

The Broadmoor Bulletin

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Jacob

Jacob's Vision – Genesis 28

Genesis 28 is one of the most compelling chapters in the Bible. In it God validates and affirms Jacob as His chosen instrument through whom He'll bless all the families of the earth. Jacob, in turn, pledges his supreme loyalty and dedication to God to show how utterly grateful he was for all that the Lord had done for him. This was a life-changing event in Jacob's life. Actually, it describes the turning point in Jacob's life. From this point on, his commitment and zeal for God would reach a new zenith.

In this chapter, Isaac sent Jacob to his family in Paddan-aram to find a wife. As Jacob journeyed toward Paddan-aram, he spent the night in a certain place and used a stone as a pillow to sleep on. It was here that he had a dream of a ladder reaching up to heaven. On this stairway to heaven, angels were ascending and descending on it. It was during this dream that the Lord appeared to Jacob and promised to bless him and be with him and give him the land on which he was standing. But what did this vision mean to Jacob? And what lessons is God trying to teach us today?

In this vision, Jacob saw a ladder that reached up to heaven. Through this image, God gives Jacob a glimpse into heaven itself. This is Jacob's *ultimate* destination and our final home too! And no matter how difficult life seems or how lonely we get on this earth, God wants us to think about – and “see” this marvelous home that awaits us! I believe that this ladder also reminds us of the *fellowship* we have with our Father in heaven. We are *connected* to our God up in heaven.

The angels ascending and descending up and down the ladder may indicate their carrying our prayers up to the throne of God and bringing back down God's protection and assistance for His children. At the top of the ladder was the Lord Himself, who gave Jacob emphatic promises to bless him and be with him in all of his journeys, and to bring him back to the Promised Land. Though Jacob may feel like a fugitive while he journeys toward Paddan-aram, God's chief desire is to strengthen Jacob and give him the greatest assurance possible – the promise of His presence and His protection! He wants us to live with the same assurance as well.

In verses 16 and 17 we see Jacob's reaction to this dream: it shook him to the very core of his being! Though Jacob may have been far away from his family and familiar surroundings, he learned that God was with him. Jacob learned just how awesome and holy God is! We need to learn that same lesson. It is here, in this vision, that Jacob experiences God's presence and peers into the very throne of heaven!

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Jacob: the Cost of Deception

Jacob was a descendant of Abraham and Isaac, two faithful men of God (Gen. 25, ESV). Jacob was loved by God and chosen before he was born to be in the lineage of Christ instead of his older brother Esau (25:23). He was blessed by God during his life (35:11) and given prosperity from the Lord (31:9). Jacob was one of the great men of faith (Heb. 11:21). Although a very righteous man in many ways, one theme that reoccurs during his life is that of deception. On a number of occasions Jacob deceived or was deceived, and negative consequences resulted.

When Rebekah gave birth to Esau and Jacob, Jacob came out second holding the heel of Esau. He was therefore given the name of Jacob which practically means “he cheats” (Gen. 25:26). I do not know if this was an indication of his character from the Lord or mere coincidence, but it is an interesting instance. The next event that is recorded in Jacob's life is when Esau comes in from the field exhausted from hunting, and Jacob unjustly trades Esau's birthright for some stew. I am not saying that the entire trade was because of Jacob since Esau did show a lack of wisdom in his hasty decision to give up his birthright and the Bible notes that he despised it (v.34). However, Jacob exploited his brother's weakness in order to take something of great value. This was the first offense against his brother. The second occurred when Jacob allied with Rebekah in taking Esau's blessing. Jacob deceived his father Isaac by taking advantage of his poor eyesight. Jacob pretended to be Esau and directly lied to his father twice stating that he is Esau (Gen. 27). This deception not only caused agony for Isaac who was deceived and Esau from whom the blessing was stolen, but this act caused enmity between the brothers. Esau hated Jacob and planned to kill him (v.41) forcing Jacob to flee from his family (v.43). After Jacob went to Laban's house, he wanted to marry his daughter Rachel. Laban required seven years of service. However, after the end of seven years Jacob was deceived by Laban when he was given the older sister Leah instead of Rachel (29:25). Because of this deception Jacob was married to a woman that he didn't love (v.18), he was furious at Laban (v.25), and had to work an additional seven years for Rachel (v.27). In addition to this one instance the Bible also tells us that Laban cheated Jacob ten different times by changing his wages (31:7). After Jacob became wealthy at the expense of Laban and his sons (v.1), Laban no longer regarded Jacob with favor. The Lord told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers (v.3). When doing so, Jacob decided to flee with his wives, children, and livestock without telling Laban and therefore tricking him by not telling him that he intended to leave (v.20), and not allowing him to bless them and say farewell to his daughters and grandchildren (v.28). Laban and his

