

STRUGGLING WITH JACOB

A SERMON & BIBLE STUDY SERIES ON THE LIFE OF *Jacob*

28 APRIL - 14 JULY 2024

GENESIS 25:19 - 35:29

Bible Studies - Part 3

Studies 11-12



KIAMA ANGLICAN CHURCHES

Term 2, 2024

29 June 2024

Genesis 25:19 - 35:29

Struggling With Jacob

Bible Studies accompanying the
Sermon Series on the Life of Jacob

The Study and Preaching Plan				
	Study	<i>Preaching Passage</i> Genesis	Sunday	Page
→ Studies Part 1 ←	1 (Intro)	-	-	
	2	25:19-34	28 April	
	3	26:1-33	-	
	4	26:34 - 28:9	5 May	
	-	<i>Mother's Day</i>	<i>12 May</i>	
	5	28:10-22	19 May	
	6	29:1-30	26 May	
	-	<i>One Off Sermon</i>	<i>2 June</i>	
→ Part 2 ←	7	29:31 - 30:24	9 June	
	8	30:25 - 31:18	16 June	
	9	31:17 - 32:2	23 June	
	10	32:1 - 33:20	30 June	
→ Part 3 ←	11	34:1-31	-	2
	12	35:1-15	7 July	10
		35:16-29 +	14 July	

Gordon Wenham's Word Biblical Commentary on
Genesis 16-50 was a major source for these studies

Study 11 - Genesis 34:1-31

Dinah and the Hivites

Getting Started

Chapter 34 is not included in the Sunday preaching plan. Be aware that its content is quite distressing. For either of these reasons, and depending on your group's timing, you may wish to skip this study. However, I would encourage you to at least spend time in individual study on this chapter.

1. How do you respond when stories of terrible crimes appear on the news?

Jacob has wrestled with God, faced his brother and returned to his homeland, but is not yet at his destination of Bethel. The story takes a dramatic and disturbing turn as we hear of Dinah's rape and the terrible revenge extracted by her brothers. (Be aware that 'Shechem' is the name of a city and the name of a key character in this chapter. See 33:18-19.)

Read Genesis 34:1-31.

2. Why is this episode recorded in the Jacob story?

3. Back in study 3 we noted the symmetry in the story of Jacob, and how chapter 34 corresponded to chapter 26. Back then, did you note a common theme for these two chapters?

4. Give a title for each of the sections.

Passage	Title
34:1-4	
34:5-19	
34:20-24	
34:25-31	

Shechem Rapes Dinah and Seeks to Marry Her (34:1-4)

Dinah was introduced in 30:21 where her birth was recorded.

5. How do we understand the comment that Dinah ‘went out to visit the women of the land’? Is it as innocent as it sounds?

The terms used may suggest Dinah’s imprudence if not impropriety. The women of the land may have introduced her to the men of the land. With the condemnation of intermarriage in Genesis, Dinah is at least treading on thin ice.

Dinah is raped by Shechem with the language of 34:2 showing the narrator's disapproval of what has happened.

6. In 34:3 we see a different side of Shechem. What do you make of Shechem in verses 2 and 3?
7. What aspect of Shechem's character do we see in 34:4?

A Marriage Alliance is Proposed (34:5-19)

8. What do you make of Jacob's reaction to his daughter's rape?

How does it compare to his reactions to what happens to Joseph and Benjamin? (See 37:31-35; 42:4, 36-38)

What is the reason for the different reactions to his different children?

10. How does Jacob's reaction compare with that of his sons?
11. What is the impact of the use of Jacob's old and new names in 34:7 ?

12. What is the contrast between Hamor and Jacob, the two fathers involved?
13. What does Hamor fail to mention in 34:8 ?
14. Apart from the marriage of Shechem and Dinah what else does Hamor propose? (34:10-11)
15. The offer seems quite good, but how does it stand in the light of what we have seen in Genesis, and in the light of what will be made explicit later?
(See Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Joshua 24:12-13; Ezra 9:14.
See also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.)

How does Hamor's offer stack up against God's promise in 28:13?

16. Where is Dinah at this time? See 34:26.
17. These are important and delicate negotiations, but Shechem is impatient. (34:11-12) Who would you expect to respond? Who does respond? (34:13)

There's that word again - deceit. It does seem to run in the family, although its impact is softened. Shechem is being addressed deceitfully, because he has defiled their sister. Dinah is referred to as 'their sister' emphasising why they have particular reason to deceive.

Hamor has stressed the economic benefits of intermarriage, now the brothers emphasize the religious impediments to such marriage, citing a key stipulation from the covenant God made with Abraham. (See 17:10) If the Hivites comply, there will be no problem with intermarriage, but if they do not the position will be different.

18. What do the brothers say they will do if the Hivites are not circumcised? (34:17)

19. Why do Hamor and Shechem comply? (34:19)

The Terms are put to the Hivites (34:20-24)

20. What things are not mentioned by Hamor and Shechem when they talk to the town?

What do they emphasise?

