

JACOB'S EXPERIENCE AT BETHEL (GEN 28:10-22)

1. Jacob is representative of God's elect (ROM 9:11-13; ISA 41:8).
2. Jacob was a man like ourselves and experienced his share of the troubles of life.
 - a. "Whoever observes Jacob's life, after he had surreptitiously obtained his father's blessing, will perceive that he enjoyed very little worldly felicity. His brother purposed to murder him, to avoid which he was forced to flee from his father's house; his uncle Laban deceived him, as he had deceived his father, and treated him with great rigour; after a servitude of 21 years, he was obliged to leave him in a clandestine manner, not without danger of being brought back, or murdered by his enraged brother; no sooner were these fears over, than he experienced the baseness of his son Reuben, in defiling his bed; he had next to bewail the treachery and cruelty of Simeon and Levi towards the Shechemites; then he had to feel the loss of his beloved wife; he was next imposed upon by his own sons, and had to lament the supposed untimely end of Joseph; and to complete all, he was forced by famine to go into Egypt, and there died, in a strange land. So just, wonderful, and instructive are all the ways of Providence!" The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge
 - b. Or to put it in Jacob's words: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (GEN 47:9).
3. Consider Jacob's plight and put yourself in his shoes (PRO 27:19).
 - a. He was fleeing for his life.
 - b. He was leaving the only home he had ever known.
 - c. He was going to a strange place to be with strangers.
 - d. The blessing his father placed upon him was a blessing he had acquired by deception. How assured would you be of that?
 - e. God had not as yet appeared to him and spoken to him assuring him of the blessing.
 - f. Therefore, Jacob was in the great stress of uncertainty.
4. As Jacob slept in a certain place God appeared to him in a dream in the night (PSA 112:4). It was here that God revealed Himself to Jacob and spoke to him (GEN 35:1, 15).
5. Jacob first beheld a ladder connecting heaven and earth with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.
 - a. This is explained as being the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ (JOH 1:51).
 - b. Christ is the only mediator between God and men (1TI 2:5).
 - c. Christ reconciles fallen sinners to God and His holy angels (ROM 5:10; COL 1:20).
 - i. The angels execute God's decrees (PSA 103:20).

- ii. The angels now minister *for* God's children instead of fighting against them (HEB 1:14; PSA 34:7; 91:11-12 in contrast to PSA 35:6).
 - d. Angels ascending are mentioned first. This suggests that angels were already on earth ministering for him.
- 6. God then Himself confirmed to Jacob the covenant that He had confirmed to Abraham and Isaac promising him an inheritance, a numerous progeny to inherit it, and that in his seed all nations would be blessed.
 - a. This is fulfilled in God's elect and their eternal inheritance (GAL 3:29; REV 7:9).
 - b. Like his fathers he understood he was a stranger and pilgrim on this earth and that his eternal destination was a heavenly country (GEN 47:9; HEB 11:13-16).
 - c. The proclamation that in his seed all families of the earth would be blessed is the gospel (GAL 3:8).
 - i. This is the blessing of justification through the faith of Christ (GAL 2:16).
 - ii. Through Jesus Christ the cursed placed upon sinful man is lifted and man is blessed (GEN 3:17-19; GAL 3:13-14; REV 22:3).
 - d. Thus the gospel was preached in this place where Jacob found God.
- 7. Jacob discovered that God was with Him and, that being the case, would be with Him in the future to keep him in all places whither he would go and would bring him to this land again.
 - a. Thus Jacob had nothing to fear regarding the future.
 - b. God took care of Jacob his troubles notwithstanding (GEN 48:15).
 - c. If we keep God's commandments, we know He *is* with us (1JO 3:23-24).
 - d. If we know God *is* with us, then we know He *will be* with us (HEB 13:5-6).
- 8. Upon awaking Jacob realized that the LORD was in that place, though he knew it not. God can be where He is not known!
- 9. When he realized the divine presence, he feared and said, "How dreadful is this place."
 - a. Dreadful – Inspiring dread or reverence; awe-inspiring.
 - b. PSA 89:7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.
- 10. Jacob understood this place to be none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. Therefore, he called the place Bethel, which means *the house of God*.
- 11. In the morning Jacob took the stone that he had used for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar anointing it with oil.
 - a. This stone that he had set for a pillar would be the house of God.
 - b. The rock became the anointed!
 - c. This points to Jesus Christ (the anointed).

