

Genesis 28

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 December 2005

Preacher: Ken Cameron

- [0 : 0 0] Now let us hear God's word as we read together in the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis, first book in the Bible, and we read in chapter 28.
- Perhaps we read from verse 41 of the previous chapter. 27 verse 41, it's on page 29. Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him.
- He said to himself, the days of mourning for my father are near, then I will kill my brother Jacob. When Rebekah was told what her older son had said, she sent for her younger son David and said to him, your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you.
- Now then, my son, do what I say. Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I will send word for you to come back from here.
- Back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day? Then Rebekah said to Isaac, I am disgusted with living because of these Hittite women.
- [1 : 2 6] If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living. So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him, Do not marry a Canaanite woman.
- Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.
- May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham.
- Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.
- Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him, he commanded him, Do not marry a Canaanite woman.
- [2 : 3 4] And that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac. So he went to Ishmael and married Mahalah, the daughter of Nebaioth, the daughter of Ishmael, the son of Abraham.
- In addition to the wives he already had. Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haram. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.
- He had a dream, in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham, the God of Isaac.

I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south.

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

[3 : 52] When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it. He was afraid and said, How awesome is this place.

This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. Early the next morning, Jacob took a stone, the stone he had placed under his head, and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will watch over me on this journey I am taking, and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear, so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God, and this stone which I have set up as a pillar will be God's house.

And of all that you give me, I will give you the tenth. Amen. May the Lord bless to us, that reading from his own precious word, and to his name be praise and glory.

Let us now sing in Psalm 68, in the traditional version of the Psalm. 68, and we'll sing from verse 17 to verse 20.

[5 : 17] God's chariots, twenty thousand are, thousands of angels strong, in holy place, in holy place, God is, as in Mount Sinai, them among.

Thou hast the Lord most glorious, ascended up on high, and in triumph victorious, led captive captivity. We sing from verse 17 to verse 20, Psalm 68, the tune of the tunes for the tune of the tune of Sheffield.

The tune of The tune of Sheffield, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[7 : 46] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Now, in the passage of Scripture that we read, in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 28 of Genesis, you find these words, When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.

He was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. Now, Jacob was on his way from home.

Perhaps the first time he had been out of sight of his mother's tent. And before him was a journey of some 800 kilometers. About 450 miles, I would guess.

And behind him was a household full of tension and fear and chaos. All of his own making. There had been a prophecy at the time of his birth.

[9 : 14] For he was a twin, and he was the second one born. And the prophecy was that the younger would rule the elder. Jacob, it appears, had got a hold of that, and he was going to make sure that it jolly well came true.

And he did all that he could, because he couldn't wait for God to work out the fulfillment of that promise. He did all that he could in order that he would make it happen.

And as a result, he had cheated his brother out of his birthright as the elder brother. And at last, he had actually stolen the special blessing of his old father that was reserved for the eldest son.

And he had done that with great centrifuge with the assistance of his mother. But now, he knew that his life was under threat.

His enraged brother had vowed to kill him. And so, with the help of his mother and his father's permission, he has now set on to get far away from home to the old family connections in Paddan Aram, away in the far north.

[10 : 29] That there he might find a suitable wife. So, he's on his way now. He's digging his journey, and you can just imagine some of the thoughts that must have been crowding through his mind as he went on his journey.

Restless Jacob, with a jangling agony of nerves and thoughts that would have flooded his mind as he lay down to sleep there on the open grassland with nothing but a stone for his pillow.

Behind him, there was trouble, and before him, there was much uncertainty. But there, at that point in his life, something happened.

He had a dream. It was a strange and wonderful dream. There was a ladder at his pillow on the ground. And that ladder reached all the way up to heaven.

And that ladder was being used by angels who were going up from beside him all the way to heaven and coming back down. And there, at the top of the ladder, he could perceive that God himself was.

[11 : 34] And God was speaking to him there. And promising him that he would keep him. And that he would bring to him and through him all the blessings that he had pronounced and promised to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac before him.

And that these would all come to pass through him. And the text that we have chosen is his startled response as he awakens from that sleep.

And he says, surely the Lord is in this place. Out here in the open belt. Here the Lord, the Lord is here. And I was not aware of it.

How dreadful, how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. And as we look at these words, I'd like us to note together the discovery that the dream brought to him.

