

Through the Bible - Genesis 27-28

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the themes of divine sovereignty, human deception, and the significance of true repentance through the story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau in Genesis 27-28.

Scripture: Genesis 27:1

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "The Importance of Recognizing God's Presence"

Description

Chuck Smith explores Genesis chapters 27 and 28, focusing on the complex dynamics of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau. He highlights Isaac's blindness and impending death, which leads to a deceptive scheme by Rebekah and Jacob to secure the blessing meant for Esau. Smith emphasizes God's sovereign choice in electing Jacob over Esau, illustrating that God's plans are not dependent on human actions or schemes. The sermon also reflects on Jacob's dream of the ladder reaching to heaven, symbolizing God's presence and promise to be with him. Ultimately, Smith encourages believers to recognize God's presence in their lives, even in difficult circumstances.

Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to Genesis chapter twenty-seven?

Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, your quiver, your bow, go out to the field, and get me some venison; Make me some savoury barbecued venison, such like I such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; and my soul may bless thee before I die (Gen 27:1-4).

It is interesting that at this point, Isaac is becoming feeble; he's pretty much bedfast. He's blinded now as the result of his age. He feels that death is approaching but it is interesting that death does not come unto Isaac for many, many years. After this experience, Jacob had fled to Haran, spent twenty years there, came back and Isaac was still alive.

And so sometimes you think you've about had it, you think I'm going fast but you know don't give up, the Lord still allows you to hang on and you know, "it is appointed unto us once to die and after that the judgment"(Hebrews 9:27). We don't always know the appointments of God. But indeed, I feel that it is tragic to be in the case of Isaac to be an invalid for such a long period of time. That indeed is tragic.

I think that death is not the worst thing that can happen to a person. I think that when the body can no longer really function in its God-given manner and purpose, when the body can no longer really express me, what I am, here confined to a bed, almost blind or for all practical purposes blind and all, helpless, having to be waited on; and for the spirit just to remain in the body is a hard thing. It's a hard thing upon the person that is lying there; it is a hard thing upon the persons that have to take care of them.

And many times, in cases like this, as far as the person is concerned, much better to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). And to just have your spirit linger on in the body, why does the spirit linger on? Why doesn't God release the spirit sooner from the body? I don't know. These are the things that are all in the hands of God. It really isn't mine to question the ways of God.

But here's a man that God loved. Here's a man that was a servant of God. And yet we find his body incapacitated and yet, his life continuing for many, many years to come in the state of semi-invalidism. And so feeling that he's going to die, calls his son Esau that he go out and get some venison, fix it and spice it up and all like he liked it and bring it to him that he might eat and give him the blessing.

Earlier Esau cared nothing of the birthright. A profane man not interested in spiritual things. Not interested in the promises of God and the fulfillment of the promises of God. He could care less about the birthright, but he is interested in the blessing but the blessing really went with the birthright. The blessing came upon the eldest son. But he had sold that position, the birthright, but still he was desiring the blessing of his father.

Now indeed it was the purposes of God that Jacob should receive the birthright and it was also the providence of God, the choice of God, that Jacob should receive the blessing. It is an interesting thing before the twins were born, when they were striving, fighting with each other in Rebekah's womb. She could not figure out all of the activity. She prayed and God said, "There are two nations striving in your womb". They are diverse from each other and before they were ever born, God said, "And the elder shall serve the younger".

Now this was declared of God before their birth that the selection of Jacob might be of the sovereign purposes of God, rather than the deservings of man. God knowing in advance their nature, their character; knowing in advance Esau being a profane person and being a materialist and not really concerned with spiritual things, knowing before they were ever born the attitudes of their lives. God chose Jacob over Esau, that it might be of election, by God's choice and not by man's deservings.

Now the election of God is something that is difficult for us to understand. It is really impossible for us to think as God thinks. I cannot think with that foreknowledge. I just can't do it. God does. And thus it's impossible for me to put my mind in God's mind, to think as God thinks. And thus it's wrong for me to judge God for the way he thinks because I can't even know how he thinks. Because when God thinks or when God looks at a situation, He looks at it with this foreknowledge, knowing already in advance what's going to be. We don't know that. And thus when we select someone, we don't know what the outcome is going to be.

Say we have someone who comes in for a job interview. The resume looks great. It looks like, oh, they'd be just the right--and you hire them. You think, oh my, this is great; this is the employee we need. And they turn out to be just horrible. We've made the wrong selection. Now if we knew six months what was going to be in six months, you know, when we hired them, we'd never have hired them. We'd never have selected them. If we had the foreknowledge and knew what was going to happen because we had

selected them for this particular job, we'd never hired them in the first place. But we don't have that kind of knowledge and thus we select or we elect and then we hope for the best.