- i. God is the Rock (DEU 32:4; 1SA 2:2).
 - 1. Rock – In figurative uses: Something which affords a sure foundation or support; something which gives shelter or protection; used *esp.* with reference to Christ.
 - 2. God is the *Rock of our salvation* (PSA 95:1). He is our protection against destruction.
 - ii. God became the Christ (ROM 9:5; HEB 1:8-9).
- 12. Jacob vowed a vow that if the LORD would do as He promised, the LORD would be his God, this stone would be His house, and Jacob would give Him a tenth of all that God would give him.
 - a. Jacob would worship and serve no other God but the Lord.
 - b. This offering is connected with the house of God.
 - c. Jacob later returned to Bethel and built an altar, a place for offerings (GEN 35:6-7).
- 13. When God brought Jacob back to his homeland according to His promise, He called him to go up the Bethel and dwell there (GEN 35:1-3, 9-15).
 - a. The house of God for Jacob was a place to dwell.
 - b. Jacob worshipped God there with an offering.
 - c. God further communicated with Jacob at Bethel.
- 14. Compare what this passage teaches about the house of God with the teaching of the rest of Scripture about the house of God.
 - a. This experience with the house of God belongs to Jacob, God's chosen (PSA 65:4).
 - b. The tabernacle and later the temple was the house of God in the Old Testament
 - i. In this place God manifested His presence and revealed Himself to Israel as He had done to Jacob at Bethel (EXO 25:8, 29:42-46).
 - ii. There the worshippers were to bring their offerings (DEU 12:5-7).
 - c. The physical body of Jesus Christ is the house of God (JOH 1:1, 14; 2:19; COL 2:9).
 - i. Christ is an anointed stone as was this house of God at Bethel (1CO 10:4; 1PE 2:6-8 w/ EPH 2:20).
 - ii. Christ is the gate of heaven (JOH 10:9; 14:6).
 - iii. God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ and speaks to us in Him, as God revealed Himself and spoke in Bethel (MAT 11:27; JOH 1:18; HEB 1:1-2).

- iv. A Jacob was called to dwell in Bethel, so believers are called to abide (dwell) in Christ (JOH 15:4).
- d. The mystical body of Jesus Christ, the church, is the house of God (1TI 3:15; 1CO 3:16).
 - i. As the anointed Rock was called the house of God, so the church is called Christ (1CO 12:12-13).
 - 1. Christ is the chief cornerstone upon which the church is built (EPH 2:19-20).
 - 2. *In* Christ the church is *fitly framed together* and *in* Him believers are *builded together for an habitation of God* (EPH 2:21-22).
 - 3. The church is thus built upon and in Christ. Without Christ, no church would be the house of God.
 - 4. The service we render to the church we render to Christ (MAT 25:40).
 - ii. This house of God was a pillar. So, too, is the church (1TI 3:15).
 - iii. The church is the gate of heaven in that it has access to heaven itself (HEB 10:19-22).
 - iv. As the gospel was preached at Bethel, so is the gospel preached in the church (ROM 1:15; 1CO 15:1-2).
 - v. In the church God's people find the Lord and hear Him speak. It is God's habitation where He is and where His word, in which He speaks, is preached.
 - vi. God's people are to dwell in His house (PSA 23:6; 27:4; 84:4).
 - vii. Our sacrifices of praise are to be brought to God's house.
 - 1. The sacrifices of believers are thanksgiving with their lips, doing good, and communicating (HEB 13:15-16).
 - 2. We are built up a spiritual house and a holy priesthood for the purpose of offering up spiritual sacrifices (1PE 2:5).
 - 3. Praise is to be offered in the assembly of the saints, i.e. the house of God (PSA 22:25; 107:31-32; 111:1; HEB 2:12).
 - viii. In the day of trouble, it is good that we direct our sights to the house of God and resolve to pay our vows there as Jacob did.
 - 1. So did Hannah (ISA 1:11, 24), Hezekiah (ISA 38:20-22), Jonah (JON 2:4, 9), and the Psalmist (PSA 66:13-15).
 - 2. God grants us deliverance that we might praise Him in His church (PSA 9:13-14; 116).