

CONCERNING THE WAY

May 20, 2008



Introduction - Isaac and Jacob

In the next two lessons we're going to cover chapters 24 to 33. These chapters relate the events in the lives of Isaac and Jacob, the ones who will carry on the promises made to Abraham in the covenant. We'll touch on some high (and low) points of their lives and discuss some important principles that can be learned from them. Please read these chapters first before you go over this study.

One of the important elementary things to remember when you read the Bible is to remember that it was written in sequence; it wasn't dropped out of a cloud some place, all as one unit; there is a progression to the way God reveals Himself in history.

We have looked so far at creation, the fall, the flood, the covenant, the call of Abraham, and now the beginning of the Jewish culture. Next will come the Exodus and the kingdom of God. In order to put all of this together **we want to remember that the kingdom of God is something political, something physical. Don't ever think of the kingdom of God as something mystical; that's not the way the Bible presents it.** The kingdom of God began at a point in time in the Old Testament, a shadow version of the yet to come eternal kingdom of God. This Old Testament shadow version, however, is not occurring at this point in Genesis. It's going to occur with the rise of the Jewish nation at the Exodus; therefore all these stories that we're looking at, the stories of Abraham, the stories of Isaac, the stories of Jacob and Esau, are all preparatory to this coming kingdom. And as we look at this coming kingdom we want to think about what the Holy Spirit is teaching? What is He stressing that has to be all functioning before He starts His kingdom?

If we draw the kingdom of God as some sort of a building and realize that it's a nation in the Old Testament, that building has to rest on a foundation. What is the foundation for the kingdom of God? **It is a family culture.** Which unit does God work with first? Family or overall society? Family precedes the nation and therefore if you want to affect society you must affect the family, and if you don't affect the family then you're never going to affect the society. Culture is built through the family and we can make that sociological claim simply because this is the mechanism that God used in the Old Testament.

- *Dusty Rhodes*

Genesis 24 - Abraham gets a wife for Isaac

In this chapter we see Abraham sending his most trusted servant, most likely Eliezer, back to where his brother Nahor's family lived to find a wife for Isaac.

- A man needs to determine what his calling is before he finds a wife. Isaac is the son of Abraham chosen by God to carry on the Abrahamic Covenant, so this is his calling. He now needs a wife to help him with his calling.
- Abraham is going to turn his wealth and his business over to Isaac. This means he will need to have a stable wife to help him (spend the money - joking!), he will need a woman with common sense and maturity.
- God has promised that Isaac will continue the line of the promised Seed, so he needs a wife to produce and raise children

Why could he not find a wife there among the people in the area he lived in?

- All along we have seen that God has intentionally kept Abraham separate from the pagan Canaanite peoples he lived among. This was so the promised seed, Isaac, would not be influenced by their culture.

- Abraham is obeying God, he understands that he still needs to protect Isaac from the pagan influences. A local Canaanite woman, even if she became a believer, would still likely retain the cultural influences of her family.
- We could also infer from this that there is a bloodline issue here, God does not want the seed of Abraham to mix with the Canaanite races. That's why Abraham sends Eliezer to get a wife among his relatives.
- We see later that his relatives are also still pagan, but by bringing a wife from far away, and a relative, there is a better chance that a woman with maturity and common sense can be found.

This chapter gives us an excellent example of divine guidance that we can use in our own lives. Do you struggle with trying to know God's will for your life? Let's take a look at these principles:

Principles of Divine Guidance

- **Dedication**
 - John 7:17 - This is the first and most important principle – you have to be **willing** to do God's will before you know what it is! Only then will you know it.
 - Romans 12:1 – the principle of **dedication** – this can be one of the toughest decisions you'll ever make. This is addressed to believers, not unbelievers, by the way. The phrase “present your bodies as a sacrifice” means you're giving up the future of your life to God
 - This sometimes needs to be repeated over and over, and should be our daily attitude, but there needs to be some point in your life where God has worked with you and you stop and say, OK, right here, right now, **this is when I dedicate my future life to Christ**. It might be a momentous point in your life that you always remember, or not, but that point has to come if the Holy Spirit is really working with you.
 - Now the reason this is so slippery and so difficult for us is what goes on in our mind. What we would like is for God to come up with a blueprint and say, hey, there's your life, do you like it? And we want to be in the position of having some say, or even vetoing His plan. **We want to know all the cards in the hand before we'll play the game**. That isn't the way God works, unfortunately. What He wants us to do is be willing to trust Him with all the cards and you don't see the hands. God wants to know whether we mean business, or whether we want the veto.
 - The moment you get to the point in your life where you're willing to give up the veto, the thought runs through your mind - **can I really trust God?** If I give my life to God, He's going to have me out in the jungles peeling bark, or He's going to have me doing some ridiculous thing with my life. Don't do that - since when is the God of the Bible a bad God? That is where Satan is influencing, right at that critical point.
- **Sources of Guidance**
 - **The Word of God** – well, this is obvious, isn't it? This includes the direct commands of Scripture or the deduced commands of Scripture. Clearly, if the Bible tells you to do something you don't pray about it, you do it. There's no need to pray about divine guidance in that situation. For example, young people who date unbelievers, 2 Corinthians 6:14 says you have no business doing so because you're getting involved with a non-Christian. And in this situation the Scriptures are so clear you don't have to sit around and pray about it.
 - **Your Conscience** - Romans 14:23. - on the negative side only. Conscience by itself can't guide you, but it can guide you on the negative side. Here Paul clearly teaches that it's okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols; no problem. But he's saying if your conscience says no, then you shouldn't do it. The Bible does not give clear commands about some things. In our day you could apply this to eating certain foods, drinking alcohol, smoking, dancing, movies, music, etc. In this situation you must use your conscience. **If it feels wrong or seems wrong, then don't do it.**
 - **Experienced Counsel** - particularly other people who have experience in these matters. This can include parents, older siblings, friends, etc. Go to them and find out what they have discovered.
 - **General revelation** - Genesis 2:19. – this has to be used many times when you don't have a command of God, your conscience doesn't give you any negative flack, well then what do you do? Well, what does Adam do in verse 19? He's been told to name the animals, only a certain number of animals come in front of him. How does he name them? He names them by studying general revelation; the structure of nature and the structure of man. Adam looks at them and he studies. We have common sense. We have exposure and experience, wisdom based on general revelation; creativity, all these things. Those are the things you use in that situation. Sometimes you're not going to get any more divine guidance than that. We've got to go on the basis of **common sense**.
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- **Application** – how to apply these principles in your life
 - **The Standard approach** - simply ask the question, what does the Bible say? What are the principles here - boom, boom, straightforward, clear. But oftentimes this really doesn't help you and you have to go to another approach.
 - **The Continuity approach.** It's given in principle in 1 Corinthians 7:20, "Let each one remain in that situation in life in which he was called." Paul is saying in this passage that if you were called as a Christian as a slave you remain as a slave unless you get very clear indicators to go some other way. In other words, what we're saying is God doesn't lead you in a zigzag path. He leads you with a curve.
 - Now how do you operate and apply this approach? You do it by looking at **how God has led you in the past.** For example, say you have two options – option A and option B. You look at option B and you say oh-oh, I see some things in option B that are going to give me a hard time because in the past I had a hard time with it. Now the question is, does God want me to go on option B and get clobbered again, am I strong enough spiritually to take this or not? When you start thinking in terms of God's guidance this way you're using the continuity principle; what was God doing with your life before the present moment?
 - **The Help or Hinder approach** - this approach is very simple, maybe not as objective as the other approaches but very helpful. You come along in life, a fork in the road: option A, option B, which way do you go? Ask yourself - if I go option A, **does this help my spiritual life or does it detract from it?** If I go option B does this help or does it detract?

Now, you can see some of these principles operating in this account of finding a wife for Isaac. Abraham had the same principles of divine guidance that we have.

- He knows God's commands have always been to keep separate from the pagan Canaanite people, so in verse 3 He obey's God's Word and sends to another country to find a wife.
- Then in verse 4 he says he wants a girl from his own bloodline. We don't know for sure if this was a direct command from God, but at the least, he is using common sense here, thinking that the bloodline is important, and there's a better chance getting a good woman from his own family than there is anywhere else.
- Then something kind of weird in verses 5-8. Abraham insists that Isaac not go with Eliezer to the land of his family. What's that all about? Why does Abraham not want Isaac to leave the land?
 - It could be that Abraham is just concerned, after everything else that has happened, that something will happen to Isaac. He's trying to protect him, because he knows he is all-important to the covenant.
 - It's probably the Continuity principle being used here. Abraham remembers that every time he left the land (Egypt) he got in big trouble, so he's afraid something bad will happen to Isaac.
 - It's also kind of crazy to expect a girl to just pick up and go with someone she doesn't know to a husband she's never met. Verse 7 is Abraham's answer. He reasoned: look, didn't God call me alone to a land that I hadn't seen before? Wasn't that just as screwy as a girl leaving her home to marry a man she hadn't seen before? So Abraham says **the God who did that to me, He's the same God that can bring us a bride.** I don't know how it's going to happen, I'm going to trust God for it, but I know one thing, I do not want my son there, so God's going to have to work around that restriction. God loves to work around restrictions; it challenges His ingenuity. So, again, you have the continuity principle being used.
- So Eliezer goes to the city of Nahor, verse 10, and goes to the well of water, at the time of the evening, the time that women go out to draw water. Now notice, there's no big prayer in verse 11, he's looking for a girl, he goes where the girls are. And in the city where were the girls? They had their chores to do and the chore was to go down and get water. Now logically he could have done it differently; he could have looked for an upper class princess type of girl to follow in Sarah's footsteps, so he might have gone to some of the big parties in the city of Nahor. He might have met some upper class girls at the party. The only problem is, meeting them at the

party wouldn't tell him what kind of character they had. So he goes to the place where he can watch them fulfill their work responsibilities. **So Eliezer is just using common sense wisdom.** He doesn't pray, "Oh God, drop a girl right here!"; he uses normal common sense, finds them and looks at them as they work; that will tell you what kind of character.

- The challenge of verse 14 is to **pray specifically**. Many of us are afraid to pray specifically. God loves specific prayers; look, the most He can do is say no, you haven't lost anything. God is not going to answer any more specifically than your petition is; sloppy petitions get sloppy answers. And so verse 14 is a particular petition that got a very particular answer.
- In verse 15, not only did he get a particular answer, look at how quick it came. "...before he had finished praying," so here he is mumbling a prayer and all of a sudden Rebekah comes in the scene, so quick. **Perfect sovereignty, perfect timing of God.** And she comes out, and in verse 16 the Scriptures add that she was beautiful.
- In verse 19 Rebekah waters Eliezer's camels. We may not realize this, but this would have been a big job. There were ten camels, and camels drink a lot of water, and she couldn't have carried very much at a time. She had to be doing a lot of running back and forth for a while. This was an indication of her character.
- Eliezer gives her gifts and asks what family she is from. She verifies she is from the family of Nahor, and then asks if he could spend the night in her father's house. She says yes and runs home to tell her family.
- Verse 27 shows that this was God's doing, and Eliezer praised the Lord for leading him to Rebekah. In the Hebrew it says "As for me – **in the way** the Lord led me. This is important. Do you know what that expression, "in the way" means? That if he wasn't in the way the Lord would not have led him. This is the delicate balance between sovereignty and human responsibility. You don't want to get so heavy on sovereignty that you negate our responsibility. Yes, God arranged this whole thing, but He used Eliezer to make it happen. Eliezer had to do something, **he had to be in the path and only then, when he got on the path, would God use him.**

Now the Abrahamic Covenant is secure for another generation; Rebekah becomes the mother of the next generation.

So how did the sovereignty of God work out in history? Was it ever uncertain? No, not from God's point of view. But in practice it worked out because believers applied through choice the principles of divine guidance.

Divine guidance is very often misunderstood in our day because people think that divine guidance is a direct voice of God, a sort of infallible guidance system that need not ever be questioned and that is always inerrant. That is not divine guidance. If that were taking place today we would be writing more scripture and we would have the Bible added to; that can't happen, the Scripture is closed, the canon is shut; God has not spoken directly for 1900 years. So if that is not divine guidance what is divine guidance? **Divine guidance is simply discovering truth** and it is not infallible in the sense... not that the truth that we're trying to look for is inerrant but rather our apprehension of it is colored with error.

