

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Tonight we are going to be in Genesis 28,

This past weekend, I was blessed with the opportunity to catch up with a couple of brothers in Christ that I only see once or twice every year.

I didn't care for the food or the hard beds or my snoring roommates....

However, the reason I look forward to these retreats every year - **is that you actually see how God is working in the lives of other believers** – and that - is the true testimony of the believer.

Sometimes we get caught up into thinking that our testimony has to do with how bad we were before we came to Christ – in reality, the power of our testimony lies in what God has done in our lives after we accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Always remember that our testimony does not end - until we die.

This evening we are going to be looking at Jacob – and up to this point in our scripture – his testimony is one of a deceiver.

But because of God's amazing grace and His faithfulness, we will see God begin to work on the testimony of Jacob.

Let's pray...

Chapter 28 is a transition point in the book of Genesis as the next eight chapters will now cover God working in the life of Jacob.

Now, one of the things that we saw in our study last week was that Jacob up to this point of the scriptures is **not** a man of God.

We had seen evidence of this in not only the way he walked (he was a deceiver) but also in the words that he spoke.

You might remember one of the questions that Isaac asked Jacob as he entered the tent pretending to be Esau, wearing his stinky clothes and the goat skin on his hands and back of his neck was, "How is it that you got here so fast – and Jacob's response was, **Because the LORD your God brought it to me.**

Jacob, the man that God chose to reward the blessing doesn't even acknowledge God Almighty as his own God.

Did God make the wrong choice? Of course not! God knows all –

You see, God has big plans for Jacob – in the same way that He has big plans for you and me.

[Jer 29:11 NKJV] 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

So, in order for God to begin the work in Jacob or even in our lives, He must first grab our attention.

And there are numerous ways that God grabs our attention.

He grabs our attention through trials and personal loss – we see the lives of Joseph and Job as an example of this.

He grabs our attention through defeat – we see Joshua and the nation of Israel experience this through their defeat in Ai – Joshua 8.

Sometimes He grabs our attention through restlessness, through spoken words or through a dream or a vision.

That is what God is going to do to Jacob in our chapter.

Let's look at verse 1 and 2 again.

[Gen 28:1-22 NKJV] 1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 "Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

At the start of our study last week, Isaac was disobedient to the will of God but when he realized that he had been duped by Jacob, when the fear of God got a hold of Isaac, that is when his mindset changed.

Isaac's attempt to disobey God by blessing Esau had been defeated.

Notice that Isaac didn't fight or take back the blessing that he had given Jacob.

You might ask why Isaac is giving the blessing to Jacob here again, when he had already given the blessing to him in the last chapter.

The difference here is that Isaac is giving the blessing to Jacob fully aware that it is Jacob he is blessing. In the last chapter, Isaac thought he was giving the blessing to Esau. Here, he wants to give Jacob the blessing that God had already determined would go to him.

Thus, Isaac appears to have come full circle and is back in sync with God's plan and in submission to his role in the sequence of patriarchs.

The scriptures do not reveal any other events where Isaac was disobedient to the will of God. He lived the remainder of his years in peace with the Lord until he passes away and is buried with his parents Abraham and Sarah as well as Rebekah.

Not only does Isaac bless Jacob, he commands him to go get a wife.

Remember – Jacob's is in his seventies already – he is still living in his parent's basement – it's time for Jacob to grow up already.

Isaac commands Jacob to get himself a wife – not a Canaanite woman like his brother Esau did ...and he sends him packing to go to Uncle Laban's – some 500 miles away.

Now, a few chapters ago, we saw that Abraham did the same thing when he sent Eliezer to go get a bride for Isaac.

Here Isaac is walking in the same footsteps as his father as he realizes the importance of marrying someone who has the same spiritual connection.

So, here is a question for you guys –

Is dating a nonbeliever a big deal??? Of course it is – it doesn't matter how dreamy that person might be – if Jesus Christ is not that person's Lord and Savior then there is no need to date that person.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians warns the believer about being unequally yoked.

However, this is something that sometimes we don't take very serious.

Turn with me to the book of Deuteronomy 7.

[Deu 7:1-4 NKJV] 1 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before

you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 "and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them [and] utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

And we see this happen in the book of Judges as the Israelites become unequally yoked because they intermarried with the same peoples that are listed in this warning.

It also happened to Samson who chose an unbelieving woman and it destroyed him. Solomon is another example as he had over 700 wives and countless concubines – in the end, his countless wives turned him to worship the same gods that they worshipped.

You see, being equally yoked is not meant to inhibit our dating lives. Rather, it is a command designed for protection and honor. Being unequally yoked is more dangerous than you think – and waiting for someone with whom you share the same spiritual heritage is far more rewarding than many believe.

Now, as all this is going on, Esau is looking at what is happening –

6 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, [and that] as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. 8 Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. 9 So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

Esau had been married already for over thirty years to two Hittite women – we learned this at the end of chapter 26, Judith and Basemath.

