

The Separation of Jacob

Genesis 31:1-55

- I. JACOB'S DECISION TO RETURN TO CANAAN (Genesis 31:1-16)
 - A. Jacob's Decision to Separate and Return to Canaan (Genesis 31:1-3)
 1. Because Laban and his sons had turned against Jacob (Genesis 31:1-2).
 - a. In hearing the words of Laban's sons (Genesis 31:1)
 - (1) Accusing Jacob of taking that which was not his.
 - (a) Laban's sons talked about Jacob openly, just not directly to his face.
 - (b) They wanted Jacob to hear, just indirectly.
 - (c) This kind of tactic is found in the world. It is a cowardly tactic but used often by evildoers.
 - (2) Accusing Jacob of stealing that which belonged to Laban.
 - (a) The hypocrisy in the accusation—This was so hypocritical of Laban's sons, especially considering how Laban had tricked Jacob with the marriage of Rachel, and then the possibility of Laban taking the blemished cattle at the start of the covenant/contract of which we pointed out in our last chapter (see Genesis 30:34-36).
 - (b) The hyperbolicism in the accusation—This was an extreme exaggeration considering Jacob had added to Laban's wealth. Jacob had been scheming but had not "taken all" the livestock. However, evil men do not abide by the truth.
 - (3) Accusing Jacob of taking honour for himself
 - (a) The conversation was not honourable but it spoke of honour.
 - (b) These sons were envious of Jacob—Jacob was making a name for himself, and this was something that the sons of Laban could not stand for (Proverbs 10:4; Proverbs 12:24). The sons of Laban perverted the truth accusing Jacob of taking their father's honour when in fact Laban had done that to Jacob in the marriages and contracts.

- b. In seeing the countenance of his father-in-law, Laban (Genesis 31:2)
 - (1) Jacob had beheld the countenance of Laban.
 - (2) Laban's demeanor had changed toward him.
 - (3) Countenance in the Bible
 - (a) Occurs 51 times in the Bible.
 - i. A countenance can fall (Genesis 4:5, 6)
 - ii. A countenance can change (Genesis 31:2; 1 Samuel 1:18)
 - iii. A countenance can be lifted up (Numbers 6:26)
 - iv. A countenance can be fierce (Deuteronomy 28:50)
 - v. A countenance can fool or disinform the observer (1 Samuel 16:7, 12; 1 Samuel 17:42).
 - vi. A countenance may be beautiful or fair (1 Samuel 25:3; 2 Samuel 14:27)
 - vii. A countenance may be made sad (2 Kings 8:11; Nehemiah 2:2, 3)
 - viii. The righteous looks for the light of God's countenance upon them (Psalm 4:6; Psalm 44:3), and that He might behold them (Psalm 11:7).
 - ix. A countenance can bring gladness (Psalm 21:6, and can bring help (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5)
 - x. A countenance can be full of pride (Psalm 10:4)
 - xi. A countenance can be made cheerful (Psalm 15:3)
 - xii. Moses' countenance was made glorious (2 Corinthians 3:7).
 - xiii. The LORD's countenance as the sun (Revelation 1:16)
 - (b) *Countenance*: mid-13c., countenance, "behavior, bearing, conduct, manners;" early 14c., "outward appearance, looks," from Old French countenance "demeanor, bearing, conduct," – from: etymonline.com
- 2. Because God had told Jacob to return to his kindred, and his land (Genesis 31:3; cp. Genesis 31:13, 18; Genesis 28:15; 32:9; Genesis 35:1).
 - a. The LORD told Jacob to return to the land,
 - b. And to return to his kindred,
 - c. The LORD, once again, promised to be with him.

B. Jacob's Conversation with Rachel and Leah (Genesis 31:4-16)

- 1. Jacob called Rachel and Leah to him into a private place (Genesis 31:4).

