Sam 24:11-12). David was required to choose one of the following options: *"Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me"* (2 Sam 24:13).

David actually confessed this was a most difficult decision to make, and therefore cast himself upon the mercy of the Lord, because His mercies were great. He only requested, *"Let me not fall into the hand of man"* (2 Sam 24:14). He trusted the Lord to make the decision, and reconciled himself to receiving that choice.

Indeed, God did make the choice. As it is written, *"So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there*

died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men" (2 Sam 24:15). At that point, the Lord's mercy burst forth. It is written, "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is

enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite" (2 Sam 24:16).

There you have it. God moved David to do something that was in concert with His will, then sent a

judgment because it was done. None of this was unjust, for God is righteous. I gather that a similar thing happened in the deception Laban perpetrated upon Jacob. It is not appropriate to pursue this subject further, for that would require us to extend ourselves beyond revelation—and that would not be right.

SERVE ME YET SEVEN OTHER YEARS

"²⁷ Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. ²⁸ And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. ²⁹ And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. ³⁰ And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years."

FULFILL HER WEEK

"Fulfil her week . . ." This is thought to refer to the feast Laban had prepared, which is considered to be seven days in length. This is based on a marriage feast prepared for Samson, which was seven days in length (Judges 14:10-12). I see no reason why this explanation is not satisfactory.

YET SEVEN OTHER YEARS

" . . . and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years..." Other versions read, *"you will serve me still another seven years,"* ^{NKJV} *"another seven years of work,"* ^{NIV} *"you shall work for me yet seven more years in return."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Thus, after agreeing to work seven years for Rachel, now Jacob is informed fourteen years of labor will be required. He only has one alternative: complete the seven days with Leah, keep her, and receive Rachel, working seven more years in order to keep her. **The measure of the love that he has for Rachel will determine what he does.**

JACOB DID SO

" . . . And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week . . ." Other versions read, *"So Jacob complied and fulfilled [Leah's] week."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Compelled by his love for Rachel, and his willingness to go through an enormous amount of inconvenience, and even injustice, Jacob fulfilled the appointed week with Leah.

wife." ^{NIV}

Thus, Jacob did receive Rachel as his wife – but he could not return to his homeland until he had served Laban for seven more years in Haran of Mesopotamia.

A Type

In a sense, the marriage of Jesus

On the other hand, those who do not have a proper love for Jesus will balk at what He requires, and refuse to go through any inconvenience or hardship that results from attentiveness to Him.

Something to Learn

It is still true that love – real love – is compelling. God's love compelled Him to give His Son (John 3:16). The Lord Jesus loved His church so much He gave His life for it (Eph 5:25). Those who love the Lord (James 2:5; 1 John 4:19), will do anything that is required to maintain fellowship with Him.

On the other hand, those who do not have a proper love for Jesus will balk at what He requires, and refuse to go through any inconvenience or hardship that results from attentiveness to Him.

HE GAVE HIM RACHEL

" . . . and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also . . ." *"And he gave him Rachel his daughter to be his*

to the church is similar to that of Jacob being married to Leah and Rachel. I am careful as I approach this matter, seeking to avoid any despising of Leah. Yet, there is something to be seen here, hidden beneath the shroud of ancient circumstance. As is true of all types, the likeness to reality is not thorough, but only introductory.

In the end, Jesus will receive the church as His bride. Until that time, there is a part of us that is a member of Christ that, like Leah, is not the preferred. It is our bodies. While they are *"vile"* (Phil 3:21), and appropriately called *"the body of this death"* (Rom 7:24), nevertheless they do have a close relation with Jesus, the Bridegroom. The bodies of the elect are sanctified by virtue their redemption purchase (Eph 1:14), and the Holy Spirit

who uses them as His temple (1 Cor 6:19). In view of this it is written, *"Know ye not that **your bodies are the members of Christ?** shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid"* (1 Cor 6:15). We are to possess our bodies with that in mind. They are like Leah being Jacob's wife. They cannot be given to anyone else outside the bounds of marriage.

brought on by an ignorance of God, the ways of God, and the purpose of God. Jacob, together with Abraham and Isaac, knew absolutely nothing about the *"eternal purpose of God,"* the extent of the work of the coming *"Seed,"* or of life beyond the grave. They only knew of the work and will of God within the context of this present evil world: a flesh-and-blood people, a land, and the nations of the earth being

ignorance, for there is no longer an acceptable excuse for it. Paul once said to some Grecian philosophers, who also were in a state of spiritual ignorance, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; **but now commandeth all men every where to repent:** Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* (Acts 17:30-31). That has some alarming implications for our times, and the churches in them.

