

## Jacob Sent to Laban

THEME: God appears to Jacob at Bethel; Jacob makes a vow.

In the previous chapter we saw Jacob doing one of the most despicable things any man could do. He did it at the behest of his mother. You know, sometimes people excuse themselves for being mean by saying it is because their mother didn't love them when they were little. Believe me, Jacob couldn't say that. Jacob was loved and spoiled. When he was asked to do something that was not the honorable thing to do, he did it. He stole the birthright from his brother.

The birthright was already his. The formality of his father giving a blessing wasn't necessary at all. Abraham hadn't given the blessing to Isaac—God had! And it is God who gave it to Jacob. His trickery was not only unnecessary, but God will deal with him because of it, you can be sure of that.

The plan that Rebekah has now thought of is plausible and logical. It probably was the right thing to do in this case. She didn't mention to Isaac that she wanted to send Jacob to her brother so that he'd get away from the wrath of his brother Esau, but she did mention the fact that he could choose a wife back there from among her family.

In this chapter we will find Jacob leaving home. He comes to Beth-el where God appears to him and confirms to him the covenant made to Abraham. - McGee

***Gen 28:1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan."***

All the way through the Old Testament we find that God does not want the godly to marry the ungodly. That, again, is my reason for believing that in the sixth chapter of Genesis, where it says the sons of God looked upon the daughters of men, it is saying that the godly line married with the godless line of Cain. This finally resulted in the judgment of the Flood with only one godly man left.

Intermarriage always leads to godlessness. I say this as a caution. I recognize that we are living in a day when young people are not very apt to take advice from an old preacher. They wonder what he knows about it all. Frankly, if you want to know the truth, I know a whole lot about this particular matter. I've done years of counseling and have had many, many couples come to me and have been able to watch them through the years. The story is pretty much the same. A young lady or a young man will say they have met the right person, the one they wish to marry. That person is not a Christian. However, they want to marry that person and win him or her for the Lord. May I say this, young lady, if you cannot win him for the Lord before you get married, you will not win him after you are married. May I say this, young man, if you cannot win her for the Lord before you get married, you will not win her after you are married. God forbids the godly to marry the godless. It always entails sorrow. I have seen literally hundreds of cases, and I have never yet seen a case where it has worked. Never yet! You can't beat God. God has put it down indelibly all the way through the Word that the godly are not to marry the godless. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2Co\_6:14). The New Testament strictly tells Christians that they are not to be unequally yoked. You don't get unequally yoked by sitting

on a platform with an unbeliever, as some critics have accused me of doing! You do it by intermarrying. That's the way you join up with them. And God strictly forbids it.- McGee

***Gen 28:2-5 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham." So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.***

It is obvious now that Isaac understands that God had given the blessing to Abraham, that God had transferred it to him, and that this blessing is to be passed on to his son, Jacob.

If you were to give the nationality of this family, you would have to say they were Syrians because that is what they are called in the Scriptures. Sometimes the question is asked, "Was Abraham a Jew? Was he an Israelite?" No, actually he was not. There were no Israelites until the time of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. His twelve sons were Israelites. The line came from Abraham, he is the father of the race, but you're not going to call Abraham a Midianite, I hope, and yet he is the father of the Midianites, also.

Esau Marries an Ishmaelite

***Gen 28:6-9 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.***

Now lest someone misunderstand what I meant when I said we were through with the line of Ishmael, let me say that the Bible will not follow his line. However, his line will be mentioned as it crosses the line leading to Christ. So here, Esau goes out and marries the daughter of Ishmael. He thinks it will please his father. You see what a lack of spiritual perception he has. The Ishmaelites were as much rejected as the Canaanites or the Philistines. - McGee

### ***Jacob's Dream***

***Gen 28:10-11 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.***

The place he has come to, as we shall see in a moment, is Bethel, literally, "the House of God." Bethel is twelve miles north of Jerusalem, and the home which Jacob left was probably twenty-five or thirty miles south of Jerusalem. This means that Jacob covered at least forty miles that first day. You can see that he is really hotfooting it away from Esau. He wants to get as far from him as he can, but the farther he gets away from Esau, the farther he gets away from home.

What do you think he was feeling that night? Well, he was very lonely, that is for sure. He was probably homesick. As far as the record is concerned, this was his first night away from home.

My friend, do you remember the first night that you were away from home? I certainly remember the first night I went away from home. We lived in the country in a little place called Springer, Oklahoma. They tell me it hasn't done any springing since then. It's still a small place, just a wide place in the road. We had some very wonderful friends who lived down the road. I suppose it couldn't have been over a mile, but at that time I thought it was five or more miles. I've been back there, and I was amazed to find out how close together things are. When I was little, I thought it was all pretty well spread out. Well, these people invited me to come down and spend the night. They had a boy about my age—we were nine or ten, I guess. He had come up to get me, and we went down to his house together. I shall never forget that experience. We had a delicious dinner, a good country dinner, and I enjoyed it that evening with these folks. Then we played hide-and-seek until it got dark which kept me occupied, but every now and then I looked into the darkness and began to get just a little homesick. Then someone said it was time to go to bed. They put a pallet down in the front room, and I put on the little nightshirt that I had brought under my arm, and I lay down on that pallet. Friend, I have never been so lonely in all my life. Homesick! Oh, how I wanted to go home! I rolled and tossed there for a long time. I finally dozed off and I slept for a while, but I awoke very early in the morning. Do you know what I did? I took off my nightshirt and put on my clothes, put my nightshirt under my arm and started running home. I didn't stop until I got there. Nobody was up, but I was sure glad to be home. First night away from home. After that, I went a long way from home, but I never was more homesick than I was that first night.

