

A Heart Changed

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2016

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] Now as we come to this 33rd chapter, continuing our progress through this section of the lives of Isaac and Jacob, we come then to this reunion much dreaded by Jacob with his brother Esau.

This, as we mentioned in previous weeks, was that which simply had to be faced, had to be gone out of the way. There is going to be no peace in Canaan, no peace for Jacob and his family until this challenge is faced.

And this comparatively short chapter begins with Jacob in potential fear of his life. As you know, the Israelites were later on encouraged to recite when they brought their first fruits to the tabernacle and to the priests, to begin with this statement, a Syrian ready to perish was my father.

Deuteronomy 26 and verse 5, we have that there. A Syrian ready to perish was my father. And then he went down into Egypt and so on. And this Syrian ready to perish is a reference to Jacob.

He had come out of the land of Syria. He had come from Pan and Aram. And although, yes, he had his wives and his children and his flocks and his herds, he had nothing else. He had only the Lord as his protection.

[1 : 20] He had no house of stone at that time. He had no city to dwell in. There was only his tents. There was only the protection of the Lord. And we tend to think, perhaps with hindsight, we think in terms of, you know, the tabernacle.

We think in terms of David and Solomon and all the heroes of the Old Testament. But all of that is hundreds of years in the future. At this patriarchal time, when Abraham and Isaac and Jacob have nothing but the knowledge of the Lord who speaks directly to them out of the darkness.

They have nothing but this relationship with the Lord. No temple. No priesthood. No nothing. It is just them and the Lord in this patriarchal simplicity.

It is a relationship well and truly there because there is no organized religion at that time. And we may forget just how ancient is this time of which Jacob is living and in which he is situated.

By the end of the chapter, we find that he is settled in the promised land. He has a house of his own. He has land that he himself has bought and paid for.

[2 : 35] But at the beginning, nothing stands between himself and the vengeance of Esau except the Lord. And once he is settled in Canaan, then it is only the Lord that is his peace and his protection.

And it concludes with him setting up the altar for the worship of the Lord in peace. Now, if we look just briefly to the end of the chapter here. We see that this land that he possesses at the end. He bought it of the children of Amor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money. Now, something which indicates the ancient nature of this situation is that the word translated in English as pieces of money.

It's not quite unique in scripture, but it is extremely unusual. It occurs only three times. It is here in Genesis 33. It occurs again, I'm talking about the Hebrew word, which is translated with the term pieces.

At Joshua 24, at verse 32, which is really just describing this transaction, where we read the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem in a parcel of ground, which Jacob bought of the sons of Amor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver.

[3 : 53] And it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. And likewise, again, in Job chapter 42, at verse 11, we read, Then there came unto him all his brethren, all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before.

They had eaten bread with him in his house. They had been moaned him and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

Now, what makes it unusual? What makes it unusual is that this word translated a piece means literally a lamb. A lamb of money, or a lamb of silver. And some people have speculated that this means, oh, well, they were just bartering.

They were trading with actual lambs. Except that in Joshua, it specifies its pieces of silver. And this is a most likely meaning that at that time in history, the trading amongst these pastoral nomadic peoples meant that there had become, by that stage, a standard weight of silver in a coin, standard weight, stamped with the image of a lamb, to indicate that this would be the set price, the standard price for a lamb.

This weight of a coin of silver with a lamb stamped on it, this would be a lamb of money, a lamb of silver. Because this is what the original Hebrew means.

[5 : 16] What's translated a piece of money means literally a lamb of money, a lamb of silver. Now, we have other precedents in history for this. In later Greek civilizations, they referred to an ox, either of gold or copper or whatever it was made of, because it was a coin stamped with an ox.

Perhaps it was the price of an ox, perhaps it wasn't. And later on in the 17th or 18th century, in France, they standardized their money by calling the gold coins a Louis d'Arc.

In other words, a Louis of gold, or just abbreviated to Louis because it was a gold coin stamped with the image of King Louis. So it was referred to as a Louis because of the image that was stamped on it.

So likewise, there is a lamb, almost certainly, probably a lamb stamped on these kinds of silver coins of a certain weight, which probably were the amount of money, one coin, one lamb.

And this is 100 pieces of money for this. Why is that significant? Well, it's significant because it indicates a time before the city-states and monarchies and empires had grown up to be powerful enough to be minting their own money.

[6 : 35] It's not Babylonian money. It's not Egyptian money. It's not Assyrian money. It's not money of this city-state or Jerusalem or Jericho or anything like that.