Jacob, together with Abraham and Isaac, knew absolutely nothing about the "eternal purpose of God," the extent of the work of the coming "Seed," or of life beyond the grave. They only knew of the work and will of God within the context of this present evil world: a flesh-and-blood people, a land, and the nations of the earth being blessed.

Admittedly, the figure has its limitations, and cannot be paralleled in an extensive way. Yet, there is a figure here that merits some consideration.

HE GAVE HER BILHAH

" . . . And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid . . . "

As with Leah, Rachel was given a handmaid – an attendant to assist in meeting her needs. Both the handmaid of Leah and the handmaid of Rachel will play a prominent part in the formation of the *"twelve tribes of Israel."*

Again, multiple wives and bearing children through handmaids were customary in those ancient times, even though, technically, as Jesus put it, *"but from the beginning it was not so"* (Matt 19:8)–i.e. God always intended for there to be one husband and one wife. Some now inquire why God tolerated these conditions, and allowed the nation of Israel to form under such conditions. In Christ, they would not be acceptable. Why, then, were they ever acceptable?

Here again, we see the limitation

blessed. Further the Law, which defined morality, had not yet been given. **That is why the conditions to which we are being exposed existed.**

We would not consent to having two wives, under any circumstances, and certainly not to bearing children through the handmaid of a wife. **However, the only reason we think in such a way is because we have greater knowledge on the matter.** In many foreign countries, where such knowledge is still withheld from the people, they continue to have multiple wives and children through concubines.

The glorious thing about all of this is that God did not abandon His work because of human ignorance. Instead, He continued to develop His purpose, working with imperfect people who had imperfect knowledge.

The Modern Situation

Our modern situation is more related to the times of Jacob than those of the reign of Messiah – and it is owing to pervasive spiritual ignorance. **However, this ignorance is no longer acceptable, for greater revelation has been given.** God no longer *"winks"* at

JACOB LOVED RACHEL MORE

" . . . And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years."

The text does not say that Jacob had no love for Leah, but that he had **more** love for Rachel. From the beginning, she had been his choice, while Leah was foisted upon him against his will. He was willing to work seven more years for Rachel (fourteen years in all), but he apparently would not have done this for Leah.

However, as we will find, this was not as simplistic as it may appear. **God Himself had a certain reaction to this circumstance.** I will leave to you to consider this matter more deeply.

Jesus Is to be Our First Love

Rachel was Jacob's *"first love"* – not merely *"first"* in time, but *"first"* in priority. **Likewise, Jesus Christ is to be our "first love," with no one else competing for the first position.** The Lord Jesus Himself is clear about this: *"He that loveth father or mother **more than Me** is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter **more than Me** is not worthy of me"* (Matt 10:37). Whatever argument may be put forth concerning having an equal level of love for everyone to whom a person is related, Jesus will not accept second place or even an equal place with anyone else. I am not sure this is a common persuasion with many. Yet, it is a matter that has been made crystal clear by the Lord Jesus.

THE LORD SAW LEAH WAS HATED

³¹ **And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."**

THE LORD SAW

"And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated . . ." Other versions read, *"unloved,"* NKJV *"not loved,"* NIV *"despised,"* DOUAY/GENEVA *"was slighting,"* LIVING *"detested,"* ABP *"Jacob loved Rachel more than he did Leah,"* CEV/ERV *"Leah was loved less than Rachel,"* GNB *"being neglected,"* ISV and *"the hated one."* YLT

ON THE WORD "HATE"

"WHEN THE HEBREWS COMPARED A STRONGER AFFECTION WITH A WEAKER ONE, THEY CALLED THE FIRST LOVE, AND THE OTHER HATRED, MEANING TO LOVE IN A LESS DEGREE — "JACOB HAVE I LOVED, AND ESAU HAVE I HATED" (ROMANS 9:13); I.E. ON JACOB HAVE I BESTOWED PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS SUCH AS ARE THE PROOFS OF AFFECTION; I HAVE TREATED HIM AS ONE TREATS A FRIEND WHOM HE LOVES; BUT FROM ESAU HAVE I WITHHELD THESE PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS, AND THEREFORE TREATED HIM AS ONE IS WONT TO TREAT THOSE WHOM HE DISLIKES. THAT THIS REFERS TO THE BESTOWMENT OF TEMPORAL BLESSINGS, AND THE WITHHOLDING OF THEM, IS CLEAR, NOT ONLY FROM THIS PASSAGE, BUT FROM COMPARING MALACHI 1:2,3; GENESIS 25:23; 27:27-29, 37-40." McCINTOK & STRONG'S

