



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 29: 1-35

“The Deceiver Deceived”

TRANSCRIPT

Will you turn with me to Genesis chapter 29, and I want to read the entire chapter for the scripture reading. Now, just by way of review, remember after the blessing had been obtained by Jacob in chapter 27, because of the threats that Esau made against the life of Jacob, Rebekah was very much disturbed and suggested to Jacob that he go. She said that she was tired of living because of the daughters of Heth, that is, Ishmael's pagan wives and therefore, Isaac called Jacob to himself and charged him that he should not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan but rather should go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.

Now, these were cousins of Jacob. Rebekah was the sister of Laban. They both were the children of Bethuel, and so Jacob is now charged to go to the east in order to obtain a wife. Along the way, Jacob, a fugitive from justice really, has this great experience in which at Bethel the ladder appears in a dream to him. This ladder has its top reaching to heaven and its bottom upon the earth, and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. And then God stood by the side of it and said, “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac,” and then after saying this, he introduced Jacob not only to the promises that had been given to Abraham and

Isaac, but also added some special words for him. He said that he would be with him and he would keep him wherever he would go and he would bring him back to the land and that he would not leave Jacob until he had done what he had promised him. And so that is something of a blank check for the care of God over Jacob’s life and therefore, from that point, from Bethel, we pick up the story in Genesis chapter 29.

“Then, Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the sons of the east. And he looked and saw a well in the field, and behold three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well. And Jacob said to them, ‘My brothers,’ evidently he calls them brothers because they were fellow shepherds, ‘My brothers, where are you from?’ And they said, ‘We are from Haran.’ And he said to them, ‘Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?’ And they said, ‘We know him.’ And he said to them, ‘Is it well with him?’ And they said, ‘It is well, and behold Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep.’ And he said, ‘Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them.’ It is quite obvious he wants to be alone with Rachel. But they said, ‘We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep.’ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep for she was a shepherdess. ‘And it came about when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother’s brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban, his mother’s brother.”

Now you notice that is mentioned three times, so this relationship is evidently important to the author of Genesis. Laban is Uncle Laban, Rebekah sister and therefore,

Rachel who is the daughter of Laban is his first cousin. I guess we could say that they were kissing cousins. [Laughter] We do say that in South Carolina, anyway, and that stretches to about the third or fifth degree. So, Verse 11,

“Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah’s son and she ran and told her father. So, it came about when Laban heard the news of Jacob, his sister’s son that he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, ‘Surely you are my bone and my flesh.’ And he stayed with him a month. Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?’ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah’s eyes were weak.’ (I think that the Authorized Version has perhaps ‘tender’ but it means weak.) ‘Leah’s eyes were weak but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. Now, Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, ‘I will 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; stay with me.’ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.’ And Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. (This was the marriage feast, usually lasted about a week.) Now, it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. And Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So, it came about 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 with you? Why then have you deceived me?’ But Laban said, ‘It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.’ (Certainly, it was a strange time for Jacob to learn of that practice, custom. [Laughter] Laban goes on,

he says, “complete the bridal week of this one,” that is, “finish the week of the feast,” “and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.” Now he is going to give Jacob Rachel now, but Jacob is to serve another seven years. That makes 14 in all.) ‘And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. So, Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years. Now, the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.”

There is an interesting thing here that there is on one of the strange texts in the Bible in the minds of some people. And that is the text, “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.” Now, as Bible expositors, we usually explain, well of course, that does not mean that God has personal animosity toward Esau. “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated” means simply that to love is to be the object of his redeeming, electing love. To hate is to reject in the purpose and plan of God. And thus, to be hated by God is not to be the object of personal animosity, but simply a recognition of the fact that he does not belong to the Lord as the elect and redeemed children do. And it has often been said that to hate in a situation like that means simply to love less. And to love, “Jacob have I loved” means to love more.

