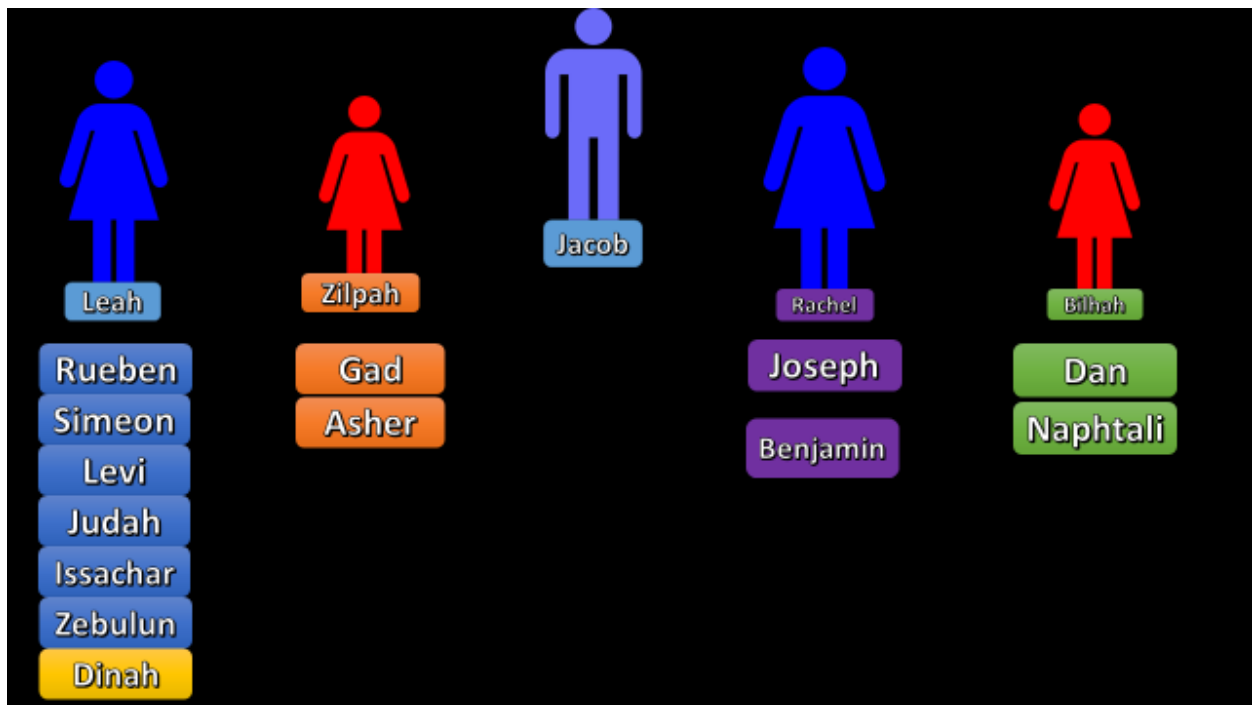


Genesis 29-30: Jacob's Family 09-09-18 PM

Genesis 29-30 tells the story of the establishment of the family of Jacob, the beginning of the nation of Israel. It is a messy story full of intrigue and base human behavior. It raises many questions about how God operates and accomplishes His purposes in light of human sin and misbehavior.



Jacob becomes the father of twelve sons and one daughter through two wives and two concubines (slaves). These sons have an equal share (except the birthright inheritor) despite the very unequal circumstances of their mothers.

The Problem of Polygamy

The situation of Jacob having multiple wives and concubines (slave marriages) is a major moral dilemma. It is called polygamy. In Genesis 2:24 we are told God's design of marriage: one man, one woman for one life. We also see in Genesis 20:3 that when another tries to enter it, it is adultery, and it is a sin worthy of death. In Genesis 4:19 the first polygamist is seen, and we see that he was an unholy man. Finally, in general, polygamy made problems for the patriarchs (Abraham & Sarah, Jacob & Rachel & Leah). But polygamy is never directly condemned, and seems to be indirectly tolerated.

In the law of Moses, we are surprised to see that there is actually a codification of a "legal" polygamy. We see this in the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy 21:15, and even the problem of David in 2 Samuel 12:8. Polygamy is not the only Old Law marriage problem; there are slave

marriages/concubines; there are sexual assault (?) marriages (consider the absence of condemnation of fornication), and there is the certificate of divorce issued in the Old Law.

The Solution of Marriage in the Law of Christ

The Law of Christ does not permit polygamy, concubines, or provide a certificate of divorce. Jesus teaches this in Matthew 19:3-9 when Jesus issues HIS law on the matter (which returns to the original intent and purposes). Today polygamy violates this law. While Jesus was particularly addressing the certificate of divorce, it indirectly invalidates polygamy too.

Why didn't God just make the Law of Christ's marriage the law of marriage beforehand? We are told that there are some things in the Old Testament that needed changing because they were imperfect (1 Cor. 13:10, Heb. 8:7). Consider that Paul said in times past God "winked" (Acts 17:30), and that He permitted these imperfections because of the hardness of hearts (Matthew 19:8).

In the end, Jacob's messy marriage is yet another example of the imperfections of the Old Testament that were rectified in the New Testament. God USED these circumstances; God NEVER approved of them.