So, Eliezer is welcomed by Rebekah's brother Laban, who we will also see later on. Eliezer tells the story of how he came to be there, and what he is there for, and Rebekah's family agrees to allow Rebekah to leave with him. They ate a meal together and Eliezer spent the night there. The next morning he is ready to leave, but in verse 55 Rebekah's mother and Laban try to get them to stay for another week or more. Eliezer insists on leaving, so they bring Rebekah in and ask her if she's

ready. She said, "I want to go."

- Have you put yourself in Rebekah's parent's position? They are way up north, about a thousand miles north of Abraham and Isaac, down in the Negev right now. How long has it been since this girl's parents have seen Abraham? Let's see, Isaac is 40 years old; how long did it take Abraham and Sarah to wait for Isaac? 25 years; that means they haven't seen their relatives for 65 years. How'd you like it if a relative you hadn't seen for 65 years suddenly dropped in, didn't even drop in, he sent a representative to see you, demanded your daughter in marriage; you are supposed to instantly disconnect, **let your daughter go to people you haven't seen in 65 years, to a boy you've never seen.** Do you see why they wanted to hesitate and let it be ten days before Rebekah left?
- Now there's a piece of wisdom in verses 54-56 and it's kind of hard of harsh. It sounds so hard at the first, when it says "release her, now," it's like Jesus says "if you love your father and your mother more than Me" then forget Me, you're not worthy of Me. This isn't meant to hurt people; in fact, it's meant to help them. I think the reason it was good for the girl to go immediately was because it would be harder for parents, for ten days, to go through this thing, every morning the girl gets up, every morning she looks in her brother's eyes, every morning there's that oh, nine more days and I'm going to be leaving forever; eight more days, I'm leaving forever, seven more days, I'm leaving forever. If you prolong it, it's more painful. Why not just get it over with, that's what this event is saying.
- It's the same thing that happens when God asks Abraham to kill his son; no puttering around, no procrastination, **get over the things that hurt so that they're on the other side**, they're in the past and you go on living your life.
- There are these kinds of hurts when God's sovereignty invades and demands something, when if you procrastinate two things will happen: (1) you will wind up, if you finally do obey, hurting more than if you'd instantly obeyed in the first place. And (2) it may very well be that in your hesitation to obey, thinking you've got to take care of this detail, that detail, in your hesitation to obey, **you're finally going to talk yourself into not obeying ever.** Conceivably, they could have thrown so many parties that by the end of ten days the servant and Rebekah would forever stay on and never go back to Abraham. So there's wisdom in this, even though I know if we read it as Americans in the 20th century it seems like a very harsh thing.
- The Bible never tells us how Rebekah decides to go; maybe she's been praying about it a long time, we don't know, but for some reason it doesn't bother her as much as it appears to bother her family. It's very possible that the Holy Spirit had been preparing her heart beforehand, or maybe she was looking for an opportunity to leave home, as many teenagers do. It may have seemed like an exciting adventure to her.

Genesis 24:62-67 *Now Isaac came from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. (63) He went out to relax in the field in the early evening. Then he looked up and saw that there were camels approaching. (64) Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel (65) and asked Abraham's servant, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" "That is my master," the servant replied. So she took her veil and covered herself. (66) The servant told Isaac everything that had happened. (67) Then Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent. He took her as his wife and loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

- In the Hebrew it's kind of funny; at the end of verse 64 instead of "she got down from her camel" it says she fell off the camel. Well, it doesn't mean that she saw Isaac and thump, fell off the camel. It means that she just got off fast; in the Hebrew the verb used this way this means boom, she hit the dirt. Now why did she do this? Because intuitively she knew this was her husband. On the journey back Eliezer had probably talked up Isaac, painted a great picture of him, so she was probably very excited to meet him!
- Verse 67 says Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Woman supplies the man with something that's missing in the man's soul; men that are alone have a certain masculine characteristic that is simply unfulfilled; it can show up as harshness, it can show up as insensitivity, it can show up in many, many different ways. This is why God said to Adam alone, "It is not good for a man to be alone," **a man needs the woman** and this is why Isaac was comforted, because now he had, so to speak, his rib, his helper was there and this provides him fullness.
- I suggest verse 67 is the clue as to what he's praying about in verse 63, that as he walks out in that field to pray he's praying for a helper and while he's praying, he's lifting up his eyes and sees the answer to his prayer.
- Now, all of a sudden his grief and his loneliness caused by his mother's death had turned to joy; to

expectation. His bride had come. What I want you to understand, is that Isaac, who had been living down south of Jerusalem in the desert, had left his home and the tents of Abraham. And somewhere between "the far country" from which his bride was coming, and his home, there was a meeting. What was the lesson? **It will be the same way when Christ calls His Bride home.** He's not going to immediately call her to Heaven, but He's going to leave Heaven and meet her part way. We'll look at that in detail in a future lesson.

The Bride of Christ

I want you to picture these things. Isaac and Rebekah had just met, and the servant explains to Isaac how miraculously this whole thing had come together. "There's no doubt Isaac, that this girl is God's choice for you." So Isaac had no doubt that this was God's choice of a wife for him.

- The Bible never tells a wife to love her husband, but it does say, "**Husband, love your wife.**" And here it is: It doesn't say that Rebekah loved him (although we know that she did), but it began with Isaac loving his wife.
- This story is important for many reasons. This is also a picture of the gospel. You have Abraham, Isaac, the servant and the bride, right? We discussed last lesson that the story behind Abraham and Isaac, the sacrifice and so on, is a picture of the Father/Son used in the New Testament; who do you suppose the servant of Abraham is? **It's a picture of the Holy Spirit** and the Holy Spirit picks up what? The bride, who is the church of Jesus Christ, and brings her to the Second Person of the Trinity.
- **It's no accident the story was designed this way;** God providentially worked history to bring this story about in all of its details, but that isn't all. Think of Isaac here. Isaac was miraculously born in answer to a promise; Jesus Christ was miraculously born in answer to a promise. Isaac was obedient to death; remember the scene, Isaac allowing his father to tie him down to the altar, sit there while his father takes the blade slowly toward his throat to sacrifice him for God, and Isaac doesn't move, he doesn't leave, when he could have because his father was very old; Isaac sat there and took it, he was obedient unto death. Now even more spectacular, between the time of Genesis 22 when the sacrifice of Isaac took place and Genesis 24, Isaac disappears from the text. The last thing we see Isaac doing was dying and then basically "coming back to life", and the next thing we see Isaac doing is receiving his bride. Historically the last thing we see Christ do in history is die and rise again from the grave. **The next thing we see Christ do in history is He comes for His bride, the Church.**
- Another interesting thing - the servant goes into a far land and woos a bride to the guy that's a thousand miles away, and what is the Holy Spirit doing today but wooing you and me to Christ or we'd never see Him. Rebekah has to bet her life that a boy that she's never seen is going to be her husband, and you, **when you become a Christian have to bet your life that Jesus Christ, who none of us have ever seen, is actually who He claimed to be and we have to commit our lives to Him and His future destiny.**
- But even more amazing, what was the theme of this chapter? The blessings God had given to Abraham; to whom were the blessings that God had given to Abraham now given to? The son, Isaac. When Jesus Christ is presented in the Gospels He is presented as the One who is heir to His Father's blessings, and we are wooed to Jesus Christ because of the Father's blessings, which become Christ's which become shared for us; we share the Father's blessings through

Jesus Christ.

- In the Song of Songs, another basic theme of the Gospels, you see a peculiar thing. Christ, when He is presented by the Holy Spirit in history does not come as the King of Kings. In both the Song of Songs and the Genesis 24 motif, He comes as the seeking groom who sets aside His glory and tries to woo His bride on a human level. In the Song of Songs; Solomon doesn't come up to the bride and say, hey, I'm king, bow! That's not the way the gospel is presented; it's Christ wanting us to know who He is and **we respond to all of His character**, not just His sovereignty, all of His character, and he woos us to Himself, not in weakness but in deferred majesty. And so similarly Isaac doesn't come and demand Rebekah's allegiance. Isaac comes and he offers, and Rebekah must surrender; she must surrender the whole future destiny of her soul to a man she's never seen.
- And **that's what we have to do**. As non-Christians, when we respond to the gospel, we surrender everything that we have to Christ. And as we grow as Christians more and more we become aware of this need, to make that transaction of dedicating or surrendering or whatever label you want, for the future of your life, to a Lord that you've never seen.
- In the New Testament the apostle Paul talks about the Bride of Christ, which is the Church. When I say Church, I do not mean a building or a denomination, but **the real Church in the New Testament is anyone who is In Christ**, anyone who has trusted Jesus for salvation. The only way we can understand the language of the Apostle Paul regarding the calling out of the Bride, is to understand the Old Testament program.
- Here is where we have had so much confusion over the years throughout all Christendom. There is so much difference between the Old Testament program and the Age of Grace, that nobody really knows what to believe, or why, or how. That's why we're going through an outline of the Old Testament program, and I'll take you all the way through to the return of Christ, where He comes back for His Bride. But for now, I wanted to briefly go over this little story of how Isaac and Rebekah got together. When we get to study the Bride of Christ in detail, you'll remember this story.
- The reason I'm emphasizing this is because nowhere in the Old Testament, or well into the New Testament, is there a single hint that there would be a Gentile wife of Christ. Everything was Israel. Israel was to be the bride of Jehovah. The Church was a mystery known only to God until Jesus hinted at it in the gospels and Paul explained it in detail in his epistles.
- So, we've got some good stuff coming up. Does that whet your appetite?

So now, of course, the Nation of Israel is on its way. **Isaac was the son of promise**, and now he has his wife Rebekah and we're ready to move on. In Chapter 25, there is a strange interlude in the life of Abraham. I can't understand it. But, there are a lot of things I don't understand. After Sarah's death, Abraham marries again and her name is Keturah. And it's interesting to note, that, out of this other wife, Abraham has several more sons. Two or three at least are well known enemies of the offspring of Isaac. Some of the descendants of these sons become enemies of the descendants of Isaac, as we'll see later on.

Genesis 25:8-11 *Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man who had lived a full life. He joined his ancestors. (9) His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar, the Hethite. (10) This was the field*

Abraham had purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. (11) After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac. Isaac lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

Remember, that even though all these other Arab families have come out of Abraham, or at least his next of kin, yet the only people that are in the line of the Covenant, are Isaac, and later on Jacob and his twelve sons. Next we see the genealogy of Ishmael, which you might find kind of strange, but it actually follows the same pattern Moses has been using and will use throughout Genesis. There's always the appearance of the natural, or their genealogy, and then the spiritual. First Cain and then Abel. And now, it's first Ishmael and then Isaac. Then there's Esau and Jacob. You can actually see this repeated throughout scripture, you can watch for it. Now we come to the spiritual line, Isaac.

Genesis 25:19 *This is the account of Isaac, the son of Abraham. Abraham became the father of Isaac. (20) When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. (21) Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. (22) But the children struggled inside her, and she said, "If it is going to be like this, I'm not so sure I want to be pregnant!" So she asked the LORD, (23) and the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples will be separated from within you. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." (24) When the time came for Rebekah to give birth, there were twins in her womb. (25) The first came out reddish all over, like a hairy garment, so they named him Esau. (26) When his brother came out with his hand clutching Esau's heel, they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.*

“she asked the Lord” According to the Jewish Midrash, she went to the School of Shem, where the knowledge of God was expounded. Some feel she went and inquired of the Lord through Abraham who was still alive at this time.

It was in God's plan all along, that Jacob should have the birthright and the blessing. He foretold it way back here, that the younger would be over the elder.

When Isaac is 40 he marries Rebekah. And then 20 years later, when he is 60, the twins are born and they are Jacob and Esau. When Isaac is 75, Abraham dies, being 175, so Abraham is off the scene. The twins are 15 when Abraham dies.

Before we move on, we must spend some time talking about the doctrine of election. You just can't talk about Jacob and Esau without discussing the issue of election or predestination.

Election

- You have seen God's sovereignty at work in the choosing of a wife for Isaac. Even though God is sovereign, one of the things that is hard to reconcile is the question, "Is God absolute in whom He chooses? Does everyone else not have a chance? How does it all work?" Is it totally the sovereign choosing of God; or, is it the free will of man? I think what you have to do is realize that it's not either one or the other, but both that are true. God is sovereign over the choosing, but we are still responsible for our choices. How does that work? I have no idea, but God makes it work.
- Way back in the time of the reformers, John Calvin was of the persuasion that we are chosen. Then those who abused Calvin's teaching went so far as to go overboard and say, "If you're chosen, there's nothing you can do about it. If you're chosen, no one has to do anything to win you, you're in. If you're not chosen, you're out." **This approach is ridiculous.** That leads to the unbiblical idea of Limited Atonement", that Jesus didn't die for the whole world, but only for the chosen ones.

