

Scripture Reading: Genesis 28:

“11 So [Jacob] 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, Jehovah stood above it & said: "I am Jehovah, 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 Jehovah 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 Jehovah 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."”

"Jacob Makes a Vow"

We are looking at events here in the 28th Chapter of the Book of Beginnings that cover a very pivotal time in the life of Jacob. The covenant given to his grandfather Abraham and Father Isaac is now directly passed on to Jacob by God & as I have mentioned Jacob will be with us until his death & burial in the final chapter of Genesis.

- **And it is appropriate to have this focus on the final member of the three Patriarchs, Abraham, Issac & Jacob!**

Last week we saw Jacob as a broken man who had left his family alone with all of his human efforts coming to naught. Then we saw Jacob as a converted man when God found him here at Bethel...

- **And now this week we will see Jacob as a worshipping man which of course is the proper response of any man or woman found by God!**
- **Thus there are rich lessons for us to learn for today!**

This morning our focus will be on the worship and vow of Jacob, but I want to say just another quick word more about Jacob being alone on this trip. I believe that John Calvin gets it right when he points out that the Patriarchal fathers did NOT want their sons of promise to leave the Promised Land. Thus Abraham refused to send Isaac away and instead sent his trusted servant loaded with riches to help entice a wife for Isaac to return with him.

Now Isaac faces a different challenge because he needs not only to find Jacob a wife outside of the land of Canaan, but he must send Jacob away to protect him from the rage of his brother. It is likely that Jacob is sent away empty handed not as some sort of punishment, but rather to ensure that he would return for his proper inheritance from his father Isaac.

- **In any case we do find him alone on this journey, apparently even without any animals for a sacrifice!**

As we saw last week it is God Who finds Jacob in this lonely place and reaffirms the covenant and gives him this personal assurance at verse 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.”

We can only imagine how many times these words would have returned to the mind of Jacob during the trials he would endure over the next 20 years or so! It should be a reminder to us that we can find comfort in the promises of God! *[holding Bible]* As we focused on in our weekly study at the Swan home, this is the Word of God to us!

- When Jesus says that His burden is light we can believe that, even if the load of a particular day seems quite heavy!

When God promises that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”

- We can believe that, even when our life or even the whole world seems to be falling apart.

And yet sadly if you are like me and most of God’s Saints, it is SO easy to forget God when things are going well and so tough to believe God when the going gets rough! This is why right worship is so important, both individually and collectively as is now illustrated in the life of Jacob...

**16 “Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Jehovah 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!"**

The first response of Jacob is one we always see from men who are put in the presence of God... Fear and awe! This is why the Angels had to tell Zacharias and Mary and even the shepherds to fear not...

Or why Isaiah or John have to be lifted up by God after falling on their faces.

And as was the case with all of them, Jacob responds with right worship... **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.”**

Now if we are going to see Jesus in our account, as we always should, I think the Church fathers were spot on in seeing this stone as the Savior! *[of course they saw Jesus everywhere!]*

However here especially I think we should see Jesus as the one who is our Rock, the one on whom we can cast our sorrows and burdens and the one who is the solid foundation for our lives!

- Jesus is indeed seen in the New Testament as the Chief Cornerstone of the Church!

Jesus Christ is the anointed stone as well. Think about what we read in Psalm 45 which we sing often here at Church of the King:

Psalm 45: “6 Your throne, O God, is forever & ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. 7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

- This image of the anointed Rock is confirmed for us by the writer of Hebrews when we hear the same words as he reveals to us what the Father says to Jesus:

Hebrews 1:9 "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness & hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

So Jacob sets up this stone as a memorial or remembrance of this event which we will consider a bit more at the Table this morning & then he names the place where God found him...

19 “And [Jacob] called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.”

Bethel simply means ‘house of God’ which reflects what Jacob had seen, saying surely God is in this place. The history of this spot is interesting because while there seems to be no city at this location at the present time the Canaanites would build Luz here and then God’s people would use Jacob’s name of Bethel when they conquered the land.

And as is sadly often the case with God’s people, what is given as a part of proper worship is later abused and desecrated: It would be here at Bethel that King Jeroboam would later set up the golden calf for Israel to bring sacrifices to so they would not return to Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom.

- These abominations had grown so foul that when the prophet Hosea proclaimed God’s judgment he gave Bethel a new name: Beth-aven, ‘the house of vanity.’

Of course those arguments about right worship came all the way down to the time of Jesus where we find Him conversing with a woman at a well in Samaria... She asks Jesus to settle things, ““Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

- Jesus takes the opportunity to not only answer her simple question, but to instruct His Church down through the ages...

““Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

This is why it is so important to learn these lessons about right worship and why we focus on it here at Church of the King. In fact I will soon do another series of messages on the major elements of our worship as I have in years past... A good review for us and a vital part of how we raise our covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord!

And as we always should, Jacob follows his right worship with obedience in the giving of the vow we find at verse 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 Jehovah 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.””

Now this is not the sort thing that we will often see in Hollywood where someone makes a deal with God!