It's simply silver coins stamped with a lamb, which indicates nobody is yet powerful enough, rich enough, sophisticated enough in their city-state civilizations to be minting their own money, producing their own coin.

It is clearly that which is beginning to replace the old money, the old way of doing things. If you look back, for example, to when Abraham, in chapter 23, is buying a place in which to bury Seah his wife, we see in chapter 23, at verse 16, where it says, Abraham hearkened unto Ephron, and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver.

Whatever it was, the items of silver or the wedges of silver or the weight, it had to be weighed out. It wasn't counted out pieces of money. So the old way that Abraham and people were doing it then is now beginning to be replaced by this new, perhaps more standardized form of coin, but not yet at the stage of the city-state sophistication civilization where people are actually stamping, printing their own state, empire, nation, money.

Now remember, Genesis is an ancient time being described. Patriarchal days before major civilizations get up and running. Job is almost certainly the oldest written book of the Bible.

[8 : 17] Yes, it is describing a time that's later on in the Bible record than the Genesis times, but remember that the first five books of the Bible, they are entitled the books of Moses.

In other words, the Lord inspired Moses to record these factual events, either which had been handed down with oral tradition from the ancient times, or these are now being written down, the oral tradition being itself inspired of God, but at any rate, or himself being directly inspired by the Lord himself to write these things down.

At any rate, Moses comes much, much later than Jacob, and Jacob, likewise, is almost certainly later than the time described in the book of Job. So it is ancient times after the practice of simply weighing out silver and gold, but before civilizations and city-states and empires begin to get up and running and organized and making their own money, minting their own money.

So it's just a little sort of historical aside there. This is the kind of business that they engage in. But going back then to the beginning of the chapter, here we have Jacob facing his worst fear.

Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him 400 men. Now as we mentioned, Jacob knew this danger must be faced if he and his family were to have any peace in

the promised land.

[9 : 48] Each of us, at different times in our lives, each of us have no doubt, come and face up to different times and situations as an obstacle, a challenge, a danger, of which we are deeply afraid, which we just wish wouldn't happen and hoped we would never have to face.

And yet it comes upon us. You know, Job, to go back to the book of Job, you know, at the end of chapter 3, remember how he says, you know, I was neither in peace and safety, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came.

Now that's just trouble in general. But for each of us, no doubt, there have been things of which we have been deeply afraid. And maybe an exam. It may be an interview.

It may be something to do with our relationship. It may be an event or a job or something that we just don't want or an outcome that we are terribly afraid of happening.

And we don't want it to happen. But we know we have to go through it. We know we have to face it down. Or we'll have to run away from it.

[10 : 56] There are such things which come in almost all of our lives, probably all of our lives, certainly most of our individual lives, from which we must flee or to which we must face up.

Now if you flee from it, you may avoid the immediate conflict and the immediate problem, but the thing itself will still be there. It will not go away. It will not magically melt into the atmosphere.

There are things that come in our lives which we have to just clench our teeth and face down. And until we do so, they will not magically disappear. And I, myself, and others, no doubt, have been in the situation where I pray like mad.

I want you to make this go away. Make it so that I don't have to bite this bullet. Make it so that I don't have to make this choice and do this thing. Just make it go away. That was sorted.

If this just happened, it just melted away and the situation changed. It all worked out like I wanted to do. I wouldn't have to face this problem. I wouldn't have to face this danger.

[11 : 59] Just make it go away, Lord. But the Lord doesn't make it go away. Because he knows, and deep down we know, there is such a challenge, such a danger or a threat, which unless we face it down, will always be hunting us down in the back of our mind.

You can flee from it. And then you don't have to engage the butts. It will always be there. And eventually you will have to come back and face it sometime. So we read, Jacob lifted up his eyes, and behold, Esau came.

Now he isn't just sort of rolling the dice and seeing what happens here. When we are faced with this particular danger, this thing which we fear, whoever it should be, whatever it should be, we take an example from Jacob.

We see in the previous chapters when we have prayed about it. Not just a one-off quick prayer to heaven, but when we have really prayed consistently and with fear and with expectation, with trust in the Lord, when we have prayed, when we have prepared with everything that we had.

Remember how we said in previous weeks how Jacob made use of what the Lord had given into his hand. He sent this present to Esau. Not just one big drove, but he sent little drip by drip, incremental, so many rams, so many ewes, so many goats, so many oxen, so many donkeys, and so on.