- But, you see, at the time of Martin Luther and Calvin, along came a man by the name of Arminius, and the theology of many of today's church denominations came from the Arminian view. This expressed the opposite persuasion, that it's all up to the free will of the individual. **That's the other extreme.** Of course, Arminians can't get away from the fact the Bible clearly teaches that God predestines us to salvation. So, they explain it by saying that God simply looks into our future to see if we will eventually trust Christ or not. Those that do are chosen.
- **That's a problematic view**, because it is very simplistic and still seems to make God subservient to our choices. The Arminian or Holiness doctrines that most of these denominations have tend towards the humanistic side. They focus more on what man must do, rather than what God has done. From those doctrines it's an easy slide to humanism, emotionalism, legalism, works-based salvation, or even "open theism", which is the belief that God doesn't know or control the future; that it is all affected by the choices that humans make. Some churches are going this way today, and that's out and out heresy. It's completely against what the Bible teaches. **If God isn't sovereign, then He isn't much of a God.**
- What we have to see is what Genesis 24:5 indicates – **there has to be a willingness**, but on the other hand, as you go through this chapter you can see that God definitely had His hands on the whole situation. Everything fell into place, and the servant was amazed. When he got up to Syria, he asked God, "the girl who is to be the one, let her, when I ask for water, say, 'not only can you drink, but I'll water the camels also.'" And that's the way it happened. The very first girl that came along was the one! Now, how are we to reconcile this?
- This is a touchy subject among Christians, you have most people lining up on opposite extremes on this issue. Let's look at a couple of verses in the New Testament.

Ephesians 1:4 *For he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we may be holy and unblemished in his sight in love.*

- This and many other scriptures make it plain that God does choose us, we are predestined. But how does that work? Is it totally arbitrary, or is it because God knows that some people will be open to Him and some will reject Him?

1 Peter 1:1,2 *From Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those temporarily residing abroad (in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia) who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by being set apart by the Spirit for obedience and for sprinkling with Jesus Christ's blood. May grace and peace be yours in full measure!*

- *"...chosen according to the foreknowledge of God..."* This verse seems to indicate that we are chosen because God knows ahead of time whether we will accept His offer of salvation. Many people explain predestination, election by this method – that God knows whether we will be willing or not. But this verse can be debated – it doesn't actually say that God chose us because He knew we would be willing. To me, it seems like this verse's mention of God's foreknowledge could be a lot more than just whether or not we trust Christ. **There could be many other factors involved in God's choosing, some of which we can't understand, because He sees all ends.**
- Furthermore, the word "to foreknow" sometimes means "to determine beforehand," even as the word "know" sometimes means "to choose" (cf. Genesis 18:19; Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:29, 11:2, 1 Peter 1:20). Thus, to foreknow (or elect) refers to the selection of those to be saved, while predestination pertains to the destiny of these people. Foreknowledge selects the people; predestination the program.

The problem with the foreknowledge doctrine is that it denies the fact that God's choice determines ours, and not the reverse: *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; . . ."* (John 15:16). *". . . and all who had been appointed for eternal life believed."* (Acts 13:48). *". . . The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying."* (Acts 16:14).

- So, why did Rebekah come to water the livestock and meet Abraham's servant at just the appropriate time? Obviously, it was the sovereign working of God, there's no doubt about it! But, she was also willing. And why was she chosen?

Why are some of us saved, and our friends and loved ones not saved? Not because we were special or better obviously, because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God". Well, look at these next verses:

Romans 9:10-12 *Not only that, but when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our ancestor Isaac (11) even before they were born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose in election would stand, not by works but by his calling) (12) it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger,"*

This scripture implies that God's choosing has nothing to do with our works. God foreknew what Jacob and Esau would do in their lives, and neither one of them seemed to be quality individuals, but God chose Jacob. Why?

Romans 9:13-16 *just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (14) What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! (15) For he says to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (16) So then, it does not depend on human desire or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.*

Well, this makes it pretty plain, doesn't it? God chooses people for His own reasons! It's very presumptuous to assume that God elects people because of what they will do, or even their willingness. Going on in the chapter:

Romans 9:18-21 *So then, God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden. (19) You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who has ever resisted his will?" (20) But who indeed are you -- a mere human being -- to talk back to God? Does what is molded say to the molder, "Why have you made me like this?" (21) Has the potter no right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special use and another for ordinary use?*

That is a rhetorical question of course! We have no right to question God's choices, he obviously has every right to do with us anything He wants, and we have no right to judge Him. So, we don't always know what the reasons for God's choosing are, and **we shouldn't try to explain election by just saying that God foreknew what choice WE would make.**

So, does this mean we don't have to share our faith with others? We don't have to send missionaries to regions of the world that have never heard the gospel? I mean, after all, God does the choosing, so He doesn't need us, right? Wrong! He doesn't need us, but **He desires to use in the process.** We must share our faith, we are commanded to spread the gospel, and to be salt and light to the world. Why?

Because there is still the matter of human responsibility. Even though God does the choosing for His own reasons, we are still responsible for our choices. We still must be willing to accept God's offer of salvation through Christ. We are responsible for that decision.

Going back to the story the choosing of Rebekah for Isaac, you'll find that even though the servant that Abraham sent does all he can to win this beautiful girl, she had to make the final decision. After they've had their feasting, and getting acquainted in the house of Rebekah and her family, it all boils down to her making the choice.

Genesis 24:57,58 *Then they said, "We'll call the girl and find out what she wants to do." So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Do you want to go with this man?" She replied, "I want to go."*

She made the final decision. It's the same way with Salvation today. The Holy Spirit can woo; the Holy Spirit can convict; but **God will never take someone by the nape of the neck and force the issue.** However, salvation has to be totally the work of the Holy Spirit. We can assume that Rebekah made the choice she did because the Holy Spirit opened her heart to God. She could feel God calling her. Too many times other things enter in, and people are almost forced to make a false decision. Then, years later, people wonder what happened when that Christian is bankrupt spiritually. I'm afraid they've never sincerely trusted Christ, because it was approached in the wrong way. But here, Rebekah was given the choice and she said, "I will go."

So, on the issue of election, we must acknowledge that God is sovereign and does the choosing, but that also we are responsible. How is that possible? We can't know that. **This is an area where man's rationalistic thinking breaks down.** You see, God is 100% rational. That means that God can perceive truths and every relation of every truth to every

other truth. He knows all relationships between the pieces of truth, because He's omniscient. Now, the problem with 16th and 17th century rationalism was they thought that was attainable by man, and it isn't. That is only a quality of omniscience; man will never attain to all truth and man cannot attain to all interconnections between pieces of truth. Man's truth will be partial; he will perceive some pieces of truth here and there that are revealed to him, and he may see one or two relationships but he doesn't know all the interconnecting pieces, for the reason that he isn't God. And, he certainly can't see the future. **God can see not only what will happen in the future, but all possible future outcomes – everything that might have been.** That boggles the mind, doesn't it?

So we are here, on one side, with God's sovereignty, we are here with man's responsibility on the other side, and we can't bridge between the two. Why can't we bridge between the two? Because God has not given us enough revelation.

One thing that we have to be careful of, is having a sort of intellectual pride that we can figure everything out. That if we just study hard enough, think about it enough, with the intellectual pride of rationalism, that we can gain the very omniscience of God ourselves; we will know all doctrines and we will know all interconnections there between.

This is not to say we shouldn't push to understand every doctrine but it is to say that if we set that impossible goal for ourselves, we are arrogant rationalists and that is a sin. I think God limits His revelation for this purpose, because **it just stops that sin of intellectual arrogance.** God tells you, okay, smart man, understand what I have said, but also, smart man, understand there's a boundary and I'm not going to tell you any more about it. And you can't sit there and wait until you get it all together; then decide whether you're going to believe it or not. Oh no, God doesn't work His Word that way. He tells you one thing, He tells you another thing and He expects you to believe it. Maybe you can get added insight as time goes on but you can't postpone bowing before the authority of His Word because of a false use of logic. **The Word of God, not logic, is the starting point of doctrine.**

Turn to Deuteronomy 29:29. This is the final answer and it helps us remain spiritually thinking people without becoming arrogant. *“Secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those that are revealed belong to us and our descendants forever, so that we might obey all the words of this law.”* Notice, not for our entertainment, but “that we may obey” them. Who decides the secret things? God does.

So, let's not try to pin God down on why and how He chooses people for salvation, but just accept the Bible's teaching that He does, and at the same time accept the Bible's teaching that we have a choice, a responsibility to accept His free gift of Salvation through Christ, or reject it. This is not a contradiction. Both are true, and I'll let God work that out - He can handle it without me understanding the process.

(Isa 55:8-9) "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."

OK, moving on...

Genesis 25:27-34 *When the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the open fields, but Jacob was an even-tempered man, living in tents. (28) Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for fresh game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (29) Now Jacob cooked some stew, and when Esau came in from the open fields, he was famished. (30) So Esau said to Jacob, "Feed me some of the red stuff -- yes, this red stuff -- because I'm starving!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) (31) But Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." (32) "Look," said Esau, "I'm about to die! What use is the birthright to me?" (33) But Jacob said, "Swear an oath to me now." So Esau swore an oath to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. (34) Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew; Esau ate and drank, then got up and went out. So Esau despised his birthright.*

These are two totally different individuals. They are as different as daylight from dark. One is a

hairy individual and the other one is smooth skinned. The one is going to be an outdoors man, probably a rough and ruddy type individual. Jacob, I think is going to be more on the soft and delicate side. Two totally different people, but, God had said from the beginning, that Jacob would be the one that would be used in the Covenant.

The Midrash explains “tents” to mean “schools of religious study.” It is certainly possible that Jacob was studying or thinking about God with his parents at home and thus knew more of the Lord than brother Esau.

Be careful, after our discussion of election, that you do not get the idea that God made Jacob good and Esau bad. This is not the conclusion we come to. God elected Jacob, yes, and in His mind, Jacob was always elect. But, in history, and in our eyes, **Jacob became elect, and Esau became degenerate.** You can see it in their actions. Watch for it as you go through the narrative. Neither one of these guys were men of faith to begin with. But Jacob, as you can see through the choices he made, eventually became a believer in God’s promises, and a man of faith - Esau did not.

As was so often the case with the old patriarchs, and it's probably a problem in a lot of families, even today, when parents make favorites. You see the controversy that's going to be in that home. Every time Esau did something that would irritate Rebekah, Isaac would stick up for him, and vice versa. These are young men now, they are full grown. Esau is already a hunter.

So, what was the birthright? Many think it was the estate. That was not the case. That is the blessing. The blessing was the material part of the estate. And to be in the place of the eldest son in Israel, meant that he would receive a double portion of the estate and then the others would get what would be left. So remember, that the blessing was the material estate, but the birthright was a spiritual thing.

Here's the point. Esau was totally destitute of faith, like Cain. Esau saw absolutely nothing to be gained in enjoying this spiritual promise. He couldn't have cared less that someone would be born out of his lineage who would bring redemption to Israel and to the world. **But Jacob had a glimpse, maybe not much; but he had a glimpse that there was something to be gained by being in the line of that spiritual birthright.** And the physical, the blessings, which would come later, that, of course, was secondary. Now, let's go to Hebrews Chapter 12, because you always have to realize that what the Old Testament doesn't answer completely, most of the time the New Testament does.

Hebrews 12:16,17 *And see to it that no one becomes an immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that later when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no opportunity for repentance, although he sought the blessing with tears.*

So, even though he was a favorite son of Isaac, even though he was a great outdoors man, and a hunter, what kind of a person was he morally? He was an immoral person. Esau's whole problem, from start to finish, was that he was destitute of faith. He could not put any trust in what God said. You know, that's the problem with a lot of people today. They just cannot believe the Word of God. Well, that's not God's fault, and yet they will not, just like Esau, turn around and say, "Yes, I believe it." They will continue on in their unbelief.

Esau didn't have any need or desire for his birthright, because it was a spiritual thing that had to be

comprehended by faith and he had none. It's the same with people today. They say, "Well I can't understand that Bible. It's just a bunch of Greek to me." You know what their problem is? They're destitute of faith. You would have to take this Book by faith. Faith opens our spiritual eyes so we can understand spiritual things.