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Jacob: the Cost of Deception

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kinsmen pursued Jacob and overtook him (v. 25). Laban's anger was compounded when he assumed Jacob stole his idols and fled with them (v.30). Laban had the power to do Jacob harm for his trickery but God protected Jacob (v.29). One additional instance of deception in Jacob's life was when Jacob's sons deceived him concerning Joseph. His sons tore Jacob's coat and dipped it in goat's blood in order to make Jacob think that an animal had killed him (37:33). This deception caused Jacob great grief and prompted him to tear his clothes, dress in sackcloth and ashes, mourn for many days, and prefer to go to his death mourning for his favorite son (v.34-35). From the events in the life of Jacob, the evil that is brought about because of deception can easily be seen. Deception caused hatred, enmity, prejudice, and sorrow during Jacob's life, all of which are reasons why deceiving others is not worth the perceived pleasures or advantages of the sin.

Drew Byers

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Hebrews 12:15 - 17

Do Unto Others...

There is at times within each of us a desire to be selfish, to think only about those things that concern us – our needs, our wants, our problems, our disappointments, and so on. The sad truth is that if we focus on our issues, they will consume us and we will never find satisfaction.

On the other hand, Jesus constantly points us in the direction of others: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Mathew 7:12). The apostle Paul also instructed us "to regard one another as more important than ourselves" (Phil.2:3), pointing us to the example of Jesus who "emptied himself" and "humbled himself" and thus was "highly exalted" by the Father. The joyful truth is that the more we focus on the issues of others, the less we will be aware of, or even concerned with, our issues.

Of all people, we should be mindful of the concerns that weigh down our brothers and sisters in Christ. Make a point each week to think about at least one brother or sister and do something to lessen their burden. Write a note, say a prayer, make a phone call...something that says "We are one family."

Curtis Byers

Awed by God's Grandeur

"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Genesis 28:17).

On some level, every human being can understand the amazement of Jacob when he realized what he was seeing. As he slept that night at Bethel, fleeing from his brother's wrath and with a stone as his pillow, he dreamed of "a ladder [that] was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). Above the ladder was God Himself, who spoke to Jacob words of promise and hope! And having grasped this portion of God's greatness, Jacob was a man changed for the better.

Like Jacob, we need to contemplate the majesty of God and the marvel of His communication with His creation. Nothing is more healthy for us spiritually than to be struck by the wonderful lightning of God's grandeur. It is a truly transforming experience.

It was Immanuel Kant who said, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." The connection between these two sources of wonder is more than coincidental. We can't give serious consideration to God's greatness without being appalled by the huge chasm between His perfection and our own imperfection. To be awed by God's grandeur is to be moved to turn away from anything inconsistent with His glory. Thus for fallen creatures such as we are, there must always be strong elements of humility and repentance in worship. "Repentance is the process by which we see ourselves, day by day, as we really are: sinful, needy, dependent people. It is the process by which we see God as he is: awesome, majestic, and holy" (Charles Colson). For us, godly sorrow should be a quite natural part of our reverence.

God's grandeur . . . our need . . . unutterable awe. These things are the very heartbeat of religion. If we really live in God, we'll lose ourselves in wonder before Him.

"For worship is a thirsty land crying out for rain,
It is a candle in the act of being kindled,
It is a drop in quest of the ocean, . . .
It is a voice in the night calling for help,
It is a soul standing in awe before the mystery of the universe,
...
It is time flowing into eternity, ...
[It is] a man climbing the altar stairs to God" (Dwight Bradley).

