

January 27, 2019

Genesis 35:1-15 – Assurance

Introduction

Purify Yourself (Gen. 35:1-4). As Genesis 35 begins, the text describes how God spoke to Jacob. He gave him two sets of instructions. First, Jacob is told to “go to Bethel and settle there” (Gen. 35:1). This is not the first time in Genesis that Jacob has been to Bethel. The last time he was there, he had a dream about a stairway whose top reached up to the sky (Gen. 28:10-22). In that incident, God stood beside Jacob and made a promise to him. God stated: “I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying” (Gen. 28:13). After having traveled in many other regions, now, Jacob was returning to the place that God had given him. The second command that God gave Jacob was this: “Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you” (Gen. 35:1).

In preparation for their journey and in anticipation of their meeting with God, Jacob told his family that two specific actions needed to be taken. First, they needed to “get rid of the foreign gods” that they had in their possession (Gen. 35:2). Second, they needed to “purify themselves” (Gen. 35:2). What a powerful reminder for modern day believers. As we walk with God, we will certainly have to rid ourselves of some things; and, we will definitely have to keep ourselves holy.

Obey God’s Directives (Gen. 35:5-8). In obedience to the command of the Lord, Jacob and his family began their journey. As they traveled, God’s protection was with them. In fact, this passage reports that “a terror from God came over the cities around them, and they did not pursue Jacob’s sons” (Gen. 35:5). Encountering no opposition, then, Jacob and his family arrived safely in Bethel.

Remember God’s Promises (Gen. 35:9-13). When Jacob returned to Bethel, the Bible explains that a series of events unfolded. First, one member of their group passed away (Gen. 35:8). Her name was Deborah. She was Rebekah’s nurse. Second, God appeared to Jacob again. Just as God had appeared to Jacob earlier, He now meets him again. After all that Jacob had been through, this had to be a refreshing reminder of God’s watch care over him. Third, God made his name change permanent (Gen. 35:10). The idea of a name change was first proposed in Genesis 32. Fourth, God made a promise to Israel.

This promise included two specific features: a command and a reminder. God commanded Israel to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 35:11). These words certainly recall the commands of God to both Noah (Gen. 9:1) and Abraham (Gen. 17:2). Next, God reminded Israel of the promise He made to Abraham and Isaac before him. God told Israel that He would give him and his descendants the land that He had promised to give Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 35:12). After this, God departs.

Treasure God’s Promises (Gen. 35:14-15). To honor the place where he met God, Israel set up a marker (Gen. 35:14). In addition to that, Israel “poured a drink offering on it and anointed it

with oil” (Gen. 35:14). These actions further highlighted the significance of this location. As the passage closes, one final note is mentioned. We are reminded that Israel named this place Bethel. This Hebrew word literally means “house of God.” Now that this stone was in place, it would be a beautiful tribute to the fact that God had met him there.

Conclusion

Israel returned to Bethel. When he arrived, he set up a marker to commemorate his meeting with God. This marker would be a constant reminder of God’s presence and His promises. As I close, this episode in Israel’s life prompts me to ask, “How do we mark the special occasions when God meets us and speaks to us?”