

Life, Death, & The Future King

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[0:00] I want to invite you guys to open up in your own copy of the Scriptures to Genesis chapter 35.

! We are finishing our series through the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. We have been walking through these chapters from the end of chapter 11 and really with chapter 12 beginning with Abraham, now up through all of chapter 35 this morning.

We have been walking through these for quite some time, for several months, taking a few breaks here and there for other things. But we spent a lot of time looking at the lives of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, looking at the grace of God made evident in them and through them to others.

And that's not going to change this morning as we look at this last chapter that focuses upon the life of Jacob.

Now, this is not the last chapter in which Jacob appears. This is not even the chapter in which we learn of his death. That will come some chapters later. But this is the last chapter that really has a focus upon Jacob.

[1:21] From here on out, the focus shifts to his own children and to God's preservation of the people of Israel, the children of Israel, the children of Jacob and their children, as we move through the end of Genesis and toward the book of Exodus, where God does a great work of deliverance for these descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But now this morning our focus is here in chapter 35, as we are privileged to see God's hand of mercy and grace continue with Jacob.

And so I want to invite you guys to stand to your feet as we read from this great chapter this morning, Genesis chapter 35. We're going to jump in with verse 1. We're going to read all the way down to the end of the chapter this morning.

God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.

So Jacob said to his household and to all who are with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.

[2:37] So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem. And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

Jacob came to Luz, that is Bethel, which is in the land of Canaan. He and all the people who were with him. And there he built an altar and called the place El Bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Alon-Bakuth. God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan Haram and blessed him.

And God said to him, Your name is Jacob. No longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name. So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply.

A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.

[3:45] Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it.

So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel. Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephraim, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor.

And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, Do not fear, for you have another son. And as her soul was departing, for she was dying, she called his name Ben-Oni.

But his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem. And Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb which is there to this day.

Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Adair. While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

[4:44] The sons of Leah, Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, Simeon and Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel, Joseph, and Benjamin. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant, Dan, and Naphtali.

The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, Gad, and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan Aram. And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath Arba, that is, Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.

Now the days of Isaac were one hundred eighty years. And Isaac breathed his last, and he died, and was gathered to his people old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Father, we thank You for this passage, for the events recorded in the life of Jacob, and the life of Israel. And we ask now that Your Spirit would teach us, and show us the glory of Jesus through this section of Scripture.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. If any of you are familiar with John Newton, the thing that may stand out most to you about him is that he is the writer of the great hymn Amazing Grace.

[5:57] But if you know more about John Newton than that, then you may know that he lived a very sinful lifestyle for the first part of his life.

As a small child, he was instructed by his mom in the things of God. She taught him the Bible. She took him to church. But she died when she was very young. And his father, who was a sailor, took him, and they went out to sea.

And he spent much of his life at sea. And as you can imagine, being a young boy, a teenager, and then a young adult out at sea, you're going to pick up a lot of bad habits.

You're going to indulge in a lot of sinful ways and temptations. And that's exactly what he did. He was eventually captured by the British Navy, pressed into service.

But then he was kicked out of the Royal Navy. He came to serve on a slave ship. One that would capture, gather up slaves in Africa, buy them there, and then take them to other parts of the world, mainly the New World.

