



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Genesis (Part 2)

Lesson 6: Genesis 35:1-36:43

Whew! I feel like we have been through a lot together already. This lesson should be a little lighter for us as chapter 36 is mainly genealogy which means we will spend the vast majority of our time in chapter 35. We ended last time with Jacob's return home and the terrible events that surrounded Dinah's rape. In this lesson, we will encounter several major life events for Jacob that are each briefly summarized in just a few verses. If you are prayed up and ready to begin, let's go!

Read Genesis Chapter 35:1-15

We are not told exactly how long Jacob was living near Shechem, but it comes time for him to make good on his vow to God. God calls him to move to Bethel, to live there, and to make an altar there. It is apparent that Jacob is made aware of the need to put away all other gods in order to serve the one true God. Jacob most likely has many people in his household at this point with all his children and servants. He tells them to do several things. These things seem to correlate well with how we make God our only God today.

First, Jacob tells them to "put away the foreign gods which are among you". No doubt these gods would include those household idols that Rebekah stole from Laban upon their departure. Those gods were "among" them. Jacob had allowed them to be there until this point. There are always things "among" us that will try to take the place of God or cause us to compromise His authority. We have this same need to put away any and all things that would vie

for His rightful position. We must repent and give Him sole and complete reign in our lives if we want to truly have Jehovah as our God.

The next thing Jacob tells his household to do is to purify themselves. They need to be clean from the sin they have repented of. We are not told exactly how that takes place for Jacob and his household, but the idea is a cleansing to remove the old, unclean self. How do we purify ourselves today? What can we do that will "wash away [our] sins"? It is difficult to not notice the parallel of baptism, which according to Act 22:16, does just that. It is a cleansing, a washing, a purification. Yet another vital step in allowing Jehovah to truly be our God.

Then Jacob tells his household to "change [their] garments". They were required to change just as we must change. When we are baptized, we put on Christ according to Gal. 3:27. He is our new garment. We must put Him on and allow Him to live in us as we die to self (Gal. 2:20). The meaning of the Hebrew word for "change" here includes "abolish, altar, renew". Do those terms remind you of anything in your own faith? Any and all souls who wish to make Jehovah their God must be changed – renewed. We will look at some passages in our question section to help us better understand the renewal we are to experience.

Lastly, Jacob tells his household to "arise and go". It is time for action. They have taken the steps of repentance, purification, and renewal.



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Now they must act upon those decisions. Sounds like they have faith and now must implement works. Faith and works are inseparable. In fact, Scripture tells us that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). The point is that “faith without works is useless” (James 2:20). Jacob understood this. Therefore, he calls his household to action. May we do the same in our faith and fulfill all the good works our Father has prepared for us in this life.

The good news is, Jacob’s household does just that. God provides them with safety in their travels by causing the surrounding cities to fear them and not attack them. Isn’t God fantastic! We worry about so many things when really all we have to do is trust and obey. He is able and willing. He is our refuge and our only true security. Praise God!

When Jacob arrives in Bethel, he builds an altar and surely gave his sacrifice. If you remember when he fled from home and had the dream, part of his promise was to give God a tenth. When you consider how wealthy he had become, that must have been a huge sacrifice. He had given Esau 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels, 50 head of cattle, and 30 donkeys as a present. I can only imagine what his sacrifice to God must have been like. The value, the time, and the clean up of such a sacrifice had to be substantial.

After all of this, we are told that Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse has passed away. She is never mentioned before or after this event, but she must have been a treasured woman for it to even be included in Scripture. She obviously meant a great deal to them as they name her burial site, the “oak of weeping”. What a testament to her life.

The last part of this section is a retelling of when Jacob came from Paddan-aram and God blessed him. It details how God changed Jacob’s name and renewed His covenant to Abraham’s descendant concerning the land promise. If you remember from our first study of Genesis, it was not uncommon for writers at this time to repeat stories in order to add more detail. Remember also that they do not necessarily write in chronological order. This fact will be important at the end of this chapter.

**What is vying for God’s place in your life?
How can you “put them away” so that God can have preeminence in your life?**

What do you learn about your “change” or renewal from these verses:

- **Rom. 12:1-2**

- **2 Cor. 4:16-18**

- **Eph. 4:20-24**

- **Col. 3:1-17**



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Why do you think Deborah’s death is included in Scripture and what can that teach us about our own life?

Read Genesis Chapter 35:16-29

We again don’t know how long Jacob was in Bethel, but we see him moving again. As they are approaching Ephrath, which is another name for Bethlehem, Rachel goes into distressed labor. Here is a big life event for Jacob summed up in just a few verses. Rachel’s passing had to be a very grievous time for Jacob, but God provided him with yet another son from his beloved wife. I believe what she names him and what Jacob calls him are appropriate for what transpires. Verse 20 lets us know that Rachel’s grave is still known and remembered at the time of Moses writing the book of Genesis. In fact, we know it is still around even when Saul becomes king some 600 years later (1 Sam. 10:2). Interestingly, she is buried in the land that will someday belong to the sons of Benjamin himself.

The next life event recorded is Reuben’s sin with Bilhah. She is not only his father’s concubine, but also Rachel’s maid. That begs the question if perhaps Reuben committed this heinous act in retaliation of Jacob’s favoritism toward Rachel’s sons. However, he could have just fallen victim to lust. We are not told why he sinned in this way, but we are told of some of the consequences later. Reuben loses his birthright over it according to Genesis 49:3-4 and 1 Chron.

5:1. This must have been yet another grievous time for Jacob.

The last few verses of this chapter let us know that Jacob returned to his father, Isaac. There is no mention of Rebekah so some speculate that she has already passed away. We really have no way of knowing if Jacob ever saw his mother alive again, but we do know that Isaac ended up living a long time after he gave Jacob the blessing. We are told that he lived to be 180 years old, which means he was still alive even when Joseph was sold into slavery and presumed dead. In fact, he dies around the time Joseph has been in Egypt for twelve years which is the time frame of Joseph being in prison. The text closes Isaac’s life out here, but remember it’s not chronological. The Scriptures are merely turning their focus from Isaac and Jacob and heading towards Joseph.

How do you think Leah felt about Rachel’s death (if she was still alive)?

According to 1 Chron. 5:1, who does Reuben forfeit the birthright to?

What do you think about the fact that Isaac was alive when Joseph was presumed dead and never lived to know the truth about his



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grandson?

What can that fact tell us about our own future and God's plans?

Read Genesis Chapter 36

We are not going to spend much time on chapter 36, but I do want to mention that it obviously was important enough for God to include in Scripture twice. Esau's generations are again laid out in the last half of 1 Chronicles chapter 1. As you know, Esau is Edom and becomes the father of the Edomites. The Edomites are enemies of the Israelites despite being "brothers" and they cause a lot of grief for the Israelites. God pronounces judgment on them several times in the old testament through the prophets. The book of Obadiah is actually dedicated to the prophecy of Edom's destruction. If you have the time, I encourage you to read through Obadiah this week to get a fuller picture of all that will become of Esau's descendants.

As we close this lesson, I want to say thank you for taking the time to learn more about God's word with other sisters in Christ. I pray we will all grow in grace and truth through our time in this study. God bless!