

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

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This Sunday is Easter.

Breakfast starts at 8:30, please bring your food hot, ready to serve.

Easter Worship Service 9:30 special music with The Greatest Gift,
from Waterboro, Maine

April memory verse

Commandment 1 Exodus 20:1&2

² I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. And he looked, behold there was a well in the field, and, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And all of the flocks were gathered together here: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again on the well's mouth in this place. And Jacob said unto the young people that were there, My brothers, where do you come from? And they said, We're from Haran. And he said unto them, Do you know Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, Sure, we know him. And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, Sure: and, look, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep (Gen 29:1-6).

So God had His hand upon Jacob, had guided him to the place of Haran and actually at that very moment, Rachel Laban's daughter was coming with her father's sheep.

Now this well had this big rock over it and they would gather at the well to water their sheep. Well, here it was in the early afternoon and these people were already there. But the rock was so big. Evidently it took a lot of them to move the rock. And so they have to wait till the whole group came, but yet they had sort of a process where first come, first served. And so they'd

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

come early and just sort of lie around and let the sheep lie there while they were waiting to get enough people to move the rock so that they could water it. And then they would wait until all the flocks that were gathered in turn and each one being watered, and then they would roll the rock back over the well.

So Jacob is talking to them, perhaps cannot understand why they'd just be there so early or being sort of lazy really in their job of watching their sheep and is talking to them, "Where are you from?" "We're from Haran". "Do you know Laban?" "Yeah, we know him and in fact there comes his daughter right now".

And he said, Hey, it's high it's still early afternoon, really about noontime. It's yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water the sheep, and then go out and feed them (Gen 29:7).

Hey, you shouldn't be just sitting around here at this time of the day. Go ahead and water your sheep and then take them out to the pasture, you know. It's too early to have them just standing around here.

And they said, We cannot, until all of the flocks are gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; and then we water the sheep. And while he was yet talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother (Gen 29:8-10).

Probably just showing off a little bit his strength. You know it took a whole group of them to roll that stone back but when you've got incentive, it's amazing what you can do. And so Jacob went up by himself and rolled the stone back.

And so then Jacob [overcome with emotion] kissed Rachel, and lifted up her voice, and wept (Gen 29:11).

She probably thought, "Who in the world is this", you know. He is doing these marvelous feats of strength; now kissing me and crying.

And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father. And it came to pass, when Laban

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him for the space of a month. And Laban said to Jacob, Because you are my brother, should you serve me for nothing? tell me, what should your wages be (Gen 29:12-15)?

Notice Laban is allowing Jacob to set his own wages.

And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah was tender eyed (Gen 29:16-17);

Some believe that that means she was blue-eyed. Her eyes were not the real deep dark brown which were considered the strong, stronger eyes.

but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel (Gen 29:17-18);

Sort of a love at first sight.

and he said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter (Gen 29:18).

Now it was a custom in those days for a man to pay a dowry for a wife. And in those cultures today, it is still a cultural thing to pay a dowry. Now what a dowry actually amounts to is alimony in advance. In case you're not treating your wife right and she has to leave you, rather than being destitute, the dowry is to be saved for the wife. It's actually for her and for her future. In case you put her away, in case you divorce her, she has enough to get along on. The dowry was used for that. It was actually alimony in advance and it was the responsibility of the father to keep that for the wife for the future in case something didn't work out in the marriage. It was then to take care of her and to provide for her.

Now Jacob came from home with nothing. All he had was his walking stick. So he had no dowry. But he was so in love with Rachel, he was willing to become a slave for seven years in order that his seven years of service might become a dowry.

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

Now in reality, in those seven years that he served Laban for Rachel, because God so blessed Jacob and Jacob's service, that Laban was increased with wealth and goods, that which came to Laban by Jacob's service should have been set aside as the dowry for the daughter. But, Laban didn't do that. He just, you know, used it for himself and did not really set up a true dowry for his daughters. And so Jacob made the deal. "I'll serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel".

And Laban said, It is better that I give her to you, than I should give her to another man: [go ahead and] abide with me. And Jacob served for seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him just like a few days, because he had such great love for her. And Jacob said to Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her (Gen 29:19-21).

It's sort of the seven years but Laban still just didn't turn her over. I mean, Jacob had to ask for her.

And Laban gathered together all of the men of the place, and he made a great feast (Gen 29:22).

Because actually they would celebrate for about seven days, the wedding feast would last that long. They'd gather together, have big feasting and big parties and all.