NOTE: I DO NOT CARE FOR THE EXPLANATION "TO A LESSER DEGREE." TO ME THE WORD "HATE" INVOLVES WITHHOLDING FROM THE ONE WHAT IS GIVEN TO THE OTHER. THAT APPEARS TO BE THE MORE ACCURATE WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORD. — GIVEN O. BLAKELY

The meaning of the word *"hate"* has long been debated. Some affirm that God loves everyone, and does not *"hate"* anyone. This is not an intelligent statement, for it is affirmed there are people whom God does hate.

- ➔ God hated Esau (Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:13).
- ➔ Because they cried out against Him, God hated Israel, His own heritage (Jer 12:8).
- ➔ Among the things the Lord hates, the following are specified: *"a false witness that speaketh lies,"* and *"he that soweth discord among*

brethren" (Prov 6:16-19).

- ➔ All workers of iniquity are hated by God (Psa 5:5).

The question is, what does *"hate"* mean. Is *"love less"* an accurate definition? I think not. **As used in Scripture Divine hatred is exhibited in the withholding of benefits that are reserved for those He loves.** For example, God has gone on record that He hated Esau (Mal 1:3; Rom 9:13). Yet, Esau's descendants (which are the subject of Malachi 1:3), were protected by Divine command, even though they were hated. It is written, *"And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore: Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink. For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing. And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Eziongaber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab"* (Deut 2:4-8).

Thus, the distinction between Esau and Jacob was seen in the extensive blessing of God toward the children of Israel (Jacob), while that kind of blessing was withheld from the Edomites (Esau).

Therefore, when the text states that the Lord saw Leah was hated, it does not mean that she was *"unloved,"* but that the benefits and affection given to Rachel were not given to her. I

suppose a number of reasons could be cited to justify this circumstance. Rachel was Jacob's choice. He had, in fact, labored for seven years for her, and that by a joint agreement. Leah had been foisted upon him without any hint that this would happen.

Notwithstanding, this was not a pleasing condition to the Lord, even though men can present some palatable explanations for its existence. The Lord, seeing this condition, gave a special benefit to Leah that was not, at the time, given to Rachel.

HE OPENED HER WOMB

" . . . he opened her womb . . ."

Other versions read, *"made her fertile,"* CJB *"made her fruitful,"* GENEVA *"made it possible for her to have children,"* GWN *"enabled her to become pregnant,"* NET *"enabled her to have children,"* NLT *"gave her a child,"* BBE *"Gave children to,"* CEV *"made it possible for her to have children,"* GNB and *"made her able to bear children."* AMPLIFIED

When the Lord saw that appropriate love had been withheld from Leah, He enabled her to have children. This would give her some compensating joy, and bring her into the purpose, of God as, well.

The Lord is the One who closes the womb – and until the He took this action, opening Leah's womb, it was *"closed"* – like *"the wombs of the house of Abimelech"* (Gen 20:18). Other woman whose wombs were opened by the Lord include the following:

- ➔ The wife and handmaids of Abimelech (Gen 20:17-18).
- ➔ Sarah, Abraham's wife (Gen 21:1-2).
- ➔ Rebekah, Isaac's wife (Gen 25:21-22).
- ➔ Rachel, Jacob's wife (Gen 30:22).

- ➔ Manoah's wife, Samson's mother (Judges 13:2-3).
- ➔ Hannah, whose womb the Lord had "shut" (1 Sam 1:5,20,27).
- ➔ Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (Lk 1:7,13).

RACHEL WAS BARREN

" . . . but Rachel was barren."

This was a state of nature, but not merely a state of nature, for God Himself governs all of nature. This is why holy men and woman have sought for God to remove the state of barrenness, enabling the woman to conceive (Gen 25:21; 1 Sam 1:9-12; Lk 1:13). Just as the Lord opened Leah's womb, He had shut Rachel's womb.