Genesis 26:3-5 *"Stay in this land. Then I will be with you and will bless you, for I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants, and I will fulfill the solemn promise I made to your father Abraham. (4) I will multiply your descendants so they will be as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give them all these lands. All the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using the name of your descendants. (5) All this will come to pass because Abraham obeyed me and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."*

God is constantly promising Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob of things to come, if they'll be obedient. So to Isaac He makes the promise. Now the Arab world thinks they are going to drive Israel into the sea, bless their hearts. We should love the Arab peoples as much as anyone else. But I'll tell you what, if they only knew their Scripture, they'd quit fighting about it and resign themselves to the will of God, because God has promised that whole area of the Middle East to the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and no one else. So he repeats it to Isaac here in this verse.

The Blessings of Isaac to Jacob

Genesis 27:1-3 *When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he was almost blind, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son!" "Here I am!" Esau replied. (2) Isaac said, "Since I am so old, I could die at any time. (3) Therefore, take your weapons -- your quiver and your bow -- and go out into the open fields and hunt down some wild game for me. (4) Then prepare for me some tasty food, the kind I love, and bring it to me. Then I will eat it so that I may bless you before I die."*

Now, there are two ways of looking at what happened here. Either Jacob connived with his mother to get the blessing, or it was Isaac that was the conniver, trying to get away with blessing Esau, even though he had to know that God had already chosen Jacob. Rebekah, at least, had to know (Gen. 25:23), and it's hard to believe she wouldn't have informed Isaac what God had told her. Isaac seems to be defying the will of God here, playing favorites with Esau and saying, "I'll run my home the way I want to!"

In these next verses, Rebekah hatches a plan:

Genesis 27:11-13 *Go to the flock and get me two of the best young goats. I'll prepare them in a tasty way for your father, just the way he loves them. (10) Then you will take it to your father. Thus he will eat it and bless you before he dies." (11) "But Esau my brother is a hairy man," Jacob protested to his mother Rebekah, "and I have smooth skin! (12) My father may touch me! Then he'll think I'm mocking him and I'll bring a curse on myself instead of a blessing." (13) So his mother told him, "Any curse against you will fall on me, my son! Just obey me! Go and get them for me!"*

So we see now the family is weakened, the parents are divided. Now this is always a problem for a believing woman. To have a husband that is out of it, spiritually, he's failed to lead and so she correctly sees the will of God and she wants to do something about it. But yet her position in the home is one in which she's supposed to be subordinate to the man. And this is an endless frustration for many Christian women. I'm not saying it doesn't work the other way too but Genesis

27 is the case where the wife is under the 8-ball here with a husband that's just not leading.

Because of the choices that were made by the people in this story, there have been a thousand years of history that were full of bloodshed. Who's to blame? Isaac or Rebekah? Both? Here's some things that were done wrong in this family:

- Intentional rebellion against the will of God by Isaac – he was trying to make Esau the chosen one instead of Jacob
- Isaac not being the spiritual leader of his family – he should have
- Rebekah spying on her husband - she was spying, just to make sure, because she knew more than her husband about this and in fact here she was right, but nevertheless, still something is wrong. She spies on her husband, she runs and talks to her son, that's where the his son-her son starts. In verse 5 she heard him speaking to "his son." So she went and got "her son" to pit against "his son." So now we've got suspicion brewing between wife and husband and now we have sides being taken in this long debate.
- Rebekah tries to place herself over her Isaac and control him - To her credit this is a woman who knows the future because God told it to her. Presumably she loves Jacob because she is motivated to see that he performed what God promised ought to happen in that home. So Rebekah has what we'll say is a godly motive, she did want the will of God for her children. But Isaac's inability to lead forces her to take control of the family
- Rebekah tries to control her 40 year old son – he is not a child. A mother commanding a forty year old man, what is this? "Just obey me!" It's the verb used in the Hebrew Scriptures for a general commanding his soldiers. Even though she has a godly motive something's wrong.
- Favoritism shown by both parents – Isaac to Esau, Rebekah to Jacob
- Rebellion by Esau against God, assuming Isaac had taught him about the one true God
- Jacob takes his orders from his mother against his dad, and deceives him. And this reverses the authority of the home. Lying would be one thing but wrenching the whole chain of command out of kilter is quite another thing and Jacob realizes this. Now we don't know whether Jacob went yes mama and walked out in the field and did this or what the reaction was.

So you can see that this was a dysfunctional home. And yet, all of these things produced the results that God had preordained! So, does that make all these wrongs right?

We don't know what else happened to Rebekah. But if anything was a curse, the one thing for sure was that after Jacob had to flee for his life, Rebekah never saw him again. And that was the end of her association with her favorite son. I think that, in itself, was enough to break her heart. Of course Isaac lived on and Jacob spent quite a few years with him after he returned with his families.

Genesis 27:14,15 *So he went and got the goats and brought them to his mother. She prepared some tasty food, just the way his father loved it. Then Rebekah took her older son Esau's best clothes, which she had with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob.*

These clothes weren't just Esau's best clothes, but designated him as the heir, the oldest son. This is still the custom in the Middle East even today. The oldest son is given clothes that pertain to his position. In the next lesson, when we study Joseph, you'll see how mad the other sons get when Jacob gives Joseph the coat of many colors. Well, they saw that their father was designating Joseph as the head of the brothers, even though he wasn't the oldest. What Rebekah is doing then, is taking this designated piece of clothing for Esau and putting it on Jacob. This is all done in the their human viewpoint thinking, but God doesn't stop it, because he had mandated that this is way it would be. They were merely fulfilling what God had mandated in the first place.

Genesis 27:16-19 *She put the skins of the young goats on his hands and the smooth part of his neck. (17) Then she handed the tasty food and the bread she had made to her son Jacob. (18) He went to his father and said, "My father!" Isaac replied, "Here I am. Which are you, my son?" (19) Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, your firstborn. I've done as you told me. Now sit up and eat some of my wild game so that you can bless me."*

How could Jacob tell a bold faced lie? But, again, you must look at it in the light that God himself had designated that Jacob was to have the role of the firstborn. So, in that light, Jacob was not lying. He was in his position of the first born. I suppose he still lied. But according to the way God reckons things, this is exactly where Jacob must be. We may ask was God unfair? NO! Because what had God seen in the make up of Esau? NO FAITH! And what does Hebrews 11:6 say? *"Without faith it is impossible to please God."*

So, no matter how morally good Esau might have been (and I doubt that he was, because of his marriage to the Canaanites), even if he was a better man than Jacob, God couldn't use him because he had no faith. Now it is the same way today. The reason people are turned off by Christianity, the reason they have no desire for spiritual things is that they are destitute of faith. They cannot believe that this is the Word of God. Most say unless you can prove some of these things, they can't believe. While we have good evidence for what we believe, **that's not why we believe!** And God doesn't have to prove anything, because He is Sovereign. He has spoken it! And He has every right to expect mankind to believe what He has spoken.

Genesis 27:20-23 *But Isaac asked his son, "How in the world did you find it so quickly, my son?" "Because the LORD your God brought it to me," he replied. (21) Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer so I can touch you, my son, and know for certain if you really are my son Esau." (22) So Jacob went over to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's." (23) He did not recognize him because his hands were hairy, like his brother Esau's hands. So Isaac blessed Jacob.*

We need to remember that, in the ancient middle eastern world, when even the pagan kings made a decree, it could not be broken. An example is the Book of Esther. Right or wrong it stood. It's the same way here.

The birthright was the spiritual side of the family position. The eldest son was more or less the priest of the family. He was the spiritual leader. But with this little family coming out of Abraham, it's more than just being the family priest. It is through this line that the promised Messiah would come.

You'll see the birthright issue did not create the hard feelings that this blessing will. And the reason of course was that the blessing was the material side of the whole picture. Now, the material side said that the eldest son would get a double portion. In Isaac's case, he would divide the blessing into three parts, with the oldest getting two, and the other, one.

This was what Esau was so angry about; he didn't want to give up this double portion. And you need to remember this was a very wealthy family. They had flocks, herds, servants, and even Abraham had a good collection of gold and silver.

(Gen 27:28-29) *Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine; May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you."*

Now let's watch the blessing that he makes. He says, and as you read this blessing, think now, of all this resentment in the home, resentment between the husband, resentment with the wife,

suspicion between the brothers, and all this sense of maneuvering, look at how he blesses. Keep in mind verse 28-29 Isaac thinks apply to Esau, that's what he thinks when he says it. Now see if, as you read verse 28-29 you don't see evidences of the father's intent, resentment over Rebekah, and intense resentment over Jacob.

Genesis 27:30-33 *Isaac had just finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, when his brother Esau returned from the hunt. (31) He also prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Esau said to him, "My father, get up and eat some of your son's wild game. Then you can bless me." (32) His father Isaac asked, "Who are you?" "I am your firstborn son," he replied, "Esau!" (33) Isaac began to shake violently and asked, "Then who else hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it just before you arrived, and I blessed him. He will indeed be blessed!"*

There was a crisis point when suddenly everything falls apart. He's built his whole lifestyle in his home, on a rebellious principle that God's plan is not going to be followed here. And he gets down to this point of his life and what has he done? He has fulfilled God's will that he established his rebellion against. The table has been turned on him.

And then before he finishes his lament he adds that last clause and the last clause is a key because it shows that in the middle of this awful crisis of his father he suddenly realized all right, I was wrong and God's will goes on, and Esau, I'm sorry, I can't do anything about it, because the last phrase says "and he will certainly be blessed." That's an admission of his surrender to the sovereign plan of God this late in his life but nevertheless he finally did surrender to him.

Genesis 27:34 *When Esau heard his father's words, he wailed loudly and bitterly. He said to his father, "Bless me too, my father!"*

I think, possibly, that Esau was so distraught, that he thought through his weeping and crying he could get Isaac to change his mind. But Isaac wouldn't because that just wasn't the custom. And then, of course, he was also bewailing the fact that he had now missed the birthright and the blessing. We need to understand that all of Esau's problem goes back to the same thing we had with the man, Cain.

Cain had the same opportunity that Abel had. But what was his problem? No faith! He didn't see any significance in what God said. And so it is with Esau. **He sees no significance in spiritual things.** And again, let me bring it up to our own day and time. Isn't that exactly where we find so many of our fellow people, right here in America. They see absolutely no need to believe what God says. They can get along fine without Him. They think they're doing all right. They just cannot comprehend that God has said there is an eternity coming. There's a judgment coming. And even though they may think they can get along without God for 70 or 80 years, there's coming a day.

Genesis 27:35,36 *But Isaac replied, "Your brother came in here deceitfully and took away your blessing." Esau exclaimed, "'Jacob' is the right name for him! He has tripped me up two times! He took away my birthright, and now, look, he has taken away my blessing!" Then he asked, "Have you not kept back a blessing for me? Isaac replied to Esau, "Look! I have made him lord over you. I have made all his relatives his servants and provided him with grain and new wine. What is left that I can do for you, my son?" Esau said to his father, "Do you have only that one blessing, my father? Bless me too!" Then Esau wept loudly.*

You must remember the definitions of all these Hebrew names were definite. And Jacob meant "the deceiver," "the supplanter," where as Israel meant literally a "prince with God." So what we are going to see in the conversion of Jacob later on is **the man is going to be changed from a deceiver and supplanter to a prince with God.** Now, isn't that what should happen to everyone of us? When we are in our lost state what are we? We are sinners, rebels, nothing, we're enemies of God. But once salvation has come in, there should be that 180 degree turn. I've seen some people change overnight, but for most it takes time. The Christian life is a growth process, just like an infant coming into the world. And they, too, must be fed, and nurtured, and loved as they grow. And so it is with the Christian experience.

I think what we must understand, that in spite of all the weeping and wailing that Esau went through, did it change his status of faith? Not one bit! Esau doesn't come out of this experience and say from now on I'm going to believe what God says. We can even relate to this today. Individuals may go through an emotional upheaval, but it doesn't make a real difference. I don't take much stock in emotionalism on these things, because people can be forced by emotions to do things that they don't really mean.

(Gen 27:39-40) So his father Isaac said to him, "Indeed, your home will be away from the richness of the earth, and away from the dew of the sky above. You will live by your sword but you will serve your brother. When you grow restless, you will tear off his yoke from your neck."

