

I. God Gives Jacob The Blessing of Abraham (10-15)

A. Jacob's Lonely Flight (10-11)

1. Jacob Flees For Haran (10)

a) *Jacob is running for his life*

- (1) He is fleeing from the wrath of Esau
- (2) He is going into exile to save his life
- (3) He is running because of his deceit and unbelief
 - (a) He stole Esau's blessing and birthright
 - (b) He did not trust the promise of God and thought he must sin in order to obtain it

b) *Jacob is now utterly alone*

- (1) His treachery put him on a 400 mile journey away from the promised land
- (2) He has left home and family. There is no one to help him now

c) *Jacob's flight represents a reversal of Abraham's call of faith*

- (1) Jacob, the promised seed, is now traveling the same route as Abraham did – but he is going alone and away from the land of promise
- (2) Notice that his destination is no longer called Paddan-Aram, now Genesis calls it Haran (Where Abraham was called away from)
- (3) The promised seed seems to be moving away from the promise

2. Jacob Stops In A Desolate Place (11)

a) *Jacob stops in the middle of nowhere because night has fallen*

- (1) Notice that the area is called "a place" three times in this verse – there is nothing particularly notable about it
- (2) The place Jacob stops is barren – He uses a stone for a pillow – there is nothing there of any luxury
- (3) NOTE: It is easy to feel sorry for Jacob at this point, but remember that he brought this on himself – he deserves absolutely nothing because of his deceit and faithlessness

b) *Remember Isaac has given Jacob the promise*

- (1) Isaac pronounced blessings, fruitfulness, family, and land to Jacob
- (2) None of that seems real or possible to Jacob now. He is alone, moving away from the promised land, and running for his life

Genesis 28:10-22 The Grace of Jacob's Ladder

B. God's Grace is Revealed to Jacob (12-15)

1. Jacob's Ladder is Revealed (12-13a)

a) *Jacob falls asleep and God appears to him in a dream*

b) *Jacob sees a "ladder" (probably more like what we call a staircase) touching the earth and going all the way up to heaven*

(1) Notice the repetition of the word "behold" –

(2) This heightens the excitement and wonder of what Jacob sees – It is like saying "Look! A ladder. Look! Angels! Etc.)

c) *Angels ascending and descending on the ladder*

(1) Jacob sees the activity of the ministers of God coming and going from earth to heaven and vice versa

(2) Jacob sees the God of creation standing over all

(3) Jacob is shown that even in this desolate place, God is active and working to fulfill His promise

2. God Gives Jacob The Promise (13b-15)

a) *God Identifies Himself (13b)*

(1) This is the God who fulfilled His word to Abraham and Isaac

(2) God has been faithful to Jacob's fathers and therefore, Jacob can be assured that God will be faithful to His promises

(3) God has always been able to work in the most impossible circumstances for the fulfillment of His promise – even now in Jacob's situation, God is able.

b) *God Gives Jacob Abraham's Promise (13c-15)*

(1) God gives Jacob the promise from His own Mouth

(a) Previously Jacob received the blessing and the promise from Isaac

(b) God Himself transfers the promise of Abraham to Jacob

(2) God Promises the Land (13c)

(3) God Promises a Multitude of Descendants (14a)

(4) God Promises a Blessing To the World (14b)

(a) Remember this is the promise of the gospel – Paul says this promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the gospel (Gal. 3)

(5) God Promises His Presence To Protect (15)

(a) "I will be with you"

(b) "I will keep you wherever you go"

(c) "I will bring you back to the land"

(d) "I will not leave you until the promise is fulfilled"

Genesis 28:10-22 The Grace of Jacob's Ladder

(i) *The purpose of the vision of the ladder is to show Jacob that God is with Him – even in this desolate place and even though Jacob has been far from faithful*

(ii) *God promises not only to be with Jacob in this place, but wherever Jacob goes. – Remember Jacob is on the run and it looks like he is in dire circumstances.*

c) *A Demonstration of Grace*

(1) God should rightly destroy Jacob for his sin

(2) Jacob has behaved just as badly as Esau, God owes Him absolutely nothing

(3) Notice that Jacob is not seeking God in this desolate place, he is running for his safety – It is God who sought out Jacob and places His promise upon him.

