**Walk Through the Bible**

**Lesson Number Twenty Five**

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**God calls Jacob back to Bethel – Jacob commands his family and servants to give up their idols.**

Last week, we saw that a young man by the name of Shechem raped Jacob and Leah’s daughter, Dinah. Because of that, Simeon and Levi deceived the men of Shechem and talked them all into being circumcised. The third day after their circumcisions, Simeon and Levi along with their servants went into their city and killed every male there. They also took everything that belonged to those men including the women and young girls.

As we move on into Genesis chapter 35, we see God calling Jacob back to Bethel.

**Genesis 35:1 (NLT)**

Then God said to Jacob, “Get ready and move to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau.”

What is significant about Bethel and where is it?

First of all, Bethel means “House of God.”

A place in Central Palestine, about 10 miles north of Jerusalem, at the head of the pass of Michmash and Ai. It was originally the royal Canaanite city of Luz (Genesis 28:19). The name Bethel was at first apparently given to the sanctuary in the neighbourhood of Luz, and was not given to the city itself till after its conquest by the tribe of Ephraim. When Abram entered Canaan he formed his second encampment between Bethel and Hai (Genesis 12:8); and on his return from Egypt he came back to it, and again "called upon the name of the Lord" (13:4). Here Jacob, on his way from Beersheba to Haran, had a vision of the angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder whose top reached unto heaven (28:10,19); and on his return he again visited this place, "where God talked with him" (35:1-15), and there he "built an altar, and called the place El-beth-el" (q.v.). To this second occasion of God's speaking with Jacob at Bethel, (Hosea 12:4,5) makes reference.

In troublous times the people went to Bethel to ask counsel of God (Judges 20:18,31; 21:2). Here the ark of the covenant was kept for a long time under the care of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron (20:26-28). Here also Samuel held in rotation his court of justice (I Samuel 7:16). It was included in Israel after the kingdom was divided, and it became one of the seats of the worship of the golden calf (I Kings 12:28-33; 13:1). Hence the prophet Hosea (Hosea 4:15; 5:8; 10:5,8) calls it in contempt Beth-aven, i.e., "house of idols." Bethel remained an abode of priests even after the kingdom of Israel was desolated by the king of Assyria (II Kings 17:28,29). At length all traces of the idolatries were extirpated by Josiah, king of Judah (II Kings 23:15-18); and the place was still in existence after the Captivity (Ezra 2:28; Nehemiah 7:32). It has been identified with the ruins of Beitin, a small village amid extensive ruins some 9 miles south of Shiloh.

Easton’s Bible Dictionary

Bethel is mentioned in over sixty verses in the Bible, representing over thirty distinct stories and prophecies, all of them in the Old Testament. So here is a list of some of the most important events that took place in Bethel:

* Near Bethel, Abraham built one of the first altars mentioned in the Bible, and there he “invoked the name of the Lord.” (Genesis 12:8)
* After Abraham had fled to Egypt to escape a famine in the Holy Land, he returned to the same place near Bethel, and once again invoked the name of the Lord. (Genesis 13:1–4)
* When Jacob was fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, he stopped for the night at Bethel. That is where he first encountered God, in a dream in which he saw a stairway to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending on it, and the Lord standing above it. ([Genesis 28:10–22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2028:10%E2%80%9322&version=NRSV))
* After Jacob’s return to the Holy Land, Bethel was the second place where he and his family settled. There he set up an altar to God, and God spoke to him. (Genesis 35:1–15)
* ­Upon first entering the Holy Land, after conquering Jericho, Joshua and the Israelites next conquered Ai and Bethel. (Joshua 8:10–17; 12:7-9, 16)
* Bethel was one of the first places in the Holy Land where the ark of the covenant of God was set up, and where the priests offered sacrifices and inquired of God. (Judges 20:18, 26–28; 21:2)
* When the northern kingdom of Israel seceded from the southern kingdom of Judah, its first king, Jereboam, set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan. He had the people worship there instead of going to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple where the ark was. (1 Kings 12:25–33)
* After Assyria conquered and exiled the northern kingdom of Israel, the king of Assyria sent one of the captured Israelite priests back to Bethel to teach the people from other nations who had been resettled in Israel how to worship “the god of the land.” However, they continued to worship their own gods as well. (2 Kings 17:24–41)
* Because Bethel had become corrupted by the worship of idols and other gods, several of the prophets railed against it. See, for example, Jeremiah 48:13; Hosea 10:15; Amos 3:13–4:4; 5:1–6.

If we put together all of these key stories about Bethel, here is the picture that emerges:

Bethel served the ancient Hebrews as an early point of communication with God, and of entry into the Holy Land—even if not always the first. As the religious, cultural, and political life of the Israelites increasingly focused on Jerusalem, Bethel faded in significance. However, when the northern kingdom of Israel seceded, Bethel became one of two major centers of idol worship in the north. This corruption sealed its fate in the Bible story. By the time of Jesus’ birth, Bethel had completely faded away as a place of importance. It is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament.

**Genesis 35:2,3 (NLT)**

**2**So Jacob told everyone in his household, “Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing. **3**We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone.”

God calls US to put away ALL of our pagan idols!

