



## BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

**A1804 ~ Jacob Wrestles with an Angel.**

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*Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.*

Today's *Bible Adventure* is more about the life of Jacob, who was Abraham's grandson. Once Jacob's family determined to leave Jacob's uncle Laban and his control over their lives, they stole away one day without saying "goodbye". And in the rush to get ready and leave, Jacob's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, Rachel, collected up her father's household gods and took them too, without Jacob knowing. The Scriptures give us no reason for this. It was a pagan custom for families to have a small shrine in a corner of their houses, with small images of gods or idols to pray to in times of distress.

Rachel had known Jacob now for 20 years. But she obviously didn't have great faith in Jacob's God the way she might have had. She'd heard his stories about his vision of a golden stairway leading up to heaven and God's guidance of Jacob to find her at the same well his mother had been found as a wife for his father. Yet it is a fact that many who hear Bible stories, like Rachel, never make the step to a personal commitment to God.

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When God told Jacob to return to Canaan, Jacob may have wondered if his older twin brother Esau was still alive, and still intent on killing him. There was danger ahead and danger behind him. But God had promised to be with Jacob wherever he went and God was the only One he could count on.

When Laban and his relatives caught up with Jacob and his family close to the border with Canaan, Laban strongly accused Jacob of running away with both his daughters and most of his animals. But Jacob had married both Laban's daughters, so they were his wives, and the markings on the animals also showed that they all belonged to Jacob. Laban had come and falsely declared ownership of Jacob's wives and all of Jacob's property that he had earned under an agreed arrangement with Laban. Laban had also given both his daughters to be Jacob's wives.

Laban, the deceiver, was complaining that he had been deceived. People can accuse others of doing the very thing they themselves are guilty of. In Romans, Chapter 2, it says: "Do you, my friend, pass judgment on others? You have no excuse at all, whoever you are. For when you judge others and then do the same things which they do, you condemn yourself."

What upset Laban most was the theft of his household gods. So Jacob promised to punish with death anyone who was found to have stolen them. But Jacob didn't know that Rachel was the guilty one. Rachel sinned in stealing her father's property. Even if she thought she had a claim to them, she should have asked for them first, but that would have forewarned Laban that they were leaving. Rachel's theft of the idols testified to her lack of faith in God. Rachel was also a deceiver and as a result, the gods weren't found after a search through Jacob's things.

Jacob then rebuked Laban for pursuing him and treating him harshly for the past 20 years. Jacob also told Laban that it was the God of Abraham and Isaac who had instructed him to leave with his family and animals after so many sacrificial years of service to Laban.

Laban now realised that he couldn't oppose Jacob's God. Seeing that he couldn't prevail over Jacob, Laban made a peace treaty with him. They made peace, as neither desired ongoing conflict, and Laban was now fearful after seeing a vision from God.

The next morning, Laban kissed his grandchildren and daughters goodbye and blessed them. Then he departed. And that's the last that we hear of Laban in the Bible. But how differently things might have turned out if Laban's household gods had been found in Rachel's tent!

Sometimes in our lives, a whole chain of events hinge on one particular event. If that one event had turned out differently, then a lot of other things would have turned out different then too. We need to remain committing our lives to God and asking Him to show us His way and plan for our lives so that we can honour and please Him in all that we do. Ask for God's Holy Spirit to show you where your work and resources are being wasted on the temporary things of this world and are being diverted away from what is of eternal value and close to God's own heart. Like Jacob, we too need to ask for God's protection from those whose selfishness might harm us.

Jacob was still afraid of meeting Esau, although he knew he must. He firstly sent messengers to Esau from the land of Edom, southeast of the Salt Sea. When he heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, he divided his own people into two groups, hoping that at least one camp would escape an attack from Esau.

Jacob then prayed to the Lord, first saying that he had obeyed God's command to return to Canaan. Then he went on to claim God's promise to bless him with possessions, although he himself was unworthy of God's blessings. He expressed his fear of meeting Esau and he asked for God's protection from his angry brother from the past. God answered Jacob's prayer and gave him wisdom to devise a plan of sending a group of animals to Esau as gifts, in the hope that these would win Esau over. But it was actually God Himself, who changed Esau's heart to kindly regard Jacob, in response to Jacob's prayer.