Well, you can see that that is precisely what is meant in this instance. Because we read in verse 31, “Now the Lord saw that Leah was unloved” but if you have a Bible with a marginal note, you will notice it is the word hated. Leah was hated. But, in verse 30, we have just read, “So Jacob went in to Rachel also and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah.” So that to be hated is to be loved less. To be loved is to be loved more. That is what is meant.

In the New Testament, if I had time, we could show the same illustration of this identical thing in our Lord’s comments about one must hate father and mother in order to be a disciple. It means to love them less than the will of God. Verse 32,

“And Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, ‘Because the Lord has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.’ Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, ‘Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved,’ (hated) ‘He has therefore given me this son also.’ So, she named him Simeon. And she conceived again and bore a son and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become attached to me because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore, he was named Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son and said, ‘This time I will praise the Lord.’ Therefore, she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.”

Now, of course, it is important to notice that it is Leah who is the mother of the promised seeds, ancestor, Judah, and not Rachel. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject this morning, as we turn again to Genesis is “The Deceiver Deceived, or Jacob Learning the Justice of God.”

Bethel was a high point in the education of Jacob. Chapter 28 is the ladder chapter and it taught Jacob some very important lessons. It taught him, first of all, that earth and heaven are linked everywhere. And that was a great consolation for fallible, erring Jacob. He had been forced to leave because of the threats of Esau and, as a result of that, he had to make his way in to the far country and out in the midst of the desert-like country in which he perhaps was, it might have been a question in his mind, “is this really the area of the Lord God Jehovah or have we passed beyond His territory?” And he learns from the experience of the dream and the voice of the Lord and the reaffirmation of the promises and the addition of other promises that no place is too man-

deserted for the Lord. And then he also learned the awe that every believer should manifest in the presence of the Lord God. Jacob, you remember, when he was getting the venison with the help of Rebekah for Isaac, when asked about this venison “where did you get it,” had said, “The Lord your God caused it to happen to me” and so he had flippantly used the name of the Lord but now as a result of the experience at Bethel, Jacob is frightened by the sense of the majesty of God.

We read in verse 16 of chapter 28. “Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place!” And so Jacob learns something of the awe that every Christian should have in the presence of the Lord God. But he learns something else that was, no doubt in the later years, even more significant for him. He learned that the God of Bethel is the God of pursuing grace. And even though he was a fugitive, and even though he may have done some things that were contrary to the will of God, nevertheless, he could not really put any distance between himself and the Lord God, and so the experience of Bethel, of the ladder vision, God coming to him, God speaking to him, and God telling him that unworthy creature that he was, nevertheless, he was going to make a seed like the dust of the earth and he was not going to be satisfied with Jacob until he had accomplished everything that he had said that he would accomplish.

Now, you know we often cite Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6; it is one of my favorite verses. When people ask me to sign their Bibles, as they frequently do in churches, after I preach there, I usually sign my name and then put Philippians 1:6, in which the apostle writes, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which have begun a good work and you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” That is not simply a New Testament blessing, but we have it right here. “For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” And so the God of Bethel is the God of infinite love and mercy.

He is the God of grace, forgiving mercy too. He is the God who comes to the sinful, disobedient wanderer and ministers to him. He is the one who seeks us when we are not seeking Him. And He is the One who takes the initiative in all of His dealings with us. He is the One who answers before we call as we read in the Old Testament. He is the man who came to Moses in the midst of the burning bush and revealed himself to Moses as the great “I Am”. He is the God who called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees coming to him at his own initiative and bringing Abram out of his heathen surroundings. He is the God who came to Isaiah when he went up to worship in the temple and revealed himself there as the Lord God Jehovah. “Holy, holy, holy,” so the seraphim said concerning this Lord God of the hosts and of course he is the God of Jeremiah to whom he said, “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee.” And so the God of Bethel is the God of pursuing grace and Jacob learns that.

