

Genesis 28:1-22

"Jacob's Ladder"

I can recall it like yesterday; the day God changed my life forever. It was so personal, so powerful; it was just Him... & me. There was no one else around & there I was, alone & thinking about my life. & I just remember how the Spirit was dealing w/me (oh I couldn't have articulated it in that fashion then, but God was dealing heavily w/my heart). He was making Himself real to me, revealing to me the folly of my own ways. & I remember crying out, "God, all I know is that my will is taking me to hell, & I need Your will in my life".

It was the day that Jeff died & Christ came alive in me, I was born again by the Spirit of God & I grabbed hold of the plow & I haven't ever looked back. Have I stumbled or made more than my fair share of mistakes along the way? Absolutely. But the fact remains, I'm a new creation in Christ, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.

How many of you can remember the day that your entire life changed because in some way contact was made between you & the Living God? It was personal, it was powerful & it's something you'll never forget. You can never deny what God did that day, how He made Himself real to you & by His grace reached out & revealed Himself to you...

If you don't have that I would encourage you to seek the Lord for it because He wants to make Himself real to *you* in a personal way. He wants to forgive you of your sin & make you new (even today).

That's the scene that God allows us to look upon in the journey of Jacob's life today. Over the next several Ch's Jacob is saved, subdued, separated & sanctified. Not because *he's* so great (that's never the case), but because God is so great & where sin abounds grace abounds still more...

Ch 28 begins as a continuation of sad situation in Ch 27. Ch 27 is a narrative of lies & deception, a family fragmenting due to a refusal to walk by faith in the word of God.

They lived life on the basis of what they thought was best rather than what God's word had declared. Anytime we allow our own feelings, our own rationale govern our lives as opposed to what God's word has said, it's a recipe for disaster.

Perhaps you recall that Isaac had sought to give the covenant blessing to *Esau* even though God had said it would belong to *Jacob*. So Rebekah (Isaac's wife) came up w/an elaborate plan to deceive Isaac into believing that *Jacob* was *Esau* so that *he* would get the blessing.

What it amounted to was one of the most tragic successes in the Word of God. Rather than trust God to bring it about as He had said He would, Jacob got in there & manipulated the situation. The result was his brother grew instantly bitter toward him & vowed in his heart to murder him as soon as Isaac died. **So Rebekah having heard what Esau was plotting & being worried for Jacob's life deceived Isaac once again. She said, "I can't hardly stand my own life because of the daughters of Heth, if Jacob takes a wife from Canaan like Esau did, what would be the point of even living?"**

She's pretending that in order to safeguard the covenant that God has made w/Isaac, he needs to send Jacob away to get a wife from her family back in Haran. But secretly She told Jacob to go hide out for awhile & when things cooled off she'd call for him. But she'll never see him again; she'll die before he returns some 20 yrs later.

Don't be deceived, God is not mocked, whatever a man sows that will he also reap. Sin (not matter how subtle or slight we may believe it is) is never worth the price we pay. How many times we find ourselves in a situation that seems to justify, or somehow rationalize sin in the moment, but when that sin comes to fruition we regret it? It wasn't worth it, & it never is. Look at Vs 1

Vs 1-2

Few things we want to take note of here real quick. #1 I found it interesting that Isaac didn't rebuke Jacob here, but rather he blessed him. This is another reason why we lean toward the fact that Isaac knew that he should've blessed Jacob rather than trying to give the blessing to Esau. Because you would think that having just been deceived into giving your inheritance & covenant blessing to someone you weren't intending to give it to, you might be a tad upset 😊! "What were you thinking coming in here like that & lying to me! I have 1/2 a mind to..." But Isaac doesn't do that, he blesses Jacob.

2^{ndly} He tells him that he needs to leave Beersheba in order to take wife from his mother's family rather than marry a woman from the land of Canaan. You might underline it, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan." The idea being the essential need to safeguard their spiritual heritage.

