

PRAISE

“And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing” (Gen. 29:35).

Paul wrote to the Romans that early in human history when men knew God, they glorified Him not as God and were not thankful (Rom. 1:21). The following references are from the KJV:

- The first use of “thank” in the Scriptures is 1 Chron. 16:4.
- The first use of “thanked” is 2 Sam. 14:22.
- The first use of “thankful” is Ps. 100:4.
- The first use of “thankfulness” is Acts 24:3.
- The first use of “thanks” is 2 Sam. 22:50.
- The first use of “thanksgiving” is Lev. 7:12.
- The first use of “thanksgivings” is Ne. 12:27.
- The first use of “thankworthy” is 1 Pet. 2:16.

Chronologically, the earliest reference to anything in the Scriptures related to thanksgiving is the word “praise” which is in our text. This is, of course, was over 2,000 years after the creation. We must be careful, however, not to hold these early inhabitants of earth to the high standards of Christianity. Remember! The times of such ignorance God overlooked (Acts 17:30) Now, however, God holds us to a much higher standard.

There are at least three levels of gratitude.

1. Thanksgiving for physical blessings such as food, clothing, health, and money.
2. Thanksgiving for spiritual blessings such as the forgiveness of sins.
3. The highest level of thanksgiving is stated by Paul in 1 Thess. 5:18, **“In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”**.

There is something profound and wonderful about giving thanks in everything. It reflects the realization that God is firmly in control and we can always trust Him to do what is right. If you truly believe that God is in control you can be thankful in everything. Our text is focused around Leah, the first wife of Jacob. She was apparently not beautiful and her husband did not love her. She apparently came to the place where these earthly problems were seen in the light of eternity. She discovered that you can praise God if you are beautiful, and you can also praise God if you are not beautiful. You can praise God if your husband loves you, and you can also praise God if your husband does not love you. In Christ we believe that all things are working together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). Leah apparently saw this truth from afar and was a pioneer in making this great spiritual discovery a part of her life. By the time of David thanksgiving and praise were an integral part of worship as the book of Psalms makes clear.

With this in mind, let us examine the text more closely.

Laban had two daughter, Leah and Rachel. The name Leah comes from the Hebrew word

for “weariest”. The Scriptures tell us that Leah was “tender-eyed” but her younger sister Rachel was “beautiful and well favoured” (Gen. 29:17). We deduce from this that Leah was not beautiful.

As you recall Jacob was madly in love with the beautiful Rachel. He worked seven years for the privilege of marrying her and he loved her so much that “they seemed unto him but a few days”. (Gen. 29:20). Jacob, who had deceived his father and stolen his brother’s blessing, was about to experience the painful reality of being deceived himself. On his wedding night Leah’s deceitful father substituted her for the beautiful Rachel. It seems that Jacob never forgave Leah for participating in this duplicity. While marrying sisters would later be forbidden by Mosaic Law (Lev. 18:18), Jacob worked another seven years and also married Leah’s sister Rachel. We are specifically told, however, that Jacob “loved also Rachel more than Leah” (Gen. 29:30.)

This led to the intervention of God. When the Lord saw that “Leah was hated” he opened her womb and she bore four sons to Jacob in quick succession (Gen. 29:31 - 35). Their names reflect not only her desperate need to be loved, but also the spiritual growth that led her to name her fourth son “Judah” or “Praise”. Note how the names of her children reflected her own spiritual struggles.

- She called her firstborn son “Reuben” which means “behold a son”. Leah said: “surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction, now therefore my husband will love me (Gen. 29:32). Apparently he did not.
- Leah conceived again and bore another son and she called his name Simeon which means “obedient”. Leah understood that this child too was given to her by God because she was hated by her husband (Gen. 29:33). Even though Leah was obedient to God her husband still didn’t love her.
- Leah conceived another son and named him Levi which means “joined”. Leah therefore said: “Now this time will my husband be joined unto me because I have born him three sons” (Gen. 29:34). Her optimism about being “joined” to her husband apparently never came to pass.
- The fourth son, as we have pointed out, was named Judah which means “praise”. At this time Leah said: “Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing” (Gen. 29:35). Praise the Lord! It seems that Leah came to realize that if she was pleasing to God it really didn’t matter what anyone else thought of her.

IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THIS CHILD NAMED “PRAISE” WAS CHOSEN BY GOD TO BE THE ANCESTOR OF JESUS! SOME 700 YEARS LATER DAVID WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT JEHOVAH INHABITS THE PRAISES OF ISRAEL (PS. 22:3), BUT APPARENTLY LEAH UNDERSTOOD THIS LONG BEFORE HE DID! PLEASE CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT LEAH’S INSIGHT AT THE BIRTH OF HER FOURTH SON WAS LIKE THE FIRST FRUITS OF PRAISE WHICH WOULD LATER CHARACTERIZE ALL OF GOD’S CHILDREN!