Now the only blessing he can eek out for Esau is this one and it really isn't a blessing at all. And what verse 39 is doing is it is excluding Esau and his descendants from the Promised Land. So that forever in history they lived down in this area, called Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea whereas Jacob and his descendants live up here in the fertile area.

Turn to 1 Samuel 14:47 - here's what the history was of the descendants of Jacob and the descendants of Esau. This is the passage in Samuel when the monarchy is being established in the nation Israel and Saul takes office, *"After Saul had secured his royal position over Israel, he fought against all their enemies on all sides – the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines."* The descendants of Esau now become the enemies of Israel; they're the anti-Semites.

1 Kings 11:14 - Solomon, whose name means peace, when he got out of fellowship his kingdom began to fracture and weaken and dissolve and in 1 Kings 11:14 who is the first adversary? *"The LORD brought against Solomon an enemy, Hadad the Edomite, a descendant of the Edomite king."*

Finally, turn to 2 Kings 16:6, the amalgamation of the Edomites and the Syrians to form what we now call the Arabs, part of the Arabs. *"(At that time King Rezin of Syria recovered Elat for Syria; he drove the Judahites from there. Syrians arrived in Elat and live there to this very day.)"*

So now a mighty enemy is created for the Jews; the Edomites and the Syrians, and they combined and they can be traced, historians can trace their line through history, but you also might be interested in how it all came out in the days of the New Testament.

Their descendants came to a land and gradually encroached in all this area called the wilderness of Zin; they spread westward over into a country known in New Testament times as Idumea, and out from Idumea came one of the most famous of all New Testament characters, the great family of the Herods. Herod is ultimately a son of Esau. And what did Herod do when the Messiah was promised?

He went into Bethlehem and he slaughtered the infants in one of the first cases of genocide in history. And what did his sons do? They persecuted and tried to destroy the Christian church in the book of Acts.

One of the reasons we're given these stories is to see the mistakes real people made in history, the consequences that came from their choices. It was Isaac and Rebekah who set the wheels in motion for the death of thousands of soldiers, awful wars in battle. Prior to what Rebekah did, didn't we see Sarah do the same thing? Remember what Sarah did? She tried to suggest something to straighten out her husband and wound up creating the Arabs in Ishmael. And what has that begotten in history but constant warfare, constant strife.

Genesis 27:41 *So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing his father had given to his brother. Esau said privately, "The time of mourning for my father is near; then I will kill my brother Jacob!"*

Usually, when you run into the word "hate" in Scripture, this has thrown a curve at a lot of people. Jesus, in His earthly ministry, said unless you hate your father and mother you cannot be His disciple. And that has bothered people. It is used in another place also. Turn to Malachi:

Malachi 1:2,3 *"I have shown love to you (speaking of Israel)," says the LORD, but you say, "How have you shown love to us?" "Esau was Jacob's brother," the LORD explains, "yet I chose Jacob and rejected Esau. I turned Esau's mountains into a deserted wasteland and gave his territory to the wild jackals."*

When the Scripture uses the word hate, at least as so far as God is concerned, it merely means that his love for Jacob was so much greater than it was for Esau. It was as if it was a hatred. But remember, God can't hate, because hate is a sin. So always look at that word in its context, and realize that it is only a comparative term. So, getting to the verse Jesus used about hating your father and mother or you can't be His disciples, it didn't mean he expects people to hate their parents, as we look at the term. Rather, our love for the LORD should be so much greater than for our earthly parents, that by comparison, it's the difference between love and hate.

Here in Gen. 27:41, I think Esau is using the word hate as the term we understand it to be. When the Scriptures said, *"So Esau hated Jacob"* how long has that hatred lasted? Right up even to today. This is the crux of all the problems of the Middle East today. Remember, they are all relatives. All those Middle Eastern nations come out of Terah, and Abraham and his two brothers. And out of those three brothers, we had Lot. And Lot had the Moabites, and the Ammonites, Then on the other side you have Ishmael, a son of Abraham, though they are relatives, they are outside the Abrahamic Covenant. So they became enemies of God's Covenant people. And then you have Esau's descendants. Throughout history all these groups mixed with each other into the Arab peoples we have today.

Genesis 27:42-46 *When Rebekah heard what her older son Esau had said, she quickly summoned her younger son Jacob and told him, "Look, your brother Esau is planning to get revenge by killing you. (43) Now then, my son, do what I say. Run away immediately to my brother Laban in Haran. (44) Live with him for a little while until your brother's rage subsides. Stay there until your*

brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I'll send someone to bring you back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?" (46) Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am deeply depressed because of these daughters of Heth. If Jacob were to marry one of these daughters of Heth who live in this land, I would want to die!"

She thought Esau would cool off and Jacob could come back home maybe within a month or two. But how long did it turn out to be? Twenty years - and Rebekah never lived to see Jacob again. Do you realize what Rebekah is really saying? Do you know what they were practicing? Capital punishment. She knew that if Esau murdered Jacob, she would also lose Esau, because that's what the law demanded. Note, they didn't have God's Law yet. Most of these people lived their daily lives according to the old ancient laws of Hammurabi. He was a Babylonian and, of course, when Moses came on the scene, that was all superseded. Nevertheless, Hammurabi's Law demanded whoever murdered, he himself would also lose his life. And they didn't have four or five years of appeals. Rebekah said "in one day." Had Esau killed Jacob, his own life would have been taken in a matter of hours.

Esau had already married two of these Canaanite women. And it was a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

One of the important things to learn from this story is that God even uses bad choices that people make to accomplish his plans. He is not responsible for our choices, not responsible for sin. But He can even use sin to fulfill His plans. Even every scheme of the devil ultimately plays right into God's hands. He is sovereign, nothing can thwart or turn aside His plans.

And each of the characters in this story endured the consequences of their actions. One of the great scholars summed up the thought of Genesis 27, the great Lutheran Old Testament scholar of the 19th century, Frederic Keil; he said, in concluding how the story plays out and **everybody gets judged, nobody is happy at the end of Genesis 27**. He says: Rebekah was obligated to defend her pet son into a foreign land away from his father's house in an utterly destitute condition. Rebekah probably never saw the son she loved ever again. Jacob had to atone for his sin against both brother and father by a long and painful exile in the midst of privation, anxiety, fraud and want. Isaac was punished for retaining his preference for Esau in opposition to the revealed will of Jehovah by the success of Jacob's stratagem. And Esau was punished for his contempt of the birthright by the loss of the blessing. In this way," says Dr. Keil, "a higher hand prevailed above the acts of sinful man, bringing the counsel and will of Jehovah to eventual triumph in opposition to human will and human thought." Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated.

Genesis 28:1-4 *So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman! (2) Leave immediately for Paddan Aram! Go to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and find yourself a wife there, among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. (3) May the sovereign God bless you! May he make you fruitful and give you a multitude of descendants! Then you will become a large nation. (4) May he give you and your descendants the blessing he gave to Abraham so that you may possess the land God gave to Abraham, the land where you have been living as a temporary resident."*

We see that Isaac is in full agreement with all of this, even though he recognizes that Jacob may have deceived him. Otherwise, I don't believe you would see him calling Jacob back and giving him those instructions. The Canaanites were pagan, immoral and idolatrous, yet Esau was comfortable with them. But Isaac and Rebekah don't want Jacob to get involved with the Canaanite women.

So Rebekah is telling Jacob to find a wife among his cousins. At this point, the race is still relatively pure. They had a gene pool that allowed such a custom without having any repercussions.

So Isaac calls Jacob and commissions him to go on up to the relative's house. Of course what Jacob doesn't realize, is that Laban is double the cheat that Jacob ever thought of being. Jacob cheated at this one point in his life, but with Laban it was a way of life; which is a strange ironic circumstance. God seems to do this; He seems to say well Rebekah, you like to do things by the shortcut approach. And so let me tell you something, I'll take that dear son of yours and we'll take him on a little vacation, we'll put him in a little training school and in that training school I'm going to appoint a professor for his education, and this man is a specialist in wheeling and dealing. In fact, he will teach your son so well, that after 20 years your son is going to learn never to do this again. In other words, what God is saying, Rebekah, because you are transmitting your learned behavior patterns to your son, I'm going to take your son out and train him for 20 years to stop that pattern that you are teaching your son.

JACOB'S WIVES AND TWELVE SONS

I think at this point **Jacob is still an unbeliever**. He is the perfect picture of the Nation of Israel as a whole. He is going to be sent out into a far country, out of the Land of Promise. He's going up into Syria, and even though he's up there in unbelief, God still has His hand on him.

And this is what so many people today can't comprehend. The Nation of Israel today, their government is just as secular, and no more godly than any other government on the face of the earth. And don't expect them to be any different. But who is watching out for that little nation? **Almighty God is!**

God loves the Arab as much as he does the Jews. He loves Americans just as much as the Middle-Easterners, because this is the day of Grace. But, going back to His Covenant promises, God has delineated that the Nation of Israel is His chosen and Covenant People, and He is going to bring to fruition all of those promises He made to Abraham. That is why the little nation is in the news all the time. Even though they are out numbered, no one dares attack them, other than firing rockets at them occasionally. Today, Syria and Iran is fiercely building up their armed forces. And for all practical purposes, you would have to say that they could overrun Israel in a day or two. But, Almighty God is holding everything in check!

How would we feel if all of a sudden Mexico and Canada, and other nations would attack us? That's exactly what happened to Israel in the six-day war in 1967. They were invaded from four different directions all at once. And yet, in a matter of hours, they turned the tide and literally destroyed those Arab armies. Now, what was that? That was a miracle of a Sovereign God! Even though they are for the most part in unbelief. So it is with Jacob; he's going to be under the protection of The Almighty God. But he himself is still an unbeliever. He is still the deceiver, and supplanter. He is still Jacob.

Genesis 28:5-10 *So Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean and brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. (6) Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him off to Paddan Aram to find a wife there. As he blessed him, Isaac commanded him, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman." (7) Jacob obeyed his father and*

mother and left for Paddan Aram. (8) Then Esau realized that the Canaanite women were displeasing to his father Isaac. (9) So Esau went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, along with the wives he already had. (10) Meanwhile Jacob left Beer Sheba and set out for Haran.

Even in his unbelief, Jacob has just enough faith, that he obeyed his parents, but it was enough that Esau could see that Jacob obeyed his father and had gone. Now Esau tries to do something right. And it just doesn't work. It was bad enough to marry Canaanites, but now he takes one step worse, and what does he do? He marries daughters of Ishmael.

It is obvious that Esau just doesn't get it. He's not thinking spiritually, not trying to please God. He's trying to please his father, and he ends up making it worse. It wasn't that the girls he was marrying were defective in their genes, or ugly, or smelled bad. It was that they were unbelievers, and Esau, being an unbeliever himself, just couldn't perceive the problem. He is spiritually blind.

Genesis 28:12-15 *He reached a certain place where he decided to camp because the sun had gone down. He took one of the stones and placed it near his head. Then he fell asleep in that place and had a dream. He saw a stairway erected on the earth with its top reaching to the heavens. The angels of God were going up and coming down it (13) and the LORD stood at its top. He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the ground you are lying on. (14) Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. All the families of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using your name and that of your descendants. (15) I am with you! I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you!"*

The Abrahamic Covenant repeated again, and again, and again. How can God say "I am with you?" That's not a solitary promise to be taken out of context; it's not God patting Jacob on the head and saying he's a good boy. What verse 15 is saying is that because of the covenant, because of my entire eternal plan for history, because of all these details and your place in these details, therefore I am with you.

Let me point something out to you about the land that many people don't realize. **Palestine was picked as the geographical center of the earth;** not the geometrical center, the geographical center. You can prove this mathematically, that if you wanted to pick a location on the surface of the earth that was the average minimum distance from every other point on the surface of the sphere, the continents being what they are, you would have to pick an area right there in Palestine. God gave Jacob this land so that his descendants could communicate with Asia to the north; Europe to the northwest, Africa to the south, and North America and South America either way. So the location of Israel is very important.

There's a cool little nugget in verse 12. Do you see it? The angels are going up and down on a stairway, right? Now turn to John 1:51, this is Jesus speaking to his disciples - *"He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth — you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* So, what is the stairway? It's Jesus! Jesus is our "Stairway to Heaven"!

Genesis 28:16-22 *Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." (17) He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (18) So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. (19) He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. (20) Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, (21) and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. (22) "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."*

Is He Jacob's God yet? No. I think that he's bargaining with God. It's sort of akin to a lot of battlefield statements where men say, "Lord if you will just bring me through this I'll serve you." But as yet, Jacob is not a true believer.

