

READ**Genesis 35:16-29****REFLECT****APPLY****JOY AND SORROW**

After Jacob had restored his relationship with God by returning to the place of his vow and recommitting his life to Him, they journeyed on from Bethel towards Ephrath which later became known as Bethlehem. However, on the journey a tragic event unfolded that brought joy and sorrow both at the same time.

CHILDBIRTH v 16-20 – during the journey from Bethel towards Bethlehem, Rachel's deep desire for another son was fulfilled. She had said 'Give me children, or else I die' (Gen 30:1), not knowing how that cry would be fulfilled. She had not realised, in her frustration at her infertility, that childbirth would for her, be life threatening. As it was, she lived long enough to see Joseph grow up and influence his young life to trust in God. This would never happen for her second son as her labour in childbirth became life threatening. Realising she was going to die, Rachel named her newborn baby 'Son of my sorrow'. Jacob intervened, proudly calling him 'Son of my right hand'. Rachel's two sons, both born from agonised prayers, would play a central role in God's purposes. Joseph, her firstborn would be the one through whom the nation of Israel would be delivered. Benjamin would be the tribe from whom not only King Saul would be born (1 Sam.9:1-2), but also the Apostle Paul, who brought the gospel to the Gentiles (Phil.3:5). Deeply bereaved after her tragic death, Jacob marked the place of Rachel's burial with another of his characteristic pillars that became a landmark for the nation of Israel in days to come.



Rachels tomb *biblediscovered.com*

How does being confronted with the imminence of death change your relationship with people?

Consider the sons of Leah. What were they characterised by? How does that reflect man's position under the bondage of the law?

REUBEN'S DISGRACE v 21-22 – despite his close relationship with God, trouble was never far from Jacob and his large family. After Rachel's death, he settled in Bethlehem near the tower of Eder (the tower of the flock). Whilst there, his eldest son, Reuben, disgraced his position in the family by committing adultery with Bilhah, his father's concubine. The event, though apparently unpunished in this chapter, was judged in Genesis 49:4 when Israel denied Reuben his position as first-born son, because of his disgraceful immoral act.

ISRAEL'S GENERATION v 23-26 – in the genealogy of the sons of Israel (Jacob), Reuben remains first, just as Benjamin is listed as born in Padan-Aram, even though he was in fact, born in Canaan. The list is the beginning of the fulfilment of the Lord's promises to Abraham. From his twelve great-grandsons would grow a nation through whom God would demonstrate His Sovereign power, protection and love, and ultimately, His gracious salvation.

Reuben, Simeon and Levi appear to be unaware of the gravity of their sin. In what way does awareness of sin lead to repentance and a desire for change? (Romans 3:20, Gal.3:24)

THE DEATH OF ISAAC v 27-29 – finally returning to Hebron, Jacob was reunited with his father. Isaac had lived another 21 years after the notorious events that surrounded the blessing of his sons. Without his eyesight, and frail in his body, he waited for Jacob to return to him. Isaac never met Rachel, the beloved wife, but he would have been introduced to Leah, his twelve grandsons and Dinah, his granddaughter. No doubt there were also great grandchildren too. Isaac would have been assured that the promises given to him by God were being fulfilled. So it was, that Jacob and his father were reunited and reconciled before Isaac's death at 180 years of age. He was the longest living of all the patriarchs.

*'A wise son makes his father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.'
Proverbs 15:20*