Now, of course, if he has promised to direct Jacob in his life, then it is clear that one of the first steps is marriage. Now, the psalmist says that the steps of the saints are ordered of the Lord. And so we should expect that the steps of the believing Jacob should be ordered of the Lord in this most solemn of all alliances. And that is exactly what we find. Marriage is not something to be left to the whim and fancy of an individual. It is not something to be left to our friends. It is not something to be left even to the brethren in Christ. It is something that is the Lord’s responsibility and it should be left to the Lord. The Scriptures make very interesting statements about this. “A prudent wife is from the Lord,” and it was God who taught us right in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis that it is He who institutes marriage, and it is He who should have the say so in the persons to whom we unite ourselves in this most solemn of alliances.

Now, in this case, Jacob’s marriage comes before us in chapter 29 and we notice that his steps are ordered of the Lord. Now, Jacob must also discover something else, though. He must discover the justice of God because after all he has been a deceiver.

Now, the Lord, I am going to put this in human language. Now the Lord said “I have to get teach Jacob that the man who deceives is a man who is sinning against me. So what I need to do is to send him to school so he can learn the sinfulness of deceit. Now, let me see, where on the face of the earth can Jacob best learn about deceit.”

Now speaking humanly, he says, “Ah! What better place than the place where Bethuel and Laban live because there is no better deceiver than Laban. And furthermore, Laban is the brother of Jacob’s mother. And that is where Jacob learned a lot of his deceit. He learned it from Rebekah and Rebekah’s brother Laban is the match of Rebekah. What better place than to send him to the school from which all of his powers of deceit originated, back there in Haran from Bethuel and Laban and Rebekah. And so Jacob is going to discover that Laban is the equal of his clever sister Rebekah, his mother. And so Jacob is to be paid back as we say “with the family calling.” He is going to get his own medicine from his own family, and how interesting it is.

Now the Bible says, in one place, Genesis chapter 22 that, “God did prove Abraham.” That is very suggestive. It does not say that he proved Lot. Sodom proved Lot. Sodom proved that Lot was a very worldly man, but it was God who proved Abraham. You know it is really a position of honor to be proven by God. And so God proved Abraham when he had him offer up Isaac because he knew what was in Abraham since he had put in Abraham what was there. And so he felt confident that Abraham, through that experience, would manifest what he had put within him, the trust in the Lord God.

And so God now proves Jacob. He does not say that here but you can sense that this is part of Jacob’s proof. He is going to prove Jacob, just like he proved Abraham. Men seldom drift to their desired haven. They usually sail and they sail against it, against the most contrary winds. And in Jacob’s case now, we are going to discover that this man, going to the school of the Lord is going to sail to the port that God desires for him

against a great deal of opposition, from the experiences of life, from his own flesh, and from other sources of difficulty.

Now, we look at the first part of the chapter which we could entitle “Jacob at the Well or Love at First Sight.” It is a beautiful story of the providence of God. The Lord guides the steps of the saints and it is such a comforting thing to know that all of our steps are ordered by the Lord. Incidentally, there is great virtue in asking questions. You will notice that Jacob is just full of questions, but they get into what he is interested in and so it is all right to ask the questions.

Now, the first few verses here describe the meeting with the shepherds. We read, “then, Jacob went on his journey,” and did you notice in the margin that that is literally then Jacob lifted up his feet. You can sense that there is a new spring in the step of Jacob because of the experience at Bethel. God has appeared to him and God has strengthened him and encouraged him and now he has hope with reference to the future and so with a light springing step, he makes his way to the east and comes the 450 miles finally to the area of Haran.

When he arrives, he sees a well in the midst of the field. That is a very insignificant thing, something very common, no doubt; he saw some flocks lying about and a few men who were shepherds and since he was a shepherd himself, he went over to them and he said, “My brothers, where are you from?” and they said, “We are from Haran.” You can sense that in Jacob’s heart there must have been, at that point, it began to beat faster because that is where he was going. He was going to Haran, it just so happened. So my Arminian friends would say – it just so happened that there were some people there who were from Haran. And he said to them, “Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?” And they said, “We know him.” And he said, “Is it well with him?” And they said, “It is well and look! Rachel, his daughter is coming with the sheep!”

