

The Cleansing and Casualties of Jacob's House

Genesis 35:1-29

- I. THE CHANGING OF LOCATION FOR JACOB (Genesis 34:1-5, 7, 13, 27)
 - A. The Principles in the Change
 1. The key to the change in Jacob's situation was moving.
 2. He had been in the wrong places since his reunion with Esau and had been overdue in obeying the orders that had been given to him from God in Haran, which sent him back to the land and particularly to Bethel.
 - B. The Precept for the Change (Genesis 35:1)
 1. *"God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel."* This change and improvement in Jacob were caused by a Divine command from God.
 2. It was, therefore, the word of God that caused this revival in the lives of Jacob and his family. Note: "It is never wrong to do right."
 3. Note: This required action on the part of Jacob.
 4. When individuals and homes are messed up or troubled, they do not need self-help books or psychologists; they need the word of God.
 - C. The Place for Change (Genesis 35:1)
 1. *"Go up to Bethel."*
 2. Notice that Bethel is "up" from where Jacob is currently.
 3. Geographically Bethel is about 1,000 ft. up in elevation from Shechem.
 4. Spiritually for Jacob it is also "up," for Jacob is now headed in the direction that God wants him to go.
 5. God's commands will always lead you to the higher moral and spiritual ground.

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6. Man's philosophies will only pollute and corrupt a society. It was not the word of God that had gotten Jacob in the mess at Shechem. It is not the word of God that corrupts a society.

D. The Purposes of the Change (Genesis 35:1)

1. An abode – *“Go up to Bethel, and dwell there.”*
 - a. Jacob was ordered by the Lord to leave Shechem.
 - b. The mess his family got into there is a strong reminder of the peril of living out of the will of God and of not separating from the world.
 - c. Bethel represents a holier place than Shechem, a much more honorable place for Jacob to make a home.
2. An altar – *“And make there an altar unto God.”*
 - a. The word *“Bethel”* means “house of God.”
 - (1) This is where Asaph got his answers to his perplexing problem (Psalm 73:1-28).
 - (2) This is where we find strength and fellowship and answers to our perplexing problems – “In God's house” (Hebrews 10:19-25).
 - (a) House of God (Hebrews 10:21; Luke 4:14-15, 16-19)
 - (b) In the assembly (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:28)
 - b. This is where Jacob would find worship with God again.
 - c. The altar shows that true worship costs us something.
 - d. We see the word *worth* in the word *worship*. We show the Lord his *worth* in our worship.
 - e. With his sacrifice on the altar, it cost Jacob something (the sacrifice had to come from Jacob's flock). You will not have a true worship experience if Christ is not emphasized in worship, and if you are unwilling to pay a price for true worship (John 4:24; cp. Matthew 15:8-9).

E. The Preparation for the Change (Genesis 35:2, 4)

1. The creed for the change – *“Put away the strange gods that are among you... they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods... and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem (Genesis 35:2, 4).”*
 - a. True revival will not come with false doctrine. It was necessary that some changes were to be made.

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- b. Remember that Rachel had stolen some of Laban's gods (Genesis 31:34) and others in the household were evidently also guilty of possessing heathen idols. All these heathen items had to go if they were going to move "up."
 - c. It was time for Jacob to take his place as head of his household (v. 2a).
 2. The cleansing for the change – *"Be clean" (Genesis 35:2)*
 - a. When God changes a person's heart there is some cleansing that takes place.
 - b. No longer is there a desire of the things of Shechem (world), there is now a desire of the things of Bethel (the house of God).
 - c. The inner man has had a cleansing and a new desire has been given.
 3. The clothes for the change – *"Change your garments" (Genesis 35:2)*
 - a. Eventually what has happened on the inside will affect the outside.
 - b. The Christian should want to please the Lord in his or her outward appearance. The flesh should be the last one to be pleased in all of this (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- F. The Protection in the Change (Genesis 35:5)
- G. The Performance of the Change (Genesis 35:6, 7)
1. The completion of the trip – *"Jacob came to Luz... that is, Bethel" (Genesis 35:6)*
 - a. Many people start out with great enthusiasm but soon fade.
 - b. Jacob's enthusiasm was strong enough to complete the trip. He did not stop halfway. Note: Partial obedience is disobedience (1 Samuel 15:23; Matthew 21:31).
 2. The consecration in the trip – *"Jacob came to Luz... that is, Bethel" (Genesis 35:6)*
 - a. Bethel was geographically "up" from Shechem.
 - b. Spiritually speaking, in our lives we need to be going up, anything else is a decline and "down" from where God would have us to be.
 - c. This trip would be a hard one in having to travel on an upward plane.
 - d. However, Jacob had the consecration to obey despite the difficulty. Note: Many of our tasks as a Christian are up-hill tasks and require consecration to do (dedication to the Lord).