JUDAH

Judah himself is also like an allegory of spiritual development and growth. Please

prayerfully consider his life. Genesis chapters 37 - 50 primarily feature Joseph. In the midst of Joseph's story, however, an entire chapter is devoted to Judah (Gen. 38). On the surface this may seem like an interruption in the narrative, but it is not. The theme of the Bible is not about Joseph, or Judah, it is Jesus. Recognizing this helps us place the story of Judah in a larger context. Remember! Our Sovereign God determined that it was through Judah that Jesus would be born! This truth was clearly stated by Jacob just before he died: **“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall be gathering of the people be” Gen. 49:10).**

Please prayerfully consider this brief overview of Judah's life:

- Judah, like all of us, was a sinner in need of salvation. It was Judah, for example, who conceived the idea of selling Joseph into slavery for 20 pieces of silver (Gen. 37:26 - 28).
- It was Judah who became so discouraged that he “went down from his brethren” and married a Canaanite woman (Gen.38:2). Later, as you know, the Hebrews would be forbidden to marry Canaanites (Deut.7:1 - 6).
- Judah had three sons by his Canaanite wife: Er, Onan, and Shelah. (Gen. 38:3 - 5).
- Judah took a wife for his firstborn son Er. Her name was Tamar (Gen. 38:6).
- Er had no children and was so wicked that the Lord slew him (Gen. 38:7).
- Onan was also killed by God because he refused to have a child by Tamar, his brother's widow (Gen. 38:8 - 10). Again, we remind you that it was absolutely essential for Judah's posterity to continue so that Jesus could later come from his lineage.
- Under normal circumstances Judah would give his remaining son Shelah to marry Tamar and raise up seed in the name of his deceased brother (Deut. 25:5, 6). There are at least two reasons Judah did not do so. First, he considered Shelah too young to marry, and secondly, he feared that Shelah would also die as his brothers did. Therefore Tamar returned to the house of her father and waited in vain for Shelah to grow up (Gen. 38:11).
- In the mean while, Judah's wife died (Gen. 38:12). We cannot repeat too often or stress too strongly the absolute necessity for Judah to have someone in his posterity to keep the Messianic line intact.
- When Tamar saw that Shelah was grown without becoming her husband, she dressed up like a harlot and seduced her father-in-law. Judah did not recognize who she was for her face was covered with a veil (Gen. 38:14).
- Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that just as Judah was deceived by clothing, Isaac and Jacob were also deceived by clothing.
- Judah promised to give her a kid in payment for this immoral act. Again, how strange that goats would also play a part in this act of deception as they had in the deception of both Isaac and Jacob.
- Since the young goat was not immediately available, Tamar took Judah's signet, bracelets, and staff as a pledge.
- Providentially, Tamar conceived twins by Judah. Now one of these sons could continue the Messianic lineage to Christ. Again, it is interesting that this pagan woman seemed to be more interested in preserving the lineage of Judah than he was.
- When Judah realized that his daughter-in-law was pregnant he accused her of “playing the harlot” and demanded that she be burned to death (Gen. 38:24).

- When Tamar presented his signet, bracelets, and staff to him, Judah was deeply humbled by his own sinfulness and declared “She hath been more righteous than I” (Gen.38:26).
- When Tamar gave birth to her twins the firstborn, Zarah, was identified by a scarlet ribbon the midwife tied about his wrist. The other child, Pharez, however was the one whom God chose to be the progenitor of Christ. In Matthew’s genealogy we are told that Jacob begat Judah, Judah begat Pharez, and Pharez begat Esrom, Etc. (Matt. 1:2, 3). The point is that God is to be praised because regardless of how we act His sovereign will becomes reality.
- It is encouraging to discover that with the passing of time the sinful Judah was being refined in the crucible of life to be a godly man. Later, for example, when Joseph cleverly demanded that Benjamin be brought to Egypt Judah bravely volunteered to a “surety” for his younger brother (Gen. 43:9).
- Even more touching, however, is the impassioned plea that Judah made for Benjamin in the presence of Joseph. When Joseph shrewdly orchestrated matters so that Benjamin would become a slave in Egypt, Judah volunteered to take his place (Gen. 44:33).
- Note the transformation that had taken place in his life. Twenty two years before, Judah had sold Joseph into slavery, but now was willing to become a slave in the place of Joseph’s beloved brother.
- When Joseph realized this he began to weep out loud! Then he had all of the Egyptians leave the room and identified himself to his brothers. NOTE ALSO THAT THE WHOLE NARRATIVE INVOLVED THE COMING OF CHRIST OVER 1,700 YEARS LATER! Joseph said: **“Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life . . . God did send me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Gen. 45:5 - 7).**
- If the children of Abraham had died of starvation it would have nullified the promise of God that in his Seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3)

APPLICATION

Leah had many problems but it seems that we live in more perilous times. Paul predicted: **“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 KJV)**

Surely you have experienced some of these problems in your own life. Remember! Leah learned to praise God even without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. If she could praise God in her hard times, certainly we can do the same. While her optimism was rare in that distant era, it is to be the standard attitude of all believers in our own day and age.

- Joy is one of the many by products of praise! When we praise God regardless of our circumstances, our sadness is turned to joy.

- The fruit of the Spirit involves joy (Gal. 5:22).
- When the apostles were beaten for preaching the Gospel they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41).
- When faced with persecution the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52).
- Paul wrote to the to the Philippians from prison and yet the letter contains 16 references to joy. The noun “kara” is found 5 times (1:4, 25; 2:2, 28; 4:1). The verb “karein” is found 11 times (1:18, 18; 2:17, 17, 18, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 4, 10).
- When Paul and Silas were unjustly beaten and imprisoned in Philippi they were not complaining, they were singing (Acts 16:25).
- Because we have the Holy Spirit we can rejoice in our tribulations (Rom. 5:3 - 5).
- Because we belong to God and are the called according to His purpose we know that all things are working together for good (Rom.8:28).

As we pointed out before, it’s not about Joseph or Judah, it’s about Jesus. Similarly, it’s not about you or me either! It’s all about Jesus. So - **“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Col. 3:17).**

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