
GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2020
GOSPEL GLIMPSES: JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
WEEK 3 – JANUARY 26, 2020 - GENESIS 28:10-22

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) Do you ever remember your dreams? Do you think God can speak to us through our dreams, or was this just something that happened a long time ago?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

For the next two weeks we are going to be considering the life of Jacob. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons. Esau who was born first and then Jacob. Esau would have been the one to claim the birthright, but Jacob had managed to lay claim to that, as well as Isaac's blessing (Genesis 25:19-34 and 27). As a result of this Jacob had fled Beersheba and found himself in exile. Meanwhile, his brother Esau was just waiting for Isaac to die, so that he could destroy Jacob.

Jacob is on the run and has left the land that God had promised to Abraham. He went to sleep and began to dream. He saw a great stone stairway that reached to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending, and in the middle of this was the Lord. He came down and stood over Jacob.

During the time of Jacob, ziggurat towers were built in Mesopotamia. These towers were built in layers "like squared off wedding cakes." The steps of the stairways were built so high that humans could not climb them. Only the gods could descend the steps. At the top of the tower was a small shrine that represented the dwelling of the god. When the god wanted to visit the temple at ground level, he/she would descend the stairs.

The stairway of Jacob's dream reaches all the way to heaven, because God is the builder. This was not an attempt of humanity trying to reach God (think Babel). Rather, this dream showed God coming down to earth and repeating the promises that had been made to Abraham. God again promises that He will be with Jacob and his descendants.



Jacob responds in faith to the promise and presence of God. He sets up a memorial and makes vows to God. He calls the place Bethel which literally means “house of God.” What we are to understand today is that Jesus is the true “Bethel.” He is the true house of God. He is Immanuel – God with us.

Jesus is the answer to Proverbs 30:4 which asks in part, “Who has gone up to heaven and come down... What is his name, and what is the name of his son?” Jesus can ascend to heaven because he has come down. He was lifted up on the cross so that we might also be lifted up. Jesus is the way to heaven that was foreshadowed in Jacob’s dream.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read Genesis 22:28:10-22

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 to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. 12 As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. 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 am giving it to you and your descendants. 14 Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. 15 What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.” 16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” 17 But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!” 18 The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. 19 He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz. 20 Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, 21 and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the LORD will certainly be my God. 22 And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

- 2) Jacob cheated his brother Esau and is now on the run. His mother, Rebekah, had helped plan Jacob’s escape, a plan symptomatic of the family’s dysfunction. What happens when we flee from our troubles?
- 3) God spoke to Jacob in a dream so graphic that Jacob awoke and considered the place where he had slept as sacred ground. How does God talk to you? Have you ever had a “moment” like this where God changed your life forever, and/or sent you in an entirely different direction?
- 4) As followers of Jesus we can tend to spend a lot of time reading the New Testament, which emphasizes the role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. How does Jesus connect us to the first person of the Trinity - God the Father? What does our text teach us about this connection to God?

- 5) At the end of verse 14 we read, "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants." What does this mean? How are all the families of the earth blessed through Jacob and his descendants?
- 6) Before Jacob's dream, it seems that Abraham's descendants had sort of forgotten about God's promises. Has God ever made a promise to you that has been lost along the way?
- 7) Jacob was pretty much a "deal maker" his whole life. He made deals with Esau, and he made deals with God. Have you ever made a deal with God? How did it turn out?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) With his pillow-rock, Jacob makes a shrine for the Lord, promising to give God as tribute a tenth (a tithe) of everything the Lord will ever bless Jacob with, down the road. How is our "giving to God" an act of worship?