

**May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**God Blesses Jacob**  
**Genesis 35**

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

May 3 1 Chron7-8	May 7 1 Chron18-21
May 4 1 Chron9-11	May 8 1 Chron22-24
May 5 1 Chron12-14	May 9 1 Chron25-27
May 6 1 Chron15-17	May 10 Ch. 28–2 Chron1

**Lesson Introduction:** *Our lesson this week finds Jacob once again being reassured of God’s blessing. Last week we saw how Jacob was fearful of the encounter he was going to have with his estranged brother, Esau. Chapter 33 tells the story of how God reconciled their relationship. In chapter 34 we see a grim story filled with sinfulness ranging from sexual assault, to indifference toward justice, to spiteful vengeance, to cowardice. That passage ends with Jacob expressing his fear of the inhabitants of the land that he is in. In **34:30** Jacob states, “My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.” Jacob is once again wrestling with doubt, and in chapter 35, we will see God once again reassure him of His promise. As we study this passage, we will consider the Lord’s protection over His people, the call of the Lord for His people to be holy, and way the Lord brings beauty out of chaos.*

**FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS:**

- God calls His people to be holy (V. 2-4)
- The Lord protects his children (V. 5)
- The Lord restores what is broken (V. 16-29)

**Read Genesis 35**

*God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.*

*5 And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 6 And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.*

*9 God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel. 11 And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. 12 The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.” 13 Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.*

*16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. 17 And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son.” 18 And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), 20 and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. 21 Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.*

*22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it.*

*Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant:*

**Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.**

**27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.**

#### **Discussion Section 1: Be Holy, For I am Holy (V. 2-4)**

-What was the significance of God not only calling on Jacob's clan to put aside their idols, but also to purify themselves and change their clothes?

-What does it mean to be holy?

-What are some idols in your life that need to be put away?

**Note:** *At the beginning of our passage we see God calling Jacob to have his household rid themselves of all idols and purify themselves. He was calling Jacob and his family to holiness. Although Jacob was called by God and the heir of the promise made to Abraham, he and his family were still not fully committed to the LORD. Back in 31:19 we see that Rachel had stolen the gods of her father before they departed from Laban's house. Clearly from this passage, some of Jacob's servants still had idols that they clung to. In calling them to get rid of their idols and cleanse themselves and change their clothes, God was calling Jacob and his household to holiness.*

*To be holy is to be set apart. The Scriptures tell us that the Lord alone is holy (Revelation 15:4). He is perfect in all His ways (Psalm 18:30), and there is none like Him (Jeremiah 10:6, Psalm 86:8). Yet here, and throughout the Scriptures, God's people are called to holiness (Leviticus 19:2, 20:7; 26, 21:8, Exodus 19:6, Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:16; 2:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:7). It is vital that we understand that to be a part of God's family is to be holy. There is no other option when it comes to following God. We must never believe that we are truly God's children if we are not striving for holiness (1 John 2:4). But how can it be that only God is holy and righteous, yet he calls us to be holy (set apart, pure) and righteous? What is also vital for us to understand is that it is only by the saving work of Christ, and through God's power in us that we are able to walk in holiness.*

*God calls us to lay aside our idols and come follow Him, and He also equips to do just that by the power of His Holy Spirit! We are made righteous positionally by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:4-9), and then called to walk in holiness for the sake of His name, which He enables us to do by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 5:16-26). As we study this passage where we see God calling Jacob and his family to walk in purity toward Him, may we praise God for the righteousness that He has bought for us through Christ, and the way that He has enabled us to lay down our idols and walk in purity by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we consider this passage, may we recognize the idols that we still cling to, and call out to God for His power, that we might lay them down and follow Him wholeheartedly.*

#### **Discussion Section 2: The Lord is our Strong Tower (V. 5)**

-What does verse 5 tell us about God's ability to protect His people?

-What things are we guaranteed protection from as the people of God?

-How have you seen God's protection in your life?

