

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?)
Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 24. (Gen chapters 30:25-31:55). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: A literary ring composition (shown below) provides structure for chapters 29-31 which depict Jacob’s time outside the “*land of promise.*” Relational confrontation & intrigue mark these chapters, but Jacob’s character is undergoing a slow transformation as God fulfills his promise of “land” and “descendants” – first to Abraham (12:1-3) and then to Isaac and Jacob (26:24; 28:13-15). Last week, we read how Jacob spent 14 years in his uncle’s service to become a “multitude” with 2 wives, 2 handmaids and 12 children. In today’s verses, God completes His gifts of flocks and possessions to Jacob as God appears to Jacob again to instruct him to return to the “promised land.” Note the following outline:

- (A) Jacob arrives in Haran (meets Laban) (29:1-14)
- (B) Jacob and Laban make a contract (29:15-20)
- (C) Laban deceives Jacob (29:21-30)
- (D) The birth of Jacob’s 12 children (29:31-30:24) [God does prosper, a *multitude*]
- (C) Jacob tricks Laban (30:25-43) [flocks increase]
- (B) Jacob and Laban dispute (31:17-24) [God promises presence & orders Jacob to return, vv. 3,13]
- (A) Jacob departs from Laban (Haran) (31:43-54) [Jacob credits God, v.42; Laban covenants, v 44]

Read 30:25-28. After the birth of his 12th child (30:25), Jacob comes to a couple of conclusions:

- What does Jacob decide it is time to do?
- What does Laban say as a consequence of what he has learned by “divination”? Now re-read God’s initial promise to Abraham in 12:1-3. In what way is Laban’s response noteworthy in light of God’s initial promise? What lesson do you draw for yourself from these verses? Discuss.

Read 30:29-43. Jacob plans not to be indebted to Laban regarding future possessions. What is Jacob’s plan and what are the physical results of Jacob’s actions?

Read 31:1-16. Now consider the spiritual aspects of Jacob’s life. These verses seem to indicate a true turning point in Jacob’s walk with and reliance on God. Previously, he seemed to think and act as if he could accomplish things by his own effort.

- What is Jacob’s apparent relationship with God at this time? [Note particularly verses: 3, 5, 7, 9-13, 16]. How do you compare your own life walk with God to this time in Jacob’s life? Discuss.
- Now re-read Jacob’s discussion with God roughly 14 years prior in 28:18-22. What transformation appears to have taken place in Jacob during this time? What, if any part of this, is applicable to you? Discuss.

Read 31:17-42. These verses contain a mystery that we will not solve (most probably) in this session. Jacob flees his kinsman with his rightful possessions; unbeknownst to Jacob, Rachel steals her father’s household idols (*teraphim*). How this all fits together is definitely open to conjecture!

- How active is God with Laban and Jacob in this set of interactions and how might your conclusions apply to your life?
- What has Jacob apparently finally learned and concluded about the God of Abraham and Isaac? Discuss.

Read 31:43-55. The deceiver (Jacob) has finally turned a spiritual corner in his life. He becomes the reconciler – a preparatory act for what is about to happen between him and his brother, Esau, in chapter 33.

- What actions do Laban and Jacob take as they prepare to separate from each other?
- Now read 2 Cor 5:11-21. What does Paul say about Christians as reconcilers? What lesson do you draw for yourself from these verses? Discuss.
- What lesson, if any, do you draw for yourself about crediting God for blessings? Discuss.