

Stairway to Heaven 5-22-16

Gen 28:10-22

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! 13 And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. 14 Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth 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 promised you." 16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord 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 So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. 19 He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

Jacob, much like Saul was religious but did not have personal faith in God.

- Both were impacted by a vision that changed the course of their lives. Gen 28:10-12
 - Jacob's came 70 miles into a 550 mile trip to Haran, Abraham's homeland.

He is alone, homeless, missing his family & frightened. He had reached the bottom.

- Many times it takes a crisis (tragedy, failure, \$\$/job loss, illness, marriage/family problems) for us to see our need, look toward heaven, & be open to God.
 - "God whispers to us in our pleasure & shouts to us in our pain." C.S. Lewis

- God lovingly brings each of us to the end of our own abilities & schemes then meets us in our crisis....usually before we reach out for Him.
 - Jacob was asleep but God was pursuing him before he pursued the Lord.

Focus of the dream not on angels or physical location but on the ladder (stairway).

- Be careful when interpreting dreams/visions, they are very subjective.

Interpret scripture with scripture: here interpret Old Testament by the New Testament.

Jn 1:51, 14:6, 10:9, 1 Tim 2:5

- The ladder was symbolic of Jesus Christ who bridged the gap between heaven & earth.

- Through Jesus Christ God came down to man & through Him man has access to God.
 - Jesus did not show us a way, He IS the only way.
 - Led Zeppelin is wrong: We can't buy or earn Stairway to Heaven.

Gospel

God began drawing Jacob to himself by discipline & then with grace at a point of need.

- This is 1st time God ever spoke directly to Jacob: he had no harsh rebuke or commands to obey. Only sweet words of promise and assurance. Gen 28:13-15, 2 Tim 2:13
 - God's word was exactly what Jacob needed, though he did not seek blessing.
 - God's Word has exactly what you need in your crisis.

Jacob's response to this dream experience & God's promised faithfulness is a mixture of immature faith & uncertainty. Gen 28:16-22,

- Memorial: God is omnipresent, but in this specific place He especially made Himself known to Jacob.
 - Similar examples: Palestine, 1st Bible, special date, special event pic.
- 1st vow recorded in Bible is not focused on God or His glory but on what Jacob could get out of deal.
 - Conditional: "If God blesses me, then I'll serve Him."
- He had a lot of growing to do, just like all of us do.
 - "Lord, if You _____, then I will give my life to You."

Thank God that He deals with us on His unconditional terms, not on our conditional terms.

- The Father knows the perfect balance of discipline/mercy or grace.
 - God didn't rebuke Jacob for his selfish vow, He let it go & graciously kept working with him until Jacob became a mature man of God.

He is faithful in spite of our immature/weak faith & self-centeredness. 1 Cor 1:27-29

- He lovingly brings each of us to the end of our own abilities & schemes and then meets us in our crisis at the point of our greatest need with His grace.
 - In His wisdom God grants us exactly what we so desperately need: salvation, hope, assurance, strength, guidance, His sweet presence!

Spurgeon quote

There is grain for sale in Egypt. Genesis 42:2

Famine pinched all the nations, and it seemed inevitable that Jacob and his family should suffer great want; but the God of providence, who never forgets the objects of electing love, had stored a granary for His people by giving the Egyptians warning of the scarcity and leading them to treasure up the grain from the years of plenty. Little did Jacob expect deliverance from Egypt, but there was grain in store for him.

Believer, though all things are apparently against you, rest assured that God has made a reservation on your behalf; in the roll of your griefs there is a saving clause. Somehow He will deliver you, and somewhere He will provide for you. Your rescue may come from

a very unexpected source, but help will definitely come in your extremity, and you will magnify the name of the Lord. If men do not feed you, ravens will; and if the earth does not yield wheat, heaven will drop manna.

Therefore be of good courage, and rest quietly in the Lord. God can make the sun rise in the west if He pleases and can make the source of distress a channel of delight. The grain in Egypt was all in the hands of the beloved Joseph; he opened or closed the granaries at will. And so the riches of providence are all in the absolute power of our Lord Jesus, who will dispense them generously to His people. Joseph was abundantly ready to help his own family; and Jesus is unceasing in His faithful care for His brethren.

Our responsibility is to go after the help that is provided for us: We must not sit still in despondency, but stir ourselves. Prayer will bring us quickly into the presence of our royal Brother. Once before His throne we have only to ask and receive. His stores are not exhausted; there is still grain: His heart is not hard; He will give the grain to us. Lord, forgive our unbelief, and this evening constrain us to draw largely from Your fullness and receive grace for grace.