**JACOB BUILDS HIS WEALTH**

**[THE GOD OF PADDAN ARAM (II)]**

**Genesis 30:25-31:55 Key Verse: 31:13**

**“**I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.”

Jacob departed from Laban to return to the home, the Promised Land. Jacob had God’s promise and love. Now he determined to build wealth. This part divides two parts; (1) Jacob’s preparation by building wealth for his family, (2) Jacob flees, Laban pursues, and peace covenant between Jacob and Laban. God intervened in all processes. We learn God cares for his covenant people. We learn Jacob’s extraordinary hard working spirit. We learn the God of Bethel. Is the God of Bethel old story? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac appeared to Jacob as the God of Bethel. God is the living God. The God, who appeared to Jacob, can also be the God of your through Jesus Christ,

1. **Jacob built wealth. (30:25-43)**

When Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob wanted to go back to his home. He had been away from home for 14 years. He had been working for 14 years only for Laban. Even though he made Laban wealthy, he had not his own wealth when he had a big family; four wives and 11 sons and one daughter. He didn’t ask money or sheep or material. He asked Laban to give him his wives and children and send him to his home since Laban had power to take them away from Jacob. Look at verse 30:26, “Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I’ve done for you.”

What was Laban’s response? He said to Jacob, “If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.”

What did Laban know from Jacob? Laban knew that the LORD blessed him because of Jacob. How did he know? He knew by divination. Divination had no power to show truth. This practice was forbidden in Israel (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10, 14) because it presumed that human beings could manipulate the deity to serve them instead of depending in faith on God. Ironically, the Lord used even Laban's magic so that he confessed God's blessing on Jacob, even as the Philistine kings acknowledged their blessings on Abraham (Gen 21:22) and Isaac (Gen 26:28-29). Laban asked Jacob to stay with him because he thought the supernatural power was with Jacob. Laban learned God through Jacob. God blessed Laban because of Jacob. We have to be a source of blessing where we are. If you are student, you shall study hard and help others in a class. Then students in a class like you Then you can say, “I am a Christian.” Who, then, is magnified? Christ! The other students learn Christ and God. So you can become a blessing. All of us have a job. The work place is holy because firstly, God provides us with material through our jobs and secondly, the people may come to Christ through us. We have to work hard in a job as if we work for God. We have to serve them as Christ serves us. Then our boss and our colleagues will learn Christ through us. In this way we can become a blessing and magnify Christ.

We learn through Jacob about how we shall work in a job. **First**, Jacob worked for Laban as if he worked for his own business and so he made Laban rich. Look at 30:29-30, “Jacob said to him, “You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. The little you had before I came has increased greatly and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?” Wherever we are or whether our bosses see or not we have to work before God until God blesses those whom we work for. Then the people know God and Christ we believe. This is the way Christians live in the unbelieving world. **Second**, we have to be honest in our work place and honor others’ property. Look at 31:38-39, “I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night.” Laban probably gave Jacob animals for food. When Laban’s animals were lost, Jacob could have ignored missing animals since animals were greatly increased and a few lost ones could not be noticed. But Jacob paid lost animals from his own meals. Jacob was a trusted and faithful employee. **Third**, we have to work hard for our duty in a job. Look at 31:40, “This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes.” He could work only for regular hours, in modern term 8 hours per day. The daytime in Middle East is hot. It is cold at night. Jacob had lovely wives and kids at home. He got his wages already. He could have worked slowly enjoying family. Even though he worked hard, his salary was not increased since he got already his wages or he was not promoted. But he was very thorough in doing his work. If Christians are neglect in their duties, Christ or God’s name is dishonored. Students should also study hard for the glory of God but not for selfish goal. God honors those who honor Him as He honored David when David glorified God.

When Jacob wanted to leave Laban to go back to his home, Laban asked Jacob to stay with him. Why? He knew he became wealthy because of Jacob. When you say to your boss in your job you want to leave a job, will your boss tell you “stay with me?” Then you are good. But your boss may say to you, “You can go,” you need to change your work aptitude in your job.

Now Jacob minded to do something for his own household. Laban asked, “What shall I give you?” Jacob didn’t ask money or material. He didn’t take easy way. He would start again. He had faith in God. Look at verses 31 through 32. “Don’t give me anything.” Jacob replied. “But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them. Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark colored lamb and every spotted or sparkled goat. They will be my wages.” What was difference between Laban and Jacob? Laban knew the God of Jacob but he didn’t accept the God of Jacob. He remained as an idol worshiper. Laban depended on Jacob but not on God. Now Jacob would work for himself. So God would bless Jacob. Jacob had God. When we have God, we have everything. We have to challenge the impossible thing for the glory of God only depending on God. Even though Jacob had to start all over from nothing he was confident because he had God’s promise.

