

The Lord Gave a Son to Rachel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help others who are controlled by dislike or hatred because of rejection. Christ is able to lead people to forgive others. In this topic, we will see that the Lord chose to give Rachel a son when she prayed to the Lord and asked Him to give her a son.

In Genesis 30:14-15, we read, “Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, ‘Please give me *some* of your son’s mandrakes.’ But she said to her, ‘*Is it* a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?’ And Rachel said, ‘Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.’” In that day, mandrakes were considered something that would cause a woman to become fertile so that she could have children. They were actually a small orange-colored fruit, but this thought caused the people who thought this to call them “love-apples”. Since this was before Laban began paying Jacob wages for his work, this would have happened before the second seven years he worked for Rachel were complete. That would mean Reuben was probably between the age of five and six when he found these in the field and brought them to his mother.

Rachel apparently saw Reuben bring these mandrakes to his mother and so she asked Leah to give her some of them since she thought that might cause her to become able to give birth to children. However, Leah was not interested in the idea of giving the mandrakes to her sister. Instead, just the words she used to give her answer showed she was angry. Leah said, “‘*Is it* a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?’” The first question showed that she felt she had been robbed of her husband. The word translated “small matter” is translated by words like *little or small thing*. By her words, Leah made it very clear that she thought a life-changing thing had happened to her when Rachel took away her husband. She had enjoyed the short time she was the only wife of Jacob, but once Jacob also married her sister, Rachel, we see that Leah felt totally rejected.

The second question showed that she was not interested in her sister possibly becoming pregnant since the people of that area thought that mandrakes were love-apples and might cause her sister to become fertile and have children. Here, we see that just the thought of her sister having a son caused Leah to become angry. Instead of answering the anger of her sister, Rachel offered to purchase the mandrakes with a very unusual payment. We see that Rachel said, “‘Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.’” Apparently, Jacob was not spending very much time with Leah, even though she was his first wife. In fact, we see that she accepted the offer of Rachel, even though it made her feel like a prostitute as we see in the next verses.

We go to read, in Genesis 30:16-21, “When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, ‘You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.’ And he lay with her that night. And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, ‘God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.’ So she called his name Issachar. Then Leah conceived again and bore

Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, ‘God has endowed me *with* a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.’ So she called his name Zebulun. Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.” In these verses, we see that Leah told Jacob that she had hired him for the night with her son’s mandrakes. The word translated “hired” is translated either *hire or wages* and is used to speak of a temporary purchase. In this case, Leah said that she had hired Jacob for the night.

Then, Leah used another form of the word to describe the results of her night with Jacob. We read that Leah said, “‘God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.’” God did cause Leah to become pregnant that night and when the time came for the child to be born, we see that she had another son. She chose to name this son Issachar. The name “Issachar” means *hire or there is recompense*. Here, we see again that many of the names of the sons of Jacob were related to the fact that Rachel was the wife that was loved and Leah felt that she was rejected. Again, we are reminded of the consequences of violating the first principle that God gave about marriage in Genesis 2:24. That verse reminds us, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” God gave this principle to Adam and Eve who had no father or mother to leave, so this principle was for all of their future descendants, including those who are still being born at the present time.

We see that the Lord later gave another son to Leah. Leah chose to name him “Zebulun” which means *to exalt or honor*. This name shows that Leah was still looking for the honor and respect she should have received from Jacob. She realized that God had given her a gift or endowment by giving her a total of six sons. We see that she thought that now her husband would honor her and dwell with her because of the fact that she had given him six sons. This honor probably did not happen until after the death of Rachel because Leah had no control over the decisions of Jacob. However, we see that was the desire of her heart. Jacob now had a total of ten sons, but none of those sons had been born to the wife he loved.

The Lord later gave Leah a daughter as well. Leah named her daughter “Dinah” which means *judgment*. Although Jacob may have had other daughters, this is the only one who is mentioned. That is probably due to the fact that in chapter 34 we will see Jacob, and the entire family, experienced the result of what happened to this daughter. We go on to read, in Genesis 30:22-24, “Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, ‘God has taken away my reproach.’ So she called his name Joseph, and said, ‘The LORD shall add to me another son.’” In these verses, we see that although Rachel was the favorite wife, she was still sad that she did not have a son. As a result, we see that she began praying to the Lord, asking that He would give her a son. The fact that both Rachel and Leah prayed showed us that Jacob was doing at least some teaching to all of his family about God.

The family of Abraham had been idol worshipers, as Joshua 24:2 says, “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods...”’” Laban was the grandson of Nahor. We will see that his family also worshiped idols. The only way that the family of Jacob was going to learn about the living and true God, who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, was through Jacob. Although Jacob taught his family some things about God, we will see that his family still continued to follow

idols, even though both Leah and Rachel prayed to God. It was not until Jacob returned to Bethel, in Genesis 35:2, that we read, “And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments...’”

We read that God remembered Rachel and listened to her. The word translated “remembered” means *to pay attention to* and many times, results in some action being taken. That is what happened in the life of Rachel. We see that God did pay attention to the prayer of Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb. Here, we see that God can choose to pay attention to the prayer of a person, even if that person knows very little about God. That is the choice of God, and He can do whatever He chooses. We see that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. We also see that she gave the glory to God because of that fact. Rachel said, “God has taken away my reproach.” The word “reproach” means *to cast blame or scorn on someone*. This may mean that each time Leah had a son, she mocked her sister because she was having sons and Rachel continued to be childless.

We see that Rachel also showed her belief in God by the name she gave to her son. The name “Joseph” means *may the Lord add* or *He will add*. We see that her belief in God caused Rachel to feel that God would also give her another son. Rachel had waited quite a number of years for this son, but that did not stop her from believing that the Lord would also give her another son. Yet, we will see in the next chapter that Rachel stole the idols of her father. Genesis 31:19 says, “Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father’s.” The fact that Rachel stole the idols of her father was an indication that she may still have depended, at least partially, on those idols. That is one reason why one of the things the Gentiles were told in the New Testament was to abstain from things offered to idols. Acts 15:28-29 says, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.” The early church understood that those who become Christians, out of a background of idol worship, needed to come to a clear understanding that God is the Creator of all things and that idols cannot help them in any way.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain two key lessons from these verses. First, people can have a very limited understanding of God and still come to Him in repentance and faith. Second, there may be a need to help such individuals come to a clearer understanding of the fact that the Lord is the Creator of all things and that eating things offered to idols may hinder them from sharing the Gospel with their relatives and friends. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to explain these things to others.