- [7 : 00] And he spent a number of years doing that until eventually he himself was enslaved in Africa. It was a strange turn of events that led him to that.
- He tried to lead a mutiny against his ship captain. And he was left on shore there. And he became the slave of an African woman who was married to a European man, another slave trader.
- And he spent three years in slavery to this woman and her husband. Until finally his father sent a ship to rescue him. And on the way back from rescue in that ship, he was in a great storm.
- And it was in that storm that he experienced a conversion. He knew the Gospel. He had been taught the things of God by his mom when he was younger. But it was in that storm, in that moment of crisis, that he committed his life to Christ.
- And he spent much of the rest of his life fighting against the slave trade, trying to overturn it. He eventually became a pastor or a priest in the Anglican church. And there he served the Lord for the remainder of his days.
- [8 : 08] But in a lot of ways, as I was looking back this week over the life of Jacob, it was John Newton who came to my mind because there seemed to be so many parallels between Jacob and John Newton.
- Both of them aware of the things of God at an early age. No doubt Jacob had been taught the things of God. He had received the covenant promises. No doubt he knew the information, but it had little impact on him early in his life.
- We follow him through his life and he is sinful, he is deceitful, he is full of trickery and treachery toward those around him until he finally ends up practically in a life of slavery to his father-in-law.
- He describes it as such. He says, I've been your servant for all of these years. You keep changing my wages. You keep cheating me. And so he spent some time there. And finally he is freed from that.
- He leaves and on his way back to the promised land, he has this night alone where he wrestles with the angel of the Lord who is the Lord Himself. And there he is transformed. He is changed.
- [9 : 10] That doesn't mean that he was made perfect. And if you read the writings of John Newton, one of the things you will learn about John Newton is that he was well aware of continuing sin in his own life.
- Because that's the case for all of us. After our conversion, we are not immediately made perfect. The path of sanctification, the path of being made holy by the Lord is a difficult path at times.
- It takes some strange twists and turns. But throughout our lives as followers of Christ, He is at work in us. Even if we have not yet arrived, even if we look at ourselves and we reflect upon our thoughts and our feelings and our desires and our behaviors, and we think, I'm not where I should be.
- I'm not the kind of person that I thought I would be at this point in my life. I'm sure Jacob had those sorts of thoughts at times. We've just seen a chapter in which Jacob behaved in a way that we find a bit shocking.
- We think, how could you not want to do something to defend your own daughter who's been assaulted and accosted by this man? How could you remain silent?
- [10 : 21] He left it to his sons who went overboard in their seeking of revenge. Terrible things happen because of Jacob's silence. So we know that even after that sort of conversion experience that he had, and even after such a dramatic turn in his life, we know that he has a ways to go.

And now we pick up in chapter 35 with what I think is a crucial period of time in the life of Jacob. It's not quite his sunset years.

Toward the end of the chapter, we find out that his father Isaac dies at 180 years, that would mean that at the end of this chapter he is 120 years old, which we would think, 120, that ought to be the sunset years.

But of course, the patriarchs lived longer than we expect. He's got another 27 years of life ahead of him. So these are not exactly his sunset years, but they are crucial years that are closer to the end of his life than they are toward the beginning of his life.

And we see some important things communicated to us in this chapter about Jacob himself. And some of these parallels that I've mentioned between the life of Jacob and then the life of the great John Newton are easily seen in this chapter.

[11:38] Because both of them are in a position to look back upon their life and draw some conclusions, but also be confronted with the reality that life is still moving and life is still going on.

It's a great quote by John Newton that I think probably would have expressed Jacob's sentiment at this point in his life very well. He said this, he says, I am not what I ought to be.

In other words, he recognizes there's still indwelling sin in his life. I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be in another world.

But still, I am not what I once used to be and by the grace of God I am what I am. It's true of Jacob at this point in his life.

He's not what he ought to be. We've seen that clearly in chapter 34. He's not what he wants to be, certainly. But he's also certainly not who he used to be.

[12:34] He's not that man anymore. He's not the man who lives his life by trying to fool others, by trying to get one up on others. No, he is a fundamentally different person now, even if he's not who he ought to be yet.

And that's something that we ought to be able to say about ourselves if we are followers of Christ. We should be able to say I'm not who I ought to be and I'm not who I want to be, but I'm certainly not who I once was.

And everything that I see in me, I see God at work in those things. I am what I am by the grace of God. And the grace of God comes to the fore in the first half of this particular chapter.

Note, verse 1, God comes to Jacob and speaks to him again. He says, Arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there. Bethel being the place where he had the vision, where he had the dream and he saw the stairway extending into heaven and God revealed Himself to him and God gave the covenant promises to Jacob.