Since Laban didn’t meet his own personal God, he depended on deception. He thought if Jacob stayed his wealth would be all the more increased. Look at verses 34 through 36, ““Agreed,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.” That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs and he placed them in the care of his sons. Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban’s flocks.” Laban thought he did smartly. But he didn’t know God really. His fourteen years of Bible study was nothing. Even though we study Bible one year, our Bible study is successful if we meet a personal God through the word of God. Laban wanted to manipulate the Lord through Jacob to serve his own greed rather than to bless Jacob and so receive God’s blessing (see Gen 12:3; 20:14-18; 31:9). Laban was cheating. According to the agreement the unusually colored animals should have been Jacob's starting flock. Jacob began with none of these. Laban is not a good employer. What point of view was Jacob an excellent worker? Whether Laban is a good or a bad employer didn’t matter to Jacob. He did what he had to do. He worked before God. Jacob didn’t yield to a hostile environment. Jacob didn’t despair and sit down. He knew he was in crisis. But he knew God is a Sovereign LORD. He knew God is a Creator God. He knew God is in control. He invented non-scientific method. Jacob’s method is explained in 30:32 through 42. It shouldn’t work. Even though Jacob had faith in God, he didn’t just sit down waiting for miracle. He did diligently what he could do. Then God worked. The 31:6 through 12 explain how God worked for Jacob, “You know that I’ve worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said, ‘The speckled ones will be your wages,’ then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, ‘The streaked ones will be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore streaked young. So God taken away your father’s livestock and has given them to me. In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. The angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ I answered, ‘Here I am. And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled, or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.” If Jacob’s method was scientific this method should be in a textbook in the past and nowadays. But this happened only one time in human history. God sent angel to change scientific law. God used Jacob’s extraordinary hard working spirit and efforts.

This reminds me of Jesus’ first miracle at Cana in Galilee. Jesus said to the servants to fill jars with ceremonial washing water. Servants obeyed and filled all jars with water to the trim. All water turned to the best wine. If servants had filled only jars to the bottom, the only few people would have tasted this heavenly wine. Psalm 81:10 says, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.” When we work hard believing that God is the source of blessing, God turns our time and efforts into His blessing.

The 30:43 says, “In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.” In just 6 years of a short time, Jacob became wealthy and had more than Laban had. Laban had cheated Jacob by changing his wages "ten times" (see Gen 31:7; i.e. Gen 29:23; 30:25). "Ten" is symbolic number for "time and again." Here it signified "enough is enough." Laban had cheated Jacob, but it was the Lord who had plundered Laban (Gen 31:4-9). Jacob openly proclaimed his faith and gave all credit to God for his blessing.

What do we learn from Jacob? If I were in Jacob’s situation, I probably would despair and be paralyzed. From Jacob’s demonstration and action we don’t see any clue of frustration. He did what he had to do tirelessly. Then he trusted in God. In any hostile situation or even any impossible situation, we don’t have to allow any despair or frustration. We have to stand firm and do tirelessly what we can do believing in God.

Why do I live powerlessly? Why do I struggle helplessly with same problem again and again? Why can’t I become like an apostle Paul or Daniel? Even though I have studied the word of God many years or tens of years, why do I remain always same? Isaiah 55 inspires me. I recommend you to read a whole chapter. Isaiah 55:6 says, “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.” I am in higher position in Argonne National Lab I have ever had in the weakest part of mine and in the experience of zero when a job description says, “minimum 15 years-experience.” I was often in panic. I learn that God put me in a furnace to train me. God wants me to seek Him and call on him to experience God. Isaiah 40:29-31 say, “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” What is the secret to work tirelessly? What is the secret of bearing good fruits humanly and spiritually? I thank God for training me through a job that I had never imagined. I will seek God, call on Him, and hope in the LORD daily. Then I will work hard like Jacob believing in God’s blessing. Then I will let God worry for me instead I worry.

You know sparrow fly just above tree and moves its wing continually and gets tired easily. Even though Jacob was a hard worker, without God’s help, Jacob probably was like sparrow. But with God’s intervention, he became like an eagle. Did you see eagles fly? The mountain eagles make their homes on the top of cliff. The eagles like to dominate the air and the ground flying high. When they fly high in the sky they don’t move their wing frequently, but just hit the air one time, sit on air stream, soar on wings of wind, and fly fastest and highest among all birds. But sparrows don’t know to soar high on such wings of wind. When we have God’s dream or God’s hope we can soar on the Holy Spirit and fly high. When we let the Holy Spirit rule our hearts, we can soar on wings of the Holy Spirit. And we experience an extraordinary life. Matthew, let’s fly together like eagles.

