

Genesis Chapter 31 Commentary

1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. **2** And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. **3** And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. **4** And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, **5** And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. **6** And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. **7** And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. **8** If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked. **9** Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

God is preparing Jacob to be on his journey homeward. It is necessary that Jacob fulfill his vow to God and he can't do this here. Notice, the first thing he tells his family is; he has heard the murmuring of Laban's sons, and that Laban's countenance toward him is not favorable any more. He has heard the talk of Laban's sons, and he understands their desire to have the possessions, which God has given Jacob, for their own. The lesson for us is; we should be aware of those about us, with whom we may have lost favor because of God's blessings in our lives. The devil is always working to stir up the spirit of envy and jealousy in men, one toward another. I had this happen, in my own personal life, and did not understand it until later. Had I paid acute attention to those around me, maybe much confusion could have been averted.

He further, and most importantly, states that he has had a message from God, and in obedience to God he must return to his home country. This is a good lesson for us today; a reminder that we should be about our heavenly Father's business, no matter the circumstances in our natural lives.

Jacob, to prepare his family to go with him, calls a family meeting, and lays all the circumstances out for them. He explains that Laban no longer looks upon him with favor. He explains that Laban has changed his wages ten times in order to try and scam Jacob out of what is rightfully his. Jacob points out to his family; God has protected me and kept Laban from overcoming me in his deceitful scheming. Jacob explains to his family; God has taken the wealth of Laban and given it unto me, and God has appeared unto me and told me to return to my home and fulfill my vow to him.

10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled. **11** And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. **12** And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

We see the evidence here; God is the giver of the increase. Jacob's wizardry didn't make the increase. It was simply God doing that which he promised, which was to bless Jacob with a multitude of children and natural abundance.

We find this same principle, of God giving the increase, in scripture in the New Testament in: **1Co 3:5-7; 5 "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."** The principle here is; if we do what we are supposed to, sow seeds, God will bless with increase according to his will and purpose.

13 I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

God reminds Jacob of where he came from and the vow he made in Bethel. God tells Jacob; the need, and time, to fulfill his vow is here.

14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15 Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. 16 For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

These daughters of Laban, Jacob's wives, understand the situation, and they recognize that Laban, because of his love of money, has also turned against them in his effort to swindle Jacob. They encourage Jacob to do what God has said, and acknowledge that God has given them all that Jacob has gained from his labor for Laban.

What a great example of the need to communicate with one another, and to encourage one another in our service to Christ our Lord. Good communication with our families yields solidarity in the family. This is especially true in the organized church bodies, insuring that now only are we doing God's will, we are also in agreement with God's will and stand together as one body in Christ.

17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; 18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

Jacob gathers up all that he has come to possess, in his labors for Laban, and starts for home. Jacob recognizes; if he tells his deceitful father-in-law of his plans; that Laban, being the deceitful and covetous man he was, would probably try to take everything away from him by force.

A lesson for us; when we are moved to be obedient to God, and prepare to make our confession of faith to the church, we don't go out and tell our enemies, the world, but rather, we get busy being on our way to our Father's house with all that we have. If you go tell the world of your plans; the world will attempt to deceive you into not being obedient to God.

19 And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's.

Laban goes to shear his sheep, and this gives Rachel the opportunity to steal Laban's images. I have no clue why Rachel stole the images. It also provides opportunity for Jacob to get three days head start away from Laban, before Laban knows he is gone.

20 And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. 21 So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.

Jacob knew the covetous heart of Laban, which is why he stole away. He knew that if he asked Laban's permission to go home, Laban would by force try to keep him there or steal Jacob's possessions. Jacob understood that Laban was a deceitful and covetous person.

The same principle, of fleeing from the ungodly, is true in our own lives; seen in: **1Co 10:13-14; 13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."** We shall see that this is exactly what God does for Jacob and his family as we continue the chapter.

The river is the river Euphrates, which lay between Mesopotamia and Chaldea, which was to be the border between the land of promise and Syria, which we shall see later in scripture.

22 And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. 23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

Laban hears that Jacob has fled. Laban knows the multitude of blessings he has enjoyed through Jacob's presence. He recognizes the loss he is faced with if he allows Jacob to escape, with his rightful possessions, which Laban intends to have for himself. Laban gathers his forces and pursues after him. He is setting out to do just what Jacob expected he would do to begin with, which is why he stole away to start with. Laban pursues after Jacob as though Jacob is a thief and robber.

What lesson can we draw from this? When you make your public confession of faith to God, and join the church; you are an immediate target, of the world you have left behind, and of satan. They will try to recapture you into the bondage of sin and evil.

24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

God rebukes Laban in a dream. God tells Laban; he is not to work his wiles against Jacob any more.

25 Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. 26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

We see that Laban immediately accuses Jacob, so that it looks like Laban would have intended to do good, rather than steal. This is satan's way, to try and put us on the defensive, and to make himself look good, by worldly means and deceit. We know that the accusation is false, because of the consultation with his wives in **Ge 31:14-16** in which they agreed to willing go. Aside from that, Jacob

took only what was his already. He had purchased the daughters by the contracts he made with Laban, their father. He is accused of stealing what is his own, by the labor of his own hands.

27 Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? 28 And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. 29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Laban makes his false accusations, pretentious words that he uses to make himself look good, and claims to have power to do Jacob harm. However, Laban confesses; God has instructed Laban that he is not to do any harm to Jacob. Jacob knows that he is not guilty of any sin and is not stirred by Laban's deceitful speeches.

