



Lesson 27

BACK TO BETHEL

Story Elements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEXT: Gen. 35:1-29 • Setting: circa 1800 B.C. near Bethel (aka Luz), about 10 miles northeast of Jerusalem. • Main Characters: God and Jacob • Plot: God brings Jacob back to Bethel and appears to him there. Later, the | <p>family grieves losses and celebrates a birth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key word(s): “God _____” (vv 1, 7, 9) • Climax: <i>Genesis 35:9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.</i> |
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Back to Bethel

- 1) (v 1) About ten years after Jacob’s return to Canaan, God called to him to go back to Bethel to renew the covenant.
 - a) When Jacob had fled from Esau, he spent the night in Bethel (Luz), where he saw the vision of the angelic ladder. The next day, he built an altar and vowed to give back to God a _____ of all his substance when he returned to Canaan. (cf. 28:22)
 - b) When Jacob returned to Canaan, he built an altar near _____ (33:19, 20). The Bible does not specify if Jacob fulfilled his vow in Shechem, or whether God is summoning Jacob back to Bethel to make good on his promise there.
 - c) God described himself as the God “that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” The LORD uses the remembrance of past deliverances to remind us how we must continue to _____ on Him in the present.
- 2) (vv 2-4) Jacob prepared his family for the move to Bethel and for spiritual renewal by telling them to...
 - a) ...surrender their _____ – idolatry had crept into Israel. It started with Rachel’s stealing Laban’s *teraphim* and probably continued with the sons of Jacob keeping some of the idols when they plundered Shechem.
 - b) ...bathe and change their clothes – bodily cleanliness and appropriate clothing are symbols of _____ towards others and _____ towards God when we gather for worship.
- 3) (v 5) God protected Jacob and his family as they journeyed to Bethel. Why would Israel need protection? _____
- 4) (vv 6-7) At Bethel, Jacob built an altar and called it *El-Beth-el*, which means, “The _____ of the House of God.”

- 5) (v 8) This detail about Deborah’s death implies that Rebekah had already died and that Jacob took his mother’s nurse into his own household. They named her burial site *Allon-bachuth*, which means “the oak of _____.”
- 6) (vv 9-12) At Bethel, God appeared unto Jacob again and confirmed the covenant by restating Jacob’s new _____ and the previous promises to Abraham.
- 7) (vv 13-15) Jacob believed God’s promises and evidenced his faith by making a drink offering and pouring _____ on the altar.

Bereavement, Birth, and Betrayal

- 8) (vv 16-17) On the journey from Bethel to Ephrath, Rachel went into labor. The midwife said to her, “thou shalt have this son also” – an allusion to her last son’s name, _____, which means “he shall add.”
- 9) (vv 18-20) Rachel had hard labor with her second child, and as she died, her last words were *Ben-oni*, “son of my sorrow.” But Jacob called his youngest son _____, “son of my right hand.” A pillar was erected on Rachel’s burial site.
- 10) (vv 21-22) While sojourning in Bethlehem, _____ committed a heinous sin - one that the apostle condemned with the strongest language (1 Cor. 5:1). For his treachery, Reuben would later be denied the firstborn’s birthright (see 49:4).
- 11) (vv 27-29) Jacob later came to Hebron to visit his father who was old and well stricken in years. Isaac passed away at the age of _____.

Application

- 12) Why did God call Jacob back to Bethel? It appears from the text that idolatry was growing in the ranks of Israel (cf. v 2, 4), certain loved ones would soon die, others had wickedness lurking in their hearts, and a young Joseph would soon face the trial of a lifetime – Jacob’s family needed _____. And so do we.
- 13) When we pray, or hear the public reading of scripture, or partake of the Lord’s supper, we must do so in faith, believing God’s promises that he has attached to those ordinances and means of grace. Mathew Henry notes: “The comfort which the saints have in holy ordinances is not so much from Bethel, the house of God, as from El-beth-el, the God of the house. The ordinances are but empty things if we do not meet with _____ in them.”¹

Answer Key

Key word(s): appeared | 1) a) tenth; b) Shechem; c) depend | 2) a) idols; b) respect, reverence | 3) The surrounding cities were enraged because Simeon and Levi had killed all the men of Shechem (cf. 34:30) | 4) God | 5) weepings | 6) name | 7) oil | 8) Joseph | 9) Benjamin | 10) Reuben | 11) 180 | 12) revival | 13) God

¹ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994. Print.