**II. Jacob flees for home, Laban pursues, and God protects Jacob (31:1-55).**

Laban and his sons’ attitude to Jacob were changed. Jacob built his own family. He now needed to build his own wealth for family. Jacob had his own flock and was having his own wealth. Even though Laban deceived Jacob, God was with Jacob. So Jacob’s wealth was being increased fast. Of course Jacob worked hard. Even though he worked hard, he would not have accumulated his wealth without God’s intervention. So Laban’s sons were saying, “Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father.” Jacob noticed that Laban’s attitude toward him was not that it had been.

Jacob faced an adverse situation again. God used to this situation to remind Jacob to return to a promised land. Actually it was not easy for Jacob to think about to return to his father’s house because Esau was there. However, staying with Laban was also difficult. How did God use this situation? Look at 31:3, “Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and your relatives.” Who were Jacob’s relatives? They were Esau’s family. It would have been nice to see his father and mother. God clearly said “the land of your fathers and your relatives.” Jacob might be reluctant to return to his home. So God used this adverse situation for Jacob to return to his home. When we face at the adverse situation we don’t have to fear of difficulty and challenge. There may be God’s will. This was the second time God said to Jacob to return to his home.

God called Jacob to return to his native land earlier. Look at 31:10-13, ““In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. The angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ I answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.” This calling was when Laban was deceiving Jacob. God plundered Laban’s sheep, goats to Jacob. Jacob’s property became abundant. He might be reluctant to return to Bethel. In the past God called Himself, as the God of Abraham. But this time God called Himself as the God of Bethel. God heard and remembered Jacob’s selfish prayer. God worked based on Jacob’s prayer at Bethel. God wants us to pray to Him. God remembers our prayer. God provided Jacob more than Jacob requested at Bethel. God pleases to call Himself as the God of Peter Perry or the God of Grace Baek. Do any of you have worries? Pray to God instead of depending on parents or others. When I pray, I call God daddy by the name of Jesus. When Jacob didn’t return to his homeland then God used a hostile situation and said to him, “Go back to the land of your fathers and your relatives.”

Jacob called his wives. He explained situation. He told his plan to return to his home. Rachel and Leah fully agreed and supported Jacob (31:14-16). To Rachel and Leah Jacob’s home was a foreign land. But they decided to follow Jacob to the Promised Land. They loved Jacob more than their father and brothers and relatives. Rachel and Leah acknowledged God's blessing and were willing to risk a journey to the Promised Land. Man shall love his wife and be mature enough to get wife’s support.

Jacob explained how God appeared to him and what God commanded him. Rachel and Leah knew the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They knew the God of Jacob practically through the wealth God provided Jacob. They were also interested in wealth of their own family. 31:16 says, “Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you.” Then Jacob took his children, his wives, and all his livestock and goods and left for his father Isaac.

Rachel stole his father’s idol. Unlike Sarah and Rebekah, who had embraced the God of the patriarchs upon coming to the Promised Land, Rachel had not given up her pagan idols or ethics (see Gen 30:14). We have to embrace God’s way and hope completely turning from our old ways, or old habits.

On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. How did God protect Jacob? Look at 31:24, “Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, “Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.”

Laban overtaken Jacob and rebuked that Jacob deceived him and carried off his daughters like captives in war and let him send Jacob with joy and singing to the music of timbrels and harps. However, Laban was not correct. Jacob didn’t deceive him. He left with his own properties. Jacob’s wives all agreed to Jacob. It was questionable that Laban would send Jacob with joy and singing to the music. Based on 31:29, Laban could harm Jacob if God didn’t appear to him. Jacob knew through Laban’s testimony that God protected him. Then Jacob took spiritual leadership. Jacob became bold and was angry because Laban hunted him. He addressed how he worked hard and Laban became rich since God blessed Laban through him. Jacob also testified the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac.

Laban suggested making a covenant. He feared the God of Jacob. When we live a pure Christian life people have the fear of God through us. They took an oath each other and eat and drink and left peacefully.

In Conclusion, it was not Jacob’s cunning way that he was victorious and became an extraordinary person who had God’s promise, love, and wealth. It was God’s blessing. God is pleased to be called the God of Isaac Baek. Today we are not studying just the God of Bethel. We have God’s promise through Jesus Christ. All who believe in Jesus and follow Jesus are God’s children. God’s promise is yours! Extraordinary life is yours whatever your age is! I was weak. I was sorrowful. I was not influential. I barely survived. I satisfied with small thing. My youth is gone. All hope to bear extraordinary fruits Jesus promised seems to be gone. This was my situation before studying this passage. Now I look up heaven. Now I fix my eye on Jesus. I see I am a God’s child. I learn I have God’s promise through Jesus Christ. Matthew, you are extraordinary person, if you believe today. Don’t delay, believe today that God wants you to have an extraordinary vision. This is my prayer, “LORD, give me ‘Your dream.’ Give me ‘Your hope.’ I long to meet ‘The God of Isaac Baek,’ through Jesus Christ as You appeared to Jacob, ‘The God of Bethel.’” I pray that all of you experience extraordinary life through Jesus Christ.