

***“The Foundations of Our Faith Revealed, Theme by Theme, Genesis —
The Sovereignty of God, Part 6”***

Today’s Outline: The Lord God Provided A Testimony for Jacob

- ***The Lord Provides Jacob a Testimony—But Only Through Hard Times***
- ***And the Lord Allows Joseph to Be Sold into Slavery — But with the Blessing of Protection from His Own Brethren!***

I. The Lord Provides Jacob a Testimony—But Only Through Hard Times:

Gen. 26:25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

- ***The contrast is clear: Isaac was a digger of wells, while Jacob was a builder of altars as verse 25 makes so clear. We have already commented on Isaac’s well digging, but now we need to comment on Jacob’s building of altars.***
- ***Now it would be right to ask this question: what is the significance of these altars, considering that Jacob was in a trial of soul and spirit as they were being built across the land that had been promised to him. They were in Jacob’s mind his personal response to the sovereign work of the Lord God in his life:***
 - ***The recognition of Jacob’s own condition before the Lord: he is a marked man, a man marked by God himself as one not worthy and yet called by God to lead a nation though trials that would always to be his lot***
 - ***The recognition nevertheless of the abundant and unearned blessings of God sovereignly bestowed on him and his family***
 - ***The recognition therefore of the faithfulness of God regarding his promises and covenants***
 - ***The recognition that the God of Jacob’s father and grandfather was indeed his own personal God!***
- ***So in these ways the altars were a most significant part of Jacob’s life and testimony. Yes, God did give Jacob a testimony though it would be given one step at a time and through many trials. Are there any applications of these truths to our own lives we might well ask?***

[READ] Gen. 28:18-22

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. [He builds another altar!]

19 And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

- *This makes it so clear that Jacob is now in the trial of his life with the Lord God as he must consider well who this God is whom he serves. Now the challenge for Jacob will be this: will the God of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham be his own personal God? We shall see. The Lord will provide him with a testimony, but only through hard times indeed.*

Today we have the privilege of considering that testimony and how it was that as Jacob lived out his life in the shadow of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham.

The Lord faithfully and sovereignly provided that testimony. As we shall see, there were many trials and testings to be sure, and on Jacob's part, many doubts and moments of great foreboding and fear, but nevertheless, Almighty God worked as the refiners fire to bring forth something magnificent indeed. Let us see ...

We begin there today highlighting Jacob's building of altars in chapters 32 & 33. The angels of God greet him as he leaves Laban with Rachel, Leah, and family.

Chapter 32 begins with angels meeting Jacob but ends with him wrestling with the pre-incarnate Son of God who renames him Israel.

[READ] Gen. 32:1-3

1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

- *Jacob is still focused on Esau! But this will soon change...*

Gen. 32:9-12 [Personal Blessings Sovereignly Bestowed- First recorded prayer in the Bible]

9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, *and* the mother with the children.

12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. *Reminding the Lord of his previous promise]*

- *My, my, with the angels of God meeting Jacob just after building another altar with sacrifice between his land and Laban's these words ring in our ears as we winder what great trial might be at hand. Not only the dreaded encounter with Esau was coming, but far, far more. It would be the greatest wrestling match of all time. We will not review that struggle again today and what it accomplished, but we will reread those key verses:*

Gen. 32:22-31

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is it that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

- *And so from now on Jacob must support himself with his staff as he walks. It would therefore become not only that mark of his authority as patriarch over his family, but also a mark of his life-transforming encounter with the pre-incarnate Son of God!! And Jacob's name is changed by the Lord God himself to Israel (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). Both names show Jacob's character from different perspectives, but the greatest contrast is between the man Jacob and the prince, Israel, between the "thief" or "supplanter" on the one hand, and the prince who has "power with God and man" on the other. This is most profound and worthy of much contemplation.*

Chapter 33 records for us the dreaded meeting with Esau and his army of 400 men, but again, the work of the sovereign Lord God will be now seen to have made all the difference:

[READ] Gen. 33:1-4

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

- *The wait was long and many fears paved the way to this event. But the Lord had sovereignly intersected with Esau as well as with Jacob*

(but in dramatically different ways, to be sure) and had changed his hardened heart gloriously! Amen!

Gen. 33:16-20

16 So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.

17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city.

19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.

20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.

- *Such a turning point in Jacob's life had occurred that Jacob wanted to memorialize that by this altar. His father's and grandfather's God had now become his own! For Elelohe-Israel in Hebrew means "God, the God of Israel"!*
- *From now on, much would be different. This great advance would lead to more as the Lord God directs Jacob (now Israel) to return to Bethel and to the task of not only dwelling there but of rebuilding the monument and altar previously constructed. Israel's God had kept the covenant with him to preserve him and grant him a heritage through his wife's and many children. He responds faithfully to the Lord's command:*

[READ] Gen. 35:1-3

1 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were* with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

3 And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

4 And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which *were* in their hand, and *all their* earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.

5 And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

6 So Jacob came to Luz, which *is* in the land of Canaan, that *is*, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him.

- *Again, Jacob builds now another altar where he had before. And more, the Lord renews his covenant with Jacob that had been passed from his fathers to him. He is reminded of that again and again for its knowledge and recognition by Jacob is of critical importance to his life and testimony. That rings true here in chapter 35:*

Gen. 35:7-15

7 And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

8 But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth.

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.

10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

13 And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.

- *This is indeed the house of God as God has fulfilled his promises to Jacob time and time again. See Gen. 28:22 for Jacob's recognition of this fact, so foundational in his experience as he had dreamt of a ladder to heaven so long before, as he had just begun his life's journeys.*
- *But this story is not near to being finished as he is now commanded to be fruitful and to multiply (verse 11), perhaps a strange thing considering what had gone before. But this commandment has a special meaning here as the next verses indicate so well:*

[READ] Gen. 35:16-20

16 And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.

17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.

19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

- *Such a great trial of soul and spirit had now overtaken Jacob and one might say that his life had been turned from a triumph as Jacob into a tragedy as Israel. But that would be so wrong as we shall now see. For the rest of the story reveals to us a man in league with Almighty God as the trials of life have produced in Jacob (renamed Israel) a confidence that only a Victor, only a Prince with God and man could have.*
- *Much time passes (and many chapters of Genesis where we find the details, some of which we will consider in our next study), but let us consider finally how God sovereignly works this all out in Jacob's life as he reaches his final days, blessing Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, near the end of his sojourning here in the land of promise.*

Now to the end of the story where we shall see how the testimony that God gave Jacob would be turned into a song of praise and honor to Almighty God, even the God of Israel:

Gen. 48:15-21

15 ... And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this *is* the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

19 And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it*: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

[READ] Gen. 49:22-26

22 Joseph *is* a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well; *whose* branches run over the wall:

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot *at him*, and hated him:

24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob; (from thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

25 *Even* by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

- *What more can be said? Through much trial of soul and spirit Jacob (now Israel) has walked with the Lord until his very end of life. Bringing forth much fruit is what the Lord had exhorted just before Benjamin was born. And then there is the fruit through Joseph. Through much tribulation his sons Ephraim and Manasseh had been born in Egypt of an Egyptian woman, the daughter of Potiphar, you will recall. And now they had been blessed and given prophetically a heritage, for even nations would come of them in God's due timing.*
- *But how can that be, we wonder, considering what is written in chapter 37 and following where we will continue our studies next time.*

In closing today, let's just read the introduction to that saga of all sagas, the sacred history of the work of Almighty God who sovereignly brings to pass all that his will and purpose requires, independently most often of satan and his desires.

- *For after Jacob rebuilds the altar and monument in Bethel, when Benjamin is born Rachel dies. Then Isaac dies at age 180! And the next phase of Israel's life begins with Twelve Sons and so very many challenges yet ahead, even on the doorstep, as it were.*

For we now turn back to chapter 37 to see the depth of trial and tribulation into which this great patriarch of God's chosen people Israel will immediately be thrust:

II. And the Lord Allows Joseph to Be Sold into Slavery — But with the Blessing of Protection from His Own Brethren!

- *This begins the narrative of the most significant (or surely, one of the most awesome) workings of the Sovereign Hand of the Lord God found in the Old Testament). Let us open the curtain to see how the Lord begins this sovereign work, a work that will encourage our hearts and it has for so many of his people down through the ages:*

Gen. 37:1-7

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2 These *are* the generations of Jacob. Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed *the flock* in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here *am I*.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, *he was* wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks*.

17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

21 And Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, *his* coat of *many* colours that *was* on him;

24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh. And his brethren were content.

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child *is* not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

32 And they sent the coat of *many* colours, and they brought *it* to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it *be* thy son's coat or no.

33 And he knew it, and said, *It is* my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, *and* captain of the guard.

- *Again and again we have seen how God's sovereign plan regarding the promised Seed of the Woman has been furthered generation by generation. But now Joseph has been sold as a slave in Egypt. Humanly speaking, nothing could have been worse. But, as we have seen from the end of Genesis, with God all things are possible.*
- *Next time, Lord willing, we will complete this survey of this great theme in Genesis, the Sovereignty of God revealed on every page! Amen.*