

JACOB

Genesis 28:10-22

Intro: We have been studying the lives of men who are mentioned in the book of Genesis, men who played a major role in the plans and purposes of God in early human history. It is impossible to go any farther than to Adam in human history because there was no human history before him, regardless of what the deceived evolutionists try to make us believe.

I don't think that I have mentioned the time frame in the book of Genesis, but the first eleven chapters cover as much time as the rest of the OT put together! They span the time from Adam to Abraham. At Genesis 12 the record slows down as we have the record of four men in one family: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Abraham was the father, Isaac, his son; Jacob, Abraham's grandson, and Joseph, Abraham's great grandson.

Today I want to consider with you the life of Jacob. Of course, much more is given in Scripture than we can consider in one message, but I want to point out the major events in the life of Jacob that may be of help to us in our walk with the Lord today.

I. A COMMON FAMILY CHARACTERISTIC.

Most of us have this trait that I am going to mention, so we can't point an accusing finger at this grandfather, Abraham, nor his son, Isaac, nor his grandson, Jacob. But they all had it, and we do too. It was the tendency to run ahead of the Lord. It speaks of a lack of patience. Time is very important to us, and time is also very important to the Lord. But if we can't see how God is going to fulfill a promise to us, or how He is going to answer our prayers, the tendency is to take matters in our own hands, and run ahead of the Lord.

You see it in Abraham's life when he and Sarah thought that they were too old to have children, that God had waited too long, and so they went ahead and had a son by Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar. That had immediate consequences, and far-reaching consequences as well. That never should have happened, and it wouldn't have happened if Abraham and Sarah had only continued to wait on the Lord, believing that the Lord knew what He was doing.

You see the same characteristic in Isaac's life when he thought that he was going to die, and so he sent Esau out to get venison for the stew that he loved to eat, planning, when Esau returned, to give him the blessing. And he did this knowing that it was God's plan that Jacob have the blessing.

Bringing it down to Jacob today, we know that Jacob was running ahead of the Lord when he got Esau to give up the birthright even though he undoubtedly knew that God was going to give him the birthright and the blessing as well. And then when Rebekah knew that Isaac was preparing to give the blessing to Esau, she quickly prepared the special dish that Isaac loved to eat, and sent Jacob in with it to get the blessing before Esau got back. So Isaac was running ahead of the Lord in planning to give the blessing to Esau. And Esau was running ahead of the Lord in preparing to receive it. Rebekah was running ahead of the Lord in getting Jacob to go in to get the blessing, and Jacob was running ahead of the Lord in giving in to his mother's demands to send him in, to deceive his father, and to get the blessing.

They all, except possibly Esau, trusted the Lord most of the time, but in these situations they all took matters into their own hands. They lacked faith, and they lacked the faith that would have enabled them to wait to see what the Lord would have done for them.

We all need to remember that when God gives His people a promise, He knows exactly how He is going to fulfill that promise, and *when!* It is *the timing* that usually gives us trouble. That is when we need to keep trusting the Lord, and to wait patiently for Him.

But let us see how it all worked out.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES.

What are consequences? They are the results of what we do. Everything has consequences. All action produces results. When we do God's will, blessing follows. It may not always be the blessing that we had wanted, but there will be blessing. The Lord will see to that.

But if we disobey the Lord, if we run ahead of Him and take matters into our own hands, there are also consequences. One consequence for Jacob was that Esau hated him because of what he had done, and he vowed that

as soon as their father died, he was going to kill Jacob. So Jacob had to flee for his life. He went on the pretense that he was looking for a wife, but the main reason was to get away from Esau.

There were consequences for Rebekah, Jacob's mother, also. She probably suffered more than we are told in Scripture, but one thing is certain. She sent Jacob away for a few days, but he was gone for twenty years, and she never saw him again. She is not mentioned when Jacob finally got home, and so we assume that she had died.

Isaac and Rebekah did not have a particularly happy home, but what Rebekah and Jacob did made matters infinitely worse. And we are not told about Isaac, but we can be sure that he wasn't happy to have Jacob gone so long.

But amazingly there were some good consequences. Jacob did not have Romans 8:28 in those days, but he was going to learn that truth anyway. What do I mean?

Let me read it to you from the Bible. If you haven't done so already, please turn to Genesis 28 and follow as I begin reading with verse 10. (Read Gen. 28:10-22.)

This happened on Jacob's first night out. Was the Lord pleased with what Jacob and his mother had done? Obviously not! He wanted them to trust Him with what was going on, and to wait for Him to see what He would do. The Lord intended for Jacob to have the birthright and the blessing, but not the way he got it.