NOT OF WORKS

Here, then, is a demonstration of what is meant by the expression *"not of works"* (Rom 9:11; Eph 2:9). God had promised *"the fathers"* (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) multitudinous offspring (Gen 16:10; 26:4; 28:14). **But this would not be by the works and wisdom of men.** Thus far, the wives of the patriarchs have been barren (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel). **If God Himself did not intervene, there would be no twelve tribes – no Jewish nation.** That is a sterling example of what *"not of works"* means!

The same is true of the salvation of God. **Its obtainment requires Divine enablement, just as surely as bearing the progenitors of the twelve tribes required the working of the Lord.** In the matter of appropriating salvation, the following Divine involvements are essential.

- ➔ The preservation of the individual until they are experientially an heir of salvation (Heb 1:13-14; Jude 1:1).
- ➔ The conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).
- ➔ Repentance being *"given"* (Acts 5:31), or *"granted"* (Acts 11:18).
- ➔ Being *"given"* to believe (Phil 1:29),

with faith being *"obtained"* (2 Pet 1:1).

- ➔ Being *"chosen to salvation through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit and the belief of the truth"* (1 Thess 2:13).
- ➔ Being *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet 1:2)
- ➔ Being *"begotten again"* (1 Pet 1:3), *"born again . . . by the Word of God"* (1 Pet 1:23).

effective. What WE are required to do IS necessary, for Jesus is *"the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"* (Heb 5:32). However, although it is essential, **obedience has no power of its own.** It cannot cause re-creation, reconciliation, or sanctification. It cannot cause one to raise from death in trespasses and sins. It cannot of itself put us into Christ, or cause *"the circumcision of Christ."* **Those are all things accomplished by Deity, and Deity alone.**

That is but the hem of the garment of what it means to *"saved not by works of righteousness which we*

In spite of this great plainness, many of the Jews did boast of their status and their circumcision, as though this was the result of their doing.

- ➔ Being *"quickened,"* or raised from death in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-2).
- ➔ Being put into Christ (1 Cor 1:30).
- ➔ Having the flesh cut away in *"the circumcision of Christ"* (Col 2:11-12).
- ➔ Being *"added"* to the church (Acts 2:47).
- ➔ Being placed in the body of Christ where it pleased God (1 Cor 12:18).
- ➔ Having the Law of God written in our hearts and out into our minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16).
- ➔ Being *"justified from all things"* (Acts 13:39).
- ➔ The *"new creation"* wrought by God: *"created in Christ Jesus"* (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10).

These, and other similar realities, are what cause salvation to be

have done" (Tit 3:5; Eph 2:9). If *"works,"* as used in those texts, were in any way the foundation of cause of salvation, then men would appear to have a just cause for boasting (Eph 2:9). However, even then, it would not be before God. As it is written, *"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God"* (Rom 4:2).

In spite of this great plainness, many of the Jews did boast of their status and their circumcision, as though this was the result of their doing. With this in mind, Paul wrote to some of the Jews in the Roman church: *"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law"* (Rom 2:17-20). However, their boast was wrong in every sense of the

Such things as ignorance, indifference, and lukewarmness were common among them. Their spiritual appetite was, for the most part, meager, and their perspectives infantile.

word, for essentially they were no different than the ones against whom they boasted. *"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?"* (Rom 2:21-26),

The only legitimate boast is in the Lord Himself, who has wrought the things that has made any legitimate difference. Therefore, it is written, *"But*

by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD" ^{NASB} (1 Cor 1:30-31).

A MODERN COUNTERPART

I have come from a religious background that precisely reflects the scenario Paul paints in the second chapter of Romans. It was common to hear people quoting James on the subject of works: *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). However, they were completely ignorant of the fact that James was writing about the EVIDENCE of salvation, NOT its cause. He was writing to people who had traits of being friends of the world, and thus were the enemies of God (James 4:4). The group with which I was identified boasted of being the "true New Testament Church," knowing what they perceived to be "the plan of

salvation." Without taking into consideration the due effects of baptism, they had a proper view of the essentiality of baptism, and the way it was to be performed – and they gloried in it, just like the Jew gloried in the Law true.

