

JACOB'S LADDER

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 27:41-46; 28:1-22.

LESSON 23 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord" (Psalm 116:14).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 27:41-46;

41 ¶ And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

42 And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

45 Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

Genesis 28:1-22.

1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

2 Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

notes:

Esau hated his brother Jacob because he had taken his inheritance from him. One almost feels sorry for Esau because he had lost everything, but it really was his own fault. There must have been something in the life of Esau that displeased God, because, as He said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:7). So Esau must have been receiving a reward for his sins. The very hate in his heart for Jacob made him a murderer, because, as we studied in a previous lesson, if a man hates his brother he is already a murderer (**Matthew 5:22; 22** But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. **I John 3:15; 15** Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him).

A Spirit of Revenge

Esau's anger was smouldering in his breast, and he purposed to kill his brother. Nevertheless, because he still had some respect for his parents, he decided to wait until his father died.

Rebekah heard the words of Esau, and quickly came to Jacob's rescue. She told him to go back to her family in Haran until Esau's anger had cooled. She did not expect him to be gone twenty-one years -- in fact, she spoke of his stay as "a few days." However, she did not live to see Jacob again; so she suffered, too, for her part in their plan to deceive Isaac and Esau.

Esau had married two women of the Canaanites, which was a vexation to Isaac and Rebekah. This gave her a good excuse to suggest to Isaac that Jacob should go to Haran to choose a wife for himself from among her people. Isaac thought it was a good idea, and sent Jacob away with even greater blessings than he had already given him. He said, "And [God] give thee the blessing of Abraham."

God had given a promise to Abraham that He would make of him a great nation, and through his lineage all the nations of the earth would be blessed. That was a prophecy that Jesus would some day come, through Abraham's descendants, to bless all the people who would believe on Him. The pattern we saw introduced when God called Abraham from the land of Ur is gradually being unfolded, and we are now to the third generation -- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Esau still hoped to gain some favour in the eyes of his parents; so when he heard Isaac tell Jacob not to take a wife from among the Canaanites, he tried to please them by marrying again -- this time the daughter of Ishmael who was not a Canaanite. This did not undo the wrong he had already done, and we are sure he did not gain much peace of mind from this venture.

A Wonderful Dream

Jacob started in his journey, in reality running from his brother. At the close of the first day he lay down to sleep, and God gave him an unusual dream. He saw a ladder that reached to Heaven, and angels were going up and down on it. God was at the top and He spoke to Jacob, assuring him that the blessings Isaac had given him were really going to come to pass. God promised him the land around him, and that his children through the coming generations would be as the dust of the earth in multitude. (Those people are the Jews today.)

God promised Jacob, too, that He would be with him wherever he went, and would bring him back again. In the years to come

3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

6 ¶ When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;

7 And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;

8 And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

10 ¶ And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them* for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land

Jacob was going to have many occasions to think of those promises. In the next few lessons we shall study about the hardships he went through, but that God never left him, and eventually did bring him back to his father.

Guardian Angels

Wouldn't it be wonderful to see angels ascending and descending as Jacob did in his dream? We do have such angels, even though we cannot see them. Paul said of them, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). In Psalm 34:7, we read: "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

One time the Old Testament prophet, Elisha, was in a city that was surrounded with an invading army. His servant was afraid, and cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" But Elisha told him not to be afraid because there were more soldiers on their side than the enemy had. Then Elisha prayed that God might open the servant's spiritual eyes. And was he surprised when he saw the mountains around them filled with horses and chariots of fire that God had sent to protect them! (**II Kings 6:14-17; 14** Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. **15** And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? **16** And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them. **17** And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha). God's angels are watching over His children; and if we put our trust in Him and live to please Him, we do not need to be afraid of what man can do to us.

When Daniel was in the lions' den, God sent an angel to close the mouths of the lions. The Bible does not say that Daniel saw the angel, but he knew he was there, because he told the king how he had been protected.

The Presence of God

When Jacob awoke he was afraid. Why do you think Jacob was afraid after seeing all those beautiful angels going back and forth between Heaven and earth, and hearing God promise him the greatest blessings it was possible to give him? It was because there was sin in the heart of Jacob. He had run away from Esau because he was afraid of him; but now he was in the presence of God, and a much greater fear came upon him.

God had promised him wonderful blessings to fulfil the covenant He had made with Jacob's grandfather, Abraham. There was nothing that Jacob had done to deserve those blessings.

Marvellous Promises

God has promised all men joy in their hearts, peace with their fellow men, enough to eat, clothes to wear, a place to live (**Philippians 4:19; 19** But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus); and, as a crowning reward, eternity in such a marvellous Heaven that it is more than we can comprehend. Surely man has never done anything to deserve all those blessings; but the mercy of God has provided them, and will make them come true in the lives of all who yield to Him. But the one who turns away his heart from God will get nothing but punishment.

Jacob's Vows

Jacob now realised he was a sinner, but right away he wanted to do something about it. He got up early, set up a pillar, and poured oil on it in preparation for his worship. He said, "Surely, the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not." What a privilege we have to worship in a place where God is!

whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

16 ¶ And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew *it* not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful *is* this place! this *is* none other but the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22 And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Jacob made vows that morning that resulted in a change in his nature. While he once had grasped all he could for himself, without regard for others, he was now willing to let God lead him. All he asked was enough to eat, enough to wear, and that he might come again in peace to his father's house. Such a change of heart can come only when a man is born again, saved from his sins through the Blood of Jesus. By yielding his life to God he placed himself in a position to receive the promised blessings.

Jacob also promised henceforth to pay tithes. He was going to give one tenth of all his possessions unto the Lord. We notice that he said, "Of all that thou shalt give me." No more was he going out to get things for himself, but he was trusting to the mercy of God to give him what he needed in his future life. We shall learn that God blessed this consecration and richly rewarded Jacob, both materially and spiritually.

QUESTIONS

1. What effect did it have upon Esau when he learned that his father had given Jacob the blessing?
2. Was the blessing following Jacob that had been pronounced upon him?
3. What did Jacob use for a pillow?
4. What was Jacob's vow?
5. Should we pay tithes today?