When do they mention circumcision?

21. Compare 34:23 with 34:10.

Jacob's Sons take Revenge (34:25-31)

22. What is your response to the revenge taken by Simeon and Levi and the other brothers?

Simeon and Levi are not just Jacob's sons, they are Dinah's brothers. It was Jacob's failure to act that provoked the brothers into an extreme and disproportionate act of revenge. He had not loved Leah or Dinah, but they did.

23. To what extent did the Hivites bring this violence on themselves?

24. The heated exchange between Jacob and Simeon and Levi brings the episode to a close. What does he accuse his sons of doing?

Note also Jacob's words to Simeon and Levi in his farewell speech. (49:5-7).

25. Compare Jacob's response here with that of 32:9-12.

Despite his experiences at the Jabbok, and his successful reunion with Esau, he shows the same fear as before. Although fear is natural in this situation, the reasons Jacob gives for damning his sons betray him.

26. What reasons does he give? (34:30)

Simeon and Levi have the last word. (34:31) Their words can be seen as condemning Shechem. But they could also be seen as a condemnation of Jacob.

27. Often tragedy unites a family. Here it leads to a deepening rift between Jacob and his sons. Is this what you would have expected after chapter 32-33 where Jacob was changed to the new Israel?

Reflections

This story provides an interesting backdrop to the Joseph story where again the underlying division between the sons of Rachel and the sons of Leah come into play.

Despite Jacob's lack of affection, moral principle and courage, he survives. Indeed, he prospers in an unexpected way from his sons' fierce anger. Compare with this 12:10-20; 20; 26:6-14 where both Abraham and Isaac failed to protect their women, yet prospered.

Despite fear, unbelief and human frailty God is at work fulfilling his covenant promises.

28. Who is not mentioned in this chapter?
What does that tell you?

29. Read Leviticus 19:18 and Romans 12:17-21
What do these verses tell us about revenge?

Prayer

Pray for our troubled world in which there is much sadness.

Pray for God's justice to be done.

Study 12 - Genesis 35:1-29

Jacob in Canaan

Getting Started

This final study has a couple of optional exercises as well as questions reflecting on the whole of the series. If you wish to do all these as a group, it may be best to spread this study over two sessions.

If you don't do all that as a group, I encourage you to spend time personally on reflecting back on the whole series.

1. What is one thing that has stood out to you in the story of Jacob?

Chapter 35 brings to an end 'the account of Isaac' in which, as we saw back in study 1, Jacob is the main character. Although Jacob will continue to feature in the following 'account of Jacob' (37:2), the main character there will be his son Joseph. In the current chapter we see Jacob back in the land as God had promised him, with the chapter concluding with the death of Isaac.

Read Genesis 35:1-29.

2. Give a title for each of the sections.

<u>Passage</u>	<u>Title</u>
35:1-7	
35:8	

Passage	Title
35:9-15	
35:16-22	
35:23-26	
35:27-29	

This chapter does appear to be a bit of a bit of a random collection of material, but when compared to the end of the Abraham and Joseph stories, there are some parallels. Some are more precise than others.

Optional Extra: Give a brief description for the parallels:

Jacob	Abraham	Joseph	Description
35:1	22:1-2	46:2-3	
35:2-8	22:3-14	46:5-7	
35:9-15	22:15-18	48:4	
35:16	22:19	48:5	
35:17-18	22:20-24	48:5-6	
35:18-20	23:1-20	48:7	
35:21-22	24:1-67	49:3-4	
35:22-26	25:1-6	49:3-28	
35:27-29	25:7-10	49:29-50:14	

Have a look at a Bible Atlas (or Map 3 at the back of the NIV study Bible will do) to see where the events in this chapter are taking place.

Jacob Returns to Bethel (35:1-7)

3. What has immediately preceded God's command in 35:1?
4. What is the significance of Bethel for Jacob? (See 35:3, 28:10-22)

Jacob promptly obeys God. See 22:1-3 for Abraham's prompt obedience to a similar command.

5. By comparison how does Jacob's 'test' seem?
6. What are the preparations Jacob makes for the pilgrimage to Bethel?

What is the significance of them?

Note also the similar passages of Joshua 24:14-15, 23-24; 1 Samuel 7:3-4.

Jacob's household respond to his instructions by getting rid of their gods and the rings in their ears.

7. What have the earrings got to do with it? Numbers 31 (see verses 1-9, 19-20, 48-54) has some parallels with Genesis 34 and 35:1-7 and may suggest why the earrings are mentioned.

8. Jacob sets out for Bethel. What is the reaction of the Canaanites? (35:5)

How does this compare with the experience of Jacob's descendants when they enter the land?

See Exodus 23:27 and Josh 2:8-11.

The reference to Bethel by its old name, Luz, in 35:6 would seem unnecessary in the light of 28:19. Repetition is common in Genesis as a way of stressing the importance or certainty of events.

9. What is the repetition emphasizing here? (See 35:7, 14-15)

In 35:7, Jacob follows the command of 35:1 and by implication fulfils his vow of 28:20-22.

