

The Blessing Conveyed To Jacob

Gen 28:10-22

SS Lesson for 10/27/2013

Devotional Scripture: Ps 105:1-15

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews the **Blessing Conveyed to Jacob**. The **study's aim** is to determine whether there are any principles in the account of Jacob that we can use to guide our own lives. The **study's application** is to apply these principles to our responses to God's Word and our experiences.

Key Verse: Gen 28:15

15 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 spoken to you."

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jacob's vision at Bethel was based on God's pure grace. God appeared to Jacob to assure him of His promise of blessing and protection, prompting in Jacob a marvelous worshipful response in which he vowed loyalty. This passage (a) answers the question of whether the Lord was also the God of Jacob, and (b) shows how Jacob's outlook was dramatically changed. Jacob, stopping for the night on his way to his Aramean Uncle Laban at Haran in Paddan Aram (cf. 25:20; 28:2), dreamed of angels on a stairway extending to heaven. The point of the story is that God was present with Jacob wherever he went. This was symbolized by the "ladder," explained in words by God (vv. 13-15), and recognized in faith by Jacob (vv. 20-22). God reiterated to Jacob the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac, promising him the land... descendants as numerous as the dust (cf. 13:16; 22:17), and universal blessing through him (cf. 12:2-3; 15:5, 18; 17:3-8; 22:15-18; 35:11-12). God also promised to protect and be with Jacob while he was out of the land and to see that he returned. Jacob's worshipful response included (a) having fear before the Lord, (b) erecting a memorial stone... pillar, (c) consecrating the stone by anointing the top of it with oil, (d) naming the place Bethel ("house of God") to commemorate the event, (e) making a vow in which he expressed for the first time his faith in the Lord (the Lord will be my God), and (f) promising to tithe (v. 22). All these enhance the central idea of God's protecting presence.

Several motifs pertaining to later Israelite customs are established here in Jacob. The most notable is the memorial at Bethel. Later the conquering Israelites would reckon this to be a holy place where God could be "seen." Another motif here is tithing (as with Abram in 14:20). To give a tithe was an act whereby a person acknowledged that everything he had belonged to God. Faith outwardly recognizes this fact in token form. Also Jacob's vow was an important element in this event. He vowed that if God would protect him, provide for him, and return him to his homeland, then this place would become a major worship center for Him. Vows were important later to Israel. Moreover, standing stones also become important from this point on. These are different from altars. Memorials were set up to recall divine visitations so that others might learn about God when they would ask, "What do these stones mean?" (Josh. 4:6). The presence of these important religious motifs stress the point that an anonymous "place" became a major worship center for Israel. The parallel structure between the two sections (Gen. 28:10-13 and 16-19) shows that the worship was a response to the vision. For example, "head" is repeated, first for Jacob's head on the stone (v. 11), then for the top (lit., "head") of the stairway (v. 12), and then for the top of the pillar (v. 18). Another wordplay occurs with the word "standing"; first, the Lord stood at the top of the stairway (v. 13), and the stone was set... up (lit., "stood up") as a memorial (v. 18). These parallels show that Jacob's miniature altar represented the vision. God's promise to be with His people is a theme repeated throughout Scripture (e.g., God said to Isaac, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you," 26:24). The assurance of God's presence should bring about in every believer the same response of worship and confidence it prompted in Jacob. This is the message from the beginning: God by grace visits His people and promises them protection and provision so that they might be a blessing to others. They in turn were to respond in faith, fearing Him, worshiping Him, offering to Him, vowing to Him, and making memorials for future worshipers at such places. This event at Bethel then was archetypical of Israel's worship, patterned after—and indeed named after—her patriarch Jacob.

