

GENESIS 29

Introduction

Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative...what should your wages be?"

Jacob agreed to work for seven years as a dowry for Rachel. As the seven years came to a close, he learned that his compensation was not what he thought it should be! He received Leah instead of Rachel, then had to work an additional seven years for the woman he truly loved.

Jacob must have seen God's hand in this change in compensation:

{ He had deceived his father; now he was deceived by his father-in-law

{ Jacob, the younger son, substituted himself for the elder to deceive Isaac; now he has the elder daughter substituted for the younger by Laban

{ Jacob deceived Isaac by allowing his mother to cover his hands and neck with goat skins; Leah came into his tent veiled and most probably wearing her sister's clothing and perfumes

Jacob learned that God pays *spiritual* "wages," and that his heavenly Father was *recompensing* him for his previous actions.

"Recompense" means "compensation," but can have two shades of meaning when used to describe the spiritual wages God pays:

^ On the one hand there is a recompense of reward to those who are seeking God and submitting to His word in obedience. God rewards them, not according to what they deserve, but far beyond what they could ever deserve - both now and in eternity future.

% On the other hand there is a recompense of retribution to those who sin and are disobedient. "Retribution," in this case, means to repay someone in kind for their sin. God brings retribution in this life, not according to what is deserved, but mercifully - to discipline His child.

Jacob received both reward and retribution from God. While it is true that he received the recompense of retribution, he also received a recompense of reward while in Haran:

{ God enabled him to find his mother's family without difficulty after a five hundred mile journey

{ God gave him a wife - in fact, two wives

{ God blessed him with twelve sons

{ God prospered him both materially and spiritually

{ When it was time for Jacob to go home, God gave him a peaceful parting from Laban and a charitable reconciliation with Esau

Let me give you another biblical example of God's recompense of reward and retribution:

Think of King David. As a man after God's own heart, seeking the Lord, God paid him the spiritual wages of reward - the recompense of reward. By God's grace He established David as King, blessed him as Israel's greatest King, and promised him an eternal kingdom with Jesus Christ to sit on his throne forever! This is the recompense of reward. David didn't earn these things, or deserve them. They were simply the spiritual wages God paid to him as he submitted to the will of God.

But David would also, in the midst of God's recompense of reward, experiences God's recompense of retribution. David sinned with Bathsheeba, taking Uriah's wife and ordering his murder. In retribution God "paid" David the following spiritual wages:

{ David took Bathsheeba willfully for himself; David's son Amnon forced his sister Tamar into sex	
{ David had Uriah murdered; David's son Absalom would murder	Amnon
{ David lusted after Bathsheeba and lay with her secretly; Absalom would take David's wives and lay with them publicly, in a rooftop	orgy

Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative...what should your wages be?"

Ask yourself this question from our text in Genesis:
Because *you* are God's child...what should *your* spiritual wages be?

They should be God's recompense of reward. They can be God's recompense of retribution.

#1 As You Submit You Will Receive
God's Recompense Of Reward
(v1-14)

Dr. Henry Morris, commenting on this passage of Scripture, reminds us that Jacob's years in Haran "were for the most part very happy and prosperous years, with no more troubles and problems than are normally encountered by a believer seeking to follow the Lord."¹ There was a great recompense of reward in Jacob's life, for God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Let's look at some of the rewards in the first fourteen verses.

¹quoted by Boice, Genesis, Vol. 2, p. 301

^ God rewards Jacob by Directing His Steps

Genesis 29:1 So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East.

The text doesn't tell you, but this is a journey of some five hundred miles. It is through rough and unfamiliar terrain, and is made by a man who had never before been away from home.

It is a great reward of grace that "The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way" (Psalms 37:23). Again you read in Proverbs 4:12, "When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble."

Genesis 29:2 And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well's mouth.

Jacob came to the very place God had ordered for him. It was the place where the sheep were watered. Jacob, himself a shepherd, was learning that God was his shepherd.