However, there was this little glitch: they were really not distinguished in their conduct and manner of life. In their movement there were glaring and warring divisions. Their people were woefully ignorant of the Scriptures, and moral infractions were plentiful among them. Such things as ignorance, indifference, and lukewarmness were common among them. Their spiritual appetite was, for the most part, meager, and their perspectives infantile. Yet, they dared to boast of their heritage. Even though they placed a great deal of stress upon "works," they were by no means noted for godly works. Their theology and their lives were woefully out of synch, and most people knew it.

Such people are, in fact, similar to a Leah who could not bear children, and Rachel, who was barren. God could no more save them upon the basis of their works than He could build a Jewish nation with Leah and Rachel while they were in a state of fleshly barrenness. Admittedly, this is a difficult lesson for many to learn.

REUBEN IS BORN

"³² And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me."

LEAH BARES REUBEN

"And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben..."

This is Jacob's firstborn son, and is mentioned seventy-four times in Scripture. His tribe is listed in the sealing of Israel in the book of the Revelation, which gives a symbolic

account of the conversion of Israel (Rev 7:5). Because he had an incestuous affair with Bilhah, Leah's handmaid, Jacob disqualified him from the birthright and preeminence of the firstborn, giving it to Judah instead (Gen 49:3-4,8-10).

"Reuben" means "He who sees the son," ^{HITCHCOCK} "BEHOLD THE SON!" ^{EASTON} "BEHOLD YE A SON," ^{FAUSSET} ("REU"=BEHOLD, "BEN"=SON), "SEE, A SON," ^{McCLINTOCK & STRONG'S}

SURELY!

" . . . for she said, Surely the

LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me."

Especially note the consciousness of God that existed in Leah. We have no record of any special revelation being given to her, as there was to Rebekah (Gen 25:23). Yet she had learned some valuable things about God. She knew He was aware of her grievous situation, and could do something about it.

If this was true of Leah, what

possible excuse can be offered for a person being ignorant of God in this “day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2)? Leah had apparently taken advantage of the limited knowledge of God her father Laban possessed, as well as what she must have learned from Jacob. **There is a sterling example of taking advantage of what is available, and realizing some**

profitable increase in personal understanding. We know that the Lord “looks” upon people because of extensive revelation (Psa 11:4; 14:2; 33:13; 102:19-20; Heb 4:13). Now, with far less revelation, Leah reasons that the Lord has seen her situation.

Now, she thought, Jacob would

love her—i.e. in a more satisfactory way. I think this is probably stated very modestly. To be married, and yet not realize the level of love that is to be expected would not be a burden easily borne. Yet, she thought, having a son would surely change that situation. She reasoned that delivering a son to Jacob would move him to love her more.

SIMEON IS BORN

“³³ And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.”

SHE CONCEIVED AGAIN

“And she conceived again, and bare a son . . .”

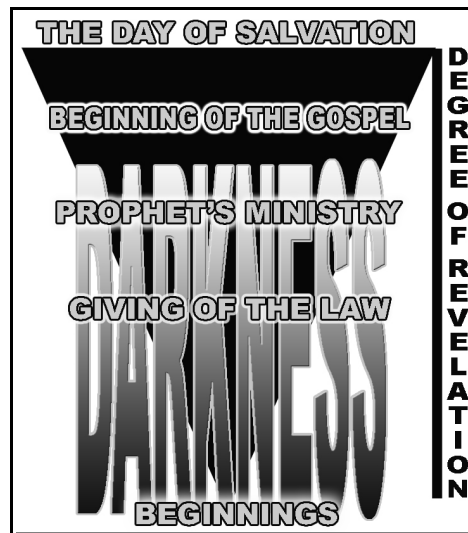
This is the lower view of the matter. **From the higher perspective, God was beginning to fulfill His promise to Jacob:** “*And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*” (Gen 28:14).

Beginnings and Times

The events of which we are now reading were beginnings, and **they were wrought during inferior times, when the knowledge of God was not yet developed, and the effects of sin had not been duly neutralized by regeneration.**

The circumstances of our text are by no means ideal: namely, a man having two wives. Also the fact that children are being begotten by the wife that is not preferred can introduce difficulties for some. **Yet, they were not intended to set the pattern for the future.**

Our text took place during the beginning of the working out of God’s purpose. **So far as understanding was concerned, it was a time of relative darkness.** That darkness, or the



absence of revelation, did have an impact on the way people lived, and how God worked out His purpose.

