

What You Need to Know About ISAAC & JACOB:

“The Lord who leads armies makes this solemn vow: ‘Be sure of this: Just as I have intended so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen.’” Isaiah 14:24 NET

Study Number Six – Genesis 28:1-22

One of the things that’s important to notice in this series of studies is the fact that God is so specific about the instructions with regard to the covenant. To Abraham it was said over and over, and then it’s actually going to be said by the Lord as we wrap up this episode on Jacob.

It’s gone from Abraham to Isaac, and now we see the mantle passed to Jacob. We are going to say goodbye to Isaac in this study. He’s going to live for 43 more years and he’ll only be a footnote in our other studies in this series, because he just stays home and basically dies. What a waste of 43 years. There’s not been anything biblically significant in his life.

When we study these characters, we realize there’s something about them we really would like to be and other things about them that we really would not like to be. For Isaac we say goodbye and Jacob takes center stage.

Hand-offs are really important, aren’t they? Hand-offs in

ministry, hand-offs in life, and here we're seeing the hand-off from Isaac to Jacob in this study.

And if we just go back to so many of these passages and we see the Abrahamic covenant specifically stated to each of these three guys, how could we live in our generation and have any question about who's right? Who the land belongs to and who is the one through whom the seed is going to come, the Christ. And certainly the Lord has fulfilled all of that. But ultimately, He's going to fulfill the coming of the kingdom and it's going to be made quite clear to whom the land belongs.

Jacob has a lot to learn. We could almost call it going to school. We're going to see him now enter the black and blue university. He's going to really have a rough time.

And he's getting ready to leave home. Rebekah thinks he has to leave home to save his life because Esau wants to murder him. But Isaac believes that he's fulfilling God's plan in sending his son back to the home where his bride Rebekah came from.

And it is true. The things he's going to talk about, he's in the will of God. And the difference between this passage and our last one ought to make us always wake up every morning and want to be in the center of the will of God, not kicking stumps, not trying to make things happen. But to just be available for God to use us so that in quiet peace we can watch Him do some incredible things.

For Isaac it was the mistake of affection over what the Lord had asked of him. He loved Esau more than he did Jacob, and so he forgot—actually his affections caused him to forget that in the original birth of the boys the Lord had specifically said that the older would serve the younger.

Isaac thought that he could probably work this all out. And he almost did it if it hadn't been for his wife.

Now the thing that we want to watch, because some of these things are so instructional when we see them actually in play, is the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah. It is really sad because after their marriage he was praying for her to become pregnant, they prayed together for 20 years asking God to answer their prayers.

And here we have them not even referring to one another in any kind of an affectionate way. It ought to tell us something. If we want to have a good marriage, we have to work at it. And we have to work at it all the time. It's no fair coasting and if we're not working at it, we are drifting apart. Culture will see to it that it happens. So don't let anything else take the place that belongs to us and our mate.

We'll see some of that in this study.

Now let's start with two verses from Psalm 37:

Psalm 37:23, 24

If the Lord delights in a man's way,
he makes his steps firm;
though he stumble, he will not fall,
for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

For Isaac—because he's going to call Jacob. In our last study he called Esau out of the will of God and all of that went on. Now as the study opens, he's going to call Jacob. Yay! He's right on track.

Ready? Let's get started.

v. 1 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman.

“So Isaac called for Jacob and he blessed him and he commanded him: ‘Do not marry a Canaanite woman.’”

If he'd had done this in the first place we wouldn't have had all this mess we went through previously. If we're doing the will of God and we're seeking it, and we're pursuing it with a passion on a daily basis, we're going to avoid a whole lot of this stuff that happens here when we're trying to go against God's will. Our personal affections are greater than what God is making clear as to what we ought to be doing.

So there are **THREE THINGS** he does here:

1. “Isaac called for Jacob,”

2. “Isaac...blessed him,” and then

3. “Isaac...commanded him.”

And it’s very specific. It’s a **NEGATIVE COMMAND**:

“Do not marry a Canaanite woman.”

The reason he says this is because Isaac and Rebekah have really been upset by Esau’s two marriages to those Hittite or Canaanite women.

