

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Genesis, Chapter 35. We are finishing up our study of God of our Fathers! Isaac and Jacob. Here is the image we have been using.



If we had the opportunity to speak to Isaac and Jacob one on one at this time in their lives, and ask this question, “Are you a follower of God Almighty?” What do you believe their answer would be? “Why, yes, how dare you ask!” Do you agree? It would probably be an emphatic yes. Throughout our study we have seen in the lives of Isaac and Jacob, that statement could possibly come into question.

Hey! Is there any part of our lives the comment I just made could be said about our lives. Sure! There are times that we may say or do that someone could say to us as well, “Well that isn’t very Christian!” Are any of us perfect? No! But, but may we never use that as an excuse to not seek to always do the right thing which is being obedient to the Word of God.

Let’s look at Jesus’ own words from Matthew 5:48.

Matthew 5:48

⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The Greek word for perfect, is:

Telios: brought to its end, that which is perfect

Within salvation there is a process that takes place to perfection, holiness. Not that we will ever attain perfection here on earth. But just as we learned from the prayer of Jesus from John 17 that is the desire of Jesus, our sanctification. Look at these verses:

As we talked about for several Sunday's, from the High Priestly prayer of Jesus from John Chapter 17, there is the time of salvation. The time when we are convicted of our sins, and we repent and surrender in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is our justification. A legal term meaning that we are guilty sinners, but Jesus stepped in and said I will take their punishment!

Jesus called us to follow him! Correct? In others word, Obey him! Again, from John Chapter 17, as Jesus prayed, he told God the Father, of those that have believed, he has given us his glory. We are partakers of his glory in that now by partaking of his glory we put on the armor of God to fight the battle of our holiness, our sanctification and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

What is that good work? Conviction that leads to repentance, that leads to salvation! That work continues as we are sanctified through obedient living to God's Word, and then the completion of glorification when we receive our glorified bodies at the time of the Rapture and our salvation is complete.

It is a process and so we see tonight in Jacob's life that has been and is being sanctified in his obedience to God Almighty! Look at verse 1 of Chapter 35.

Genesis 35:1

¹ God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

Look at this map and see where Jacob is and where God is calling him to.

The Journeys of Jacob and Rachel



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Remember from last week, Jacob and his family is in Shechem and God tells him to go to Bethel and make an altar. Why? There is some unfinished business that Jacob needs to follow through with. Turn to Genesis Chapter 28.

This is right after Jacob has left Beersheba and he is running from Esau, who had just threatened to kill him when Isaac died. Chapter 28 verse 10 tells us Jacob came to a certain place and goes to sleep. Several things happened.

1. Jacob had a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder that went from earth to heaven.
2. During the dream God reiterates the promise to Jacob he gave to Abraham that he would be a father of a great nation that would be like the dust of the earth in number. Meaning, there will be a lot of them.
3. Jacob awakes from the dream in reverential fear realizing he was just in the presence of God.

Look at verses 16 and 17.

Genesis 28:16-17

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” 17 And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

Being in his presence, then Jacob makes a vow, a promise to God.

Genesis 28:20-22

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.”

Jacob had set up an altar when they came into Shechem, but it was the place where Jacob had previously built an altar and called the place, Bethel, which means, House of God, that God was bringing Jacob back to Bethel to renew the covenant made those 20 years earlier.

God said, “Arise!” You see the urgency here. God was wanting Jacob to fulfill his promise. God had fulfilled his promises to Jacob over and over even in times of disobedience. Think about it! In your prayers have you ever made a promise to God? God if you will just, then I will

This is a good example of once again realizing how faithful God is towards us and that we in turn should be faithful to him. We know what God wants us to do in our lives, but we hold back. Here is the point!

Partial obedience is still disobedience!

What does Jacob do with this command from God of Arise!

Genesis 35:2-4

2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

What did Jacob do? He obeyed and he obeyed promptly! Jacob also got his family and those that were with him prepared as well. The question comes in is, “Where did these foreign gods come from?” Were these leftovers from Rachael when she had stolen Laban’s gods and brought them with her? Possibly! Some of the servants that came with Jacob from Paddan-Aram could be still worshiping false gods as Laban had.

