

Message Four

**The Reality of Bethel
and
the Bringing Forth of Christ
as the Son of Affliction
and the Son of the Right Hand**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 35:1-20, 27

- I. In Genesis 35 the vision of Bethel came again; however, this time it did not come as a dream—it came as a reality—vv. 1-15:**
- A. We all come into the church life twice—28:12, 16-17; 35:15:
 - 1. The first time we come in a dream, and the second time we come in reality; we need both the dream and the reality.
 - 2. The dream in the beginning was a true picture, and everything in the reality is the same as that in the dream.
 - B. At Bethel Jacob's name was changed to Israel, indicating that his being had been changed; now he was Israel at Bethel—32:28; 35:10.
 - C. In Genesis 35 there is a crucial and radical turn from the individual experience of God to the corporate experience of God—the experience of God as the God of Bethel—Eph. 3:17-21; 4:4-6:
 - 1. In Genesis 35:7 we have a new divine title—*El-bethel*, “God of the house of God.”
 - 2. Before this chapter God was the God of individuals; here He is no longer just the God of individuals but is El-bethel, the God of a corporate body, the God of the house of God.
 - 3. Bethel signifies the corporate life, which is the Body of Christ; thus, in calling God the God of Bethel, Jacob advanced from the individual experience to the corporate experience—1 Cor. 12:12:
 - a. The altar that Jacob built at Shechem was called El-Elohe-Israel, the name of God as related to an individual—Gen. 33:17-20.
 - b. The altar that Jacob built at Bethel was called El-bethel, the name of God as related to a corporate body—35:6-7.
 - c. The altar at Shechem is an individual altar, but the altar at Bethel is a corporate altar—the altar for the house of God.

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- D. The All-sufficient God is revealed for the building of Bethel; only at Bethel is it possible for us to realize the all-sufficiency of our God—v. 11a:
1. The purpose of God's revealing Himself as the All-sufficient One is for His building; the All-sufficient God is for God's building.
 2. We cannot experience the All-sufficient God in an individualistic way; in order to experience the All-sufficient God, we must be in Bethel, in the church life.
 3. God's all-sufficiency requires the Body; we need the house, the building, in order to experience this aspect of Him—Phil. 1:19.
 4. The Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the church are four-in-one; ultimately, the church is a group of people who are in union with, mingled with, and incorporated with the Triune God—Eph. 4:4-6; 3:16-21.
- E. At Bethel Jacob set up a pillar and poured out a drink offering on it; this indicates that the drink offering is for God's building—Gen. 35:14a:
1. The drink offering typifies Christ as the One poured out as the real wine before God for His satisfaction—Exo. 29:40-41; Num. 15:1-10; 28:7-10.
 2. The drink offering also typifies the Christ who saturates us with Himself as the heavenly wine until He and we become one to be poured out for God's enjoyment and satisfaction and for God's building—Matt. 9:17; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6.
 3. Our pouring ourselves out as a drink offering to God brings in the outpouring of the Spirit for God's building—Gen. 35:14b.
- F. The function of Bethel, the house of God, is to express Christ—Eph. 1:22-23:
1. God's ultimate goal is the expression of Christ, and the expression of Christ is not an individual matter but a corporate matter in the house of God—John 17:22; Eph. 3:21; Rom. 9:23.
 2. The bringing forth of Christ for the corporate expression of Christ will cost us our natural choice, our natural desire, and our natural life.

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- G. After experiencing the reality of Bethel, Jacob entered into full fellowship with God at Hebron; the fellowship at Hebron means intimacy, peace, satisfaction, and joy—Gen. 35:27; 1 Cor. 1:9:
 - 1. Although we are in the church life, we still need to journey on until we come to Hebron and enter into full fellowship with the Lord—1 John 1:3.
 - 2. The fellowship at Hebron is not only fellowship with God but also with other members of the Body of Christ—Phil. 2:1; 1 John 1:7.
 - 3. If we know the life of the Body of Christ, we will see the importance of fellowship, and we will realize that apart from the fellowship of the Body, we cannot live—1 Cor. 12:14-27.
- H. Toward the end of his life, Jacob declared that the Lord had shepherded him all the days of his life; the Lord's shepherding is for Bethel, the house of God—Gen. 48:15-16; 28:10-22; 35:1, 3, 7-11.

II. The birth of Benjamin typifies the bringing forth of Christ as the Son of affliction and the Son of the right hand—vv. 16-18:

- A. The birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel occurred simultaneously; this means that Jacob gained a son by losing Rachel—vv. 16-20:
 - 1. Rachel was Jacob's natural choice according to his heart's desire—29:18-20.
 - 2. The death of Rachel, the loss of Jacob's natural choice, was a deep and personal dealing for Jacob—35:16-20.
 - 3. Jacob lost Rachel, but in the process he gained Benjamin, who is a type of Christ—vv. 18-19:
 - a. In the same manner, God will eventually take away our natural choice so that we may bring forth Christ for His expression.
 - b. God's goal is not to make His chosen ones suffer loss; it is to bring forth Christ through them—Phil. 3:7-8.
- B. As Rachel was dying, she called the child Ben-oni, meaning "son of my affliction," but Jacob immediately changed the child's name to Benjamin, meaning "son of the right hand"—Gen. 35:18:

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1. As the son of affliction, Benjamin typifies Christ, who, as the man of sorrows in His incarnation and human life on earth, accomplished God's eternal redemption for His full salvation—Isa. 53:3; Heb. 9:12.
2. As the son of the right hand, Benjamin typifies Christ, who, as the Son of the right hand in His resurrection, victory, and ascension, ministers in the heavens to carry out the application of God's redemption for His salvation—8:1-2; 7:25.
3. Christ was incarnated to be Ben-oni, the man of sorrows, but in His resurrection He became Benjamin, the Son of the right hand in glory and honor—Psa. 68:27; 80:17; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31.