

## Arise, Go Back to Go Forward

**Mat 4:18-20** And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. {19} Then He said to them, “**Follow Me**, and I will make you fishers of men.” {20} They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

When God starts us on a path, He intends for us to remain on it but **we have a habit** of swerving, falling short of the calling and missing the way. When we do, **He reminds us to get back to where we started. He reiterates the original terms of covenant.**

**Peter** began his “Walk” to the call of “Follow Me.” **3.5 years later**, after forsaking Jesus and denying Him with an oath, **Jesus visits him again:**

**John 21:19-22** This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “**Follow Me.**” {20} Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” {21} Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” {22} Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You **follow Me.**”

Jesus’ heart had not changed despite Peter’s abandonment. Peter was so far off track, he needed to know that. **The gifts and callings of God are without repentance...**

**In Genesis** (Beginnings = Principles and Patterns for all of human history) **we see the covenant man, Abraham** to whom God promised great things and territory:

**Gen 12:8** 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 on the name of the LORD.**

Bethel was not so-named at that time (Luz). Later it would undergo a name-change. What is important is that God met with Abraham there when he called on the name of the Lord. However, Abraham **journeyed on** to Egypt where he encountered severe difficulties and, although the Lord was watching over him, he **no longer heard** from **God.**

**Gen 13:1-4** Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. {2} Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. {3} And he went on his journey from the South as far as **Bethel**, to **the place where his tent had been at the beginning**, between Bethel and Ai, {4} to the place of the **altar which he had made there at first.** And there **Abram called on the name of the LORD.**

**And, Abraham heard from God. Later, Jacob came to this same place:**

**Gen 28:10-22** Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. {11} So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. {12} Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. {13} And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “**I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.** {14} “Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be

blessed. {15} “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and **will bring you back to this land**; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” {16} Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” {17} And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the **house of God**, and this is **the gate of heaven!**” {18} Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. {19} And **he called the name of that place Bethel**; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. {20} **Then Jacob made a vow**, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, {21} “so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. {22} “And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

The Lord reiterates His covenant terms. Note that it is that place where He presented Himself to Abraham and now to Jacob. **Abraham learned to go back there if he really wanted to meet with God. Jacob will learn this also. First, however, he, like Abraham, will journey on (as he is fleeing his brother’s wrath). 20 years pass when:**

**Gen 31:13** ‘I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now **arise, get out of this land, and return** to the land of your family.’”

The Lord had watched over him but they **had no contact during all those years**. Now, God is calling again. He will not withdraw the original terms of covenant. Thus, in the very **midst of all our wandering**, stumbling, stops and starts, He reminds us of our beginnings. Consider:

**Rev 2:4-5** “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. {5} “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.

Consider the **context of Hebrews 10 which is a call to holiness and a statement that you are not to cast away your confidence... for the Hebrews had gone backwards:**

**Heb 10:32** But **recall the former days** in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

Consider the **context of the Galatians who had “fallen from grace,” gone back to the law, and been deluded by false teachers:**

**Galatians 3:2–3** <sup>2</sup> This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—<sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

The **Lord always calls us back to higher ground from which we have declined**. At the beginning of our Christian life there is a freshness to everything and a devotion flowing from it. All too often, this **grows cold because the world, the flesh, and the devil take their toll** on us and dim our vision and still our ardor.

**Returning to Jacob, we can see this in his attitudes 20 years after his vow.**

**Gen 33:18-20** Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. {19} And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money. {20} Then he erected an altar there and called it **Ei Elohe Israel**.

**He returned to the land but lived in it as unseparated from its people. Therefore, he got in major trouble. His boys, Simeon and Levi avenged wrong done to their sister Dinah by killing an entire city. Jacob's response:**

**Gen 34:30** {30} Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

**Notice that he doesn't notice that he was in the wrong place. We, too, can get so caught up in the circumstances of the moment that we fail to see that we have fallen short of the original terms:**

**Gen 35:1-2** Then God said to Jacob, "**Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there**; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." {2} And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments."

**Note God's positive direction, not negative criticism. Jacob recognizes how far away he is from the original terms; "Put away the foreign gods...purify yourselves...change your garments. What you tolerate in Shechem will not do in the House of God! (In Shechem it was El Elohe Israel, God, the God of Israel, but it will not be so at Bethel.**

**Gen 35:6-7** So Jacob came to Luz that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. {7} And he built an altar there and called the place **El Bethel**, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

Here it is **God, the House of God. He is Alpha and Omega!** Have you wandered from the original terms? Lost freshness? Grown cold? Settled outside your inheritance? Gotten in trouble there in Schechem? Tolerated idols (things God would never approve)? Then **go back to the beginning. God wants to meet with you!**

**Gen 35:9-12** Then **God appeared to Jacob again**, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. {10} And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but **Israel shall be your name.**" So He called his name Israel. {11} Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. {12} "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

When Jacob finally got back to the beginning, the Lord appeared to him, changed the man, changed his name, reiterated the terms of the covenant as at the beginning, and pointed him to his destiny!

**It's time to Go Back to Go Forward!**