

# Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

## **Monday (January 16) – Genesis 24**

Abraham makes his servant swear that he will not find a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the pagan Canaanites. God is faithful to Abraham and He answers the prayer of Abraham's servant (24:12-14). Isaac is blessed with a wife who fears the Lord. Isaac and Rebekah agree to be married even though they have never met (24:58). Emotion and romance are blessings that grow in marriage, but they are not the basis for marriage. The basis for marriage is lifelong faithfulness vowed publicly. Abraham and Rebekah's father give their blessings, and God also blesses the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, through which God continues to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham: "In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (22:18).

## **Tuesday (January 17) – Genesis 25, 26**

In chapter 25 note the importance of the birthright. Esau, the rightful recipient of the birthright, despises it and swears it over to his brother Jacob for a bowl of stew. Even were he truly starving, his actions demonstrate a lack of trust in God's providence. In chapter 26 God promises Isaac that the oath He swore to his father Abraham will be fulfilled through him. God reminds Isaac and us of the reason for this oath: "In your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." This oath which God swore to our fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; was fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord. Immediately after this Isaac goes and takes matters into his own hands to protect himself and his family. Despite Isaac's dishonesty God continues to bless him. Isaac's servants dig a well and find water, but there was conflict over rights to the water. They move on and dig another well and find water. Again, God blesses Isaac.

## **Wednesday (January 18) – Genesis 27**

Jacob deceives his father, Isaac, with the help of his mother, Rebekah. They take advantage of Isaac in his old age and blindness. Esau reacts to all of this with rage. Despite everyone seemingly working against God's plan and sinfully looking out for their own good, God works all of this for His purposes and our good. The promise to Abraham, that by his offspring all nations of the earth would be blessed, is passed on from Isaac to Jacob. In his rage Esau threatens to kill Jacob after their father dies, and so Rebekah urges Jacob to flee to the land of her brother Laban. At the close of the chapter, Rebekah shares with her husband her worry that Jacob will marry a Hittite wife as Esau did, and that Jacob also will be led away from the fear of the Lord by an unbelieving wife. This is why the Bible warns against being "unequally yoked" (marrying an unbeliever).

## **Thursday (January 19) – Genesis 28**

The last half of the chapter recounts Jacob's vision of the ladder to heaven. Jesus speaks of this vision to Philip and Nathaniel at the beginning of John's gospel, "Truly, truly, I say to you: You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Jesus' explanation helps us to make sense of this vision. Jacob saw the pre-incarnate second Person of the Trinity. Martin Luther writes, "[God] revealed to Jacob himself that he would be the father of Christ and that the Son of Man would be born

from his seed. God did not speak this in vain. Indeed, He painted that picture of the ladder to comfort and console Jacob in faith in the future blessing...in order that they might teach and transmit it to their descendants as certain and infallible, and expect a Savior from their own flesh. In this way God strengthens Jacob, who, like the useless trunk of a tree, is wretched and afflicted in a foreign land; and by means of this new picture He transfers to him all the blessings, to assure him that he is this patriarch from whom the Seed promised to Adam will come.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Friday (January 20) – Genesis 29**

Jacob thinks he married Rachel but in the morning he wakes up and finds Leah. Even though Laban takes advantage of Jacob, God uses it all for good. Leah is not shown the love and respect she is owed by her husband, who loves his second wife, Rachel, more than her. Seeing this God blesses Leah with many sons. Marriage was never meant to be more than the union of one man and one woman. In the next chapter, Rachel gives Jacob her servant Bilhah as a surrogate wife. The practice of polygamy and of surrogate motherhood occurs frequently in Genesis but is not condoned by the Scriptures. Though these practices violate God’s order of creation, God still works through them to bring about the fulfillment of his promises. These sons born to Israel (Jacob) of Rachel and Leah go on to be the fathers of the tribes of Israel.

### **Saturday (January 21) – Genesis 30**

Jacob is tricked again. But just like last time, God uses it for his good and blessing. Laban was not a trustworthy father-in-law. Laban and Jacob strike up a deal, but Laban schemes to deprive Jacob of his wages. Yet God is with Jacob. He causes the flocks to bring forth striped, speckled and spotted young. It’s not clear what Jacob is doing with the sticks with white strips of peeled bark. The Lutheran Study Bible note suggests that this may be conventional animal husbandry wisdom of the day. Whatever the reasoning, it wasn’t the sticks that made Jacob wealthy while he served in the service of Laban—Jacob is blessed by the Lord. He entered the land with nothing but goes away with flocks, servants, and great wealth.

### **Sunday (January 22) – Genesis 31**

Just as he did when he stole the birthright from Esau, Jacob again takes matters into his own hands. He sinned against Laban by deceiving him and sinned against God by not trusting Him to protect and provide for him and his family. But God remains faithful, even when Jacob wavers. When Laban pursues after Jacob, God intervenes. Rachel stole her father’s household gods. She still dabbles in pagan worship. Jacob and Rachel are far from perfect. Even so, God is with Jacob and his family. Laban makes a covenant with Jacob. Laban swears by his pagan gods, the gods of Nahor, as well as by the God of Abraham. But Jacob swears “by the Fear of his father Isaac” (v. 53). Jacob binds himself to the agreement in the name of the one true God, the God who blessed him with great wealth and from whom Jacob expects fulfillment of the oath made to his fathers.

Notes by Pastor Anthony Mandile – St. Paul’s Lutheran Church: New Hartford, CT

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 5: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 26-30*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 5 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 217.