

RETURN TO BETHEL (PLACE OF FIRST ENCOUNTER)

TEXT: Gen. 28:10-22, Gen 35:1-7, 9-15 & Rev. 3:2-5

Hymn: I will cling to the Old Rugged Cross

INTRODUCTION: Bethel means the House of God, a holy place. It is sometimes referred to as Beth-Elohim ie. House of Elohim. It is a geographical location in the land of Canaan where God Almighty appeared to Abraham and there he built an Altar unto the God (Gen 12:7-8 *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.* ⁸ *And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called).* Many years after, Jacob his grandson had divine encounter at Bethel with the Lord appearing unto him. Gen 28:10-19; Gen. 35:1-7. For every Christian today, Bethel is much more than a geographical location to be visited rather is an illustration of one's total experience.

WHAT DOES BETHEL SIGNIFY?

1. **It is a place of divine encounter & discoveries. Gen 12:7; 1 Sam. 10:3-6**

God appeared unto Abraham at Bethel. Jacob suddenly discovered His (God) awesomeness and heaven open unto him. He saw God upon the ladder. Even the first king of Israel, Saul started his walk with God in divine experience at Bethel. 1 Sam. 10:6 *"The Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person"*

-(a) He became a new creature- 11 Cor. 5:17 & 21

-(b) The spirit of the Lord came upon him (John 1:12-13)- But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Rom. 8:14-16 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God".

©He started manifesting the gift of the Holy Spirit

(d) The Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he prophesy (1 Sam. 10:10), I Cor. 12:4-13

2. **Bethel is a place of tarrying in God's presence (Waiting on God). Isaiah 40:28-31; Luke 24:49; Act 1:12-14.**

Jacob tarried in Bethel all night and saw the vision of heaven. He wrestled on his way to Bethel at night until his name changed from Jacob to Israel, from supplanter to God's prince, conqueror, blessing. Isaiah 40:31 *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* It is place where the act of tarrying is greatly rewarded. It is place of upper room experience. As a born again Christian, how often do you stay in God's presence? How many minutes, hour or days do you wait on Him? Return to Bethel where your strength can be renewed.

3. **Bethel is a place of conception of ideas. Gen 28:13-14.**

Jacob was loaded with God's purpose for life. At Bethel ie, in His presence, one would become pregnant with God's divine ideas, plans or program that would change life and situation.

4. Bethel is a place of revelation and divine instruction. Gen 28:13-14, Heb.10:19-23

Jacob was instructed at Bethel. The promises of God were revealed unto him. The covenant promises were renewed with him. There are many covenant blessings in the scripture for all of us. As a Christian one needs to renew or remind God about them. There is no other place to dwell than Bethel ie Alter of God, the place of awesome presence of God where covenant of victory, covenant of promotion, covenant of fruitfulness, covenant of prosperity, covenant of security, healing and guidance are made.

5. Bethel is a place of divine fellowship with God & His Ministering Angel Heb. 10:25.

Jacob saw the ladder: God was on top and the angel were ascending and descending. They ascend with the saints' request or supplication and descend with God's blessings or answer to our requests. He 10:25 *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"*.

6. Bethel is a place of renewal of strength. Gen 28:14-16

Jacob had just escape from Esau his brother and was heading toward his uncle, Laban's house to hide. Jacob was tired, exhausted and confused about life. At Bethel he was encouraged and reassured of God's leading and safety. At Bethel, he saw his victory before manifestation. At Bethel a stone was turned to a pillar of God's House. At Bethel one's weakness or ugly situation would be turn around for good. Many Christians are in terrible problems, pits or darkness of life because they have left Bethel. Brethren, Return, Return ye.

7. Bethel is a Place of Total Commitment. 1 Peter 2:21-24; Gen 28:20-22

Jacob made a vow to God at Bethel. He made a life commitment to serve God forever. He vowed to build for the Lord. He vowed to pay his TITHES. As a Christians what is Bethel to you?, is your Bethel life of food and drink or merriment, what life commitment have you made to the Lord Jesus. Job said though He slayeth job me, I will trust Him (Job 13.15) Jesus paid the supreme sacrifice- "His Life" for us. Our call is to follow His steps-1 Peter 2:21-24 ²¹ *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:* ²² *"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";* ²³ *who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;* ²⁴ *who **Himself** bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.*

8. Bethel is a Place of Holiness. Gen. 35:1-6, Heb. 12:4 Habakkuk 1:13, 1 These 4:3-7.

Hence, they that walk the way of Bethel MUST be pure, holy and righteous. They eyes of the Lord cannot behold iniquity. Without Holiness no man shall see the Lord. Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:4 ⁴ *In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood"*). The call to Bethel is a call to Holiness. (Heb.12:14 *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord"*); (1 Peter 1:16 *for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*); (2 Peter 3:11 *"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives).*

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING AWAY FROM BETHEL?