Last night if Gossage would have had foreknowledge and known what that particular pitch that he elected to pitch to Baylor what was going to happen to it, you think he'd ever elected that pitch? No, you'd have thrown it out of the park. He'd have rolled in the home plate or something. But you see, we don't know so we think this is what's best. They fire it and then oh man, what a mistake. But God doesn't make mistakes because God knows in advance what the result is going to be. And thus he elects according to His foreknowledge.

Now if you had the capacity of foreknowledge, wouldn't it be rather stupid to elect a loser? If you had this kind of ability to think with foreknowledge, wouldn't it be sort of dumb to select someone you know is not going to make it? Of course, it would be. So how can you fault God for the fact that He makes selections because He does it according to His foreknowledge? I can't think that way and I really can't fault God because He can think that way and makes His selection by His foreknowledge.

So God knew in advance concerning Esau, concerning Jacob, and according to this advance knowledge that God had, He selected that the elder should serve the younger and that through the younger one, His promises for the nation and for the world should be fulfilled.

Now Jacob came to an awareness of this. Of course, his mother knew it before he was ever born because she had prayed and she said, "God, what's going on inside of me?" God said "there are two nations" and He said, "the elder shall serve the younger". So when Jacob came out second, she knew that Jacob was the one that God had selected for the blessings, and that the purposes of God will be accomplished through Jacob rather than Esau. Their mother knew that from their birth. And knowing that, she favored Jacob. But Esau, not really caring about the spiritual things, manifested the very character and nature that God knew he had from the beginning, the reason why God rejected him.

Now Isaac's whole request, go out and get me some nice barbecued venison that I might bless you. You know the kind that I really love to eat. What a cheap basis for blessing. Just 'cause this kid can hunt and get good barbecued meat, that's all that Isaac was really caring about. He was going to give the blessing upon the basis of a savory meat, where God wanted the blessing to go upon the basis of the purposes of God in the future.

So when Rebekah heard Isaac sending Esau out to get this venison, she called Jacob in, and she said, Now, your dad has sent your brother out to get some venison and all, so quickly, get me a couple of goats and kill them and I'll fix the meat. I can barbecue that goat to taste like venison. Your dad won't know the difference. And you take it in to him that you might receive the blessing (Gen 27:5-10).

Now notice that this whole deceptive scheme was coming from Rebekah but she was putting Jacob up to it.

And Jacob objected and said, Hey, there's so much difference, though we're twins there's so much difference between us. They were fraternal instead of identical twins and so much difference between us that he'll surely discover the fact that I'm not Esau. That guy is so covered with hair and if he calls me over to feel me, he'll see that I'm just smooth and he's just covered with hair and we smell different and everything else. No way we can pull it off. And she said, Let me take care of that. And said, she wrapped some of the goat fur around his arm and around his neck and put some covered him with dirt to give him

an earthy smell. And so he carried in this barbecued goat that she had fixed to taste like venison. And he said, Here, father, I've got the venison for you that you might eat and bless me. He said, Well, how come you got it so fast? And he said, Well, the Lord was with me and the deer just came right across my path. As soon as I got out the door, there it was and I got it. And he said, Are you sure that that is you, my son Esau? And he said, Yes, I'm Esau. He says, Well, come over here close to me. And so Jacob went over close and the old man felt his arm and he held out that fur that he had tied around his arm and he says, Yeah, it's the voice of Jacob but it's sure the hairy arm of Esau. And he ate the venison and he blessed Jacob (Gen 17:11-25).

Now the thing is, was it God's will that Jacob receive the blessing? Yes. Did Jacob and Rebekah know that it was God's will that Jacob receive the blessing? Yes, they did. But they made a mistake and that is they knowing what God intended, endeavored to help God out in fulfilling His purpose and thus went into the deception which was a ploy of theirs to help God fulfill His will and fulfill His purpose.

Why is it that we think that God can't do His work without our help? Why is it that we think that God is so dependent upon us to accomplish His purposes? Such is not the case. God can accomplish His purposes apart from our help. God will accomplish His purposes apart from us if necessary.

You remember when Esther was faced with that dangerous task of going into her husband, the king, uninvited. According to the laws of the Medes and the Persians, if she should go in without his asking for her to come, she would be grabbed by the guards and put to death, unless he would raise his sceptre to her. No one goes into the king, not even his wife, unless the king has called for them. And to dare to come into his court without being called meant instant death unless the king himself at that moment would give you the reprieve by holding up his sceptre.

