

Introduction

God makes Jacob the custodian of His redemptive plan

God completes Jacob's family as the next step in His redemptive plan

God rewards Isaac as part of His redemptive plan

A. God makes Jacob the custodian of His redemptive plan (READ 35:9-13)

1. While Jacob was at Bethel, God appeared to him again: this is now the 5th (or possibly 6th) encounter Jacob had with God:
 - a. Genesis 28:10-15: God appeared to Jacob in a dream and confirmed the covenant with him
 - b. Genesis 31:3: God spoke (didn't appear?) to Jacob 20+ years after living in Paddan-aram and told him to go back home
 - c. 32:1: angels met Jacob shortly after he left Paddan-aram (just says angels of God; might Christ have been one of them??)
 - d. 32:24-29: God appeared again as an angel (pre-incarnate Christ) and wrestled with Jacob
 - e. 25:1: God told Jacob to go to Bethel after living in Shechem for 10 years
2. Now, here in chapter 35 God appeared to him again, but this encounter was different in that it established Jacob as the earthly CUSTODIAN of the Abrahamic covenant:
 - a. I chose the term custodian because in a legal sense a custodian refers to the one who is responsible for safeguarding and managing something (e.g. if a parent dies before their children reach adulthood often a custodian is put in place to manage the estate until the child reaches adulthood)
 - b. Abraham was the first custodian of the covenant, then after he died Isaac became the custodian, and now that Isaac was nearing the end of his life, Jacob became the custodian and we see that reflected in this passage:
 - 1) God began by reminding Jacob of his new name (RE-READ 35:9-10):
 - a) This is a reminder because God already informed him of his new name back in 32 when He wrestled with Jacob (READ 32:27-28)
 - b) You may remember from when we studied that passage, there's debate over the literal meaning of "Israel" but the text made it clear that the name represented the fact that Jacob had wrestled with God and men and prevailed until the God blessed him (e.g. persisted)
 - c) Hosea 12:4 said this: **"Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought His favor"**
 - d) Ultimately, Jacob's descendants would become the nation God promised and would take this name, Israel, as their national identity; they were to be Jacob and persist in seeking God's blessing

- 2) After this, in preparation for Isaac's death, God made Jacob the custodian of the Abrahamic covenant and the one through whom He would continue His redemptive plan (RE-READ 35:11-12):
 - a) At this point, Jacob was nearly done having children (Rachel was pregnant with Benjamin, his last) so the command to "**be fruitful and multiply**" refers mainly to his sons and their descendants (the same was true of Noah when God commanded him to be fruitful and multiple when he was also done having children)
 - b) This is reflected in the next verse where God said that nations and kings would come from him and they would take over the land of Canaan, and historically that's exactly what happened (RE-READ 35:11b-12)
3. After this encounter, Jacob did the same thing he did the last time God appeared to him at Bethel: he memorialized it by building a pillar and making an offering (RE-READ 35:13-15)
4. Takeaway:
 - a. Jacob became the earthly custodian of the Abrahamic covenant, the one through whom God's continue His redemptive plan; it was through Jacob that future generations would learn about and experience God's promises
 - b. In a similar fashion, we—the Church—have become the custodians of the New Covenant established in Jesus Christ
 - 1) It is through us that the world hears about God's redemptive plan, the Gospel
 - 2) It is through us that the Good News is preached to the world

B. God completes Jacob's family as the next step in His redemptive plan (READ 35:16-26)
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1. We learn here that after he left Bethel and started heading south toward home, tragically Rachel died while giving birth to another son:
 - a. Initially, Rachel named him "**Ben-oni**" which means "**son of my suffering**" (or misfortune)
 - b. However, Jacob changed his name to "**Benjamin**" which means "**son of my right hand**", though it's not clear what this means or why Jacob changed it (some suggest it was because he didn't want his son's name to remind him of Rachel's death)
2. In the midst of this tragic event, however, there are some positive elements:
 - a. The first is that Benjamin was an answer to Rachel's prayer:
 - 1) You may remember the rivalry between Leah and Rachel over bearing children for Jacob
 - 2) Leah was the more fertile one giving birth to six sons to Rachel's one
 - 3) After giving birth to Joseph Rachel prayed that God would give her another (READ 30:22-24)
 - 4) We see the fulfillment of that here, especially in the words of Rachel's midwife when she said: "**Do not fear, for now you have another son.**" (35:17)