- 1 **Sowing to the wind (Fruitless efforts)**- Gen 29:25-27; Gen 31:38-42; Hos.12:1-4. For Almost 37 years Jacob moved away from Bethel. These were years of dryness, years of cheating and being cheated, years of wilderness experience, years of deprivation and servitude.
- 2 **It brings about Unfulfilment.** Lev. 26:23-26, Haggai 1:5-6, Amos 4:6-8; Micah 6:10-14
- 3 **It brings about Abandonment by God**- Hos.4:17-19
- 4 **God's Anger and Judgment- Hos** 5:9-14; 9 11-17
- 5 **Doubt and Fear e.g King Saul** 1 Sam. 28:5-8; Isaiah 33:14; Prov. 13:21; Prov. 28:1
- 6 **Powerlessness and Defeat**- Deut. 32:29-30; Psalm 78:7-11; Joshua 7:1, 4-12
- 7 **Spiritual Death (Separation from God)**- Romans 8:5-6 "to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and

HOW DO I RETURN TO BETHEL-GEN 35:1-7; 9-13; Gen 31:11-13

- 1 **ARISE**:- The first step is to arise ie change your position, your perception, your thoughts, opinion or attitude. To arise means to accept that something is wrong in your life that needs to be put straight. Prov. 28:13 "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*". Arise like the prodigal son

- 2 **GO UP**- Col. 3:1-2; Joshua 7:13; Gen.35:1

-Go up in prayers and fasting as most of us are currently observing. Remove all the strange gods.

-Go Up in purification, every spot and wrinkle must be cleansed

-Go Up in purity and holiness. Approach His presence in soberness and reverence. It is an awesome place. The awesome God dwells there (1 John 5:18; Col. 3:5-14; 2Tim. 2:2' 19-24.

of unrighteousness
consecrate yourself.

-put away your idols
-Change your garment
-Be clean. You must

3. **DWELL IN BETHEL**

Stay in touch with God at all times. Stay in fellowship. David rejoiced when he was called to come to the house of God. The presence of God is wonderful; it is precious and fulfilling. Come often the church, do not miss programmed; *stop going out to warn yourselves at the fire side of unbelievers*. Peter did and his name was nearly wiped out of the book of life.

4. **BUILDING AN ALTER IN BETHEL**

Bethel is a place of sacrifice; Roman 12:1-2 says "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

CONCLUSION

Rev. 3:2-3 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you

Back to Bethel is a MUST. Returning to Bethel is a necessity. The event of that encounter must be experience over and over; that first LOVE, the fervent spirit, that strong zeal, that desire for righteousness and hatred for sin must come back lest the judgment of God comes suddenly upon one's life. Ponder on this:-

- ✓ Where is that holiness consciousness?
- ✓ Where is that fear and reverence for God?
- ✓ Where is that time of prayer and meditation?
- ✓ Have we not defiled our bodies and despised authority and power?
- ✓ Where is that time of personal testing and waiting?
- ✓ Have you not concluded that the time of mountain experience has passed?
- ✓ Is your fire still burning?
- ✓ Where is that love for personal witnessing and evangelism-the heat beat of God?
- ✓ Where is that zeal and fervency for the things of God?
- ✓ Have we not left the place of Alter unattended?
- ✓ Yes we have left Bethel for too long, we have been too busy for days, months and years.

Brethren, the Lord is warning in Re. 3: 2-3 *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God”*.

Esau is around the corner with his strong army. Laban is pursuing you from behind to destroy. The only safe place is a Return to Bethel. Jacob was instructed to return to Bethel in his fears amidst his frustration among the multitude of his adversaries; there was an urgent call to go back to Bethel. Every believer needs to go back to Bethel. The problem of life will suffocate you except there is return to Bethel. The mountain will not move except you hearken to the Call. You might be destroyed in wilderness of life except you seek your God at Bethel. There would be no light in your dungeon or pit until you reach out for Bethel. It is time to rise as Jacob rose and went back to Bethel Gen.35:1.

PRAYERS POINTS

1. Father, give a revelation that will change my life, perception, idea attitude way of life and turn my total being around for good.
2. Every anti-holiness in my life, Father remove them and make me see your glory.
3. Earnestly pray for consecration, ask God for grace to live above the vanities of the world and to be obedient to Him completely.
4. Father, help me to make it to heaven.
5. Like Jabez, pray that God would bless you, enlarge your coast and cause you to flourish. (Chroni. 4.10 (Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request).

God bless you real good.

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