

Strange
Gods that are Among
You

Genesis Chapter Thirty-Five



~ At this point in our Spiritual Safari many of you dear readers may, understandably, be questioning what appears, at face value, to be a conflict in my teaching. First, two reports ago, I said we would see a change in Jacobs's heart and life; but we haven't seen any noticeable change - at least, not a change for the better. Some of us were also certainly left wondering when to make a stand and what that stand should be because we just let that whole sub-topic dangle. How the rape should or should not have been avenged and dealt with was the specific question, you will recall. What I will say is that it should have been handled in a much better way than it was by Jacobs's sons.

Even so, Jacobs's life did begin to change at this time; even if we don't see it. Some people have a crises experiential moment that defines their salvation - such as DL Moody had – and many people may be able to turn back to some wonderful experience; but many others cannot turn back to any defining experience that brought them into the light. Some people make it seem that if you haven't had an experience, then you haven't experienced God. Well, friends, that's all "selfy." Jacob has been rising in self from the beginning of his life until now and here he is experiencing the fall of himself; and what a tremendous fall it is! Jacob went down like a blown-out tire. He had more pressure built up than a pressure cooker when it all just ruptured. The last chapter could easily be construed as revealing that there was still no faith in the life of Jacob. Further, I also have a personal concern that, when Rachel stole Laban's gods, and they could have been killed because of it, nothing was said or done by Jacob. He didn't even talk about it with his wife. Was Jacob ready for the experiences God would give him at Bethel?

The Christian Catastrophe we saw in chapter thirty-four was that of a man who had been walking by the flesh his entire life, experienced a hard fall, and, as a result, was left with a shattered faith. Jacob is not being the proper role model in his home, either, and has not taken the correct place he should have in bringing his sons to God. Jacob was no spiritual giant, by any means; but Jacob is, however, now beginning to see how the hand of God has moved and is moving in his life. Unfortunately, Jacob won't let that hand lead him very far for very long; because, as soon as we see Esau leave, Jacob takes the family down into Shechem. See, Jacob is still depending upon his own clever schemes here. Remember, Dinah has been raped and Levi and Simeon, her full brothers, went to the prince for justice. He wanted to marry her – so, these sons of Jacob murdered him. They orchestrated a slaughter that would make a Hollywood horror movie director blush. Remember, Jacob said they had made his name to stink among the people of the land. I do not think Jacob is ready for Bethel....

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

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:

~ When God tells Jacob to move Jacob is immediately convicted regarding his home environment. Jacob had done nothing about the gods when Rachel stole them, but now – all of the sudden – they have to go. When they were first discovered had been the only effective time for Jacob to talk to Rachel about it. Jacob didn't insist on getting rid of the images, though - and they haven't been a problem - until now. I'm sure things got tense between Jacob and Rachel. The home dynamic just doesn't work out under those circumstances – but leads to compounding, much larger problems. God says to Jacob "go to Bethel" and Jacob says to his family, "...stop doing that stuff and get cleaned up." I think we are looking at a family of dirty hippies right now, personally. I think the entire family was worshipping the images Rachel had stolen.

There are too many Christians today who won't put away their strange gods. Some of them actually fill their lives entirely worshipping false gods – and they never even know it. They talk about a Jesus all day long – but their liberal Jesus is one who doesn't – and never did – exist. Every day of the week you will find them serving some other image right here on this forum on which I teach. Then they wonder why God doesn't bless their lives like the Bible says it will and they get burned out in their service to the Lord. Friends, you're going to have to put away the strange gods in your life, whatever they are, if you're going to come to the Lord today. Many so-called "Christian" businessmen are out for every nickel they can get! These people devote a lot more energy and resource to obtaining more dollars than they do to serving the Lord – because they love money.

So, Jacob tells his family to get clean. We can't just unfold the Bible in contempt and pray for tomorrow when we are ignoring the murder in our lives today, my beloved. You can forget that foolishness. We have to stay clean in the Word of God with a regular cleansing. We take a regular bath or shower – I hope! Some take two each day. The contemporary church has a foul spiritual body odor because there is no confession of sins on the part of the members in their personal, private prayer life. Confession and Bible study are the cleansing factors - and you must have both to get properly cleaned up. If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness; but that's a pretty big "if" for a whole bunch of people. There must be confession of sins to receive forgiveness in our Christian lives after we have been saved.

Jacob also tells them to get some new clothes. When we come across "garments" in the Old Testament it always speaks of "habits." We still call them habits today. Policemen, football players and horse jockeys all wear habits. The dress of the child of God should mirror who he or she is – by habit. Do people know who you are in business by the clothes you wear, or can you be detected as a Christian by your dresses? If your life is a little different then you're wearing a habit. Up until now, quite frankly, I don't think Jacob was living for God on any level...

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.

~ These stressful experiences have caught up to Jacob and convicted his heart. He realizes he needs to get his life straight with the Lord. He's going back to that place from long ago where he heard God speak directly to him so clearly. Thank God He is faithful and did this and did speak to Jacob or Jacob would never have built this altar. Without this altar Jacob would have no testimony in his life whatsoever. He wants to return to the place where God had been faithful to him; and I can relate to that – but when God says, "go back to Bethel," it means that, after all these years, Jacob has to go back to square one with God and start all over again. That's the way it's going to work for you today, too, my saved Christian friend. God loves you, yes; but – you'll have to begin with God where HE says to begin – not where WE want to begin. Some people have to start all over at the beginning again every single day with the Lord. They are Christian Catastrophes.

