

Genesis 33-36

Coming Home

Genesis 31 -33 tells the story of Jacob and his family as they journey home

Genesis 34 – 36 records how Jacob and his family settled in the land of the patriarchs. While this was a homecoming for Jacob, his entire family had never seen Canaan before

I. Genesis 33 – Jacob meets Esau

This first section records Jacob's long awaited encounter with Esau

After departing from Laban, Jacob and his tribe begin to make the long, slow journey from **Padan Aram** back to southern Israel where he will encounter Esau at Penuel

- Knowing that he would have to face the consequences of his treatment of Esau 20 years earlier, Jacob sent word to Esau of his coming and pled for mercy

Genesis 32:3-5

Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of **Seir**, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, "Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.

Esau had moved out of the boundaries of the Promised Land and was beginning to establish himself near Mount Seir in the area that would become Edom

- When the messengers returned they brought news that Esau was coming with 400 men.

Genesis 32:6

Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and **four hundred men are with him.**"

- Jacob, filled with fear begins to prepare for the coming of his brother. Jacob's strategy is in THREE parts:

- **FIRST** he divides his camp in two hoping at least one will survive

Genesis 32:7-8

So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."

- **SECOND** he seeks God

His prayer is based upon the mercy and covenant of God and in it he pleads

Genesis 32:11

Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.

It is in response to this prayer that he has the encounter with God where he wrestles through the night and finally surrenders to The Lord

- **FINALLY** he sends an elaborate gift to Esau as an act of remorse for his previous actions

Genesis 32:13

So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:

The present was sent in waves one after another hoping to beat down the anger of Esau

Genesis 32:20

And also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.' " For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."

GENESIS 33 picks up the story. Jacob having divided his family, prayed, sent a gift and encountered God is now as ready as he will ever be to face Esau.

- It seem that he is not however ready for what will transpire

Genesis 33:3-4

Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. **But Esau** ran to meet him, and **embraced** him, and fell on his neck and **kissed** him, and they **wept**.

- Jacob prostrated in humility before Esau and Esau embraced him, kissed him and wept.

Instead of wrath Jacob experienced kindness, love and forgiveness

- Jacob goes on to present his family to Esau along with the elaborate gift that he had previously sent, to which Esau responds "what is the meaning of this gift"

Genesis 33:8

Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?"

And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord."

Genesis 33:9

But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

- Esau explains he has enough and is blessed to see his brother once again. **It is at this point that Jacob says that seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God.**

It is clear that no man has actually seen the face of God, however God has often revealed himself in limited ways to mankind.

Jacob would would have some idea of what the face of God looked like because he wrestled with The Lord the night before.

What is it about Esau that caused this big hairy man to

resemble God?

I am sure that we have all been complimented at one time or another for how we looked or what we were wearing. Of all the compliments I have received none has been quite like what Jacob said to Esau. After not seeing his brother for 20 years Jacob said, "**you look a lot like God.**"

Jacob is not saying that God is a six-foot tall man with red hair, but that the actions of Esau were in some way reflective of the character of God.

What was it that Esau was doing that was so godlike?

The answer is forgiveness. After being deceived time and time by his brother, Esau had finally resolved to let it go. He was no longer haunted by his hurt, anger or bitterness but had freed himself by letting it go. Instead of bringing an army to attack Jacob he brought a welcoming committee and extended an arm in forgiveness.

Sadly many of us carry around a heavy weight of unforgiveness not realizing that it is like a poison that robs our joy. We think ourselves justified in holding a grudge instead of looking at the cross and realizing that we too are guilty of the most heinous of sin. Instead of harboring bitterness and hurt it is time that we reflect the face of God and forgive those who have wronged us.

What can we learn about forgiveness from the actions of Jacob and Esau?

- From the perspective of **Esau** **the one showing forgiveness**

The answer will be found in his own words:

Genesis 33:9

But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

20 years before Esau was so angry because his brother stole his blessing. The bulk of the riches of Isaac were passed on to Jacob not Esau. But

after 20 years Esau has seen the grace of God in providing for him.

God's grace is the greatest motivator to encourage forgiveness; Paul put it like this

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

No matter how we might have been wronged it cannot compare to the debt we owe God or the price He paid to forgive it. Looking at the cross is the key to forgiveness

- From the perspective of **Jacob** the one seeking forgiveness

There are a few key things that we can apply if we want to receive forgiveness for having wronged another

First – Jacob took responsibility for what he had done wrong and humbled himself before his brother

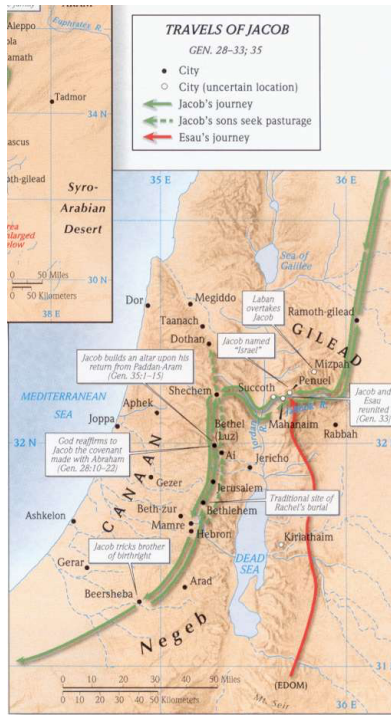
Although Isaac was rebelling against the plan of God in keeping the blessing from Jacob, Jacob was still wrong for swindling his brother

Second – Jacob sought to do his best to make restitution. While a flock of goats could not pay back all that he had wronged Esau, he did what was in his power to fix the relationship.

The chapter concludes with Jacob and Esau parting ways and promising to see each other again

We read that Esau returned to Seir, where Jacob promised to meet him although there is no record of that encounter ever taking place. Instead we read that Jacob made his way to **Succoth** and later to **Shechem**

The map shows the route of Jacob from Padan Aram and the route of Esau from Seir where they met together at **Peniel**. It also shows Jacob's route from **Succoth** to **Shechem** to **Bethel**. This will be the location of the events recorded in Gen 34-35



First stop Succoth -

Genesis 33:17

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Succoth meaning **booth** or tent is situated on the river Jabbok east of the Jordan in the modern country of Jordan. keep in mind ancient cities were always located near a water source and built in a defensible fashion often on a high place

Later a feast would be established to remind Israel of the time the patriarchs dwelt in booths without a land to call their own. This feast is commonly referred to simply as Sukkot or Booths and takes place in Late September or early October

All that is recorded of their time in Succoth is that Jacob built himself a house and booths for the livestock.

Next stop Shechem -

Genesis 33:18-20

Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.

19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.

20 Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

Archeological remains show that the city was built right around the time of Jacob and fortified with a wall. This would make it a modern city when Jacob settled there

Shechem is about 30 miles west of Succoth - across the Jordan and over the mountains.

Shechem sat in what later became Samaria and near the ruins of Shechem was the NT city of Sychar where he woman at the well met Jesus. The town of Sychar was the first Samaritan area to come to Christ and would be the seeds of the revival that broke out in Samaria under the ministry of Phillip

Shechem is a city with a long biblical history

Genesis 12:6 -7

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh

It was here that the promise of the land was given to Abraham

It was also at Shechem that 400 years later Joshua would gather the people of Israel between the two mountains and declare all the blessings promised to those who obey and the curses that will follow those who rebel against the Word of God

In our text we find that Jacob settled in Shechem -

Genesis 33:18 -

And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which [is] in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and pitched his tent before the city

It was in this same area where Joseph was sold into slavery

Genesis 37:12 - And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

Later in Israel's history, after entering the land, Shechem became a Levitical city of refuge (see numbers 35 for details)

regarding refuge cities)

Joshua 21:21 - For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, [to be] a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs,

Because Jacob settled there, Joseph's bones were carried from Egypt and buried there

Joshua 24:32 - And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

Seems Shechem became a capital of sorts for the new nation. Probably because of its history and central location

Joshua 24:1 - And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

Shechem became the capital of the north after the civil war led by Jereboam

1 Kings 12:1 - And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

1 Kings 12:25 - Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.

Finally near Shechem was the NT city of Sychar where Jesus met the woman at the well.

One of the earliest revivals in church history took place in Samaria and probably stemmed out of the seeds that were sown when Jesus led the woman at the well and many of the inhabitants of Sychar to faith

3 verses speak to Jacob's arrival in Shechem

Genesis 33:18-20

Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent

before the city. **19** And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. **20** Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

We read that Jacob:

- Pitched a tent outside the city
- Bought a plot of land
- Erected an altar

Neither here in the text nor elsewhere in Scripture are Jacob's actions commented upon. We find that having arrived at Shechem he returned to the ways of his fathers and lived once again in tents, but that he also purchased a plot of land for himself. It is possible that, like Abraham, Jacob is exemplifying great faith

Remember it was at Shechem that 200 years earlier Abraham was first promised the land of Canaan

Genesis 12:6-7

Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Abraham received the promise, built an altar and later bought a field and a cave for his burial.

Now Jacob continuing with a great act of faith bought land and built a home and an altar himself

He called his altar "God, the God of Israel"

And it was erected in the same location Abe had built his altar after receiving the promise that this would be the land of promise. (gen 12:6-7)

II. Genesis 34 – Trouble arises within the home

As we enter Genesis 34 we are reintroduced to Dinah the daughter of Jacob and Leah. We first met her in chapter 30

Genesis 30:21

Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Now she is a grown woman probably in her late teens or early twenties. (Genesis gives us no way of precisely dating this event).

As her story begins to unfold we are told:

Genesis 34:1-2

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. **2** And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

Two important points are made to help us navigate our way through what is commonly referred to as “The Dinah Incident”

First we read that Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land.

Because of what unfolds it seems that Dinah is drawn to the more wanton lifestyle of the Canaanite woman. She may serve as an illustration of the young Christian who is tempted to go see what the life in the world is really like.

It is critical to keep in mind that this story does not end well for anyone.

Second we read that Shechem, whose family ruled the area that bore the same name. (Archeological discovery suggests that this city had only recently been built when Jacob arrived.) Shechem of Shechem met Dinah and we read that he “*violated her*”

We are left to our own to determine exactly what happened. It is possible, although from the reaction of Jacob in particular highly unlikely that Shechem raped Dinah. More likely Dinah got involved with the women of the area and those relationships led to her being in a situation where she became sexually active with Shechem.

Biblically, any sexual relations outside of the marriage covenant are considered a violation.

After their physical relationship began, Shechem desired Dinah and sought to convince Jacob to allow them to marry.

Genesis 34:3-4

His soul **was strongly attracted to Dinah** the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.
4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

Intimacy is an important part of the marriage relationship and was designed by God as an expression of love and serves as a binding agent for the relationship

Sexual activity before marriage is extremely damaging as it puts a permanence upon relationships that are by nature temporary. Whenever a couple becomes sexually active they are no longer able to navigate their way through the relationship. They become linked to one another in a way that a temporary relationship was never designed to handle.

Hamor and Shechem decide to convince Jacob to give Dinah's hand in marriage. What follows is a black spot on the story of Jacob and his children.

The story plays out this way:

- Hamor and Shechem ask for Dinah's hand and agree that Jacob and his family will live in the area and the two tribes can form an allegiance.
- Jacob's sons convince Hamor and Shechem to have all the males circumcised as a proof that they are one with Jacob
- While the men suffer from their surgery Simeon and Levi break camp and kill all the recovery men and plunder the wealth of the town.

Moses does not comment on this event but simply records its dark facts. Since nowhere else in Scripture is this event commented upon we are left to use the rest of Scripture to condemn the actions of Dinah, Shechem, Hamor and the children of Jacob

A few lessons to take away

First – bad company will corrupt good morals

Second – It is wrong for believers to be unequally yoked with unbelievers

Third – The right reaction to sin is not more sin

III. Genesis 35 – Back to Bethel

After the tragic events at Shechem Jacob is called to return to Bethel the place where he had previously met with God.

Bethel plays a key role in the narrative of Genesis

- It was one of the first places Abraham visited upon entering Canaan.
- It was where he built one of his many altars
- It was the place he returned to after fleeing to Egypt
- It was at Bethel that Jacob had the dream of Angels ascending and descending to heaven and where he received the Abrahamic covenant
- And it is to Bethel that God calls Jacob to return and recommit himself and his family to The Lord

Jacob is following the same route Abraham took when he arrived in Canaan.

Genesis 12 records that after having the covenant reaffirmed with God at Shechem, Abraham made his way to Bethel and built another altar to The Lord. Later, after fleeing to Egypt because of famine, Abraham returned to Bethel and sought God once again

Jacob is called to follow the same path. From Shechem where they had wandered from the ways of God, back to Bethel and back to commitment to the Lord

There is great value in following the leadership of those who have gone before us. One of the great tragedies in Israel's

history is when young Rehoboam refused to listen to the godly counsel of the older statesmen

Genesis 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."

There is no question that the spiritual condition of the family is wanting and that it is time for a recommitment to the Lord.

God calls them to go to Bethel and build an altar.

An Altar would symbolize commitment to The Lord

Gen 35:2-7 records how they react to the call of God

Jacob's actions in returning to Bethel serve as a model of returning to the Lord.

- Gen 35:2-4 - First he had to **put away the false gods** that had crept into his life.

Living in a pagan culture it would be easy to pick up the practices of the people around them.

In the same way we often unknowingly develop the practices of the world we live in.

Returning to the Lord involves doing inventory and removing ungodly practices that have become a part of our lives.

Jacob had his family bury the false gods under a tree; I suggest a more permanent solution. Don't leave sin at an arms length but remove it completely.

- Gen 35:5-6 - After removing the idols, Jacob and his family **began the long journey** to Bethel. Sons, daughters, wives children, grandchildren and supplies would make this a slow and difficult trip. In addition the route they had to take was a dangerous one.

There were many reasons NOT to make the journey to Bethel, but for Jacob the desire to return to the Lord was greater.

Whenever we choose to move forward in the Lord there is always opposition.

We face the difficulty of overcoming our past and our present as well as the fear that we will not be able to change.

It is encouraging that in Jacob's case the Lord stepped in and held back the would be attackers of their caravan.

In the same way once we begin to pursue the Lord, He will aid us along the way making our return to Bethel successful.

- **Gen 35:7 & 14** - Upon arriving at their destination Jacob built an altar and poured a drink offering upon it. The drink offering is symbolic of a life poured out to the Lord. Paul used the phrase to describe his commitment to the Lord.

Once we determine to go back to the Lord we must decide to surrender all to Him.

- **Gen 35:9-12** - Finally it was at Bethel that the Lord unveiled his plan for Jacob.
 - He was given a new name
 - He was reminded of the promises first given at Bethel years earlier. These were the promises of the covenant which included a land and descendants to fill it

It is worth noting that it was after he chose to leave the idols behind, do the work required to return and pour himself out to the Lord he began to understand the plan of God.

There is no doubt that God has a plan for each of us, but that plan is wrapped up in a life of surrender to Him. Let's return to Bethel where we can experience the life God intends for each of us.

After the family recommitted themselves to The Lord they began to face some very serious trials.

Genesis 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.

Genesis 35:18 Speaking of Rachel

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.

Genesis 35:29

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.

Quite often commitment, re – commitment or further commitment is followed by times of great difficulty. We may associate this to either spiritual warfare or the fact that God prepared us in advance for the difficulty He knew we would face by getting ourselves back into right relationship with God.

Sometimes we can forget what life was like when we were not abiding in Christ and benefiting from his love, grace, mercy and power

IV. Genesis 36 – Esau's family

Genesis 36:6-8

Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom.

We read that Esau made his way East of Israel to the area of Mount Seir which later became known as Edom a name taken from the Nick name of Esau who chose the red stew

Genesis 25:30

And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

Genesis 36:31

The Kings of Edom

Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel:

While Israel will struggle for 400 years in Egypt, Edom will become a strong and fortified area gaining wealth through the trade that passed along the kings highway. (A route from Egypt to Damascus)

This will be of particular importance when Israel attempts to make there way to the Promised Land only to be refused aid by the Edomites who over the years will be a trouble to Israel

All the way to the time of Judah's fall to Babylon we read of fighting between Israel and Edom