

**Genesis 28: 18-22; “This Stone shall be God’s House”, Sermon # 83 in
the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on March 4th, 2018, in the Morning Service.**

We have looked at Jacob’s conversion to Christ this last Sunday. It was, of course, in an Old Testament context of revelation, where Jesus Christ was pictured for him in a dream in the night. In his dream, Jacob saw a ladder that was set up on the earth, and its top reaching to heaven; and there, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. We know from John Chapter 1, verse 51, that this ladder is the Lord Jesus Christ in a symbolic form. The Lord God stood above this ladder and He proclaimed to Jacob promises of what He would do for him in the days to come, including the all-valuable promise of the blessing of the promised Seed, who we now know from Galatians 3: 16 and 19 is Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is both the promised Seed and the ladder reaching to heaven. He is the only Mediator between God and man; the only One who can bring us to God. This was the gospel being preached to him in picture form in this dream. Jacob was totally unworthy of these precious promises and this great revelation of God to himself, and he did not understand very well the doctrines which surrounded his conversion. But he correctly saw and understood that God “was in that place”, and that it was an “awesome place”. He called it “the gate of heaven” He received this gospel of Christ to himself by faith, and was saved.

But now it is morning; it is the dawn of a new day for Jacob. He has come to know God. He knows that he has had this tremendous experience of God revealing Himself to him. Everything would be different for him now, because God was in His life. God would be the One to lead him, and guide him, and teach him in the way that he should go. Here in the latter part of this chapter we not only find the beginnings of spiritual life in Jacob’s conversion, but we also find the beginnings of his understanding of how he should respond to what God had revealed to him. He responded in acts of worship to God. He was being led by God in his coming to understand what it means to be in the house of God. All of Jacob’s responses to God, the morning after his conversion, were in relation to the stone that he had used for a pillow the night before. This stone was a picture of Jesus Christ and His Church in relation to Jacob himself, and all of Jacob’s spiritual descendants. This stone which Jacob set up as a pillar was God’s house to him. We want to see what Jacob does with this stone; those things that will show us more of what it means to worship and serve God after our conversion. There are 4 actions that Jacob took with this stone that will show us what the right and appropriate response of worship is, during and after we are converted to Jesus Christ.

1st of all – Jacob had put this stone at his head the night before.

(Verses 10 and 18)

When Jacob came to “that certain place” and stayed there all night, he “took one of the stones of that place, and put it at his head.” “And then he lay down in that place to sleep.” This was an action which relates to what every believer in Jesus Christ does when they come to saving faith in Him. You consciously take Christ as your Savior and Lord. You take Him as a stone to rest your head upon. Christ says in Matthew 11: 28 – “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Christ is the only one who can give your soul rest from the burden of sin. He is the only One who can take away the weariness that comes to you, the one who is trying to run away from the consequences of the sinful things that you have done in the past. This is what was happening to Jacob. It may be something that is happening to you, even now. I think that a stone is an appropriate emblem of what the troubled and weary soul needs to rest upon. It will not be something soft, that you can easily forget what it is, that you are resting your head upon. Neither is Christ’s blessed work of righteousness which He worked out in His life, and His sacrificial death on the cross, something that will easily be forgotten by the true believer. It well deserves to be

remembered; especially when you are weary and heavy laden, when your mind and your conscience are continually thinking about your past moral failures.

It is because of Christ's strength, His firmness of purpose to save you from your sins, that He will indeed save you, if you trust in Him. If you lay your weary soul down and put your head on the stone which is Jesus Christ, you may get the best sleep that you have ever had in your whole life. You can truly rest when your conscience has been cleansed by His blood. You can cease performing the labors of dead works in order to merit favor with God. It says in Hebrews 9: 14, "...How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Jacob was now going to begin to serve God but he needed to rest his head upon Christ to do so.

I wonder if you have learned this valuable lesson, as he did? In order to serve God acceptably, you first have to rest in Christ; His finished work, His perfect righteousness, His perfect obedience to the Law, His death on the cross, His burial where He lay in the tomb for 3 days. "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God," it says in Hebrews 4: 9. "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His," verse 10 says. All this resting leads to service. The hymn writer says, "Jesus I am resting, resting, in the joy of what Thou art." "I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart." "Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, as Thy beauty fills my soul." "For by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole." "O how great Thy lovingkindness, vaster, broader than the sea!" "O how marvelous Thy goodness lavished all on me!" "Yes, I rest in Thee Beloved, know what wealth of grace is Thine, know Thy certainty of promise and have made it mine."

Is this what you have done? Have you laid your head on the rock-pillow of Jesus Christ? You shall not be disappointed. Have you put this stone at your head where it can influence all your thoughts, and all your dreams of this life, or are you sleeping in your sin and refuse to be awakened? Listen to Spurgeon on this. "We, perhaps, like Jacob, were sleeping." "God was awake." "This was the mercy." "And He came to us while yet our heart slept and our mind had not felt awakened towards himself." We seemed slumbering with regard to divine things, but as a dream in the visions of the night, so God came to us." "He found us sleeping, but nevertheless he manifested Himself to us as he doth not unto the world." "Do you remember all that?" "Then the God you have to look to is the God of that unexpected grace." (end of quote) Yes it is unexpected, but the mercies are sure and certain when you put this stone at your head.