Both Isaac and Rebekah hated them –

Here Esau sees that his father is not pleased with Canaanite women – and he sees the charge that Isaac gives Jacob – and Jacob’s obedience.

So what does he do? He chooses to marry a daughter of Ishmael, a descendent of the “bondwoman’s son” who had already been cut off from the family line, **all this, in an effort to please his father.**

Esau was a carnal man – the scriptures tell us that. All he cared about was about satisfying the flesh – that is why he married the two Canaanite women initially, that is why he sold his birthright and that is why he now marries a third wife.

Esau kept making one bad decision after the next. Why??

Listen to the words of Paul in 1 Cor 2,

[1Co 2:14 NKJV] 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

That was the life of Esau – he couldn’t think of spiritual things because his mindset was only on the world.

What Esau does here in this chapter is a picture of religion.

Think about what he is doing, he is trying to please his father but doing it his way instead of his father's way.

Isn't this what religion is all about???

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. 12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder [was] set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I [am] the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall 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 spoken to you."

So, it's about a two day walk from Beersheba to this place that Jacob is going to name Bethel later on in this chapter.

It gets dark and he proceeds to find a rock for a pillow and he then has this dream.

This is where God will reveal Himself to Jacob – not because Jacob was a good guy, God chose to reveal Himself to Jacob in this manner solely and completely by His grace.

But notice when God reveals Himself to Jacob...

in the wilderness, during a time where he was alone, during a time where he must have been struggling with doubt.

These are the times when God reaches out to us to reassure us of His presence, to comfort us, to remind us of His promises.

Now, regarding this dream that Jacob had,

There is a ladder, angels going up and down the ladder and God Himself is at the top.

Regarding the angels – notice the order, they go up to heaven and then come down from heaven. We tend to think of the angels simply hanging out in heaven all the time when the truth is that they spend much of their time here on earth ministering to the need of the believer.

Where does it say that?

[Heb 1:14 NLT] 14 Therefore, angels are only servants--spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

Now, before we proceed, I would like to address a few unbiblical practices revolving angels -

- It is unbiblical to pray to an angel or to worship an angel – God alone deserves all worship. Angels are created beings like us and the scriptures never tell us that they were created in God's image like man is.
- Many people attribute their lost loved ones as angels – that is unbiblical too. Our loved ones do not become our guardian angels.

I truly believe that there are angels here in our presence right now. Angels are looking at us right now trying to figure out God's redemption plan.

You see, Peter tells us in

[1Pe 1:12 NKJV] 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

The Hebrew word for ladder here can be better translated as a "staircase" or a "stairway"

So this dream is demonstrating to Jacob that heaven is closer than he imagines.

Remember, that was the reason that Rebekah and Jacob resorted to deception, they felt that they had to help out God – that God was too busy taking care of other things.

This ladder also has a deeper meaning for you and for me.

Turn with me to the gospel of John,

[Jhn 1:43-51 NKJV] 43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is **no deceit!**" 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 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 verse 51, Jesus is referring to the text that we are studying tonight in Genesis 28. But notice what Jesus tells Nathaniel, he says that the angels of God are ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

What Jesus is stating is that He is the ladder in Jacob's dream.

That He is the mediator between man and God.

We sing that wonderful worship song all the time, Living Hope that begins with

How great the chasm that lay between us

Jesus is the ladder that connects allows us access to God by what He did on the cross.

[Jhn 14:6 NKJV] 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

[1Ti 2:5 NKJV] 5 For [there is] one God and one Mediator between God and men, [the] Man Christ Jesus,

Jesus is Jacob's ladder...

Let's look at what God told Jacob in the dream,

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I [am] the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall 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 spoken to you."

God promises Jacob His presence, His protection and His preservation.

God comforted Jacob with the same promise that He had made to Abraham and to his father Isaac.

Notice that the promises of God made to Jacob are unconditional.

I asked you to underline the last promise that God made to Jacob – for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you – that is very similar to what Paul writes to us in Philippians 1:6

[Phl 1:6 NKJV] 6 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;

So let's see what Jacob's response is...

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 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 "so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. 22 "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

Jacob responds with worship – which is a good thing.

However, he also responded with a vow. Now, the bad thing about his vow is that it is not an unconditional like the promise that God had made to Jacob.

It is a conditional vow – because he says, If God will... then, I will ...

You see, Jacob is still a work in progress just like all of us are. However, it appears that Jacob is not ready to make that full commitment to fully place his trust in God.

Something is holding him back...

God's plans for Jacob are going to be delayed until he makes that full commitment.

There are some of us here tonight that may be in the same situation that we find Jacob in – we can't commit to His will - unconditionally.

We still want to worship the Lord under our own terms.

We should examine ourselves constantly and pray that He searches our hearts and reveal to us whether there is an aspect of our lives that is keeping us from making that commitment to follow Him.

You see, many people can claim Jesus Christ as their Savior – but there are a lot less people that can claim Him as their Lord.

Our testimony will reflect whether or not He is our lord and Savior.

Amen.

Let's pray...



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