

GENESIS 27-28

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 27 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Remember back in Genesis chapter 25, before Esau and Jacob were born, the Lord told Rebekah, “... **‘Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.’**”

In other words, Jacob, even though he was not the firstborn, Esau was, God was giving him the blessing of the firstborn.

Obviously Rebekah knew this. I am sure that Isaac knew this. And I am sure that they probably mentioned it to their children.

But in Genesis chapter 25 we see that Jacob, the schemer, the supplanter, gets the birthright from Esau. And he did this because Esau came back from a hunting trip with no food. Jacob was cooking some lentil stew and Esau wanted some, he was starving.

But Jacob would not give it to him until Esau promised him his birthright, and Esau complied.

Again, God already told this family that Jacob would receive the blessing of the firstborn, the birthright! But they did not believe it and we will see that played out here tonight in our study.

The birthright spoke both of a physical and spiritual blessing.

The person would receive a double portion of the inheritance and would be the spiritual leader in the family when the father passed on. (We see this in Deuteronomy 21:17, I Chronicles 5:1-2 regarding the birthright)

Also, he would receive the covenant that God made with Abraham and thus, Jacob is wheeling and dealing to get what God promised him in the first place.

Now as we read all that is going to be taking place tonight in our study here in Genesis, it is not a pretty picture of faith.

And I don't know if you have noticed this, but God's people are not painted pretty, they are there "*All warts and all!*"

I guess that does give me some comfort because if God can use people like this, He can use me!

Keep in mind that their salvation was not based on their good works, but upon faith and that is true for us as well.

Grace does not give us a license to sin, as some think. But it takes the weight off our shoulders of trying to be perfect, which we can't, and thus, our salvation is based upon grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

As Genesis chapter 27 opens up we see Esau and Jacob are seventy-seven years old and Isaac is one-hundred and thirty-seven years old!

That means some thirty-seven years have passed between Genesis chapter 26 and Genesis chapter 27.

You see, we are told that Isaac was sixty years old when Esau and Jacob were born.
(Genesis 25:26)

Then, in Genesis 26:34 we see Esau at forty years of age and since they were twins, Jacob was forty years old as well.

That would make Isaac one hundred years old at the close of Genesis chapter 26!

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Genesis chapter 27, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

GENESIS 27

VERSES 1-4

Here we see this man of God trying to negate the will of God.

Keep in mind that as this chapter opens, as I have said, Isaac is 137 years old. Not only is he in poor health, but his eyes are bad. He thinks he is going to die!

Why did he think he was going to die?

I don't think he was a hypochondriac, but keep in mind that his brother Ishmael died at 137, so he figured his time was short, it was drawing to a close!

He did live to be 180 and that means he lived for another 43 years after this event here in Genesis chapter 27!

And we see here that Isaac calls for his oldest son, Esau and asks him to go and get some venison and cook it up and bring it in and he would give him the blessing!

Now, the Lord told Rebekah and Isaac that the blessing was to go to Jacob, not Esau but Isaac was trying to circumvent God's will.

You see, he loved Esau more than Jacob and thus, he let his palate govern his heart and thus, his actions are in opposition to God's will!

You would think that as old as Isaac was, his walk with God would have been stronger, but it wasn't. He was determined to pass on the blessing to Esau, despite what the LORD had said and what the boys had shown in their lives.

Not only that, but he is doing this secretly, no one else knows, at least that is what he thinks. And that tells me he knew what he was doing was wrong!

What a household this is, and it is going to get worse, a lot worse!

VERSES 5-10

I guess you can call Genesis 27:1-4 Scene One in this soap opera!

Now, in Genesis 27:5-17 we come to scene two! And here the focus is Rebekah and Jacob.

Remember what we read in Genesis 25:23 as the Lord told Rebekah about the sons who were to be born, “**... ‘Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.’**”

Now she is worried that Esau would get the blessing instead of Jacob, so she plans a deception to fool her husband into blessing Jacob.

Did God need help?

No!

Was Esau going to get the blessing?

No!

But Rebekah acts in the flesh and folks; the end does not justify the means.

