

Between a Rock & a Hard Place

I. Slide1,2 Intro:

- A. It's safe to say **the rest of Genesis** presents the life of **Jacob**.
 - 1. It including his trials w/**Laban** (28-31), w/**Esau** (32,33), & with **his sons** (34).
- B. Derek Kidner, *This **call** of Jacob and its **outcome** rank in Scripture far above the rise & fall of empires.*

II. Slide3 **JACOB'S FAREWELL BLESSING / ESAU'S REBELLION (1-9)**

- A. **Look at Map:** explain Beersheba, 3 days to Bethel. Note Haran.
- B. **JACOB'S FAREWELL BLESSING (1-5)**
- C. Jacob could now leave home with **an aim** before him **and** a father's **blessing** behind him.
- D. He's not a young man, he's **77 years old** at this point. He must go **meet God** & make some **decisions** on his own. [**reminder** its *never too late* to come to Jesus]
- E. A theme in Jacob's life will be *reconciliation*... 1st with **God**, **later** with **himself**, **later** with **his brother**.
- F. **ESAU'S REBELLION (6-9)**
- G. For Esau to take a 3rd wife, even though an Ishmaelite was better than a Hittite, was hardly the way back to dad's blessing.

III. Slide4a **JACOB'S NIGHT OF DISCOVERY (10-15)**

- A. **Jacob is actually a good picture of a lost soul.**
 - 1. In the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from his Father's house. Burdened with sin. Ignorant of the fact that God is near him & wants to save him.
- B. From **Beersheba** to **Bethel** is **3 day journey**.
- C. (12) **He dreamed** - dreams and visions are a common mode of divine communication throughout the Bible. [**he sees angels**. he sees **the God** of angels]
 - 1. This is the 1st of 7 recorded revelations **from** God **to** Jacob.

2. Slide4b *When the night is the darkest, you see the stars brightest.*

D. A Ladder (סֻלָּם/sulam) - only used here. *a stairway of steps.*

1. *Sulam Yaakov* - Jacob's ladder.

E. Angels of God were ascending & descending - that divine beings used the ladder shows that the staircase marked an **entryway** to the divine realm.

1. The imagery also suggests that angels regularly visit earth to *do God's work.*

F. Slide4c Jesus' Commentary - John 1:50,51 Jesus to Nathanael, *You will see greater things than these. 51 And he said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*

G. Christ alludes to *being Jacob's ladder*, from Gen.28.

1. Christ **reveals the glory of heaven & opens it for us** to enter in.

H. Christ is *God's ladder* between earth & heaven. (like bridge analogy, just vertical)

1. Jesus **replaces** the ladder. Jesus is **God's link** w/earth. Jesus is **the new Bethel** (God's dwelling place).

2. He **reveals** God to men (down arrow) **and takes** men to God (up arrow).

3. He **opens the way** to heaven **and is the way** to heaven.

4. **Angels up & down**...God's messengers & servants doing his bidding.

5. **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. There's a lady that's sure. All that glitters is gold. And she's buying a stairway to heaven. wait!**

a) Led Zeppelin's *Jimmy page & Robert Plant* missed it...thinking there was **a Lady buying a stairway to heaven**. **Instead** it was **a man**, a **God-man**. Who was the stairway **&** was giving out **free access** to **heaven**.

b) **Christ is God's stairway to heaven**. He **bridges the gap** between earth & heaven.

I. Slide5a **God's Promises** - A person is not saved by angels or visions; he is **saved by faith** in **God's Word**. This is a **supreme display of divine grace**. *Kidner*

1. Jacob's not a pilgrim **nor** a returning prodigal...**Yet** God came to meet him.

J. **Note** no word of rebuke, reproach, or a demand...*only* a stream of *assurances* flowing from the *I Am The Lord*. [**from** past to future. **from** where he lay his head to the 4 corners of the earth. **from** his person to all mankind]

K. What does Jacob learn about **God** here?

L. *Slide5b* The promises God gives Jacob:

1. **Land** - The Holy Land belongs to the Jews.
2. **Offspring like the dust** (multitude) - assured Jacob God would give him a wife.
 - a) **What are you desiring?** a spouse, a child, a grandchild, to foster, to adopt.
3. **Behold I am with you** - God's personal presence.
 - a) You may wander about (like Jacob) **but** God is *with you*.
 - b) Though in the **hard** years ahead, Jacob had to **reap the consequences of sins**, God was still with him to *protect him & bless him*.
 - c) **In what specific situation in your life do you need God *with you* today?** marriage situation, with you w/1 of you children, w/a ministry situation, work decision.
4. **I will keep you** - protection.
5. **I will bring you back** - **both a promise & prophecy**. *You're entitled to the land you are being driven from.*
6. **I will not leave you** - a providential plan.

M. Have you **personally met** Jacob's God? Has He **revealed Himself** to you?

N. **When** did this happen on Jacob's **faith journey**? (age 77)

1. What "**age**" are you at on your sp faith journey? Did you expect to be further along? If God showed up would you **hear Him** in all the noise of your life?

O. What have you learned about **God** lately? How has He revealed himself to **you**?

P. What did Jacob learn about his own **purpose** in life? What do **you** feel is your purpose in life?

Q. What does, when the **night** is the **darkest**, you **see** the stars **brightest**, mean to you tonight?

IV. *Slide6a* **JACOB'S MORNING OF DEDICATION (16-22)**

A. **Cosmic Geography** (16,17)

B. His astonishment highlights the belief in *cosmic geography* - that certain places were associated with divine appearances.

1. **The house of God** / בֵּית אֱלֹהִים *Bet Elohim* / **Bethel** -

a) Have a *Bethel* in your life, **a place** where you meet God in a serious way.

(1) **Men** spend a lot of money on a *Man Cave* or **women** on a *She-shed*. [ha, Cheryl's she-shed on the *State Farm* commercial]. Nothing wrong with that...*I'm just encouraging a place to meet with your God.*

b) If you've *gotten away from the Lord* come back to Bethel, renew your dedication.

2. **The gate of heaven** - The stairway led to God's abode, the heavens, where divine administration of the affairs of heaven and earth were conducted.

C. **Slide6b Turning a Pillow into a Pillar** (18,19)

1. Jacob takes his **stone pillow**, turns it on edge, turns it into a **pillar/a memorial stone**. **He turns hard pillow into a holy altar** (*poured oil on it*). [yrs later he returns to Bethel & repeats this, ch.35]

2. **Illustration:** We had a neighbor move & gave Kel a whole box of **children's books**. Last night the grand kids picked *Charlie Brown Trick or Treating story*...where at each door, all the kids share what they got, Charlie Brown gets a **rock**.

a) After reading this story - hey, if God only brings you **a rock**, lay in the dirt of the earth **and** place your head on it...and see what He will do! [**your rock might turn into a pillow, into a memorial, into an altar**]

D. **Slide6c Jacob's Vow** (20-22)

1. This is actually the **1st vow recorded in the bible**. This act of faith was Jacob's way of **dedicating himself to God**.

2. **Jacob's gift of his tenth/tithe** - was voluntary before it was commanded.

a) This is pre-law & must be pretty good post-law also (age of grace).

3. It had become a **fetish** or an **irrational devotion** for the Pharisees in Mt.23:23.

4. The principle of **proportionate giving** is upheld in the NT. (i.e. sow bountifully, reap bountifully - cheerful giver. as you purpose in your heart)

- E. What was Jacob's **response**? What is your **response**? What **stone** that you've been dealt in life can you turn into a **pillow**? What **place** can you turn into **your Bethel**?
- F. Jacob learned God **was with** Him. **Working for** Him. And had a **perfect plan** for his life. What does God want to whisper as a reminder to **you** tonight?