



Brent Alderman
P.O. Box 2060, Annapolis, MD 21404
240.818.3053
brent.alderman@capitolcom.org

SALVATION – LESSONS FROM JACOB (Genesis 28:10-22)

In his book, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, C.S. Lewis writes, "Be sure it is not for nothing that the Landlord has knit our hearts so closely to time and place – to one friend rather than another and one shire more than all the land". This reference to God Himself (the Landlord) is a true observation of how we have been made and how we remember important events in our lives. Places play a key role in our memories. We remember when we saw our future spouse for the first time and day of our proposal. We remember the day we saw our children's face for the first time. Graduations, weddings, illnesses, funerals – all the significant events are burned into our memories and for each of them, I would say we could physically go back to the very spot they occurred. Places are powerful reminders of our experiences.

When we last left Jacob, he had just deceived his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing meant for his brother, Esau. When Esau became enraged to the point of threatening to kill Jacob, Rebekah, Jacob's mother, proposed a plan to Jacob to flee and return home later after Esau's anger had subsided. Jacob was scared and covered 50 miles on the first day. As he lay down, exhausted, he had no idea how his life was about to change.

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

Genesis 28:10 - 15 - Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 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 promised you."

Anytime there is a spiritual change in a person's heart, God initiates it by revealing Himself. Today, God speaks through His Word, but at this time, He sometimes used dreams to send His message.

This dream included a ladder (bridging the gap between God and man), angels (showing God's accessibility) and the Father Himself standing at the top speaking. As He spoke, God stated who he was, confirmed the promise He made to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham¹, and gave Jacob reassurance that He would always be with him.

What we have in front of us today in the Scriptures, is God's way of communicating Himself and His will. He is not adding any revelation to what He has already said in His Word. The Bible is sufficient for all our desires to know and follow God². That is such an encouragement to know when we're seeking answers to the problems of life.

We also should be glad for the fact God has revealed Himself at all. Without His initiating contact with us we would be directionless and without hope. As we see here and throughout the Bible, spiritual change is only possible with God first showing a person who He really is.

JACOB RESPONDS IN FAITH

Genesis 28:16, 17 - Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 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."

Have you ever awoken from an intense dream? Jacob was just told that the redemption of the world would come through his descendants. That's an intense message and he was in awe!

When Jacob first arrived in this place, God was the furthest thing from his mind. He was on the run for his life and collapsed in exhaustion, but God had other plans and used this moment to speak to Jacob in a way he hadn't before. It impacted Jacob in a huge way and he realized that he was in a special place in his life, a crossroads where he had a huge decision to make.

How many times do we rush through our days and have little or no thought of God's presence around us? We move from meeting to meeting, catch meals on the run, and squeeze in texts and phone calls when we can, but do not take time to hear from God in His Word or come to Him in prayer. We all should spend time each day looking to God for wisdom and strength with the desire to glorify Him in what we do.

Jacob responded to God's revelation in faith, believing what he had been told. He had no idea how God would work out His plan of salvation for the world, he had no way of knowing about God coming to earth as a man someday, but he did obey with the limited information he had at this time and place. And that's how Old Testament saints were saved – through faith and belief in what God had said to them. Speaking of Abraham, Paul wrote

*Romans 4:20-22 - No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why **his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."***

People have always been saved the same way – through faith in God. Here's what we must do.

*Romans 10:9, 10 - if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

JACOB REVERSES DIRECTION

*Genesis 28:18-22 - So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. **He called the name of that place Bethel,** but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then **Jacob made a vow,** saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."*

In the 13 verses of the text for this study, the word "place" occurs six times. Places are important markers and Jacob wanted to set a tangible reminder of his encounter with God. After setting up a pillar, he renamed the place Bethel (or "house of God"). He had been profoundly moved by the dream God used to communicate to him.

Then he made a vow – a vow to follow and obey what he had been told. It was a vow of commitment and surrender. When Jacob had arrived there the night before, he was a man who made his own plans without consulting God. He regularly deceived and took advantage of others to get what he wanted. But now, Jacob turns a corner and vows to live in a new way.

If we are to be accepted by God and forgiven, we must have a Bethel experience. We must respond to His Word, what has been revealed to us, in faith believing He will accomplish what He promises. And when this is genuine, we will change. That is always an evidence that the truth of the gospel is working in us.

*2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. **The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.***

*1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 - Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own,** for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

*1 John 1:6, 7- If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But **if we walk in the light,** as he is in the light, **we have fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The Scriptures make it clear that no one can claim to follow God and remain in the old patterns of sin and self-absorption.

¹ [Genesis 12:1-3.](#)

² [2 Timothy 3:16, 17.](#)

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATORS AND STAFF (During Session)
TUESDAYS, 8:00 a.m.
ROOM 153, HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING