

Lesson 44
Jacob's Experience after Peniel

Genesis 33:1-36:43

I. INTRODUCTION

A. These final chapters in the life of Jacob give the reader insight into a person who is learning to walk with God. After Jacob's encounter with God at Peniel, he is a different person but he is by no means perfect in all his actions.

B. Again these chapters reveal to us how God in His sovereignty is able to overrule the sinful acts of men, and somehow work all things for His own glory.

II. JACOB MEETS ESAU 33:1-20

A. Jacob Faces Esau (33:1-7). Jacob has yet to meet Esau face to face, and he realizes that Esau is coming with 400 men. Esau had vowed to kill Jacob for his deceitful stealing of the birthright 20 years before. He divided his children according to the mothers and Rachel and Joseph were last because they were his favorites. Esau was anxious to see Jacob. His anger had passed and at their greeting they wept. NOTE. Jacob had an encounter with God at Peniel but he still had many spiritual obstacles in his life to face, for Peniel was just the beginning of learning to trust God in the midst of crisis. NOTE. God had prepared Esau's heart and all of Jacob's scheming did not make that much difference. God can and does change the attitudes of men because He is sovereign. NOTE: Jacob acknowledges that his children are from God (33:5). It is a great privilege to have children for God Himself gives them to us.

B. Jacob Insists That Esau Accept His Gifts (33:8-11). Esau did not want Jacob's gifts, for it was not Jacob's gifts that had changed Esau's heart but Jacob's God. NOTE. This does not imply that Esau had some spiritual experience with God, for there is no indication that he was a true believer in Jehovah. Since Esau was now prosperous and attached no particular value to the birthright there was no reason why he should not be reconciled to his twin brother. Esau had a natural love for his brother and there was no reason to harbor hatred for him.

C. Jacob and Esau Separate (33:12-17)

D. Jacob Gets Side-tracked (33:18-20). God had specifically told Jacob that he was to return to Bethel in the land (31:11-13) but Jacob stopped at Shalem, a city of Shechem, in Canaan. He should have gone to Bethel but something sidetracked him. He did erect there an altar and named it *El-elohe-Israel* (God, the God of Israel). NOTE. Jacob had only partial obedience. He was in the land but he was not in Bethel. Because he is not in the complete will of God, he is in for some trouble. NOTE: Jacob seems to forget Peniel and resort to some of his old devices. Even after Peniel he does not trust God wholly. Sanctification for Jacob, and for us, is not by one great stride or in one experience. It is a lifelong process, a continuing warfare.

III. JACOB'S FAMILIES' SCANDAL 24:1-31

A. Dinah Defiled by Shechem (34:1-4). Dinah, the daughter of Jacob born to Leah, becomes involved in a sexual sin with Shechem, a Hivite prince, and son of Hamor. Surely Dinah was not innocent for there was love between Shechem and Dinah (34:3). Dinah brought scandal on Jacob, but Shechem wanted to marry her. NOTE. The ways of the flesh in Jacob are now beginning to show up in his children. NOTE: Dinah may not have been in this trouble had Jacob gone on to Bethel in obedience instead of stopping at Shechem.

B. Jacob and His Sons Hear of the Affair (34:5-7). The sons of Jacob, especially Simeon and Levi, who were brothers to Dinah through Leah (34:25), were upset and mad about the defilement. They did not blame Dinah but took out their wrath on Shechem.

C. Hamor and Shechem Want Dinah to Marry (34:8-12). Hamor wanted Shechem to marry Dinah because he desired to please his son. He suggested that the Canaanites and Israelites intermarry and have full social and business intercourse (34:9-10). This would, of course, have pulled Jacob and his family down spiritually. Shechem was willing to give a big dowry for Dinah.

D. Jacob's Sons Conceive a Deceitful Plot (34:13-24). The sons of Jacob, aching to get revenge, plot a treacherous deed. Never planning to keep the offer, they suggest that there be social and business relationships between the Canaanites and Israelites (even intermarriage) but the Shechemites would have to be circumcised. The unsuspecting men of Shechem complied with this request (34:18,24). However, these Shechemites had other motives and that was to ultimately take over all Jacob's material possessions and family (34:21-23).

E. Simeon and Levi Slay the Men of Shechem (34:25-31). The Shechemites were circumcised for they trusted the Israelite's word. On the third day after circumcision, these men were very sore. Simeon and Levi came into the city, slew all the men, including Hamor and Shechem, and took Dinah away. Then Jacob's other sons came upon the city and sacked it (34:27) and took the cattle, wives and children. This was a dastardly act and brought even more scandal upon the house of Israel (Jacob). Finally Jacob speaks out with a mild rebuke. His concern does not seem to be with the awfulness of the sin committed but his own reputation and fear of retaliation by other Canaanites (34:30). NOTE. The treachery of Jacob showed up in his children, for what a man sows that shall he reap.

IV. JACOB'S RETURN TO BETHEL (35:1-29)

A. Jacob Called Back to Bethel (35:1). God calls Jacob back to Bethel, which is the center of God's will for him. Bethel was only about 30 miles from Shechem but it was many years before Jacob finally arrived at Bethel.

B. Jacob Separates Unto God (35:2-4). Jacob commands his entire household to put away their idols and he buried them under the oak at Shechem. They were to be a clean people before God, for they were to worship Him in spirit and in truth. NOTE. There must be a separation from all idolatry and worldliness if true devotion to God is to be given by the child of God. Certain things must be buried and left behind if true devotion to God is to be maintained. An idol is anything that takes the place of Christ in the life of a Christian, or to put it another way, an idol is anything that comes between an individual and God (1 John 5:21). Idols must be given up to receive the full blessing of God (Acts 19:19 cf. 1 Thess. 1:9).

C. Jacob Protected God (35:5-8). God restrained the other Canaanites from attacking Jacob and his family because "the terror of God was upon the cities." Jacob is learning to rest in God's purposes, for the person in temporal fellowship knows that if God is for me who can be against me. Jacob built an altar to God.

D. Jacob is Reaffirmed Concerning the Covenant (35:9-15). In the place of blessing, God repeats the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob. God is always faithful to His promises.

E. Rachel Dies (35:16-21). Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin the twelfth son of Israel (Jacob) (35:17-18).

F. Jacob's Named (35:22-26)

G. Isaac Dies (35:27-29): Isaac's life was the longest of the patriarchs, 180 years (35:28). Jacob and Esau, whom God had reconciled, now cooperate in burying their father who had blessed Jacob but also blessed Esau in a lesser way (35:29).

V. ESAU, THE ORIGINATOR OF THE EDMITES 36:1-43

Is there any heart discouraged as it journeys on its way?

Does there seem to be more darkness than there is of sunny day?

Oh, it's hard to learn the lesson, as we pass beneath the rod,

That the sunshine and the shadow serve alike the will of God;

But there comes a word of promise, like the promise in the bow,

That however deep the waters they shall never overflow.