Genesis 29:3 Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth.

It was their custom to water all the various flocks at the same time. This might have been because they wanted to insure an even use and distribution of the water; it might have been to prevent dust from entering the well more than was absolutely necessary.

It also gives us a nice picture of life in the Church. There are always many "flocks" - many different groups of believers within the Church. While each have unique needs and desires, all can be watered from God's Word when they gather together.

Genesis 29:4 And Jacob said to them, "My brethren, where *are* you from?" And they said, "We *are* from Haran."

Genesis 29:5 Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him."

Genesis 29:6 So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "*He is* well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."

These may have been grown men or shepherd boys. Whichever, they were not great communicators! They offered as little information as possible to Jacob... Sometimes, when someone asks me my name, they will further inquire, "Can you spell it?" I answer "Yes, I can."

This was just another ordinary day at the well for these shepherds. For Jacob it was an extraordinary day - the day that the Lord had made! Their lack of zeal did not discourage Jacob in his enthusiasm for what God was doing for him. Don't let the unbeliever convince you that your life is ordinary.

^ God rewarded Jacob by directing his steps. Now God rewards him by giving him the desire of his heart: "Rachel is coming with the sheep." Remember, Jacob had set out to find a wife from Laban's family. God would give him the desire of his heart.

Genesis 29:7 Then he said, "Look, *it is* still high day; *it is* not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed *them*."

Genesis 29:8 But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

Jacob is trying to get rid of these guys so he can be alone with Rachel. Jacob's love for Rachel is a beautiful interlude in the Book of Genesis. It is a strong, pure love - and powerfully romantic. His efforts to rid himself of these shepherds reveals the foundation of romance - desiring to be alone with, or at least being fully captivated with, the one you love.

Genesis 29:9 Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

Genesis 29:10 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.

Genesis 29:11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept.

Genesis 29:12 And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father.

How old do you suppose Jacob was at this meeting? He was at least *seventy-seven years old!* True love waits... He found strength in God to wait for the woman God had provided.

God put these desires in Jacob's heart, then wonderfully fulfilled them.

^ God rewards Jacob with Fellowship

Genesis 29:13 Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things.

Genesis 29:14 And Laban said to him, "Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month.

The wandering pilgrim had come to a new family. Jesus said of you,

Mark 10:29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's,

Mark 10:30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

= This is just the beginning of God's recompense of reward to Jacob. As we pointed out earlier, he would reward him with children and great prosperity, as well as with spiritual maturity.

As you submit, seeking the Lord, He will do the same for you.

#2 If You Sin You Will Receive God's Recompense Of Retribution (v15-30)

Jacob had sinned when he deceived his father Isaac. While completely forgiven, his sin was not without further consequences:

{ He was forced to flee his home and family

{ He and his mother, Rebekah, would never see each other in this life again

{ Though a patriarch he would serve for twenty years as a servant

Sin always has consequences. When you have your sins forgiven by Jesus Christ there are still consequences.

In addition to consequences, we are learning that God pays you the recompense of retribution. It is because He loves you and must discipline you. As the writer to the Hebrews says,

Hebrews 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

God's recompense of retribution is a wonderful aspect of His discipline in our lives.

Genesis 29:15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages *be*?"

Jacob, though a guest, was working - probably tending sheep. He couldn't stay idle - a wonderful trait to instill in our children and to encourage among ourselves.

Genesis 29:16 Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Genesis 29:17 Leah's eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

Rachel is said to be beautiful of both "form" and "appearance." She had a good figure and a beautiful face. Leah probably had a similar figure, but she had one noticeable defect: She had some problem with her eyes. They are described as "delicate," or "weak." We really don't know what exactly is meant. It seems, though, that this one facial feature was sufficient to block any progress in her relationships with men. They couldn't "see" past her defective eyes.

It was really they who had eye trouble! If a physical characteristic blocks you from discovering the spiritual qualities of a person you are indeed carnal.

Genesis 29:18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

Genesis 29:19 And Laban said, "*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."

In their culture the father received a rich dowry for the daughter. Jacob had nothing to offer but his service.

You have nothing to offer your heavenly Father, but He delights to receive your service and then reward you for it!

Genesis 29:20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

Working side by side as shepherd and shepherdess, deeply and romantically in love, Jacob and Rachel nevertheless remain sexually pure.

Genesis 29:21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her."

Genesis 29:22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.

The feast would last up to a week. You see in verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight reference made to the week-long feast. The wedding would be consummated on the first night, then celebrated the following nights.

Genesis 29:23 Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.

Genesis 29:24 And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

It was dark...Jacob would have enjoyed the wine...Leah was wearing her sister's clothing and perfume, and would be veiled...Though it seems unlikely this could happen, it did.

Where was Rachel? We are never told! *If* she was part of this plan, by obeying her father she was simply doing what Jacob had done in obeying his mother when they contrived to deceive Isaac. Rebekah and Jacob sought to steal Esau's rightful blessing as the firstborn; Laban and Rachel sought to seal Leah's blessing as the firstborn.

What about Leah? Shouldn't she have refused to deceive Jacob? Perhaps...She was simply acting the way Jacob had acted - using carnal methods to achieve a spiritual goal.

Genesis 29:25 So it came to pass 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 you? Why then have you deceived me?"

Genesis 29:26 And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

If there was any doubt in Jacob's mind that this was God's retribution, Laban's choice of words revealed that it was: "It must not be done...to give the younger before the firstborn." Jacob had schemed to do just that - to take the birthright and blessing from the firstborn. He was being recompensed in kind by God.

Genesis 29:27 "Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years."

Genesis 29:28 Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.

Genesis 29:29 And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.

Genesis 29:30 Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

Jacob served seven years, waited seven days, went in to Rachel, then served seven more years for her.

= God's recompense of retribution came as a discipline for Jacob's sin in deceiving his father. God wasn't remembering Jacob's sin and holding it against him. Indeed, we've seen how abundantly God had and would bless him. Jacob was simply reaping what he had sown! He had sown seeds of deceit; a crop of deceit was the inevitable harvest he must reap.

Whatever you are sowing today will be reaped in due season! Job said, "Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same" (Job 4:8). Hosea writes, "They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul said, "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:8).

It is wrong to see every trial or persecution or affliction as a retribution for something that you have done, for some sin you have committed. There *are* times in your life, however, when a crop will appear that bears a striking resemblance to the seeds that you earlier sowed in your sin!

Each of us should be concerned about what we are sowing, knowing that the reaping is inevitable.

Conclusion

There is something important to realize about God as a Recompenser of reward and retribution:

^ In recompensing reward, God is gracious. He rewards you beyond what you deserve. Look at Jacob; he certainly didn't deserve a blessing for his deception. Yet, because Jacob was seeking God, God rewarded him both materially and spiritually - with prosperity and prophecies, with victories and visions.

You don't really deserve any blessings in your life. Even though you are God's obedient servant, Jesus said in Luke 17:7-10,

Luke 17:7 "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?"

Luke 17:8 "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?"

Luke 17:9 "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

Luke 17:10 "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

God, though, loves to recompense you with reward. In another place He tells his obedient servants, who are not thinking they deserve anything,

Matthew 25:21 "His lord said to him, Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

In recompensing reward, God is gracious!

∞ Just so, in recompensing retribution God is merciful - *not* giving you what you do deserve. Look at Jacob; he deserved to be cursed for his deception, but God kept Isaac from cursing him. Esau sought to murder him, but God kept him alive. God was in every way merciful. His retribution was a just discipline, a proper chastening - necessary for his spiritual growth and maturity.

= God as a Recompenser is gracious in reward and merciful in retribution.

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