Spurgeon picked up on this and wrote, “*Good men have gone very wrong when they have thought of aiding in the fulfillment of promises and prophecies. See how Rebecca erred in trying to get the promised blessing for Jacob. We had better leave the Lord’s decrees in the Lord’s hands.*”

If the Lord can't handle this situation, or any situation, then how powerful is He? Not too powerful. Remember, what God has promised, He is more than able to bring to pass! (Romans 4:21)

As you read this story you may be thinking, "*What a dysfunctional family!*"

No one trusted each other.

Isaac sends Esau out secretly so he can bless him.

Rebekah doesn't trust her husband or God, so she comes up with this plan to deceive.

Folks, this is the family of faith, but not in their actions here!

Why are they so dysfunctional?

Because they are not walking with the Lord, they are living in disobedience to him and that is the result in the family!

And please understand I am not saying that you will never have problems in your family if you are walking with God, but it will not be dysfunctional!

What is interesting here is that Rebekah knew her husband well enough to know that he couldn't tell the difference between what she prepared and what Esau might bring home from hunting.

Again, she is trying to deceive her husband to allow Jacob to get what God said was already his! And this deception is going to get even worse, and we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 11-17

Notice what Jacob is concerned about here, getting caught! He is not concerned that this is wrong.

And his mom steps in and tells him not to worry, if he gets caught then let her be cursed and not him.

And we will see as this chapter ends, she was cursed by her actions!

Remember, Jacob is concerned about being caught, not that he is deceiving his dad so that he could get the blessing!

Now, because Esau was a hairy, an outdoors kind of guy, Rebekah places goat hair on Jacob's hands and his neck, talk about being hairy!

And she has Jacob put on Esau's clothes so that he smells like him, the smell of the outdoors. I don't think they have a cologne for that one, I don't think it would go over too well!

And we see that Rebekah cooks up a meal to taste like venison and now Jacob is all set to deceive his father so that God can bless him.

I know, that sounds strange, but that is what is going on here. You see, when a person is in sin, it doesn't seem wrong to them!

Have you noticed that neither Rebekah, Isaac, nor Jacob prayed about this. None of them sought direction from God and neither did Esau because he was more interested in the blessing than being obedient to God.

VERSES 18-29

We can call this scene three and as it opens up the focus is Jacob and Isaac.

Remember what Jacob's name means – scoundrel, conniver, deceiver and he is acting that out here before his father, Isaac!

Isaac asks him who has entered the room and Jacob says it is Esau, he lies to his father!

And when Isaac asks him how he got the deer so fast, if what he has done so far was not bad enough, he then brings God into the picture saying that he got that deer so fast because God had blessed him.

I wonder how many of God's people use deception to get what they want and then claim that, because the outcome was good, God actually blessed them!

How sad, how horrible it is when we have to bring God into our wickedness and use Him to justify our sin!

But Isaac is still not sure this is Esau, so he asks him again and Jacob reaffirms that he is Esau.

And then the fourth lie is that of his appearance; he dressed like Esau, smelled like Esau so much so that he did fool his dad!

Thus, Isaac believes that this is Esau, and he blesses him!

Now Jacob not only deceived his brother to get the birthright, the double portion of the blessing but he also tricks his father to get the blessing as the spiritual head of the family and the covenant that God had promised to Abraham and Isaac and now Jacob.

- ***Isaac blesses Jacob as he prayed for prosperity in crops, Genesis 27:28.***
- ***Prosperity over the nations, Genesis 27:29.***
- ***And for those that blessed him they will be blessed and those that would curse him would be cursed, Genesis 27:29.***

Keep in mind that this is a reaffirmation of the promise God gave to Abraham back in Genesis chapter 12 which was passed down to Isaac and now to Jacob by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now, was Jacob blessed because of the words of that prayer, what Isaac said?

No, not at all! He was not blessed because of these words.

Jacob was blessed because God said that He would bless the younger over the older brother!

Boice nails it as he wrote, ***“The point is that the sovereign will of God is done, in spite of our or any other person’s opposition to it.”***

Yes, and in spite of the deception, the lies, to obtain it in the first place, God gave him the blessing!

Make no mistake about it, we don’t have to fight, scheme, deceive to get what God has already promised us. We must just wait upon the Lord for again, what God has promised, He is more than able to bring to pass!

Now the timing to what happens next is priceless!