- b. The second is that Benjamin was Jacob's twelfth and final son which completed his family and finished the foundation upon which the nation of Israel would be built; and we see this in 35:23-26 (RE-READ)
 - c. Before we move on we need to address v. 22 which seems out of place: it's just a statement regarding Reuben's wicked and despicable sin with Jacob's concubine:
 - 1) It says Israel (Jacob) heard about it, but it doesn't appear that he did anything about it, at least at the time
 - 2) The consequences didn't come until later when Jacob prophesied about the future of each of his sons:
 - a) Reuben was the first born which means that he would inherit the birthright (a larger portion of the estate and the head of the family), but Jacob said that he "**shall not have preeminence**" meaning he wouldn't inherit that role (READ 49:3-4)
 - b) We know this is regarding the birthright because it states it in 1 Chronicles 5:1 (READ)
3. Takeaway: God's grace and faithfulness is seen at each step in His redemptive plan:
- a. We see His grace to Rachel by not forgetting about her, and answering her prayer and giving her another son
 - b. We see His faithfulness to Jacob by fulfilling many of the promises he made to him...returning him safely home, prospering him, and providing him with 12 sons who ultimately become the twelve tribes of the nation God promised Jacob would become
 - c. We see these same traits of grace and faithfulness throughout our relationship with the LORD, don't we?

<p>C. God rewards Isaac as part of His redemptive plan (35:27-29)</p>

- 1. While Jacob was away in Mesopotamia it appears Isaac and his family had moved from Beersheba to Hebron, about 30 miles north; we know this because v. 27 tells us that "**Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiraith-arba (that is, Hebron)**"
- 2. Jacob was around 100 years of age when he returned home which would have made Isaac around 160 (per Genesis 25:26 Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born)—meaning that Isaac lived another 20 years or so after Jacob returned home
- 3. The text says Isaac lived to 180 and then was "**gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age**" (29):
 - a. Something almost identical was said about Abraham back in Genesis 25 when he died
 - b. If you remember, I suggested that the phrase "**gathered to his people**" was not a synonym for death:
 - 1) According to multiple commentaries, it was an idiom used to describe being reunited with one's ancestors after death; listen to what the Jewish Publication Society's Torah Commentary on Genesis says (p. 174):

This phrase, peculiar to the Torah, is also used of Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, and Moses. An analysis of the contexts in which it is found reveals that it is to be distinguished from death itself because the action follows the demise. It is not the same as burial in an ancestral grave, because it is employed of Abraham, Aaron, and Moses, none of whom was buried with his forefathers. It is also not identical with interment in general because the report of burial follows this phrase, and the difference between the two is especially blatant in the case of Jacob, who was interred quite a while after being “gathered to his kin.” It would seem, therefore, that the existence of this idiom, as of the corresponding figure “to lie down with one’s fathers,” testifies to a belief that, despite his mortality and perishability, man possesses an immortal element that survives the loss of life. Death is looked upon as a transition to an afterlife where one is united with one’s ancestors.

- 2) This reminds me of something God said to Moses in Exodus 3:6: **“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...”**
 - 3) Jesus quoted this verse when debating with the Sadducees about the reality of life after death and resurrection, but then added, **“He is not the God of the dead but of the living”** proving that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all spiritually alive and had been gathered together after death
 - 4) An analysis of this phrase and a similar one (to lie down with one’s fathers) in the Bible shows that it was only used of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, Moses and David—all of whom we can safely assume were saved
 - 5) So, it’s reasonable to interpret the statement that Isaac **“was gathered to his people”** as a reference to him being reunited and united in Heaven with those of like faith who preceded him in death
- c. The other phrase, **“an old man of ripe age”** was also used of Abraham and is more literally **“old and full [or satisfied] of years”**: this could simply be an idiom to mean old, but it could also be interpreted to mean that he was **“satisfied with life”** or as the NET translates it, **“he died an old man who had lived a full life.”**
4. The last thing we read in our passage is that both Esau and Jacob buried their father
 5. Takeaway:
 - a. Because of Isaac’s part in God’s covenant, he experienced a full and satisfying life and was gathered to his people for all eternity
 - b. In the same way, because of our part in the New Covenant, Jesus offers us abundant life and I believe He was referring to both here and now in this earthly life and also in the life to come:
 - 1) This doesn’t mean we won’t have struggles or difficulties, we will
 - 2) However, because of Jesus we can have full and satisfying lives here and now in spite of anything we face
 - 3) And, when we come to the end of our days like Isaac, we can be assured that Jesus will take us safely to our eternal home where we will be gathered to our people—all those of the same faith who went on before us