Jacob Returns to Bethel

Genesis 35:1-15

Key Verse 3

"Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

Introduction:

Before beginning the new year, we would like to think about Genesis 35. It is a great contrast between chapter 34 and 35 in that in 34, there is no mentioning about God and Bethel where God wants him to be, but in 35 there are more than 10 times for both God and Bethel. Like Jacob, we may go back to Bethel in terms of securing right relationship with the Lord.

1. Read verse 1-3. What has happened before God speaks to Jacob? (33:17-34:31) What does God tell Jacob to do? (1) What does Jacob ask his family to do before leaving for Bethel? (2,3) What important event in Jacob's life had happened in Bethel? (1b, 3; 28:10-22; 31:13) What do you think it means for him to return to Bethel?

1.1 Read verse 1-3.

Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. 3 Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

1.2 What has happened before God speaks to Jacob? (34:1-31)

Genesis 33:17-20

17 Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.18 After Jacob came from Paddan Aram,[b] he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. 19 For a hundred pieces of silver,[c] he bought from the sons of Hamor,the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. 20 There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.

After he experienced God’s help in a matter of meeting Esau, he forget God’s promise and wanted to settle down in the different place.

As a result he had a trouble through his daughter in chapter 34.

The whole Shechem incident was because Jacob went to Shechem instead of Bethel, where he was supposed to be.

We often end up in much difficulty for we do not go where God tells us to go.

1.3 What does God tell Jacob to do? (1)

“Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

1.4 What does Jacob ask his family to do before leaving for Bethel? (2, 3)

“Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. 3 Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

No matter how hard we try to teach our children godly conduct they will still do what we do for they’re influenced by us and knows how to copy us.

1.5 What important event in Jacob's life had happened in Bethel? (1b, 3; 28:10-22; 31:13)

Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it[c] stood theLord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” 17 He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” 18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillarand poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel,[e] though the city used to be called Luz. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord will be my God 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.’”

1.6 What do you think it means for him to return to Bethel?

God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”

It was for him to have a personal relationship with his God and keep his promise on his part.

2. Read verses 4-5. What does Jacob’s household do? (4) What happens after they get rid of all the foreign gods? (5) What do you think we can learn from this?

2.1 Read verses 4-5.

4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears,and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem. 5 Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

God’s grace and his sin forgiveness covered Jacob even when his sin had made he and his family vulnerable.

2.2 What does Jacob’s household do? (4)

So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears,and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

2.3 What happens after they get rid of all the foreign gods? (5)

the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

It reminds me of Matthew 6:33, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these will be given to you as well.”

Right relationship with God first and set one’s purpose straight for God’s glory, and then God provide us all we need.

2.4 What do you think we can learn from this?

3. Read verses 6-8. What does Jacob do when he arrives at Bethel? (6-7a) Why does he name the place El Bethel? (7b) What do you think this shows about Jacob's faith?

3.1 Read verses 6-8.

6 Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. 7 There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

8 Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Allon Bakuth.

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3.3 Why does he name the place El Bethel? (7b)

It is because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

3.4 What do you think this shows about Jacob's faith?

He could develop his personal faith in the Lord further.

4. Read verses 9-15. What does God do after Jacob returns from Padan Aram ?( (9) What is God’s name for Jacob? (10, Gen 32:28) What does God say to him? (11-13) What does Jacob do after God speaks to him? (14-15) What do you think this shows about his faith?

4.1 Read verses 9-15.

9 After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. 10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel.

11 And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. 12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. 15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.

4.2 What does God do after Jacob returns from Padan Aram ?( (9)

9 After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him.

Relationship is restored. This is an excellent example of what it means to return to your first love.

4.3 What is God’s name for Jacob? (10, Gen 32:28)

10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel.

The reminder of the new name was important, because Jacob had been acting like Jacob instead of Israel.

Yet, God wants to set his mind on what God made him.

God does the same with us, reminding us who we are in Him.

God wants us to remember and live in the great n new names He gives us insteaf of our old name.

4.4 What does God say to him? (11-13)

11 And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. 12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

4.5 What does Jacob do after God speaks to him? (14-15)

14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. 15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.

4.6 What do you think this shows about his faith?

He poured out his life finally before God.

The idea of a drink offering is found often in the Bible.

Drink offering was made with wine poured out in sacrifice before the LORD at His altar.

Reference Bible passages-

Exo 29:40-41 With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah[c] of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. 41 Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the Lord.

Lev 23:13 together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephahof the finest flour mixed with olive oil—a food offering presented to the Lord, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine.

Num 15:5-7 With each lamb for the burnt offering or the sacrifice, prepare a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering.

6 “‘With a ram prepare a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a third of a hin of olive oil, 7 and a third of a hin of wine as a drink offering. Offer it as an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

Paul considered the pouring out of his life before God to be like the pouring out of a drink offering at God’s altar

2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.

Jacob’s heart of worship shows gratitude towards God.

When we look back on life, we should never have the attitude that says, “I was robbed.”

Instead our heart should say, “God has blessed,” and pour out our lives to Him only.

\*How do you think God is calling you to return to Bethel this year?

In conclusion,

May the Lord help us to be thankful and make effort to repent of our idols like Jacob as a good example for others. And then we recover our relationship with God and resume our first love before beginning 2014. One word:Let us go up to Bethel!