[13 : 28] And keep it coming, drove by drove, always with the same message. Well, it's a present to find grace in the sight of my Lord Esau. And behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us.

He's coming. Here's a present. He's coming. Here's another present. He's coming. Make use of what the Lord has given you. And also reinforce the message that terrified as Jacob may be, he's not going to run from this one.

He is going to face it down. So when we have prayed, when we have prepared, when we have wrestled, as Jacob does in a previous chapter, remember with the angel or the man of God until the dawn, when we have acted with such prudence and wisdom and discretion as the Lord has granted, you get to the stage where now there is nothing to be done but to face the challenge, the danger, the thing you most fear.

And when you have done all and committed it all to the Lord, do what Jacob does here. He lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, Esau.

When you have committed it all to the Lord and done all that you can, lift up your eyes and go forward. Just remember what Jesus says to his own disciples again when he's talking about times of trouble and difficulty.

[14 : 54] Men's hearts failing them for fear. This is Luke chapter 21 and verse 26. And for looking after those things which are coming on the earth for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh.

Jesus is describing a time of untold upheaval, of fearful things happening, of all the previous orders of the world collapsing. Now Jacob isn't facing that.

And most of us aren't facing that in our individual lives. Though it can seem like that as though the world is collapsing around us. It isn't really. You can take it to the Lord.

You commit your ways to the Lord. You do all that you can by way of preparation and prudence and wisdom. And when you have committed it all to the Lord, look up and go forward.

[15 : 54] Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, Esau came and 400 men with him. Esau was right there before Jacob, the thing he most feared.

But the Lord was way ahead of him and had gone before him. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost.

And Leah and her children after Rachel and Joseph and the most. And he passed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. He still has to act with prudence.

Just because the Lord is in charge doesn't mean that we have to throw caution to the winds. God expects us to act with wisdom and prudence and with prudence in all things.

He still acts wisely as the situation is required. Now if now there be no opportunity for escape yet Jacob still will arrange his family in such a way as to maximise protection of the most beloved if they are attacked or to maximise dignity and order of beloved rank if they are led with peace.

[17 : 10] The handmaids and their children first then Leah then Rachel the most beloved wife and all their respective children with them. Now we must take it that the respective love and honour shown here in their different rankings reflects not so much Jacob's love for the respective children themselves as for their mothers.

It's not that he loves Joseph more he loves Reuben or Isaac or Zegulon or whatever. It's rather that he loves Rachel best of all. He loves and respects Leah and Hitch the mother of most of his children.

The two handmaids he didn't get a lot of choice in his relationships with them and they are after all only handmaids they are not his wives in the same status so they go first and their children Gad and Asher and Dan and Nathalie and the two handmaids they go first.

So the lowest first and then the next most senior and just like with the droves he keeps on the incremental effect but the rankings go from lowest to highest in the sense of not least beloved but most beloved coming last and the ranking is not for the children themselves the ranking is for the love and honour that he places upon their mothers the handmaids then Leah then Rachel notice this we should not take it that Jacob loves some of his children less than he loves others of his speech but rather that the respective love that he has for their mothers Rachel is the beloved wife there's no question about that Leah is the next most she is a legitimate genuine wife she is the mother of most of his children the handmaids are less important because they are handmaids because he didn't get a choice in a sense they got less of a choice themselves too similarly the love which the Lord has for his own children over against the creatures of the field or the deep or the unbelieving and unredeemed portion of the mass of humanity reflects his love not only for the children themselves but for his beloved son his spouse the church think on it the Lord loves the world

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life so God loves all that he has made he made it good he made it very good so he loves the creatures of the deep he loves the beasts of the field the birds of the air he loves what he has done he loves every individual human who is brought into being he loves them they are the work of his hands the work of his creation but there is any special love a different category of love for those who are essentially his own his redeemed who are his by love and by relationship and not just by creation it's a different kind of love it's a different category of love and it is focused ultimately not in our different his redeemed believing children are from unbelieving human beings but rather his love for his only beloved son his love for his spouse the church it is if you like the parent who guarantees the position of the child it is the love born to the parent which

orders the ranking of the children as they are presented to Esau the Lord loves his children yes but he loves his beloved son most of all there is no bond of love deeper more powerful or more intense than that amongst the persons of the Trinity and if we are saved and redeemed by Christ then we are welcomed into glory not because we are good or kind or nice or have made a good job of our lives down here but because we are his because we belong to