There were the people that Simeon and Levi took from Shechem after they took revenge upon the defilement of their sister Dinah. The people of Shechem were pagan. Whatever the case everyone was to purify themselves before they were to go to Bethel and be brought before the one and only true God, God Almighty.

Jacob gives a beautiful description of how God has worked in his life over the years he has followed him. Now, Jacob gets to bring all these people before God as well and he becomes a witness of God before them. The people are obedient as well as they give Jacob all their foreign gods, idols, and Jacob takes them and buries them under the terebinth (oak) tree, in Shechem.

Some of you may be asking, “Is there a special significance to this tree?” Well, I had the same question. Yes, I do believe there is. It is in Chapter 12 that Abram, Abraham came by Shechem to the Oak of Moreh and God promised he would give him this land and to his offspring and Abraham built an altar to the Lord, which was the first time Abraham worship the Lord.

Moving forward in time, in the book of Joshua Chapter 24:23, just as Jacob has just done, Joshua tells all the people to put away their foreign gods. The people did and the people said they would serve the Lord and obey his voice. Joshua puts up a stone under, guess what? The terebinth (oak) tree at Shechem.

What famous saying from Joshua comes out of Chapter 24 pertaining to serving God? ***But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!***

How is it with our homes? What idols are in our homes that we need to get rid of? What about our life? Where are we being disobedient? Let’s bury them!

Let’s name them: Money, power, unbiblical pleasure, recognition, sports, education, social media likes, entertaining ourselves, our looks, how smart we may sound, apathy, compromising on Scripture, complacency.

I believe we do see two good points to make here in relation to our lives besides looking at what idols may be in our lives. We should look at our lives daily and see if there are any idols, sin, in our life we need to repent of. In that repentance, we add Bible study, and prayer, we purify ourselves before God Almighty.

The people were told to prepare themselves for worship to God Almighty by washing physically and changing their dirty clothes and put on clean garments. So, we prepare for worship every day and we prepare ourselves to come in here on Sunday and Wednesday to see God do a mighty work not only in our lives but those that come in this place of worship each Sunday and Wednesday.

But I also see a wonderful imagery of salvation. First, can we make ourselves good enough to be accepted of God? No! Do we clean our lives up before we come to the point of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? No!

It is through the conviction of the Holy Spirit that we see the sin, the pride, the idols in our lives that we have put before God. Then God shows those to us and we put them behind us, ***Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead (Philippians 3:13)*** as we now are purified not by washing and changing clothes but we are cleansed by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

We put off the old self of sin and put on the new self in Jesus (Colossians 3:9-10). We desire to worship the Lord by congregating to gather to glorify his name and worship him through a life of obedience.

So, it is with Jacob as he journeys on to Bethel.

Genesis 35:5-8

⁵ And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. ⁶ And 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 there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. ⁸ And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.

This is another example that we can get comfort from. Through God’s call and Jacob’s obedience we see that God protected everyone as they traveled to Bethel. May we be reminded that if we are truly following the Lord

Jesus then nothing happens to us outside of God's sovereign hand directing the circumstance. There are common struggles we will all face because we live in a broken sin sick world with broken sin sick people.

There are things we go through that we bring upon ourselves with our own sinful decisions and actions. God also will bring tests upon us to strengthen us, to grow our faith, use our trial to put ourselves in front of people to share the Gospel with other people.

In 1 Peter 1:6, Peter wrote these words led by the Holy Spirit when it comes to our trials or tests.

1 Peter 1:6

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though we are living a life of obedience and following the Lord Jesus closely does not mean everything on this earth is going to be easy and we won't face hardships, tough seasons in our lives, and grief. We see this here with Jacob.

Jacob finishes the task ahead of him. Jacob completes his vow. Jacob, his family, and all the people with him arrive at Bethel, House of God, and they worship. They build an altar and Jacob back in Chapter 28 promised he would give a tenth of all he had to God, so we can say with confidence that they also sacrificed some of the lambs for repentance, praise, and worship to God.

A song came to my mind as I just finished writing what I just said. I doubt many of you remember or know this song, We Bring Sacrifice of Praise! Here are the words.

***We bring the sacrifice of praise, into the house of the Lord.
And we offer up to you the sacrifices of thanksgiving.
And we offer up to you the sacrifices of joy.***

How are we in bringing our thank offerings, our sacrifices of praise to the Lord when we enter this house of the Lord? Are we being obedient in our giving of true praise, our time, our resources because we do know the Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever and in doing so, we show a world that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the their sins to save their souls.

How about just in our day-to-day life? Worship is a lifestyle so this sacrifice of praise should be exhibited everywhere we go. Romans 12:1 says, "***We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.***"

As I mentioned earlier, just because we serve the Lord faithfully and are obedient to his word and call on our lives, does not mean we are not affected by the trials of this world. We see this in verse 8, where Rebekah's nurse, Deborah died. That verse may have seem out of place. There is no portion of Scripture out of place.

Deborah is probably the nurse that is mentioned in Chapter 24 as Abraham's servant went to Haran to find a wife for Isaac. When Rebekah agreed to come with Abraham's servant to marry Isaac, it says her nurse came with her. Deborah may have even been the mid-wife that birthed Jacob and Esau.

It's not in Scripture, but it is possible. Deborah was definitely a beloved member within the family as seen by the reaction to her death as they called where they buried her, Allon-bacuth, Oak of Weeping.

We will see that Jacob will endure more grief later. But first we again see God meet with Jacob.

Genesis 35:9-15

⁹ God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. ¹¹ And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. ¹² The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." ¹³ Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. ¹⁴ And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. ¹⁵ So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

Jacob finally fulfills his vow! It took around 30 years and Jacob during that time had to go through a lot of suffering and pain, most of it self-inflicted. We see God's patience and longsuffering as he had made a vow, a covenant with Jacob. Now that Jacob fulfills his vow, God appears to Jacob once again.

In Chapter 28 God appeared to Jacob in a dream. This time God appears in bodily form before Jacob. God re-emphasizes that Jacob now has a new name. In his obedience he is showing he is a changed man, living a changed life that only God can do in a person.

God renews the covenant with Jacob that a great nation would come through him as his descendants grow. God emphasizes that he is God Almighty, El Shaddai! God, that is all powerful, all sufficient. It is God that will accomplish his will in Jacob's life as Jacob acknowledged this back in verse 3 as Jacob and his family were heading to Bethel as Jacob said this.

Genesis 35:3

³ Let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.

God will fulfill his will in our lives as well as we are seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, Matthew 6:33, not our kingdoms or our self-righteousness. God will direct our paths and he will make them straight if we will follow God's command from Proverbs 3:5-7

Proverbs 3:5-7

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

God goes up from Jacob and we see another example of Jacob becoming a changed man. Jacob sets up another pillar. In Chapter 28 verse 18 we see where Jacob pours oil upon a pillar, a stone, he had set up some years ago. This time he offers a drink offering as well. This was the first time Scripture shows us the drink offering offered during the time of sacrifice. The drink offering was an example of something to come.

1. In the Mosaic Law, a drink offering of wine would be mixed with the blood of the sacrifice of the animal brought to the priests in worship, in repentance, as the Jews were being obedient to God. This drink offering would be completely poured out of the cup used for the drink offering.
2. The drink offering would be an example of Jesus Christ's pouring out his blood as an offering to God for the sins of the world. Jesus described this at the Passover meal as he shares a cup with his disciples and says this.

Matthew 26:27-28

²⁷ “And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The Apostle Paul also alludes to this symbol of a drink offering to his life in 2 Timothy 4:6

2 Timothy 4:6

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

Anybody know what the Apostle Paul said next? I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith!

