

Commentary on Genesis chapter 28 by Chuck Smith 4.9.25

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April memory verse

1 Exodus 20:1&2

² I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

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Now So Isaac called Jacob, and he blessed him, and he charged him, and he said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, and go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from there of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother (Gen 28:1-2).

Now evidently, they were able to keep some kind of a communication perhaps by the caravans that would travel. You'd give a letter and it will be carried and you'd-and they would probably deliver mail back and forth because he knew that Laban had had some daughters at this point. "So you go back and take one of Laban's daughters for your wife".

And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that you may be a multitude of people (Gen 28:3);

And so actually he is continuing now to bless Jacob, even giving further blessing, the blessing of God upon thee, the fruitfulness and becoming a multitude of people.

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with them; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham (Gen 28:4).

So notice that now Isaac is adding to the previous blessing, adding unto Jacob the blessings that God had given unto Abraham, and unto Jacob and his seed this land that God had promised unto Abraham. And so there is an extension of the earlier blessing where when Esau said, "Isn't there anything left?" Isaac couldn't think of anything. But now when Jacob comes before him, there is the added blessing, the blessing of Abraham to be passed upon to Jacob and his descendants.

And Isaac sent Jacob away: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to take a wife from Padanaram; and that

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as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, You will not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padanaram; And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan did not please Isaac his father; Then went Esau to Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife (Gen 28:5-9).

Realizing that his two wives were not pleasing to his parents, he took a third wife and this one from the descendants of Ishmael who were, of course, Abraham's descendants through Hagar the handmaid.

Now Jacob went out from Beersheba, and he went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took the stones of the place, put them for his pillows, and he laid down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, behold 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 Jehovah God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: and the land where you lie, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shalt spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north, to the south: and in thee and thy seed [seed singular there] shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of (Gen 28:10-15).

So he's had a hard journey traveling to Bethel some thirty miles or so from the area around Beersheba, a little more than that, thirty-five miles. Tired, he gets to this rocky wilderness, barren area. He's tired, the sun is going down, he puts some rocks together for a pillow, he goes to sleep. He starts to dream. An interesting dream indeed, a ladder from earth reaching up into heaven. The angels of God are ascending and descending. And the Lord is standing there.

The Lord talks to him and the Lord promises to give him, first of all, the area where he's lying. Promises to bless him. Promises to go with him. Promises to give to the north, east, south and west the land and to his seed. And so the Lord is actually repeating unto Jacob the promises that He made to Abraham and then in verse fifteen, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither you go."

Now he didn't know where he was going at this point except back to Haran but he really didn't know where it was or anything else about it. "I will bring thee again into this land; I will not leave thee, until I have done all that which I have spoken to thee about." So here this dream of Jacob could very well have been prompted by his lying there under the starry sky, looking up into the heavens and thinking, "Well, God is up there somewhere" as we so often think as we look up into the starlit sky. "Well, God dwells in heaven".

But you know, if you think of God dwelling in heaven it seems like God is very far off. There's something about looking up in the desert skies that brings almost a consciousness of not the nearness, but the distance of God as we have come to a

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knowledge of the vastness of the universe. And somehow through the heavens, there is a consciousness of the unapproachableness of God because He is so vast. His universe is so vast. You see, looking up into the heavens gives to us a true awareness and a consciousness of ourself. I'm so nothing. I'm so small when I think of the universe. Oh man, what am I when I think, I compare myself to the universe?

One of the smaller planets around, around one of the small stars is a small corner of the vast Milky Way galaxy, which has a billion stars in it. But the Milky Way galaxy is just one of the galaxies of the billions of galaxies out there in space. When Job was looking at the heavens, he came to an awareness not of the nearness of God, but of how far God was and how unapproachable God was, so that when his friends said, "Hey, if you'll just make peace with God everything will be okay, buddy". He says, "Thanks a lot but how am I going to make peace with God? He's so vast. I look up in the heavens and He's so great. Who am I that I can stand before God and plead my cause?"

So though the heavens make us aware of the glory of God and the power of God and the greatness of God, somehow the viewing of the heavens makes us feel distant from God, as though God is dwelling there in the heavens. And here am I, the insignificant little me down here on this little planet earth. And I'm so insignificant among those that dwell upon the planet earth.

And as Jacob was lying there and looking up and thinking about God and thinking about his life, in his heart there came that desire to reach God. But how can you reach God? The universe is so vast. And so when he went to sleep, there came forth a concept on how to reach God; a ladder that would reach into heaven. And so he dreamed of a ladder. And it was reaching up into heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on this ladder. All right, climb a ladder. And the Lord stood by the ladder and began to speak to him.

As we turn to the New Testament and we find Philip coming to Nathanael and saying, "Behold, we have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth". Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And when Nathanael came to Jesus, Jesus said, "Well, it's nice to meet an Israelite in whom there is no guile". And then he said, "How did you know me?" And he said, "Well, when you were over under the fig tree and Philip called you, I saw you there". Well he knew that Jesus was nowhere around. And he said, "Truly you are the Messiah, the King of Israel" (John 1:45-49).

And Jesus said, "Do you believe that 'cause I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You stick around; you're going to see a lot more than that. For from henceforth you are going to see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man". What is Jesus saying? I have come to be the ladder whereby man can reach heaven, whereby man can come to God. The ladder of Jacob's dream was none other than Jesus Christ. He is the access whereby men can come to God. And so Jacob saw it. He saw it in a dream and when he awoke from his dream, verse sixteen,

he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not (Gen 28:16).

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When I came here last night, I was so tired and kicked those rocks for a pillow and laid down, I didn't know God was here. I felt so far away from God. As I looked up in the sky and I thought, "Oh, God, You're so far away". But God isn't far away. He's in this place. Right here in this place of testing, this place of barrenness. The rocky places of life. God is there. Those hard places of life, God is there. Those uncertain places of life, God is there. When the future seems to be so cloudy and you don't know which way to go, God is there. "Surely the LORD is in this place." He's not in heaven only; He's in this place.

And it is so important for us that we become aware of the presence of God. That we come into this consciousness of the presence of God, that truly is in this place. I don't care what that place may be; a place of discouragement, a place of defeat, a place of hopelessness, a place of despair. God is there. Learn to recognize the presence of God. It'll change a place of barrenness and defeat into an altar, into a place of worship, as you become present, aware of the presence of God. It will dispel the fear and it becomes now a place of confidence, rather than uncertainty. "Surely the LORD is in this place."

Notice he didn't say, "The LORD was in this place." Last night the Lord came down here and was in this place. His consciousness was now a prevailing attitude; "The LORD is in this place". I don't see the ladder right now. I don't see the Lord standing but He's here, I know He's here. The LORD is in this place. And again he said, "I knew it not." I know it now. "The LORD is in this place," I know it now. I knew it not. Last night I didn't know it. But now I do. I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and he said, How awesome is this place! this is none other than the house of God; this is the gate to heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and he set it up for a pillar, and he poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of the place the House of God: because it used to be called Luz, that city at the first (Gen 28:17-19).

So he made the pillar, poured oil on it. The place of barrenness, a place of despair, hopelessness became an altar unto the Lord, a place where he became aware and conscious of the presence of God.

And Jacob vowed 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 clothes to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall Jehovah be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee (Gen 28:20-22).

Now Jacob is really trying to strike a bargain here with God saying, "well, if you do all this for me, then You'll be my God, I will serve You".