

GOD'S UNEXPECTED PRESENCE I

Jacob's Ladder--Genesis 28: 10-17

Jacob's journey to the remote regions of Mesopotamia was initiated by a response to his brother's murderous plans against him. Esau hated Jacob for masterminding the plot to deceive Isaac, in which case it worked, and the blessing Isaac believed he was bestowing upon Esau in reality was given to Jacob. Now Jacob is attempting to escape with his life still intact. On the advice of his mother (Rebekkah) he is fleeing to her hometown where he hopes one day to find a wife for himself.

In the process of the long journey across varied terrain, he settles down one evening, after sunset to sleep, and suddenly has a dream. Genesis is a book of beginnings and this is the start of a new career for Jacob. Up to this point we see little evidence that he had any kind of relationship with God at all. Yet now it seems that God is demonstrating a measure of grace in all this, that even though we do not seem to be seeking after Him still he actively engages us in life. Between verses 12-15 we read the word "behold" three times.

The first time is in connection to a ladder whose appearance must have surprised Jacob. In visions, God typically captivates us with the remarkable. Remember, Moses was mesmerized by a bush that burned yet was not consumed by the fire. Here in the desert Jacob is dreaming of a ladder. But let us not think of a construction worker's ladder used for scaling a house. In ancient times this would have not been an invention of the day. But think of a number of parallel stones embedded in the side of a mountain used by Bedouin for ascending steep hillsides. This was a ladder seen by Jacob and utilized by Angels. They were going up and coming down and God was at the top of it all.

His power and might and sovereignty are known by what all He controls. God is God over all creation. He is able to reach us in the direst of circumstances and He is able to

communicate with us under the most extreme forms of duress. Jacob is going into exile and this story shows us that separation from loved ones does not have to mean separation from God. To be truthful about it, you cannot flee to any place where God is not.

The words spoken by God to Jacob in the vision accentuate promises made by God to his ancestors. Having parents or grandparents who have known the Lord is wonderful it should never be taken for granted. To know that God's record of salvation extends generationally through your lineage is an awesome thing to take note of. God affirms four things in verses 13 and 14:

1. He will be given the land upon which he lay.
2. His seed will be as the dust of the earth.
3. They (his seed) will overspread the earth.
4. All families on earth will be blessed by them.

All these pronouncements by God point to His marvelous ability. There is nothing that God cannot and will not do for his covenant people. As Christians, we possess a New Covenant that far outweighs and supersedes any covenant made to ancient Israel. Our covenant is based upon Jesus' redemptive work on the Cross and our expectations should always remain high. He is there even when you least expect Him.

What have you made of your own life? Are you on the run, believing that a change in geography will be a change for the better? I can assure you running is not the answer—unless you run into God! Jacob awaked out of his sleep to discover that God was nearer than he first believed. It may be that your life is out of sorts right now but do not despair, God is able to reach you still. If He knew Jacob's address (of only one night) in a desert place, I can assure you, He is capable of descending into the lower spheres of your life too. However, when he does, just acknowledge that one moment in time has altered your life forever, and don't ever forget it.----Pastor Darrell