During those beginnings, moral and spiritual darkness was at a high level. **Divine tutelage was very elementary, as men had to be taught about the Lord, His character, and His ways.** This could not simply be proclaimed, for men only had limited exposure to God. Furthermore, His “eternal power and Godhead” were largely a mystery. Although they were displayed in nature, no one had seen them with any degree of clarity. **Therefore, at that time, all of the promises had to do with what would take place on the earth in the realm of time: blessing, making great, multiplying offspring, inhabiting a land, possessions increasing, etc.**

In that kind of context, it should

be obvious we have no reason to expect the kind of insight and understanding that is available under the administration of Jesus – a time when sin has been put away (Heb 9:26), Satan destroyed (Heb 2:14), and principalities and powers plundered (Col 2:15).

As time progressed, and more revelation was given, more was expected of the people. This is why it is so wrong for parallels to be drawn between those in Christ Jesus and those living in those spiritually primitive times. **The conduct now reported is not owing to rebellion in the people, but is owing to the relative smallness of their understanding, which, in turn, was strictly owing to the brevity of revelation.**

With that in mind, the manner of reasoning that is now reported in Leah is rather arresting. She reasoned in a manner that is vastly superior to the reasoning of many who profess to be in Christ Jesus.

THE LORD HATH HEARD

“ . . . and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.”

The name “Simeon” means, “A HEARING.” McCLINTOK & STRONG’S Leah sees God as a compensating God – balancing the scales of propriety. What was withheld by Jacob was given by God, and she is grateful for it.

The Lord Hath Heard

Other versions read, *"heard that I am unloved,"* ^{NKJV} *"it has come to the Lord's ears that I am not loved,"* ^{BBE} and *"the Lord heard that I was despised."* ^{DOUAY}

When Reuben was born, Leah said the Lord had **looked** on her situation. Now she say the Lord has **heard** – no doubt referring to her inward groaning and sorrow. Later, when more revelation has been given, the Psalmist exclaimed, *"The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out*

of all their troubles" (Psa 34:17). And again, *"For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners"* (Psa 69:33). And yet again, *"The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry"* (Psa 34:15). Peter affirms, *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil"* (1 Pet 3:12).

Again, considering the spiritually

primitive nature of the times, this is a most remarkable observation. Many professing Christians of our time – a time of unparalleled revelation – can not yet reason in this manner. This is largely owing to fundamentally flawed teaching.

And what of you? When you are wounded by injustices and inconsideration, are you persuaded that the Lord hears your groans, and will do something about it?

LEVI IS BORN

³⁴ *And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi."*

THIS TIME

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons . . ." Other versions read, *"my husband will become attached to me,"* ^{NKJV} *"will be united with me,"* ^{BBE} *"keep me company,"* ^{GENEVA} *"will be with me,"* ^{SEPTUAGINT} *"will show me affection,"* ^{NET} *"feel affection for me,"* ^{NLT} *"will love me,"* ^{RWB} *"adhere to me,"* ^{WEB} *"will hold*

me close," ^{CEV} *"will be bound more tightly to me,"* ^{GNB} *"will connect with me,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"will be a companion to me."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

HIS NAME WAS LEVI

" . . . therefore was his name called Levi."

The name Levi means, "ASSOCIATED OR JOINED," ^{PULPIT COMMENTARY} "TWINE OR ADHERE," ^{MCLINTOK & STRONG'S} "ADHERE, BE JOINED TO," ^{ISBE}

This is the progenitor of the tribe of Levi, which was set aside for the service of God (Ex 38:21; Num 1:47-50). Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi (Ex 2:1-10; 4:14). The tribe of

Levi was not numbered in the census of Israel because they belonged exclusively to the Lord (Num 1:49).

These births, therefore, are being orchestrated by the Lord, as he begins to build the only Divinely exclusive nation in the flesh that the world has ever known.

Notice that each birth is a kind of epoch, with the child being named in strict accord with a particular perception of God. We are seeing people shaping their lives by what they perceive God to have wrought. The very existence of their children will be a continual reminder of that working.

JUDAH IS BORN

³⁵ *And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing."*

SHE CONCEIVED AGAIN

"And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said . . ."

Although the record does not specify the times when Leah's sons were born, some are of the opinion her first four sons were born in the first four years of her marriage to Jacob. This may very well be the case.

NOW WILL I PRAISE THE LORD

"...Now will I praise the LORD..."

While some mothers would have lamented for having so many children so soon, Leah declared she would *"praise the Lord"* who had opened her womb to have children.