VERSES 30-38

As scene four opens up, it will cover Genesis 27:30-40 and it will deal with Esau and Isaac.

Picture what is going on here.

As Jacob gets the blessing and leaves his father’s tent, here comes Esau and he enters the tent with the hot venison for his father and he is ready for this blessing.

And Isaac, not being able to see too well, wanted to know who entered the tent and the response is, ***“Esau! Don’t you remember dad, you sent me out to get the venison and now you are going to bless me?”***

Busted!

And notice what it says in Genesis 27:33, that **“Isaac trembled exceedingly.”**

Morris tells us this verse can be translated, “*Isaac trembled most excessively with great trembling.*”

And The Amplified Bible says, “**Then Isaac trembled and shook violently.**”

You can just imagine how mad he was when he found out that Jacob tricked him into giving Jacob the blessing instead of Esau. That is why Isaac was so upset!

Now, in saying that, there is something else that probably bothered him.

I believe it was because he saw that he could not circumvent the will of God no matter how hard he tried. And he truly tried as we see here!

How do I know that for sure?

Because Isaac tells us in Genesis 27:33, “**indeed he shall be blessed.**”

He is speaking of Jacob!

Isaac was trying to bless Esau even though he knew that was not God’s will.

But eventually Isaac is broken, and he surrenders to the will of God, and we would never get that here in Genesis, but we are told of that in Hebrews chapter 11 or *The Hall of Faith* section of Hebrews!

In Hebrews 11:20 we are told, “**By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.**”

And in Genesis chapter 28 we see Isaac bless Jacob by faith.

Now, before you are too hard on him, is there something in your life that you are doing that you know is not the will of God for you?

If there is then don't wait until you shake violently because you are not getting what you want, but surrender to the will of God, repent and get right with Him and then walk accordingly, walk as He would have you walk!

As you read this it truly seems like Esau is really broken here, broken over this, but he wasn't.

Yes, lots of emotion because he was going to miss out on the material things, but he didn't care for the spiritual.

How do I know that?

Listen to what Paul said in Hebrews 12:16-17 regarding Esau.

We are told, **“lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”**

The example that Paul shows us is that of Esau who sold his birthright for a morsel of food, to satisfy his body appetite and many Christians do the same by selling their birthright of intimacy with God for the temporary, for satisfying their body appetite, for what pleases them instead of the Lord!

Now Esau didn't get this birthright back nor did he get the blessing back even though he cried out to God, why?

Because his cry was based on what he lost, and he was not willing to repent. Esau wanted the blessing of God, but he didn't want the God of the blessings! It doesn't work like that! And God had already promised this blessing to Jacob.

Now, how does this apply to us, or does it even apply to us?

I believe it does. Let me show you what I mean.

We see that the older was going to serve the younger.

For us as Christians, it is the old nature, the one we inherited from Adam, that will serve the younger or the new nature which we have received from God!

And here's the thing. Once Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob, he could not take it back. It was a done deal!

And here is this wonderful news. Once we have come to Christ, once that blessing is pronounced upon us, it can never be revoked! Our salvation, that awesome blessing of eternal life can never be taken away once God has given it to us!

Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 11:29, "**For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**"

And for Esau, he rightly recognizes that Jacob was a dirty rotten scoundrel, a schemer, a conniver, a supplanter for what he had done.

And yes, Esau was going to serve Jacob, not Esau himself but his descendants just as God had said.

And all that Esau can do is cry out to his father to give him some kind of blessing and we will see this in the next few verses.

VERSES 39-40

Not a great blessing like Isaac gave to Jacob, but he was still going to be blessed.

In regard to this blessing of Esau, Barnhouse believes that this verse should read, "**your dwelling shall be *from* the fatness of the earth.**"

You see, *“from”* and not *“of”* and it is indicating that the descendants of Esau would be desert-dwellers.

I tend to lean that way; history seems to verify that fact.

We also see that Esau would be under the leadership or servitude of Jacob but not forever, that one day Esau would break that yoke that was around their neck.

During the reign of Joram, King of Judah we are told in II Kings 8:20-22, **“In his days Edom revolted against Judah’s authority, and made a king over themselves. So Joram went to Zair, and all his chariots with him. Then he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots; and the troops fled to their tents. Thus Edom has been in revolt against Judah’s authority to this day. And Libnah revolted at that time.”**

Thus, that yoke was broken!