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3. The company in the trip – *“Jacob came to... Bethel, he and all the people that were with him” (Genesis 35:6)*
 - a. Jacob influenced his whole camp in the right things in this instant.
 - b. He caused the entire camp to move to Bethel.
 - c. We need more fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts that are willing to take a “chance” to influence family, friends, and acquaintances for the cause of Christ.
 - (1) Jacob was obedient here and it paid off.
 - (2) People may not follow you when you’re obedient; but live a godly life anyway so that if anyone does follow you, they will be on the right path (Genesis 35:3; cp. Proverbs 3:6). Note the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24).
4. The construction of the altar – *“He built there an altar” (Genesis 35:7)*
 - a. Three lessons of worship
 - (1) The price of worship – It costs you something to worship God. It will cost you both your energy (“built”) and your gifts (monetary and talents) [sacrifices].
 - (2) The priority of worship – After moving to Bethel, Jacob did not waste time attending to the matter of worship. When you move into a new community, one of your first tasks should be to find a good church. In fact, if you’re moving into a new community this should be at the top of your list to do before you move, above location of your home.
 - (3) The publicness of worship – Jacob was not ashamed to worship God in public though others (Canaanites) in the land worshiped heathen gods.
 - b. The naming of the place
 - (1) He *“called the place El-beth-el” (Genesis 35:7)*
 - (2) When Jacob first named the place, he named it *“Bethel”* which means *“the house of God” (Genesis 28:19)*.
 - (3) *“El-beth-el”* means *“The God of the house of God.”* In worship we must see more than just the place of worship (the house of God), we must see primarily the Person (God) of worship. That is we need to seek more than just being in church on a given day, we must come with a heart to worship and commune with the one that deserves all of our being.

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II. THE CONVERSATION FOR JACOB (Genesis 35:9-15)

A. The Mercy in the Conversation (Genesis 35:9)

1. *“God appeared unto Jacob again.”*
2. The word *“again”* emphasizes mercy. God had spoken to Jacob at Bethel before and had given him much helpful revelation. However, Jacob had been tardy regarding that revelation.
3. When Jacob finally returned to Bethel, God graciously spoke to Jacob *“again”* with another wonderful revelation.
4. Every saint, in every age can be grateful to God for His mercy in speaking to us *“again”* (Psalm 103:10). Note: If God had not given an *“again”*, most people would not be saved.

B. The Matters in the Conversation (Genesis 35:10-12)

1. The prince in the conversation – *“Thy name is Jacob... but Israel shall be thy name”* (Genesis 35:10).
 - a. This name change repeats the message Jacob received from God at Peniel (Genesis 32:28).
 - b. The name means *“prince.”* It speaks of noble position. However, Jacob had not been acting like his name. The name change is a reminder to Jacob that he needed to live like Israel and not like Jacob.
 - c. Christians too need to be reminded to live like Christians (children of God), far too often they live like the world.
2. The Provider in the conversation – *“God said unto him, I am God Almighty”* (Genesis 35:11).
 - a. *“Almighty”* reminds us that God is all-powerful, has all-strength and has all-sufficiency.
 - b. This was a revelation of God's name to Jacob. When Jacob became obedient and worshipped, he learned more about his God. Thus, it is with us.
3. The posterity in the conversation – *“A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins”* (Genesis 35:11).
4. The place in the conversation – *“The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee”* (Genesis 35:12).

- C. The Memorial in the Conversation (Genesis 35:13-15)
1. The word to be memorialized
 - a. Making a memorial of this revelation experience emphasized just how important the word of God was to Jacob. In his case it was the spoken word of God in the revelation.
 - b. In our case, it is the written word of God, the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:14-17).
 2. The setting up of a pillar – *“Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him [God]” (Genesis 35:14).*
 3. The sacrificing on the pillar – *“He poured a drink-offering thereon... and... oil” (Genesis 35:14).*
 - a. Pouring out some liquid of value unto God was one way of sacrificing unto God. A drink offering at times would be the fruit of the vine (wine) as opposed to a meat offering (see Leviticus 23:13). How much value do you place on God and his word?
 - b. The greatness of the value showed great honour to God and his word.
 4. The signifying of the pillar – *“Called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel” (Genesis 35:15).*
 - a. Naming the place *“Bethel”* again does not recant or contradict his naming it *“El-beth-el”* a bit earlier. Rather it reflects the fact that after hearing from God, Jacob felt that he was in God's house.
 - b. This instructs us that God's house is a place where God's word is heard.
 - c. Jacob saw God's house as a place where God's word was heard. Thus, this is the way it should be today.