And yet the people of God were in danger of extermination by a foolish decree that the king had made. And Mordecai came to Esther and he said, "Look, perhaps God has brought you into the kingdom for just a time as this or just an hour as this"(Esther 4:14). In other words, maybe your whole life is going to be fulfilled in this one hour that God has brought you to this position just for this purpose.

She explained the difficulty, the law of the Medes and the Persians. He hasn't called me for a long time. I don't know if he's mad at me or whatever. If I go in there and he doesn't raise his sceptre, my head is gone. It's all over for me.

And Mordecai said to her, "Do you think that at this time you can altogether escape the edict of the king? You're Jewish, too". And he said, "If you should fail at this time, their deliverance shall arise from another quarter". God will save His people. He's not going to let His people get wiped out. If you fail, God is still not going to fail. But you, in your failure, will lose your own life. Sort of "he who seeks to save his life will lose it: he who'll lose his life for my sake", Jesus said, "the same will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

And Esther was in that very position. Mordecai said, "Look, don't think that you're going to escape this decree. But if you at this time altogether fail, their deliverance shall arise". He had that confidence that God will accomplish His purpose. Though you may fail, the purposes of God cannot fail.

But what happens is that you'll lose out the reward and the blessing that could be yours by being that instrument that God uses to accomplish His work. Now the work of God is going to be accomplished. What God has willed and purposed shall come to pass. We can be the instruments through which it happens. If we yield ourselves to God, He'll work through us. If we fail to yield ourselves, God will still do His work and

yet we have lost the reward and the benefit and the joy of being the instrument.

But the work of God is never dependent upon our deception or our conniving or our scheming. We don't have to scheme and connive to get the work of God done. I look around today at people who are endeavoring to do the work of God. And there are so many people who have great visions for what they can do for God. All they need is the money. And so they've gone into all kinds of schemes to raise money in order to do the work of God. And when you read their letters, the whole insinuation of the letter is "here's a glorious work of God that is depending now upon you sending in your contribution. And if you fail the work of God is not going to be done".

And they really lay those heavy ones on you of you've got to send it in and here's the work of God. It can't be done unless you respond. If it's a true work of God, it's going to be done. If it is a true work of God, then it is worth responding to. But yet, God is able to do His work independent. God is not dependent upon us ever. We are dependent on Him always.

So their mistake or their fault here was not a fault of not believing God nor was it a fault of not believing the purposes of God. They were both faithful, believing God, believing the purposes of God. Their mistake was thinking that God couldn't fulfill His purposes without their help.

"I know what You want to do, God, and I just don't see how You can do it without my help". And so I get in there and I start scheming and conniving to help God get His work done. Never. He doesn't need that kind of help.

And so Jacob pulled it off and Esau blessed Jacob, verse twenty-six. I mean Isaac.

Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and he kissed his father: and his father smelled the smell of his raiment (Gen 27:26-27),

Looking for that earthy smell.

and he blessed him, and he said, See, the smell of my son is the smell of the field which the LORD hath blessed (Gen 27:27):

It smells like the outdoor fields.

Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: And let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over your brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee (Gen 27:28-29).

So somewhat the blessing that God had pronounced upon Abraham is passed on to him. That is, the blessing upon those that would bless him, the curse upon those that would curse him, but giving to him the fatness of the earth, prosperity, and servants.

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of the blessing of Jacob, and Jacob was scarcely gone out from the presence of his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made the savoury meat, and he brought it to his father, and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art you? And he said, Well, I'm your son, your firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, [began to

shake] he said, Who? And where is he that has taken the venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten all of it before you came, and I have blessed him? yes, he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtlety, and he has taken away your blessing. And he said, Is he not rightly called Heel Catcher? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing. And he said, Haven't you reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said to Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all of his brothers have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Have you not but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept (Gen 27:31-38).

Now in Hebrews the twelfth chapter as we deal with the men of faith in the Old Testament, this particular incident is brought into view. In verse sixteen and seventeen of chapter twelve where he's talking about the men of faith in the Old Testament, actually going back to verse thirteen is where, well twelve, were not eleven, is men of faith, twelve is getting into the chastening of the Lord. And he tells us to "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

Now be careful about yourself. Follow after peace with all men. Don't allow bitterness to fill your heart. Any root of bitterness coming in will trouble you and will defile many people around you. "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Hebrews 12:14-17).