And the dismay that the dream instilled in his heart. And the doorway that the dream revealed. First then we have the discovery that the dream brought.

[12 : 48] Surely, he says, the Lord is in this place. And I knew it not. You see, he was discovering, first of all, that there was one that he could not escape.

Jacob was in a very special way a mother's boy. He was always stood around the house and around the tent. He was a plain man, we are told, living in tents.

Esau, on the other hand, was a man of the open hillside. Always a wild hunter who loved ranging the hills and taken up with a chase and bringing home the trophies that he had managed to win as a hunter there.

And home... His home there in that land was the only home where the God of heaven was worshipped. All around were the Canaanite people who had their local gods.

The gods of the hills, the gods of the valleys, the god of Ekron, the gods of Ascalon. And it could well be that in Jacob's mind, as he went to escape from the wrath of Esau, he might also be escaping from the range of his god as well.

[13 : 59] His father's god and his mother's god. And doubtless added to his thoughts of loneliness, it added to his thoughts of loneliness as well, as he was perhaps tempted to think that what he could do when the restraints of home religion were no longer upon him.

And that when they were not his concern, when suddenly on this lonely hillside, a long day's march from home, from the home back there in Beersheba, this vision and the amazing dream tells him that wherever he goes, the God of heaven is there.

He cannot escape. You cannot escape from my presence. You cannot outrun me, Jacob. You can't outrun my caring love. He was there when he...

God was there when he least thought of God, when God was not in his thoughts at all, and he least expected it. From which... From your spirit, whither shall I go, said David, or from your presence fly?

I ascend heaven, you are there. Yes, there, even if I lie in hell. You will be there. This is the God with whom you and I have to do. We can never outrun his love, his care, his concern for our heart, for our lives, and for ourselves.

[15 : 21] This is the God that Jacob, whose promise came to Jacob, Jacob had thought he would outsmart God. He'd be two or three steps ahead of God. He would hurry God on to fulfill the promises that he had given.

But here he finds him. And in his mercy, he is a God there, not with a rebuke for him, but a God with a message of love. And he had this surprising way of letting him know that very thing.

Surely he's here, he says. And I didn't know. This dream brought a discovery that there was one that he could not escape. One whom one day we will all face, whether we want to or not.

But he is there, wherever we are. But also he discovered that there was nothing that this God did not know. I am the God, he says, of Abraham, and of your grandfather, and of your father Isaac.

You are only a lonely little speck of a man lying out there on the grassland, somewhere in the middle of nowhere. Far from anyone else. No one else can see you, but I know you.

[16 : 38] I know where you come from. I know your family. I know your ancestors. I know the old man you cheated and left behind at home. And as well as all your dealings with your brother.

Many was the dealing I had with your grandfather Abraham. And you may think that your future lies in your own cunning and your own lying ways and cheating hands.

But you will never achieve anything if it is left to you. Jacob, you can't escape from me. You can't hide from me. I am the God of your father spoke of.

Are you running from God? Well, are you running from God? Perhaps even today there is someone here and that just describes our situation. Though you may be in church, your life is really close to God.

Are you like Jacob? Doing your own thing. Going your own way. Getting far from him. But he has a plan for your life.

[17 : 51] He has a purpose for your life. And he knows all about you. He knows every detail of your life. He knows your home. He knows the background. He knows where you come from. He knows your ancestors. He knows what purpose he has for you.

And the place that he, in which that blessing and blessed purpose he has for you will be fulfilled. He has numbered the very hairs of your head. All things are naked and open, says the scripture, to him with whom we have to do.

Surely, says David, says Jacob, the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. The second thing I want us to notice here is the dismay that the dream instilled.

After the discovery, there is the dismay. And he was afraid, it says. How awesome! How dreadful! How awesome is this place! You see, there was a sense of awe that filled him.

The whole thing was absolutely staggering and startling. The vision of the dream with the ladder and the angels ascending and descending. That voice that came from above.

[19 : 05] This presence by his pillow. One night, God took Abraham, his grandfather, out under the starry sky and he said to him, See Abraham.

See these stars? I made them. And if you can count them, you will be able to count the number of descendants I am going to give you. This is the God, the Creator, the awesome, holy, eternal God.

In this vivid dream he stands before me. How can I cope with this? And this ladder stretches from heaven right up there.