And so it came to pass in the evening (Gen 29:23),

It was dark.

he took Leah his daughter (Gen 29:23),

And of course, they were heavily veiled.

and he brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah, Zilpah his maid for a handmaid. And it came to pass, in the morning [when Jacob saw his new bride], that it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What have you done to me? I served you for Rachel. Why have you beguiled me? And Laban said, It's the custom of the country, that we're not to give the younger before the firstborn. So fulfil her week (Gen 29:23-27).

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

In other words, the week long wedding thing, go ahead and serve you know fulfill her week, sort of the honeymoon,

and then I'll give you the other daughter and you will serve me yet another seven years (Gen 29:27).

Now I am certain that in this Jacob could not help but remember the deception that he had pulled upon his dad disguising as his brother. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). And this is a classic example. He had disguised himself as his brother, had deceived his father. Had gone in and received the blessing. And now the old switch-a-roo is pulled on him. And his father-in-law does much the same for him. He serves for seven years, created dowry, and the old man switches daughters.

A lot of questions are unanswered: Where was Rachel? You know, I wonder if they had to whisk her away by force. And what was Leah's mental attitude in this whole thing? I mean, surely she knew that in the morning when he wakes up and sees that it's me, you know, it must have been tough on her as he made love to her that night realizing that he was thinking that he was making love to her younger sister and all. And it wasn't easy; I wouldn't suppose for this whole situation and no doubt created a lot of tensions for the time.

But Jacob was a good sport through it all. I mean, that you have to confess. You know, what would you have done? You know, had the switch-a-roo been pulled on you like that. And it could be that it was because of his own past that he was such a good sport and so understanding about the whole thing. But the old man just-Now if that were the custom then Laban should have told him the custom back at the beginning of the seven years. He should have said, "Well, that's fine, son, but we got a custom here". But he's figuring to, you know, to squeeze out from Jacob everything he can.

Now Jacob is a good sport in that he goes on to serve another seven years for Rachel so that Leah would not feel less in his eyes. In other words, had he been making the deal for Leah in the beginning, he probably wouldn't have said seven years 'cause he really wasn't interested in her. But Jacob consenting to go on for another seven years and there isn't really too much about Jacob's explosion or anger or anything else but he's pretty even and

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

cool through the whole thing. Much more than I think I would be under the similar circumstances.

So Jacob went along with it. Spent the honeymoon with her,
and then he gave him Rachel as a wife also (Gen 29:28).

In other words, he didn't have to wait a full seven years to get Rachel. He received Rachel the next week but still he then was obligated to serve another seven years to form her dowry.

And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served yet another seven years (Gen 29:29-30).

Now here we find the case of polygamy but even as we read of it, we see the difficulties that exist in a polygamous relationship as there begin to develop jealousies and rivalries and so forth among the wives.

And so we find that here there is really no strong biblical injunction against it. It was something that was accepted in that culture at that time. And of course, it came to its maximum under Solomon. But by the time we come to the New Testament and the purposes of God are more clearly defined, when the church is developed, polygamy is definitely prohibited. And those who were to be the overseers of the church were to be husbands of one wife and keeping their homes. And this was still in a time in which mistresses and courtesans and so forth were widely accepted in the Grecian culture and in the Roman culture.

So problems did develop; jealousies and all, Rachel, whom he loved more than Leah; yet, even in that you have a difficult situation. That it's going to create hurt feelings. That's going to create difficult living.

but Rachel was barren. But Leah conceived, and she bore a son, and she called his name [look, a son]: for she said, The LORD hath looked upon my affliction (Gen 29:31-32);

She sees that he doesn't love me so much as he loves my sister. So look, a son.

now therefore my husband will love me (Gen 29:32).

Commentary on Genesis chapter 29 by Chuck Smith 4.16.25

Isn't that rather pathetic? She senses a lack of love from Jacob and she's hoping now that I've born him a son, now will he love me? And reaching out for love. As I say, it's just the tragic by-product of this polygamous relationship.

And she conceived again, and bore another son; and she said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated (Gen 29:33),

And that word "hated" should not be taken literally; I was loved less. He didn't really hate her but he didn't love her as much as he loved Rachel.

he hath therefore given me this son: and so she called his name Hearing (Gen 29:33).

Which the Lord has heard me so she called his name, I've been heard or hearing.

And she conceived again, bore another son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined to me, because I have had three sons for him: and so she called his name Joined. And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Praise; and she left off bearing (Gen 29:34-35).

So the names of the boys were actually indicative of her desires to be accepted, to be loved, and they probably were born within a year of each other.