

Genesis 35:1-15 New International Version

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 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.” 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.

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,^[a] 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.^[b]

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

¹¹ And God said to him, “I am God Almighty^[f]; 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.^[g]

COMMENT: the above reading is the last one covering the first 35 chapters of the book of Genesis which starts with the beginning of the universe, of our world, plants and animals, and of the beginning of God’s relationship with man. We also see a God who goes to extraordinary lengths to have a relationship with His created beings, even when they rebel against him. We meet many characters, including Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Noah and his 3 sons, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob to name just a few.

In verse 2, Jacob instructs his followers to ‘get rid of the foreign gods you have with you’.

Modern day idolatry is anything that you love, treasure, prioritise, identify with that could interfere with your walk with God. It could be a person that you idolise, obsess over, desire; it could be you obsess over your self-image and appearance; it could be a bad attitude (jealousy, hatred, envy). Even though you personally know people you could help financially, are you keeping your money to yourself? It is much easier to pray for people who are struggling, to hand it over to God to sort out, rather than help them yourselves. Is unconfessed sin hindering your walk with Christ?

God is seeking faithful servants to be channels of His incredible power.

Mark 8:34 *“if any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.”*

Many people, however, do not know the full, abundant life that Christ offers because they sit on the throne of their lives, they want to stay in control.

If YOU are on the throne of your life, repent of your selfishness and yield the throne to Christ. Only then can you live a Christ-directed life.

QUESTIONS:

1. The book of Genesis is full of characters. Which character has impressed you most?
2. Which character has disappointed you most?
3. Can you identify any false gods (or potential false gods) that could interfere with your walk with God?
4. What is your favourite story in Genesis and why?
5. How could you share the love of God this week?