

“Lifeless Idols & The Living God”

Genesis 31:25-55

Main Idea: The false gods we cling to are powerless and empty, but the one true living God remains faithful to His covenant promises and people.

THE CONFRONTATION vv.25-43

1. Laban’s Accusations vv.25-30

- Two Accusations
 - i. Accusation #1 → “Why did you flee secretly and trick me...?” v.26
 - ii. Accusation # 2 → “ Why did you steal my gods?” v.30
- The word translated ‘*household gods*’ is the Hebrew word ‘*teraphim*.’
 - i. It appears 5x in this passage vv.19, 30, 32, 34, 35)
 - ii. Small man-shaped idols made of stone or clay
 - iii. Used for both pagan worship and divination (gaining guidance/knowledge apart from God)
- Why did Rachel steal the household god? (explanations have been suggested)
 - i. Out of bitterness or revenge against Laban.
 - ii. They were connected to inheritance and/or fertility.
 - iii. She had still not fully let go of the idols and false worship she grew up around.
 - iv. To keep Laban from using them for guidance or divination (to find them).
- **Psalm 115:4-8** ⁴ Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. ⁵ They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. ⁶ They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. ⁷ They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. ⁸ Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

2. Jacob’s Response vv.31-32

- About leaving → “I was Afraid” v.31
- About Laban’s gods → “Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live.”

3. Rachel’s Deception vv.33-35

- Under the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, menstruation made a woman ceremonially unclean for a period of time (Leviticus 15:19–24).”
- **Isaiah 44:16-17** Isaiah mocks false idols

4. Jacob’s Complaint vv.36-42

- He is defending himself, presenting evidence, and exposing Laban’s wrongdoing. The scene almost feels like a courtroom, with the relatives acting like witnesses between them.”

5. Laban’s Claim v.43

- **1 Chronicles 29:11-12** “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all...”

THE COVENANT vv.44-55

1. The Proposal v.44-48

- Jacob & Laban's Covenant
 - i. A Peace Treaty
 - ii. A Boundary of Protection
 - iii. A Promise to Care for Leah & Rachel
 - iv. God is the Witness and Judge of the agreement
- "heap" → a large pile or mound of rocks set up as a visible monument.
- They called it...
 - i. Laban → Jegar-sahadutha → Aramaic
 - ii. Jacob → Galeed → Hebrew
 - iii. Both Names → "Heap of Witness" / "Pile of Testimony"

2. The Mizpah vv.49-50

- Mizpah → "Watchtower" or "To keep watch"
- "Mizpah Blessing" is often treated like a sentimental statement of love or friendship, but in context it is actually a warning between two men marked by mistrust and conflict: "The Lord is watching you."

3. The Witness vv.51-53

- 'The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their fathers... judge between us.'
 - i. The language suggests plurality 'may they judge.'
- 'The Fear of his father Isaac.'
 - i. Title for God
 - ii. The word 'fear' here means reverence, awe, worship, and trust.

4. The Last Moments vv.54-55

- Laban is never mentioned in the Bible again
- Henry Morris:
 - i. "Laban is an unfortunate example of a worldly, covetous man, one who knows about the true God and to whom a thorough witness has been given. He had seen the reality of God in the life of Jacob. He himself had even enjoyed many of the blessings of God through his relationship to Jacob. Nevertheless, he continued in idolatry and covetousness, seeking material gain for himself to the exclusion of all other considerations. Rather than seeking to follow the truth of God's plan as witnessed by Jacob, he merely resented and coveted the blessing of God on Jacob. He finally ended up with neither. His life constitutes a sober warning to a great host of semi-religious but fundamentally self-worshipping and self-seeking men and women today."

1 Chronicles 16:23-29

²³ Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

Tell of his salvation from day to day.

²⁴ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!

²⁵ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
and he is to be feared above all gods.

²⁶ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

²⁷ Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and joy are in his place.

²⁸ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!

²⁹ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come before him!

Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;