But did He forsake Jacob because He wanted to have nothing more to do with him? No. Did Jacob deserve to be forsaken? Yes. But when we do wrong, the Lord may let us experience some of the consequences, but He never gives us all of the trouble that we deserve to have. Read verse 15 again. I am sure that Jacob had a hard time believing he was hearing such words from the Lord. This is truly the amazing grace of God. Jacob called the name of the place where the Lord appeared to him, "Bethel," which means, as we have read, *house of God*.

But what happened after this? Well, Jacob went on to his Uncle Laban's house, and he was to find out what it was to be deceived because Uncle Laban was the same kind of a man that his nephew Jacob was.

Uncle Laban had two daughters: Leah and Rachel. Jacob fell in love with his cousin Rachel because she was the prettier of the two. Jacob agreed to work for his uncle for seven years in order to be able to marry Rachel. But when the seven years was over, Jacob thought that he was marrying Rachel, but Laban gave him Leah instead. And then he told Jacob afterwards that in their country the older daughter had to be married first. So the Lord was giving Jacob a little of his own medicine. He had deceived his father, and now he was deceived by his uncle.

Afterwards Laban told Jacob that he could marry Rachel too if he would work another seven years for her. It seems that he was married to Rachel a week after he had married Leah, but this was going to lead to other troubles. Leah started to have children first, but Rachel was not able to have children. Jacob had children also with Leah's handmaiden, Zilpah, and finally with Rachel's handmaiden, Bilhah. Then the Lord gave Rachel a son who was born on their way back to Canaan, but the Rachel herself died.

During the time that Jacob worked for his Uncle Laban, Laban changed his wages ten times, and you can be sure that none of the ten was up, or pleasing to Jacob worked for Laban six more years after the fourteen he worked for his two wives. But finally things got so bad that Jacob took his four wives and their children and left to return to Canaan at a time when Laban did not know that he was going.

But there had been a heavy, dark cloud hanging over Jacob's head for twenty years, and now that cloud got blacker than ever. He was going back home, but what he dreaded more than anything, was meeting Esau. Evidently there had been no communication with his family in Canaan for that twenty year period, and the last he knew about Esau was that Esau was going to kill him.

Nevertheless, Jacob kept going home. But then another very wonderful thing happened. What I am talking about now is told us in Genesis 32.

The first thing that happened to him was that he was met by "the angels of God. See Gen. 32:1-2. This was the Lord's way of telling Jacob that he was going to be protected. Jacob heard that Esau was coming, and that he had *four hundred men with him!* This frightened Jacob, and so he divided his family, hoping that not all of them would be killed. But even before he did all of that, he did something else that showed at least a little of

what the Lord had been doing in Jacob's heart during those twenty years. What was it? He prayed! It wasn't a long prayer. In fact, it was very short. It only took Moses four verses to tell us how Jacob prayed. You will find the prayer in Genesis 32:9-12. Let me read it to you. I really love the way Jacob prayed, and I think you will too. (Read Gen. 32:9-12 and explain it.)

But that was not all that happened.

Jacob had prepared an outstanding gift for Esau, had gotten his family situated, and then very significantly we are told in Gen. 32:24, "And Jacob was left alone." But what happened? A man suddenly came upon him, and they wrestled each other all night long. Jacob had to think that this was a spy sent by Esau to determine the best way to attack Jacob and kill him and his family.

But at some point in the wrestling match, Jacob realized that he was wrestling with the Lord. And since "no man hath seen God at any time," this has to be an OT appearance of Christ, the pre-incarnate Christ!!!

(Read Gen. 32:24-32 and explain it.)

In our conflicts with the Lord, we win by surrendering. The Lord not only works in our circumstances to change us, but He works in our hearts. It is easy to record the circumstances, but not the heart work. But in this story we see the sovereign hand of God, taking this son of Isaac, putting him in situations where others took advantage of him, and where he obviously was unable to cope with the many problems that he had, until Jacob realized that it was the Lord he needed so Jacob would be content to follow the Lord instead of running off ahead of Him. How good the Lord was to work in Jacob's life, and to solve all of his problems.

The last two verses of Genesis 35 tell us about the last time that we see Jacob and Esau together – at the place where they buried Isaac, their father.

Concl: This is one of the best stories I know which teaches us how we all need to learn to trust in the Lord, and to wait patiently for Him. He knows the way through the wilderness, and His way is best!