

SALT Church

Genesis 35

“God, Hope, Residual Sin, & Grace”

September 23, 2026

“In the Beginning”

Recap:

- ***Genesis 34***
 - ***“One Decision”***

We learned the power of “One Decision”

- Jacob made “One Decision” not to go to Bethel
 - That “One Decision” led to:
 - His only daughter kidnapping, rape, and being held hostage
 - That led to his sons deceiving the men of Shechem into the holy sacrament of circumcision.
 - That decision led to the murder of every man in Shechem
 - The theft of all of their stuff
 - The abduction of those men’s wives and children
 - That decision led to
 - The Lords Name and reputation being shamed.

That is the power of “One Decision”

- We closed last week with these questions:

What if:

- Jacob had gone to Bethel
- Dinah had stayed at home
- They had sought the Lord and the Lord would have handled this?
 - Would not that have been a greater testimony?
 - What if they had only dealt with Shechem (the person)?

In the end Jacob had allowed the god of self to rule over his life.

- He thought he knew better than God the Father
- Instead of worshiping the Father through obedience he chose to worship that idol called self.

We closed with this reminder:

- **“One Decision”** can change everything not only for you but for generations of people.

Before we start tonight’s teaching allow me to point out a very important fact about chapter 34:

- God’s name was never mentioned one time in chapter 34
 - This transitions immediately with the 1st verse of chapter 35
 - Pay attention to how many times God’s name is mentioned in this chapter (I counted 26 times)

Genesis 35

1 God said to Jacob, “Get up! Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.”

- The contrast between chapter 34 and chapter 35 is amazing.
 - There was no mention of God in chapter 34 and it showed.
 - Rape, murder, theft, kidnapping, and slavery ruled that chapter.
- But chapter 35 is different.
 - The 1st word is God “Elohim” Lord of lords or God of gods
 - Supreme over all
 - Scholars calculate that Jacob had stayed in Shechem for approximately 10 years.
 - Process that for a moment, God was patient with Jacob for 10 years!
 - Keep in mind all that had transpired
 - The altar that Jacob had built (in the wrong place)
 - The women and children that his sons had taken
 - What happened to Dinah?
 - The mess of residual sin!

But God...

- God had made a covenant promise and swore on oath to bless and take care of Abraham’s descendants.
- This story is not just about Jacob and his family.
 - Nor is this only about the beginning of the nation of Israel.
 - This is about God
 - His nature

- His grace and mercy
- His glory
- We learned from 1 Corinthians 13 that love is long suffering
 - Love forgives and doesn't keep a list of wrongs.
 - That is truly a Godly love.

God loves Jacob and that is the problem

- For us Jacob is a mess
- Jacob doesn't deserve God's love, grace, or mercy.
 - As soon as we are honest about that we are struck with the realization that we are Jacob.
 - Quick to commit to the Lord and even quicker to sin.

But God...

- God knew what Jacob was going to do just like He knew what we are going to do.
 - This is the eternal love of the Father.
 - This is amazing grace!!!!

God repeats the command to Jacob that had been given a decade ago, “get up and go to Bethel”

- This time Jacob is ready.

² So Jacob said to his family and all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. ³ We must get up and go to Bethel. I will

build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.”

- It may distress us to think about Gods people having foreign gods
 - But they did
- Jacob sounds more like a traveling evangelist to me
 - Traveling evangelist call people out and demand repentance.
 - Jacob does the same
 - “Get rid of your foreign gods”
 - Purify yourselves and change your clothes.
 - “It’s time to Change!!!!”
 - Return to the “House of the Lord” Bethel
 - Let’s go and build an altar to our faithful God who has never left us nor forsaken us.

4 Then they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and their earrings, and Jacob hid them under the oak near Shechem.

- The fact that there were many foreign gods and even earrings with pagan symbols on them tells us a lot about this family.
 - They were messed up
 - They needed a strong man to call them out and call them to repentance.
 - So the idols were buried and left behind as Gods people headed toward the “House of God”

5 When they set out, a terror from God came over the cities around them, and they did not pursue Jacob’s sons.

- This is God’s undeserved grace

⁶So Jacob and all who were with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.

- Thirty years prior to this moment a much younger Jacob laid his head on a rock to sleep.
 - He was tired because he was fleeing the wrath of his brother Esau.
 - It was here that God showed Jacob many things
 - The stairway into Heaven in which the angels traveled back and forth completing the will of the Father.
 - It was here that God the Father reaffirmed the promises that had been made to Abraham and Isaac.
 - This is where Jacobs journey had begun
 - This was the House of the Lord as far as Jacob understood.

⁷Jacob built an altar there and called the place El-bethel because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

- “God of Bethel”
 - 7 verses in and there are already 8 references to God
 - It is good to be in the House of the Lord

⁸Deborah, the one who had nursed and raised Rebekah, died and was buried under the oak south of Bethel. So Jacob named it Allon-bacuth.

- Scholars tell us that Deborah was 180 years old when she died which would put her the same age as Isaac.
- Nothing is said about Rebekah's death
 - But Deborah would have reminded Jacob of his mother and I am sure that Deborah's death is recorded for us to mark the end of Isaac's and Rebekah's patriarchal reign.

⁹ God appeared to Jacob again after he returned from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; you will no longer be named Jacob, but your name will be Israel." So he named him Israel.

- God had already done this nearly ten years prior
 - This time God does it as a reminder of who he is and not who he was.
 - Jacob was gone and Israel was alive!
 - This was a reminder that God always keeps His promises even when we act more like Jacob than Israel.

¹¹ God also said to him, "I am God Almighty.

- "El Shaddai" GOD ALMIGHTY
 - This is the first time that God uses this name for Himself.
 - He states this name because God Almighty is going to command and deliver many things.

Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from

you. ¹² I will give to you the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac. And I will give the land to your future descendants.”

- It is good to remember the promises of God
- It is even better to hear Him repeat these promises when we are in right relationship with Him.
 - In all of these promises Jacob knows that he will not live long enough to see them come true but he places his hope and trust in the God Almighty that had rescued him so many times.

¹³ Then God withdrew from him at the place where he had spoken to him.

- Apparently, this was another theophany
 - We must remember the written word would not exist for several hundred years.

¹⁴ Jacob set up a marker at the place where he had spoken to him—a stone marker. He poured a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. ¹⁵ Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

- Scholars explain this extra step in adding a “drink offering” which was wine as an act of rehabilitation.
- Oil and wine were often used in the rehabilitation of the sick.
- This was to signify the renewal of Israel's relationship with the Lord.
 - “Bethel” means House of God or House of the Lord

16 They set out from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath (Bethlehem), Rachel began to give birth, and her labor was difficult.

- This was not like it was the next day
- It takes weeks to gather all of the people and folks and head out.
- They are headed to Hebron the place where Isaac lives
 - The place where Jacob grew up
 - But along the way Rachel goes into labor.
 - And her labor is very difficult.

17 During her difficult labor, the midwife said to her, “Don’t be afraid, for you have another son.”

- There is an incredible amount of sadness here.
 - Jacob is now Israel
 - He is walking with God
 - The family has renewed their commitment to God
 - They are headed to visit and live with Isaac.
 - Our hearts want to cry out “Why God?”
 - This is just another example of why it is very important that our faith should be unshakable.

Rachel had once cried to her husband, “give me a child lest I die”.

- Sadly, this child will be the reason she dies.

18 With her last breath—for she was dying—she named him Ben-oni, but his father called him Benjamin.

- Ben-oni means “son of my sorrow”

- But Jacob understands the power of a name and how it shapes little minds steps in and changes his name to Benjamin “son of the right” or “son of my right hand” which would be a favored son.

¹⁹So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰Jacob set up a marker on her grave; it is the marker at Rachel’s grave still today.

- Couple observations here:
 - Jacob is called Jacob when he sets up the marker for her grave
 - But you will notice in verse 21 he is Israel.
 - Rachels tomb can still be found
 - It belongs to Israel and has a stone wall build around it and is guarded by the military.

²¹Israel set out again and pitched his tent beyond the Tower of Eder. ²²While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard about it.

- There is another important lesson to be learned here
 - Although we have been forgiven
 - And Even though we are walking with God
 - The effects of “Residual Sins” still linger
 - Why would Jacobs oldest son do such a thing?
 - Here is what I believe was his motive:
 - His mother Leah had always been neglected

- Bilhah was Rachels handmade if Reuben defiled her Jacob would have no choice but to love Leah.
 - This is horrible logic and it does not work.
- It is odd to me that there is no further explanation
 - No real reaction recorded from Jacob
 - This is so messed up
 - And it is the result of residual sin
 - Jacob had shown favoritism toward Rachel and her boys
 - That cut deep in the hearts of Leah and her children
 - This will continue to shape this family until their deaths.

From incest to lineage: (A strange transition)

Jacob had twelve sons:

²³ Leah's sons were Reuben (Jacob's firstborn),

Simeon, Levi, Judah,

Issachar, and Zebulun.

²⁴ Rachel's sons were

Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁵ The sons of Rachel's slave Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali.

²⁶ The sons of Leah's slave Zilpah were Gad and Asher.

These are the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

- Did you notice that Moses is back to calling Jacob “Jacob”?
 - There must be a reason for this family lineage but I am not sure what it is.

²⁷ Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. ²⁸ Isaac lived 180 years.

- Sarah’s laughter live 180 years
 - This means that he was approximately 150 when Jacob left
 - I can’t imagine not seeing my children for 30 years
- Isaac seemed to have lived in peace
 - We know that when Jacob left, he had vision problems
 - Perhaps he was completely blind when his son returned.
 - Perhaps his mind was gone and that is why nothing is recorded about Jacobs return.
 - Perhaps God kept him alive until Jacob had become Israel.
 - This will be the fun part of Heaven as we will commune with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

²⁹ He took his last breath and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

- Death is such a double-edged sword
 - What joy must Isaac felt to see Jesus again

- To feel the warm embrace of Abraham and Sarah
 - To see his beautiful wife Sarah
 - To meet the daughter-in-law he never knew.

We have 15 more chapters before the Bible records Jacobs death

- In fact Jacobs death closes out the book of Genesis
- And there is still so much to tell before we get to Jacobs death so why would I bring it up?
 - Before Jacob dies, he calls his sons together and pronounces the blessings of a father upon each son based on his relationship with each one.
 - His words to Rueben were not kind
 - His words to Simeon and Levi were not nice but they were true.
 - Each son receives what the father gives and the words of earthly fathers carry incredible weight especially when they are said on a death bed.
 - For Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin there is great blessing.
 - For the others it sounds like more of a prediction rather than a blessing.

Here is what I know:

- All of them are gone
 - I assume all are in Heaven
 - We are given their lives in written form not so that we will judge them but rather to see Gods wonderful nature.

- If they are in Heaven they are at rest
 - There is no more hate, war, rape, murder, lust, lies, or deception.
 - There is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control.

I want to close with this thought:

- Last week we talked a lot about how “One Decision” can change everything
 - For Jacob it was a bad decision
 - But let me remind you that “One Decision” can also change everything for the good and glory of God.
 - And we do not have to wait for Heaven to experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
 - Come now Salt Church and let us throw away our foreign idols
 - Let us seek the cleansing that comes from God’s Word.
 - Let’s put on Spiritual clothing that tells our world that Jesus is the best “One Decision” I have ever made!