[21 : 21] Christ that is why we are in the position we are in not because we are better than other people not because we look nice or behave more kindly or speak more softly or because we do better things but because of who we belong to so likewise with the children here they are ranked in terms of their dignity or their exposure to danger we might say depending on who they belong to and the love that their father has for their respective spouse so this then is the situation but above all before them all remember how we said that the Lord goes before Jacob to Esau so likewise Jacob seeking to be like the Lord before he puts his handmaids and their children and Leah and her children and Rachel and Joseph in their different writings he himself goes before them all he exposes himself to the greatest danger he puts himself in the position of protecting them as much as possible if Esau has an argument it is with

Jacob if he has resentment it is with Jacob not with these women and children not with these flocks and herds and there was reason to hope that if Esau's vengeance and blood lust was at its worst Jacob going ahead of them might be cut down and murdered or whatever in full view of them but then Esau might be satisfied and the others might escape he puts himself ahead of them all he puts himself in a position of danger he himself passed over before them verse 3 and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother and then we read verse 4 here's the miracle Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him and they wept now we might think oh there's nothing to worry about all this time it was just Esau coming with a great big retinue to meet his brother no it wasn't if you're coming with a retinue to meet your brother you bring flocks and herds for feasts you bring your women and children to sell family tents to have a nice big gathering and festivities and so on this was a war party this was a small army this was intended to wreak vengeance on Jacob so what had happened

God had changed his heart Jacob had wrestled with the angel of the Lord he had played with the Lord himself and as the Lord had pronounced through the angel in chapter 32 as a prince with God and with men he had prevailed verse 28 of chapter 32 thy name shall be called no more Jacob of Israel for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men now you seem to be a prince not only with God but with men God has gone before him and changed the heart of his vengeful brother he has changed Esau from the one who sought bloody justice to the one who now is magnanimous and forgiving remember that there is no question here Jacob does not say oh brother I'm so sorry I stole your birthright I'm so sorry I deceived you out of your blessing

I wish it hadn't happened I repent of it because all of these things were under God's hand reprehensible as the methods may have been the outcome was according to God's intention he is not able under God to renounce that which the Lord has placed upon him he is not able to renounce the blessing or the privilege or the covenant line which is now his according to the word of God but he does seek peace with his brother and God changes Esau's heart so we read in Proverbs 21 verse 1 the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will God changes men's hearts Proverbs 16 at verse 7 when a man's ways please the Lord he may give even his enemies to be at peace with him so likewise Jacob had gone from being the twister the supplanter to being the one who now lived under

God's protection and guidance we'd seen evidence in the previous chapters of how Jacob's outlook and his behaviour had altered had changed he was now a man under God's protection he's now a man living to serve and pleased the Lord he's now a man acknowledging God's hand in the giving him of his wives and his children and his wealth and his flocks and herds and this is also reflected now in the answer that Jacob gives to Esau he said who are these who are those with me he could have said well that's my family but instead he says the children which God hath graciously given thy servant he never forgets his respect to his elder brother but above all he never forgets his thankfulness to the Lord the children which God hath graciously given to thy servant it is the answer of godliness and gratitude going beyond mere information to giving thanks to God

[26 : 58] Jacob's family likewise come forward and bow to Esau and they have either been taught beforehand by Jacob look at it all goes okay this is how you behave you bow to Esau seven times just like I do you come before him you show him respect if it all goes well presumably if it didn't go

well you have to run but you know these things are in the Lord's hands now either they're taught beforehand or they're taking their cue from what Jacob himself does or more likely it is a combination of both when we are to be instructed in the ways that we are to face the dangers and difficulties of the world we are taught in God's word what we should do we are taught how we should behave how we should act how we should prepare ourselves but also we have the living witness and example of our Lord himself what would Jesus do how did Jesus behave they are watching Jacob to see his example as he has taught him as he has instructed him so he lives it out so we likewise see how

Jesus himself went before us and we are to follow him his teaching his example and to take our instruction from this word it is not an either or it is a both and and likewise you know remember when Paul wrote his letters he said to people you know whatever you've seen in me do that whatever I've taught you follow that go by my example go by my witness not many of us can see that such are our Christian lives and the poverty of them but we are taught to imitate Christ himself and his apostles and we trust hope and pray that our Christian lives will be so consistent that others will be guided not only by what we claim to believe but how we live it out and how we behave that should be our goal that should be our objective and then we have this discussion about the present that Jacob has brought now Jacob has sent this present through fear he has been hoping to placate his brother but he urges its acceptance through love he wants him to accept it through love I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God and thou was pleased with me now he's not likening Esau to the Lord himself but rather I think we should understand it as God has shown his face to me God has shown his mercy to me and that he has reconciled you my brother to me he has done the impossible for all the droves and flocks in the world would not have changed Esau's heart God has changed his heart just as God changed the heart of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road just as God changes the heart of every soul that is brought from darkness to light from death to life from unbelief to faith it is a work of God doing the impossible for all the religion in all the world and all the upbringing and all the culture to which we may be exposed which may be Christian in its heritage will not save people's souls it is a work of