And by this time, you can just imagine how Jacob felt. All of these days and days that he had spent thinking about this wife that he had been urged to take and Isaac had

said to him, “Do not take one from the daughters of Canaan but go to Bethuel, to his house and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother and here is Rachel and she is coming with the sheep.” And as he looks out, there she is with all of the flock and here the shepherds around the well. I know that in his heart there just must have leapt up the conviction that “God is really directing my steps. This is the first installment of the promise of his presence with me that he gave me back at Bethel.”

And incidentally, my dear Christian friends, it is very important that we as Christians practice the art of discerning the movement of God’s finger in the most minute experiences of our lives because that is exactly what is taking place. Jacob is no different from you and me. We are directed by the providence of God. Our steps are ordered by him and we should learn to recognize him in the commonest of events, just as it happens in his case.

Now, the shepherds are lying around and the water is there. The well has the large stone upon it and Rachel is coming. What would you do, young man? Well, you would think of some way to get those elder shepherds out of the way, wouldn’t you? Oh, that is exactly what Jacob did. He thought about that. So he said, “Behold it is still high day! It is still noon. It is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go and pasture them.” Get way. He wanted Rachel to himself. He did not want any double dating. Now, Jacob is a man of maybe 57 to 77 years of age. He is quite old. But he is wise. The Lord Jesus said that we should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves and in this case, Jacob is wise. He wants Rachel to himself. This is forethought, wise forethought. But of course, it fails. They did not go. They said we cannot until all the flocks are gathered and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well, then we water the sheep and while he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep for she was a shepherdess.

Of course, Jacob has been brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that is the greatest of God’s gifts, faith in Christ. Who cannot, who is a Christian, who cannot put first in his life that moment, when by the grace of God, we came to the trust in the Lord Jesus, that means the forgiveness of sins? That is the greatest of blessings. If you’re in the audience and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are lost. You are guilty under the condemnation of your sin and you are headed for a Christ-less eternity.

Now, many in this audience know the experience of seeing the Lord Jesus as the sacrifice for sin, realizing that the blood that was shed there is sufficient for the sins of the whole human race. And by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, you have come to faith in Christ and you have to come to know the forgiveness of sins and you know the joy and rejoicing that comes to the believer who knows that he is justified before the Lord. But now the second best of God’s gifts is maybe a woman’s love and Jacob is now going to experience the second of these.

Well, then Rachel arrives. Jacob has been taught properly. He is not gallant. He is gallânt. Now, there is a difference. Now, a gallant man is a man who is very courageous in battle, but a man who is gallânt is a man who knows how to treat a woman. He is courteous. He has been trained properly. In Charleston, we have got gallânt men. Not as courageous as they ought to be but some gallânt men. Well, anyway, Jacob is gallânt. And so he rushes to remove this large stone. It is said it was a large stone. So, he rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and he watered the flock of Laban, his mother’s brother.

Now, you can say this about Jacob, he had an eye for Rachel, but he also had something else. He had an eye for Laban’s sheep. Did you notice that? That is what it says. “When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother and the sheep of Laban, his mother’s brother.” [Laughter] So he had an eye for the girl and he had an eye for the sheep because he knew that if he married this girl, it just might be that he

might get some of those sheep too. Ah, this man, he is some man, I say, he takes particular notice, so the text of Scripture lays a great deal of stress on it, and later on we are going to see that a large part of Jacob’s life is built around the sheep of Laban.

Now, in the 11th verse, imagine, he offered a word of thanksgiving to the Lord. Rachel is a kissing cousin. So, we read then Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted his voice and wept. I said in Charleston, it is a custom to kiss cousins. We used to talk with kids about kissing cousins down to the third or fourth or if they happened to be sixth or seventh degree that appeared to be, it might be advantageous to apply the tradition of kissing cousin, you might kiss to the seventh degree, but in Charleston, everybody knew who your cousins were. First, second, third, fourth, fifth. Now, we are living out in the West and we do not know things like that. But there was some value in that. There was some benefit in it.

And so Jacob kisses Rachel, it is a kiss of greeting, and he lifted up his voice and wept. No, he did not say after he had kissed her, “Why have I waited so long to do that?” That was probably not the reason. Do you know why he wept? I think he wept because he was so filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit over the providence of God in bringing him to this place and then bringing him to the very person that he might marry. And he was so pleased with what he saw and with what God had done and he was so overjoyed with it, that a lump came in his heart and he began to weep. He is an emotional man. And he appreciates the great providence of God. You know you have to be a very, very poor Christian if there have not been times in your life when you have felt just as Jacob has felt. The experiences of life have been so wonderful that you cannot do anything but weep over the things that God has brought into your life.

You know it was a very ordinary kind of experience; a journey on the road, meeting some shepherds near a well, a young woman coming up, a shepherdess, an act of courtesy, removing the stone. And these great and far reaching results that came from it because the God of Heaven was interested in every little thing that was transpiring

there; in fact, had arranged it. There is nothing really small in the life of a Christian. Chance meeting, receipt of a letter, some experience in the supermarket, some providential meeting of a friend on the street, all of these things are important for the Christian believer. It is true that these are the experiences of ordinary life, but do you know what ordinary means? It really comes from order. Our ordinary life is the ordered part of our life. And so here we have the harmonious, beneficent combination of circumstances that guided and directed Jacob by the overruling wisdom of God to this woman that was to share his life.

Now he meets Laban. I will pass that by for the sake of time and say a word about the next section, which could be entitled “Jacob and Laban: The deceiver deceived.” God chooses his instruments not for their sakes but for his. Leah is unloved, but she is the one who bore the sons. Rachel is loved, but she is the one that was barren. This is an evidence of the independence of the grace of God.

Now Laban, after Jacob has been there for a little while, has a proposition and so there is a contract that is drawn up between Laban and Jacob. Laban said to him, “You’re my relative. Therefore should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” Was he generous? Well, yes in some ways Laban was a generous man. Was he greedy? Yes, he was very greedy. Was he sagacious? Yes, he was very wise because he wanted another hand on the ranch and Jacob evidently was a useful hand. And so he offered him this proposition. And Jacob is asked, “What shall your wages be?”

Now, Laban had two daughters, the name of the older was Leah; the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah’s eyes were weak. I do not know exactly what that means. The commentators are divided in their interpretations. It does not mean that she needed glasses evidently. It means that she had eyes that were not as sparkling as say Rachel’s evidently. There are eyes like that. You know there are eyes that when you go to write down on your driver’s license, the color of the eye, it is difficult to do it, like mine. So they put down “hazel,” whatever that means. Then there some eyes that just do not

sparkle and then there some that sparkle. There are those beautiful brown eyes, there are beautiful blue eyes, there are beautiful green eyes, and Leah just had weak eyes. That was it. [Laughter] But Rachel, she was beautiful of form and face.

Female loveliness does not render the loving heart less pure. A man who loves a beautiful woman is not less holy than a man who loves one who is not so beautiful. And we are not suggesting of course, that because one is beautiful, one is therefore more likely to be the object of the grace of God. That, of course, is not true. But, Jacob loved Rachel.

Now, we read in 18th verse. “Now Jacob loved Rachel and he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than I should give her to another man; stay with me.” So, Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. This was love at first sight.

Now, someone might say, “Well it doesn’t quite say that.” No, it does not say that; it says that Jacob was there for a month but it would seem from reading the account and most of the commentators, pathetic though they be, agreed that this was likely love at first sight and it certainly was love after only a month of relationship for we read in verse 18, “Now Jacob loved Rachel.” He had been there one month and he was ready to marry her.

