

Genesis 28 - Jacob Flees From Esau

A. Isaac's farewell to Jacob.

1. (1-2) Instructions to not take a Canaanite wife.
 - a. **Isaac called Jacob and blessed him:** Perhaps now Isaac resigns himself to what his wife Rebekah told him was the LORD's will all along - that the older would serve the younger and that Jacob, not Esau, would receive the birthright. So he sent Jacob on with blessing and instructions.
 - b. **You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan:** It is essential Jacob *not* take a wife from the **daughters of Canaan**, as his brother Esau did. Jacob is the one who inherits the birthright and carries on the seed of the Messiah.
2. (3-5) The all-important transference of Abraham's blessing.
 - a. **And give you the blessing of Abraham:** Essentially, this is the aspect of the birthright that Esau despised, but Jacob (who seems equally unworthy) will gain. Jacob is the one to carry on God's promise to Abraham.
 - i. Essentially, Jacob is promised a land, a nation, and a blessing, even as Abraham was (Genesis 12:1-3).
 - b. **To you and your descendants with you:** Jacob is by no means worthy of this blessing. Each of the four parties in this whole birthright mess were in the flesh somewhere along the line. The amazing thing is that God could bring *any* good out of all this, and this is an example of a triumph of God's sovereignty.
 - c. **So Isaac sent Jacob away:** Tragically, this is the last time Jacob will see his father or mother.
3. (6-9) Esau adds wives.
 - a. **Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob:** *Now* the blessing and the birthright seem important to Esau. They were important enough to him that he determined to impress his father by marrying non-Canaanite women when he saw **that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother.**

B. Jacob meets God at Bethel.

1. (10-12) Jacob's dream of a ladder.

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

- a. **Then he dreamed:** In this desolate wilderness, Jacob had a significant dream as he used a stone for a pillow (which would seem to cause strange dreams).

i. One can only imagine the strange flood of feelings in Jacob at this moment: the fear, the loneliness, the isolation, the excitement, and the anticipation. This was an absolutely strategic time in Jacob's life.

b. **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:** In Jacob's dream, there is now access to heaven. Jacob now knew God was closer than ever and there was real access and interaction between heaven and earth.

i. Jesus made it clear in John 1:51 that *He* is the access to heaven. *He* is the means by which heaven comes down to us and by which we can go to heaven. *He* is the "ladder." *And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."* (John 1:51)

ii. Jesus *is* this way to heaven. He does not show us a way, *He is* the way. *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* (John 14:6)

2. (13-15) God speaks to Jacob.

a. **The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants:** These words are for comfort and hope in the life of Jacob, at this critical crossroads in his life. Essentially, God repeats to Jacob the terms of the covenant He gave to both Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5).

i. Before, Isaac told Jacob the covenant was his (Genesis 28:3-4), but now the voice of God Himself confirms it.

b. **I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac:** Jacob had no doubt heard about the great God who appeared to Abraham and to Isaac, but now this same God has a personal encounter with Jacob himself. This was a life-changing experience for Jacob.

c. **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:** God gives to Jacob the same kind of promise found in Philippians 1:6: *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.* God won't let us go until His work is complete in us.

3. (16-19) Jacob worships God, naming the place **Bethel** (*house of God*).

a. **Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it:** Jacob was right in sensing the presence of the LORD there, but he was wrong in perhaps thinking God was in some places and not in others. David knew this: *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?* (Psalm 139:7)

b. **How awesome is this place!** From his fleshly perspective, Jacob puts too much emphasis on a particular *place*. He doesn't realize that if the presence of the LORD is not with him in *every* place, then God can never fulfill His promise to him.

c. **He called the name of that place Bethel:** The city of **Bethel** plays an important (though not glorious) role in Israel's history. It is second only to Jerusalem in the number of times mentioned in the Old Testament.

i. Later, when speaking to Jacob, God refers to Himself as *the God of Bethel* (Genesis 31:13).

ii. Bethel would eventually become a high place, notorious for idolatrous sacrifice (1 Kings 13:32, Hosea 10:15, Amos 4:4).

4. (20-22) Jacob's vow unto God.

a. **If God will be with me:** This can be also translated "since God will be with me"; but knowing Jacob, he undoubtedly means it in the sense of "if God will be with me." God has given him a promise, yet he is still making "deals" with God, even promising God money if He makes good on His promise.

i. The way Jacob prayed, it was evident God's mere word was not enough for him. He had to *see* God do it before he would believe. Are we the same way? God says, "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19); He says, "*The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.*" (Nahum 1:7) Do we believe these things before we *see* them?

b. **Keep me in the way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on:** Here, Jacob sets the terms of his covenant with God. He is laying down the deal for God, instead of humbly receiving what God said would be the deal.

i. Jacob isn't very submitted to God. God will teach him submission in a very tough situation, through his Uncle Laban.

c. **Jacob made a vow:** Unfortunately, there is a great contrast between God's promise and Jacob's vow. One is totally God-centered; the other is man-centered.

i. God's promise (Genesis 28:13-15):

- *I am the LORD God.*
- *I will give to you.*
- *I am with you.*
- *I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken.*

ii. Jacob's vow:

- **If God will be with me.**
- **And keep me.**
- **In this way that I am going.**
- **Give me bread and clothing.**
- **So that I come back to my father's house.**

iii. How much better if Jacob had prayed like this: "Because You promised to be with me and to keep me and to provide for all my needs, and to bring me back to the land which you swore to give to my fathers and to me, I will be completely Yours, God."

iv. God is gracious enough to not call off the whole deal when He saw such a carnal response from Jacob. Instead, He is willing to be called, *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (Exodus 3:6).