VERSES 41-46

I guess we are in the final act or scene for this soap opera, and it is focused upon Esau’s anger, Rebekah’s instructions and Jacob fleeing!

Here we see that Esau is so mad that he wants to kill his brother Jacob.

Obviously this is not a fruit of the Spirit but the works of the flesh. Esau was not a spiritual man, not at all!

Esau feels that by killing Jacob he will be comforted!

The reality is, there is no rest, no peace for the wicked! (Isaiah 48:22, Isaiah 57:21)

And this is important for us to understand because we too can allow anger, bitterness to get the better of us and we may not murder someone physically, but we can murder them with our tongue!

And the only solution for peace of the soul is to turn to the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ and give Him your hurt, your pain, your anger.

But before you can receive the peace **OF** God, you must **MAKE** peace with God and that is only accomplished through Jesus Christ.

It is then and only then that you can experience the peace **OF** God in your life as Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6-7, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

Maybe from one of the servants, we are not sure, but Rebekah hears what Esau is going to do and calls for Jacob and tells him to get out of town, to go to her brother Laban’s house, his uncle and stay there for a few days until things cool down.

Once Esau has forgotten all about this, she will send for him, and he can return home.

Sounds good but that is not how it played out.

Now, did Rebekah and Jacob win out?

No, not at all, they in fact were going to lose.

You see, this was the will of God for Jacob all along and they did not have to plot and scheme and deceive to get God’s will done.

But now, in their fleshly actions, a few days away for Jacob is going to last 20 years and for Rebekah, she will die and never see her son again on this side of eternity!

You see, although Rebekah planned the deception, Jacob was also guilty for going along with it.

And he truly is going to reap what he has sown.

C. H. Mackintosh had this to say regarding what Jacob gained from this. He wrote, . . . whoever observes Jacob's life, after he had surreptitiously [secretly] obtained his father's blessing, will perceive that he enjoyed very little worldly felicity [happiness]. His brother sought to murder him, to avoid which he was forced to flee from his father's house; his uncle Laban deceived him. . . . He was obliged to leave him in a clandestine [secret] manner. . . . He experienced the baseness of his son Reuben . . . the treachery and cruelty of Simeon and Levi towards the Shechemites; then he had to feel the loss of his beloved wife . . . the supposed untimely end of Joseph; and to complete it all, he was forced by famine to go into Egypt, and there died in a strange land. . . .

- C. H. Mackintosh

Again, what God has promised He is more than able to bring to pass. Don't scheme or plot to get what God has promised you because, like Rebekah and Jacob found out, there are consequences to our actions. And yes, God's will is going to come to pass in spite of ourselves!

As this chapter closes, Rebekah tells Isaac that if Jacob marries a wife from the land of Canaan, a pagan woman, it will kill her. She does not want Jacob to follow in the footsteps of Esau who married two women from the land of Canaan and it grieved Isaac and Rebekah greatly. (Genesis 26:34-35)

Thus, she is setting Isaac up to send Jacob away with a blessing to get a wife, while Rebekah is just trying to keep Esau from killing Jacob.

“As sand through the hourglass, so go the days of our lives!”

It truly is like a soap opera and yet, this is very true!

How much better to walk after the Lord, to follow after Him, to be directed by His Spirit than to walk in the flesh and try to manipulate God’s will in your life.

You see, like I have said, God’s will is going to be accomplished and God does not need you lying and cheating and stealing and-so-on to accomplish it!

It is as Solomon said, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”**

Proverbs 3:5-6.

May we learn the lesson.

GENESIS 28

VERSES 1-2

Back in Genesis chapter 27 Isaac was not on board with the plan of God and he was going to give the blessing to his son Esau instead of Jacob.

But, when he saw that the plans of God cannot be changed, he went along with what God said, that the older would serve the younger or that Jacob and not Esau would receive the birthright. (Genesis 25:23)

And you will see what I mean in a few minutes as we look at how Isaac sends Jacob away, with a blessing.

Here we see that Isaac is instructing his son not to follow in the footsteps of his brother Esau who took his wives from the Canaanites, from the world.

You see, from the descendants of Jacob the Messiah would come and thus, God wanted there to be spiritual purity in this lineage.