Now, he had no dowry, he had no property, and so he was going to serve seven years and in that statement in verse 20, we have one of the most beautiful statements about love found in all of literature. “Jacob serves seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.” Those words express the purest tenderness and express more emphatically than the flowery excesses of language of romantic phraseology, the deep attachment that this man had developed for Rachel. There is nothing more beautiful in any romantic literature than that statement, “They seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge said, “No man could be a bad man who loved as Jacob loved Rachel.” Well, in one sense that would be true, all men are bad but this was one of the great things about Jacob, he did love Rachel in that way. And incidentally, this is an illustration of the love that Jesus Christ has for the church of Jesus Christ. Almost all of the commentators comment upon that fact. Because, here is Jacob who is illustrative of the Lord Jesus Christ serving, because he loved Rachel and so the Lord Jesus Christ, the servant of God, has carried out his work of atonement because of his love for the church. He loved the church and gave himself for her.

And Jacob is a person who served that he might be united with Rachel in that deepest of human unions, marriage. And the Lord Jesus Christ served that he might unite us to himself in an even deeper union. For they that are joined to the Lord are one spirit and, of course, Jacob served that Rachel might have the confidence of his love. And so the Lord Jesus Christ has carried out his work of atonement that we might have the confidence and security of the love of God. If you want security, if you want a sense of truly belonging, then to know Christ and to know his love for us and to have by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit to have responded, is to know true security. What a magnificent, really, picture.

Now, of course, Laban comes into the story. And Laban is quite a different character. After the end of the seven years, Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife for my time has completed that I may go in to her.” That was incidentally evidence that his love for Rachel was pure and true. “Give me my wife that I may go in to her.” And so they had the marriage feast and Jacob was anticipating being married to Rachel.

This was a seven-day feast. It’s a rule, they had a large party, and sometimes they had a few alcoholic beverages. It is possible that that may have accounted for some of the difficulty but the other is this, that in those days it is customary for the wife to be brought to her bridegroom with a veil that covered not only her face but also her body. And so there would have been no way for Jacob to know definitely. It was nighttime,

there were a lot of festivities. With a veil over this woman, there was no way for him to know that it was not Rachel but Leah. And so Jacob’s chickens now come home to roost. He is the deceiver, he is the deceiver, and he is going to be deceived by the master craftsmen of deceit, Laban himself, the brother of his mother, who taught him what he knew, but he is going to get another lesson right now.

Now, of course the next morning, he took the veil aside and instead of Rachel it was Leah. And you can sense the spirit of the statement in verse 25, “It came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this that you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?” Well, we could have answered that this way, “You were deceived Jacob because God is reminding you in this way of your own deceit but that is on the divine side.

Laban has another proposition for him, “Just go ahead and finished out the week of festivities and I will give you Rachel at the end of the week and you will have two. But of course you will have to serve another seven years.” Jacob is so much in love with Rachel that he is going to do it. And so that is exactly what happened. The feast was finished. He was given Rachel. And so now at the end of the one week, when he should have had one bride, Rachel; he has two, Rachel and Leah. You wonder about Leah, was she herself deceived? Is it possible that Laban said to her now, “We have arranged a little different situation here and Jacob is willing.” It is obvious Leah loved him. Maybe Laban did deceive Leah. That accounted for the fact that she participated in this. On the other hand, so far as the record is concerned, she herself was involved and she loved him enough and wanted him so much that she was willing to be a part of the deceit. And, after all she was part of the family too and this family, they are experts in deceit.

So, the last part of the chapter, I would not say anything about; it is the story of how God blesses Leah with children and Rachel is barren. You can see the party in the midst of the situation though because Leah names her children in ways that reflect the glory of God and finally when Judah is born she says, “I will praise the Lord,” and she

named him Judah, which means praise. So, she is a pious woman and it is from Leah, of course, and the tribe of Judah that the Lord Jesus shall eventually come.