My personal estimation is that most people simply do not recognize how many of their years are utterly wasted living a shoddy and shabby Christian life. For most people Christianity just seems to be nothing but a waste of time. Others play fast and loose with Him – and then they lose big time and become devastated. A relationship with Christ just doesn't mean anything profoundly life changing in their lives. Remember, Israel will later cry out to God from Egypt and God will tell them to get out of Egypt and go into their land that He would show them. So, what do they do? - they wander around the desert for forty years in unbelief until Joshua and Caleb come along. When we get to that account you'll see and understand that God picks up with Israel right where they left off in their willful disobedience, too. Israel had wasted forty years – God has eternity to wait for you to do it HIS will His way! Are you wasting your life for Christ today? This is a tremendous spiritual lesson here - for me....

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.

~ We are not stopping in our safari to bury the false gods Rachel stole or to take up the matter of the significance of earrings in Scripture - but a lot will be said later in the Bible about both. Earrings in the Word of God are always associated with polluted worship of some kind. This description associates and identifies them as idolaters; and God says it's time to get rid of them all. This is just another point that reveals there are so many precious truths packed into the Word of God that we could never carry them all out in this expedition. Well, we have more mines to dig - so let's just fill up our pockets with the jewels of Holy Writ that we can carry now and get back out into the real world again. There are so many more precious stones and so much gold ahead of us that we don't need to carry around much now....

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.

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

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

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

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.

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.

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;

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.

~ We will find out that Rebekah died without ever seeing Jacob again after he had run away to Uncle Laban's house. Of course, after the incident of deceit between Jacob and Isaac, the home was broken permanently. This is certainly a Christian Catastrophe, so it would seem. Remember, Rebekah had only meant to send Jacob away for a few days until Esau could cool off. That quickly turned into twenty years. "The land" was promised to Abraham so long ago, and then to Isaac and now Jacob. God repeats this promise several times to all of them; which displays a wonderful love. The land of Israel is going to be critical for the rest of our safari - so let's really try to learn about them and understand them. An acute knowledge of the people and the land of Israel goes with the overall comprehension of eschatology and, indeed, the entire Word of God. There are certain axioms we must always have before us.

First, God's promise to all of the Old Testament saints involved inheritance of land. God did not promise the OT saints Heaven. The Lord promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they would inherit the land and be raised to live there from the dead. The OT saints promise is an EARTHLY promise of paradise; whereas, our promise for the church today is all spiritual blessings in the Heavens; raised unto justification and given a new, glorified body. Second, Israel is IN NO WAY to be likened to the church today. That is just patently wrong theology, and it doesn't fit any correct doctrine, as we shall see. Making ANY comparison of the two is to not understand the Bible properly. Mixing this up makes prophecy utterly meaningless, too, by the way. Third, the laws given to Moses in Exodus pertain mainly to the LAND. The year of Jubilee and the Sabbath rest of the land; the laws of gleaning and the poverty program God gave the nation Israel ALL have to do with the LAND and, my friend, if you really want to put yourself back under the Mosaic System of Levitical Law then you better move to Israel. Then, you can start being a total abomination to God and begin killing animals. Perhaps somewhat hyper-facetious and, perhaps even off point – but – let's be serious. That's what it boils down to; irrespective of how you might attempt to explain it away. Alright, we're going to leave it here for now, but we need to pray about and start concentrating on the nation Israel in the

Bible – because we’re going to be with them for a good portion of our Bible study....

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

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.

~ The drink offering was the second offering God gives us later in the Bible. First is the burnt offering; and the drink offering goes hand in hand with it. The drink offering has a tremendously special spiritual meaning for us today. It was poured out over the hot altar and would go up in a flash of vapor and steam. Paul said he wanted his life to be poured out like the drink offering. How about you, friends? Are you ready to present yourself a living sacrifice to the Lord today – and just be poured out? Well, if you go with me all the way through this Spiritual Safari we are all going to go up in a vapor - just like this offering....

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

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.

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.

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

~ So, as the sun sets on this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God let’s not miss one more great spiritual truth that we find in Jacob’s son Benjamin. As Rebekah was giving birth, she said, “....call him ‘son of my sorrows’ – Benoni;” but Jacob looks down at his beautiful Rachel laying there dying and says, “....I’ll call him the son at my right hand - Benjamin.” In this list of the sons of each of the sons, the grandsons, of

Jacob, Benjamin and Joseph are the outstanding ones. The others – well, let's just say they won't turn out so great in Scripture. God does not bless plurality of wives, my beloved. You can just write that down. This story and this family illustrate that clearly. We're going to leave that subject – and consider it an axiom of our understanding in Holy Writ. I'm sure this is the last time Jacob and Esau met again - at the burial of their father Isaac. Since Esau has come back around for the funeral, God will give us one last look at him in our next report ~

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

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

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

22 And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

23 The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun:

24 The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin:

25 And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali:

26 And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padanaram.

27 And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

28 And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years.

29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him
~