Now, let me also say this. That does not mean they were perfect and God did use godly women who were not from the children of Israel to fulfill His plan.

In fact, Ruth was the great grandmother of King David, and she was a Moabite!

Thus, Jacob is to go to Mesopotamia to the house of his uncle Laban, Rebekah's brother, for a wife!

How does that apply to us today?

It is simple and we see this spoken of in the New Testament as well.

God does not want us to be unequally yoked together.

What does that mean?

It means that you are not to date unbelievers, you are not to have that close fellowship with unbelievers, you are not to go into business with unbelievers.

But why can't we?

Because the unbelievers will be moving in one direction and believers move in another direction.

For instance, dating an unbeliever is wrong and chances are you are not going to lift them up, but they will bring you down.

Yes, they will say whatever you want to hear when you are dating to get what they want, but once you sign that marriage contract, it is a mess!

Paul makes this point, and he is very clear on this when he tells us in II Corinthians chapter 6 starting in verse 14, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.’”**

II Corinthians 6:14-18.

May we listen and obey for God knows what is best for us, no matter what we may think!

Now look at this blessing that Isaac gives to his son Jacob.

VERSES 3-5

Notice how Isaac blessed Jacob. He used the name of God as he said, **“God Almighty”** or ***EL SHADDAI!***

That title for God was used back in Genesis 17:1 as God Himself spoke to Abraham using that title.

What that tells me is that when God spoke those words to Abraham, he passed it down to his son Isaac, and now we see Isaac pass it down to his son Jacob!

As we have seen, Isaac was not a very godly man, and it is only from Hebrews that we learn he blessed Jacob by faith.

In Hebrews 11:20 we are told, “**By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**[With eyes of] faith Isaac, looking far into the future, invoked blessings upon Jacob and Esau. [Gen 27:27-29,39,40.]**”

Yes, as we have seen, he blessed Esau, but Jacob was given the blessing of Abraham, which was passed down to Isaac and now to Jacob and Isaac did this by faith.

And keep in mind that Jacob did not deserve this; this was God’s sovereign plan!

Now, after the blessing Isaac sends Jacob away and he was going to be gone now some twenty years, never seeing his mother Rebekah again!

He was heading to Padan Aram, which was in Mesopotamia, and this is the area that Abraham was originally from and where his family still lived.

VERSES 6-9

Esau, seeing how his previous two wives did not please his parents, tries once again, maybe trying to impress his parents into giving him a blessing or taking it back from Jacob. Which he could not do.

But when you walk in the flesh, no matter how hard you try; you will never accomplish anything that will be pleasing to God.

You see, for Esau he took a wife from the family of Ishmael, but that was the wrong side of the family you might say!

Whereas Jacob was obeying his father and he is taking a wife from his mother’s family!

Remember what Jesus said in John 15:5, “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**”

It is not that we can't do anything but apart from Christ there is nothing we can do that He will accept!

Esau goes to the descendants of Ishmael to get a wife, but, like I said, Ishmael was not the son of promise, but a son of the flesh and the flesh is drawn to the flesh!

He had no understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant, and he lived in the human level, not the life of the Spirit.

VERSES 10-12

So as Jacob heads away from home he is heading eastward toward the ancestral lands of his grandfather Abraham. (Genesis 11:31-32)

Also, he is heading towards the ancestral lands of his mother Rebekah. (Genesis 24:3-4)

So he is on the run from his brother Esau and that first day he travels forty miles to get from the area of Beersheba to Bethel!

Why was he moving so fast?

Because he thought his brother Esau would come after him to kill him. That is why he is on the run in the first place.

As he finds a place to rest that first day, you can clearly see that this is not your Best Western or even your Motel 6. He had a rock for a pillow as he was on the run from his brother Esau, and he was seeking a wife from his people.

And it is here that he encounters God. Isn't it interesting that in the darkest, coldest, difficult times in our lives, God is still there, and He speaks to us, and most of the time He has to bring us to that point for us to listen!

Now you can debate this among yourselves but prior to this point Jacob did not walk with God, he did not have that relationship with him, he was one who walked in the flesh and not the spirit.

And now he sees this ladder stretching up into heaven and there are angels ascending and descending upon it.

