

Jacob was Deceived by Laban

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord leads us as we learn to yield to Him. Jacob loved Rachel, even though he had only known her for a short time when he said he would work for her for seven years. In this topic, we will see that Laban deceived Jacob and gave Leah to Jacob, even though he had worked seven years for Rachel.

Apparently, Jacob went to work for Laban very soon after he arrived. After a month, Laban finally asked him what he wanted as wages for his work. Genesis 29:15-17 says, “Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages *be*?’” Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel. Leah’s eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.” Laban realized that it was not right to expect a relative to work for nothing. That is why, after a month, Laban asked Jacob to tell him what he wanted for wages. Jacob had come for a wife, and Laban had two daughters. By this time, Jacob knew which daughter he wanted.

These verses tell us a little about each of the daughters. Leah was the older of the two daughters. We also see that her eyes were described as delicate. The word translated “delicate” or tender means that *her eyes did not show brightness*. Some people in that day felt that was a blemish. In contrast, Rachel was a very beautiful young woman. The word translated “beautiful” speaks of beautiful in form and appearance. Deuteronomy 21:10-12 says, “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails.” Then, 1 Samuel 25:3 uses the word to describe Abigail. “The name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And *she was* a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man *was* harsh and evil in *his* doings. He *was of the house of* Caleb.” In both verses, the word is used to describe a beautiful woman.

The verse also says that Rachel was well-favored. The word translated “well-favored” is used to speak of the young men that the king wanted in the book of Daniel. Daniel 1:3-4 says, “Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom *there was* no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who *had* ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.” Here, we see that the king wanted good-looking young men, but also listed a whole variety of other abilities. During the month that Jacob had been living with Laban, he had been able to observe that Rachel had many things that he wanted in a wife.

As a result, when Laban asked Jacob what he wanted for his wages, Jacob was prepared to answer that question. Genesis 29:18-20 says, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’” And Laban said, ‘*It is* better that I give her

to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.’ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.” We read that Jacob loved Rachel. This is the word that is used in Leviticus 19:18, where we read, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: *I am* the LORD.” Christ used this statement from Leviticus, in Matthew 22:37-40, where we read, “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” This means that this word for love is used in the Old Testament and quoted in the New Testament.

Laban was happy with the offer of Jacob. He said that it would be better for him to give his younger daughter to Jacob than to some other man. However, Laban also had other plans. He took the offer of Jacob, but developed a plan that would give him fourteen years of work from Jacob in order for him to receive Rachel as his wife. Jacob would learn that just as he had deceived his brother to get the blessing, Laban was going to deceive him as well. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Jacob was going to reap an extra seven years of work for Rachel. In addition, he was going to have two wives who were jealous of one another.

We also see that the first seven years passed very quickly for Jacob. Those years seemed like only a few days to Jacob because of the love he had for Rachel. This is a key lesson young people need to learn about marriage. If there is genuine love, the time will pass quickly. However, if genuine love is missing, the opposite is true. God gives each couple the opportunity to experience His love. If we are motivated by His love, we will be able to love others. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Here, we see that as we understand the love of God for us, we begin to live for Him who died and rose again. As we live for Him, we experience great joy in our lives.

Soon, the seven years had passed, and so Jacob said to Laban, in Genesis 29:21-25, “Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.’ And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah *as* a maid. So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?’” Jacob was eager to marry Rachel as soon as he had completed the seven years of work to receive her as his bride. As a result, he made the request to Laban for his wife to be given to him so he could marry her and go in to her. Laban agreed and gathered all of the men of that place for a week of feasting to celebrate the wedding. That was the custom of their area.

That evening, everything was ready for the marriage so that Jacob could receive his bride. However, Laban chose to deceive Jacob and brought Leah to Jacob, instead of Rachel. Since the bride had a veil over her face, and it was dark, Jacob could not see her face and realize that it was

Leah, instead of Rachel. As a result, he went into the tent in the dark of the night and consummated the marriage with her. It was not until the next morning that Jacob learned he had been deceived by Laban and that he was married to Leah, instead of Rachel. Suddenly, Jacob realized what it was like to be deceived, instead of being the one who was the deceiver. He had deceived his brother more than seven years earlier and had seen the great anger of his brother.

At the same time, we see that Laban had done what was customary at a wedding. He had also given Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. It was a custom, in their culture, for the father to give the daughter a maid to help the daughter. Of course, that did not ease the anger of Jacob, but Laban could say that he had carried out the customs of his culture. In his anger, Jacob went to Laban and asked him three questions. First, Jacob asked, “What is this that you have done to me?” Jacob had worked for seven years to pay for his wife. Those years had seemed like just a few days because of the love Jacob had for Rachel. However, he realized that Laban had tricked him and he was now married to Leah instead. This was not the woman for whom he had worked for seven years. Instead, this was the older sister, not the young woman Jacob had loved and eagerly looked forward to marrying. Jacob suddenly knew what it felt like to be cheated.

Second, Jacob asked, “Was it not for Rachel that I served you?” Jacob had said, in Genesis 29:18, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’” Jacob had made it clear to Laban that it was Rachel that he wanted to marry. He had specifically said that he wanted to marry the younger daughter. Of course, Laban knew what Jacob had said, but due to the fact that Leah’s eyes were delicate he knew that it was possible no one would ask to marry her. In fact, in the next topic, we will see that Laban had already planned to give Rachel to Jacob, but he was going to get seven additional years of work from Jacob for Rachel.

Third, Jacob asked, “Why then have you deceived me?” Jacob understood what it meant to deceive others. He had deceived his father to get the blessing. He had deceived his brother by claiming to be Esau so his father would give him the blessing. Now, he had been deceived and knew how it felt to be deceived. He had worked for Rachel for seven years and then after the marriage found out that he was married to Leah and that his father-in-law had deceived him. The Lord later led Paul to write, in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” Jacob had reaped exactly as he had sown. We want to help our physical and spiritual children to understand and apply these verses to their own lives so they will be able to help others realize the consequences of their choices. Many people fail to realize that they will reap the consequences of their choices. That is why it is so clearly explained what happens when people make sinful choices. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the result of sinful choices.