

This time of year proves to be a very hard time for many of us, as we remember the passing of loved ones at the holidays. May we find much help and instruction as we focus on how Scripture memorializes the deaths – and the lives – of both believer and nonbeliever.

**Monday: Read Genesis 35:13-15****Renewed by Reminders**

Before we speak of memorials to humans, marvel at how God memorialized Himself, coming down to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 35:9-13). In just his time of need after a fearful trip through hostile territory (Gen. 35:5), God came to Jacob as He comes to us – with reminders of our earthly security in Him and of our heavenly inheritance “kept safe” for us in heaven (see 1 Peter 1:3-4). As Rev. Bill Harrell points out in his comments on Gen. 35:13, the Lord goes up visibly from Jacob back to heaven, just as He showed Himself in heaven during their first meeting at Bethel (Gen. 28:13). It was “a token of his own sure exaltation one day...to be with the Lord in His glory forever.”

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God that He knows how to come to us in our need, clearly and memorably revealing something of His wisdom, will, purpose and grace for our lives so that we, like Jacob, are reinvigorated in new acts of worship, even as Jacob anoints the pillar as a memorial in Gen. 35:14. May the Lord revive us with reminders of the heavenly inheritance waiting for us, and may we lift our eyes with Jacob to behold by faith where Jesus has gone as the Pioneer of our faith.

**Tuesday: Read Genesis 35:13-15 & Ge. 48:2-4****Preserving Memories**

At the end of his life, Jacob spoke once again of God’s memorable appearance to him at Bethel (also called Luz in Gen. 35:6). Though he was on his death bed, he was able to rouse himself by faith. The first words out of his mouth spoke of God’s blessings confirmed to him at that beloved place, Bethel, or “House of God.”

**Meditate and Pray:** God knows how to give us lasting memories of His saving grace – potent enough to stick in our minds even on our death beds, like Jacob! Thank Him that, because of His Saving Work, we will always have much to remember and speak about when it comes to memorializing God’s grace in our lives. The Psalmist had it right when it comes to remembering the Lord’s Goodness to us:

*All you have made will praise you, O Lord; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom (Ps. 145:10-12).*

Lord, may we speak like this, so that the whole world would know. Amen.

**Wednesday: Read Genesis 35:16-20****Living Memorials**

If we need proof of the strengthening of Jacob's faith after Bethel, we need look no further than the bold faith by which Jacob renamed – and reclaimed – his youngest son, born through the deadly childbirth of Rachel. In her despair she named him after her sorrow—and what believer would not be tempted to name such a child, “son of my sorrow” in such a trial? Jacob changed it to a triumphant name, “Benjamin,” meaning, “son of my right hand.” In this way, Jacob identifies his son as a “living memorial” whose very life is a testimonial to God's gracious provision and answer to prayer. After all, Rachel had prayed and asked God for this son (Gen. 30:24). Jacob therefore erects another pillar (Gen. 35:20) as a thankful memorial to the life he had shared with his beloved Rachel and in recognition of the continuance of God's promises in the lives of her sons, Joseph and Benjamin.

**Meditate and Pray:** Do you have “living memorials” whom God has placed in your life to remind you of His faithfulness and goodness? Treasured friendships of faith? Spiritual counselors and encouragers within your church family? Covenant children who give you hope for the future progress of the Gospel? Thank Him for all such “memorials.” Thank God for the promise of Psalm 145:4-5:

*One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty... (Psalm 145:4-5).*

**Thursday: Read Genesis 35:16-20 & Genesis 30:15-24****Memorials of Thankfulness**

Remember that unbelievers in the Bible are not usually memorialized in terms of altars, pillars or other public expressions of gratitude to God for their lives. They simply die and are cut off in the narrative of the Bible and their place remembers them no more. Where are the Babylonians, the Assyrians and others who made a “name” for themselves while alive but who are so soon forgotten? What a contrast with Rachel in her death. Not only does her husband remember her with a pillar set up before the Lord, God Himself remembered her (Gen. 30:22) and gave her children as a token of His mindfulness of her prayers for a fruitful family. Surely Rachel's prayer of faith was answered in the birth of such fine sons as Joseph and Benjamin! We therefore, along with Jacob, should thank God and remember the faith of Rachel.

Did Rachel deserve to be remembered? Did she deserve to be the mother of a prince of Egypt named Joseph? Did she deserve the precious life of Benjamin, born in her ungrateful despair after she had practically stamped her foot when Joseph was born and said to God: “One son is not enough!” (Gen. 30:24). A quick glance at her rivalry with her sister Leah (Gen. 30:15-21) further proves that she was singularly undeserving of such gifts and answers to prayer.

**Meditate and Pray:** God's Grace again comes to the fore in the remembrance of Rachel's life on the pages of Scripture. God brings something as clean and beautiful as Benjamin out of the womb of so many bitter years of ingratitude on the part of Rachel. Praise His Glorious Grace as we behold the birth of Benjamin, the only son of Jacob to be born in the Promised Land!

**Friday: Read Genesis 28:18; 35:14; 35:20 & Psalm 116**

**Memorials of Thankfulness**

Jacob's free-will actions of gratitude to God, consecrating pillars with oil, and pouring out a drink-offering on the pillar to the Lord form a fit conclusion of our study of Memorials in the Bible this week.

Such drink offerings were voluntary, and usually offered after a singular deliverance or in fulfillment of a vow – in this case, Jacob's vow (Genesis 28:20-22) that, upon God's faithfully returning him to Bethel, he would offer an offering in thankful recognition that God kept His promise to bring him back to the Promised Land.

**Meditate and Pray:** Psalm 116 gives us a glimpse into the surge of gratitude to God which must have coursed through Jacob's heart as he offered his drink offering to the Lord, and also fitly expresses the note of gratitude which should dominate our lives when we consider the "cup of salvation" which has been given to us: "How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people" (Ps. 116:12-14). May the Lord increase our gratitude as individuals and a church on a daily basis for all of His goodness to us. Amen.