And out of this Jacob understood that he could have access to God.

Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for “**ladder**” can be translated “*stairway*.”

Make no mistake about it, Jesus was the original stairway to heaven, and He is the only stairway to heaven! He is that bridge that connects God to man and man to God for sin had separated man from God and the bridge was out until Jesus came and died for our sins!

Jesus expounded on this in John 1:51 where we are told, “**And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’**”

In other words, Jesus is that ladder for us to access God, He is the One who unites God and man.

You see, when Jesus was lifted up on the cross to die for our sins, that cross became the bridge that allows us to ascend into heaven.

And Folks, this is important.

It is not that Jesus just shows us the way to heaven, but He said, “**. . . ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” John 14:6.

You see, ***HE IS THE WAY, THE ONLY WAY TO GOD THE FATHER, TO HEAVEN!***

And I love how Spurgeon sums this up for us. He wrote, “*The God of Bethel is a God who does concern himself with the things of earth, not a God who shuts himself up in heaven, but God who hath a ladder fixed between heaven and earth.*”

VERSES 13-15

Let me ask you this. Did Jacob deserve this blessing from the Lord?

Absolutely not, but God extended grace to him and gave to him that which he did not deserve!

And God has done the same with us. We don’t deserve eternal life with Him, but God has freely given us eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ!

Now, notice what the Lord tells Jacob in verse 15 here in Genesis chapter 28:

- *He will have companionship with God* – I am always with you
- *God will provide safety for him* – I will keep you wherever you go
- *God will guide him* – I will bring you back to this land
- *God guarantees him this* – I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoke to you

Think about this. “*Prior to Bethel, where Jacob was ‘surprised by joy’ and ‘transfixed by awe,’ he had no personal contact with God. Everything had come to him second-hand.*”

(Daily Notes of the Scripture Union)

Yes, Isaac blessed Jacob but now God speaks to him, and he hears it from the mouth of God having this assurance, “**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**” Philippians 1:6.

And folks, we also have that assurance. God will continue His work in us until He completes it!

What does that mean?

It means that the work that He started in us, our salvation, He will continue to work in us until we are taken up into heaven. It speaks of the fact that we are secure in Him, our salvation is based upon His faithfulness and not ours!

Listen to how Pastor Chuck Smith sums this up for us. He wrote,

The night before Jacob had no consciousness of God. His heart was filled with fear and uncertainty about the future. He was tired and lonely and had no thought of God until after this dream and he realized that God was in this place.

Many times we find ourselves in a place of anxiety, pressure, trouble and not knowing what the future holds for us. We know what is behind us but not what is in front of us. We can't go back, but we're afraid to go on.

In that point of anxiety and concern we're not aware of God's presence. We're not aware of the Plan of God in our life. We can't see His hand on us in these circumstances.

It seems that we're desolate and that God has left us.

Not so!

Just as the LORD revealed himself to Jacob, that He was in that place; surely, the LORD is with us.

He has said that He would never leave us or forsake us.

- Pastor Chuck Smith, Genesis 28

You see, God had always been with Jacob but now at this point he is made aware of God's presence!

VERSES 16-19

Jacob has never encountered God like this and thus, as he wakes up, he is a little afraid of all that has taken place.

Warren Wiersbe tells us,

On awakening, Jacob's first response was one of fear and surprise. God was in that place, and he didn't know it!

But "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7), so Jacob's response was the right one. He discovered that he could find God in unlikely places and that any place is "the house of God" (Bethel) because God is there. He would be away from his father's house for at least twenty years, but the Lord would be his "dwelling place" no matter where he went (Ps 90:1).

His next act was to worship the God who had appeared to him. He turned the head-piece into a pillar to memorialize the great experience that had been his that night. By pouring oil on the stone, he consecrated it to the Lord. He didn't use the stone as an altar or make a sacrifice; he simply set it apart as a memorial.

In later Hebrew liturgy, the pouring out of liquid was symbolic of pouring one's life out in devotion to the Lord (Ex 29:38-41; see also Phil 2:17; 2 Cor 12:15).

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, p. 103

Today, as you hear people having an encounter with God, it is almost blasphemous.