Commentary from Bible Expositor and Illuminator

This lesson's text contains a word of encouragement and reassurance that God communicated to the patriarch Jacob. After tricking his brother Esau into giving him both his birthright and his blessing, Jacob left his family. The drama that had unfolded involved a web of treachery and rage. Isaac and Rebekah played favorites with their two sons; Rebekah helped Jacob deceive Isaac; and Esau was planning to kill his brother. From a human standpoint, Jacob was in no place to receive such a blessing from the Lord. He had just played a part in some rather malicious activity, including deceiving his extremely aged and disabled father! Some may think God should have unleashed swift judgment upon Jacob. Ignorant of the rest of the story, they may think the next part of Genesis will include Jacob falling into a bottomless pit and being consumed by fire! But God did not see fit to do this. Instead, He responded by speaking to Jacob in a dream, repeating the promises of the Abrahamic covenant and applying it to him. Although Jacob did see consequences for his sin later in his life, he was greeted with encouragement and comfort at this particular time in his journey. This part of the Genesis narrative should serve as a healthy dose of encouragement for believers. Notice how God provides both powerful encouragement and amazing grace. While God did appear to many of His people through dreams in Bible times, this is not His typical method today. God's primary form of communication, including encouragement, is through His Word, the Bible. Christians today have access to the same kind of comfort Jacob experienced at Bethel. We have words from God communicated to humanity and preserved through time. A quick glance at Psalms reveals beautiful passages that remind us of God's watchful care. Notice Psalm 91:2—"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." The New Testament is full of comfort as well. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). God's Word is a valuable source of encouragement that divinely admonishes us to surrender our self-centered definitions of security. Let us trust that God will supply our needs as we trust and obey Him. Let us never discredit His marvelous gifts. God encouraged Jacob at Bethel, and He also provided amazing grace. God was lovingly forbearing about Jacob's sin and withheld punishment. He does the same even today with His people. While we should expect consequences for our sinful actions (cf. Gal. 6:7), we should also recognize the grace God exercises in our lives. Imagine if the full punishment for all your sins were suddenly enacted! We could not endure that {cf. Ps. 130:3). The grace exercised toward Jacob and the grace we experience every day should draw our eyes to the Cross. Jesus' dying for our sins is the greatest act of grace ever provided for mankind. Let us never lose sight of this grace.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the outline of the lesson was adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
13	And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac	Jacob's Blessing of Meeting God
18	Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.	Jacob's Response to Meeting God

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

It is interesting to classify levels of faith by the three words: If? Because? Regardless?. Examples of the three levels abound. The "if" level. This level is characterized by an attitude of "If (and only if) God will do this, then I will do that." Some people bargain with God to coax him to do what they want. In other words, their obedience

to God is conditional. A statement by Jacob that is part of today's lesson may seem, at first glance, to demonstrate this level. We will evaluate this in our discussion of Genesis 28:20, 21. The "because" level. We may perceive this level of faith in passages such as Exodus 18:11; Judges 17:13; 1 Kings 17:24; and 2 Kings 5:15. Particularly interesting is Job 1:9-11. There Satan claims that Job fears God because God has blessed him so much; but if God were to remove the blessings, then Job would curse God. Job proved that his faith was not what Satan thought. Instead, Job's faith was at the next level. The "regardless" level. Job 13:15 speaks to this level of faith. This level also is demonstrated by Daniel's three friends who refused to bow to an idol near Babylon. The three men stated that God was able to deliver them; but even if God chose not to deliver them, they still would not bow to the image (Daniel 3:16-18). These three levels of faith and today's lesson text invite each of us to consider this question: Which level of faith describes my own?

The final segment of last week's lesson saw Isaac becoming ever more prosperous (Genesis 26:13). That prosperity, however, brought negative consequences in the forms of jealousy, sabotage, and expulsion (vv. 14-16). As a result, Isaac ended up moving to the southeast, toward Beersheba (v. 23), a place where his father, Abraham, had lived. It was at Beersheba that the elderly Isaac decided that it was time for him to give the formal patriarchal blessing to his older son, Esau (Genesis 27:4). This was in spite of the fact that God had told Rebekah that the older would serve the younger (25:23). Isaac may have reasoned that Esau should have the blessing because Esau already had wives (26:34) whereas Jacob was still a bachelor. Things did not go as Isaac had planned because Rebekah schemed for Jacob to receive the blessing instead (Genesis 27:5-29). This was accomplished, but then Esau threatened to kill his brother (27:41). Rebekah heard about the threat, and she developed a plan to put her favored son 550 miles away: she appealed to Isaac that Jacob should return to her relatives in order to secure a proper wife (26:34, 35; 27:46). Our text for today picks up with Isaac's reaction to this plan.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Jacob's Blessing of Meeting God (Gen 28:10-15)

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

14 "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

15 "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 spoken to you."