There are some who feel that the proper translation of this is that God was not at the top of the ladder but that God had come down, that God was with him, that God was there. That the ladder had been the means by which God had come down to be beside him.

to speak these words. He is the one who says elsewhere in the scripture, Heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool. How Isaiah spoke of saying, I am the high and the lofty one that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, and yet I dwell with him who is of a humble and of a contrite heart.

[20 : 23] I can hardly think that at that moment that Jacob was thinking of had a humble and contrite heart. He was conscious, doubtless, that he was far from holy.

But was he somewhere between these two places? What did he have in common with God? The presence of such a God was awesome. And he says, how dreadful, how awesome is this place?

But more than that, there was the sudden alarm that gripped him. You see, there wasn't, as I said, much humility and repentance and grief about sin with Jacob.

He was a selfish go-getter who had cheated and lied his way to where he was now. to get what God had promised him anyway. It was his right, so I'll have it, he says.

Now he's caught unawares in the presence and this is a shattering experience. And how it must have brought his whole life before his eyes. All his grasping and scheming, his impatience, his unbelief, his selfishness, his cruelty to his old blind father.

[21 : 35] What a mucky past. And now he's running scared from his brother. He's rather like Isaiah who much later was confronted once by a vision of the Holy God in the temple.

And his reaction was, woe is me for I am undone. For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. What can I do in this situation?

There was alarm that gripped his heart. This place in the middle of nowhere is his house and I'm in it and he's the one with whom I do and there's just me and him and I'm overawed by his greatness and I'm alarmed at my position as a selfish sinner.

How carelessly I've treated him to date and he's here and I am dismayed at this discovery. I'm afraid. I'm in dread of him.

How dreadful a place this is for me a sinner who hasn't given him a serious thought till this day. But thirdly there was in this dream something special revealed to him.

[22 : 55] There was a doorway that the dream showed to be opened. Jacob reflected on the dream that he had seen and what he had heard and whether he understood fully or not there were two main things that were being revealed to him by that wonderful dream that he was given.

There was a gateway that God had opened. He dreamed of a ladder set up on the earth. The top of it reached to heaven and on it myriads of angels were busily traveling up and down.

They were beginning their journey where he was. They were going to heaven. They were coming back. They were going up to God to heaven.

Here was a ladder that was uniting the sinful and the holy in uniting heaven and earth. Its base is firmly on earth. Its top is certainly in heaven. And the heavenly messengers are not starting their journey in heaven but they are starting their journey where he is.

They are unaware of it. The angels of God have been with them and here they are going from where he is up to heaven as though to tap the great resources that are available there to bring the blessings down.

[24 : 15] The blessings of protection. The blessings that God intends for him. He had never thought of the unseen world and here God has revealed this to him.

He has been cared for by millions of angels who are presenting his needs to God and bringing these blessings down to him. God is caring for him. His servants, God's servants are ministering to him.

Psalms 91 tells us that of the people of God he will give his angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways. We read in Psalm 103 of the angels who excel in strength we sang there of God's angels God's chariots are twenty thousand thousands of angels strong.

We read in Hebrews of the ministry of the angels who are the spirits who are ministering spirits sent to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation that they have a ministry there is a hidden ministry of the angel to the people of God and there are angels today ministering to God's people even today his unseen servants and you or I if you or I are objects of God's gracious care we know that unseen God has his ministering angels ministering to us the very gateway to heaven was right here where he was there out in the out in the in the wilds of Canaan it's a ladder by which God's best gifts come down came down to him from heaven now you and I do not have now you and I do not have to go past the Lord

Jesus Christ to begin to understand what this ladder really signifies do you remember what Jesus said to Nathanael when he came to Nathanael he said to Nathanael here is an Israelite in whom there is no guile now the word Jacob means twister it means supplanter it means a crooked guy and you remember how later when God dealt with Jacob after his wrestling with an angel you remember he was given a new name you will no longer call Jacob no longer the old twister that's finished you are Israel Israel the prince with God and what Jesus was saying to Nathanael about Nathanael here is an Israelite without the Jacob an Israelite in whom there is no guile and then he said to Nathanael a very interesting thing Nathanael was amazed that Jacob knew him and he said how did you know me he said I saw you before when you were under the fig tree I saw you and Nathanael is struck by this and he says you really are the