Commencing with Sarah, and continuing with Rebekah and Leah, there was an association of births with the promises of God. In the case of Sarah, it had to do with the immediate heir of Abraham, through whose lineage

the promised Messiah would come. In the case of Rebekah, a Divine choice was made between the twins Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the one through whom the lineage of the Messiah would be established.

Now, Leah has given birth to her fourth son. Unlike the sons birthed by Rebekah, all of these sons are presently counted as part of the promised seed: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. All of them are mentioned in the prophesy of the conversion of *"all the tribes of Israel"* in the Revelation: *Reuben* (Rev

7:5), *Simeon* (Rev 7:7), *Levi* (Rev 7:7), and *Judah* (Rev 7:5).

SHE CALLED HIS NAME JUDAH

"...therefore she called his name Judah..."

The name "*Judah*" means, "THE PRAISE OF THE LORD," HITCHCOCK "PRAISE," EASTON "PRAISE JAH," SMITH'S "CELEBRATED," MCCLENTON & STRONG'S

Judah is the tribe through which Jesus came, and with whom He is identified. As it is written, *"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake*

nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb 7:14). Jacob prophesied of the Messiah when he said, *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be"* (Gen 49:10).

SHE LEFT BEARING

" . . .and left bearing." Other versions read, *"stopped bearing,"* NKJV *"stopped having children,"* NIV *"ceased bearing,"* NRSV and *"had no more children for a time."* BBE

The idea here is not that Leah had

no more children, but that she ceased for a season to have children. We know this is the case because she will have two more children (sons): Issachar and Zebulun (Gen 30:18,20). Thus Leah will bear six sons to Jacob, four of which have been born to this point.

All of this was managed by the Lord, who alone can cause life to be begotten. *"Children are the heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb"* is, in a very real sense, *"His reward"* (Psa 127:3). Her womb was shut when she was married. God opened it, and now for a season, it is shut again.

CONCLUSION

As God develops the nation of Israel, He goes about it in such a way as accents His own will, power, and glory. Has not the Lord made clear that we are to walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7)? **Can you not see that He works in such a manner as to promote such faith?** As seen in those times of relative spiritual darkness, **God worked in such a way as to unveil His power and faithfulness to His purpose.** Even though the circumstances seemed to suggest the promises of God could not be fulfilled, God worked in such a way as to highlight **His** ability, not man's disability. Ponder what we have seen to this point. I am beginning with the initial promise of God to Abraham: *"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen 12:2-3)

- ➔ **GOD'S WILL CANNOT BE FULFILLED BY FLESHLY MEANS.** He begins with an impotent husband and a barren wife (Gen 11:20; Rom 4:19; Heb 11:11-12).
- ➔ **HUMAN THOUGHT CANNOT COMPREHEND DIVINE MANNERS.** It appeared as though the only way Abraham could have an heir was through Sarah's

handmaid, and God did not interfere with making such an attempt (Gen 16).

- ➔ **GOD'S PROMISES ARE PRECISE.** The promised heir is born at the precise time God determined, when Abraham is one hundred years old (Gen 21:5).
- ➔ **FLESH AND SPIRIT CANNOT CO-MINGLE.** In time, it became apparent that the child of the flesh could not live with the child of promise (Gen 21:10-12)
- ➔ **GOD WILL NOT RECOGNIZE THE FLESH.** So far as His blessing and the coming Savior is concerned, He ignores Abraham's first child (Ishmael, Gen 21:10-12), as well as his last six sons (Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah, Gen 25:2).
- ➔ **IN THIS WORLD, GOD DOES HAVE MERCY ON THE UNJUST.** Both Ishmael and the sons of Keturah received secondary blessings, but were omitted from the primary blessing (Gen 21:13; 25:5).
- ➔ **CHOOSING THE RIGHT IS NOT NECESSARILY ACCOMPANIED BY FRUITFULNESS.** Isaac marries Rebekah, but she is barren, and unable to have children (Gen 25:21).

➔ **GOD ANSWERS THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS.** In answer to Isaac's prayer, God enabled Rebekah to bear children (Gen 25:21).

➔ **GOD IS THE ONE WHO MAKES THE CHOICE.** Rebekah has twins, with God rejecting one and choosing the other (Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:13).

➔ **GOD REJECTS WHAT IS RIGHT BY HUMAN STANDARDS.** The son that is rejected is the one, to whom the birthright belongs (Gen 25:23; Rom 9:12).