2nd – Jacob set the stone up as a pillar. (Verses 18 and 22)

"Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, and set it up as a pillar." His setting up this stone as a pillar is a memorial to his having met God in this place. This is where God first revealed Himself to him, and this is where he would first set up his worship to God; in this awesome place. In 1st Timothy 3: 15 the Apostle Paul says, "I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Jacob had already acknowledged that this place where he was, was "none other than the house of God." Now we see why Jacob sets up the stone that he slept upon as a pillar. It was his declaration that he would never forget that night that the Lord came to him and saved Him from all of his sins. It was there that God gave him precious and magnificent promises of all the everlasting good that He would do for him. This place, and the things that God said that he would do for him, would be remembered by his setting up this pillar. He would be a worshiper and a follower of God all of his days. This act of his setting up the pillar was the declaration of his faith and his public profession in the presence of God.

This was the house of God that he was making his profession in. In Psalm 118, verse 19 it says, "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord." "This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter." "I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation." "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone." "This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes." Jacob did not

reject this stone, but rather set up this stone; the very stone that he laid his head on that night, to represent the vision of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ that was preached to him there, and which he believed and received.

In the New Testament writings we find that Jesus Christ is the corner stone of the Church that He is building. It is a spiritual building which is composed of living stones. Each individual believer is a living stone in this building. Jacob is one of those stones. In 1st Peter 2: 4 it says that we are “coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” This is why in verse 22 of our text, Jacob says, “And this stone which I have set up as a pillar shall be God’s house.” This was a consecrated and a holy place; the place where God revealed Himself to him.

I hope that you have come here this morning to church understanding this great truth; that this is God’s house. It is not the building that I am talking about; although sometimes we speak of the building as being God’s house in terms of our worship. Rather, it is the house of God, the people, the living stones, the pillars, and the monuments of God’s free grace, who are here gathered. This is the Gate of heaven where the gospel is preached. This is where God will reveal Himself to those who may not even be looking for Him to do so. And it most certainly is the place which we have deliberately made a house, where we who have come to know Him, will worship Him and honor Him. How awesome is this place, because God is here in the midst of His people. Let us treat this place and this time with reverence because it is so.

3rd – Jacob poured oil on top of this stone and he changed the name of the place where he set it up. (Verses 18 and 19)

The pouring of oil on the stone by Jacob was another aspect of the consecration of himself to the worship of God. He wanted to remember the exact stone, so that when he returned later, he would know that this was the place where God had met with him. That is quite true. But I believe that it also represents the need that all believers have to have all of their worship, and all of their works which they do to God’s glory, anointed with the influences and graces of the Holy Spirit. We are living stones, who have been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have been made partakers of the gift of life and of the Holy Spirit. Shall we not strive to worship God and serve God in the Spirit? Jesus Christ, it says in John 3: 34, was “given the Spirit without measure”. Because He “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness”, it says in Psalm 45: 7, “Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

The Lord Jesus was anointed for His burial by Mary the sister of Lazarus taking a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointing His head and his feet. (If we combine the 3 accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John) He allowed Mary to do this; to pour this valuable oil over Him, to “anoint his body for burial”. His being anointed for His burial was an act which symbolically consecrated Him to complete the work of redemption through His death, and thus to fulfill the mission which He was sent on, by His Father; which was – to give Himself up as an offering and a sacrifice for sin. Jesus called it – “A good work that she did unto Him.” If the Lord Jesus received such an anointing then should we not desire to know this same kind of anointing that will permit us to give ourselves more fully to Him when we gather together in our worship? I think that we should.

In Acts 10, verse 38, Peter says that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Do we not long for that kind of anointing that will bring power to our service to Him? In Exodus 40 when the worship of the Tabernacle was being set up, instructions were given concerning the articles which were to be placed there; the ark of the testimony, the table of the showbread, the lampstands, the altar of gold for the incense, the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and the laver between the tabernacle of meeting

and the altar. All of these pieces of sacred furniture were to be anointed with oil. And then Aaron the high priest and his sons were all to be anointed with oil so that they “may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.” (Exodus 40: 15)

We as believers in Jesus Christ have been anointed with His Holy Spirit and we need to ask our God for more of His Spirit to graciously be poured out upon us as we worship God, so that our worship and service would be pleasing to Him. Worship and worshipers need to be anointed with God’s Holy Spirit. This we do when we call upon God and ask Him in prayer to set us and our worship apart to Himself. We also ask that He would come and be present among us His people. He “anoints our head with oil” and “our cup overflows” with His blessing and our praise. Then we can truly say, “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” In fact Jacob was so much impressed with what God had done for him in that place, that he changed the name of the place to Bethel, which means literally, “the House of God”. It had been called Luz before which means, “an almond tree”. But now it would be the House of God.

