

Genesis 31:17–35

Only the Real God Really Saves

Main idea: Laban and Rachel's idols cannot save. Only the God of Jacob's father, the Living God, can!

¹⁷ Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. ¹⁸ And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. ¹⁹ Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's. ²⁰ And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

²² And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. ²³ Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. ²⁴ But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."

²⁵ So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

²⁶ And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? ²⁷ Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? ²⁸ And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing. ²⁹ It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' ³⁰ And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"

³¹ Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.' ³² With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take it with you." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

³³ And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them. ³⁵ And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is with me." And he searched but did not find the household idols.

Introduction

Idols to which we look for salvation, satisfaction, and security.

1. Laban (and Rachel's) idols
 - a. The teraphim of v19
 - i. Laban calls them 'gods' in v30—he had used them for divination (30:27, cf. Ezek 21:21), and Rachel was afraid of this.
 - ii. But they cannot even save themselves! (v30, 34–35)
 - b. His daughters, grandchildren, and flock (v28, cf. v43)
 - c. What idols do to us
 - i. The stealing of Laban's heart (v20, 26)
 - ii. The searing of Laban's conscience (v29, cf. v31, 24/29b/42b)
2. Jacob's God
 - a. Nothing is hidden from Him (v24, cf. v12)
 - b. Nothing is beyond His power (v29)

Conclusion

Because not even our idolatry is hidden from God, in order for our salvation to be accomplished by His power, it would cost the humiliation and even the atoning death of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Laban and Rachel's idols cannot save—cannot even provide security or safety. Only the God of Jacob's father, the Living God, can!