

Introduction

- Jacob is fleeing in exile and has a miraculous encounter with God.
- The right response to God's promises is worship.
- Jacob responds wrongly, but still receives grace.

The Place

- Bethel is the place Abraham first saw God and built an altar.
- It is mentioned more than any other Israelite city, other than Jerusalem.
- It was the primary place of worship until the temple was built.
- Jacob just so happens in his wanderings to stop at this exact place.

The Vision

- Jacob has an unusual dream that is given to him by God.
- This probably was not a step ladder like you or I could picture.
- It could have been some sort of ramp leading from earth to heaven.
- It could have been a ziggurat or pyramid slowly stepping its way to heaven.
- The primary interpretation is the stone represents Christ the cornerstone and the ladder is also Christ showing us the way to heaven.
- The point is that Jacob sees heaven coming down to earth and the messengers of God going between them.

God's Promises

- God Himself appears in the dream in the heavens.
- He identifies Himself by name, and as the God of Abraham and Isaac.
- God makes several significant promises to Jacob, many of which repeat and reaffirm the Abrahamic covenant.
- The very land Jacob "randomly" is sleeping on will be his.
- His offspring will be multiplied like the dust.
- His offspring will spread in every direction over the earth.
- All the families in the world will be blessed through this covenant.
- Then God adds a particular blessing to this promise.
- God will be with Jacob.
- God will keep Jacob in all his travels.
- God will bring Jacob back to promised land.
- God will not leave Jacob until every promise is accomplished.

Jacob's Response

- First, he acknowledges the uniqueness of the place he has found himself.
- He recognizes that God is in this place.
- He misunderstands God in interpreting that God is only in this geographical place.

- He turns his stone pillow into an altar of worship.
- He has a good but incomplete and flawed response to God.
- We see hints of his doubt and trying to bargain with God.

Jacob's Conditions

- Jacob will worship and follow God, if God meets all of his conditions and requirements.
- He will worship if God is really with him.
- He will worship if God really keeps him on this particular journey.
- He will worship if God gives him bread and new clothes.
- He will worship if God brings him to his father's house in peace.
- If God keeps up His end of the bargain, then Jacob will reciprocate.
- If God keeps His promises, Jacob will make YWH his God.
- If God keeps His promises, then Jacob will make God a house.
- If God keeps His promises, then Jacob will give God a tithe.
- Jacob does not believe God's promises and is trying to sweeten the deal.

Proper Response

- The proper response would have been unconditional worship and gratitude.
- He should have made the altar in worship and decided God will be His God.
- We too should worship God without bargaining or placing conditions on our following God.
- We should trust God to keep His promises to us.
- We should respond in worship and praise even before we see the fruit of those promises.
- We should recognize God's grace to Jacob even in this moment.
- God shows us grace even when we don't notice believe Him.