II. Jacob Continues To Demonstrate Faithlessness (16-22)

A. Jacob Honors God (16-19)

1. Jacob Recognizes God's Presence (16-17)

a) *Jacob Realizes God is Here in This Desolate Place (16)*

(1) Jacob recognizes that God is here (even in a place like this) and he did not realize it

(2) Jacob says "I didn't know" – just like many of us, we feel that God is absent when we are going through troubles and trials (especially when it is our own fault)

(3) This shows that God's promises do not fade away and they cannot be nullified – His presence is with His children even when we look around and can't see it

(4) For the promise bearers, God is faithful to His word even in spite of our sin and failures

b) *Jacob is Afraid (17a)*

c) *Jacob Assumes This Place is Special (17b)*

(1) The word "dreadful" is from the same root as the word "afraid" in this verse. The idea is that this is a fearful and awful place. (awful – meaning full of awe)

(2) Jacob doesn't seem to fully comprehend that the point is not simply that God dwells in this place. The point is that God will be with him in every place, wherever he goes.

(3) Jacob says that this place is the house of God (Beth-el) showing that this is the place where God dwells

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- (4) Jacob says that this place is the gate of heaven, showing that this is the place of access to God.
- 2. Jacob Reveres God's Presence (18-19)
 - a) *Jacob Sets an Altar For Worship (18)*
 - (1) His first act is to set up a pillar as an altar in the same way that Abraham and Isaac set up altars.
 - (2) Jacob pours oil on his altar as a kind of offering but also sanctifying this place as God's (See Lev. 8:10-11)
 - b) *Jacob Names The Place Bethel (19)*
 - (1) Jacob renames this place Bethel (the house of God)
- B. Jacob Bargains With God (20-22)
 - 1. Jacob Gives God Stipulations For His Faith (20-21a)
 - 2. Jacob Offers Honor and Obedience if God Delivers (21b-22)
 - a) *Although Jacob honors God with the pillar and the naming of the place, he demonstrates that he still does not have the heart of faith as God's promise bearer*
 - b) *Jacob bargains with God rather than trusting and obeying*
 - c) *Remember the faith of Abraham in sacrificing Isaac? He did not regard the consequences or place any stipulations on God – He simply trusted and obeyed.*
 - d) *Jacob isn't demonstrating that faith at all – he tells God that he will obey if God does something good for him*
 - 3. Why in the world is God putting up with this guy? Why is this God's chosen promise bearer?

III. Jesus' Interpretation of Jacob's Ladder (John 1:45-51)

- A. Jesus Meets Nathaniel
 - 1. Nathaniel doubts whether anything good can come from Nazareth
 - 2. Jesus says Nathaniel is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit (unlike Jacob who is full of deceit)
- B. Jesus Reveals Himself to Nathaniel
 - 1. Jesus says that he saw Nathaniel under the fig tree (we don't know what was going on but Nathaniel obviously does)
 - 2. Notice the similarities of Jacob alone in the desolate place not realizing that God was with him – and Nathaniel alone under the fig tree not realizing that God was with him
- C. Nathaniel Believes in Jesus
 - 1. Jesus says that he will see greater things – he will see the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man
 - 2. Jesus is Jacob's Ladder

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3. Jesus is the "house of God" and the "gate of heaven"

Jesus is the Lord at the top of the Ladder watching over the promises to His people and He is the one who came to earth for us in salvation.

Jacob's ladder is a foretelling of the promised Messiah. Jesus still says I will be with you even to the end. Jesus is still not done with us, even when we can't see where He is and we question whether he is still there.