

APPREHENDING GOD | GENESIS 28:6-22 | PASTOR MARK BOFILL | 12/17/2023

I. The Desperation (6-9) | II. The Departure (10-11) | III. The Dream (12-17) | IV. The Discovery (18-21) | V. The Devotion (22)

INTRO: After receiving the Blessing from Isaac, **Jacob's journey now begins**. In this chapter we learn it is **NOW** time for **GOD to apprehend Jacob** and for **JACOB to apprehend God**. – To **APPREHEND** is to *capture* or *arrest* (God), but it also means to *perceive* or *understand* – *to grasp something either physically or mentally* (Jacob). – **How many people really grasp who God is?** To many people, **God is unknowable!** He is merely an inference, or a deduction based on the evidence of creation. **This was the case with Esau!** In a last-ditch effort to obtain favor from his parents, we learn that his actions are even more repulsive.

I. THE DESPERATION OF ESAU (6-9) – We have already learned that he was unconcerned of **Familial** and **Spiritual Etiquette (26:34-35)**. Esau had disgraced himself by marrying two pagans wives, **Judith** and **Basemath**. This brought an annoyance to the family of Isaac. – After the whole “Blessings” debacle we still see that Esau’s fleshly inclinations directed his behavior!

A. Esau Saw That... (6-8)

- Isaac **Blessed** and **Charged** Jacob (6-7) – Jacob obeyed and set out for **Padam Aram** (Syria)
- Isaac was Not Pleased with Canaanite Daughters! (8)

B. Esau's Supposition... (9) – Because Jacob went to his uncle Laban for a wife, **Esau went to his uncle Ismael for a wife**, seeking to marry again, but within the family this time! So, he married his cousin **Mahalath**. What he failed to comprehend was that **Ishmael was an OUTCAST**, sent away by Abraham! (This served as **a third strike**, which really declared **Esau as OUT!**)

P/A – Because **HE DESPISED EVERYTHING SPIRITUAL**, **ESAU NEVER APPREHENDED GOD!** His actions showed **WHY** he was **NOT** chosen by God! (God knows if we desire Him! As He did with Jacob)

II. THE DEPARTURE OF JACOB (10-11) – Because Jacob had deceived Esau, he **HAD TO LEAVE HOME**. – For the first time in his life, **Jacob was ALONE!** No caravan, no servants and probably fearful that his brother “the Hunter,” would apprehend him for his dealings. – **There are times in all of our lives when we especially need to know that Lord is with us!** So he went...

A. His Heading... Haran (10-11a) – His father sent him away to **HARAN**, a 500-mile journey north, from Beersheba. – As Jacob started out on his long northward journey, all he had to **DEPEND** on was the **PROMISES** of God (**Gen 28:3-4**).

- After a three-day journey **“Jacob came to a certain place” to Rest as the Sun set**. The name of the place was **LUZ**, which he would later rename (**v.19**). **6m. N of Jerusalem**

B. His Headstone (11b) – While some believe that Jacob had a **Rock for a pillow**, it seems as if **he took a stone and placed ‘NEAR’ his head**, **probably for protection** while he slept. Who really knows? *Though he was hardheaded...ha!* – As he lay his head down, **he obviously had a lot on his mind**. He closed his eyes not knowing that he was about to have his 1st real encounter with God! – When you lay down at night, are your thoughts **Worries and Woes** or are they **Wows and Wonders** at the goodness of God? – (**Psalm 127:2**) *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep.*

III. THE DREAM OF JACOB (12-17) – WHAT ARE DREAMS? – In the OT, God used dreams and visions to reveal His plan, to further His plan, to put His people in places of influence, and also as we see here, to Reveal and Reiterate His promises and His presence to Jacob.

- In the NT, dreams and visions served to provide information that was unavailable elsewhere. – Specifically, **God used visions and dreams to identify Jesus and to establish His church**: Zacharias (Luke 1:5-23), Joseph (Matt 1:20; 2:13), Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19), Ananias (Acts 9:10), Cornelius (Acts 10:1-6), and Peter (Acts 10:9-15). Paul also had several visions in his missionary career. God even gave him a vision of heaven (2 Cor 12:1-6).
- **But what about us?** (Eccl 5:3) tells us... *For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words.* Simply translated... If you **WORRY about many things**, you will have many dreams. *If you talk too much*, you will say foolish things!

LET'S SEE HOW GOD uses a Dream to Apprehend the MIND of a Weary Traveler!

A. Included A Ladder (12a) – In this vision Jacob sees something similar to a ladder or a stairway {Heb. **Ladder** – *sullam*, used only 1x}. – The ladder connected heaven to earth. A vivid symbol which communicated God's personal involvement in the affairs on earth, and a connection between God and man!

B. Included Angels (12b) – In this DREAM he saw a host of ANGELS moving up and down it, with **God Himself standing above it!** Whoa! – **What does this communicate?**

- God has appointed Angelic Messengers to **ENSURE** His divine plans on earth below.
- Jesus affirmed the fact that **ANGELS TRAVEL** *back on forth between heaven and earth* as **MINISTERING SPIRITS (Heb 1:14)** – To Nathaniel he said, *"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."* (John 1:51).
- **This dream is highly symbolic, but it transfers a marvelous reality.** The LADDER clearly represents the Mediator, Jesus Christ. – He came to earth and became the ladder FOR US so that we can reconnect with God! **Our relationship with God was severed b/c of sin!**
- **This dream reveals God's Desire to actively bring Himself to man**, as opposed to the men of Babel in (Gen 11) who tried to reach heaven by their own actions, apart from God!

C. Included The Lord (13-15) – This was the first time God appeared to Jacob. **Notice God's location was in Heaven, above the Ladder.** – He spoke to Jacob directly (13a): I am...

