



“And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world...” (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance
of this week’s lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®
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NOT WHAT THEY BARGAINED FOR

For decades, people streamed into the aptly (or so it seemed) named town of Paradise in California’s Sierra foothills. The beauty of the hills beckoned people to build their homes far into the heavily wooded countryside. Two weeks ago, strong, dry winds made the drought-stricken land a tinderbox. When the inevitable fire started, it could not be stopped. Scores of people died as their heavenly surroundings in Paradise rapidly turned into purgatory! Being caught in the most devastating fire in California history was not what Paradise residents had bargained for.

MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR

Several of the people in today’s lesson got *more* than they bargained for. Formerly childless Rachel was blessed with a son. Laban, a schemer who took advantage of his son-in-law, prospered greatly as Jacob cared for his flocks. And Jacob, whom we’re tempted to think of as having been a schemer all his life, prospered even more than Laban. All of them got blessings they had not expected.

1. Why do you think this California town was named *Paradise*? Do you think that people were more likely to thank God for the blessings of the town of Paradise at its best or question God for the destruction of it in the past weeks? What does that say about human nature?
2. How do you determine whether a blessing or disaster is of divine origin or due to human activity? Does it matter? Explain.
3. How much is coincidence a factor in life? Or are all the things that happen to us the result of God’s actions? What experiences in your life indicate that God was actively working for your benefit?

—Charles R. Boatman

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