And yet, we know at that point in time, Jacob is still, he's still on the outside. He's still saying things like, If you prove yourself true, then you will be my God at that point in time.

[13:49] But now, years later, he is told to return. Return to the place where I revealed myself to you. Return to the place where I first gave you the covenant promises specifically to you.

Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau. So this is essentially a call to worship. Go back to the place where I revealed myself to you, gave you the promises, and there you will worship me.

You will build an altar and you will praise my name. But first, some things have to happen because he is not yet what he ought to be. He's not yet who he should be.

There are still some things present in his life and certainly present in the lives of those who surround him. in the lives of his family members, of his clan that travels with him.

And so he receives some fairly specific instructions. Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.

[14:53] Then let us arise and go up to Bethel so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone. And we're told in verse 4 that they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, the rings that were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

Now that word hide has the connotation of discarded. Put them away. Almost in the sense of buried them away. So this is not he's hiding them for later use.

He's actually getting rid of these things. He's taking care of this. He's obeying God's instructions. Those who are with him have obeyed him and given to him all of these foreign gods.

And we think, what foreign gods? Why at this point in time would Jacob's family still be clinging to foreign gods? And then we recall that his wives were raised believing in foreign gods.

That his favored wife Rachel, that she stole her father's household gods. And they've been living outside the city of Shechem, a pagan city, for quite some time.

[15:56] They had taken slaves from that city when they slaughtered the men there. And so no doubt, his household would have been probably full of all sorts of false gods and idols.

And God says, you're going to come and you're going to worship me. But you have to rid yourselves of those things. And so that's what they do on their way to Bethel to worship. They rid themselves of the idols, of the false gods, of these things that would weigh them down, that would prevent them from pure worship before God Himself.

and we see the grace of God come. Beginning in verse 5, first, that He protects them as they journeyed a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them so they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

So God guards them from the people. They probably heard of their reputation. They slaughtered all of the men of Shechem. God causes this word to spread and causes a terror. It's called a terror from God.

It fell upon all the cities so they are protected and they're able to come to Bethel and there they build an altar. And then verse 9 contains what is probably the most significant event in this chapter.

[17:08] We're told that God appeared to Jacob again when He came from Paddan Aram and blessed him and God said to him, Your name is Jacob. No longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.

So He called His name Israel. And God said to him, I am God Almighty be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body.

The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and I will give the land to your offspring after you. This is essentially a covenant renewal. In fact, what is striking about God's words to him here is how closely they parallel God's words to Abraham in Genesis chapter 17 where there is a renewal of the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis chapter 15.

In Genesis 15 God makes a covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 17 God reaffirms and reestablishes that covenant, introduces the covenant sign of circumcision and there is a covenant ceremony.

And here God has already given the covenant promises to him and yet he comes to renew the covenant promises. The people have purified themselves.

[18:19] God has responded by protecting them and now in his great mercy and grace God comes to Jacob reminding him you're not Jacob anymore. You're Israel. You've been renamed.

And the covenant promises belong to you. You are to be fruitful. You are to multiply just as I told Abraham. Nations will come to you just as I told Abraham.

Kings will come from your body just as I told Abraham. This land just as I promised to Abraham this land will be yours.

So there is there is the promise of covenant life here. There is the promise of God's hand of protection to continue with them and go with them and to continue to multiply his offspring.

There is life here. And yet one of the interesting things about this chapter a chapter in which the covenant is renewed a chapter in which life is promised to Jacob and his descendants is the prominent role of death in this chapter.

[19:23] This is a chapter that deals with life and death. It's dealing with reality because God's promise of eternal life comes to us and yet the reality of death still surrounds us and confronts us all in the future.

And Jacob is no doubt reminded in these years covered in this chapter of his own mortality. Now we skipped over a moment ago but the first death is recorded in verse 8.

We're told that Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. Which is an interesting note to include in here because we're never told of Rebecca's death.

We're never told when she died or how she died. We're never told any of those things. Because Rebecca, we saw several weeks ago, Rebecca is in a sense having to reap from her own behavior.

