

GENESIS 28: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

I. OVERVIEW

- A. Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him to Laban, Rebekah's brother
- B. Esau married an Ishmaelite woman to appease his parents
- C. Jacob laid down to sleep one night on his journey
 - i. He had a dream that night
 - a. There was a ladder reaching to heaven
 - b. Angels were ascending and descending on it
 - c. God stood at the top of the ladder and spoke to Jacob
 - i. Promised to give him the inheritance of Abraham
- D. Jacob set up a stone when he woke up
 - i. Called the place Bethel
 - a. Meaning House of God
 - ii. He made a vow
 - a. If God protects him and provides for him and brings him back to his father's house
 - b. Then the Lord will be his God

II. YOU MUST NOT TAKE A WIFE FROM THE CANAANITE WOMEN – V. 1

- A. Because Esau did
 - i. And his wives were causing trouble for Isaac and Rebekah
- B. Same instructions Abraham gave his servant for a wife for Isaac
- C. To marry a Canaanite woman was to risk falling into idolatry
 - i. Some say they had polluted bloodlines like the Nephilim
 - a. So the Messiah couldn't come from polluted bloodlines
 - ii. The Canaanites are a picture of falling in love with the world around us
 - a. It influences us more than it influences the world
 - iii. The Promised Seed cannot be mixed with the seed of the serpent

III. GO TO PADDAN-ARAM – V. 2

- A. Where Rebekah's brother Laban lived
- B. Isaac is finally starting to listen to his wife
 - i. And listen to wisdom

IV. GOD ALMIGHTY – V. 3

- i. Hebrew *El Shaddai*
 - a. Name previously given to Abraham and passed down to Jacob
 - i. Genesis 17:1 ***When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless...”***

V. COMPANY OF PEOPLES – V. 3

- A. Not something that was promised to Abraham or Isaac
 - i. They only had one son that would receive the promise
 - ii. But Jacob would have many sons¹

VI. MAY HE GIVE THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM TO YOU – V. 4

- A. Isaac already gave him this blessing
 - i. He knew Jacob needed to encounter God himself

VII. ISAAC SENT JACOB AWAY – V. 5

- A. Instead of sending a servant to find a wife for Jacob
 - i. This time Jacob has to go himself

VIII. ESAU WENT TO ISHMAEL – V. 9

- A. He wanted to appease his parents
 - i. Win their favor after losing his birthright to Jacob
 - ii. Maybe he thought he would get a blessing also
- B. He went to his father’s brother to find a wife
 - i. Isaac found his wife from his father’s brother
 - ii. But Ishmael had been sent away from Abraham’s family

IX. BESIDES THE WIVES HE HAD – V. 9

- A. Esau is collecting wives like Lamech
 - i. Hebrews 12:15-16 ***See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.***

X. TOWARD HARAN – V. 10

- A. To the east
 - i. Now Jacob is entering exile

¹ Armstrong, S. (2012, June 24). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 28A*. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_28a

- a. Exile is synonymous with death

XI. UNDER HIS HEAD – V. 11

- A. Or, at his head
 - i. As a weapon to protect himself²

XII. HE DREAMED – V. 12

- A. Just like Abraham dreamed when God made the covenant with him
 - i. Genesis 15:1-18 ***After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”... As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him... On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates...***

XIII. THE TOP OF IT REACHED TO HEAVEN – V. 12

- A. Just like the tower of Babel
 - i. Except this ladder wasn’t built by men
 - ii. The men who built Babel tried to reach God and couldn’t
 - a. But this proves God is accessible³

XIV. ASCENDING AND DESCENDING – V. 12

- A. Angels are carrying messages between heaven and earth

XV. THE GOD OF ABRAHAM YOUR FATHER – V. 13

- A. God had appeared to Abraham and Isaac to confirm the covenant
- B. This is the first time He appears to Jacob
 - i. He had been given the covenant by Isaac but now God is confirming it to him⁴

XVI. WILL BRING YOU BACK TO THIS LAND – V. 15

- A. Not only after he travels to Haran to find a wife
 - i. He will return from exile
 - a. As if returning to life or resurrection
 - ii. But eventually he will go to Egypt and settle there

² Armstrong, S. (2012, July 2). *Genesis 2011 -Lesson 28B*. Verse By Verse Ministry International. https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_28b

³ Armstrong, S. (2012, July 2). *Genesis 2011 -Lesson 28B*. Verse By Verse Ministry International. https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_28b

⁴ Guzik, D. (2018). *Genesis 28 - Jacob Flees From Esau*. Enduring Word. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-28/>