Being still and waiting on God (10-11)

Jacob's isolation - from Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Man has needed a companion ever since God looked at Adam said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (2:18). In the beginning God never intended for man to be lonely. Jacob's isolation on the journey to Haran resulted from his own sinful actions. In spite of this, God assured Jacob of His presence, saying, "I am with thee" (Gen. 28:15).

The need to be humble and be still before God and wait on His workings (Ps 37:7)

7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

It is only through the humility of quietly waiting on God that God can make us strong (Ps 27:14)

14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

It is a blessing to wait on God (Isa 30:18)

18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Be humble and understand that God is good to those who wait (Lam 3:24-26)

24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25 The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

We must patiently wait on God's promises (Rom 8:25)

25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

The Dream (12-15)

Dreams are great, but God's Word is even better (Heb 1:1-2)

1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

God uses dreams in the lives of others so that it effects their treatment of us (Genesis 20:3)

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman."

It has been prophesied that God will use dreams in these latter days (Joel 2:28-29)

28 And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

God speaks to His prophets through dreams (Num 12:6)

6 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.

God sometimes warns us through dreams (Matt 2:12-13)

12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. 13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Barnes Notes commentary on Jacob's dream

Verse 10-22. Jacob's dream and vow. Setting out on the way to Haran, he was overtaken by night, and slept in the field. He was far from any dwelling, or he did not wish to enter the house of a stranger. He dreams. A ladder or stair is seen reaching from earth to heaven, on which angels ascend and descend. This is a medium of communication between heaven and earth, by which messengers pass to and fro on errands of mercy. Heaven and earth have been separated by sin. But this ladder has re-established the contact. It is therefore a beautiful emblem of what mediates and reconciles (John 1:51). It here serves to bring Jacob into communication with God, and teaches him the emphatic lesson that he is accepted through a mediator. "The Lord stood above it," and Jacob, the object of his mercy, beneath. First. He reveals himself to the sleeper as "the Lord" (Gen 2:4), "the God of Abraham thy father, and of Isaac." It is remarkable that Abraham is styled his father, that is, his actual grandfather, and covenant father. Second. He renews the promise of the

land, of the seed, and of the blessing in that seed for the whole race of man. Westward, eastward, northward, and southward are they to break forth. This expression points to the world-wide universality of the kingdom of the seed of Abraham, when it shall become the fifth monarchy, that shall subdue all that went before, and endure forever. This transcends the destiny of the natural seed of Abraham. Third. He then promises to Jacob personally to be with him, protect him, and bring him back in safety. This is the third announcement of the seed that blesses to the third in the line of descent (Gen 12:2-3; 22:18; 26:4)

Adam Clarke's Commentary on Jacob's dream

[He dreamed, and behold a ladder] A multitude of fanciful things have been spoken of Jacob's vision of the ladder, and its signification. It might have several designs, as God chooses to accomplish the greatest number of ends by the fewest and simplest means possible: 1. It is very likely that its primary design was to point out the providence of God, by which he watches over and regulates all terrestrial things, for nothing is left to merely natural causes, a heavenly agency pervades, actuates, and directs all. In his present circumstances it was highly necessary that Jacob should have a clear and distinct view of this subject, that he might be the better prepared to meet all occurrences with the conviction that all was working together for his good. 2. It might be intended also to point out the intercourse between heaven and earth, and the connection of both worlds by the means of angelic ministry. That this is fact we learn from many histories in the Old Testament; and it is a doctrine that is unequivocally taught in the New: Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation! 3. It was probably a type of CHRIST, in whom both worlds meet, and in whom the divine and human nature are conjoined. The ladder was set up on the EARTH, and the TOP of it reached to HEAVEN, for GOD was manifested in the FLESH, and in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Nothing could be a more expressive emblem of the incarnation and its effects; Jesus Christ is the grand connecting medium between heaven and earth, and between God and man. By him God comes down to man, through him man ascends to God. It appears that our Lord applies the vision in this way himself, firstly, In that remarkable speech to Nathanael, "Hereafter ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man," John 1:51. secondly, In his speech to Thomas, John 14:6: "I am the WAY, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Jacob's Response to Meeting God (Gen 28:16-22)