He sought what carefully? Not repentance. He wasn't crying here repentant tears at all. What was he crying about? He was crying about the loss of the blessing. Many people get confused and think, "Oh, poor Esau, he tried to repent and he was crying in repentance and he couldn't find a place of repentance though he sought repentance with tears". No, he never did seek repentance. What he was seeking was the blessing and what he was crying about was the fact that there was no blessing for him. Had he really repented, then God surely would have done something for him. God has said that "a broken and a contrite spirit he will not turn away" (Psalm 51:17). No man has yet truly repented but what God did not accept him and bless him.

But his was not the repentance at all nor tears of repentance. And don't confuse thinking "oh, the poor guy was just there weeping before God and crying out in repentance but he couldn't receive it". No, that's not so. You read the story here and the tears were not at all tears of repentance. Actually, they were tears of anger; they were tears of bitterness. They were tears of a lost blessing that he was desiring. He really didn't seek spiritual things. He wasn't really seeking God; he was only seeking the blessing of his father. And when it was gone, when his brother had taken it, his tears were tears of bitterness, anger, hatred against his brother but not at all tears of repentance.

There was no place of repentance. And that's what the scripture is saying. He didn't--he didn't really repent at all. There was no change in Esau's heart, only a weeping over the fact that he had lost the blessing.

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it

shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. 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; and then will I slay my brother (Gen 27:39-41).

My dad's soon going to die and as soon as he's dead, I'm going to kill that brother of mine. Didn't want to do it while his dad was alive 'cause his dad might curse him. So I'll wait till daddy's dead and then I'm going to kill him.

Notice the bitterness. This is what Hebrews is warning about. "Lest any root of bitterness"; profane person Esau, he became very embittered over this, a root of bitterness defiling him. Now this hatred of Esau's descendants for Israel continued. Esau became the father of the Edomites. And there was a great hostility through history of the Edomites against the Israelites. Many times the Edomites sought to invade the land of Israel. When the Israelites were coming out of Egypt and needed to pass through the land of the Edomites, the king of Edom met them with his armies and prohibited their passage through the land.

The Edomites of course have since passed off of the scene. The last Edomite that we know is Herod, king Herod of Idumaea and his family. And there ended the Edomite race. But of course, God has preserved Israel to the present time.

Now this threat of Esau was heard by his mother Rebekah.

And so she called Jacob, and she said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, is comforting himself in the thought that he's going to kill you (Gen 27:42).

He's finding comfort in that right now. He's really mad, he's really bitter and he's just comforting himself by his intention to kill you.

Therefore, [she said], obey my voice; and arise and flee to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until your brother's fury is turned away; Until your brother's anger is turned away from you, and he forget that which was done to him: then will I send, and fetch thee from there: for why should I be deprived of you both in one day? And Rebekah said unto Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob takes a wife from one of these wild girls around here, then what good is my life going to be to me (Gen 27:43-46)?

And so she's setting up for that Isaac will send Jacob away in peace, saying that these daughters-in-law were just really a real vexation and a problem and all and she wanted her son Jacob to go and get a wife from her own family.

Somehow it takes away a little bit from the romance of the story as it goes to realize that at this point, Jacob was about seventy years old. Getting ready to run away from home. But these patriarchs were living to twice the age, which is normal today. So you have to really sort of cut the age factor in half in order that you might totally understand the virility and all of the person at seventy years because they lived to one hundred and forty, one hundred and fifty years old. Thus seventy years wasn't really that old to them at that time. But it does sort of throw a different light on the whole thing; you don't picture some teenage kid running off from home at this stage. He was close to seventy years old.

Rebekah said stay there for a few days until your brother's anger has subsided. But Esau did not cool off in a hurry for word never did come to Jacob from his mother to come home because as Jacob was gone, his mother died. And so he never saw his mother again unfortunately. And of course, the sad by-product

of this bit of deception that they had connived together is that the mother was deprived of ever seeing her son whom she loved, Jacob again. She died while Jacob was in Haran.

Now if you remember the story earlier, when the servant had gone to Haran to get a bride for Isaac, that Rebekah came out to the well and he said, "Give me a drink" and she said, "Sure, and I'll get water for your camels, too". And that was the little thing that he had set up that he would know the will of God for the one who was to be the bride of Isaac. And how the servant explained this whole thing and he gave to her a gold nose ring and a couple of golden bracelets. And she ran home and said, "Oh, one of Abraham's servants is here and he's looking", you know for they didn't know what his purpose was but he's just here and he's got a lot of camels and she showed the gold earrings and the golden nose ring.