You guys we see it again & again in God's word (especially as of late w/regard to the establishing of God's covenant w/Abraham). The bottom line is that we're not to be unequally yoked w/unbelievers.

The bible is clear, *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?”*¹

When it comes to you seeking a spouse, of paramount importance to you should be his/her spiritual position. Do they love God, do they pursue God, is their heart to please God? Or is it a position of, as it pertains to God they could take Him or leave Him, maybe not hostile toward God but they're not for Him? God wants us to walk w/Him in holiness, not to be connected w/& tied to that which is unclean.

Now if you're already married that's a different story (& a different study), don't seek to remove yourself from that, shine & share the love of Christ in that relationship. But if you're *not* married, the exhortation of the *word* of God is that we're to marry w/in the *family* of God.

The final thing I would observe here is this. W/Isaac, Abraham sent his servant to get him a bride. W/Jacob, Isaac sent him. What that means is that the way God works out His will in your life & how God brings together His plan in my life may look a little different. Oh we're all saved by grace through faith in J.C. But how God works in you, & how God works in me will differ. I point that out because at times we remember how God worked in us & we anticipate Him doing it the same way in someone else. But God worked in Abraham's life different than He worked in Isaac's; than He worked in Jacob's. We need to allow space (w/in the parameters of grace & faith) for God to work somewhat uniquely in each of our lives. The way He works His salvation out in my life will differ slightly from how He works it out in yours. That's why it's called a "personal" relationship w/God. Now it won't go outside what He's said in His word, we're not talking about sin in a situation, but simply that we need to realize that God works in each of us uniquely, a little differently.

Vs 3-5

So Jacob officially receives the blessing of Abraham; that part of the birthright that Esau despised & didn't really see any value in. A blessing that included a land, a nation & ultimately the birth of J.C. Himself. The tragedy in all of this is found in Vs 5, "So Isaac sent Jacob away", it would be the last time he would ever see his mother or have any meaningful inner action w/his father. His deception was a tragic success.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (2 Co 6:14-15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 6-9

You can see here how that Esau's understanding of this whole thing wasn't firing on all cylinders. It seems as though in some way he's still hoping that Isaac will bless him. It's like he thinks, "It's because of the women I married. Maybe if I marry from the family I can receive a blessing." He saw that Isaac wanted Jacob to marry from the family back in Haran so in an effort to try & please his dad he marries from the family there in the area.

But in so doing the rejected son of Isaac marries into the rejected line of Ishmael... ironic isn't it? Here's what Esau evidently doesn't understand. It wasn't about whom he married *ethnically*, or where his bride came from *geographically*, it was about maintaining *spiritual purity*. He was making decisions from a natural rationale rather than a spiritual rationale. He had no clue what the heart of the matter was. At its heart the decision needed to be made from a spiritual basis, not a natural or physical basis.

The bible teaches that there are basically 3 kinds of people. There is the natural man. The man who doesn't know God, has no real understanding of God, he's just lives his life off of the impulses of his flesh, his own wants & desires. Then there's the spiritual man. This is the man who knows God. Who's believed on the Lord J.C. & been forgiven of his sin having received Christ into his heart/life. He's no longer driven by his own impulses but is led by God's Spirit. His thinking isn't so much about how something will benefit him as it is how it will glorify God (not that his feet aren't in real life, he's simply more concerned for God's glory than his personal gain)... Finally there's the carnal man. This is the man who's received Christ, but has chosen to still allow his impulses to drive him, he feeds his flesh & ignores the Spirit, he's in a constant state of misery because he knows his life is out of line w/God's heart (which grieves him) yet he still chooses to indulge his flesh.

Esau seems to be leading the natural life; just making decisions from his own impulses & in so doing his situation keeps going from bad to worse. The rejected son marries into the rejected line. Listen, just because the bible reports on problems doesn't mean it condones them. God is not down w/polygamy (Esau now has 3 wives).

Anytime in scripture you find more than one wife in the home, it creates real problems. Why? Because in the beginning God didn't create them male & female; He created one woman for one man & that's His heart for us. 1 man for 1 woman for life, that's the heart of God for you & for me, anything outside of that is outside of God's will.

Vs 10-12

In Vs 20 of Ch 27 Jacob uses the phrase, “The Lord your God” in speaking to Isaac which caused us to question whether or not Jacob had encountered the Lord for himself at that point in his life. Now we can remove all doubt.

God is getting ready to blow Jacob’s mind. He’s on the run, he’s in fear for his life from his brother Esau, he’s out in the middle of nowhere & he’s all alone. The sun has set so he grabs a rock to use for a pillow & he lies down under the starry sky & drifts off to sleep. Then out of nowhere (seemingly) God shows up & will forever change his life, this is a night he will *never* forget.

Here’s what strikes us about the whole encounter. God didn’t come to him when he was trying to be a good guy, or seeking after God’s will, he was running away, he was in fear for his life, he’d just lied to his dad, his brother wanted to kill him, then God shows up & blesses him... Why? Because everything God does *in* us, *for* us, & *through* us is based 100% *not* upon our goodness, but upon His grace.

But we’re given the details of his dream. In his dream he saw a ladder that was set up on the earth, but the top stretched all the way to heaven (we’ll see in Vs 13 that God was at the top of it) & angels were ascending & descending upon it. That is they were ministering on earth & ascending into heaven by the basis of this ladder, it was the only access to God from the earth. The bridge was built (so to speak) the gap was spanned between heaven & earth by means of this ladder. And any interaction between heaven & earth took place by this access point.

Now in John’s gospel Jesus picked up on this. Leave the book of Genesis & turn to [John Ch 1](#) (Vs 43-51).

Wait what’s that? Angels ascending & descending upon the Son of Man? Now I can’t prove this but I’m of the persuasion that when Nathaniel was under that fig tree that he was either reading *over* or thinking *about* this passage that we’re looking at today.

& He was probably trying to solve the riddle of the ladder in Jacob’s dream. “Man, what was that all about?” Jesus makes allusions to that throughout this passage. He calls Nathaniel an Israelite in whom there is no “deceit”, unlike Jacob who was just involved in deception w/in this passage & who’s name *means* *deceiver* (heel catcher).

Then He says, “You’re going to see the heavens opened up & the angels of God ascending & descending upon the Son of Man.” What Jesus was saying is that He is the exclusive access for all interaction between heaven & earth. That He is the bridge that spans the gap between God & man & He alone can take us to heaven.

Jacob represents the lost soul, fleeing in fear for his life, alone & in the dark burdened by sin completely unaware that God is near to him & desires to save him. But there's only one way, one access point to God from the earth & that's exclusively through J.C. He is the means through which heaven comes down to us & by which we can go to heaven. In the 14th Ch of John He said it like this, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*²

Vs 13-15

No longer does Jacob see the LORD as his dad's God, now He's *his* God. Again of interest is the fact that God didn't rebuke Jacob for his scheming but rather He spoke words of promise & assurance to him.

Now there are times when God will rebuke us hardily, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens" (Heb 12:6). Think this through, this is the 1st encounter Jacob has had w/God in a personal way. Think back to *your* 1st encounter w/God in a personal way. Did God bust you & rebuke you, & chasten you? Or did He reveal Himself *to* you, assure you of His love *for* you, His forgiveness *toward* you & that His grace was *sufficient* for you, that He had a plan for you & wanted to use your life for His glory?

God reiterates the covenant, then He assures Jacob of 4 things. #1 His presence, (Vs 15) "I am w/you" #2 His protection, "I will keep you wherever you go" #3 His preservation, "I will bring you back to this land" & #4 His promise, "I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

God gave Jacob a promise that He wouldn't forsake Him, but that He would fulfill His plan for his life. God gave you that promise as well. It's found in the book of Phil, *"He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"*³

God will never leave you nor forsake you, He will be w/you & finish what He's started in you.