The drink offering was a completion to the sacrifice. Jacob completes his vow to God as he completes his sacrifice to God at the altar he built at Bethel. To reiterate what Romans 12 verse 1 in that we are now a living sacrifice. Are we letting our lives be a drink offering where we are all poured out for the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Though Jacob won't live perfectly this changed life of obedience to God as we will see, we can see that he is growing in his sanctification in living for the God Almighty, El Shaddai. Jacob is continuing to progress to live up to his name of Israel. We now see that there is even more tragedy that comes into Jacob's life.

Genesis 35:16-21

¹⁶ Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. ¹⁷ And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son.” ¹⁸ And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹ So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), ²⁰ and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. ²¹ Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

Living in a broken world filled with sin, we are not immune to the tragedies of life just because we are living faithfully to the Lord. Jacob experiences the death of this beloved Rachael during childbirth. It is interesting to think about what Rachael said to Jacob when she was barren. Anyone remember?

Give me children or I will die if I don't have any children! My paraphrase. Here she dies while in childbirth. During her pain she called the son she was having, Ben-oni: *which means Son of my sorrow*. But Jacob is quick to change his name to Benjamin: *which means Son of my Right Hand*. Changing the name from a negative connotation to a more positive one, which is more common for parents to do.

Rachael is buried near the city of Bethlehem. The 12th and final son of Jacob has been born. From these 12 sons would come the great nation of Israel that God would set apart to show the world of God's holiness, power, salvation, as they were to follow his commands from the Law that would be given to Moses.

There would be another son born in Bethlehem, that would fulfill all the law given to Moses and he would reveal to the world the very character of God in himself. This son would be the very Son of God, Jesus Christ, who would show the world God's holiness, power, mercy, and grace, and through his own death provide salvation for all those that would repent and believe.

After Rachael's death they travel on and do live near Bethlehem for a time. Once again, we see life played out, as we see again how deviant man's heart can be and Jacob experiences death in his family once again.

Genesis 35:22-29

22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram. 27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Why Reuben did what he did, we can only guess, other than it once again shows the wickedness of man's heart. His act would have consequences down the road that we won't get into here tonight. But it definitely creates some interesting family dynamics.

What we are getting ready to see is that it is time for Jacob to take on the responsibilities that God had called him to do. It is time for Jacob to lead this family. We get the list of the sons and their mothers again. Jacob is once again going to experience sorrow in his life as Isaac dies.

Genesis 35:29

29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Jacob comes to visit his father Isaac, and we can only speculate that they reconciled in their relationship as well from Jacob and Rebekah's deception those many years earlier. By Isaac's death Jacob is now the head of the family. Jacob is the heir to the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob is to lead this family in obedience to God Almighty.

Jacob does not lead his family perfectly. He continues to make mistakes as we all do. But I believe we see a man that is changed and is changing. We see one more example of that in Jacob's life and a good description of how the sanctification process should look in our lives in Chapter 36. We will only look at one small portion of that Chapter. The majority of Chapter 36 is Esau's descendants.

Esau had come to bury his father with Jacob, as he should have. But Esau was a man of the world. Esau had no desire to serve or do the things of God. Though we saw that Jacob and Esau had reconciled and loved each other. There was a difference and there had to be a separation in some aspects of their life.

Chapter 36:6-8

6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. 7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. 8 So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)

This is the last we would hear of Esau. The separation of Jacob and Esau looked innocent enough. They had to separate because their possessions were just too great for them to live near each other. It is important to take note of the last verse. Esau is Edom. Edom would become one of the Israel's most bitter enemies.

The world and the world's system directed by Satan is our enemy. A Changed Life, a sanctified life is to separate from that world. Is that a reality in our life. We are to be in the world to proclaim the Gospel, but our lives are not to look like the world. I go back to John 17 as Jesus prayed for our sanctification and one of the reasons for this. ***So that the world may believe that you have sent me!***

We won't do that perfectly, but are we striving, are we seeking to obey the Lord? Has the profession of faith we are saying we have made changed our life or are we looking just like the world.

We must separate from the world. That may mean some friends, some family members, I'm not saying we don't have a relationship with them to where we can share the Gospel but there may be some situations where we have to completely separate from them.

A Changed Life! Is that a reality in your life! Live for Jesus, not for this world!