1. The Lord VERBALLY Identified Himself (13b) – *As the God of Abraham and Isaac.* – Jacob was aware that God first promised the Blessing to Abraham and that Isaac also received it and passed it to him. **But NOW, God PERSONALLY confirmed it and reassured HIS covenant promises in Jacob's life!**

2. The Lord Iterated...

- a. **His Promise (13c-14)** – Jacob now **HEARS** the **Abrahamic Blessing** from God. God repeats the terms of the covenant that He gave to both Abraham (**Gen 12:1-3**) and to Isaac (**Gen 26:2-5**) re: the Land, Multiplication, and Blessings!
- b. **His Presence (15a)** – *“Behold, I Am with you” & “I will not leave you.”* This is what Jacob needed to hear most!
- c. **His Protection (15b)** – *“I will keep you wherever you go”* – Jacob needed assurance of **God’s protection**. – God does likewise for us (tt. Psalm 121:1-8).
- d. **His Preservation (15c)** – *“I will bring you back to this land”* – Jacob was walking into an unknown land, but even **after 14 years, Jacob never forgot his own land!** (see **30:25**).
- e. **His Pledge (15d)** – *“I will do what I have spoken”* – How comforting it is to know that God would keep this promise! As He so faithfully does for us. (**2 Cor 1:2**) *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

P/A – **God knew exactly what JACOB needed to Apprehend Him.**

IV. THE DISCOVERY OF JACOB (16-17) – God’s Dream **APPREHENDED** Jacob’s mind so powerfully that *He Awoke from his sleep!*

A. His Awareness (16) – Jacob thought he knew **where and how to meet with God...** but he discovered that **God was in this place!** (*Even at a Rocky Desolate location*) – He comprehended that God is Omnipresent! (*i.e., God everywhere always*) – He discovered that **God shows up** when we are beat up and broken down, busted and disgusted, hopeless and helpless... desperate and downcast! – *“It is sad but true, that often we do not really find the comfort of the presence of God until all of our earthly crutches are taken away”* – Chuck Smith

- For over **77 years Jacob thought he understood God.** In his own way, he KEPT GOD in a box... summoning Him ONLY when needed! – **This encounter revealed The Almighty God is much greater than he imagined! Now Jacob Apprehended God in a greater way!**

B. His Acknowledgment (17) – As Jacob began to **grasp the clearer concept of who God was, “he became fearful.”** – **A humble respect of the Creator** will always manifest in humility and reverence! This is consistent with what scripture teaches (**Prov 1:7**) *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* (cf. **1 Cor 3:18**)

- **Jacob was moved emotionally,** but he lacked a total understanding of God. **Zeal with No Knowledge!** – His recognition of *“the place being AWESOME,”* is a **superstitious perspective!** – The fact of the matter is that **God desires to dwell within us!** (*Scripture exhorts us to grow in the knowledge of God – 2 Pet 1:5; 3:18*)
- Jacob then determined the place to be the **House of God (Bethel)** and the **Gate of Heaven!** Because of this spiritual encounter, **Bethel** always had a spiritual significance to Jacob, (**Gen 35:1-26**) – **Over time, Bethel became a place of Idol practices** (**Hos 10:15, Amos 4:4**)

P/A – Jacob discovered that **God is With him**, and **God was Working in His life!** Likewise, God is always working our lives... (Psalm 74:12) *For God is my King from of old, Working salvation in the midst of the earth.* (John 5:17) *“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”*

V. THE DEVOTION OF JACOB (18-22) – As soon as Jacob gets up, he gets going!

A. His Actions (18-19) – Jacob Awakes early to respond to God. He Assembles a Sacred Pillar to signify the special place, a known practice of the ancients. Then he Anoints it by pouring oil on it, to consecrate it to the Lord.

- In (v.19) Jacob Appoints the place with **a new name**, which provides a spiritual lesson for us. It's previous name was **LUZ = SEPERATION**, but now he called it **BETHEL = HOUSE OF GOD** – **What does this communicate?** *“I was once separated from God, but now I dwell in His house!”* (Some of us need to move from LUZ to BETHEL this morning!)
- At Bethel **God Apprehended Jacob** *with spiritual realities that he was unaware of!*
- At Bethel, **Jacob Apprehended God** *recognizing that He was the keeper of His promises!*

P/A – **This was a starting point for Jacob...** the beginnings of an altar (*a pillar*) **to devote himself to the Lord.** – In **Gen. 35** we see that **he builds the rest!** (*Devotion to God is a continual practice*)

B. His Avowal (20-21) – Here we have the first VOW in the bible. Jacob's statement in (v.20) **can be translated in two ways:** The word **“If”** is conditional, which implies that Jacob is striking a deal with God. The word **“Since”** communicates a heartfelt reaction to **God's grace upon Jacob!** – Whatever the case, the outcome was still a vow of allegiance to God (21). **The Lord shall be my God!**

C. His Announcements (22) ...was linked to **WORSHIP! The Stone** he set up would be **THE PLACE** where he would worship God. – Secondly, **Jacob voluntarily vowed to give a TITHE** (*tenth*) of all his increase as God supplied.

- When true conversion takes place in our hearts, we honor God by giving back to Him.

P/A – **God got ahold of Jacob's heart!** Jacob's **DEVOTION** was a result of His **APPREHENSION.** **Was he perfect...NO! He was in PROCESS!** The fact that there is still more work to be done in Jacob's life is **evident in the following chapters**, where he learns to *shed his old personality and eventually becomes Israel.*

WHERE ARE YOU TODAY? Like Jacob, have you been trying to run away from your problems? Are you currently at the end of your resources and you are tired and weary of running? **Maybe you're going the WRONG WAY!**

Jesus is the ONLY way to heaven! He does not show us a way; He is the way. In (John 14:6) Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”*