

Genesis

Chapter 35:1-29

- ✠ **Gen 35:1** *Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."*

Last week we read of how Jacob had stopped in Shechem and the results of his stopping there. Now in chapter 35 God is telling Jacob to leave Shechem and return to his home, which was where Jacob was heading in the first place.

- ✠ **Gen 31:17-18** 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.*

God also reminded Jacob of whom He was and that He had appeared to him as we studied in chapter 28 about Jacob's ladder.

Why did God need to remind Jacob of these things? The answer is in the next verses.

- ✠ **Gen 35:2-4** ² *And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. ³ "Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." ⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.*

Remember last week when Simeon and Levi had killed the men of Shechem? They didn't kill the women but took them and were very likely made their slaves. But by doing this, they not only took the women and children, but their gods too. It seems that they started to serve and worship these false gods, and even started to take on the appearance of the people because Jacob tells them to *change their garment*.

The word *change* here means more than putting on something else, but it's more of a renewing, getting rid of the old and putting on the new.

It's the same type of thing that happens to us when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

- ✠ **2 Cor 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Or as it says in the NLT,

† **2 Cor 5:17 (NLT) *What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!***

We tend to hold onto our past and try to bring it into our relationship with Jesus Christ.

† **2 Cor 6:17-18 ¹⁷ *Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."***

We bring our music, the way we talk, the movies we watch, the books we read and anything else we can think of in our new life with Jesus Christ. But we shouldn't be doing this. We are now separated from the world. We are still in this world but we should not be like them. We see the world do something and we try to do the same thing, the only difference is we put God or Jesus' name on it and think that, that will make it OK. Does God not have better ideas than satan? Do we think that satan has come up with this great idea so we should do the same thing against him?

God created the heavens and the earth and ALL the fullness thereof. Has God run out of ideas? Does God approve of us using satan's things to bring His good news to others? As a musician, I can think of times when I wanted to take a song of the world and just change the words to glorify God. The intent may be good, but it's not what God asks of us. This is not real worship but rather it's for yourself, because it reminds you an old song from your past and bringing joy to yourself. God desires pure worship, which is not for our enjoyment but His!

Once again God tells us to separate ourselves from the world. We should stop trying to bring your old ways and including them with your relationship with Jesus. If you are out of ideas, then ask God to help you out. I bet He has many wonderful ideas; He's just waiting for us to ask Him instead of asking for His permission to imitate the things of this world to worship Him!

So Jacob tells his family and all others (including these servants) to put away these foreign gods. If you read verse one God doesn't say anything about foreign gods. This would mean that Jacob knew about it and allowed these so called gods into his home.

Don't we do the same thing with our children? Do we allow them to bring in things into our homes, which are not pure? Like their music, video games, comic books, etc.? What about you, what are you bringing into your home? What movies are you renting, what magazines are you buying, what do you watch on TV? I know this may sound legalistic and old school, but what does God say about it? We read it just a few minutes ago.

† **2 Cor 6:17 *Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."***

How can you expect your children not to bring these things into your home unless you do the same thing yourself?

Jacob took these gods and earrings and buried them under the terebinth (or oak) tree in Shechem. Why was Jacob doing this? He was leaving them there and not taking them back to his father's home. Sure he could have taken them there and buried them under a tree there, but then there is always the chance of someone else digging them up and now polluting his family and the land that God had promised to him and his descendants. Jacob knew that they didn't belong in this land of promise from God. He wanted it to be pure and clean because it was a possession that God had given Jacob.

✧ **Gen 35:5-7** ⁵ *And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.* ⁶ *So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.* ⁷ *And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.*

Remember last week how Jacob was now afraid of the surrounding cities because of what Simeon and Levi did? But Jacob didn't need to fear because they heard of how God was with Jacob and protected him. So Jacob had returned to the place that God had instructed him to, and there at Bethel, Jacob built an altar to God just as he was told to.

We studied about Bethel back in chapter 28 and in the study we saw a satellite photo of Bethel. If you missed it or don't remember it, then go back to the study on chapter 28:6-22.

✧ **Gen 35:8** *Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.*

Allon Bachuth = "oak of weeping"

✧ **Gen 35:9-15** ⁹ *Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.* ¹⁰ *And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel.* ¹¹ *Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.* ¹² *"The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."* ¹³ *Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.* ¹⁴ *So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it.* ¹⁵ *And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.*

Here God is changing Jacob's name to Israel, but God changed Jacob's name back in chapter 32.