[27 : 10] Christ you are the king of Israel and Jesus said you are going to see much more than this the day is coming you are going to see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man what is this ladder this ladder is symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ the one who says I am the way to God no one comes to the father but by me here is heaven reaching down to earth to bring the blessings of God's grace to lost sinners to bring peace to their hearts the ladder was firmly set firmly on the ground and we have a savior God who came down from the glory of heaven and who lived in this earth and top of that ladder reaches to heaven he is the one who can bring poor lost sinners home to God in peace he indeed is the ladder up to heaven we sin and fall short of God's glory but he reaches all the way down to us in his perfect righteousness he reaches all the way to heaven he is the true meaning of the promise to Abraham and to

Isaac and now to Jacob that in him all families of the earth will be blessed because Jesus Christ was a direct line descendant of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob the great God of heaven has come down in Jesus Christ to show the way back to God the second thing is here is the grace that God revealed that is the gateway that God has opened but the grace that God revealed you see all around that country there were pyramids great ziggurals with steps going up on flat tops that people built in order to get near to heaven and to worship their gods you remember the story of the tower of Babel that let's get together let's build a tower that will reach up to heaven man thought that by his own efforts he could get up and he could reach up and get to heaven by his own efforts and reach up to

God and get back into favor with God but God came down when people tried to do that in judgment and scattered them you remember by changing their languages that was the ladder that man built but here is the ladder that God has built this is the ladder that God has set up on the earth and all our blessings come to us through Jesus Christ it is because of Jesus Christ that wicked men are not immediately cut down because he is a God of mercy primarily he is a God of judgment but he is a God of mercy and he is withholding from us what we do not desire in order that he may extend to us the message of his grace and goodness in Jesus Christ to tell us there is a way back to God from the dark paths of sin there is a door that is open and you a sinner to

Jesus God is merciful there is time for repentance Jacob he is saying don't count my delay as slackness Jacob there is not a word of condemnation for Jacob here but a promise of grace and what God promises and God purposes God will do for him and through him Jacob is overawed by such kindness and as he awakens recognizing with dismay and alarm and wonder the grace of God he says this place is the turning point in my life from now on God is going to be the center of my life he's not going to be my father's God he's going to be my God this is going to be the house of God and all that I have is going to be if this is the kind of God that my father and my grandfather had since he has given me this promise he can count on the commitment of my life and if that is what is the what he does there he takes his stone and he sets it up as a pillar something standing a tangible evidence of the promise and the commitment he has made he faces up there to how dreadful is the place how gracious is his

God and we find a new Jacob going on his way having discovered the gracious goodness of God who has revealed to him the ladder that reaches to where he is God who has come down and brought blessing to his soul do you know that blessing in your life do you know that God have you got a place that is the very gate of heaven to your soul because there you met with the Lord and you gave your heart and life to him he will keep his promise you will know his grace if that is true and if not may this be the very place for you today where he becomes your Lord and Savior and you set out on your journey to what he has in store for you with your hand in the hand of the Savior may God bless our meditation and his word let us pray Lord we thank you that it is not possible for us to outrun the

[33 : 09] Savior to outrun his love to get away from the grace and goodness of God and we pray Lord that if we are ignoring it if we are resisting it or refusing it that this may be the day when you speak to our hearts and bring us still that we may look up and we may recognize that wonderful provision that you have made that way back to God for sinners and that today we may say this is the Lord is in this place this is the house of God for me this is the gate of heaven I take you Jesus as my Lord and Savior we pray Lord that as we are reminded those who know and love great goodness and grace and mercy may we rededicate our lives to him today and say surely you will be my God from this day onwards hear us we pray and accept of us for

Jesus sake Amen we sing in closing in Psalm number 25 in the Sing Psalms version and it's on page 29 the tune is Rockingham we're going to sing from verse 4 O Lord reveal to me your ways and all your paths help me to know direct and guide me in your truth instruct me in the way to go you are my savior and my God all day I fought in you alone remember Lord your love and grace which from past ages you have shown from verse 4 to verse 9 of Psalm 25 good for you to meet your ways and all your paths help me to know direct and guide me in your truth instruct me in the way to go you are my savior and my God all did I hope in you alone remember Lord your love love and grace which from that ages you have shown do not recall my sins of earth or my ■■■ Cau enzymesiffe■ast I remember way remember me with ant love for me

Lord are good away Because the Lord is just and good, He shows His path to all who stray.

He guides the wicked for His right, and teaches them His holy way.

[37 : 45] Amen.