

## Jacob's Ladder

Scripture Reading: Genesis 27:41 – 28:22

In our last lesson we introduced Jacob's life and saw a drama develop between two rivaling twins, Jacob and Esau. They were two very distinct kinds of people. Jacob was quiet and plain compared to Esau who was rugged and impulsive. Also, there seemed to be a rivalry between parents. Isaac, the father, favored Esau. Rebekah, the mother, favored Jacob. The rivalry was about the blessing, which affected who would be the chief / patriarch of the family. This determined who would get the largest inheritance and be the leader and priest of the tribe. God had given a prophecy to Rebekah in which the younger son, Jacob, would be this leader. Esau showed lack of character for this position. He impulsively sold his birthright to Jacob for a dinner of stew when he was very hungry. Esau also showed carelessness in choosing Canaanite wives. This would affect the posterity of the family in a negative way. We'd like to say Jacob was more spiritual, but all we can say is that he was more civilized. With Rebekah's leadership, Jacob caused a great deception. He tricked Isaac into giving him the blessing to him instead of Esau. Despite all the reasons to not choose Esau, Isaac was determined to give the blessing to him because of personal favoritism and the fact that Esau was technically the eldest of the two twins.

We now enter the story with an angry and bitter Esau threatening to kill his brother, Jacob, because of Jacob's deception.

### **The Wrath of Esau – Genesis 27:41-45**

Without any self-examination or remorse for his previous light attitude about his birthright, Esau focused on one thing. He hated Jacob and blamed him for all of his loss. See Hebrews 12:14-17. Esau made hasty, wrathful statements, threatening to kill Jacob. Everyone heard about this. Esau thought to wait until after Isaac's death. Because he was old and blind, it was thought that Isaac would not live much longer (Genesis 27:1-2). However, Isaac would go on to live 43 more years! It is telling that Rebekah thought that Esau's wrath would quickly subside and that in a matter of days he would just forget the whole thing! Despite Esau's impulsiveness, despite Rebekah's presumption, God had other plans. Jacob would be gone for years. As was stated before, Rebekah would not live to see her Jacob again. The hopes, fears, and ambitions of people are all subject to the will and the work of a sovereign God. Man intends. God superintends!

### **The Importance of a good wife – Genesis 27:46 – 28:5**

Despite Rebekah's shortcomings, she knew the importance of having a good wife, and the importance of family (Proverbs 18:22; 31:10-12,30; Psalm 127:1-5; 128:1-6). She appealed to her husband and now Isaac is responding to her and to the values that are God's. The rugged and impulsive Esau and his venison is not as important as God's promises and instructions to his father, Abraham. Abraham, too, had a time when he needed to listen to the voice of his wife

(Genesis 21:1-13 – especially vs. 12). Our pleasures, our preferences, our agendas need to be subject to God's will, as revealed through the gospel. See Genesis 12:1-7; Galatians 3:16,26-29; I Corinthians 12:13 [This was not just a blessing to a Hebrew family, the gospel eventually impacts the whole world – John 3:16-21; 10:14-16; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20] cp. Mark 8:34-35; 10:28-30; Romans 1:1,9,14-16; 16:25-27; I Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:31-33; Philippians 1:12,20-21.

### **The Impulsive Action of Esau – Genesis 28:6-9**

Esau had a shallow desire to please his parents. They did not approve of the Canaanite women he married. He did not consult his parents. He just tried to fix things with his own logic. He added another wife from the line of Ishmael – making matters worse (Genesis 16:1-12).

### **God Reveals Himself to Jacob – Genesis 28:10-15**

The promises of God would now become personal to Jacob. This is not just some family matter. It will now be God's covenant with Jacob. See how Paul went from preaching "the" gospel to "my" gospel (Romans 1:1-17; 16:25-27 cp. Psalm 48:1-2,14; 23:1-6). The ladder / stairway makes us think of the invisible God, the spirit world, and the heavenly things that are all around us, but we cannot know them naturally. They must be revealed to us. God is involved and is interacting with the affairs of men. See Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 4:35,37; Romans 11:33-36; I Corinthians 2:9-16; I Timothy 1:17.

### **Jacob Responds to God – Genesis 28:16-22**

**Genesis 28:16 - Jacob acknowledged the truth of God / the presence of God.** He has been called, "*The God Who Is There!*" (A book by Francis A. Schaeffer, and another by D. A. Carson).

**Genesis 28:17 – Jacob experienced the fear of the Lord** (Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-9; 8:13; 9:10; 16:6; Psalm 19:7-11[especially vs. 9]; Hebrews 12:28-29). We do not understand the Lord unless we acquire this reverential fear.

**Genesis 28:18-19 – Jacob begins to invest his life in the Lord.** He set up stones to create a place of remembrance. Oil, a valuable commodity – especially for a traveler, was poured on the stones. He gave the place a name, "*Bethel*" – which means "*House of God*." We need to acknowledge God's place in our lives (Psalm 90:1-2; 107:8,15,21,31; Acts 17:22-31). Our bodies are called "*the temple of the Holy Spirit*" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). The assembling of ourselves together as a church is called "*the house of God*" (I Timothy 3:14-15 cp. Ephesians 2:22). All Christians are considered comprehensively "*a spiritual house*" of God (I Peter 2:5-10).

**Genesis 28:20-21 – Jacob made a commitment to knowing, serving, and submitting to God.** He would seek to look for the work of God in his life. He planned to respond by following through to be faithful to the Lord. He planned regular, life-long, practical, financial and material investment in the things of God (John 15:1-16; I John 5:14-15; Proverbs 3:1-18; Psalm 90:14-17; I Corinthians 15:57-58; I Timothy 4:12-16; II Timothy 3:14-17).