- 16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."
17 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!"
18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.
19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.
20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,
21 "so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.
22 "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

Realize God's presence (16-17)

The best advice is that when God calls us, we must listen (1 Sam 3:7-10)

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 8The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. 9So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, `Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Whenever in the presence of God it is holy (Exodus 3:5-6)

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

God is always speaking to us even when we don't perceive it (Job 33:14-18)

14 For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it. 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, 16 he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, 17 to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, 18 to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.

When God's saints gather, He is with them (Matt 18:20)

20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

The memorial (18-19)

Definition of Memorial (from Holman Bible Dictionary)

Something which serves as a reminder. Scripture witnesses to God's participation in human history for the salvation of God's people. Memorials to such events reinforced faith and provided opportunities for teaching. God's covenant name (Yahweh) was to be a "memorial name" (Exodus 3:15 NAS), a reminder of God's liberation of God's people. The Passover served as a similar reminder (Exodus 12:14; Exodus 13:9). The twelve stones taken from the Jordan's bed served as a reminder of God's provision of passage across the Jordan (Joshua 4:7). In the New Testament, the Lord's Supper serves as a reminder of Christ's sacrificial death and an encouragement of His future coming (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9; 1 Cor. 11:25-26). All these memorials serve to "proclaim" the good news of what God has done.

Definition of Memorial (from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

"Memorial" as the translation of 'azkdrah' is a sacrificial term, that which brings the offerer into remembrance before God, or brings God into favorable remembrance with the offerer. It is a memorial in the sense of a remembrance (Exodus 3:15; the memorial (name) of Yahweh). "Memorial" occurs in the New Testament as the translation of mnemosunon, "a token of remembrance" (Matt 26:13; Mark 14:9; Acts 10:4).

Remembering (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Many monuments erected around the world memorialize wars and their victims. America has monuments dedicated to the soldiers who fought in her wars. Napoleon intended the Arc de Triomphe in Paris to memorialize his greatness, but it has since become a French memorial to those who died in World War I. Canada has its National War Memorial in Ottawa. There are other kinds of memorials. The Statue of Liberty was a birthday gift to America to remind the world of the victory of independence that America had achieved. The Lincoln, Washington, and Jefferson Memorials in Washington, DC remind people of the character and contributions of those men. Many people will never visit such memorials, but it is now possible to view "virtual" memorials on the Internet. When Samuel raised his Ebenezer, he was creating a reminder for Israel that God had acted to save them from their enemy. A far simpler—but much more profound—memorial than any we have mentioned is the one we Christians have: the Lord's Supper. When we partake of its rudimentary elements, we remember the victory of Christ over sin. And we need not go to Ottawa, Paris, or Washington to appreciate it.

Memorial Stones (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Rather than immediately resuming his journey, Jacob lingers to commemorate the place where God has met him. He selects the stone that functioned as his pillow, sets it upright, and anoints it with oil. We should not associate this act with idol worship, as if Jacob believes the stone itself possesses magical, dream-inducing powers. Such a practice will later be condemned as detestable to God (Deuteronomy 16:22). We should

view this instead as an act of reverence, an acknowledgement that Jacob has received God's message loud and clear. Anointing with oil is a common way to set apart particular persons or objects in ancient times. By anointing kings, priests, altars, and garments, the Israelites who come after Jacob will set apart people and things for service on behalf of the one true God. So Jacob does not regard this rock as special in and of itself. Rather, he considers this particular place to be sacred because God has chosen it for his unique purposes. It is God who gives it meaning—a meaning that Jacob wishes never to forget. This is part one of Jacob's threefold response. It is fitting for Jacob to use a stone for this purpose. In ancient times, stones serve as witnesses to agreements between parties, especially agreements concerning property boundaries. Years later Jacob will erect another stone to commemorate a boundary agreement between himself and his future father-in-law (Genesis 31:46–53). In setting up this first stone, Jacob may be communicating to God that he accepts God's will for his life, including the boundary lines to the land that God has promised to Jacob's descendants.