I have often wondered about Jacob. He's actually a man now, a pretty big boy, but I think he is homesick. This is the first time he is away from Rebekah. He's been tied to his mama's apron strings all of his life, and now he is untied. He is out on his own, and this is his first night away from home.

Notice what happens. He lies down and puts stones for pillows. Bethel is a dreary place. It has been described as a bleak moorland with large, bare rocks exposed. It is twelve hundred feet above sea level, in the hills. There are many places out in the desert of California that would correspond to it.

When traveling around in the proximity of Bethel, I was with a bus tour. Others wanted to go other places which to me weren't nearly as important as Bethel. We drove within about a half mile of it and I wanted to walk to it, but the bus driver said we didn't have time. I could see it in the distance, and the topography looked bleak and forbidding. Yet this was the high point in the spiritual life of Jacob, not only at this time but also later in his life. So this is the place he came to, and here he lay down to sleep. - McGee

***Gen 28:12-14 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***

It was right in that area, by the way, where God first appeared to Abraham after he had reached the land of Palestine. Now God is giving to Jacob exactly what He had given first to Abraham; He had repeated it to Isaac, and now He confirms it, and He reaffirms to Jacob that He will do this. – McGee

***Gen 28:15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."***

ou can see that this would be comforting and helpful to a lonesome, homesick boy who really had to leave home in a hurry. He is on his way to a far country, and this first night God says to him, "I'm going to be with you, Jacob, and I'm going to bring you back to this land."

The vision that God gave to him in the dream was of a ladder that reached up to heaven. What does that ladder mean? Well, the Lord Jesus interpreted it when He called Nathanael, as recorded in Joh\_1:45-51. By the way, Nathanael was a wiseacre, and when he heard of Jesus, he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Our Lord dealt with this fellow. Nathanael asked, "How in the world do you know me like that?" And Jesus said, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael's response was, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." He was pretty easy to convince, although he was a skeptic at the beginning. Let me give you the exact quote: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 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" (Joh\_1:50-51).

What is that ladder? That ladder is Christ. The angels were ascending and descending upon the Son of man. The angels ministered to Him; they were subject to His command. Nathanael will hear from the top of that ladder the voice of God, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." My friend, God is speaking to mankind through Christ in our day. We cannot come to the Father directly. Every now and then I hear someone say in a testimony, "When I was converted, I came directly to God. I have access to God." We do not, my friend. We come through Christ; we have access to the Father through Christ. That is the only way we can get into God's presence. The Lord Jesus said, "... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Joh\_14:6). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the ladder—not one that we can climb but one that we can trust.

This truth was given first to Jacob, the usurper. To Nathanael our Lord said, "You are an Israelite in whom there is no guile"—that is, no Jacob. Nathanael was a wiseacre, a humorist, but he was not a trickster like Jacob. But this man, Jacob—God is going to have to deal with him. God has given him this wonderful, glorious promise, but, oh, Jacob has so much to learn!

Isn't that true of all of us today? No wonder God has to school us. No wonder God has to discipline us. He scourges every son whom He receives. He disciplines. He did it to Abraham and He did it to Isaac. He is going to do it to Jacob. Up to this point, everything has been going Jacob's way. I received a letter from a couple who had lost their two-year-old boy suddenly one night. Up to that time everything had been going their way. They were church members, but they were hypocrites. So many people are just members of the church, yet they don't know the Lord personally. The Lord has to shake us. He allows trials to come to us to discipline us. They put iron in our backbone; they put courage in our lives and enable us to stand for God.

Jacob has a long way to go. Notice what he does—McGee

***Gen 28:16-17 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"***

This is the passage of Scripture that I use many times in dedicating a new church. "How dreadful is this place!" I think I shock some people, especially when the congregation has come in to dedicate a lovely new facility. I get up and look around and say, "How dreadful is this place." During the rest of the time I try to win them back to being friends of mine by telling them that the place is dreadful only for a fellow like Jacob, a sinner, trying to run away from God. Every house of God, every church, ought to be a dreadful place to any sinner running away from God. It is the place where the sinner ought to be able to meet God, come face to face with God, through the Ladder who has been sent down from heaven, even Christ.

When Jacob ran away from home, he had a limited view of God. He thought that when he ran away from home, he was running away from God, also. But he found that he had not left God back home. He exclaimed, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not!"- McGee

***Gen 28:18-21 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.***

Now listen to Jacob. He has a lot to learn, and this is an evidence of it.

What is he doing? He wants to trade with God. He says, "Now, God, if You will do this for me...." But God has already told him that He is going to do every one of these things for him—"I am going to keep you; I am going to bring you back to this land; I am going to give you this land; and I'm going to give you offspring." Then Jacob turns around and bargains with Him, "If You will do it, then I'll serve You."

God doesn't do business with us that way. He didn't do business that way with Jacob either. If He had, Jacob would never have made it back to that land. God brought him back into that land by His grace and mercy. When Jacob did finally come back to Bethel, he came back a wiser man. Do you know what he came back to do? To worship and praise God for His mercy. God had been merciful to him.

Many people even today say they will serve the Lord if He will do such and such. You won't do anything of the kind, my friend. He doesn't do business that way. He will extend mercy to you, and He will be gracious to you without asking anything in return. But He does say that if you love Him, you will really want to serve Him. That will be the bondage of love. It is the same kind of love a mother has for the little child. She becomes its slave. That's the way that He wants you and me. - McGee

***Gen 28:22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."***

So Jacob erects this stone. He is trying to make a deal with God! And a great many of us are trying to make a deal with God. Oh, my friend, He just wants to become your Father through faith in Christ.