Because of her influence over her son, he has become this trickster early in his life. And because of her persuading of him to steal the blessing, he now has to escape and run away and her son, her treasured son is gone.

[20:33] And yet her hope was that he'll return in a few years but by the time he returns, she's already died. And we don't know anything about it. It's as if Moses, the author of Genesis, wants us to recognize through his silence that Rebecca received judgment for her decisions.

But then we're told interestingly about Deborah, who would have been a significant figure in the life of Jacob. She would have been the one to probably take care of Jacob.

She would have contributed as much, if not more, to raising him as his own mother had. And now suddenly we're just given this note that she died and she was buried.

And then a much more difficult death is recounted for us down beginning in verse 16. It says that they journeyed from Bethel and when they were some distance from Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, they're on their way to Bethlehem.

We're told that Rachel went into labor and she had hard labor and when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, Do not fear for you have another son. And as her soul was departing for she was dying, she called his name Ben-Oni.

[21:50] But his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and she was buried on the way to Ephrath. So one of the most significant figures of his early life, this handmaid, this nurse who would have taken care of him and contributed as much, if not more, to his being raised than his mother would have.

She's gone. Now his favored wife, the one whom he loved greatly, she has passed suddenly, not at an old age, but in giving childbirth and now she is gone.

And then finally, toward the end of the chapter, we read about the death of his father Isaac, who has been absent for a number of chapters from the book of Genesis.

We left him behind when we began to follow Jacob, but now we get to see what happened to him. Verse 27, Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, where Abram and Isaac had sojourned.

The days of Isaac were 180 years, and Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people old and full of days, and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

[23:02] So three crucial, significant deaths in this period of time in the life of Jacob. Someone precious to him in his early life. The most loved and dear person to him in all of his life.

And then the death of his own father. And what we're not told in this chapter is that the book of Genesis is not always written chronologically.

It would have been most likely during the time covered in Genesis 35 that he is told that his son Joseph has been killed. We know, of course, that he's not been killed, but he endures the grief of that.

So these are years in which the promise of life, the covenantal promises are renewed to him, but they are also years of sorrow when he has to deal with the reality of death around him and with the fact that he himself will someday face his own death.

Yes, he's 27 years away from that by the end of the chapter, but he doesn't know that. What he knows is God has promised him life, but he is surrounded by death.

[24:11] And that promise of life is the thing that would have sustained him through these years and even through the years to come. But it's not just an abstract promise.

There are some details that stand out in this passage if you're reading it within the context of all of the book of Genesis, within the context of all of the Torah, and then especially within the context of the Old Testament and even the entire Bible as a whole.

There are some things that seem to us minor details that if you're just reading through the book of Genesis or reading through this chapter as we did a few minutes ago, you might scratch your head and think, well, that's an odd detail to include in here.

Why in the world is that right here? Probably nothing stands out as more odd, as more strange than this note about his son Reuben in verse 22.

It says that while Israel lived in the land, so during these years, at some point during these years, we don't know exactly when, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it.

[25:19] And then you move on from it. And then we get a list of the sons of Jacob, all twelve sons. And even that seems a little bit out of place.

Why are these details here in the middle of this chapter? I mean, you would think that you would want to move immediately from Rachel's death to the death of Isaac. Keep those events close together.

They're clearly related thematically. Keep them close together. Why this bit of information here in the middle of these accounts of the deaths of two of the most significant people in his entire life.

Why? Why this detail about Reuben? And then why simply the listing of the sons of Jacob? Well, it's because this portion of chapter 35 is linked to later on in chapter 49, which we've gone to before to see, last week we went there, to see the blessings that he gives, that Jacob gives to his children and by extension to the descendants of those children, to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And these little details here within the context of all of the book of Genesis are pushing us ahead so that as we arrive later on at Genesis chapter 49, it becomes more clear to us why these details were there way back in chapter 35.