Aren't you glad that we have the protection of God on our side in the struggles of life? We have proof of this in the New Testament in:

- **Mt 24:24 "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."**
- **Mr 13:22 "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."**

We understand; when we begin our public profession of faith in God; we become the target of the devil, who will try to drown us in lies and deceit. Praise God, we have his protection in keeping us from being seduced to turn from God.

We also remember how God preserved the life of Job, when he allowed satan to buffet him. God has limited satan and his followers, from taking our salvation and eternal life, which was secured for us by Christ Jesus.

30 And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

Laban tries to cloud and distract from the real issue, by saying that Jacob did what he did because he was homesick. Then, Laban accuses Jacob of stealing his gods. I ask you this question; why would Jacob want Laban's gods, when they both know that all the blessings in both their lives are from the true and living God? This is an empty accusation to Jacob, because Jacob doesn't know what Rachel has secretly done.

Remember, satan will try to get you any way he can, even if it means accusing you of what someone else has done. Be not deceived, but remember always the trueness of your heart to God.

31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

Jacob comes right out and tells Laban, if I had not stolen away, you would have taken my wives, who are your daughters, and all my possessions from me by force, or deceit. Jacob also points out; you

would take everything from me by force now, except for the restraining and protecting hand of God for me.

32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

Jacob, out of a heart of innocence, says to Laban; you accuse me of theft, search, and if you find any stolen thing here you may kill the thief, even myself, and get your stolen goods back.

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. 34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. 35 And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

We see; Rachel has learned how to be deceitful from her father's example, and now uses this learned trait to her advantage. Laban is reaping that which he has sown.

This is a warning to us to live pure and sinless lives, setting the example of pure faith and trust in God almighty. Children learn what they see.

There is also a lesson to be learned of gods, idols, and images. We see that the true and living God, Jacob's God, has raised up a wall of protection around Jacob and his possessions. If these gods of Laban's were real they would have provided Laban with the knowledge of where they were. Since they don't do this, it demonstrates plainly to us that there is One True and Living God, the Lord God Almighty. This same principle is true today. People make many this into gods, idols, and images, that they worship and trust in to no avail. We have the Holy Spirit presence of God abiding in us, and thus we are protected, and kept, and instructed, by God.

36 And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? 37 Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. 38 This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. 39 That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. 40 Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. 41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Laban, unable to substantiate his accusation, comes now under the rebuke of God and Jacob. Jacob reminds Laban; you have been a crook in your dealings with me from the very start. You have attempted ten times to take away that which was rightfully mine, but I had the protection of God, which preserved me from harm from you. We must remember in our own lives; we have, all that we have, only by the protection and blessings of God.

Jacob reminds Laban that he has been a crook, and still is, and that he is no longer going to have any dealings with his deceit and lies. Jacob and Laban are not going to make any more deals to please Laban.

42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

Jacob reminds Laban; if God had not spoken to you on my behalf, you would now by force take away all that I have gained, by the blessing of God, through the labor of my hands. Again, we point out that we are under the protection of God's hands.

43 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? 44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. 45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. 46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. 47 And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

Jegarsahadutha (pronounced; yegar' sah-had-oo-thaw') is the Aramaic word meaning; *heap of the testimony*. Galeed (pronounced; gal-ade') is the Hebrew word meaning; *heap of testimony*.

48 And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; 49 And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

Mizpah is the Hebrew word which means; *watch tower*.

50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee. 51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

Laban, having been rebuked by God, now leaves his gods out of the matter, and confesses God as witness. He now fully understands that God is with Jacob and no effort of his will change that. He understands that Jacob is under God's protection, that God has tied Laban's hands, and will not let him have anything of that Jacob has rightfully earned by his own, hard, honest, work. He finally understands; the futility of all his scheming, and plotting, to get that which is not rightfully his.

52 This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. 53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac. 54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount. 55 And early in the morning Laban rose

up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

We see that Laban gets his due reward, for all the deceit and trickery that he has used. He goes away empty. His children, and the wealth, that God has taken from him and given to Jacob, are now out of his grasp. Remember, we are taught by scripture, as you sow so shall ye reap. This saying is substantiated by scripture in: ***Job 4:8 "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."***

God has given Jacob resolution within the family, through God's rebuke of Laban. Laban is now admitting defeat and has withdrawn in peace. There is a good lesson for us in this. We should be completely faithful to all our agreements with others, that our word of truth be no blemished. We should stand firm to retain what is rightfully ours, asking God's protection of us and our goods.

We should make every effort to have a peaceful resolution with our families, both natural and Christian, before we part ways with them. God does recognize; there are people, who you just can't be at peace with, demonstrated in: ***Ro 12:18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."***

There is one other point I wish to expound upon. In the dealings of Jacob and Laban, we see the differences of the attitudes of each. Jacob is faithfully doing, all he has committed himself to, as a God fearing man. Laban is striving with all his might, to take that which is not rightfully his, in his deceitful means and methods. This demonstrates; the world, and the church, cannot ever come to agreement as seen in: ***2Co 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"*** In other words, the deceitful means and methods of the world are not to be exercised in the lives of God's people. God's people should always be as faithful in their dealings with the world, as Jacob was faithful in his dealings with Laban; even in the face of the false dealings of the Laban's of the world.

May God help us to always be forthright, in our dealings with one another, having no deceitfulness between us. May we truly love, and care for one another, as the bible teaches Christians should do. Thank you Lord for you anointing, protection, and your many blessings in our lives! Praise the Lord!