It may be very pleasant in an earthly sense to be staying in a grove of almond trees. But a place where God dwells, and where He chooses to manifest Himself becomes much more than a place of earthly delights. It is a place where heaven comes down and glory fills our souls. Another meaning for the name “Luz” is “separation”. Jacob had been separated from the past, his family, and the world that he knew when he launched out on this journey, but he was ushered in to the House of God, the Church of the living God. Such is what takes place when you enter upon the Christian life. Such is what the church of the Living God becomes, to those who pour oil on the rock, like Jacob did, spiritually speaking. We are separated to God’s purpose in connection with His Church. We pray for the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit to anoint us to worship God in spirit and in truth.

And then 4th – Jacob made vows to God and would bring his offerings to God in relation to this stone. (Verses 20-22)

“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, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.’ It will be a good thing for us to see, at this point in our study, that any vows that we might make are a part of religious worship. They are something that should be done as a response to what God has done for us, by His mercy and grace. It is portrayed well for us in Psalm 116. It says there – “I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.” “Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.” “The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.” “Then I called upon the name of the Lord: ‘O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!’” “Gracious is the Lord and righteous: yes, our God is merciful.” “The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.” “Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” “For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.” “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

Then in verse 12 the Psalmist says, “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” “I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” “I will pay my vows to the Lord”. This is what Jacob was doing there. He was very thankful for the Lord’s coming to him personally and revealing Himself to him. And now that he knows God quite a bit better, through this revelation that was given to him, he wanted to believe that God would faithfully care for him all the way down the road of life. If God can keep him on this journey that he is on, then He shall indeed be his God. These are not statements of his doubting God, but rather his statements of a faith that has not proved God yet.

A vow is a solemn promise made in the presence of God, stating what we will do in relation to Him, and it is a solemn promise made in relation to what He has promised that He will do for us.

In other words, the ability to perform that which we solemnly promise God depends upon God's grace and His providential help and protection. "If God will be with me and keep me," Jacob says. If He will give me food and clothing and protection on this journey, "then the Lord shall be my God", he says. Does this mean that he will not worship and serve God, or pray to Him or walk with Him, until and unless God does these things? No, that is not what he is saying. Rather, he is declaring his complete dependence upon God's providential care in these statements. It is because he is young in his faith, and because his faith is small and weak that he says these things in a conditional sense.

He has had this great revelation of God to himself the night before, but it had not given him any confidence in himself. And that was good. He was vowing a vow that he would be able to pay. He was not taking too much upon himself, but He was looking in faith, to God, for every good thing that He would bring to him, in his future. It was a vow in the context of his worship of God in that place. I would like to ask you now, if you have ever taken this kind of vow before God; to make Him your One, your only God, when He reveals Himself to you, and gives you the promises of the gospel, so that you can believe and be saved? Being saved is intended to lead you on to worship and serve God every day; not just when He becomes your helper in some difficult or dangerous situation. We give ourselves to him wholly, and this is our worship of Him. "Every joy or trial falleth from above, traced upon our dial by the son of love." "We may trust Him fully, all for us to do." "They who trust Him wholly, find him wholly true."

And so, we find Jacob vowing a vow also in relation to all of his substance as well. He says, "And of all that you give me I will surely give a tenth to You." This is a part of worship as well, my dear friends. It is not simply to bring God your praise and thanksgiving, but it also to bring Him a tangible offering of your earthly substance and income. Jacob would give to God a tenth of all that God would give him. There would be enough in that tenth that Jacob would give, that God's worship would be kept up and maintained. The sheep and goats, the rams and lambs for the sacrifices would be there. The altar would be set up and maintained in a timely fashion. All the expense of the worship of God would be given by Jacob. This is what you and I ought to vow to do as well.

It seems so difficult to be able to give at those times when we have next to nothing, doesn't it? But we can speak to God about it in prayer and we can tell him that we will give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have. There is a blessing in this kind of a vow, and God will take notice of it. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse," says the Lord in Malachi 3: 10, "that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this....If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." The storehouse is a picture of the Church just as the stone is a picture of it here in this passage. How do you respond to what God has revealed to you in the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ? Will you bring the whole tithe into the storehouse? 10 percent was the Old Testament requirement and yet it would seem to be a minimum requirement in the New; to us who have been given so much.

Do you want the church to do more spiritually? Then give to that end. Do you want the building to be well maintained? Then give to that end. What will you do in relation to what Jesus has done for you? Will you worship God by resting in the what Christ has done for you? Will you set up the stone for a pillar like Jacob, and worship God reverently each Lord's Day? Will you pour oil on the stone like Jacob did, and pray for the greater influences of the Holy Spirit upon this church, so that we might consecrate ourselves in a greater way to God, in service to Him? Will you make vows of faith and trust and future loyalty to God through what Jesus Christ has done for you, so that God shall truly be your God all of your days? These are questions that you alone can answer. But I pray that by looking at Jacob's life, it will help you to come to the right conclusions.