

Genesis 28: Jacob's Odyssey Begins

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This chapter is a continuation of the narrative in Chapter 27. Jacob's arrival in Paddan-Aram is described in verse 5, but the focus of this chapter is the occasion of Jacob's vision at Bethel. (Esau's third marriage is noted in vv. 6-9, but may have occurred some time later.)

Rebekah has just petitioned Isaac on behalf of Jacob: she cannot stand the thought of Jacob marrying a **Hittite**. (Gen 27:46)

Isaac summons Jacob and charges him to marry one of the daughters of Laban. Emphasis on **one**.

It has been **97** years since Abraham sent his servant to take a wife for Isaac.

Isaac reaffirms the blessing and points to **God** as the true source of the blessing. In this second blessing, we see Isaac purposefully **affirming** God's will rather than trying to work against it.

The tone of Isaac's words is decidedly more **assertive** in this exchange.

Jacob leaves his father's house as a **fugitive**. He is literally running for his **life**.

There is no indication that Isaac is aware of **Esau's** intentions against Jacob.

Esau's enmity toward Jacob is illustrative of the **persecution** that occurs between the kingdom of Satan and of Christ.

When Jacob arrives in Canaan, he is in a position of **servitude** to Laban.

This journey starts on a high point (with the blessing of Isaac and of God) but is nevertheless a **downward** journey. This is a recurring theme in Genesis (e.g., Joseph) and is also reflective of the path of humility reflected in the **incarnation**.

When Jacob leaves Canaan, he has **nothing**. This may be the first time in his life that he is truly **alone**.

The journey to Haran from Canaan was a distance of about **500** miles.

Jacob arrives at Bethel (Luz) only a day or two into the journey. Here is where he has the vision of a **ladder** (*cullam*; this is the only occurrence of this word in the OT).

Jacob's vision is similar to Abraham's vision in chapter 15: both men were **sound asleep**.

The NT interprets this ladder as a representation of **Christ**. (John 1:51)

The ladder points to the need for a **bridge** between heaven (God) and earth (man). Without this ladder, God cannot come down to man, nor can man go up to God.

The ladder has a purely **divine** origin. Man cannot build a single step, though he often tries to do so in order to climb up to God by his own efforts.

In this vision, **angels** are seen as servants or messengers traveling back and forth to do God's bidding on earth. This illustrates how God uses **means** to carry out His will.

God identifies Himself as the **LORD** and the God of **Abraham** and **Isaac**.

What promises are made?

God's blessing is particularly comforting since Jacob doesn't know what lies **ahead** or **behind**.

Jacob receives the blessing from God, which clearly demonstrates that it was not based on **works**. Paul affirms in Rom 9:11 that Jacob was blessed on account of God's purposes.

Jacob's oath is the **first** recorded in scripture.

Jacob's oath is problematic in part because of his attempt to **dictate** the terms of the oath. ("If God . . . then I . . .")

The oath seems to be putting **faith** after **sight**—trusting God once He "proves" Himself.

"It is proper to argue that no one under the covenant of grace should ever make a vow, simply because we have no power to keep it and because our vows are often foolish and sometimes actually hinder spiritual growth. Instead, we should throw ourselves on God, recognizing our weakness and our need for his strength." --J.M. Boice