And Laban her brother came running out to meet him. "Oh, come, stay in our house". Laban, seeing the gold, he was--he was attracted to this and was a very gracious host and all. And Laban was active in the negotiations to send Rebekah back. She was his sister and so he is the uncle of Jacob and it's important that you sort of fix that relationship in your mind as we move along now in the story. Laban is the brother of Jacob's mother, the brother of Rebekah and he will be coming soon into our scene.

Chapter 28

So Isaac called Jacob, and he blessed him, and he charged him, and he said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, and go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from there of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother (Gen 28:1-2).

Now evidently, they were able to keep some kind of a communication perhaps by the caravans that would travel. You'd give a letter and it will be carried and you'd--and they would probably deliver mail back and forth because he knew that Laban had had some daughters at this point. "So you go back and take one of Laban's daughters for your wife".

And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that you may be a multitude of people (Gen 28:3);

And so actually he is continuing now to bless Jacob, even giving further blessing, the blessing of God upon thee, the fruitfulness and becoming a multitude of people.

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with them; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham (Gen 28:4).

So notice that now Isaac is adding to the previous blessing, adding unto Jacob the blessings that God had given unto Abraham, and unto Jacob and his seed this land that God had promised unto Abraham. And so there is an extension of the earlier blessing where when Esau said, "Isn't there anything left?" Jacob couldn't think of anything. But now--I mean, Isaac couldn't think of anything. But now when Jacob comes before him, there is the added blessing, the blessing of Abraham to be passed upon to Jacob and his descendants.

And Isaac sent Jacob away: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to take a wife from Padanaram; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, You will not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padanaram; And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan did not please Isaac his father; Then

went Esau to 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 (Gen 28:5-9).

Realizing that his two wives were not pleasing to his parents, he took a third wife and this one from the descendants of Ishmael who were, of course, Abraham's descendants through Hagar the handmaid.

Now Jacob went out from Beersheba, and he went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took the stones of the place, put them for his pillows, and he laid down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: and the land where you lie, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shalt spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north, to the south: and in thee and thy seed [seed singular there] shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 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 (Gen 28:10-15).

So he's had a hard journey traveling to Bethel some thirty miles or so from the area around Beersheba, a little more than that, thirty-five miles. Tired, he gets to this rocky wilderness, barren area. He's tired, the sun is going down, he puts some rocks together for a pillow, he goes to sleep. He starts to dream. An interesting dream indeed, a ladder from earth reaching up into heaven. The angels of God are ascending and descending. And the Lord is standing there.

The Lord talks to him and the Lord promises to give him, first of all, the area where he's lying. Promises to bless him. Promises to go with him. Promises to give to the north, east, south and west the land and to his seed. And so the Lord is actually repeating unto Jacob the promises that He made to Abraham and then in verse fifteen, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither you go."

Now he didn't know where he was going at this point except back to Haran but he really didn't know where it was or anything else about it. "I will bring thee again into this land; I will not leave thee, until I have done all that which I have spoken to thee about." So here this dream of Jacob could very well have been prompted by his lying there under the starry sky, looking up into the heavens and thinking, "Well, God is up there somewhere" as we so often think as we look up into the starlit sky. "Well, God dwells in heaven".

But you know, if you think of God dwelling in heaven it seems like God is very far off. There's something about looking up in the desert skies that brings almost a consciousness of not the nearness, but the distance of God as we have come to a knowledge of the vastness of the universe. And somehow through the heavens, there is a consciousness of the unapproachableness of God because He is so vast. His universe is so vast. You see, looking up into the heavens gives to us a true awareness and a consciousness of ourself. I'm so nothing. I'm so small when I think of the universe. Oh man, what am I when I think, I compare myself to the universe?

One of the smaller planets around, around one of the small stars is a small corner of the vast Milky Way galaxy, which has a billion stars in it. But the Milky Way galaxy is just one of the galaxies of the billions of galaxies out there in space. When Job was looking at the heavens, he came to an awareness not of the nearness of God, but of how far God was and how unapproachable God was, so that when his friends said, "Hey, if you'll just make peace with God everything will be okay, buddy". He says, "Thanks a lot but how am I going to make peace with God? He's so vast. I look up in the heavens and He's so great. Who

am I that I can stand before God and plead my cause?"

