

The God Who is Faithful to the End!

Genesis 35

Genesis 35 ends the *tôledôt* of Isaac, the account of what happened to him and his family. God's covenant passes to Jacob and his sons. Jacob's long odyssey ends in Canaan. Sin and death cannot derail God's plan to rescue fallen humanity through His chosen people.

To Bethel: Rededication, Worship, and Promise (1-15)

- Jacob returns to Bethel and worships Yahweh
- God appears to Jacob and reaffirms His promised blessing

To Bethlehem: Birth, Death, and Sin (16-22a)

- Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's last son
- Reuben commits sexual sin with Bilhah

To Hebron: God's Covenant Faithfulness (22b-29)

- Jacob's twelve sons, the foundation of a great nation
- The baton is passed from Isaac to Jacob

Questions for Christians

- *Do we worship God on our terms, or His?*
- *How can we maintain purity, living in a sinful world?*
- *Have you thanked God for His faithfulness to you?*

Jacob's Twelve Sons: Foundation of a Great Nation



1. In Gen. 35.1, God tells Jacob to go to Bethel and build an altar to worship Him there. Why did God want him to do this? Why was this so significant? See Genesis 28.10-22 and 31.3. Jacob no doubt worshipped God in Shechem, but doing so broke his promise to God – it was *his* agenda, not *God's*! How does God want *us* to worship Him? Do our worship methods demonstrate honor and obedience to God, or seek approval from the world?
2. Gen. 35.2-4 highlights a difficulty that faced Israel throughout the Old Testament: *How to live in the land with the Canaanites without acquiescing to their pagan ways*. Jacob's household is a case in point: In just a few years at Shechem, Canaanite idols are in the home and they have adapted to pagan culture. What is the cure for this spiritual malaise (vv7, 9-15)? Bruce Waltke calls it *radical symbolization* – that is, engaging in *activities* to worship our holy God and remind us of our need to hold fast to Him. What activities did God give Israel to help them maintain spiritual devotion to Him? What activities has God given to the church to help us maintain our spiritual devotion to Christ?
3. Jacob's journey south, eventually returning to his father Isaac, is punctuated with joy (birth of Benjamin) and sorrow (deaths and sin). But in the middle of all this 'ups-and-downs' of life, God records the twelve sons of Jacob (22b-26), demonstrating His faithfulness to fulfill His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12.2). Along the way, there have been trials, failures, some successes, and a boatload of hardships. Sometimes God's chosen people 'soar with the eagles,' sometimes they 'run,' and other times they only 'walk' (and stumble badly), but God remains faithful to His promise through it all (see Isa. 40.27-31)! How does this character of God evidenced in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob impact you in our life of 'ups-and-downs' today? Do you recognize and appreciate God's faithfulness? If so, how does it affect the way you choose to live your life?