God that changes people's hearts accept it take I pray thee verse 11 my blessing that is brought to thee because God hath dealt graciously with me and because I have enough now the opportunity to take back his present that might be a very real temptation but if somebody had told him beforehand you're going to have to part with these flocks and herds these 550 beasts or 580 depending how you count but Esau is going to be reconciled he just said yeah go take it cheap at the price God has changed his heart this is a little enough offering to give because God hath dealt graciously with me and because I have enough now the word that we have translated here as enough for Jacob it's slightly different from where Esau says in verse 9 I have enough my brother I've got sufficiency I've got plenty but what Jacob is saying here verse 11 although it is translated as enough what it literally means is I have all I have everything now of course he doesn't have everything he's giving chunks of it away to

Esau but he takes what he has as being all over and above what he means and it's it's because he has the Lord it's like what Paul writes to the Philippians in chapter 4 and verse 18 I have all and abound I am full having received the things which were sent from you an odor of a sweet smell a sacrifice acceptable well pleasing to God but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus now Paul had needs he had hunger and thirst he had material requirements just like everybody else and what he writes to the Philippians is I have all I have a sufficiency for my individual needs here and I have the Lord so I have all and as he wrote to the Corinthians 1st Corinthians 3 verse 21 therefore let no man glory in men but all things are yours if you're in Christ you own all things they're all at your disposal whether Paul or Apostle Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come all are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is

[32 : 41] God's I have enough I have all and he said well let's take our journey and go go together I'll go before he says no no you go ahead oh well let us leave some of the men here with you now an escort would have been nice remember that Jacob and his family are pretty much exposed there in the desert Laban when he was chasing him might he have thought a little bit twice about coming up behind Jacob and surprising him there in the mountains of Gilead if Jacob had had 400 men with him armed and ready do you think Laban might have backed off a bit so yeah he saw his guard of honour that he is offering him here it would have enhanced Jacob's status in the eyes of the world it

might have protected him against bandits and against wild beasts but hither to the Lord and helped him and he couldn't tempt providence you know as Ezra said later on in many centuries later when the children of

Israel were journeying from captivity back to the holy land he says I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way because we had spoken unto the king saying the hand of our God is upon us all for to appall them for good that seek him but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him in other words Ezra said the Lord will protect us so we can't take a bunch of soldiers to protect us and Jacob is effectively saying the Lord has helped us up to now there's also a sense of perhaps prudence here if Esau and Jacob have been reconciled that's a great mercy but let's not tempt providence here better to have a brief time of joyful reunion and then just separate out from a wee while you know what families are like you know that you can love your families as much as any of brothers or sisters or their families and their kids but put them all together in one comparatively confined house and the first couple of days will be alright and then the next few days will be a bit more tense and then it will be an absolute miracle if by the end of a week people are like I just can't stand being here with cousins so and so oh they really drive me up the water the way they do this and they do that and they do that and they can't wait to either have our own house back or go back home or whatever and it's not because you don't love these people it's not because you don't like them it's just being thrown together in close proximity no matter how wonderful it was to see them spend too much time in too much close proximity and it racks up the tension and it is tempting providence and

Esau and Jacob no doubt are no different Esau is impulsive he is ready to act on anything he sees his brother he runs to me he weeps on his neck he kisses him it's all smiles and all reunion and the Lord has changed his heart and he absolutely means it but everyone is human you know after a little while when he's used to his band of men and raiders moving fast moving at speed ready to live by the sword and here's this bunch of whinging men and women and children and little babies with snot and whining and can't sleep at night you know remember the oldest of Jacob's children Reuben is probably no more than 12 years old at this point so all the other kids are younger than that they're all little children young children four women little children yes there's shepherds and herdsmen and handmaidens and so on as well but it's not a vast powerful company it's certainly not a war band like Esau has there's no way they can keep up and

