**The Parable of Jacob and the Well of Paddan Aram [Gen 29:1-10]**

In the 29th Chapter of Genesis, it was recorded that when Jacob left Canaan for Paddan Aram in obedience to his father’s instruction, he arrived at the land of the Eastern peoples; upon getting there, he saw a well with a large stone covering. Three flocks of sheep were lying near the well. The shepherds present at the well told Jacob that they could not give their sheep water from the well until all the shepherds had gathered with their flocks, then, the stone over the well would be rolled away and the sheep would drink. The shepherds told Jacob this at the well after he asked them to roll the stone and give water to their sheep.

While Jacob was talking with them, Rachael approached with her father’s Sheep and Jacob rolled the stone over the well and watered Laban’s Sheep.

The chapter tells the story of the beginning of Jacob’s service to Laban, how he came to be married to Leah and Rachael and, the circumstances around the birth of his first four sons. All three events could have been recorded without including his encounter with the shepherds at the well. If Moses had recorded that Jacob got to the well, asked the Shepherds if they knew Laban and that after affirming, they pointed to Rachael who was approaching to water her father’s sheep, the story would have been unaffected. The inclusion of the account of Jacob’s interaction with the shepherds neither adds nor removes anything from the story but for some reason, Jacob chose to recount the story to his children who in turn told it to theirs and Moses thought it was significant that this strange and seemingly irrelevant information be added to the story.

**Keys to Interpreting the Parable**

|  | **The Elements in the Parable** | **The Spiritual Meaning** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The Characters** | Jacob the shepherd | Jesus the Shepherd of the Church |
| Rachael | Israel |
| Laban’s sheep | Jesus’ people |
| The other shepherds | The Rulers of this age |
| The sheep of the other shepherds | Those who don’t belong to Christ |
| **The Objects** | The stone over the well | The death/grave (Sheol/Hades) |
| The water in the well | Resurrection/Life |

**The Meaning of the Parable**

The parables of Jesus were about God’s Kingdom and the events, places, times, and characters involved in it. This parable of the well is no different. It also speaks of the coming Kingdom of God.

The parable tells of the two resurrections. The curse of death is to be totally lifted at the judgment day when all the dead will rise and even Death and Hades would be judged. This is the time stated in scripture for all men to rise. However, at least a millennium before the appointed time for death to be destroyed, Jesus will return to the earth to redeem His people from death [Rev 20:4-6, 11-15].

Just as there was an appointed time for the shepherds to water their sheep that were lying down, there is an appointed time for the dead, those ‘lying down’ to rise and drink ‘living water’ live again. The other shepherds whether because they lacked the ability to roll over the stone or they lacked the authority are not able to water their sheep until a certain time. Similarly, the rulers of this age lack both the power and authority to bring the dead to life and an appointed time has been set by the Father.

**Summary Table**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Description** | Jacob rolling over the well before the appointed time | The first resurrection of the Saints of Christ |
| **Spiritual Meaning** | Although not mentioned – The watering of the rest of the Sheep at the authorized time | The last resurrection of all mankind. |