† **Gen 32:28** *And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."*

Back in chapter 32, Jacob was returning home and on the way God had spoken to Jacob, changing his name then. But Jacob had not returned home like he was suppose to. But when he finally does, then God reminds Jacob that he is no longer Jacob, but Israel.

Interesting thing is, that when we continue to read of Jacob, he is no longer called Jacob, but Israel. Sure, he is still mentioned throughout the bible as Jacob but pay close attention as we continue on even in this chapter and noticed he is now called Israel.

God remind Israel of the same thing He spoke to Abraham and Isaac his grandfather and father. The promise of the land, his descendants and the promise of Jesus!

After God speaks with Israel, Israel worships God. How many times has God spoken to you? Maybe at church, or in your time of reading the bible, maybe through these studies or even the daily devotionals? How many times have you worshipped God and thanked Him for speaking to you? If God has spoken to you today (which I'm sure He has) then just stop for a moment and thank God for speaking to you and for His promises to you, the comfort God has given to you or even for stopping you from going into sin or continuing in sin.

✧ **Gen 35:16-20** ¹⁶ *Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. ¹⁷ Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also." ¹⁸ And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.*

Rachel was giving birth to her second son, with the first being Joseph. During her childbirth, Rachel died. But before she died, she named her son Ben-oni which means: "son of my sorrow".

What a name to give your son before you die, but she was in hard labor and knew she was about to die. But for Israel to keep this name for his son, would haunt him and his family forever, instead Israel renames his son Benjamin which means: "son of the right hand". This would be a more comforting name for Benjamin as it would not remind him of his mother's death, but rather that he was his father's son with a special name given to him.

Remember back in chapters 29 and 30 where Rachel and Leah were competing for Jacob with having sons. and through this, Jacob had 11 sons. Remember what Rachel said when she was finally able to give birth herself.

† **Gen 30:24** *So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."*

We studied this already, and through this we determined that even though God had blessed Rachel with a son, she still wasn't satisfied and she wanted more. Well, she got more and today we read of the results of having more.

✧ *And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.*

Does Rachel's grave still remain today? Yes it does.

✧ **Gen 35:21-22** ²¹ *Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. ²² And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it.*

Israel moves again, and after the move his first son, Reuben, sleeps with Rachel's maid, Bilhah.

† **Gen 29:29** *And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.*

She was the mother of Dan and Naphtali Reuben's half brothers. And all it says is that Israel heard about it. Once again he does nothing about it, at least not at this time. But Reuben will pay in the end when Israel is giving the blessing to his sons.

† **Gen 49:3-4** ³ *"Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. ⁴ Unstable as water, you shall not excel, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it--He went up to my couch.*

Reuben, you could have been a great man, BUT because you slept with my concubine you have lost it all.

All for a moment of pleasure, that's what happens when we fall into sin. It seems great at the time, but in the end it leads to destruction.

† **Prov 14:12** *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*

We need to learn by the examples given in the bible. They are not just here for us to read about, but to learn from so that we don't fall into the same sort of sin. It's a warning showing us the consequences of our sins. So don't take the bible as just stories that God has given us, but examples to live by and the consequences of sin.

✧ **Gen 35:23-26** *Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: ²³ the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; ²⁴ the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; ²⁵ the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's*

maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; ²⁶ and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.

We finally have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. But notice the order they are in. They're not in order of Israel's favorite or even the age of the children. Rather they are in order of marriage.

Jacob married Leah first; therefore Leah and her sons are named first. Then there was Rachel with her sons. Next was Rachel's maid Bilhah who was given to Jacob before Zilpah Leah's maid who is mentioned last.

✧ **Gen 35:27-29** ²⁷ *Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. ²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. ²⁹ So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

Finally at the end of the chapter we read of Isaac's death. He was 180 years old when he died. Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born, so Jacob had his father for 120 years, but for a greater part of his last years, Jacob was gone. Isaac didn't get to see his grandsons being born nor growing up. Why, because Jacob was a thief at the time and had to run away because he stole Esau's birthright and was running for his life.

Sin not only affects you, but those around you too. Through Jacob's sins we saw of how the best years of his life he spent working and having a family with no other family around except for his father-in-law Laban, who we learned was not a great father-in-law.

Have you been running from your family? Have you done something so bad that you don't think they can forgive you? That's what Jacob thought about his brother Esau, but as we read, Esau took Jacob back with open arms.

This may not happen in your situation, but you never know until you try. Just ask the God of Israel to be with you as He was with Israel.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy!