

JACOB'S LADDER

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

LESSON 23 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

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

Bible References:

I Rebekah's Plan for Jacob's Flight

1. Esau's purpose to slay his brother because of the blessing bestowed upon him, Genesis 27:41, 36.
2. His mother's plan to have Jacob flee to her brother's home in Haran, Genesis 27: 42-45.
3. Rebekah's subterfuge about Jacob's departure to Haran to seek a wife, Genesis 27:46.

II Isaac's Ready Consent to Jacob's Departure

1. His charge that Jacob should not take a wife of the Canaanites, but of Laban's daughters, Genesis 28:1. 2;
Genesis 24:2-4.
2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:
3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:
4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.
2. Isaac's prayer that Abraham's blessing be conferred upon Jacob; and Jacob sent to Haran, Genesis 28:3-5.
3. Esau's attempt to please his parents by choosing a wife from Ishmael's daughters, Genesis 28:6-9;

Genesis 26:34, 35.

34 ¶ And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: **35** Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

III Jacob's Dream on His Way to Haran

1. His lying down to sleep, alone in the field at sunset, with a stone for a pillow, Genesis 28:10, 11.
2. His dream of a ladder to Heaven with angels ascending and descending, Genesis 28:12;

Hebrews 1:14;

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

John 1:51.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

3. The renewal of the covenant made with Abraham, Genesis 28:13-15;

Genesis 12:2, 3;

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 26:1-4.

1 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

thy mother's brother.

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

4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

IV Jacob's Fear and His Vow to God

1. His fear of God's presence when he awoke, Genesis 28:16, 17;

Genesis 27:12.

12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

2. His step toward God in setting up and anointing the stone for a pillar, Genesis 28:18;

Exodus 29:36.

36 And thou shalt offer every day a bullock *for* a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it.

3. That sacred place, where Abraham also prayed, named Bethel, "God's house," Genesis 28:19;

Genesis 13:3, 4;

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Isaiah 56: 7.

7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

4. Jacob's vow to pay tithes as Abraham had done, a result of God's covenant, Genesis 28:20-22;

Genesis 14:20;

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Genesis 18:19.

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Notes:

The future destinies of both Jacob and Esau were determined in the plan of God, as is recorded in the prophecy of Malachi: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." God, Who knows the hearts of men, saw the difference in the hearts of these boys, even before they were born. And the place that Jacob, the younger of the two, was to occupy in the line of God's chosen people was indicated by the name given him at the time of his birth: Jacob means "to lay hold of the heel" or "to supplant."

But it was not necessary for either Jacob or his mother to resort to cunning devices and subtle deceits to carry out God's plan to make Jacob the recipient of His promises and blessings. God is not dependent at any time upon the schemes of men to carry out His own plan, much less upon the dishonest practices of men to bring to pass His ends. God at no time tolerates sin in any manner, shape, or form. He carried out His plan, and renewed with Jacob the covenant made with Abraham, making the younger an heir to His covenant promises -- not because of the devices of Jacob and his mother, but in spite of their evil-doings.

From the natural, carnal viewpoint, Esau was justified in the attitude he took toward his younger brother. It is only natural for a sinful man to seek revenge and strive for the mastery over his

the God of Isaac: the land 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.

opponent. In this case, Esau planned to kill Jacob after their father died, because he did not know the Lord Who later on said, for the benefit of those who followed Him: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." The example of Cain and his unrevenged killing of Abel should have been enough to show Esau the marvellous truth that the Lord's eye sees all the sins of men and takes note of them, and that in His own time He will bring every sinner to judgment.

Rebekah again resorted to deceit and obtained Isaac's permission for Jacob to leave the country, as well as a blessing upon him for the journey. So with circumstances as they were, the fear of death hanging over him, and the strained family relations that were always present, Jacob set out on his journey.

On the first night he stopped to rest in the open country. There were no comfortable accommodations there for him; and it is best that he was alone with God, for here an incident took place that was the turning point in his whole life.