10. What does the name El Bethel signify?

The Death of Deborah (35:8)

This is the first of three deaths recorded in this chapter. Deborah is previously mentioned, though not by name, in 24:59. It is not clear why her death is mentioned but Rebekah's is not. Perhaps Rebekah died while Jacob was with Laban in Paddan Aram.

The Promises Reaffirmed (35:9-15)

11. Why is the changing of Jacob's name to Israel repeated here? (35:9-10)

Compare the blessing of 35:11-12 with Isaac's blessing of Jacob in 28:3-4, and with the covenant ratification to Abraham in 17:1-8, and with God's promise to Jacob at Bethel (28:13-15).

12. How are they similar and different?

What is new for Jacob?

13. What is Jacob's response in 35:14-15, and how does it compare with 35:6-7 and 28:18-22?

In comparing Jacob's initial encounter with God at Bethel (28:10-22) with the wrestling match (32:22-32) in study 10, question 16, the relationship between them was raised. The question was asked if either of them was a 'conversion' experience.

14. In the light of 35:1-15 and Jacob's return to Bethel, how does this relate to the earlier experiences?

Two things should be noted here - The commentators are not unanimous in their response to these questions, and also the concept of conversion for us living after the death and resurrection of Jesus is a little different from these Old Testament characters.

Family Tragedy (35:16-22)

The spiritual elation of 35:11-14 is followed by family tragedy (just as chapters 32-33 were followed by chapter 34). Jacob is on the move from Bethel toward Hebron when his favourite wife Rachel dies in childbirth. See Rachel's earlier demand of Jacob (30:1) and prayer to God (30:22-24).

15. What are the meanings of the names that Rachel and Jacob give their son?

The birthplace of Benjamin and the grave of Rachel are probably north of Jerusalem, and part of the territory that would be later given to the tribe of Benjamin. This view is confirmed by the reference to Ramah in Jeremiah 31:15.

See also 1 Samuel 10:2 and Joshua 18:21-28. The modern location identified as the tomb of Rachel is near Bethlehem which doesn't line up with these passages of Scripture, and probably results from a misinterpretation what the NIV translates as 'some distance' in 35:16.

The events of 35:21-22 are told with extreme brevity. While the writer does not gloss over the failings of the patriarchs, we are spared the sensational details.

16. What were Reuben's motives? Were they more than sensual?

See Leviticus 18:8; 20:11 and Deuteronomy 27:20 for later condemnations of such acts. In 2 Samuel 16:231-22 we have something similar with Absalom. It is the turning point in his rebellion, after which things go wrong.

17. What is Jacob's (Israel's) response and what do you make of it? How does this compare with 34:5?
See 49:2-3 for Jacob's later response.

18. What impression do you get about the relationship between Jacob and his sons, and the relationship between the sons of the various wives and maidservants?

Jacob's Sons (35:23-26)

19. Why is this list included here?
20. What is clearer here than the previous list in 29:32 - 30:34, and the later list in 49:2-27?

The list of the sons ends this part of Genesis and prepares the way for the Joseph story which will follow.

The Death of Isaac (35:27-29)

Jacob finally reaches his father's house (see 28:21). Isaac has moved north from Beersheba (26:23) to Hebron.

See 13:14-18; 23:1-20 as well as chapters 15-18 for the significance of Hebron.

21. Compare these verses with 25:7-9. What are the similarities?

22. What details are made explicit in 49:29-33 about Isaac's burial that are only implied in 35:29?

Lessons from Chapter 35

Although this chapter appears a bit of a mish-mash, it has similarities with the closings to other parts of Genesis and shouldn't be ignored.

23. What does this chapter teach you about God?

24. Are there any specific lessons for you in this chapter?

Are there any actions you need to take?

The Remainder of the Life of Jacob

Optional Extra:

We have come to the end of ‘the account of Isaac’ in which Jacob is the main character. In ‘the account of Jacob’ which follows the main character is Joseph, though Jacob continues to appear.

If you want to pursue Jacob’s story to the end, have a look at the references on page 19 noting his interactions with his sons and with God and keeping the following questions in mind:

- Is he behaving like ‘Israel’ or ‘Jacob’?
- Is he still changing?
- Which parts of his old character still show through?

37:3-11, 31-35

42:1-5, 29-38

45:25 - 46:7

46:28-30

47:1 - 49:33

Concluding the Life of Jacob

25. Looking back over the whole Jacob story, what things have particularly stood out to you?

26. What are the main things you have learnt about God?

27. What things have you learnt about yourself?
28. Given that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come (1 Corinthians 10:11), how have you grown in your relationship with God, and in Christlikeness over the course of these studies?
29. Are there things you need to revisit and act on?

Prayer

Give thanks to God for his grace in fulfilling his promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Give thanks for Jesus, the offspring of Jacob through whom we are blessed.

Give thanks for the many blessings we have received.

Pray that you will grow in your relationship with God, through your journey.

Pray that we will all grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