So though the heavens make us aware of the glory of God and the power of God and the greatness of God, somehow the viewing of the heavens makes us feel distant from God, as though God is dwelling there in the heavens. And here am I, the insignificant little me down here on this little planet earth. And I'm so insignificant among those that dwell upon the planet earth.

And thus looking at heaven always makes us feel that need of some help in reaching God. When Job looked at the heavens and realized the vastness of God and saw how nothing he was, he said, "I need someone to stand between us who will lay his hand on us both. God's too vast. I can't reach Him. I'm too small, I can't touch Him. I need someone who would go between and lay his hand on God and lay his hand on me. The vastness between God and myself is too great, it can't be bridged".

And as Jacob was lying there and looking up and thinking about God and thinking about his life, in his heart there came that desire to reach God. But how can you reach God? The universe is so vast. And so when he went to sleep, from his subconscious there came forth a concept on how to reach God; a ladder that would reach into heaven. And so he dreamed of a ladder. And it was reaching up into heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on this ladder. All right, climb a ladder. And the Lord stood by the ladder and began to speak to him.

As we turn to the New Testament and we find Philip coming to Nathanael and saying, "Behold, we have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth". Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And when Nathanael came to Jesus, Jesus said, "Well, it's nice to meet an Israelite in whom there is no guile". And then he said, "How did you know me?" And he said, "Well, when you were over under the fig tree and Philip called you, I saw you there". Well he knew that Jesus was nowhere around. And he said, "Truly you are the Messiah, the King of Israel"(John 1:45-49).

And Jesus said, "Do you believe that 'cause I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You stick around; you're going to see a lot more than that. For from henceforth you are going to see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man". What is Jesus saying? I have come to be the ladder whereby man can reach heaven, whereby man can come to God. The ladder of Jacob's dream was none other than Jesus Christ. He is the access whereby men can come to God. And so Jacob saw it. He saw it in a dream and when he awoke from his dream, verse sixteen,

he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not (Gen 28:16).

When I came here last night, I was so tired and kicked those rocks for a pillow and laid down, I didn't know God was here. I felt so far away from God. As I looked up in the sky and I thought, "Oh, God, You're so far away". But God isn't far away. He's in this place. Right here in this place of testing, this place of barrenness. The rocky places of life. God is there. Those hard places of life, God is there. Those uncertain places of life, God is there. When the future seems to be so cloudy and you don't know which way to go, God is there. "Surely the LORD is in this place." He's not in heaven only; He's in this place.

And it is so important for us that we become aware of the presence of God. That we come into this consciousness of the presence of God, that truly is in this place. I don't care what that place may be; a place of discouragement, a place of defeat, a place of hopelessness, a place of despair. God is there. Learn to recognize the presence of God. It'll change a place of barrenness and defeat into an altar, into a place of worship, as you become present, aware of the presence of God. It will dispel the fear and it

becomes now a place of confidence, rather than uncertainty. "Surely the LORD is in this place."

Notice he didn't say, "The LORD was in this place." Last night the Lord came down here and was in this place. His consciousness was now a prevailing attitude; "The LORD is in this place". I don't see the ladder right now. I don't see the Lord standing but He's here, I know He's here. The LORD is in this place. And again he said, "I knew it not." I know it now. "The LORD is in this place," I know it now. I knew it not. Last night I didn't know it. But now I do. I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and he said, How awesome is this place! this is none other than the house of God; this is the gate to heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and he set it up for a pillar, and he poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of the place the House of God: because it used to be called Luz, that city at the first (Gen 28:17-19).

So he made the pillar, poured oil on it. The place of barrenness, a place of despair, hopelessness became an altar unto the Lord, a place where he became aware and conscious of the presence of God.

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 clothes to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall Jehovah be my God: 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 (Gen 28:20-22).

Now Jacob is not really striking a bargain here with God saying, "well, if you do all this for me, then You'll be my God, I will serve You". "If" here is not in the indicative but in the subjunctive case. As in the New Testament when Satan came to Jesus and said, "If thou be the Son of God". Satan wasn't questioning the fact that He was the Son of God, but "if" is in the subjunctive case which should be translated "Since thou art the Son of God." It isn't indicative; it isn't questioning the deity of Christ in an indicative case but the declaration "Since thou art the Son of God."

And the same is true here in the case. He is saying actually, "And since God will be with me", believing the promise of God of the night before, "I will be with you wherever you go. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to bring you back". "And since God is going to do this for me, He will be my God". It is his declaration of commitment, of himself and of his life to God. And a promise to give a tenth of whatever God had blessed him with unto the Lord.

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