➔ **GOD FULFILLS HIS WILL IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS.** The chosen son, Jacob, obtains the birthright through unusual means (Gen 25:31;36).

➔ **WHAT GOD HAS DETERMINED TRIUMPHS.** Jacob obtains the blessing of his father through unusual means (Gen 27:6-29).

➔ **INVOLVEMENT IN GOD'S WILL INVOLVES EFFORT.** Jacob chooses to marry Rachel, and agrees to work seven years in order to have her (Gen 29:18-19).

➔ **SOMETIMES THE ONES CLOSEST TO US CAUSE THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY.** Although Laban was Rebekah's brother, he treated Jacob, his nephew, with disrespect (Gen

29:22-24).

- ➔ **ONLY THOSE WHO ASK RECEIVE.** When the seven years are complete, Jacob asks Laban to give him his wife (Gen 29:21).
- ➔ **SOMETIMES WE GET WHAT WE DO NOT WANT, AND HAVE TO WORK THROUGH IT.** Through deceit, Rachel's father gives his older daughter Leah to Jacob, with Jacob thinking he is getting Rachel (Gen 29:23-24).
- ➔ **WHAT WE EXPECT MAY NOT BE WHAT WE GET.** Jacob discovers he has been given Leah, and confronts Laban with the deception (Gen 29:26).
- ➔ **SOMETIMES GOD'S WILL MUST BE DONE UNDER UNFAIR CIRCUMSTANCES.** Jacob finds that he must work seven more years for Rachel (Gen 29:27).
- ➔ **DOING GOD'S WILL OFTEN REQUIRES A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE.** At the first, Leah's womb is closed, and Rachel is found to be barren (Gen 29:31).
- ➔ **GOD CAN RESOLVE INEQUITIES.** When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb (Gen 29:31).
- ➔ **OFTEN THE MOST FRUIT IS BORN BY THE LEAST APPRECIATED.** To the conclusion of this text, Leah bears four sons, and Rachel remains barren (Gen 29:32-35).

WHO BUT GOD?

Who but God could cause anything good to come out of such circumstances? **But then, that is the**

MOTHER	NAME	REFERENCE
Leah	Reuben	Gen 29:32
Leah	Simeon	Gen 29:33
Leah	Levi	Gen 29:34
Leah	Judah	Gen 29:35
Bilhah	Dan	Gen 30:6
Bilhah	Naphtali	Gen 30:8
Zilpah	Gad	Gen 30:11
Zilpah	Asher	Gen 30:13
Leah	Issachar	Gen 30:18
Leah	Zebulun	Gen 30:20
Rachel	Joseph	Gen 30:24
Rachel	Benjamin	Gen 35:18

whole point, that this is the means through which God fulfilled His promises. However, to the flesh, there is no detectable pattern in all of this. There is no way any man could look at what was happening, and predict with any degree of certainty what was going to happen next. Looking at the events from the human point of view, there appeared to be no design in what was taking place. It is like the Lord's "way" being "in the sea," and "His path in great waters" (Psa 77:19; Isa 43:16).

In the flesh, it rather appeared to

be nothing more than God again and again overturning what men attempted to do. And, indeed, this is precisely what many people think. However, has God ever presented the fulfillment of His purpose as the result of overturning what men did? Is that the manner in which God speaks about His purpose? Does He not rather say, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa 46:11; Jer 4:28).

Who would dare to affirm that the promises God made were fulfilled by someone other than Himself? And, who would sit in judgment upon the manner in which God chose to bring His promises to fulfillment?

If these things are difficult to comprehend, let the saints stand back and exclaim with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom 11:33-36).

Why should men expect the absence of mystery in their life, or insist on everything being very apparent and easy to understand? What has God done to lead men to expect such things? Living by faith involves the absence or foolish questions and speculations. Our focus must be on the fulfillment of God's promises.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/11/13. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The fiftieth lesson will cover verses 1 through 21 of chapter thirty: "LEAH BEARS CHILDREN BY JACOB," Rachel is envious of her sister Leah, who has born four sons to Jacob. She gives Jacob her handmaid Bilhah to bear children in her stead, and she gave Jacob two sons. Leah, who had stopped bearing, sought to have more children, and birthed two more sons to Jacob – now six sons in all. She also gave birth to a daughter for Jacob. The meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.