[26:43] You recall from last week, that because Simeon and Levi exacted revenge in a way that was not proportional at all for the defilement of their sister when they killed all of the men of the city of Shechem, we saw last week that when it comes time for the blessings to be given out, Simeon and Levi's blessing is tempered.

That they don't receive what they thought they would receive and Jacob now near the end of his life as he's blessing his sons reminds them of this event and reminds them that that event has in some way cut them off from some of the blessings that are to be enjoyed by their brothers and the descendants of their brothers.

Namely, that these two tribes will not have a land to call their own. They will not have it. All of the other tribes are given their own territory later on, but he tells them you won't have your own land because of this deed that you've done.

But we also see here, we see here in this chapter at the beginning of the blessings as they are recounted, that there are consequences for that, for Reuben's actions mentioned in that one little verse.

Notice chapter 49, verse 3. He says to him, Reuben, you are my firstborn, which is significant. My might and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

[28:15] That sounds great. This is a good start for Reuben. But then, unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence because you went up to your father's bed, then you defiled it.

He went up to my couch. In other words, because of what you did all those years ago, because of that moment, you will not receive the blessing that you are expecting.

You will not be preeminent. In other words, you will not be counted as the firstborn. We know, of course, that the firstborn receives the majority of the inheritance and the bounty of the blessing usually falls upon the firstborn.

But we've seen God continually overturn that. Isaac over his brother Ishmael. Jacob over his brother Esau. And now that Reuben has disqualified himself, you would think that it would fall to the next son in line.

But the next son in line is Simeon. And he's disqualified himself. And then it comes to Levi and he's disqualified himself. So who's next in line?

[29:32] It's Judah. Read there in verse 8. Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Your hands shall be on the neck of your enemies.

Your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub. From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down. He crouched as a lion and as a lioness who dares to rouse him.

And then this is significant. The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

In other words, the king will come from the line of Judah. Well, what king? The kings that have been promised in the covenant promises given to Abraham in chapter 17 where we find the exact same language as we find in Genesis 35 to Jacob that kings shall come from your own body.

That's the language used in chapter 17. That's the language used here. Kings will come from you. But how will they come? Well, they won't come through Reuben, your firstborn.

[30:41] They won't come through Simeon, your secondborn. They won't even come through Levi the third in line. They will come through Judah. And the scepter will never depart from him.

And moreover, the obedience of the peoples will be to him so that the peoples, the nations that will come, the nations that will stream to Abraham, the families of the earth that will be blessed according to the promises given to Abraham, all of that we see now is going to happen through Judah and through the king to come from the line of Judah.

Now these things are being written long before David was born. Long before they knew specifically who would rule over the people of Israel.

In fact, when Israel came to appoint a king and to choose a king, they chose someone from the tribe of Benjamin, Saul. Not someone from the tribe of Judah, which you would have expected them to do if they had known and understand the promises that had been given to the tribe of Judah.

But for whatever reason, that's not the direction that they went. Because God was teaching them. Until God finally provides a king of His own choosing. A king, of course, from the line of Judah, to David himself.

[32 : 08] But David is just pointing toward a greater king. See, this is why when we read the book of Genesis, or when we read any part of the Old Testament, yes, we need to focus upon the original context of that particular book and of those events.

We do need to ask ourselves, what is Moses trying to teach the people of Israel as he writes this? And we do need to ask, what was happening at the time that these events unfolded. But we also need to remember that above Moses and superintending Moses is the author with a capital A of the book of Genesis.

God Himself is authoring this book. And so there are larger themes and larger connections than even the original human author was not fully aware of and couldn't make all the connections to.

So that Moses couldn't have connected this promise of a king from the line of Judah. He couldn't have connected that to David. He couldn't have connected the covenant promises of kings coming from Jacob's body.

He couldn't have connected that to David. David wasn't on the scene yet. Centuries will pass before David is on the scene. And he certainly could not have connected it to the ultimate son of David, to the lion from the tribe of Judah, Jesus Himself.

