

Heaven on the Edge of Nowhere
(Genesis 27:1-28:22)

Series: E-100

November 16, 2014 Pastor Bill Bump

Background: Earlier in Genesis, we are told that Jacob stole both the birthright and his father's blessing from his older brother, Esau.

In today's passage, Jacob finds himself in a difficult place of transition, and God transforms it. God does the same with us in 2014. He transforms difficult places into places of worship.

Jacob runs for his life:

Genesis 28:10-15 (NLT) ¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep. ¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it.

¹³ At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. ¹⁵ What's more, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised!"

Abraham, in obedience to God, journeyed from Haran to Canaan. Now, Jacob is making the journey in reverse.

Jacob has a dream and sees a ladder that angels use to go back and forth between heaven and earth. What is the job of angels?

Hebrews 1:14 (NLT) But angels are only servants. They are spirits sent from God to care for those who will receive salvation.

Jacob sees the heavenly world coming to the impossibly dark and difficult world that he inhabits.

In verse 15, God promises His presence and protection to Jacob.

Jacob's story relates to the transitions that occur in our lives.

The story of Jacob tells us that there is another world that has broken into our world. The Lord is here, and we have a future.

Jacob wakes up and responds to his dream:

Genesis 28:16-22 (NLT) ¹⁶ Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!" ¹⁸ The next morning he got up very early. He took

the stone he had used as a pillow and set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. ¹⁹ He named the place Bethel—“house of God”—though the name of the nearby village was Luz.

²⁰ Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, ²¹ and if he will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the Lord my God. ²² This memorial pillar will become a place for worshiping God, and I will give God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

Jacob responds to the dream in three ways:

1. He assigns new meaning to the place he has come to.

In verse 17, the realization of God’s presence causes Jacob to be afraid. Why? He has lived as a deceiver and manipulator.

Verse 17 also tells us that Jacob experienced a sense of wonder and astonishment at being in the presence of God.

He also calls the place “the House of God” because this is the place where God appeared.

2. He builds a memorial.

In verse 18, Jacob converts the stone that he had placed under his head into a pillar that memorializes God’s appearance.

In verse 19, Jacob names the place Bethel, which means “House of God.”

3. Jacob makes a vow.

In verse 20, Jacob vows that if God is faithful, he will make the Lord his God.

Conclusion

Perhaps you have come to a dark and difficult place. God desires to open your eyes to see it in a new light.

Psalm 139:7-12 (NLT) ⁷ I can never escape from your spirit! I can never get away from your presence! ⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there. ⁹ If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me and your strength will support me. ¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you.

In the presence of God, the place you have come to in your loneliness and desperation becomes, for you, the House of God and the gate of heaven.