“God’s Promise to Jacob at Bethel”

(Genesis 28:10-22)
1/17/1999

Introduction: (v.10-11)

**** Jacob, the fearful fugitive, comes into contact with God and receives revelation that would forever change his life!***

I. God’s Revelation to Jacob (v.12-15)

(The Fearful need God’s promises of His presence, provision, protection and direction)

II. Jacob’s Response to God (v.16-22)

(The believer’s response to God’s promises will be that of consecration, worship and service)

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v. 10
In the previous chapter, we saw how Jacob practiced deception to receive his blind father’s blessing as the favored, pre-eminent son.

This action infuriated Esau, who determined to seek to kill Jacob.

Now, following the advice of his parents (particularly his mother), Jacob flees from Esau and heads some 400 miles north to Rebekah’s family up in Syria.

Isaac had pronounced an irretrievable promise that Jacob would be blessed with the provision of land, the pre-eminence over Esau, and protection from his enemies (Gen. 27:27-29). And now Jacob finds himself fleeing for his life.

Would he be so blessed after all? It is on this occasion—when the promised blessings seemed bleak—that God intervenes and reaffirms that blessing. “Nothing less than a sure word from God would ease his doubts and give him confidence for the future” (Ross, p. 487).

Jacob was fleeing the land, but God promises to give him that land . . . Jacob had no wife, but God promises to give him “seed” (descendents), implicitly showing that God would give him a wife.

Jacob needed confidence regarding his future, and this encounter with God would provide the needed hope.

v. 11
Jacob would leave without having even a pillow, but would return (due to God’s blessing) with an abundance of riches.

Up to this point, Jacob has not been depicted as anyone too admirable. Rather, he was seen from birth as a shrewd, deceptive, grasping man who was self-seeking and carnal. ---Like all of us, before we have a divine encounter with God.

The two most significant events in Jacob’s life were two night-time encounters with God. Both occurred while he was traveling and both occurred while he slept.

The first occurred while he fled to Haran, at Bethel; and the second occurred after he had left haran, at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-32). At both times, Jacob feared for his life (due to his concern over Esau), and at both times, the Lord relieved his fears by blessing him. God most often meets us at our darkest hour.

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I. God's Revelation to Jacob (v.12-15)
(The Fearful need God's promises of His presence, provision, protection and direction)

v. 12
"A ladder" – Angels do not need ladders or stair cases to ascend to heaven and descend to earth, but for Jacob's sake the imager is given to teach a spiritual lesson.

The angels evidently ascend to receive their orders and instructions from God, and descend to fulfill their earthly duties of ministering to God's people, etc.

Note how the angels would also minister to Christ during His incarnation by going down and up (John 1:51 - And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.)

The Scriptures teach that angels are ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). No doubt, they have assisted us (under God's sovereign direction) many times.

(Heb. 1:14 - *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?")*

The Lord has ASSIGNED special ANGELS to watch over His *"little ones"* (Matthew 18:10)
The phrase ***"their angels"*** shows a special relationship angels have with particular children of God (cp. Acts 12:12-15).
What is significant about angels continually looking at the face of God is that they can see as it were the expression on God's face when something which grieves Him is happening to one of His children on earth.
They get their orders from God; looking at Him, anticipating His command to go and defend His *"little ones."*
The angels wait attentively, never taking their eyes off of the Father "lest they miss some direction from Him regarding a task they are to perform on behalf of a believer" (MacArthur, p. 118).

The fact that God has "hosts of angels in His presence ready to be dispatched to their aid demonstrates clearly how valuable believers are and how unthinkably wicked it is to look with disdain on someone whom God so highly prizes." (MacArthur, p. 119)

v. 13
Here God reiterates the relationship He had with Abraham and Isaac, and He reaffirms the promise He made to Abraham (Gen. 13:15, 17) and Isaac (Gen. 26:3). Despite difficult circumstances and trying times, Abraham and Isaac experienced God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises.