Now we will see Esau come back in here and there’s a great lesson that will come out of this. At this point Isaac is aware that he made a mistake and he knows it. And he remembered those words in that birth announcement, that the older would serve the younger.

Now he’s going to do what’s right here. And that’s wonderful! And so he charged them, “Don’t take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.”

Like father Abraham had done for Isaac, now Isaac’s doing for Jacob.

v. 2 Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.

“Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.”

Now notice the IMPERSONAL TERMS that are referred by Isaac about Rebekah. We’ll see it twice:

“your mother’s father”—not my sweet wife—and,

“Take a wife for yourself there, from the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.”

That tells us loads about the condition of a relationship by the way they refer to each other in conversation.

And he gives him this NEGATIVE COMMAND:

“Do not marry a Canaanite woman.”

But, “Go at once to Paddan Aram...Take a wife for yourself there...”

Now we’re getting ready for a trip. It’s a 450 mile trip. Esau and Jacob are 77 as the scene of our study opens and so they’re up there in years. They’re beyond marriageable age at this point, but they weren’t in those days. The covenant change is about to be connected so that Jacob will fit and fall into line here and he is not to take a Canaanite wife. So we’ve moved from PRIVATE AGENDAS to all of this.

John and Stasi Eldredge wrote a book on marriage. The book is basically about women because John has written so many great books on his personal journey. And Stasi in the book describes the struggle that women have for identification and how men so many times contribute to this. And this is what she says—it's very helpful:

(Captivating by John & Stasi Eldredge)

My story is like most women's stories—we've received all sorts of messages but very little help in what it means to become a woman. As one young woman recently wrote us,

I remember when I was ten asking myself as well as older females in my life how a woman of God could actually be confident, scandalous and beautiful, yet not portray herself as a feminist Nazi or an insecure I-need-attention emotional [prostitute]. How can I become a strong woman without becoming harsh? How can I be vulnerable without drowning myself in my sorrow?

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She also said this:

(Captivating by John & Stasi Eldredge)

I know I am not alone in this nagging sense of failing to measure up, a feeling of not being good enough *as a woman*. Every woman I've ever met feels it—something deeper than

just the sense of failing at what she does. An underlying, gut feeling of failing at who she *is*. *I am not enough*, and, *I am too much* at the same time. Not pretty enough, not thin enough, not kind enough, not gracious enough, not disciplined enough. But too emotional, too needy, too sensitive, too strong, too opinionated, too messy. The result is Shame, the universal companion of women. It haunts us, nipping at our heels, feeding on our deepest fear that we will end up abandoned and alone.

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Rebekah's got to have those feelings because she's going to be all alone for the rest of her life. Esau's already gone with his three wives now, as we'll see in just a minute. And Jacob's leaving on a trip and Rebekah's going to be alone and dies. She's not going to see the boys anymore.

What does that? What is it that causes those kinds of distance in a relationship?

Slowly things chip away at the relationship.

This is the way God proves to himself whenever He talks covenant. It's "God Almighty." We use it in that song, "El Shaddai." That's what this is. El Jehovah Shaddai, the one who is there to nourish His people. He's the strong one.

v. 3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.

“May God Almighty”—he’s praying for him now before he leaves on the trip. When we have the word “May,” that’s the prayer.

“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.”

So let’s talk for a second about El Shaddai. He is the covenant-keeping God. That very name for God is used in Genesis 17 when the Abrahamic covenant is instituted. And it’s used also several times in the life of Isaac and now here as we’re getting ready to move into Jacob.

The all-sufficient one,

the one who leads and triumphs,

the one who keeps His promises,

the one who does it His way.

He is the all-sufficient one. And notice the blessings of the covenant—there they are.

The only one that’s different, which is really kind of cool, is Isaac realizes that Jacob might be a late starter but he’s going to have a whole bunch of kids. See what it says there?

“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.”

In other words, He already sees that a nation will come out of Jacob and his work, as far as the rest of his life is concerned. So he calls it “a community of peoples.”

Want to hear the fulfillment of that? When Jacob takes the family, because of the poverty and the famine, down into Egypt to rendezvous with Joseph, remember that? There are some verses in Genesis 46 that tell us the magnitude and the fulfillment of what’s being said.

