

## HOW GOD STOPPED JACOB

**TEXT:** *Gen.31,32 (To use this series as a Bible study, please read the text first and then actually refer to each highlighted verse as you describe the events, biblically, to your students.)*

**INTRO.:** A. Jacob had grown wealthy in Padan-Aram as to his family & fortune. But it was not where he belonged. God's blessings for his soul were back home in Caanan, the promised land. God had allowed things to turn sour for Jacob to arrest him & send him back home.

B. Jacob had some things to deal with in his life. One of those major areas had to do with some old goals. Two of them were to marry Rachel & to become wealthy. He had achieved both, but neither satisfied him. God was about to place a very ugly fly in Jacob's ointment.

### I. HOW GOD STOPPED JACOB:

#### A. How Old Goals Were Challenged: **31:1-16**

##### 1. Jacob's fundamental concern: **v.1-3**

###### a. The world became suddenly menacing: **v.1,2**

- 1) Jacob had carefully fulfilled all of Laban's demands.
- 2) But jealousy is never reasonable.
- 3) Jacob could see that his very life was now in danger.

###### b. The world became suddenly meaningful: **v.3**

- 1) It had been a long time since Jacob had heard God's voice.
- 2) The world, which before looked so good, suddenly looked so bad.

**NOTE:** God's promise to be with Jacob tuned him in once again to his God.

##### 2. Jacob's family conference: **v.4-9**

- a. Jacob holds this conference w/only Rachel & Leah, secretly out in
- b. He shared w/them Laban's proved dislike. **v.5**
- c. He spoke of Laban's persistent dishonesty. **v.6-9**

**NOTE:** God had given Laban to Jacob as a mirror to his own deceitfulness, but he still could not see clearly enough to recognize himself.

How vocal we are to the wrongs others perpetrate on us, but how blind we are to how we wrong others.

##### 3. Jacob's faithful confession: **v.10-13**

- a. His prosperity had not come from his own cleverness, but from the Lord. **v.10-12**
- b. His prospects did not come from his conniving but from God's guidance. **v.13**

**NOTE:** Jacob is faced w/the loss of everything he holds dear & it drives him back to that which should have held his loyalty & love.

##### 4. Jacob's final commitment: **v.14-16**

- a. Finally the two wives agree on something...something spiritual.
- b. What a blessing it is when our loved ones agree to serve God w/us.

#### B. How Old Gods Were Challenged: **v.17-35**

**ILLUS.:** The Ten Commandments were not yet given, but the command *"thou shalt have no other gods before Me"* was engraved upon his heart. He knew his grandfather had abandoned idolatry & the worship of false gods.

1. What Laban taught: **v.17-21**

a. Ruthless expediency: **v.17-19a**

- 1) Jacob & Laban's daughters used his own principles against him.
- 2) They all slip away while Laban is shearing his sheep (he was usually shearing Jacob!).

b. Religious error: **v.19b-21**

**NOTE:** What we do always affects those around us...more than we can know!

2. What Laban thought: **v.22-30**

a. How he met Jehovah: **v.22-24**

b. How he met Jacob: **v.25-30**

**ILLUS.:** It had taken Jacob 10 days to cover the nearly 300 miles, it took Laban only one week. Note Laban's bluster (**v.25-28**), his bitterness (**v.29** & his blindness (**v.30**).

- 1) Laban had just met Jehovah but the powerful grip of the demon gods would not release him!
- 2) Gods indeed! Gods that could be stolen, packed up like pots & pans & stuffed into a bag!
- 3) With the voice of the true God ringing in his ears, Laban cries out for his idol-gods.

3. What Laban sought: **v.31-35**

a. Jacob agrees to have his tents searched & even orders the death of the one who may have stolen Laban's gods.

b. Rachel, Laban's own daughter had stolen them, but like father, like daughter...& she tricks him!

C. How Old Grudges Were Challenged: **v.36-55**

1. Jacob's Righteous Indignation: **v.36-42**

a. Over being furiously chased: **v.36**

b. Over being falsely charged: **v.37-40**

c. Over being foully cheated: **v.41,42**

**ILLUS.:** Jacob had lost his temper & as is usually the case, lost his testimony with it. Laban retreats to Padan-Aram feeling cheated by the only believer he ever knew. Such is the price of losing your temper & paying back a person in his own coin.

2. Jacob's Religious Invocation: **v.43-55**

a. The oath: **v.47-53**

- 1) To Laban the pillar was a boundary.

**NOTE:** This was really a slap in the face to Jacob. He made him promise never to treat Rachel & Leah badly (he never had)! And that he would take no more wives (the only one Jacob ever wanted was Rachel...the others were Laban's fault)!

b. The offering: **v.54,55**

- 1) To Jacob the pillar was not a boundary, but a blessing.
- 2) It was goodbye to the past rather than a guarantee to the future.

**NOTE:** Laban embraces his children & grandchildren (Jacob's children!) but not Jacob. He went back cheated of them all, because he was a cheat!

D. How Old Guilt Was Challenged: 32:1-32

**NOTE:** Jacob now learns one of the most basic, far-reaching lessons a believer can learn - that God does not condemn sin in the unbeliever & condone sin in the believer. Jacob had forgotten how he had treated his brother Esau...

1. Jacob's Confirmation From God: **v.1,2**

a. What Jacob saw: **v.1**

**NOTE:** He saw that his deliverance from Laban was not due to his own cleverness & courage, but from Divine intervention.

b. What Jacob said: **v.2** "Mahanaim" = "the 2 hosts" (Jacob's & God's)

2. Jacob's Confusion About God: **v.3-23**

**NOTE:** Even w/the vision of the angelic escort before him, Jacob began scheming & planning again as he tried to think of ways to avoid Esau's wrath.

a. Try negotiation: **v.3-8**

- 1) Esau is coming...w/400 men! **v.6**
- 2) Jacob is fearful...in spite of his angelic escort. **v.7,8**

**NOTE:** God is saying, **"Trust Me, Jacob"** - Jacob is saying **"I do Lord, but..."**

b. Try intercession: **v.9-12**

- 1) Jacob pleads the purposes of God: **v.9**
- 2) Jacob pleads the providence of God: **v.10**
- 3) Jacob pleads the protection of God: **v.11**
- 4) Jacob pleads the promises of God: **v.12**

c. Try conciliation: **v.13-24**

3. Jacob's Confrontation w/God: **v.24-32**

**NOTE:** At Beth-el Jacob saw the ladder, at the Jabbok he saw the Lord; at Beth-el he became a believing man, at Jabbok he became a broken man; at Beth-el he became a son of god, here he became a saint of God. At Beth-el he died to his sin, here he died to self.

a. Jacob very much alone: **v.24a**  
b. Jacob very much alive: **v.24b,25a**  
c. Jacob very much altered: **v.25b-32**

- 1) Broken by God. **v.25b-27**
- 2) Blessed by God. **v.28-30**
- 3) Branded by God. **v.31,32**