It wasn't enough that Jacob's grandfather and father had a personal relationship with God, he too needed to have one.

All relationships with God involve:

1) God's revealing Himself to man through His Word
2) Man's response in faith to that revelation

v. 13-15
Note the repeated phrases: **"I am. . . I will"**

God takes the initiative and comforts Jacob with His undeserved presence and His unconditional promises.

v. 14
Jacob's 12 sons would eventually be the progenitors of the populous Jewish race.

"West. . . east. . . north. . . south" – Bethel would pretty much be the central spot from which the land occupied by Israel would be located.

"In thee" (Jacob – Israel) and **"In thy seed"** (ultimately a reference to the Messiah) – the world would be blessed.

From the Jews we obtained:

1. The Holy Scriptures (Rom. 3:2)

2. The Messiah, Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:5)

God did not choose Jacob just to bless Jacob. He chose him so that through him God might bless the world.

God did not bless Israel just for Israel's sake, but He did so to bless all nations of the earth.

v. 15

In this verse God makes several promises to Jacob. He promises Jacob. . .

1) His presence – “I am with thee”

2) His protection – “Will keep (guard) thee”

3) His direction – “will bring thee…”

4) His permanence – “I will not leave thee”

5) His provision – “Until I have done that…”

The believer too has those same promises in a general sense.

With promises like that, what more do we need?

II. Jacob’s Response to God (v.16-22)

(The believer’s response to God’s promises will be that of consecration, worship and service)

v. 16

Jacob, like so many of us, was living his life without the conscious awareness of God’s omnipresence. God is everywhere present, yet we too often, like Jacob, **“Knew it not.”**

God is everywhere present!
SEE: Psalm 139:7-12
A.God's presence is spiritual
Psalm 139:7 -- "Thy Spirit . . . Thy presence."
B.God's presence is actual
Psalm 139:8 - ". . . Thou art there. . ."
C.God's presence is total
Psalm 139:8, 10 - "Thou art there . . . Thy right hand shall hold me."

It is important to note that God in His totality (whole being) is everywhere present at the same time.
--God does not have to be extended ("stretched out" or expanded) to be everywhere.
--God does not have to be multiplied or divided to be everywhere.

--God's omnipresence is not a part of God in every place, but is all of God in every place.
--God fills heaven and earth! (SEE: jer. 23:23-24)
--God sits in Heaven and rests His feet on earth (Is. 66:1; cp. I Ki. 8:27; Ps. 11:4). "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool."
D.God's presence is universal
Psalm 139:7-10 - He is in "heaven . . . hell (sheol)
. . . the uttermost part of the sea."
1.God is present in Heaven above (v. 8a)
2.God is present in hell (sheol) beneath (sheol literally refers to a "deep pit")
--Sheol often refers to the grave (Sol. 8:6)
3.God is present in earth ("sea") below
(No one is ever away from God's presence - There is actually no desolate, secluded place on earth, or in the universe!)

The APPLICATION of God's Omnipresence

The truth about God's omnipresence should be applied to your life. In other words, we need to "practice the presence of God."

A.God's omnipresence has application to the unsaved (Acts 17:22-29 *v. 27-28)
He is only a call away (Rom. 10:13).
B.God's omnipresence has special application to the saved
(Though God is everywhere, He dwells with the Godly in a special way - Is. 57:15 - "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.")
"Enoch walked with God . . ." (Gen. 5:22).
When you "practice the presence of God," the following blessings will be enjoyed:
1.Knowing God's presence with you brings joy (Ps. 16:11).
2.Knowing God's presence with you brings comfort (Acts 18:10).
3.Knowing God's presence with you brings confidence
a.Confidence as you pray (Mt. 18:19-20)
b.Confidence as you witness (Mt. 28:19-20)
c.Confidence as you serve
1)Christ fills all believers (Eph. 1:23)
2)God works in all believers (I Cor. 12:6) (Phil. 2:13)
4.Knowing God's presence with you brings an end to loneliness (Heb. 13:5). (You are never alone - Acts 17:27-28)
5.Knowing God's presence with you brings a fear of God (Gen. 28:15-17; Josh. 2:11).