Genesis 46:26, 27 (The Message)

Summing up, all those who went down to Egypt with Jacob—his own children, not counting his sons’ wives—numbered sixty-six. Counting the two sons born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family who ended up in Egypt numbered seventy.

That’s a pretty good group. And that’s the beginning of the nation and the fulfillment of this statement.

Okay, he’s still praying.

v. 4 May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land

God gave to Abraham.”

“May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham.”

What do we have in verse 3? We have the SEED. They’re going to be a big company of people.

What do we have in verse 4? The LAND.

The very same two things—the SEED and the LAND—always said in the same way. And as it has gone, from Abraham to Isaac, now it’s getting ready to go to Jacob.

Isn’t it interesting when we come to a point like this that God continually repeats Himself on what He’s going to do? And how different this is as old Isaac’s praying for his son Jacob, that just as soon as he gets out on the road the very first thing God says is the very thing that he prayed for.

So it’s like Isaac prays for it and then as soon as Jacob gets out there and meets God at the end of the study, it’s the very same thing. God is answering the prayer of Isaac in the life of Jacob.

Isn’t that interesting? We had so much of the flesh in our last episode. We had people ticked, we had people running around whispering and trying to fool and deceive and lie and cheat and all that. Trying to make something happen.

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What do we have here? God's just saying, "Hey, don't worry. I'm going to do it." It's just peaceful.

John 6:63

It's the spirit that makes alive, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life.

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effective of it quietness and assurance forever.

We recognize it's a God-thing. He's doing it and we're at peace about it. And so that's kind of the picture we have as old Isaac is praying for Jacob before he leaves.

THREE PETITIONS:

1. that He will "bless you,"
2. He'll "make you fruitful,"
3. He'll "increase your numbers."
4. "May [God Almighty] give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you can take possession of this land."

Genesis 12:1-3 is the first Abrahamic covenant. See it, parallel it. Then the other time that God makes it so clear is in Genesis 22 when Abraham took Isaac up the mountain to offer him as a sacrifice. And after they had the sacrifice of the ram, God came right back and said the very same things.

Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave you country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 22:17, 18

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities’ of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

We’ve already seen it in the life of Isaac and now it’s in Jacob.

Verse 5—he’s finished praying.

v. 5 Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the

mother of Jacob and Esau.

“Then”—we can tell he’s done. We had two verses started with “May,” those are the prayers. Now we have “Then.”

“Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.”

“the mother of Jacob and Esau.”

Not sweet Rebekah, the wife and mother of my children.

Of course, a verse like this makes it look like he’s just going to go and we aren’t going to hear any more about it. But he’s got a 450-mile trip ahead of him. And there’s a little bit of a parenthesis here, okay?

Esau’s going to come into the picture for a second. We’re going to learn so much about this so stay focused.

v. 6 Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, “Do not marry a Canaanite woman,”

“Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, ‘Do not marry a Canaanite woman,’”

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Esau is so dumb about spiritual things, because he's not been interested in spiritual things. And he doesn't realize that these women that he chose were not fair game and that his mother and daddy were very upset over the choices that he made.

That shows us the level of communication in the family, doesn't it? And so when he hears this a red light flashes because he's doubly guilty. He's got two of them as wives.

He's very interested in this because he was planning on killing Jacob and so now he's leaving on a wife-hunting expedition to get a wife from who? From the mother's side of the family. So he's going to score a big one and get another wife from the father's side of the family so Isaac will rethink the whole issue and pronounce a blessing upon him.

But look how fallacious and how ignorant he is with regard to what he's getting ready to do. This is kind of like people reveal so much about how they handle things, and it just comes out.

“Do not marry a Canaanite woman.”

v. 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram.

“and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram.”

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So now here's the ledger of the things he learned:

1. "Isaac had blessed Jacob,"
2. "[he] had sent him to Paddan Aram,"
3. and he's going on a mission to get a wife there, and he had blessed him,
4. and he had blessed him and commanded him not to "marry a Canaanite woman," and
5. "Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram."

Isn't that amazing how as we live life and separations like this take place, how we have ties with people that are very special, and we manifest our friendship and loyalty by the decisions we make?

And so he doesn't do some things. Jacob obeyed his parents and left knowing that this had to be part of the plan of God.

v. 8 Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac;

"Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac;"

The mother's not even in this anymore. It's just how

“displeasing” it is “to his father Isaac.” Because actually his dad has credited him as the favorite son so he’s only concerned about pleasing him. He finally learns here that this upset his father.

So what does he do? Verse 9—now here we go.

v. 9 so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

“so he went to Ishmael”—who’s Ishmael?

He was the son born in the situation with an Egyptian handmaid, rather than Sarah—a son who’s already been rejected. So we have a son that is rejected going to get a wife from the other side of the rejected family and he doesn’t even realize what he’s doing in this situation.

God is already basically pronounced the curse on Ishmael in the fact that Isaac would be born miraculously in God’s perfect timing. That’s an act of the flesh! And so he goes there to find a wife to take the place of the Canaanite women. So now he’s going to have three wives all for the hopes of being blessed.

One writer put it this way:

Ironically the unchosen son of *Isaac* married into the unchosen line of *Ishmael*! So Esau tried to better his marital reputation by marrying a third wife...Esau had no

understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant and its purity. He was still living on the human level.

(source unknown)

He's saying in his heart, "I who am my father's favorite will marry into his side of the family since Jacob, my mother's favorite, has been sent to marry into the mother's side of the family. I'll do this and then I'm going to get blessed by my daddy."

It's kind of like RELIGION WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP, isn't it?

ASSOCIATION WITHOUT ACCEPTANCE.

"and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had."

v. 10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran."

Okay, we're on our way. Seventy-seven years old, 450 miles ahead of us, and he's on the road—heading out into a new and different kind of life for him.

v. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down

to sleep.

“When he reached a certain place,”

Now in verse 11 this place is Bethel and it's about 40 or 45 miles from Beersheba. That is a long day's trip. This probably has to be the second day. Usually it's about 20 to 25 miles they can do if they're really hustling. And a 77-year-old guy going over a lot of rocky and difficult terrain is not going to make a lot of miles. This is probably the second night that he's out, even though it looks like and appears that he left there and he is 40 to 45 miles away.

“When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.”

v. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

“He had a dream in which he saw a stairway”—this is not a ladder. It's more like a stairway—“that rested on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”

To Jacob he's leaving momma, he's leaving daddy, he's leaving the God of the covenant, he's going out into a new life on his own. And so he actually is very surprised in this dream that

God's at the top of the stairs. And God's with him and those angels ascending and descending are messengers to take care of anything that involves the journey of Jacob in this wife-hunting expedition for the next twenty years.

To give us an idea of the picture here, remember when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter hacked that guy upside the head with a sword and the Lord said, "Put up your sword. If I needed help, I could call 7,200 angels to be here in a moment."

There is angelic movement back and forth to earth involved in all of our lives. And we need to be aware of their mission. And maybe some of us are here because of their mission in protecting us from dangers we weren't even aware of. But because of decisions and things that happened, we are here, spared and protected.

This is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the ladder—and we're not picking that out of the air. We're going to see where that is in scripture in just a second.

And we have the angels "ascending and descending." It's to be a comfort, but it's also now God's time to give an answer to the prayer of Isaac about the covenant.

Now it's "the God of...Abraham, the God of Isaac," and the God of Jacob because God's getting ready to say so in what's getting ready to happen in our passage. This is beautiful.

Now, the LADDER represents the LORD JESUS. Remember Nathanael? He was a fisherman but he spent a whole lot of time under the fig tree studying. And Philip went to get Nathanael to tell him that they'd found the Messiah, and they brought Nathanael to the Lord, and the Lord said, "Oh you're Nathanael, an Israelite in whom there is no guile." (see John 1:47)

And that just blew him away that the Lord already knew that all about him and had never met him. Then we read this:

John 1:50, 51

Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

So the ladder is the Son. That's why He's the way—the only way—the truth and the life.

Notice it's "ladder" or "stairway" SINGULAR. It's not stairways, plural, like there's a whole lot of ways that we can get there.

Scripture is so clear in these areas referring to things such as this. So this is quite a dream.

Erma Bombeck said:

(One Month to Live: Thirty Days to a No-Regrets Life by Kerry & Chris Shook)

There are people who put their dreams in a little box and say, “Yes, I’ve got dreams, of course I’ve got dreams.” Then they put the box away and bring it out once in a while to look in it, and yep, they’re still there.