- Jacob is not saying, OK God if you keep your end of the bargain then I will be loyal and even give you some of my stuff.

As Pastor Candlish rightly noted: “It is not the language of skepticism but of faith; Faith echoing & appropriating the pledge God had given [to Jacob].”

Jacob is making a vow based on his confidence in the faithfulness of God and we should be encouraged to make similar vows based on promises in the New Testament... Think about the implications of the promises we have in Romans 8:

“15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

- We do not say, hey if God does do all that then I will serve Him: No we rejoice in our sufferings and serve Him with great gladness because of what He has promised He will do!

I could give dozens of examples like that from the New Testament, but let me share just one more short one from the Book of Colossians:

3: 1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

- You see IF we set our minds and priorities on things above, the commands and wisdom that God has given us, then we can vow to serve God whole-heartedly as Jacob did!
- If we set our mind on CNN & the rest of the world... Well mostly we will be depressed & down-trotted!

OK I do want to make one more comparison to what we see here with Jacob with the Great Commission... But first let me say just a quick word about the reference to tithing at the end of our passage.

- Jacob promised Jehovah, “of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.””

Here at Church of the King we ask folks to be obedient to the principle of tithing but do not require that all the tithe be brought to the Church. Someone who argues that bringing all the tithe to the Church was required would have a problem here because where exactly does Jacob present his tithes?

- The fact of the matter is we are not told how or where Jacob paid the tithes that he promised!

So as we always try to point out in our discussions with people in this issue the important principle is NOT where the money is given or even how it is spent. Wherever you see tithing being discussed in the Scriptures you find the focus on the principle of first fruits...

- We give a tenth of all that God blesses us with as an acknowledgment that ALL that we have comes from his hand!

That was true with Jacob, it was true when his grandfather Abraham when he tithed to Melchizedek and it has been true down through the ages. To some this will seem legalistic, to which I always ask ‘fine, then how much more do you give under Grace than these Saints did under the Law?

The giving of tithes by a person is only legalistic if he or she somehow thinks they are earning some sort of merit with God or they use their actions to try and bind the conscience of another Saint.

Tithes given joyfully affirm our dedication to the Lord God who has not only saved us but blessed us with great abundance!

- This is what we see here with Jacob and Lord-willing it is what people will see in our lives as well.

So with all of that let me come back to my last example & the early church fathers seeing Jesus in that stone...

There is another major reference to Jesus as the Stone in the 2nd chapter of Daniel:

- The stone cut without hands.

If we remember the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had he saw a huge statue with a golden head, a silver chest, bronze thighs, iron legs and then toes that were iron mixed with ceramic.

Then at verse 34 we read:

“You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. **35** Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

Daniel goes on to explain that King Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, and that his mighty Empire would be followed by an inferior one, then a third one and finally a fierce one made of iron: The Roman Empire. That Empire was then divided as Rome was at the time of Jesus.

Then Daniel says to the King,

“44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

Looking back at history it is easy for us to see those four mighty Gentile Kingdoms and how after the coming of Jesus the divided Roman Empire joined Babylon, Persia and Greece in the dust bin of history...

- And how Christendom has continued to grow and grow.
- And it will grow until it fills the whole earth as was promised by God in the King's dream.

This is why the Great Commission tells us to go forth and disciple ALL the nations of the earth because God the Father has promised to give them to his son.

- When we see what God has planned it puts the trials and tribulations of our individual lives, our families, our church and even our nation and the world into proper perspective!

Jacob was alone on that road and yet he could make his confident vow because he knew that God would be faithful in all He had promised.

- We should do no less today!

Think about how the words of Jesus should ring in our ears the way the words of Jehovah would have rung in the ears of Jacob as he went forth to serve.

To Jacob He says, “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.”

And to us Jesus says, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

And so just as Jacob could vow to serve God with all that he had because he believed the promises that Jehovah had revealed to him there at Bethel...

- We too can vow to serve God with all that we have, because we know He will keep His promises!

We often speak of worship as warfare and how God's people faithfully giving their tithes could turn back much of the oppressive government we have in our day or of the power of prayer...

And yet as we gather to worship as a small church and bring our meager offerings and lift up our prayers, it is easy to have the problems of our age completely overwhelm us.

How can we overturn Supreme Court decisions or make abortion illegal once again... We are not even sure we can keep our families afloat and our marriages in tack!

How can we disciple all the nations of the earth when we get nervous when we have the opportunity to share the Gospel with just a single person?

When we are thus overwhelmed just remember Jacob setting up that stone and pouring a bit of his oil on top.

Jacob worshiped God in this way and took his vow because he believed that God would do all that he promised to do, and that is in fact what happened.

And so, just as it was in the life of Jacob we can know that our response of right worship and faithful obedience, and faithful prayers is just what God requires of us as we wait for HIM to turn back the evil of our day...

➤ **And to keep His promise that the Kingdom of Jesus will continue to fill all the earth!**

➤ **Communion Meditation: Luke 22**

"14 When the hour had come, [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. 15 Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."