Vs 16-19

"Bethel" means "house of God". Jacob's zeal is contagious but his theology is still a little off at this point 😊. It's not that God was in *that* place, God is in *every place*, the key is found in Vs 16 where Jacob says, "I did not know it."

Listen, Jacob discovered that it didn't matter where he was, or what might be going on, how isolated he felt, how "rocky" his circumstances might be.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 14:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Php 1:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God was in that place, he just didn't know it, couldn't sense it. Perhaps you're in a place today, it's "rocky" at best, God is w/you in that place. You might not *sense* Him, you may not *see* Him, but He's in that place w/you, He will never leave nor forsake you.

David said, "*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*"⁴ He said, if I ascend into heaven, or make my bed in hell, You will be there. If I flee to the ends of the earth, even there Your hand will guide me, day time or night doesn't matter the night shines as the day, the dark & the light are alike to You. God is w/you no matter where you go.

What can separate us from the love of God? I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *God is always there, the tragedy is that we don't know it. One has said that the supreme tragedy of life is the unconsciousness of God. That men miss the fact that God is there w/them & that He is there for them, they just miss it, aren't aware of it...*

Jake's life was forever changed after this personal encounter w/the Living God. Even so God will change your life & you'll never be the same once *you* encounter the Living God, the risen Christ who's reaching out to you today.

*Immediately we see characteristics in Jacob of a person who truly encounters God. The 1st thing we see is a healthy fear & a heart of worship. He erects a pillar & pours oil out upon it as a memorial to what God did in his life. Anyone who has a true conversion, who has met God & been changed *by* God will want to in some way worship God. He/she will look for a way to express love & thanksgiving to the Lord who has saved him.*

Notice what happens next.

Vs 20-22

Some see this as Jacob trying to bargain w/God. I'm not convinced of that. The word "if" can also be translated "since". God has just blown Jacob's mind, promised to save Him, protect Him, preserve Him & be w/Him. *Now Jacob is saying, "If You'll do that for me, than my life belongs to You." "Since You'll be w/me, I belong to You." Jacob dedicates his life to the Lord. Since God would care for him, he would worship & honor Him alone.*

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982) (Ps 139:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So we see attributes of conversion (1st of all) in Jacob's *worship*, 2^{ndly} in Jacob's *works*. We might say he puts his money where his mouth is. He commits a tithe (or a 10th) to the Lord. *When you tithe you're saying, "God all that I have is yours... truly... & I'm demonstrating that practically in giving back to you the 1st fruits of that which You have given to me. James said, "You show me your faith w/out your works, & I'll show you my faith by my works."*

Some people perceive tithing as legalism (generally [though not categorically] because they don't wanna give). The truth is that tithing was happening 100's of yrs before the law ever brought it up. *Abraham tithed, here we see that Jacob tithed, Jesus acknowledged the rightful place of the tithe (Matt 23:23) & Malachi tells us that if we don't tithe we're actually robbing God of what is rightfully His (Mal 3:8)!*

God promised to guide Jacob, to guard him, & to provide for him. Therefore Jacob as an expression of faith & obedience tithed to Him. It's really that simple, it's an expression of faith, of obedience, of worship.

But don't concern yourself w/giving financially to God if your heart doesn't belong personally to God. That's where it starts...w/Jacob's ladder, there's only 1 way to gain an audience w/God & access to heaven & that's through J.C. through Whom we are reconciled to God through the blood of His cross. Turn from your sin, trust in Him... you'll never be the same.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You are w/us. That You will never leave nor forsake us, & that even though we might be in a rocky place, seemingly deserted or all alone, we are not alone because You are w/us in that place. Open our eyes to see You, increase our faith in You & may we honor You w/all that we are.

Interesting isn't it that Jacob wasn't seeking after God (Rom 3, there are none who seek after God), but God sought after Jacob, just like God is seeking after you. How do I know that? Because you wouldn't be here if He weren't! But God has loved you, has a plan for you & wants to forgive you & use you for His glory. You can have an encounter w/the Living God right here & right now & He will change your life forever & make you brand new. Believe upon the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.