—ERMA BOMBECK

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Never realizing them.

v. 13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

“There above it stood the Lord, and he said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.’”

See the picture right there?

“I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are living.”—there’s the land right there in this verse.

It’s God at the top of the stairs.

Ever met God at the top of the stairs? Ever met God in a personal encounter with Him that we can look back on?

What an imposing figure God must have been at the top of the stairs. And then to begin to speak and give him essentially what his dad had just prayed for.

“I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.”

It’s going to be the LAND and then it’s also going to be the SEED here.

v. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

“Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth,”—there it is—“and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south.”—there’s the multitude of peoples—“All the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.”

So the Lord comes and underscores again what He did with Abraham in the initial one, what He did with Isaac, even there at the time that Isaac was being offered—Abraham and Isaac were there together. Moved on to Isaac and then it’s now moving on to Jacob.

There are four wonderful PROMISES here.

v. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

“I am with you, I will watch over you wherever you go, I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

After making the statements on the Abrahamic covenant on the SEED and the LAND, to come back with a statement like this. And the KEY PHRASES there:

1. “I am with you,”
2. “I...will watch over you,”
3. “I will bring you back to the land,”
4. “I will not leave you,” and
5. I will not leave you...until I have done what I have promised you.”

But there are FOUR BIG PROMISES there. Let’s look at them for just a minute. And we need to have these in our mind because old Jacob’s going to respond incorrectly here.

What’s the first promise?

1. DIVINE PRESENCE—"I am with you."

Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God...

Exodus 33:14

The Lord said, "My Presence will go with you..."

Psalms 23:4

When you walk
through the valley of the shadow of death
Don't fear any evil,
for you are with me...

Hebrews 13:5

... "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

So we have the divine presence first.

Secondly, we have the promise of:

2. DIVINE PROTECTION—"And I will keep you wherever you go."

Psalm 84:11

The Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.

3. DIVINE PRESERVATION—“and I will bring you back to this land.”

“Nothing’s going to happen to you to keep Me from being able to have a successful journey. Not over there, but also coming back to the land.” We’ll see the fulfillment of that in the next episode.

And finally the:

4. DIVINE PROMISE—“I will not leave you until I have done that which I have promised you.”

Philippians 1:6

You can be confident of this very thing, that He who begins a good work in you will continue to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

His PRESENCE,

His PROTECTION,

His PRESERVATION, and

His PROMISE.

What a beautiful statement—verse 16.

v. 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”

“When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’”

God shows up when His people open the Word and begin to study.

We have a way of not being sensitive to who is here and when He’s here and when He’s not.

Ask God, what is the level of our sensitivity? How sensitive are we to God’s presence in our life?

Jacob’s shocked. This is really the first real encounter with the Lord that he’s had. And he was sacking out just exhausted, he woke up and realized, “Hey, I’m taken by surprise. The Lord’s here.”

Does God surprise us like that?

Remember Acts 9? Old Saul of Tarsus is on his way to

Damascus to get more Christians and this is what we read:

Acts 9:3-6

And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who art You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, rise and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.”

Totally taken off guard and surprised by the fact that God was there.

Now he’s scared—verse 17. We would be too, wouldn’t we?

v. 17 He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

“He was afraid and he said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.’”

As he sees the stairway going up and down he’s saying, “This is...the house of God!” God is here and “this is the gate of heaven.”

This is most likely his conversion experience. This is the first

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time he's really had a personal encounter with God. And the way he talks about it, the promises that are given, this is one of the turning points in his life. And we'll see he's got a long way to go.

But now he's become God-conscious. He's become aware that God is there and it's literally stricken him with fear and terror in his soul.

But he's been trying to work it all out now that God, who is the God of all of this, is there for the first time. And he is very frightened by that.

v. 18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

“Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.”

This was a CALL TO REMEMBRANCE. This was something that was made so that he would come back to it, he would remember it.

v. 19 He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

“He called that place Bethel,”—which means “house of God.”

“though the city used to be called Luz.”

And so “the house of God” will be a place that we will see him return to in the next episode as we continue to pursue his life.

Then when we get to verse 20, this is sad. We just don’t make vows to God, okay. We claim promises and we trust Him, but it’s of the flesh to make a vow.

Would it make any difference if Jacob had not made a vow here? Not at all! Because God’s the one that’s going to be doing it, not Jacob.

But see what he’s doing with the vow? He’s entering into a joint venture.

The very things he makes a vow about are the very things that God has promised. So why prolong the agony of the thing in questioning God if He’s going to do what He said? Because “faithful is the one who called you who will also do it.” It’s a done deal if God said it.

God said it, I believed it, that settles it. Right?

v. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear

“Then Jacob made a vow, saying,”

“If God will be with me”—if, if, if—“and will watch over me”—he just got through saying both of these—“on this journey I am taking”

He didn't say anything about food and clothes to wear. That's number three. He's got to get that in there too, because he has to eat. He has to have some clothes to wear on this journey.

“and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear”

Notice one thing. Ten times—“I,” “me,” “my.” It's all about him at this point.

Let's look at a verse in Numbers:

Numbers 30:2

When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything that he said.

It is very dangerous when we make a vow. If we do it, we have to be held accountable for that vow to the completion and the fulfillment of it.

It's just a good thing not to vow, okay? Because when we do, we put ourselves in this kind of a situation.

This is a cute story:

God Blesses Humble Street Missionaries

Charlie and Agnes, [said to be some of the meekest people known.] Charlie is a bright, energetic, hard-working man who could have been successful about anything he set out to do. When he [had] set out to do was mission work. He spent his entire career working with some of the lowliest people on earth—alcoholics on skid row. For many years he was director of Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago, and then in his retirement years he went to work for the McCauley Water Street Mission in New York. At a time in life when most people his age were playing golf or taking cruises, Charlie would commute every day to minister to homeless men on the streets of New York.

You don't get rich doing mission work your whole life, but every once in a while, Charlie and his wife, Agnes, would get to do something special. One year they invited me and my wife, Karen, to join them for a night on the town. Someone had given them tickets to hear Handel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall—velvet-covered seats in a private booth. It was a great night, and we all enjoyed it. As they drove us home that night, Karen and I were sitting in the back seat, and I was admiring Charlie and Agnes. They were all dressed up for [this] big night [and she was sitting so close to him, it was like] high school sweethearts. They struck me in that moment as two of the happiest people on earth. Just then I noticed a little plaque that had stuck to the dashboard of their old Chevy. It explained everything: "God always gives what's best to those

who leave the choice to Him.”

Bryan Wilkerson, in his sermon “In God We Trust (Though We’d Rather Pay Cash),”
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There are no vows in that. Just a simple relationship and the joys of walking with the Lord that makes the impact.

In the book *S.H.A.P.E.*, which is a book on spiritual gifts, we read these words:

(S.H.A.P.E.: Finding & Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life by Erik Rees)

As Max Lucado has said, “Don’t go to God with options and expect him to choose one of your preferences. Go to him with empty hands—no hidden agendas, no crossed fingers, nothing behind your back. Go to him with a willingness to do whatever he says. If you surrender your will, then he will ‘equip you with everything good for doing his will.’”

106: Max Lucado, *Shaped by God*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1985, 112.
pp. 118-19

Listen to Carol Kent, who lost her son through tragic circumstances:

(A New Kind of Normal: Hope-Filled Choices When Life Turns

Upside Down by Carol Kent)

That's where we are right now, in the "resting zone" of relinquishing our desires to the one who loves our family more than we do. ...

God, I release to You what I cannot control. I hold my son with open hands. The Bible says Your angels set up a circle of protection around us while we pray. I need that circle right now, not just for protection but for comfort. Lord, Mary didn't get to see the fulfillment of the vision You revealed to her. Will you be here long enough to see my son walk out of prison as a free man? Will Monty live to see his children grow up? Or do You have a different kind of miracle in mind for Jason, for Monty, and for us...

pp. 159-160

That kind of prayer puts things in perspective.

Now notice verse 21. He's not done with this vow thing.

v. 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God

"so that"—he's continuing on—"I return safely"—he's getting ready to get the Lord to sign this for him and he's going to co-sign it, of course.