What is it that consumes all of your time? What is it that you place above the Word of God?

Get rid of those idols before you go to God next time! Those pagan idols will NOT answer your prayers. They will not heal you when you are sick. They will not comfort you when you are sad and lonely. They will not give you JOY in your times of distress.

Put God FIRST In all you do!

**Matthew 6:33 (ESV)**

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and **all these things** will be added to you.

**God WANTS to give you things,,,NICE THINGS! BUT He doesn’t want them to consume you and be your idols!**

**John 10:10 (KJV)**
10  The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more **abundantly.**

God wants YOU to have an ABUNDANT LIFE. What has the devil stolen from you?

Jacob took all the idols from his family and his servants and buried them. He put them far away from them and then they purified themselves and put on clean clothes to go to Bethel!

We should do the same when we go to God! Make sure your idols are put far from you, purify your heart and ask God to cleanse you when you approach him!

The High Priest had to be absolutely perfect to be a type and shadow of Jesus when he entered into the Holy of Holies once a year. If he was not perfect in his body and if his clothing was not perfect and clean, he would be struck dead!

The High Priest’s robe, at the very bottom had alternating bells and pomegranites. The other priests would tie a rope to his leg and if those bells stopped ringing when the High Priest was in the Holy of Holies, they would know he was dead and they would drag him out!

As Jacob and his family began to travel to Bethel, God put a great fear on all the people in the cities round about Jacob and his family.

Isn’t it kind of understood that when God gave such a great promise to Abraham and to his descendants that God would also protect them? The same goes for us! God has given us great promises and a great covenant in which we live. Along with those promises and that covenant comes God’s protection.

**WHY ARE YOU WALKING IN FEAR? YOU ARE GOD’S CHILD. YOUR ENEMIES ARE THE ONES WHO SHOULD BE WALKING IN FEAR, NOT YOU!**

Why is it that sometimes really bad things come on Believers?

1. We walk outside of God’s protection.
	1. Job FEARED and the thing he feared the most came upon him!

**Job 3:25 (KJV)**
25  For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

* 1. FEAR is sin because it is exactly the opposite of putting your faith in God!
	2. The Bible tells us that we CAN take our thoughts captive and not walk in fear.

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (KJV)**
4  (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
5  Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

* 1. Realize that we are NOT fighting carnal, earthly foes. We are fighting spiritual battles!
	2. When FEAR comes, it is your job to CAST IT DOWN!
	3. Judge those thoughts – Ask yourself, “Do these thoughts line up with what God’s Word says about me and the promises and covenant He has given me?”
	4. If NOT, then bring those thoughts into CAPTIVITY!
	5. How? Command those thoughts and the spirits behind those thoughts to GO!
	6. Refuse to let your mind dwell on those FEARS.
	7. Make your mind think about other things, preferably the Word of God!
	8. Begin to repeat scripture out loud!
	9. Remember that you cannot stop birds from flying over your head but you do NOT have to let them build nests in your hair!
1. We are not getting the Word of God into our minds.
	1. Study the Bible for yourself!

It is okay to listen to others teach the Bible and to read what others have written but you MUST read the Word of God and let the Holy Spirit have time to teach you!

**2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV)**
16  All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

**Romans 12:2 (NLT)**

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

* 1. The Word of God is what will change your soul (mind, will and intellect).

**Isaiah 55:11 (KJV)**
11  So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

**Shall** is the strongest word in the English language. When God’s Word says “SHALL”, you can count on it!

**God’s Word** absolutely will accomplish what God says it will.

1. We are making the wrong confession

**Matthew 12:34-35 (KJV)**
34b For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

**Hebrews 3:1 (ESV)**

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,

1. The idea of your confession may be a foreign concept to you. You may have never heard it talked about in church before.
2. When you walk around confessing doom and gloom all the time, you ROB yourself of the JOY that God has for you.
3. You also open up the door for Satan to come in and conquer you in so many areas of your life, health, wealth, mental well-being.
4. **I can tell where you are spiritually by the words that come out of your mouth!**

**Mark 11:12-14 (NLT)**

**12**The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. **13**He noticed a fig tree in full leaf a little way off, so he went over to see if he could find any figs. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. **14**Then Jesus said to the tree, “May no one ever eat your fruit again!”And the disciples heard him say it.

**Mark 11:20-22 (NLT)**

**20**The next morning as they passed by the fig tree he had cursed, the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots up. **21**Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree on the previous day and exclaimed, “Look, Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered and died!”

**22**Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Have faith in God.

This literally means to “Have the faith OF God.” **Have the God kind of faith.**

Now, I want to read from the King James Version. I love the New Living Translation and the English Standard Version among others but when it comes to studying the Bible, it is hard to beat the King James Version.

**Mark 11:23-24 (KJV)**
23  For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall **say** unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he **saith** shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he **saith**.
**24  Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.**

When we aren’t producing fruit, we are of NO USE to the Lord.

Many of you have recently seen the movie called, “War Room.” You will remember the old woman in the show giving the younger woman a cup of lukewarm coffee. It was a great object lesson as to what God says.

**Revelation 3:15-16 (GW)**
15  I know what you have done, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot.
16  But since you are lukewarm and not hot or cold, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth.