

GENESIS Lesson 38 – 7/28/19

Jacob return to Bethel

35:1: And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

35:2: Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

35:3: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

35:4: And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.

35:5: And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

35:6: So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him.

35:7: And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

35:8: But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.

After Jacob makes a mess of things in Shechem, God appears to him and reminds him where he was supposed to be heading, and this time God adds more detail, He tells He wants him to go to Bethel.

When God calls you, He calls you to a specific place. You need to be in the church God has you to be in, and when you are in that place you will begin to grow.

In Gen. 31:3: “And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.”

Jacob was supposed to go and live with his kindred—Isaac.

God tells Jacob, “Remember me? I showed up when you were running away from your brother. I want you to go back to the place I first spoke to you.”

Back to Bethel, is a phrase which has come to mean, even in the Christian’s life today: “Back to the place you first met God.” This place should be a precious place; I can still remember the place I was at when I met the Lord. The place I kneeled at and received Christ as my Savior.

Spurgeon says this about Bethel: “A revival of old memories is often most useful to us, especially to revive the memory of our conversion. The memory of the love of our espousals, when we went after the Lord into the wilderness, and were quite satisfied to be denied and disowned of all, so long as we might but dwell near to him—that memory is right good for us.”

For the Christian Bethel may stand for the time of your conviction, your conversion, your consecration, or the place you received your calling, or the place God did something for you.

It could be the place where you have said, "Oh He touched me!"

Shackled by a heavy burden,

'Neath a load of guilt and shame

Then the hand of Jesus touched me,

And now I am no longer the same

He touched me, oh He touched me,

And oh the joy that floods my soul!

Something happened and now I know,

He touched me and made me whole

Bethel is the "place" of the peak emotional and spiritual experience of the believer. Every Christian needs to "go back to Bethel" every once in a while. You have to rekindle the fire.

Someone said, "If you want the fire of God, you must become the fuel for God."

Jacob has made a mess of things; he now has a ruined daughter, sons wanted for serial murder, an idolatrous wife, enemies on every side, and the Lord says, "Arise, go up to Beth-el!"

Dr. Barnhouse says, “The only cure for worldliness is to separate from it.”

God commands us to separate for the world’s crowd.

Jacob then turns to his family and says, “Put away the strange gods...”

Here is Israel, the patriarch of the greatest nation to be and he has tolerated idolatry in his ranks! Jacob could never put his foot down.

But let’s not be too harsh on Jacob, his family only got right when he got right. He said, “...let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God...” It was Jacob’s decision to get right and alongside him his whole family got right.

Men, you are the head of your household, you get right with God and your family will follow suit. It may take some time, but it will happen.

Spurgeon said, “In families it is often well, when you see that things are wrong, just to call the household together and say, ‘We must draw near unto God with peculiar earnestness, for we are going astray. We have not given up family prayer, but we must now make it special, and with double zeal draw nigh unto God.’ I am afraid that some of you neglect family prayer. If you do I am sure it will work evil in your households.”

The whole family got right, they gave the strange gods in their midst, they gave their earrings, they got clean, buried the stuff under an oak tree and headed for the place God had called them to go.

And what happened when they did this? “...the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.”

Jacob was right in his assessment of the people of the land; it is probable from this statement “they did not pursue the sons of Jacob” that they were getting ready to exercise some revenge.

But in getting right with God, they gave God the opportunity to do what He does best. I want to read you some verses regarding God’s protection.

Psalms 68:1: Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

The enemies of your soul can only be defeated by God, and God can only help you when you are clean, when you are living right, otherwise you are afforded no protection.

1 Peter 5:8: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

We always quote the second half of James 4:7: “...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” But often miss the first half.

James 4:7: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Jacob had nothing to fear; whereas before he got right with God, he was full of fear.

Gen. 34:30: And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

Now we are told of the first death in Isaac's family—Deborah dies; Deborah was Rebekah's nurse. This is first time she is mentioned in the Bible.

Jacob arrives at Bethel

35:9: And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.

35:10: And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

35:11: And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

35:12: And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

35:13: And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

35:14: And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

35:15: And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.

Before God could meet with him, Jacob had to first go the place he was told to go. Jacob reaches Bethel and there God meets up with Jacob

once again. We call this a theophany. The word “theophany” means “the appearance of God,” a non-physical manifestation of God. A Christophany on the other hand is a physical manifestation of God, God in human form (see notes in Lesson 14).

But I want you to notice something, even though Jacob never went straight to Bethel from Padan-aram, he eventually got there.

Remember God calling on Jacob’s life, remember God’s promise.

Gen. 28:15: And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

As long you and I don’t mess up too badly, God will do that which He has purposed in our lives—isn’t God good!

Thirty years later and God did what He had told Jacob He would do. Jacob is back where he started, at Bethel.

It was important for God to remind Jacob of his new name because Jacob had acted like the old Jacob instead of Israel. He still hadn’t learned to fully trust God.

God does the same with us, constantly reminding us who we are in Christ. We ought to live like the children of God and not like the world.

God again repeats His promise to Jacob that He would make of him a great nation. He reiterated the Abrahamic promise.

Again, as he did when God first appeared to him, Jacob rears up a pillar of stones and pours out oil over that pillar and calls the place “Bethel.” Jacob recognizes God’s faithfulness.

Rachel dies

35:16: And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.

35:17: And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

35:18: And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.

35:19: And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

35:20: And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

35:21: And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.

So now Jacob is leaving Bethel and heads south toward Hebron, where Isaac dwelt. On his way there he had to stop, Rachel was about to give birth.

They didn’t make it to Ephrath; Ephrath was the name of the city that later came to be known as Bethlehem.



Jacob's Journey Back Home

On the way to Ephrath Rachel went into labor. Rachel had hard labor. Jacob's wife, the one he truly loved was slipping away. She was beautiful and well-favored, but now she is lying still having gone the way of every man.

We notice, that death occurs when the soul departs; and as her soul was departing she named her son Ben-oni. Ben-oni means "son of my sorrows." Rachel's life was full of sorrow, having to compete with her older sister who birthed 7 children for Jacob.

But Jacob steps in and says, "No, he shall be called Benjamin," which means "son of my right hand."

This is important because the right hand is the hand of power.

Ex. 15:6: Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

Psalms 16:8: I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Psalms 63:8: My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

Psalms 138:7: Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

Isa. 62:8: The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured:

Col. 3:1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

At the right hand is the position strength and honor. In naming Rachel's son "Benjamin" Jacob was honoring her.

You could imagine the loss Jacob felt. He is burying the only woman he loved from start to finish. And although he himself is later buried with his first wife Leah (Gen. 49:31), you can be sure that Jacob buried his heart when he buried Rachel.

I surmise that perhaps, at that place near Bethlehem Jacob's words were fulfilled.

Gen. 31:32: With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

Why do I say this? Because everything else Jacob pronounced concerning his family came to pass. We will study this in detail when we get to Genesis chapter 49.

There is power in the paternal blessing.

I want to end this lesson by reading you a story I read on the “Family Ministries” website written by Craig Hill.

<https://www.ywam-fmi.org/news/the-power-of-a-fathers-blessing/>

Pablo was deeply saddened as he received the news from his father that his mother, who had been separated from his father for nine months, was not willing to return to the marriage and was now seeking a divorce. As Pablo pondered what he might do or pray to help his parents, a very strange thought came to him.

He had recently experienced a powerful change in the life of his twenty-one-year-old son, who had been quite directionless and indecisive. This son could not decide if he wanted to enroll in Bible School, University, or get a job. Consequently, he was sitting at home doing nothing.

Pablo told me that when he looked into the eyes of his twenty-one-year-old son, he saw a scared little boy, who didn't know what to do and was afraid to make a decision.

About that time, Pablo and his wife attended an Ancient Paths Experience, and realized that the probable reason that their son was directionless was that he had never been blessed by his father, and

consequently was still spiritually, and emotionally tied to his mother as a little boy. These parents then arranged a blessing ceremony for their son, which turned out to be life-changing for him.

Pablo told me that immediately after the ceremony, when he looked into his son's eyes, for the first time, he saw looking back at him a confident, twenty-one-year-old man, not a scared little boy. The spiritual and emotional umbilical cord had literally been cut with his mother, and shortly after that Pablo's son enrolled in University and began to pursue a course of study toward a career into which he was certain God had called him.

Now upon receiving news of his parents' impending divorce, the strange thought that now came to Pablo was the remembrance of recently looking into his sixty-four-year-old father's eyes and seeing the same "scared little boy look" that he had seen in his twenty-one-year-old son before he had conducted the blessing ceremony for him.

He now realized that his father, Luis, had never been blessed by his father and was still, at age sixty-four, emotionally tied as a little boy to his mother. The reason that Luis had struggled in relationship with his wife all of their married life was that he had never emotionally "left father and mother" so he could properly "cleave to his wife." (*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh* Genesis 2:24).

Armed with this understanding, Pablo placed a telephone call to his 87-year-old grandfather, who was still alive, living in the country of their family's origin. Grandpa was quite shocked as Pablo tried to explain to

him his request to come impart his blessing to his son, Luis, and release him to be a man in a Bar Barakah (a Christian Bar Mitzvah) ceremony to be held on Luis's 65th birthday. Grandpa exclaimed, "You want me to do what? My son is having his 65th birthday celebration. If he is not a man yet, he never will be." However, Pablo was insistent and Grandpa finally agreed to come.

Upon arrival, Pablo was able to explain to his Grandpa the key of blessing that he held in his hand as a father, and that Luis was still emotionally bound to his mother as a little boy, with the cry of Esau, Bless me – me also, O my father, still in his heart at age 65. Grandpa still didn't entirely understand, but did agree that he would attempt to pray over and bless his son Luis on his 65th birthday.

When the day of the ceremony arrived, after a time of worship to God, Grandpa and Luis sat opposite each other in two chairs. Grandpa first attempted to tell his son, "I love you," but only got out the first couple of syllables and broke into tears. Luis immediately broke into tears as well, and all either man could do for the next ten minutes was sit and weep.

When Grandpa tried again, to tell his son he loved him, they both broke into tears again. Finally the third time, Grandpa was able to tell his son he loved him and how proud he was of him. He told Luis that he was a huge success because all three of Luis's children loved the Lord, had married godly spouses and all of Luis's grandchildren were all born again and serving Jesus. "What greater legacy could a man ever ask for than that?"

Then Grandpa asked, “Son, do you remember when you were 15 years old?” As his father asked this question, Luis’s eyes squinted as a huge surge of emotional pain began to be released.

Yes, Luis remembered when he was 15 years old. What no one else knew was that at that time, Luis and his father had engaged in a huge argument that even became physical. Luis’s father had become enraged at him that day, and had screamed at him horrible things, told him that he was worthless, and physically threw him out of the house. He told him he hated him and hoped he would never see this worthless son again.

Luis, of course, had become equally angry, had said horrible things to his father and also told him he hated him and never would see him again. He left the house in rebellion at age 15 to begin his adult life. Obviously, this was not the blessing his heart was looking for to release him into his adult identity.

Since that time, Luis and his father had reconciled their relationship, but had never spoken of this event. As his father now brought it up fifty years later, it immediately stirred to the surface fifty years of bitterness, hatred, resentment, and anger that had been in Luis’s heart since that day. Years ago, he had voiced the words, “I forgive my father,” but his heart had never released the pain and he had neither truly forgiven his father from his heart nor repented of the bitterness, dishonor, or rebellion that had been in his heart toward his father.

Now fifty years later, as his father lanced the infectious wound in his son’s heart, a deep, deep anguished cry escaped from the heart of his

son as he burst into profuse sobbing. Luis fell forward and buried his face in his father's breast, his father also sobbing profusely. When Grandpa's sobs had subsided enough to speak, he then whispered to Luis, "Son, I'm so sorry. I was wrong that day. Please forgive me. I got angry, said things I didn't mean, and cursed you rather than blessing you. Please forgive me. I love you!" These words only intensified the sobbing of the son.

When Luis's sobbing finally subsided, he sat up and looked his father in the eyes. His father returning the gaze then asked him directly, "Son, I love you. I was wrong. Will you forgive me for the words I said and the way I treated you growing up in general and specifically on that day when you left home?"

Luis then responded, "Yes Papa, I forgive you. I love you. I also was wrong in my attitude of dishonor and rebellion and the words I spoke. Will you forgive me?" Grandpa responded, "Yes, of course. I love you son. And today, I pronounce over you the words I should have spoken fifty years ago. Son, I'm proud of you. You are not a foolish little boy. You are a man. Today I bless you. I cut you loose emotionally and spiritually from your mother, and I give you my blessing and release you into your adult identity as a man. Go and be and do all God has called you to."

Pablo then related that something supernatural had happened in the heart of his father, Luis, through the blessing of his father. Immediately after this experience and ceremony of blessing, Pablo told me that later that day, when he looked into his father's eyes, for the first time in his

life, he saw a bold, confident 65-year-old man who was at peace inside, rather than the scared, angry little boy.

The supernatural healing that took place that day in Luis's heart was so profound that two weeks later his wife, Pablo's mother, cancelled the divorce and moved back home. She said, "I don't know what happened to my husband, but finally I got back the man I thought I married forty-five years ago. For the last forty-five years I have been trying to follow an angry little boy, who doesn't know where he is going, and who was frequently blaming me for many of his own failures and frustrations. Somehow, now the fear, anger, frustration, and blame are all gone. This is the man I fell in love with forty-five years ago. I don't want to divorce him. I love him and want to live the rest of my life with him."