Memorials become witnesses of obedience or disobedience (Josh 24:26-27)

26 And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. 27 "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

Memorials remind us to worship and fellowship (Josh 22:26-28)

26 "That is why we said, 'Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.' 27 On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no share in the LORD.' 28 "And we said, 'If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the LORD's altar, which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.'

Memorial is a reminder to proclaim what God has done (Exodus 3:15)

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Memorial to remember God's guidance (Joshua 4:4-7)

4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 5 and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' 7 tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."

Commentary from Life Application Notes

After the people safely crossed the river, what would be next? Conquering the land? Not yet. First, God directed them to build a memorial from 12 stones drawn from the river by 12 men, one from each tribe. This may seem like an insignificant step in their mission of conquering the land, but God did not want his people to plunge into their task unprepared. They were to focus on him and remember who was guiding them. As you are busy doing your God-given tasks, set aside quiet moments, times to build your own memorial to God's power. Too much activity may shift your focus away from God.

Memorial to remember God's rescue (1 Samuel 7:10-12)

10 While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. 11 The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the

Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the Lord helped us."

Commentary from Life Application Notes

The Israelites had great difficulty with the Philistines, but God rescued them. In response, the people set up a stone as a memorial of God's great help and deliverance. During tough times, we may need to remember the crucial turning points in our past to help us through the present. Memorials can help us remember God's past victories and gain confidence and strength for the present.

The Covenant (20-22)

We are under obligation to God for His great deliverance and grace (Ps 56:12-13)

12 I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. 13 For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

When we make a vow, we must keep it (Eccles. 5:4)

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

We must never be slow about fulfilling our vows to God (Deut. 23:21)

21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.

We must keep our oath even when it hurts (Ps 15:2-4)

2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the LORD, who keeps his oath even when it hurts,

Never hastily or rashly give a vow (Proverbs 20:25)

25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.

The covenant is for more than those of long ago or for those that are dead (Deut 5:3)

3 It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.

The identity of the covenant is in the priesthood of Jesus (Heb 9:23-28)

24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

The old covenant makes the Jews God's treasured possession (Ex 19:5-6)

5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

The new covenant makes all believers a spiritual treasure and priesthood (1 Peter 2:5)

5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thought From Bob Deffinbaugh

From the series: Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs

This chapter has some very sobering lessons for us as parents. Isaac's apathy in the matter of instructing his sons may sound uncomfortably familiar. In addition to this I find Isaac's love to be contingent upon Esau's performance. Isaac "loved Esau because,..." we are told (25:28). Interestingly, in this same verse we are told only that Rebekah loved Jacob. No conditions are expressed. Look at the insecurity of Esau. Here was a 77-year-old man, still desperately trying to win the love and approval of his father—and with good reason, for his father loved on the basis of his performance. Then, also, it would seem that as a favored son Esau was pampered by his father. Nowhere are we ever told of the discipline of either of Isaac's sons. Discipline, as the Bible repeatedly informs us, is one manifestation of genuine love (cf. Proverbs 3:12; 13:24; Hebrews 12:5-11). I cannot help but feel that some words of admonition and correction in the life of Esau would have assured him of his father's love. Discipline is not the enemy of love but the evidence of it. Both Jacob and Esau illustrate the futility of scheming and self-effort in achieving divine acceptance. Here Esau's sincere and diligent efforts to win approval by marrying a daughter of Ishmael are worthless. While his sincerity is evident, his actions do not conform with the requirements of faith. Sincere effort which is not based upon divine revelation is folly. All of Jacob's efforts to achieve the blessing of God are in vain as well. It was only by entering into a relationship with the covenant God of Abraham and Isaac that Jacob could experience the blessings of God. The basis for such a relationship was the revealed word of God. I find it amusing that while Jacob could not find God by striving, he was found by God while in his sleep. Surely God is trying to tell us something by this. It is by resting in Him and in His Word that we can be blessed. This does not mean the absence of activity on our part,²³⁵ but it does mean that self-effort will always be futile.

Two further lessons from this text should be pointed out. First, place is important. It surely was important so far as Jacob was concerned. Experiencing the blessing of God meant being in the place where God had promised to bless. I hear people say things such as, "I can worship God just as well out on the lake as I can in a church." But the Word of God tells us, "... not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some ..." (Hebrews 10:25). There are surely certain places where it would be difficult, even impossible, for a Christian to be for the glory of God. Second, a profession of faith does not mean our immediate entrance into blissful experiences and rose-petal-strewn pathways. For twenty years after this conversion experience Jacob was to live away from his mother and father, away from the land of promise. For twenty years Jacob was to be administered a large dose of his own medicine, dealt out by an uncle who was even more deceitful than he. Entering into a relationship with God does not guarantee only good times and happy experiences; but it does assure us of the forgiveness of sins, the hope of eternal life, and the presence of God in our everyday lives.

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Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

The events dealt with in this week's lesson occurred after Jacob fled from the presence of Esau. At a time when Jacob was very fearful, God promised to bless him and always be with him. How comforting it is to receive promises from God! The great and precious promises of God are sure to come about. God is trustworthy. We can trust God to do what He says.

A deceptive plot (Gen. 28:10-11)

Jacob was afraid for his life when he left home. He had used deception to receive the blessings that legally should have been bestowed on his twin brother, Esau. Esau was the firstborn. Customarily, the firstborn son was entitled to the birthright. Jacob pretended to be Esau. His father's eyes were dim, and he could not see clearly. Later, Jacob was told of Esau's plot to kill him. Rebekah, Jacob's mother, convinced him to flee from Esau. He left home to go to Haran, the place Terah and his family went after leaving Ur (11:31). Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

God's unfailing promises (Gen. 28:12-15)

The sun had set on the first day of Jacob's journey. Using a stone for his pillow, Jacob lay down and went to sleep. The place where Jacob spent the night on his way to Haran was called the city of Luz (vs. 19). There he dreamed of a ladder that extended from the earth to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending on the ladder. The Lord spoke to Jacob in his dream. The promises that God made to Abraham and Isaac were also made to Jacob. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are regarded as the patriarchs of the Jewish nation. Four promises were made to Jacob and recorded in this passage. God promised to be with him. He promised to keep him in all places. God also promised to bring Jacob back to the land where he was. Finally, God promised to accomplish what He had promised. God said He would give the land where Jacob was to him and his descendants. The Lord had previously told Jacob that his descendants would be "as the dust of the earth" (vs. 14).

God's omnipresence (Gen. 28:16-19)

It is wonderful to know that the Lord is with us and will never leave us. Initially, Jacob had not recognized that God was there with him as he slept. He woke from his sleep and was afraid. Eventually, it should have become comforting to Jacob to be in the presence of the Lord. "Thy presence is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11). However, Jacob still felt the need to place conditions on whether or not God would be his God (Gen. 28:20). No matter what situation we are dealing with, God is with His people. There is no need to be afraid if we trust God. Trusting God should give us a measure of peace we otherwise would not have. There are many examples of how God has fulfilled His promises in the Scriptures.

A conditional vow to God (Gen. 28:20-22)

Although the place where Jacob slept was called Luz, Jacob called it Beth-el. He acknowledged that that place was the house of God and the gate of heaven (vs. 17). God had abundantly blessed Jacob and made promises to him and his descendants. Yet Jacob felt the need to make a conditional vow to Him. We should serve God because of who He is. Whether we choose to serve Him or not, He is still God. There is no one and nothing greater than He. We should serve God unconditionally at all times.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God is already present everywhere we are or are going (Gen. 28:10-12; Ps. 139:7-12)
2. In His goodness, God reveals His promises (Gen. 28:13-14)
3. The omnipresence of God brings comfort to those who trust in Him (Gen. 28:15; Ps. 46:7,11)
4. Reverential fear is a proper response when in God's presence (Gen. 28:16-17; Eccles. 5:1-2)
5. Any true encounter with God requires a personal response on our part (Gen. 28:18-19)
6. God is pleased with any amount of true faith that is directed to Him (Gen. 28:20-22; cf. Matt. 17:20)