2. He told of their father's injustice to him (Genesis 31:4-8).
 - a. Jacob said Laban's countenance had changed (Genesis 31:4-5).
 - b. Jacob told how faithfully he had served Laban (Genesis 31:6).
 - c. Jacob told how his wages were changed ten times (Genesis 31:7).
 - d. Jacob said he was not "*hurt*" concerning the financial outcome but that he was hurt that Laban's countenance changed toward him.
 - e. Jacob omitted some events of the growth of his cattle (Genesis 31:8; Genesis 30:42).
3. He testified of God's blessing to him (Genesis 31:9).
4. He told of God's dream to him (Genesis 31:10-13). Note: God would come to Laban in a dream later concerning Jacob (Genesis 31:24).
 - a. Jacob was given revelation concerning the cattle (Genesis 31:10-12).
 - b. Jacob was reminded of Bethel (Genesis 31:13).
 - (1) The place where Jacob anointed the pillar (Genesis 28:12-22)
 - (2) The place where Jacob vowed a vow unto God
5. Rachel and Leah support Jacob's decision (Genesis 31:14-16).
 - a. Because of their frustration concerning their lack of inheritance from their father (Genesis 31:14-15).
 - b. Because of the lack of love, they felt from their father Laban (Genesis 31:15).
 - (1) Note: Laban's actions from before brought forth the effect of what would occur here. Laban had shown no concern for the love of his daughters when deceiving Jacob (Genesis 29:19, 20-26).
 - (2) Note: In consideration a father ought to consider his relationship with his children both young and old (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).
 - c. Rachel and Leah encouraged Jacob to follow God's call (Genesis 31:16).
 - (1) Likely this was driven by the treatment that they had received from Laban concerning the inheritance.
 - (2) And, likely it was due to the lack of love they felt was shared from their father concerning them.

II. JACOB FLEES FROM LABAN (Genesis 31:17-24)

A. Jacob Fleed While Laban Sheared His Sheep (Genesis 31:17-21)

1. Jacob committed all he had in leaving Laban (Genesis 31:17-18).
 - a. His family
 - b. His cattle
 - c. His possessions

- d. Note: In like manner Moses, when the children of Israel were leaving Egypt took all that they had. Pharaoh wanted Moses to leave some behind (Exodus 10:24), but Moses was adamant that all had to leave (Exodus 10:26).
 - e. Note: As believers we should leave off the world (Egypt) and press toward Christ and in our service to Him (2 Corinthians 5:17; cp. Colossians 3:5; Philippians 3:13-14).
2. Rachel stole her father's images (Genesis 31:19).
 - a. Stealing her father's idols revealed a character flaw in Rachel.
 - b. This revealed where her heart stood.
 - (1) She took something that was not hers.
 - (2) She stole something that could not help her.
 - (3) She took something that would hurt her family.
 - (a) False gods
 - (b) The relationship between her husband and her father.
 - c. A wise woman does not pluck down her house but builds it up (Proverbs 14:1).
 - (1) The foolish woman (Proverbs 19:13; Proverbs 21:9, 19; 1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 21:24-25; 2 Kings 11:1)
 - (2) The wise woman (Proverbs 24:3-4; Proverbs 31:10-31)
 3. Jacob leaves in secret and set his face toward Gilead (Genesis 31:20-21).
 - a. Jacob did not notify Laban that he was leaving.
 - b. Jacob left privately while Laban was shearing his sheep.
 - (1) Noting Laban's actions when he learns Jacob is gone, it is apparent that Jacob had made a wise decision not to tell Laban.
 - (2) God must intervene and warn Laban not to harm Jacob (Genesis 31:24).
- B. Laban Pursues Jacob and Overtakes Him (Genesis 31:22-24)
1. Laban learned of Jacob's departure and went after him (Genesis 31:22-23).
 - a. It was told Laban that Jacob was gone.
 - b. He learned on the third day.
 2. Laban overtakes Jacob at the mount Gilead (Genesis 31:23).
 - a. It is apparent that Laban was wrath and intended to get his way by force if necessary.
 - b. A week was involved before he caught up with Jacob. It was approx. 300 miles. All of this shows the heart condition of Laban.
 3. God told Laban to speak neither good nor bad to Jacob (Genesis 31:24).
 - a. The term "*good*" or *bad*" means here to not harm Jacob.
 - b. This warning shows that Laban had every intention to hurt Jacob.