Now, the story of Jacob runs through Chapter 35, but we're not going to go verse by verse the rest of the way. Please make sure you read it on your own, though. I'll just summarize and pick out a few high points.

Notice as you read through these chapters the emphasis on family. What you have is the first family, the nucleus family of the kingdom, already seriously deteriorating by the third and fourth generation. Obviously what you have taught here is the depravity of man. The Bible is quite frank to say that when God brings his program into history, it is always via fallen men. It is not because these men are the good little boys that haven't done anything; it's rather that **God is a gracious God and He is working through big bad boys to bring in His kingdom.**

Now, in Chapter 29 we find Jacob coming to the house of his relatives, and immediately he runs into the flocks of his Uncle Laban:

Genesis 29:6 *And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and here is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep."*

Here, we are introduced to the apple of Jacob's eye, and it was love at first sight. But what happened? Jacob was deceived himself this time. Jacob, the deceiver, meets his match with his Uncle Laban. I'm convinced these two are two of a kind. They are constantly trying to get the best of each other.

Genesis 29:10 *When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his uncle Laban, and the sheep of his uncle Laban, he went over and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of his uncle Laban.*

Remember, you talk about Israel and you think of this word as a label of a country, it's not. That word is the label of a man; secondarily it's the label of a country. The reason the nation Israel is called Israel is because the daddy of the nation is Israel; Israel is another proper noun for a man. That is a man's name, not a nation's name. So in prophecy when you hear a prophecy made of Jacob and then you see another prophecy made of Israel, you tend to think, oh, that's a prophecy about the man Jacob and that's a prophecy about the nation Israel. Wrong! They're both prophecies about Israel and their descendants collectively; that's the way the prophets use it. So we want to watch Jacob because he has certain characteristics and they're very hated, but I'll show you why. Let's jump ahead to chapter 30:

Genesis 30:43 *In this way Jacob became extremely prosperous. He owned large flocks, male and female servants, camels, and donkeys.*

The most scholarly recent studies done on anti-Semitism in history have produced some very startling finds. These studies point out two basic causes that have come up again and again and again, particularly in Western Europe, of hatred against the Jews, besides various queer ideas. The two basic problems is: (1) the Jews are high achievers and most people do not like high achievers because we're all lazy and we don't like somebody else that's going to show us up. And so down through history the Jew has been a very go-getter type person, high achiever, and therefore they immediately cause jealousy among the rest of us who are the klutzes.

The second problem is that the Jews down through history, particularly when orthodoxy reigned, were dogmatic that the family will be preserved at all costs. They didn't care what the king of England said, they didn't care what the king of France said, their family came first. So when a son went into business his father would provide capital for him and his son, therefore, was not economically indebted to any other person in the community except his father. It made a big difference, because now the business could start out economically independent of other people and the rest of the people in the community didn't like that. We have to watch that because there is a growing tendency in our American soul to be that same way. The attitude is that the most ideal situation is to have everybody level, don't have any high achievers. Do everything you can to knock high achievers. So that's why we pass inheritance taxes. Don't let anybody make wealth; making wealth is a sin. Who says? Misuse of wealth is a sin, not possession of wealth. The Bible is never against having wealth.

And Jacob just doesn't fit this mold because he's a go-getter. Chapter 29 verse 10 is a summation of Jacob's character. He is a producer. Production is God-ordained. The New Testament says if you don't work you don't eat. And Genesis 30:43 shows you Jacob's production. That's how he became wealthy; God blessed him, he was a high achiever.

That's his character and it's shown here with a simple act of running over and getting the top off that well when everybody else is standing around, trying to figure out, well, we can't do that right now, there's not enough people—that sort of attitude. Or, maybe he was just showing off for Rachel!

So, Jacob has love at first sight for Rachel, and eventually comes to his wedding night. Remember, it was dark. Today with all the security lights it's hard to find a dark place, but that's not the way it was back then. And so it was no problem whatsoever for Laban to convince Leah, Rachel's older sister, to go in as the bride. After all, Laban can't let Rachel become his wife when Leah is the eldest. So the wily Laban pulls one on Jacob before Jacob even gets started.

When it becomes daylight, instead of Rachel, he sees his bride is Leah the oldest sister. Of course, Laban had a logical excuse. He said it's the custom of his country that the younger daughter cannot have a husband until the eldest is married. So he makes a deal with Jacob, that if Jacob would serve him another seven years (and this is beyond the seven that Jacob had promised to serve for Rachel), then he could also have Rachel.

As you go through those chapters, where Jacob is there with Laban those twenty years, you'll see he has the two wives, Leah and Rachel. Leah will have six sons herself, and then she becomes barren. And as was the custom of that day (and God seemingly did not disapprove of it), he also had sons by Leah's handmaid. Finally, Rachel also has some sons by her handmaid. That gives us ten sons by now. And then Rachel has Joseph. Ten years after they are back in the land of Canaan, Rachel gives birth to Benjamin to make a total of twelve sons. However Rachel dies during childbirth to Benjamin.

We'll see later on that **the mother of the Messianic seed is not Rachel, it's Leah**. And so you have the woman whom God has chosen is the one who is not preferred at the beginning. From the human point of view Jacob has his eyes on Rachel like Isaac had his eyes on Esau. Who does he meet at the well first? It's Rachel, it's not Leah; it's Jacob and Rachel, and on the morning after, oh-oh, wrong

one!

So, now what's the theology of this? God wants to produce a Messianic seed. Who is the key in rearing the child? Mother. He wants the right mother; you're going to see things happen in the story that shows this woman is picked out, terribly handled, true, but nevertheless she winds up in a mother's position over the Messianic line.

Verse 17 says Leah was "tender-eyed," the Hebrew here is very hard to come across; the word for "tender-eyed" is a word that is used in the Bible for a child who has undeveloped character and who also is delicate and not ready for the world, naïve, etc. It obviously means at least that she would tend to be shy and that may explain one reason why she was having problems in her dating life, she was the kind of girl that just would kind of evaporate, a wall flower, you couldn't tell her from the wall, not because she wasn't an attractive girl, it's just her personality wasn't out there, you didn't see it. And she was always living in the shadow of her younger sister. The next part of verse 17 points out that her younger sister was much more physically attractive than she was. And so the guys would come by for a date and they thought they were going to go with Leah, and they'd say hey, the younger one looks a little better, I think we'll just go out with her for tonight. And obviously when this happened time and time again you can imagine the affect it produced on Leah, making her more shy, making her more hurt and inward grown.

Let's look at the tension because the story concludes with God's being gracious, not so much to Jacob but to Leah. Imagine day after day after day as the guys would kind of eye Rachel and Rachel would look over to Leah. What's Leah supposed to do? Wanting to die, that's what she wanted to do; probably 100 times a year that girl was down because of this tremendous pressure all the time. So that was her home life. Then she gets married off into a situation like this and what is her next experience in living? Living in a home with her sister, the same girl that she was competing with all the time she was growing up, with a husband who basically does not love her, basically passed off by her dad into another even less favorable living situation. **You couldn't ask more suffering from a woman emotionally and soulishly than what you've got here with Leah.**

So, in verse 31-35 you can watch how God deals with a woman in sanctification in this kind of situation; it's all there in the names of her son. And so we have a little dramatic piece of Scripture that shows God being compassionate to a woman in a tremendously devastating situation:

Genesis 29:31-35 *When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to become pregnant while Rachel remained childless. (32) So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "The LORD has looked with pity on my oppressed condition. Surely my husband will love me now." (33) She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, "Because the LORD heard that I was unloved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. (34) She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, "Now this time my husband will show me affection, because I have given birth to three sons for him." That is why he was named Levi. (35) She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, "This time I will praise the LORD." That is why she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.*

Notice this; here from verse 31-35 you have a packet of Scripture. Look carefully at how verse 31 starts. The Lord looks down and sees Leah and He does something for her. He allows her to conceive. Conception in the Scripture is never viewed as chance or automatic. Here's one of the proof texts where conception in the Scripture is always considered to be a sovereign work of God. He causes her to conceive. How does the passage end in verse 35? She stopped conceiving. Well, the passage begins with the Lord looking at her; the passage ends with her praising God, and stopping conception. So what you have between verse 31 and verse 35 is God's little sanctifying program that's working out just between God and Leah. All Jacob is doing is providing sperm and that's the limit to his role here. He has no role in verse 31-35. Jacob's completely out of it, out of the picture. Why? Because this is a personal story of one woman in a horrible marriage and how can she attain happiness in this marriage.

Here's a woman who normally would be defined as the helper for her husband (Genesis 2), but it isn't because of the awful situation in which she exists. The purpose of her life isn't that; at least it isn't appreciated to be that. A lot of women in this situation would commit suicide. How does she keep her hope going day after day after day in that awful situation? Because God gives her a reason to live.

The point of the story is she's finally going to realize that she has a purpose to life that is bigger than her husband and if he doesn't recognize it, that's his problem. The key problem is that she recognizes that she may never be appreciated by Jacob. Maybe she was, but you don't find any text in verse 31-35 that gives you a hint at the attitude of her husband; not a hint. You get the feeling that it's all negative. No appreciation. So how does a woman keep on keeping on? **By knowing in the depths of her heart that her life has a purpose.** You can take all hell on earth if you know your life has a purpose.

So watch what happens; the Lord opens her womb. Rachel was barren. So who does God work with first in the marriage? He works with His woman, Leah. She conceives and she bears a son, Reuben. "Reuben" means "look, a son". And she says "*The LORD has looked with pity on my oppressed condition.*". God gives her a purpose for life. That's the blessing; she's beginning to produce the tribes of Israel.

But then what does she do at the end of verse 32. She takes the blessing of God in her life but because she's so pained, she turns around and uses that as a gimmick to make her husband pay attention to her. She says my husband is going to have to love me now. No he doesn't, sorry lady, that just isn't the way it works. So she conceives again. Simeon comes from the word to hear, "*the LORD heard that I was unloved*". The idea again is that God is blessing her, but, because she's hurt, because she's mad, she doesn't have the eyes to see. And she keeps looking in the wrong place. God's over here, lady look over here, look what I'm doing, independently of your husband I'm giving you two purposes for life now. But she keeps thinking my happiness is my husband. No, **your happiness should be your relationship to God, independently of your husband.**

The third one, she's still going at it. The word "Levi" looks like the Hebrew verb to attach, and so she says now my husband is going to be joined to me because I've given him three sons. She evidently knows that Jacob is going to be the father of a nation, she recognizes she's given her husband three of his tribes for his new nation. And God says sorry, your happiness isn't your husband; your happiness is your relationship with God first.

Finally, the fourth time the whole scene shifts, "And she conceived again, and she said, "*This time I will praise the LORD.*" The name "Judah" means "he will be praised". After she bears this son her mental attitude changes; finally she has figured it out. God has been blessing her over and over, saying "I know you're in a bad situation, so I'm working in the situation to give you purpose. Finally she sees what God is trying to say to her. And now she stops bearing because the bearing process generated four tribes of Israel and helped sanctify this woman's attitude to give her the ability to continue in that marriage. The reason that she could keep on was she finally recognized her position before God.

Isn't it interesting, of all four sons, which one is going to be the Messianic seed? The one that's brought into the home after mom changes her mental attitude. So God keeps on letting her

bear, but holds up the Messianic seed until the mom gets her head on straight. When she finally gets her mind where it belongs, on the Lord instead of her husband, then and only then does God give her the motherhood over the Messianic seed.

In heaven Leah at least can look back on her life on earth and say yes, my marriage was a hell; yes, the home in which I lived was a hell, but I had the privilege and the opportunity of being mother to one of the forerunners of the Lord Jesus Christ; for that I give thanks and that alone made my life worth living. That's how God works in that kind of a bad situation.