- a. Joseph will bring his body back for burial
- b. The nation of Israel will return 400 years later

XVII. I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU – V. 15

- A. Jesus repeated the same promise to His disciples
 - i. Matthew 28:20 ***And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.***

XVIII. HOW AWESOME IS THIS PLACE – V. 17

- A. Jacob didn't realize it wasn't about the place but about God's presence⁵
- B. God had just promised to be with Jacob wherever he went
 - i. But Jacob thinks God is limited to this place

XIX. JACOB TOOK THE STONE – V. 18

- A. The stone that was originally intended as a means of self-defense
 - i. He turned into a symbol of worship to God
 - ii. He was willing to trust God to defend him

XX. POURED OIL ON THE TOP OF IT – V. 18

- A. Consecrated it to be used in service to God
 - i. Leviticus 8:10-11 ***Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. And he sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.***

XXI. BETHEL – V. 19

- A. Significant role in the Bible
 - i. Mentioned more times than any other city except Jerusalem⁶
- B. But it would become a prominent city for idol worship
 - i. 1 Kings 13:32 ***“For the saying that he called out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places that are in the cities of Samaria shall surely come to pass.”***
 - ii. Hosea 10:15 ***Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil. At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.***
 - iii. Amos 4:4 ***“Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days...”***

⁵ Guzik

⁶ Guzik

XXII. JACOB'S VOW – V. 20-21

- A. Five conditions:
 - i. If God will be with me
 - a. He wanted proof that God would keep His word
 - b. The testimony of his father and grandfather wasn't enough
 - i. We have those who have gone before us in the faith so that should be enough
 - ii. Hebrews 12:1 ***Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...***
 - ii. If God will keep me in the way that I go
 - iii. If God will give me bread to eat
 - iv. If God will give me clothing to wear
 - v. If I come again to my father's house in peace
 - a. Not just to return, but return in peace
 - i. Esau cannot try to kill him
 - vi. Jacob is trying to set the terms of the covenant⁷
 - a. God's covenant is God-centered but Jacob's response is Jacob-centered⁸
 - b. He doesn't need to do so
 - i. God has already set the terms for him
- B. Number five represents God's grace
- C. Three promises:
 - i. The Lord shall be my God
 - a. Implies that Jacob does not currently worship Yahweh
 - b. He is not just floating by on his father's faith
 - i. He is willing to claim that faith and the associated promises as his own
 - ii. This stone shall be God's house
 - iii. All that you give me I will return a tenth to you
 - a. Just like Abraham gave a tenth of what he received to Melchizedek

XXIII. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Jesus is the ladder that reaches to heaven

⁷ Guzik

⁸ Guzik

- i. John 1:51 ***And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”***
- ii. Previously men had tried to build a tower that reached heaven
- iii. But Jesus is the only way to heaven
- B. Jesus is the stone
 - i. 1 Peter 2:4-8 ***As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.***
 - a. Those who would believe in the stone would be honored
 - b. The children of Israel rejected the stone that Israel (Jacob) set up
- C. Jesus was anointed with oil
 - i. Luke 4:17-18 ***And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed...”***
 - ii. John 12:3 ***Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.***
- D. Jesus is oil poured out
 - i. Song of Solomon 1:3 ***... your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you.***

XXIV. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. Why do you think Jacob needed a personal encounter with God? Why wasn't Isaac's transferal of the blessing enough?
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- B. What did Esau not understand about his father's blessing? What should we learn from this?

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- C. In what ways have you tried to build your own ladder to heaven? How does the fact that God provides the ladder change things for you?

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- D. What are some situations where we tend to misunderstand the nature of God's presence? Do you believe God is always with you, or do you believe God only meets you in certain places?

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- E. Have you ever tried to bargain with God? How has it worked out?

XXV. FURTHER STUDY

- A. What does the Bible say about the purpose of angels (Hebrews 1:13-14)?

- B. In this chapter, only angels are ascending and descending the ladder. Who is the man in Daniel 7:13-14 that seems to have ascended to approach the Ancient of Days? What are your thoughts about the implication of this?

- C. What did this Son of Man need to do before he could ascend to heaven? See John 3:13-14.

- D. What does this give us the ability to do now, according to Hebrews 10:19-25? To where does this ladder lead us?

- E. Where is God's house? See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 1 Peter 2:5. Why is this significant?

- F. List some of the purposes for oil in the tabernacle of Moses. See Exodus 27:20; 29:1-2; 29:5-7; 29:21; 29:38-40; 30:22-24; Leviticus 2:1-2. What can this teach us about the purpose of consecration and anointing? How does this point to Jesus?