Now, let me just say one or two things in conclusion. The 29th chapter then makes some very important lessons or points. And the first is the inevitability of the divine judgment. When I was in Basel, lecturing on the Greek text of the Epistle to the Galatians in the Frei Evangelische-Theologische Akademie, I came to the 6th chapter of the Book of Galatians where we have that text about sowing and reaping. “Whatsoever a man soweth, this shall he also reap.” What a great statement that is! That does not say whatsoever a man soweth, well, he shall reap what he thinks, or what he thinks he shall reap, what he wants to, he shall reap, or what he would like to. But, it says, whatsoever a man soweth, this, this very thing, this very thing that he has sown, that shall he reap. Or as it is put in one of the prophets, “If we sow to the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind.” And so Jacob has been a deceiver. He has participated in the deceit and now he is the object of that deceit. He sowed to the wind and he reaps the whirlwind. The Greeks felt that Nemesis was the goddess of retributive justice and all of Greek tragedy is just a comment on a sentence, “The doer shall suffer.” And here Jacob must suffer and so all of his misdeeds come home to roost.

But, of course, there is another lesson here too; it is the compensations of life. Leah talks about affliction, but that is softened by the noble family of sons that God gave her. He tempers our sorrow with joy. Most of all, here in this chapter, we have evidence of the unchanging presence of the God of Bethel. He is always faithful to his promises. He guarantees that whatever he has said with reference to us, he will accomplish. He will give Jacob, in spite of his deceit, a noble destiny and a noble family and even in the midst of these experiences in which he is training him in the school of Jesus Christ, Jacob is accumulating the family that from which is to come the great blessing that God has promised because of his seeds shall come one who shall be the means whereby the whole of this earth shall be blessed. “Oh! God of Bethel, by whose hand thy people still

are fed/ Who through this weary pilgrimage hast all our fathers led.” Isn’t it great to know that the God of Bethel is the God who leads and guides his saints today! That same God who put Jacob in the school of Laban in order to learn the consequences of deceit is the God who guides and directs us.

So I say to you as I close today, if you do not know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you are not enrolled in the right school. The school of Christ is where we learn the lessons of life and the great thing about the school of Christ is that there is no tuition. There is no registration fee. It is free. And when by the grace of God we have recognized the Lord Jesus is the one who has suffered and died on the cross of Calvary, is the one who shed the blood for sins and that we by the grace of God may receive as a free gift, everlasting life, when the Holy Spirit has brought home to us, the conviction of our sin and of our judgment, our condemnation and by the grace of God we have been led to hold out our hands for the gift of eternal life, we pass into the school of Christ. We are enrolled in that school. We become a new student, first grade, elementary, and in our Christian life, we are educated in that school. Jacob is being educated. The magnificent thing about it, of course, is that God is the teacher. God is the instructor. He is the one who keeps us and He is the one who guarantees ultimately to graduate us with honors. Isn’t great to be in the school of Christ?

So we urge you this morning to put your faith and trust on the Lord Jesus by the grace of God and be enrolled in the school of eternal life. For you who are Christians, all of the ordinary experiences of life are the experiences through which the God of Bethel passes us. Recognize His presence, respond to him and learn of Him.

May we stand for the benediction!

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee Lord for the blessings that are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that by Thy grace, we have been enrolled in the school of Christ. There is so much that we need to know. We are in such a low grade. O God! Enable us to grow, enable us to advance, enable us to come to the high school and the

university of the grace of God and in the experiences of life, enable us Lord to see Thy hand. Guide and direct us.

Glorify Thy name through us. Deliver us from the perils of sin. Give us a love for holiness and righteousness. Give us a love for Thyself, for Thy Word. Deepen us, Lord. Take us out of elementary education into higher education. We look forward to the future. And we give Thee praise and thanksgiving. May grace, mercy and peace be our experience from now and forever.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.