In his sleep he dreamed a beautiful dream. He saw a ladder reaching from earth to Heaven and angels on it, ascending and descending. The Lord stood above it and spoke to Jacob, repeating the covenant originally made to Abraham, that through his posterity all the nations of the world were to be blessed. Included with this covenant was the added assurance to Jacob that God would be with him on his Journey, that there would be no time when the divine Hand was not over him, and that eventually he would be brought again to the land of his father, Isaac.

This assurance was to quell the natural fear that was in the heart of this fugitive from home who feared his brother's wrath and the trouble that would always be present between them. But while God's words were enough to cause that fear to vanish, Jacob found in his heart another fear. This was a fear of God -- a God Whom he had not taken into his plans to any great extent before this, and a God from Whom he could not flee nor escape. We may escape the consequences of our sins as far as our fellow men are concerned; but there is one thing sure: we shall never escape the all-seeing eye of God.

To rid himself of this conviction of sin there was only one thing to do: he would have to acknowledge his transgressions and make a covenant with God. This he did, in erecting a stone for an altar and in praying the prayer that he made.

It is evident that God heard that prayer, for the Lord became Jacob's God. And Jacob called the place Bethel, which literally means the House of God. Jacob was saved; and we find his whole attitude changed from this time on. Marvellous are the workings of our God! In a moment of time the guilt and condemnation of sin is gone, the fear of a righteous God is removed, and a peace-creating assurance of forgiveness is given, when a penitent sinner pleads for divine mercy and pardon.

Esau represents a type of people who are worldly-minded, who seek after the present, temporal things of this life, and who do not look ahead to see the results of their rejection of spiritual blessings. Jacob reminds us of those who, not being content with their state and condition when in rebellion against God, seek for better things and are mindful of the benefits and blessings that could be theirs.

The ladder that Jacob saw, with its host of angels, is a type of the way by which man is brought into contact with God. Sin brought a terrible result in the beginning -- a separation between man and God -- and God ordained that all those who desired could be restored to the position of fellowship with Him. To do this it was necessary that there be a Mediator. No one could fill that place but Jesus, the Son of God; so it was ordained from the foundation of the world that He was to come and bruise the head of Satan and provide a means

whereby man could be united with God.

Jesus came, in the proper time, and suffered for mankind and became the "ladder," so to speak, by which man could ascend to God and through which God's plan could be carried out. The angels are only incidental to the type, ministering spirits sent to minister to those who are heirs of salvation (**Hebrews 1:14; 14** For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country). Jesus alluded to this vision and its fulfilment in Himself, when He said to Nathanael: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). Nathaniel, through his spiritual perception, was to realise that Jesus was the "ladder," or the means of grace to fallen mankind, and that the angels were those who assisted in the great plan of God.

The Psalmist wrote of this, prophetically: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:10, 11).

Song writers have tried to capture the rapture of this grand vision and its important significance in our redemption. One wrote:

"Though like the wanderer,"	There let the way appear,
The sun gone down,	Steps unto heav'n:
Darkness be over me,	All that Thou sendest me,
My rest a stone;	In mercy giv'n:
Yet in my dreams I'd be	Angels to beckon me,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,	Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,	Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!	Nearer to Thee!"

Another writer caught a more personal application, when he wrote:

"I'd rather walk with Jesus alone,
And have for a pillow, like Jacob, a stone,
Living each moment with His face in view,
Than shrink from my pathway and fail to go through."

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Jacob going to Haran?
2. What reaction did Esau's attitude produce in Jacob?
3. What reason did Rebekah give Isaac for Jacob's departure?
4. What did Isaac do for Jacob before he left?
5. Where was Jacob's first night spent, and why was the place so named?
6. What did God say to Jacob in the dream?
7. Whom did Jacob fear when he awoke in the morning?
8. Tell what Jacob did after he awoke.
9. What did Jacob vow to do when he prayed?
10. What experience of grace did Jacob receive here?