

In the Beginning

Genesis 35:1-29

- When we decide that our way is better than God's way it will always lead to a humbling experience; and that's exactly what happened to Jacob. Instead of traveling to Bethel as God said in Genesis 31 he journeys to Shechem and the result for his disobedience was his daughter wanders out alone and is raped, his sons practice deceit and murders, and his reputation amongst the other nations is now of a wanted criminal, all because he didn't listen to God.

V1-29

- **V1** thankfully God allows **second chances** and **U-turns**, as for is the good news of the gospel > is that we don't have to stay the way we are. No matter how many times we failed the Lord we can go home again if we truly repent and obey. Remember it happened to Abraham > **Gen 13:1-4** after he went down to Egypt to avoid a famine instead of staying in Bethel, Isaac in **Gen 26:7-** lying to King Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister and not his wife, Jonah, David, Peter, and the list goes on and on concerning men and women of God disobeying the Lord only to return.
- Not only did God tell him to go to Bethel but He also tells him to build an altar there, this is the steps of repentance as spoken in **Rev 2:5** "**remember therefore from where you have fallen: repent and do the first works**"> **Gen 28:19-22-** way back over **20yrs** ago Jacob had met the Lord built an altar and made promises that he would serve and follow the Lord if He took care of him, God kept His end of the deal but Jacob had failed miserably in serving and following Him. Now God is giving him a second chance to make good on the promises he had made all those yrs ago.
- **3** things God tells him in going back to "Bethel" which means house of God, **1st dwell there-** live at the house of God implying fellowship, **2nd build an altar-** become an altered man as fellowship produces change, **3rd Depend on God-** the One Who showed up when you were afraid. **V2-4** deliverance from past sins means making immediate changes now, if your to move forward in the present, notice Jacob prior to reaching Bethel makes a bold declaration to his entire family "**that anything that is an offense to God will not be carried into fellowship with God**"
- So "**before any altars go up the idols must come down**" always remember "**never try and build something to God on top of what you have erected in the flesh**" > **Lk 5:27-28-** the call of Mathew three things happened > **1st left all-** mental abandonment, **2nd Rose up-** Physical obedience, **3rd Followed Him-** emotional surrender. In reading this Jacob knew that his family was carrying these things all along, but it wasn't until things got so bad that he did something about it. I have found that often it takes some painful and scary situations before we produce Godly responses, and its here, after Jacob's **desperation** that he makes a **declaration to God**.

- He even tells them to wash both themselves and their clothes, this signified a cleansing from idolatry and a consecration of the heart. I want you to see that in this context clothes symbolizes idolatry, look at our culture and the latest fashions and how people identify with what they wear as to who they are, which is why fashions have become less and less modest with an emphasis on creating a desire for more and more attention, which breeds more and more rebellion, stubbornness, and pride, therefore it is no room for humility > **2 Cor 6:14-18, 7:1.**
- **V5-7** after instructing his household in purity now Jacob model to them his newfound trust and reliance on God for their protection, for after **spiritual victory** comes **practical tests**. The other nations have heard what happened so Jacob and his family are targets for retaliation but God supernaturally protects them from any who is seeking revenge for what happened in Shechem. This leads Jacob once he gets to Bethel to build the altar and call it "**EL Bethel**", meaning "**the God of Bethel**" I like the play on words here as many people come to a place of fellowship, but unless God is ruling in that place it's just a building, so here Jacob says its God's house.
- **V8-15** we'll get back to Deborah, but notice God appears to Jacob and reassures him of the promises He had made to both his father and grandfather before them. **V10** God reminds him that he is no longer "Jacob- heel catcher or schemer, he is now Israel- God's fighter, the Lord's warrior, battling not for his own causes but for the Lord's will to be done.
- **V16-** Jacob decides to leave Bethel why? **V8** Deborah dies who were told was Rebekah's his mother's meaning his long time nanny and he loves her for in that culture the nurse is the one who raises the children, so after she dies he buries her at Bethel and then makes a rash decision to leave "**the house of God**" and with it "**fellowship with God**" for after this we see nothing but tragedy follow. **V17-20** during the long journey Rachel Jacob's beloved wife goes into labor and while she's dying calls the baby name "**Benomi**"- means son of my sorrow or son of my trouble.
- Either way it's bad, not a favorable name for a man to carry through life reminding him that his birth was the cause of his mother's death, so sorrow would overshadow his every birthday. Jacob then renames the boy "**Benjamin**" son of my right hand" or son to be honored. **V21-22** Reuben his eldest sleeps with Bilhah his father's concubine and one of his brother's mother, not only did this disrespect his father but it also was an attempt by him to lay claim on the headship.
- **V23-29** it was during this time his father Isaac died, and only in death did he reunite with him again because of his rash decisions. Jacob's problem was like many of our problem, when things got really bad he would depend on God but when things seemed really good he would trust in himself again, so although he cleaned house, the house would only stay clean for a little while and get cluttered up once again, never clean house for a season always clean it to last.

- Steps of faith never prevent us from experiencing new trials-new problems, as during this period of renewal Jacob buries both his wife and his father, and to add burden to bereavement his firstborn commits a terrible sin. So being a victorious Christian doesn't mean escaping the difficulties of life but rather it means walking with God by faith, and as we grow closer to God maturing in our walk with Him our prayer isn't "**how can I get out of this**" but instead "**what can I get from this**" and in doing so were seeking God's will and moving from doing things our way.