

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS

XXXI.) EXPERIENCING GOD

GENESIS 28:10-22

Q: Jacob now has the birthright & the blessing along. What else does he need?

- God's assurance: were the promises really his? Was God with him?
- God's power
- A wife

A.) THE PLACE (vv. 10-11)

- Bethel is about 70 miles north of Beersheba. It is therefore likely that it took him 2-3 days of lonely travel before settling in this place.
- Notice the strong emphasis on "this place." The word "place" is used six times in this narrative.
- **What is so significant about this?**
- This wasn't just any random spot Jacob happened upon at this time. This was THE place of God's choosing where God carefully led Jacob – whether Jacob realized it or not! Just as God had done previously with Abraham & Isaac in this same place.
- **How can this be an encouragement for us today?**

- **Jeremiah 10:23**

B.) THE EXPERIENCE (vv. 12-15)

1.) The Vision (vv. 12-13a)

What is Jacob really see here (describe it in your own words)?

- An unusual and glorious ladder that reaches from the surface of the earth to the foot of God's throne in Heaven. As high as it is, it appears to be quite wide as multitudes of angels are going up and down – passing each other at once in a great crowd.

What do you think is the meaning of this odd dream?

- A place where earth and heaven are connected.
- A place where there is direct access to God Himself, sitting upon His throne!
- Further, that God is regularly and constantly giving and receiving messages from His angels concerning the happenings on earth.
- God, in His sovereignty, is active concurrently in both spheres.
- And, there is indeed a 'bridge' between the fallen earth and the perfectly holy Kingdom of God. On the top of that 'bridge' is God Himself who built it and IS it.
- **John 1:51**

2.) **The Assurance** (vv. 13b-15)

- Instantly, the LORD was “beside” Jacob further showing that for God there is no real distance (in space or time) between Him and His creation except that created by sin.
- The LORD then gives Jacob personal assurance that the Promise has been passed to him without altering and will continue in him without fail.
- Along with the promise, Jacob is further assured of His protection and presence.
- Notice, he doesn't guarantee or predict that there will be no problems, obstacles, difficulties or opponents. Merely that HE will be with him at all times and lead Him through whatever he may encounter along the way.

C.) **THE AWAKENING** (vv. 16-22)

1.) **Realization** (vv. 16-17)

- For me, one of the saddest verses in all of Scripture.
- Jacob spent precious time in the very presence of the Almighty and yet he didn't even know it!
- How often has the LORD appeared in our lives and we too just completed missed Him?
- Suddenly, though a bit late, the realization did 'hit' him. And, rather than conclude it was too late, or that he totally 'blew' it, he wondered and worshiped!

2.) **Devotion** (v. 18)

- Immediately following the realization came reverent devotion.
- Without delay, Jacob made sure to devote this place, it's meaning and himself unto the LORD his God.
- With the oil, he outwardly demonstrated his recognition in God's power and blessing to take what was dirty and unholy (that place) and by His mere presence sanctify it.

3.) **Commemoration** (v. 19)

- With the building of the altar and the renaming of the land, Jacob turned what was a physically invisible blessing into a physically visual and lasting recognition of the LORD and the greatness of His Presence!

4.) **Commitment** (vv. 20-22)

- Jacob then made his own promises to the LORD. Not because it was demanded or expected, but as an outflow of his genuine heart of joy, appreciation and devotion.
- In doing so, he also made it clear that he was completely accepting the Word of God as absolute and certain.
- The choice to give the tithe was a tangible offering of possession and material. What is most striking is that he made this commitment at a time when he literally had nothing to his name!

SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS:

As Ross writes, the narrative shows “*how a place became a shrine, a stone became an altar, and a fugitive became a pilgrim – God in his grace revealed himself to Jacob in that place*” (pg. 486).