Jacob is wise enough to recognize this distinction so he says no there's no need for that verse 15 you know you go on and I'll come up and I'll catch you in due course I'll come on to Mount Seir where you live now here we have then we have a promise you might say a promise made is it a promise kept we don't read in scripture that Jacob subsequently went on to Mount Seir and met up with Esau but it is impossible to believe that he would have dissembled here it is impossible to believe that he would have lied and said oh yeah we'll come to Mount Seir and then quickly cross the Jordan ignore it don't go back the old Jacob younger in years but the old nature might well have dissembled the new Jacob who is now right with the Lord is not going to deceive his brother yet again after all these years so what we have is almost certainly a journey whereby yes he journeys to Succoth Succoth is about five miles again to the west of Penuel so they moved on five miles down the river and then they set up these booths and he builds himself a house he gives them all a chance to rest and recuperate but we must take it that he then went on to Mount Seir he moved south down the east of the

Dead Sea he met up with Esau and then round the bottom of the Dead Sea and up to Hebron and Manra where his aging father would be can we honestly believe that it would take until chapter 35 verse 27 Jacob came to Isaac his father to Manra to the city of Arba which is Hebron where Abraham and Isaac soldier and then it records Isaac's death that he would be there in the promised land all that time all those years and never so much as paid respects to his father it's impossible to believe so we must take it that what we have here are many silent years silent journeys journeys that scripture does not record times of family reunion times of visiting with the different branches of the family with Esau with Isaac and making up again catching up across the years but nothing remarkable the Bible doesn't record a huge amount of domestic intimacy it doesn't record a huge amount of just family reunions and getting together and so on it records major events it records how [38 : 52] Isaac gets a wife it records how David goes to war how Solomon gains the kingdom but there's hundreds of years and hundreds of incidents in between where there is silence which scripture does not record you have ten generations enunciated in ten lives and who begat who and

somebody begat somebody else and all the years of their lives and all the babies they had and all the relationships they formed and all the things that happened past over two hours there are many silent years in scripture indeed the other most common kind in the Bible there are many silent journeys that we must understand people to have taken it's not recorded doesn't mean it didn't happen how much of your life or my life would ever be recorded in the annals of our nation how many things would ever make the news in our lives doesn't mean we didn't happen doesn't mean we didn't live and serve the Lord so he came we must assume verse 18 is him coming now having been to visit Esau having been to visit his father round the bottom of the Dead

Sea up then to Hebron and then north to Shechem it does mean that all his company wouldn't have had to cross the Jordan they go down the end of the Dead Sea they go back up again they visit Esau along the way they see Isaac and he comes down to Shalom this may or may not be the same as Salim where in where John chapter 3 verse 43 John was also baptising Enon near to Salim because there was much water there that might be where he's staying we don't though it might simply be a description of peace like the word Shalom from which it might come the Hebrew word that means peace because the Lord had brought them back in peace to the promised land and so he is settled there he buys this parcel of land and we talked about the buying of the parcel of land at the beginning of the sermon there and now what is the main thing that is recorded he recorded he erected there an altar and called it El Eloche Israel God the God of Israel now you remember before when he was dealing with Laban a swear by the God of his father Abraham and the fear of his father Isaac but now he is accepting naming the God of his forefathers as his God my God God the God of Israel now he has a land of his own a parcel of ground what does he do he steps up an altar to the living God when the Lord gives us a sphere of influence or authority of our own when he gives us a family when he gives us a home of our own the most important thing that any believing soul can should or must do within that sphere of their power or authority your influence is set up the worship of the living God in its midst that there should be the worship of the Lord preferably morning and evening that there should be an altar in every Christian home in every Christian family a spiritual altar where the word is opened and read where the Lord is in pleaded with prayer where God the God of Israel is implored from every Christian head of every Christian family this is what Jacob is doing because as his title for the Lord has now changed it indicates to us nobody will get to heaven on the basis of who their grandfather was nobody will get to heaven because Abraham was our father nobody will get to heaven because Isaac was a godly man and he was my father many of us may have been brought up in Christian homes with Christian heritage and Christian upbringing but have turned our backs on it you will not be in glory because of how godly your grandparents or your parents may have been he must be your God your Savior your deliverer or you will not be delivered at all it is not just the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac but God the God of Israel God the God of your name your heart your soul nobody will be saved because of somebody else's relationship with the Lord this is Israel's God this is the one who must be your God as well and mine many of us are filled with doubts the Lord's disciples had doubts Thomas the greatest doubter of them all and yet the Lord said look my hands and my feet see it is I and we must say likewise what Jacob says here and what Thomas likewise said in the upper room my Lord and my God the Lord's you