You may hear them say things like, “*The Lord and I were walking together, talking and He was showing me things. We were like good buddies as we walked and talked!*”

How foolish! God is the creator of heaven and earth and at least Jacob recognized that fact and we see him have this reverential fear of God.

He rejoiced in the presence of God. He worshiped the true and living God!

Keep in mind that Jacob’s walk with the Lord is just beginning, he has a long way to go.

Yes, God was with him there, but God was also there in Beersheba, He was with Jacob, and He is with us wherever we go.

David said, “**Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?**” Psalm 139:7.

Many do that today; God is here, or God is there or God is in some building or whatever, when His presence fills the universe, and the big problem is they are not seeking him as we saw with Jacob!

So Jacob, after having this encounter with God, changes the name of the city from Luz, which means *separation* to Bethel, which means *house of God*.

Think about that.

At one time Jacob was separated from God but one day a ladder appeared giving Jacob access to God and there is no longer a separation as he entered the house of God – he entered Bethel!

That is true with us folks, it is only through Jesus Christ that we can have fellowship with God; He is the ladder or that bridge builder to God!

As awesome as this was for Jacob, as life changing as this was as he experienced God, we see him make a self-serving vow to God. It is a pretty carnal vow if you think about it.

Let's read on and see what he says to God.

VERSES 20-22

Jacob is still Jacob. He is the supplanter, heel-catcher, schemer, dealer and-so-on.

And what we see here is that he is dealing with God.

What do I mean by that?

He is saying that if God blesses him with these material things, then he will serve Him.

“Lord, if you do this for me, then I will serve you!”

And many Christians operate on that level. We don't worship the Lord because of what we can get from Him. We worship the Lord because of who He is – ***ALMIGHTY GOD!***

And if God did not do what Jacob thought he should do, then he wouldn't serve the Lord?

I guess that is what he is saying here.

I told you; he was young in the Lord. Jacob is going to learn submission, to submit to God and trust in Him and the Lord will use his uncle Laban to teach him these lessons.

In fact, before he truly surrenders, he will wrestle with God.

But again, it will take some time, but he will grow!

Now some don't see this as a conditional relationship with God. Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

But most important, Jacob dedicated himself to the Lord that morning and claimed the promises that God had made to him (Gen 28:13-15).

The “if” found in many translations of verse 20 can also be read “since.”

Jacob wasn't making a bargain with God; he was affirming his faith in God.

Since God had promised to care for him, be with him, and bring him back home safely, then Jacob would affirm his faith in God and would seek to worship and honor Him alone.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT, p. 103

The Hebrew word for “**if**” is IM, (eem) and it is speaking in terms of it being conditional.

In other words, “**God, if you do this, then I will do that!**”

His name means schemer, and that is what he is doing here. He is young in the Lord, he is learning! That was Jacob and he will continue this behavior until he surrenders to God!

Again, when you look at what he was saying, it was in conflict with what God already told him.

Let me contrast the promises of God given to Jacob here in Genesis chapter 28 and Jacob’s vow. You see, one is God-centered and the other is man-centered.

GOD’S PROMISE – GENESIS 28:15

- *I am always with you*
- *I will keep you wherever you go*
- *I will bring you back to this land*
- *I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you*

JACOB’S VOW – GENESIS 28:20-21

- *If God will be with me*
- *If God will keep me*
- *If He will guide me in the way I am going*
- *If He gives me bread and clothing*
- *If I can come back to my father’s house*

God already promised him those things and yet, for Jacob, it was “**If**” God will do this then he would serve Him!

He is challenging God, making a deal with God.

Look, God promised, and he was to believe and walk by faith!

Thank God He is so gracious and merciful to us. He does not call it quits with Jacob but was molding and shaping his life just as He is doing with each of us.

Folks, He does not give up even though we might give up on ourselves.

As I have said tonight, “**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**” Philippians 1:6.

It would have been much better if Jacob had prayed like this,

“Because You promised to be with me and to keep me and to provide for all my needs, and to bring me back to the land which you swore to give to my fathers and to me, I will be completely Yours God. I trust in You, and You are God and worthy of my worship no matter what!”

May we pray like that, trusting that what God has promised, He is more than able to bring to pass! And may we serve Him for who He is and not to get something from Him. He has given to us eternal life, that is the greatest gift and yet He blesses us in spite of ourselves!