Gary Henry

Israel

When Jacob was returning to his homeland, he received a message that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with a company of 400 men (Genesis 32:6). Imagine what thoughts must have run through his mind. He probably remembered how he had taken advantage of Esau by bargaining for his birthright and how he had stolen Esau's blessing by deception.

Jacob was a man who had sought to further his own interests by whatever means he thought would work. As he faced the uncertainty of knowing how Esau would react when they met after many years of being apart, an unusual event occurred. Jacob sent his possessions, his servants, and his family ahead of him and was left alone. Genesis 32:24 states that a man wrestled with Jacob that evening until daybreak. As day was breaking, Jacob refused to let the man go unless he blessed Jacob. The man then changed his name from Jacob to Israel and blessed him.

Why did this man change Jacob's name? As Jacob reflected on this incident, he realized his opponent was no ordinary man. He said that he had seen God face to face. The name Israel can be translated "he who strives with God" or "God strives". Perhaps God intended this new name to remind Jacob of his limitations, his need for God to strive for him. Jacob, who connived to get his own way, needed to become Israel, one who could wait on God to strive for him and bless him.

Waiting on the Lord is certainly an idea taught in the Bible. Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. (Isaiah 40:31) Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD. (Psalm 27:14) Wait for the LORD and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it. (Psalm 37:34) If we seek to exalt ourselves through our own schemes, we may find ourselves receiving the same deceitful treatment from others as Jacob did from Laban. If we humble ourselves and wait on the Lord, He will bless and exalt us at the time He knows best. (Matthew 23:12) Let us remember that God will strive for us and provide us victory when we submit to Him.

Gilbert Booher

?? Did You Know??

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1. When Jacob was born, he was holding to Esau's leg; therefore, they named him Jacob. Jacob means "heel" in Hebrew, and "grabbing someone's heel" is a Hebrew figure of speech meaning "tricking someone". (Genesis 25:26)
2. When Jacob was grown, he was quiet and usually stayed among the tents. (Genesis 25:27)
3. One day Jacob was making a soup when his brother Esau came from the forest. He said that he hadn't caught a single thing and that he was starving. Esau traded his birthright for Jacob's soup. (Genesis 25:29 – 34)

4. Another day Jacob tricked Isaac to give Jacob the blessing instead of Esau. Isaac thought that Jacob was Esau because Isaac's eyes were weak, Jacob had some meat for him, and Jacob was wearing goat skin so that when Isaac felt him, he would feel hairy like Esau. (Genesis 27:18 – 26)
5. Jacob worked 14 years for Laban in order to marry his daughter Rachel. Laban originally agreed to give Rachel after 7 years, but he tricked Jacob and gave him Leah, Rachel's sister, as a wife. Jacob had to work 7 additional years for Rachel. (Genesis 29:18 – 30)

Jacob Stinson

Jacob's Vision – Genesis 28

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Notice the four responses of Jacob. As a result of his profound reverence for God, Jacob first set up a memorial with the stone he slept on and poured oil on top of it. This vision of Jacob, in which God affirmed His love and protection for Jacob and His assurance of His presence, caused Jacob to express his love and commitment to the God of his fathers. God's love and assurance for us should cause us to do the same.

Secondly, Jacob changed the name of that place from Luz to Bethel – which means "house of God". This again reflects Jacob's response to such an awe-inspiring vision of God in heaven.

Next, we see the solemn vow that Jacob makes to God. This is not a bargaining tool for Jacob but rather an acknowledgement that since God has been with him and given him such assurance and protection, then the Lord will indeed be Jacob's God! And Jacob will now serve God with an increased level of faith, zeal, and thankfulness.

The fourth response to this vision was the voluntary tithe that Jacob would now give to the Lord of all that he received. This shows us the level of commitment and dedication that Jacob was willing to make in his service to the Lord.

While God no longer speaks to us today through visions or dreams, we need to "see" God's glory and power every single day. We can do so by daily meditating on the Scriptures. If we'll *envision* God's holiness, power, and glory every day, then like Jacob, we'll reach a turning point in our faith that will drive us to a greater level of faith, sacrifice, and service.

Mike Roy

Behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. "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 promised you."