

What are you seeking? In what is your hope?

Jeremy Camp -- "Give Me Jesus"

These two chapters comprise the end of the Jacob/Esau story in the Bible... and they present a contrast.

A Contrast: The Promise of God vs. the Kingdom of this World.

Let us now recall the journey of these two brothers.

Esau, the impulsive one, the worldly one. A bowl of soup meant more to him than his birthright.

Then, even though it brought grief to his parents he went and married Canaanite women.

Then, when Jacob stole his blessing he was angry and resentful and wanted to kill his brother.

Though his brother escaped him, he stayed in the land of Canaan and Edom and married more women and grew rich.

He turned into a nice guy with a big family who gave little thought to God.

Jacob's life went very differently. Clearly Jacob was not the sort of person who deserved the promise of God.

In fact, it was the birthright and the blessing, the very promise of God, that he stole from His own brother

Thus Esau wanted to kill Jacob. **Gen. 27:41-46** But, the few days became years... decades...

Jacob fled to Haran and God met him on the way, but Jacob didn't know much about God then.

In Genesis 28, at a place Jacob names Bethel, God reminds him of the promise, but Jacob makes it into a bargain. **Gen. 28:10-22**

This is important. Jacob has made a vow... if the Lord brings him back to Canaan... "Then the Lord will be my God."

Jacob makes it to Haran and finds a wife, Rachel, after he was tricked into marrying Leah... four wives, if you count the maids.

Jacob is then mistreated by his father-in-law and learned to live by his wits. He was hard working but didn't trust anyone.

This is what his name meant... Jacob = struggling, grasping at the heel

In Haran he works, unappreciated, for his father-in-law for 20 years and God gives him a family.

And, as his family grows we discover that it is as dysfunctional as Jacob himself is. Surely there is a lesson in that.

Yet, through all Jacob's struggles and troubles, God protects him and blesses him. God had made him a promise.

Then Jacob tricked his father-in-law and fled. He wanted to get back to Canaan.

He was obeying God and returning to the land that God had promised to him and his fathers.

He stumbles upon an angel army camping out nearby.

But, He knows that he will have to face his brother, Esau... Jacob is terrified. Esau has 400 men with him... warriors.

He prays. But, he's never experienced answered prayer, nor does he know much about God or prayer.

So he prepares to rely on his own cowardly plan... sending his possessions and family out in front.

But, then, in the night, God attacks Jacob, wrestles him, cripples him, changes his name and blesses him.

Jacob will never be the same. He now realizes that he's more dependent upon God than ever.

And, then, God works a miracle. Esau's heart is changed. God changed it. God saved him, though differently than he had prayed.

But, though saved by God and blessed by God, his family is still a colossal mess.

We learn in Gen. 34 of the destructiveness of sin, the strategies of the world... it is truly a seductive and wicked place.

Jacob's family has been infected by sin along with everyone else. It is a bad scene. This is the reality we see all around us.

But, Jacob has now come to understand the promise that God had made to his grandfather, Abraham, and his father, Isaac.

A promise of God's presence and blessing

A promise of land and God's protection

A promise of descendants as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore...

And, through those descendants God would bless all peoples in all the world.

Thus, Gen. 35 opens with God... and Jacob.

I. Jacob is the Son of the Promise.

And, in this chapter we can see three principal aspects of Jacob's life... three things true of anyone's life who is trusting in God.

35:1-7 Devotion to God

Jacob has learned about God... and he remembers his vow. Remember? From back in Gen. 28.

Well... God remembers, and reminds him of that place and sends him back there to live.

"If you bring me back... then the Lord will be my God."

And what does it mean that the Lord is your God... it means He is your only God. You cannot serve God and... idols. (earrings?)

You cannot serve God and money.

You cannot serve God and your friends. God has to come first.

You cannot serve God and your job.

You cannot serve God and your family.

You cannot serve God and your car, your house, your stuff. God has to come first.

What about you? Is it time to bury some gods?

And, God protects him from any enemies... God literally puts the fear of God in them...

Rather than revenge for what the sons of Jacob did in Gen. 34, they feel fear.