"I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God"

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And isn't God just clapping His hands with glee? Look who He has now if He fulfills all the requirements of the vow. He has Jacob in His camp.

Oh man, how exciting can it get?

v. 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

"and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

He's going to be a tither! Oh my, mercy sakes alive!

And we close the book on the first episodes.

But isn't it interesting how things like this really fog the relationship? And what he's doing is just vowing that he'll do this if God does that? And out of the relationship, God will do exceeding more than that.

Andrew Murray said:

(God's Best Secrets: Daily Devotional Meditations by Andrew Murray)

Read from time to time what God's Word says about the love of Christ. Meditate on the words, and let them sink into

your heart. Sooner or later you will begin to realize: The greatest happiness of my life is that I am beloved of the Lord Jesus. I may live in fellowship with Him all the day long.

Let your heart continually say: His love to me is unspeakable, He will keep me abiding in His love.
(January 13)

A.W. Tozer is so good:

(Renewed Day by Day: Daily Devotional Readings: Volume I
by A. W. Tozer, compiled by Gerald B. Smith)

Yet for all God's good will toward us He is unable to grant us our heart's desires until all our desires have been reduced to one. When we have dealt with our carnal ambitions, when we have trodden upon the lion and adder of the flesh, have trampled the dragon of self-love under our feet and have truly reckoned ourselves to have died unto sin, then and only then can God raise us to newness of life and fill us with His blessed Holy Spirit!

For every one that actually crosses over into the Promised Land there are many who stand for a while and look longingly across the river and then turn sadly back to the comparative safety of the sandy wastes of the old life!

(July 25)

There are seven lessons that come out of the passage.

Lesson #1: God brought and gave His blessings to Jacob, independent of his own human efforts.

Lesson #2: Esau's human efforts look good on the outside but were not pleasing to God. Man looks on the outward, God looks on the heart!

Lesson #3: God is standing at the top of the stairs and the stairs represent Jesus Christ spanning the separation between a Holy God and sinful man.

Lesson #4: God's promise of His presence, protection, preservation, and His promise of fulfillment are all given to us as well.

Lesson #5: Jacob's fear was over past guilt in his life.

Lesson #6: Be sure and mark well the place of your conversion to alleviate future doubt.

Lesson #7: Do not make the mistake of making vows to God.

We'll let Ruth Myers close us with this wonderful prayer:

(31 Days Toward Intimacy with God by Joni Eareckson Tada)

Lord Jesus, strip away everything from my life that keeps Your life from shining through me in all its radiance and beauty. Help me to see all of my life—the happy and the sad, the full and the lean, the joyful and the painful, the peaceful

*and the perplexing—as a moment-by-moment opportunity
to let this lost and broken world see You.
Accomplish it by the overflowing power of Your mighty Spirit.
In Your strong name...*

p. 38

What You Need to Know About ISAAC & JACOB:

“The Lord who leads armies makes this solemn vow: ‘Be sure of this: Just as I have intended so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen.’” Isaiah 14:24 NET

Study Number Six – Genesis 28:1-22

NOTES

v. 1 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman.

v. 2 Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.

v. 3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.

v. 4 May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham.”

v. 5 Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

v. 6 Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, “Do not marry a Canaanite woman,”

v. 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram.

v. 8 Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac;

v. 9 so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

v. 10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

NOTES

v. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

v. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

v. 13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

v. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

v. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

v. 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

v. 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

v. 18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

v. 19 He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

v. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear

v. 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God

v. 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 28:1-22 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Isaac command Jacob to do in the first three verses of our study?

3. What wish does he express for Jacob in verse 4?

4. What is Esau's response to Isaac's blessing of Jacob?

5. Describe the dream that Jacob had and the message from the Lord.

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6. What promise does the Lord give Jacob in verse 15?

7. What is Jacob's response to this vision?

8. What vow does Jacob make to the Lord in the concluding verses?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: God brought and gave His blessings to Jacob, independent of his own human efforts.

LESSON #2: Esau's human efforts look good on the outside but were not pleasing to God. Man looks on the outward, God looks on the heart!

LESSON #3: God is standing at the top of the stairs and the stairs represent Jesus Christ spanning the separation between a Holy God and sinful man.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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