



Series: “Genesis: Jesus is the Better _____”

Message: “The Better Israel”

Passage: Genesis 30-35

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Passage Outline

From Genesis 25-35, the focus of the story shifts to Jacob, son of Isaac and Rebekah.

- Introduction of Jacob and Esau
 - Birth of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:19-28)
 - Esau sells his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34)
- Jacob steals the blessing of his father Isaac from his older brother (Gen. 27)
- Jacob is sent to Laban (Gen. 28:1-5)
- Jacob dreams of the staircase between heaven and earth (Gen. 28:10-22)
- Jacob marries Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:1-30)
- Jacob fathers children (Gen. 29:31 – 30:24)
- Jacob prospers (Gen. 30:25-43)
- Jacob flees from Laban (Gen. 31)
- Jacob fears Esau (Gen 32:1-21; 33:1-20)
- Jacob wrestles with God (Gen. 32:22-32)
- Jacob meets Esau (Gen. 33:1-20)
- Jacob’s daughter is defiled, and his sons respond violently (Gen. 34)
- God blesses Jacob and gives him a new name – Israel (Gen. 35:1-15)

Message Notes

Up to this point, we’ve seen stories of disobedience, and stories of obedience, trust and faith. Above all, we’ve seen the nature of God—his justice and righteousness, his mercy and grace.

Jacob comes across as a man who believes that he is in control of his own life. He is cunning, smart and manipulative. He’s looking out for himself, as in when he flees from the wrath of his brother, Esau.

Things don’t always go as Jacob (and early on, Rebekah) plan. This is particularly true when Jacob goes to his kinsman Laban to find a wife. He works for his future father-in-law for seven years to marry Rebekah.

But Laban tricks Jacob into taking Leah as his wife, although in his defense Laban is simply following the custom of his people—the eldest daughter must marry first. So Jacob must endure another seven years’ labor to be able to marry Rebekah.

We need to understand the culture of the day, and not impose contemporary Western ideas onto the story. Marriage was not based upon romantic love; instead, it was more of a business deal. There were rules and customs to follow. Polygamy was common. The Ten Commandments had not yet been delivered.

And the story gets crazier! Conflict arises between Leah and Rachel, and the upshot is that Jacob winds up with *four* wives. Yet despite the disfunction, God continues to accomplish his plans.

A wrestling match with God teaches Jacob that he is not in control of his own life. His cunning would not overcome. God was in control.

And when Jacob finally realizes this, he asks for and receives God’s blessing, and his promise of a great nation.

Jesus is the culmination of this lineage. He is the better Israel, the founder of a greater congregation. Do we tell this great story to others? Who am I pursuing for the gospel? Where am I supposed to serve? Am I willing to ask God to send me we



Questions for Reflection

1. What is your assessment of Jacob? His character? His choices?
2. What do we learn about God's sovereignty through the story of Jacob's life?
3. How do you feel about Laban's act of substituting Leah for Rachel on Jacob's wedding night?
4. Do you see the irony in the younger/older role reversals in Jacob's story?
5. Why do you think God favors Jacob, a man whose morals are questionable?
6. What is your image of the wrestling match between Jacob and God? What do you think God is trying to teach Jacob when they wrestle?
7. How might this contest between Jacob and God summarize the man's life?
8. In Hebrew, "Israel" means "he struggles with God." Why do you think God gave Jacob this new name? How does the name reflect the history of God's people?
9. Have you ever felt like you had your life "under control," only to learn that it wasn't so? What happened? How did you respond?
10. As you look back over your life, where have you seen God's hand only after much time has passed?
11. As the greater Israel, Jesus is building a great nation—interestingly, the Hebrew here means "congregation." How does one become part of this Israel?
12. Have you told anyone lately about the grace of God in your own life?

My Notes