Again we see that God has control over the hearts of all people.

And, Jacob obeys God. He builds the altar that God commanded him to build... and he names the place.
"El-Bethel" = the God of Bethel = the God of that place where He keeps His promises and expects us to keep ours.
God has proved Himself. Jacob has paid attention. Now God has spoken. Jacob has signed on!
No turning back. You're my God. Nobody else. No other Gods. Only the God who will never fail.
Who are you going to follow? What God will you trust? The God who makes and keeps promises?
Now He speaks again to Jacob... and to us. He speaks again His promise.
Why? Life with God is all about depending on His promises.

35:9-15 Dependence upon the Promise

First, God reiterated Jacob's change of name. He is Israel. "Israel" = struggles with God.
The most important thing about Jacob is his relationship with God... and it will be a struggle. This is true of you too.
And, the name also means "God fights." = God will forever be a warrior on behalf of His people Israel.
Second, God speaks his name to Jacob. "El-Shaddai" = God Almighty = the God who can do anything.
No god compares. No one can overpower Him. He is in complete control of everything. You can trust him.
Third, God gives Jacob a command. "Be fruitful and multiply." = the command with the blessing.
This promise is not just about you... but about people who will come from you. It's for them too.
Fourth, God reiterates the promise of nations, kings, and land.
But, notice this: It is all future. Jacob will never see the fulfillment in this life.
The fulfillment of the promise is almost all future... Jesus the Messiah will bring the fulfillment.
But, though the fulfillment began in earnest with Jesus' death and resurrection... much of it still remains in the future.
We, too, must depend on the future fulfillment of this promise... faith in the God who makes and keeps promises.
It is the only way to live.

35:8, 16-29 Disappointment and Grief

Life for Jacob is not all candy and roses... kings and empires. God is blessing him... and yet...
A close friend of the family dies... Deborah.
The love of his life dies... in childbirth. That is indeed a mixed blessing.
One of his sons sins and offends his father, Jacob.
Jacob's father dies.
Jacob still must live life on the way to the promise... life will all of its hurts and heartaches. He's not done yet.

II. Esau is the Kingdom of Edom.

Now, in the interest of time, I'm not going to read this entire chapter aloud. I encourage you to do that... and to think about it.
I'd like to summarize it for you.
It is about Esau and his family. We're told of more wives that he married, and children from them.
Esau becomes very wealthy and has to move to Edom so that his animals can have pasture.
We are told a few times over that "Esau is Edom" = Esau has become a kingdom.
We are told of chiefs who are born to him and a dynasty of kings that come from him.

Esau does not have the blessing of God. God is not speaking to him. He is not listening to God.
But Esau has worldly wealth and all the women he could want.
He has his own little empire, a kingdom complete with warriors and kings.
If you lived around there you would say that Esau is a good man who has done very well for himself.
Esau's Edom becomes a kingdom on the map, respected, with borders, maybe with a budget.

What of Jacob? **Gen. 37:1** He has no kingdom... not yet. That is all future. Promises from God.
Jacob's family is a mess and is about to get worse.
Jacob has no land of his own besides a couple of parcels that the family has purchased.
Within a few hundred years, Jacob's family are all going to be slaves in Egypt while Edom is a thriving little kingdom.
But, God is mindful of them and will remember them.

III. Which would you rather have?

Often it may seem like a tough choice.

1. The world's riches now? Success? Popularity? Women? A man? A kingdom? Just a nice house and the ability to pay for it?
Many of you here might be able to make a list of the things you want.
But, is it worth it? Is it worth it if you don't have God?
We know from the rest of the Bible how things turn out for Edom. Eventually they are destroyed. Gone.
Eventually, all of what the world has to offer vanishes, worthless, withering away into dust.
2. But, the promises made to Jacob and those who serve his God, God Almighty... those promises are still being fulfilled.
What you get with God might seem small now... but in the future they are fantastic and last forever.
Which would you rather have?
Give me God and His promises... a future and a hope... and treat the stuff in this world with the temporary-ness that it deserves.
Give me Jesus. The world can have all its things. Give me Jesus.