Genesis 30:1-13 *When Rachel saw that she could not give Jacob children, she became jealous of her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children or I'll die!" (2) Jacob became furious with Rachel and exclaimed, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?" (3) She replied, "Here is my servant Bilhah! Have sexual relations with her so that she can bear children for me and I can have a family through her." (4) So Rachel gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob had marital relations with her. (5) Bilhah became pregnant and gave Jacob a son. (6) Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me. He has responded to my prayer and given me a son." That is why she named him Dan. (7) Bilhah, Rachel's servant, became pregnant again and gave Jacob another son. (8) Then Rachel said, "I have fought a desperate struggle with my sister, but I have won." So she named him Naphtali. (9) When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she gave her servant Zilpah to Jacob as a wife. (10) Soon Leah's servant Zilpah gave Jacob a son. (11) Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad. (12) Then Leah's servant Zilpah gave Jacob another son. (13) Leah said, "How happy I am, for women will call me happy!" So she named him Asher.*

Now this war that has been going on in this home is deeply frustrating to Jacob. Here's the real male; this is not the Sunday School sugar-coated image of a man, not that fakey pious image of a man. Here is a man in a real life situation. And what he thought was going to be a good home hasn't turned out that way. There's a sister rivalry that's tearing this home apart, and Jacob, frankly, allows himself to be maneuvered by the rivalry. The women are the ones who are in the driver's seat and Jacob just simply can't get control of the situation in his own home, and that very frequently happens. So here's a man facing a real living situation.

Now, interestingly, at the end of the struggle that Leah had, Genesis 29:35, God had gotten her to a place, spiritually, where she was looking only at Him. Leah, in other words, had made spiritual progress in chapter 29; sadly in this chapter there's a backsliding that goes on.

Now we have the second woman come on scene, Rachel, and chapter 30 features her in a stronger way than Leah. In verse 1 Rachel is angry and she calls out, "Give me children, or I die." Try to visualize this from the man's point of view. He walks in, and bang, he gets hit with this from Rachel.

She does two things; she's irrational, and she exaggerates. In verse 1 she says, "give me children," now that's interesting. It's as though Jacob is the one who's infertile. Wait a minute, that can't be; he's already produced four sons. So Jacob is not the problem, it's Rachel that's got the problem. But because she's angry, she says *you're* at fault, give me children. Then the second thing, "or I die;" now apart from self-inflicted injury, women have died from many things but I have yet to hear one die because she didn't have a baby. And so this is a little exaggeration, unless she's implying suicide. So here she is, angry, irrational, and she exaggerates.

And so what does Jacob do? Like all men, he gets mad; this is very realistic. When the woman is out

of control, he gets out of control and so he reacts, *“Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?”* Now Jacob does one thing good and one thing bad in verse 2. We obviously see the one thing bad - he’s mad and he says it in such a way that he turns her off and she doesn’t pay attention to what he’s trying to say. It’s true that men seem to have more problems in communicating these kinds of situations than women. Men typically have poor skills at saying what they really want to say. We can’t know for sure, but it seems he’s trying to lead her spiritually, saying “I am not in God’s place and God is the One who has withheld you from bearing. Now lady, get your spiritual stuff together and get straightened out with the Lord. Your problem isn’t with me, it’s with God.”

That’s what he’s trying to say but because of the way he says it, because he’s so mad and because he yells at her, she has no longer ears to hear. She’s turned her hearing off, because her husband’s mad at her today and she’s not going to listen to anything he says; that’s just the way it’s going to be.

Then Rachel comes up with this maid idea; the same brilliant scheme cooked up by Sarah that generated a nation hostile to the nation Israel. So now we have husband, wife and maid. The maid, in those days, was often given with the bride the point of marriage, we get this out of some of the tablets that have been dug up in archeology. This helps understand what they were thinking of, even though it wasn’t what God was thinking of. When the woman was given to the man, particularly if she came from a wealthy home, her dad was very concerned if she did not bear her husband a son. So often, along when he married his daughter off he would, as part of the wedding presents, give his daughter her own maid. Now, the maid was to do more things than just do her hair and take care of her clothing and so on. **She was also to act as a backup so if she did not bear sons the maid could; in this way that woman’s status in the household would be protected.** So there’s legal reasoning that’s going on behind this thing. However, what Rachel ought to have done was sit and pray about it, she would have had her son. But no, she was more concerned with competing with Leah, and she was angry and out of fellowship with God and she was doing her own little thing.

So now we have the maids getting involved and before it’s all over, here’s one man, Jacob and he’s hopping from one bed to another bed to another bed, he’s got four of them he’s got to keep satisfied. Wow, it’s difficult enough with one, how’d you like to have four? So he’s catching it, by the end of verse 24, from four different women; squabbling all among themselves, all competing against him. I just point this out to you so you can identify with Jacob.

Genesis 30:16-24 *When Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must sleep with me because I have paid for your services with my son's mandrakes." So he had marital relations with her that night. (17) God paid attention to Leah; she became pregnant and gave Jacob a son for the fifth time. (18) Then Leah said, "God has granted me a reward because I gave my servant to my husband as a wife." So she named him Issachar. (19) Leah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a son for the sixth time. (20) Then Leah said, "God has given me a good gift. Now my husband will honor me because I have given him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. (21) After that she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah. (22) Then God took note of Rachel. He paid attention to her and enabled her to become pregnant. (23) She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Then she said, "God has taken away my shame." (24) She named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD give me yet another son."*

If you're keeping score at the nursery, it's running 8 to 2 in favor of Leah. And this is the story of that home, keeping a scorecard on the number of points we've got.

And finally, in verse 22, God enables Rachel to get pregnant. And the way the text is written seems to say he listens to her complaining but you never really find anywhere where Rachel tried to resolve the problem spiritually. So we could conclude, she basically never really got it straight with God, so what you see is God being super gracious to this woman. She tried several things on her own, but nothing's worked yet so God says all right, this poor girl down here is really having a problem so I'll give her one. And then as soon as God gives her one son what does she do? She names him Joseph, which comes from the Hebrew word "give me another one." So still she's out of it at the end of verse 24. Both of these women, because of this age-long sister rivalry that's going on are creating war in Jacob's house, right under his nose. In Genesis 35:16-19, Rachel dies giving birth to Jacob's 12th son, Benjamin, which is ironic considering she told Jacob to give her children or she would die.

Now God is so concerned about this matter of sister/sister polygamous marriages that He takes steps to stop it once and for all. Turn to Leviticus 18:18 and you'll see a provision in the Mosaic Law Code that forbade, under a polygamous society, a man marrying two sisters. "*You must not take a woman in marriage and then marry her sister as a rival wife while she is still alive, to have sexual intercourse with her.*" So this caused so much turmoil in that house that God was not going to have this happen again.

Now, how are we to summarize the first 24 verses of chapter 30? Here we've got the frustrated man who can't get control of his house and he's angry, he's frustrated, he's got four women here all going after him for something. And in this situation we see painted very realistically the kind of man God uses to grow His vineyard on. And that's the story. You see, this can't come except by election; this can't come except by God's grace. How else do you work with people like this? Only if you've got a very, very good plan and lots and lots of patience, and that's the story of how the kingdom gets started. Some people have a very pious and condescending attitude to passages of Scripture like this. But look at these people in the Old Testament. Are they really any different from us? Not at all.

This is exactly the kind of people we are and people don't like it; they don't like what it's really saying, that God uses these kinds of awful situations and doesn't always rescue people out of them.

There's also a good principle for us here in how Jacob works in this unfortunate arrangement with his father-in-law. Not only is Laban a bad boss, not only is he kind of a rip off artist, but he's also into occultism, demonism. So Jacob would have, from the human point of view, lots of reasons for not working with this guy. And yet..., Jacob works within the system. Now that takes a lot of dedication. You don't find Jacob throwing the whole thing out and going somewhere else as though his happiness as a man depended completely on his employment situation. His happiness as a man depended on his appropriation of Genesis 28:15, "I will be with you wherever you are," even if you're working for that nitwit Laban. Even there, God says, I will be with you.

That doesn't mean you can't walk off and change jobs. I'm just saying the emphasis in the Bible is the continuity principle; stay where you are as much as possible. If God wants you somewhere else, He will usually make it clear in some way.

You can see in his dealings with Laban that Jacob is learning to trust God. Laban here, he's constantly trying to cheat Jacob. Jacob's not bothered with that, because He has faith that God is with Him. He knows God wants him to do his job as if he was working for Him, so he's not going to worry about all that stuff. In his case doing a good job means produce the best, most lucrative herd and that means not only taking the right pasture, it means not only scouting for good land and irrigation, it means watching the systems of breeding good stock.

So Jacob says okay, I've got to build a stock of my own and here's how I'm going to do it. He realizes that while he cuts out of the herd those animals that have spotted skins, he knows that after breeding occurs within this group some spotted genes will emerge. Now he probably doesn't know all about genes and all the rest of it but he's a good observer, so he knows after a while those characteristics will emerge from this herd. So he's going to build his herd out of those and the clear ones he just turns back to Jacob.

Genesis 30:35-42 *So that day Laban removed the male goats that were streaked or spotted, all the female goats that were speckled or spotted (all that had any white on them), and all the dark-colored lambs, and put them in the care of his sons. (36) Then he separated them from Jacob by a three-day journey, while Jacob was taking care of the rest of Laban's flocks. (37) But Jacob took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees. He made white streaks by peeling them, making the white inner wood in the branches visible. (38) Then he set up the peeled branches in all the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. He set up the branches in front of the flocks when they were in heat and came to drink. (39) When the sheep mated in front of the branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. (40) Jacob removed these lambs, but he made the rest of the flock face the streaked and completely dark-colored animals in Laban's flock. So he made separate flocks for himself and did not mix them with Laban's flocks. (41) When the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would set up the branches in the troughs in front of the flock, so they would mate near the branches. (42) But if the animals were weaker, he did not set the branches there. So the weaker animals ended up belonging to Laban and the stronger animals to Jacob.*

Laban tries to cheat Jacob again, but Jacob is very wise about raising livestock. People wondered about this for many years, but Dr. Henry Morris has pointed out that the wood Jacob used must have had some kind of chemical in it that increased the chances of conception in the animals. **Jacob was increasing the frequency of conception.** So obviously it is some stimulant that he must have put in the water and Morris points out that one of the particular pieces of wood here that's involved has a chemical that's being used in animal husbandry today for that very purpose. Now, obviously God helped the process along quite a bit.

Here's a man and his God, and this man, I think, shows us a lot about Jacob as a model for us because what it shows you is that he prayed about his job and he expected God to be a partner in the details of his job. Now what more help can a guy expect than this? God for your shepherd. You see, men, this is one of those rare glimpses that you get in the Scriptures of how interested God is in the intimate details of your business. Or said another way, if you're trying to fix your car and you know how the nut goes on this particular bolt, God knows all about it. The idea of the nut and bolt was in His mind for all eternity and He knows a lot more about nuts and bolts than you do. So try praying about it and bring Him into the shop too. Ephesians 6:5-8

Jacob, the Persevering Male: Things a man can learn from the life of Jacob:

- It can take a long time in your life to establish yourself, to mature. One of the first things we

learn about Jacob is that it took 20 years for him to develop his basic family unit, to establish himself, to raise his children, and basically get started in life. On a contemporary life scale, Jacob would have been 45 or 50 before he basically got his stuff together.

- **Be a blessing to your environment.** Even Laban realized that he was being blessed because Jacob was such a good worker, and was blessed by God. In other words, he was a blessing to his environment because he did his job as unto the Lord. Develop a reputation for being a good worker.
- **Don't be indebted to unbelievers** - Jacob does not depend upon gifts from unbelievers. You notice his rejection of this; he trusts God, he does not get himself in a position where he's overtly dependent upon unbeliever's particular favors. Now this doesn't go so far as to say he couldn't borrow money or something here and there; the point that's made is that he doesn't want to get himself in a position where later in life a non-believer can say to him, I put you there, buddy, not your God, I did it. His grandfather Abraham had the same policy, if you remember.
- **The believing man who has a serious in-depth relationship with the Lord is wise**, i.e. he is skillful in his field. Jacob was a skilled animal breeder. And that whole section, from verse 31-43 describes his ability to set up a breeding situation to develop a new flock.
- **Use your faith in your business** - Jacob was a man who habitually used his faith, over and over again. See Genesis 31:5, 9, 11, 16, 42. There's a man who was occupied with God and with God's Word. He is habitually using the faith technique in the very core and heart of his business.
- **Realize that God knows more about your business, your job, than you do** - Jacob knew this and he was very intimate with God in the area of his specialty. God was brought into the details of the breeding business.

