

Bible Essentials

Scripture Passage: Genesis 29:31-30:24

Think about your past week. How has God answered prayer or worked in your life? What prayer requests do you have? Write them here. Then take time to pray about your requests and ask him to open your heart for today's study.

Read today's passage. Jot down your initial impressions of the passage.

Here is some context for Genesis 29:31-30:24.

This passage continues the story of Jacob, the final patriarch in the line of Abraham. After angering his brother Esau by stealing his birthright and his blessing, Jacob leaves home and travels to his mother's family for safety. Rebekah's brother Laban takes him in, and Jacob falls in love with Laban's daughter Rachel. In wage negotiations, Jacob and Laban agree that Jacob will work seven years in exchange for Rachel as his wife.

Everything goes as expected—until the wedding night. Jacob works for seven years, the wedding arrives, he gets married—and to his surprise, he discovers Leah has been married to him instead of Rachel. Laban defends himself by saying that their custom is for the oldest daughter to marry first. So they negotiate another seven years of work for

Rachel. Jacob worked seven years to marry one sister, waited a week, married the other sister as well, and then worked another seven years for her. Within the span of a week, Jacob gains not only two wives but their two attendants as well. Through all of this, Jacob loves Rachel more than Leah, and everyone knows it. And what happens after marriage? Children.

One more note for those who read the story and wonder about the significance of mandrakes. A mandrake is a flowering plant in the nightshade family that has large, forked roots that sometimes resemble a human face and body. They were believed to be an aphrodisiac and were commonly eaten to promote fertility. Mandrakes are mentioned one other time in the Bible in Song of Solomon 7:13. I'm not sure how well they work, since in this story Leah has at least three more children before Rachel has her first son.

What are your thoughts about the context? Write some key points here.

Read the passage again. Use a different Bible version if you have one available. Then summarize the passage in your own words.

Look closely at the passage and answer the following questions.

What does the passage say about God?

What does the passage say about people?

What does the passage say about God's plan?

What else strikes you about this passage?

Understanding how a passage fits into the overarching story of the Bible is important.

Back in Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that he would make Abraham into a great nation. Abraham waited 25 years for God to give him the promised son through whom he would become a great nation. Abraham's son Isaac then waited 20 years after his marriage to Rebekah before God gave them twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob becomes the final member of the three patriarchs, and God's promise to build Abraham into a nation finally seems like it might become a reality. With 12 sons, Jacob has a good start on building a massive family tree.

We see throughout the rest of the Old Testament that Jacob's 12 sons do indeed become a great nation, the nation of Israel. In fact, they become so numerous that the Egyptians were afraid of them and placed them into slavery. Despite the efforts of the Egyptians to slow the growth of the Israelite population, the Israelites numbered 600,000 men plus women and children when they are finally freed from slavery and escape from Egypt (Exodus 12:37). God had fulfilled his promise.

Making Abraham into a great nation was only part of God's promise. God also promised that the whole world would be blessed through Abraham. What was this blessing? This blessing was Jesus, the Messiah, God himself come to earth to pay the penalty for our sins and bring salvation to all who believe. I find it interesting that Jesus came through the line of Judah. Judah was Leah's child, not the beloved Rachel's. Also, Judah was the first son that Leah had that she didn't try to use to manipulate Jacob into loving her. Instead, she simply praised God for his birth. This was the son through whom Jesus would come.

What are your thoughts on how this passage fits into the overarching story of the Bible? Write your thoughts here. If you have any questions, write those as well. You may find answers in future lessons, or you may want to find another Christian that you can ask.

Use the following questions to apply today's Scripture passage to your own life.

How does this passage affect how you view God?

How does this passage affect how you view yourself?

How does this passage affect how you will live your life?

Close in prayer, asking God to help you apply what you learned today.