Jacob took his wives, children and animals and he crossed over a small river. But he himself returned to the other side again to be left alone that night. A Man appeared and began to wrestle with Jacob. They wrestled for many hours, until daybreak. When the Man couldn't overpower Jacob, he disabled him by dislocating Jacob's hip. But even then in his pain, Jacob wouldn't let the Man go. God finally gave Jacob full assurance that Jacob would prevail, not only with Esau, but in all the struggles that lay ahead in the Promised Land.

God gave Jacob a new name 'Israel', and this became the name of a new nation of God, which lasted until the northern kingdom of Israel was overthrown in 722 BC. The name returned to usage in 1948 AD, with the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

This Biblical account of Jacob's struggle with God is not a dream or a vision. It resulted in Jacob limping for the rest of his life. But that struggle changed Jacob inwardly in his heart also. On his way out of Canaan 20 years previously at Bethel, Jacob had encountered God through a vision, but now he knew Him face-to-face. In his crippled weakness, his full dependence was now on God and His promises to him.

If we hope to know God face-to-face too, we mustn't try to approach Him on our own terms. We must allow Him to break our self-will and self-centredness by the ways He brings to pass and only then, can we seek to gain God's deepest blessings.

The following morning, crippled Jacob saw Esau coming towards him with his 400 men. Jacob greeted him with respect, bowing to the ground seven times. But in contrast to Jacob's formality, Esau rushed forward and embraced his brother and kissed him. While Jacob's heart was still filled with fear, Esau's heart was filled with love. In this way, God answered Jacob's prayer that he might be saved from his brother's anger.

Jacob was clearly overwhelmed by Esau's forgiveness and from Esau's face, Jacob knew that God's love now filled Esau towards him. As a result, their relationship was restored. Jacob insisted that Esau kept his gift of livestock and Esau accepted. And once again, Jacob publicly acknowledged that it was God who was the source of his prosperity.

When we sum up Jacob's 20 years outside the Promised Land, we can see that the godless culture of his father-in-law had a strong influence on Jacob's life. Satan is known as the prince of this world, and one of his areas of great control is in society culture, which are the traditions handed down from generation to generation.

But this behaviour of people to bow down to graven images shows the desire of the human heart that our Creator God has put in every person to worship something beyond himself! Humankind often knows its weaknesses and the unknowns of life, and desires to see some kind of deity or power to help when needed. In Exodus, Chapter 20, God Himself taught the Children of Israel that making idols of any kind was strictly forbidden by Him. The culture of household or community idols being handed down from father to son in each generation is a winner in deception for Satan.

People today, and especially in the Western world, have become quite refined in their search for an external power. They have cultivated idols in their minds or in their desires and here again, Satan still wars against God through self-sufficient and desire-focused people. Some of those idols of the mind are from demons. Some are further developed through fiction, fantasy or entertainment but they consume a person's time and thoughts just the same. It's possible to even make an idol of one's self, making oneself the king decision-maker in life.

The rightful place of our Creator God is in our hearts, minds and souls. And our daily lives must be sought and guarded against Satan's many attacks. How believers in Christ look forward to that day in heaven when we'll be past sinning and Satan's temptations will trouble us no more!

In Matthew, Chapter 5, the Lord Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount and much of that teaching replaced traditional culture with God's teaching. We who trust in the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer from sin are to live God's way. This means that all self-serving anger is wrong. All sexual relationships outside of God's ordained requirement of marriage between a man and a woman are wrong, and one day, like all sin, will be judged by Jesus Christ, even if the culture-of-the-day says that sleeping around is OK. God says: "No, wait until you're married first, and then be faithful to that one partner for life." If there are problems, seek help. Even addiction to pornography can be overcome and marriage relationships can be healed and restored in the Name of Jesus. Children too then can be welcomed into a God-honouring and God-seeking household.

Jesus also taught that Christians indwelt by God's Holy Spirit are to live as people of integrity and honesty. If we give a promise to do something, then we should do it, even if it comes at a cost to us. Let our yes be "Yes" and our no be "No". We're not to swear oaths and then not keep them. We're not to be people of revenge but that of forgiveness. Jesus said to love our enemies and not to hate anyone, as we let Him enable us to do this. By following such things, we'll soon find we are going against our society's culture. However, let us maintain the good things God has given us and do not let culture squeeze us into its worldly and idol-filled mould instead.

In Psalm 115, Verse 1, it says: "To you alone, O Lord, to you alone, and not to us, must glory be given because of your constant love and faithfulness."

*The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.*

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