Genesis 31:11-13 *In the dream the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' 'Here I am!' I replied. (12) Then he said, 'Observe that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled, or spotted, for I have observed all that Laban has done to you. (13) I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the sacred stone and made a vow to me. Now leave this land immediately and return to your native land.'*

- Notice in verse 11, “the angel of God” which is Christ preincarnate, who does He says He is in verse 13? “I am the God of Bethel,” so there's one of your proof texts in the Old Testament that when it says the “angel of God” that's different from God (the Father) at the same time is God (the Son).
- So, twelve sons are the setting for the Nation of Israel. I would hope that everyone clearly understands **the Nation of Israel comes about by Abraham's son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons from which we get the TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL.** It will be those twelve sons that wind up in Egypt. But now, Jacob is coming back from Haran. He's been there twenty years, and remember old Laban and Jacob have been trying to get the better of each other for those twenty years, but Jacob has finally gotten the upper hand. He's got his wives and children, and the best of the flocks, and herds. So he comes back with quite a caravan.
- Now lets come over to Chapter 31. Word comes back to Laban that Jacob, Laban's daughters, and the children are leaving. We've seen in our previous lessons that, since the Tower of Babel, everyone on the face of the earth of the then-known world were idolaters. Then God called Abram out of idolatry, and Abram becomes a man who worships the one true God, as does Isaac, and we are going to see that Jacob will. But other than this family, they are all idolaters, even the relatives up there in Syria. Now, here it is in verse 30, where Laban catches up with Jacob's

caravan. He says:

Genesis 31:30 *"Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"*

- Notice it is a small "g." What kind of gods? They were his idols. Here is another thing that most people miss. Why was Laban so concerned about a bunch of little images? They were the family gods. And according to the pagan customs of that day, the child who received the blessing, was also the child to whom the family gods were given. Now, that meant something, if you had the family gods, you had it all. So Rachel, knowing that, slips them out without her father knowing about it, and she takes them along, and has them hidden.

Genesis 31:34-36 *Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find them. (35) She said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols. (36) Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me?"*

- I don't know if you've noticed yet, but it seems that Jacob may have had a problem with confrontation. He always seemed to shrink away from it or just try to turn away from it. Now, sometimes that's a wise thing to do, but a man has to be able to handle confrontations in life, you just have to deal with it instead of trying to avoid it.
- So, what it seems like God is doing starting here is giving Jacob three tests of confrontation. Keep in mind these are not punishments, but training. The first test is this confrontation with Laban.
- This is the first time that we see Jacob actually getting angry, and I think he has a right to be, after all he's had to put up with from this guy, and now he's being falsely accused? He's finally had enough of Laban, and lets him have it.

Genesis 31:48-52 *Laban said, "This pile of stones is a witness of our agreement today." That is why it was called Galeed. (49) It was also called Mizpah because he said, "May the LORD watch between us when we are out of sight of one another. (50) If you mistreat my daughters or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one else is with us, realize that God is witness to your actions." (51) "Here is this pile of stones and this pillar I have set up between me and you," Laban said to Jacob. (52) "This pile of stones and the pillar are reminders that I will not pass beyond this pile to come to harm you and that you will not pass beyond this pile and this pillar to come to harm me."*

This is the so-called Mizpah oath which Christians often use wrongly. This is an oath saying we don't trust each other and we're going to have a monument here, a contract established to protect ourselves one from the other. In other words, they bring their disagreement into legal form.

Genesis 31:55 *Early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place*

Genesis 32:1-3 *Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. (2) Jacob said when he saw them, "This is God's camp." So he named that place Mahanaim. (3) Then Jacob sent*

messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Jacob sees these angels. Now whether everybody else sees them we don't know; sometimes when angels materialize everybody sees them; for example Genesis 18, the two angels walk into Sodom, both the Sodomites and Lot and his family see the angels. So they've materialized in a complete physical way. Other times when angels appear they don't materialize, they just are visible to certain people. It's like veils are lifted off the person's eyes and they see what was there all along. For example, right now in this room there are probably hundreds of angels; if we had our vision fixed up right we would see them all through the room.

But this is apparently an angelic army that God allows Jacob to see. God wants Jacob to see that He is ready to protect him if Esau is planning to attack. I think this is also a wonderful picture of the protection God gives believers! In the Hebrew "Mahanaim" means the two hosts. The one of course was God's host, and the other his own.

Genesis 32:4 *He commanded them, "This is what you must say to my lord Esau: 'This is what your servant Jacob says: I have been staying with Laban until now.'*

He still recognizes that Esau, even though he's a spiritual ignoramus, is his older brother, and that's why he defers to him in verse 4. It's a recognition of family authority.

Genesis 32:5 *I have oxen, donkeys, sheep, and male and female servants. I have sent this message to inform my lord, so that I may find favor in your sight.'*"

The second step of Jacob; he prepares carefully. Why does he mention that he has all these things? They're tokens of grace. What he's saying is hey, Esau, God's blessing me. I'm a stinker and I've learned in these 20 years of my life what a stinker I am and how gracious God is and that He's blessed me and blessed me. So he isn't just bragging about his wealth; he's giving him evidences of things he's learned by watching God's blessing in his life. He comes back to Esau saying Esau, I've learned about myself and the basic thing is that I'm a sinner and I'm in need of grace. That's why he turns to Esau and he says now I ask grace in your sight. In other words, he's able to turn and ask for forgiveness and grace in Esau's sight because he's first turned and seen grace in God's sight.

Genesis 32:6 *The messengers returned to Jacob and said, "We went to your brother Esau. He is coming to meet you and has four hundred men with him."*

Starting with verse 6, this is the second confrontation that God puts before Jacob. He must confront Esau. This time he's not going to run away. Through these confrontations God is sanctifying and training Jacob but at the same time He is protecting Jacob. God spoke to Laban and warned him not to harm him, and it turned out that Esau had forgotten his bitterness and there is no problem.

This is a picture of Romans 8:28 and 1 Corinthians 10:13 for you and for me: "*And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose...*" and "*No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.*"

Genesis 32:7-8 *Jacob was very afraid and upset. So he divided the people who were with him into two camps, as well as the flocks, herds, and camels. If Esau attacks one camp," he thought, "then the other camp will be able to escape.*

Jacob is basically fearful because he knows all is not right with him and Esau. In Step two, he prepared carefully, choosing the time, place and method, looking at it with a gracious attitude. Step three, in verse 7, he now tries something that often people, Christians in particular, think of as coping out spiritually.

You can call this contingency planning. Something is contingent if it's not certain. Is tomorrow certain? From God's point of view, you bet! From your point of view, no. Now there's one of three ways you can handle tomorrow; you can sit and do nothing about it. Well, that just laziness and God doesn't want us to just sit back and do nothing. But then there's the other extreme, where you plan every detail for tomorrow. That's wrong by the book of James because James said woe to you businessmen, you go here, you go there, you've got your whole future planned. Suppose God wants to veto what you're going to do at 9:32 tomorrow morning? Have you given Him room to veto it? Have you maintained an element of flexibility?

So there are at two extremes and the Bible commends neither. The Bible says there's such a thing as godly planning. **Godly planning means that you are not God and don't know exactly what tomorrow will bring.** Godly planning involves many factors; one is that I confess and admit I don't have omniscience. And Jacob doesn't know what's going to take place so he divides his capital assets into two piles. He doesn't put all his eggs in one basket so they can both get ruined; he puts it over here so if one gets ruined the other is saved.

Now in Genesis 32:9-12 he prays. You'll notice when he prays and when he does not pray? **He does what he can do before he prays.** Some people have lives that are a complete mess, and when you ask them what they've done about it, they say, Well, I've prayed about it. What else have you done? Nothing. Someone said you know God says pray for your daily bread, but you don't walk out on your front lawn expecting it to come down in a parachute do you? The point is, there are things that you can do, obediently by faith. Then we come to pray.

Genesis 32:22 *Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.*

Jabbok was a little stream that flowed into the Jordan from the east. Probably just below the Sea of Galilee.

Genesis 32:24-26 *Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. (25) When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. (26) Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

This is the third confrontation God puts before Jacob. Here we have the last fascinating scene of this story, the wrestling match with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the most fascinating statements of Scripture.

We often speak metaphorically of wrestling with God in prayer. Do you know where it comes from?

Right here. This was wrestling with God in prayer. You say well I just see him wrestling. No, it's wrestling in prayer.

Hosea 12:3-4 *In the womb he attacked his brother; in his manly vigor he struggled with God. He struggled with an angel and prevailed; he wept and begged for his favor. He found God at Bethel, and there he spoke with him!*

This is a prophetic interpretation. I show you this so you don't think that I'm just making it up. That's how Hosea took the passage. This interpretation of the passage shows you that what we have in this wrestling match is a depiction of the character of the Jewish nation. Jacob is the last patriarch; from him on the tribes begin. And **God is building into his character spiritual aggressiveness**. He's not passive, he's active, and so Hosea uses the story to tell us that's what we're supposed to be. So while the wrestling match is going on it's actually an unusual prayer meeting. It's actually prayer that's going on.

Jacob is an old man and he's wrestling all night. Verse 24 says it's a man, so Jacob didn't realize at first that it was actually God. The Lord Jesus Christ is going on with Jacob for hours and He could have pinned him in the first two seconds, but He didn't; He wrestled on because all this time this is going on this prayer is going along with it; Jacob is holding on to Him because he wants a blessing if he has to put a fell nelson on God he's going to get a blessing out of him. That's his attitude. And so he goes on and on and wrestles and wrestles.

Well, the morning is coming and the Lord Jesus has something else to do and so He's going to leave this place but He just wants to make sure, like a father would wrestling with his sons, that he knows who basically holds the power. So the Hebrew has a word, it doesn't mean hit and it doesn't mean punch, it just means touch. And so while they're wrestling the Lord Jesus just reaches around with his finger and touches his thigh and totally dislocates it; and He says **I just want you to remember Jacob who ultimately is in control**. As Jacob walks away he limps, and he limps for the rest of his life.

What has been cured here, in this man? **God wants to develop an aggressive spirit in Jacob because He wants to develop an aggressive spirit in the nation Israel, an aggressive spiritual attitude**. Not a fleshly aggression that he used earlier in his life, with deception and deceit, but a Godly aggression.

Now you see the attitude of verse 26, that's what God wants, and He puts the pressure on and He keeps putting the pressure on until He makes Jacob do it the right way. And from now on he's going to have no problem with Esau, because he's learned that that aggressive spirit the God put in his soul is okay, it's just that he's got to be wise in how he uses that aggressiveness.

Genesis 32:27,28 *So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." (28) He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."*

There is Jacob's salvation! Now he becomes a child of God. Never again does the Scripture give the account of Jacob the deceiver. Never again will you find Jacob trying to cheat someone. He is now a changed man, and that is why God changes his name. From the deceiver to the prince with God. Every good Bible student should understand these two terms; Jacob and Israel. Many times

they seem to be used synonymously, however they are not synonymous. It is the same nation, but it's two aspects of that nation.

Isaiah 9:8 *The Lord sends a message against Jacob, And it falls on Israel.*

Do you see what that is saying? God sent the word into the whole nation into Jacob, but who heard it? The believers, the spiritual part of Jacob. So you will see this all through Scripture. Let's go to Romans for another Scripture concerning this.

Romans 9:6 *It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all those who are descended from Israel are truly Israel,*

See the distinction? In other words Israel too has a believing remnant. They are all called the house of Jacob or the Sons of Jacob, or Abraham. But Israel was that spiritual element of true believers. Paul tells us here in Romans that all of Israel will be saved:

Romans 11:26 *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.*

And it's that same connotation - of course all Israel will be saved. Every believer in Israel, but that doesn't mean the whole nation. So always keep those two pictures sorted out in your mind. Now, let's come back to Genesis.

Genesis 32:29,30 *Then Jacob asked, "Please tell me your name." "Why do you ask my name?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there. (30) So Jacob named the place Peniel, explaining, "Certainly I have seen God face to face and have survived."*

Always remember, no man has seen the Father or the Spirit part of God, but they have seen God the Son all through the Old Testament. Remember Abraham in Chapter 18, what did he do? He killed the fatted calf, and he sat down and ate. Who was it with? It was God the Son. At the burning bush (and we'll see that in a few weeks), who was it? It was God the Son. So, remember, no man has seen God face to face in the Trinity, but Jacob saw God the Son face to face and his life was preserved.

Well, that's the major events in Jacob's life. I hope you have learned some things about this story in the Bible that you may not have considered before. That's the end of our study on the patriarchs. Next lesson we will move on to a study of one of Jacob's sons, Joseph. Unlike Jacob, who didn't learn to trust in God until late in life, Joseph seemed to "get it" from the beginning. In fact, he is generally recognized as a type, a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ because of the life he led. In preparation, you can read Genesis chapters 37 to 50.

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