Jacob “had never imagined that this rather ordinary place could be a holy place” (Ross, p. 491).

It is at those ordinary places in life that we, too, can meet with God and walk on holy ground.

v. 17

"He was afraid"- A fear of God will always be the result of an accurate understanding of his omniscience and omnipresence.

Those who know that God knows all and is everywhere, will live differently than those who think God is either non-existent, non-involved, or non-interested in what we do in life.

If there was any place that could be called God's house, it would be Jerusalem (which was 10 miles south of Bethel), yet Heaven is His throne and the earth His footstool. He is not limited geographically as so many assume.

v. 18
Jacob builds a monumental altar at Bethel and dedicates that spot to God by pouring oil on it.

Standing stones "in the ancient world served as markers, arresting the attention of the onlooker because they were not in their natural position. . . Such a standing stone could mark a grave, form a boundary, or (as here) note some important event" (Ross, p. 492).

Bethel would be forever in Jacob's mind sacred, the very spot at which he first met God. Stones would be his memorial. For us, perhaps a date in our Bible or a note in our diary would serve a similar purpose.

v. 19
Justas this spot was special to Abraham, who offered sacrifice here, so Jacob hallows this location.

v. 20-22
Jacob (who I believe was not up to this point a believer, as his father was – cp. 27:20) vowed to make Yahweh his God, if He did that which He promised to do.

Jacob in effect says: "God, if you give me your presence, protection, provision, and direction as You said you would, then you shall be my God; I will worship you, and I will give to you of all you give to me."

"Vows were not made to induce God to do something He was not willing to do. They were made to bind the worshipper to the performance of some acknowledged duty. Jacob made his vow on the basis of what god had guaranteed to do. He was thus taking God at His word and binding himself to reciprocate with his own dedication (Ross, p. 493).

Such dedication should be the result of our awareness of god's goodness and mercy to us. Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

“Those who fully realize God’s gracious provision, those whom the Word of God has powerfully impressed, will respond with consecration and commitment” (Ross, p. 494). Where there is no reverential fear, no commitment or no devotion, there is probably very little understanding of the goodness and grace of God. To motivate dedication, worship and service in the lives of others, we need not pound people over the head with their need to do it, but rather teach them of God’s faithful promises and their dedication will take care of itself.

v. 22
The gift of “the tenth” (tithe) had not been commanded, but like Abraham who gave a tenth to Melchizedek (God’s king and priest), Jacob is willing to follow that same principle toward God.

The Principle of the Tithe (10%) and Offering

> Gen. 14:18-20 - *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he gave him tithes of all."*
>
> Lev. 27:30 - *"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD."*
>
> Mal. 3:8-10 - *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be root enough to receive it."*
>
> Matt. 23:23 - *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint nd anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone."*

2. The Principle of the First Fruits

Prov. 3:9-10 - *"Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."*

3. The Principle of Sowing and Reaping (II Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7)

4. The Principle of Cheerfulness (II Cor. 9:"7; II Chron. 24:f10)

5. The Principle of faith (II Cor. 9:8-15)

6. The Principle of Sacrifice (Lk. 21:1-4)

The Old Testament Israelite gave 10% proportionate to his income for the support of the Temple and Levites.

We ought to give *"better"* than the Old Testament saints. A key word in Hebrews is "better." God's expectations of us are higher than the Old Testament. God does not say, "Get out a calculator and limit yourself right down to the penny!" What if God gave to you the same way you give to Him?! Does He get out a calculator and say, "I need to stop pouring out blessings because this one has received over 10%?" NO

Conclusion: Have you had a "Bethel" Experience? Has God revealed Himself to you via His Word? If so, what is your response?