[33 : 28] But those are the connections, I believe, that God intends for us to see. Because in a chapter in which we see the reality of death presented three different times in ways that would have shaken Jacob's life, we also see right in the middle of all of that the covenant promises of life to come and a king to come through whom that life might be made available to all the nations and to people from every tribe and every tongue and every nation.

That's what we read earlier when we read from Revelation 5. In fact, you might want to turn to Revelation 5. When we read these words earlier, worthy, speaking to the Lamb, speaking of Jesus, worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

That's what Jesus was doing on the cross. He was ransoming people from every nation. He was bringing the nations into the covenant family.

But He doesn't do that merely as the Lamb who was slain. He does that as the rightful King who sits on the throne of David.

Look up in Revelation 5 to verse 5 where this section is introduced. Where we are first shown John's vision of Christ Himself. And that vision does not begin with Christ as the Lamb slain.

[35 : 10] It transitions to there, but it begins somewhere else. Verse 5 Weep no more. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that He can open the scrolls and its seven seals.

A Lion of the tribe of Judah. The King promised in the covenant promises made to Jacob who would be the mediator of life.

This Lion is now present. And He makes life available as He is slain as a Lamb. And the conclusion of all of this, to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

The conclusion to all of this is worship which brings us right back to the beginning of chapter 35 to God's call for Jacob and his people to come before Him in worship.

That's what all this is about. In so many ways, we can see dim reflections of ourselves and of our lives in Jacob. We can see that we, like Jacob, from birth, have a bent in a direction away from the things of God.

[36 : 30] No matter how we might be taught them at an early age, our natural inclination, our natural bent, is away from the things of God until God does a great work upon our hearts, until He infuses life into our dead hearts by the power of His Word at work through the Spirit, that we are bent away from Him.

And sometimes that happens at a very early age. Sometimes it happens much later as it did for Jacob. You know, Jacob was about 83 years old when he left to the land of promise to go to the land of Paddan Aram.

He was over halfway through his life when he left. And though he lives to be 147 years old, he only spends less than, less than the second half of his life in service to the Lord.

About a third of his life he spends in service to the Lord. And that because God came in and did a supernatural work within his heart and transformed him.

And that's what God has to do for all of us. We are all like Jacob born with a bent away from the things of God. And God comes supernaturally in and He transforms our hearts and He gives us the gift of faith so that we trust in His Son.

[37 : 55] And we find ourselves even as those within the covenant family. We find ourselves still not where we ought to be and not quite where we want to be.

As the realities of life creep in around us, whether that be the death of a loved one the way Jacob experienced or just the normal difficulties of life, unsatisfying work, illness, difficulties in marriage, frustrations with raising your children, difficulty with getting older, all of those things crowd in around us.

And if our focus is not upon the lion from the tribe of Judah and the lamb who was slain and God's call for His people to gather before Him in worship, if our focus is not there, we will find ourselves stumbling.

We will find ourselves inadequate for the tasks in front of us. We will find ourselves just passing our time, truly having what you might call sunset years in which we're just waiting for the sun to get down to the bottom of the horizon instead of using whatever time we've got, five years, twenty years, fifty years, instead of using all of our lives in praise for the glory of God because of the great work of the lion from the tribe of Judah and the lamb who was slain for the sake of His people.

The life of Jacob is not written just to give us history. The life of Jacob is written to teach us and to point us toward Christ. The life of Jacob is recorded for us so that we might see in Jacob a reflection of ourselves by seeing in Jacob a reflection of Israel and their failed history to make things right on their own until God swoops in to rescue them through a Redeemer.

[39 : 55] That's our story as well. We need rescue from a Redeemer and once we've been rescued, stumble though we might at times, difficult as it may be at times for us to be who we want to be and who we think we ought to be, the call is a call to worship.

To fix your eyes ahead on the lamb who was slain and the lion from the tribe of Judah and whatever happenings of life, whatever disappointments, whatever frustrations, whatever losses might come our way, we like Jacob have a call.

Put away the idols, clean yourself up, and come and worship. Let's pray.