**Note:** *In verse 5 there is a very interesting statement. We see that as Jacob travels to Bethel, "a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob." At the end of chapter 34, Jacob was concerned that the cities in the surrounding areas would have it out for him and his family because of the events that took place in chapter 34. Amazingly, and somewhat mysteriously, a terror from the Lord keeps all those cities that Jacob was worried about from bothering him. We are reminded that the Lord protects those who are His, and that He is our Strong Tower. Proverbs 18:10 tells us, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." As we consider our passage today in conjunction with that verse in Proverbs, and many other verses in Scripture that speak of the provision and protection that the Lord provides for us, we should strive to understand exactly what this provision and protection looks like in the lives of believers.*

*We see in this specific situation that Jacob and his family were kept from physical harm. The Lord most certainly does protect His people from physical harm when He sees fit. We see countless stories in the Bible where the Lord delivered people from sickness, or out of the hands*

of their enemies. God is powerful beyond our comprehension, and He often displays that power by defending His people from physical realities. But it is important that we understand that we are not promised physical protection in every circumstance. God sometimes allows His children to be sick, and sometimes ordains physical suffering at the hands of those who seek to persecute His children. We are never promised that no weapon will come against us, only that no weapon formed against us **“will prosper” (Isaiah 54:17)**. We are promised that our Strong Tower will not let us be defeated, but will defend us from our enemies, and give us His strength as we face them **(Ephesians 6:10-18)**. We are promised that every single thing that we face will be worked for our good if we love God and are called according to His purpose **(Romans 8:28)**. We are promised that nothing can separate us from His love (even death), meaning that no matter what we face, we will not see defeat because we are loved and cherished by Him, and will remain thus for all eternity **(Romans 8:31-39)**. We are promised that ultimately no one can harm us if we are in Christ, for they can kill the body, but they cannot snatch our souls from Him **(Matthew 10:28, John 10:28-30)**. We are forever secure in the hands of God, our Strong Tower. As we consider the protection He provided Jacob and his family in this passage, may we rejoice and take comfort in the fact that through Christ, **“a terror from God”** has fallen on our enemy, the devil. He shall have no power over us, and we shall have no fear of him, for God is our Refuge and our Strength.

### **Discussion Section 3: Something Beautiful (V. 16-29)**

-How do we see God’s hand at work even in the death of Rachel?

-What do we learn about God’s reconciling power at the very end of this chapter?

-How have you seen God move in your life to bring about reconciliation and restoration out of difficult circumstances?

**Note:** As we close out this lesson, we see how difficulty comes in Jacob’s family. Rachel dies as she gives birth to Benjamin. But even in her death, we see the plan of God unfolding to bring about hope for His people. She gives birth to Benjamin, who ends up being the father of the smallest tribe of Israel. Yet many significant people who God would use to fulfill His purposes would come out of this little tribe with such tragic beginnings. Ehud, the

judge that delivered the Israelites from the hand of Moab, was a Benjamite. Mordecai from the book of Esther was a Benjamite. The first king of Israel, Saul, was a Benjamite. The Apostle Paul, writer of most of the New Testament, was a Benjamite. The Lord would use this small tribe time and time again to do big things. Even in the tragedy of the death of Rachel, God had a plan to bring forth a son who would play a major role in fulfilling His purposes. We are reminded here of God’s sovereignty over all situations and that He is constantly working every circumstance for the good of His people.

There is a small note at the very end of this passage that is significant. When Isaac dies, we see that **“his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”** What an incredible thing, that these two brothers who were once enemies have now been reconciled. Chapter 33 (which we did not cover in our Sunday school lessons) tells the full story of this reconciliation. Again, we see that the Lord is able to bring something beautiful out of chaos. What we can take away from this little sentence at the end of the chapter is that there is nothing too far gone that the Lord is unable to restore. Perhaps there are relationships in your life that are broken, or maybe you are simply feeling like you have gone too far, and that this time the situation cannot be overcome. Take heart in knowing that we serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is all-powerful, and there is nothing difficult for Him. He takes what looks like messes to us and makes something beautiful from them. That is exactly what He has done in bringing us to salvation, as the old hymn says:

**“Something beautiful, something good  
All my confusion He understood  
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife  
But he made something beautiful of my life”**