

**Exodus 3:13-15** The Lord identifies Himself often in the Bible as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob  
 This is His name... His reputation. And, it is not what most people would expect...  
 because Jacob, in particular was not a nice guy.  
 He was especially not nice in his early years when he stole His brother's birthright and blessing.  
 And, we are going to see in coming weeks that Jacob did not shape up quickly nor very much.  
 He would not be a good husband or father and he continued in his underhanded ways.

So, what does it mean that the Lord is the God of him?

Well, it means that God is the sort of God who chooses people who have lots of problems and then He does not give up on them.  
 The Lord stays committed to those He chooses to love... who are often unlovable... like you and me.

### **The Lord is the God who makes and keeps promises.**

We are learning of this great Biblical theme of covenant promise and fulfillment.

The Lord predicts what He is going to do... He promises it.

And then He fulfills His predictions, confirming the fact that it is His word that steers the course of history.

He is the sovereign, eternal, unchanging God.

You see, it is in the Old Testament narrative that you learn your theology of God in His relationships with people.

It is theology applied to real life.

And this part of Genesis is dominated by the conflict between two twin boys, Jacob and Esau... it is a conflict that persists to this day.

Both of them, no doubt, learned at the feet of their grandpa Abraham when they were little.

I'm sure they heard about God, and His covenant promise, and the importance of faith and obedience.

But, by their mid-teens, when Abraham died, they were probably beginning to have troubles.

By the time we get to chapter 28 things have gone very badly for this family.

Doddering, blind, Isaac's plan to pass on the blessing to Esau has failed.

Esau's effort to get the blessing has failed. He was left breathing threats of murder against his brother.

Rebekah's plan has deprived her of her favorite son and put his life at risk... She will never see him again.

Jacob has to flee his home and now in this chapter we find him in the wilderness.

All human effort has failed and nobody has gained anything. But, God's plan is advancing. **Rom. 9:16**

### **I. The blessing of God determines our life course.**

**27:46-28:9**

There are two things that happen in this first half of Genesis 28.

1. Concerning the wives of Esau
2. Concerning the blessing of Jacob

These two things serve to display an illuminating contrast.

The blessing of God (that one receives and the other does not) serves to separate the course of their lives.

Let us look at how.

First, Esau. In 27:46 Rebekah recognizes that Jacob must not do what Esau did... **Gen. 26:34-35**

We'll get back to Esau in a moment, but now we move to Jacob.

Isaac, who clearly did not understand what God was doing in chapter 27, is now resigned to the will of the Lord.

Jacob is the one whom God has chosen to inherit the blessing, in spite of his character.

So, now, before he sends Jacob away, which he must do for his protection,

Isaac blesses him with the full Abrahamic blessing. (vss. 3-4) He realizes that he cannot thwart the plan of God.

"fruitful and multiply"

"the blessing of Abraham"

"possess the land"

Then he sends him to his relatives to get a wife... so that he will not marry a Canaanite woman.

... and so that Esau will not kill him.

And, Jacob obeys. He wants to pursue God's way for his life, even if he doesn't really know what that is.

And, this, by the way, is a very good place for a person to be.

Every now and then I will talk with someone who is just on the verge of becoming a believer.

They know that God is working in their life, that He's trying to get through to them.

They might not know much about God at all... but they have this sense that they are at a significant moment in life.

Often they are experiencing a new look at themselves and noticing sin that they never saw before.

It is such a blessing to have God working in you like this... don't miss the opportunity to listen to Him.

Now back to Esau, who obviously learns about all of this. What he does is childish, unwise, and despicable.

He goes off and marries a local Canaanite girl. But why?

1. Because of Jacob. Jacob obeyed his parents. For that reason he chooses not to.

2. Because of his parents. They don't want him to marry her, and so for that reason he does.

This is simply jealousy, envy, and anger that blossoms into rebellion... and it is a very common human malady.

And, this, by the way, is a very bad place for a person to be.

When you are making decisions on the basis of what's going to hurt another person or make them angry...

you're going the wrong way... particularly if it's toward people who love you.

Many people fall into this... it happens often with children toward their parents. It's called rebellion. It's deadly.

Often a parent will tell a son or daughter, don't date this person... and things go from bad to worse.  
Some people actually marry someone just to make someone else angry or jealous. Disaster.  
It can happen in marriage relationships as well... usually it means divorce is on the way.  
If you find yourself acting in such a way it is time to get wise counsel from someone who loves the Lord.

And, so we leave Esau in the story for the time being... and we follow Jacob on his journey.

How different is Jacob's finding a wife than Isaac's.

There is no praying servant going in his place. His father is not helping him. He is on his own. He is all alone.

And, he is scared and worried.

In Genesis 35 Jacob calls this moment "the day of my distress."

## II. The revelation of God comes to us at just the right time. 28:10-22

Now we learn of the first of the three great encounters that Jacob had with God.

There will be a time in Genesis 32 when God meets Jacob and wrestles with him.

Then, again at this very place, Bethel, God meets him again in Genesis 35.

But, this is the very first time that God speaks to Jacob. He's at least 40 years old and on the run in the wilderness.

Jacob has just set out on his journey... he might be a week out on his Journey. This place is about 50 miles from Beersheba. North. And, he lays down for the night. The fact that he uses a rock for a pillow probably is an indication that he has nothing along with him. It cannot be very comfortable. And, "he had a dream."

The dream begins with a threefold "behold" (vss. 12-13)

1. Look: "a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven"

2. Look: "the angels of God were ascending and descending on it"

3. Look: "the Lord stood above it..."

This is quite a dream... and you cannot miss the symbolism. God is communicating with people on earth.

Angels are messengers.

There is something both similar and different in the New Testament. **John 1:44-51**

What is different here is that the Son of Man (the Lord) is at the bottom of the ladder rather than the top.

Jesus took this condescending communication of God a step further and came to be with us!

This is who begins speaking to Jacob as he is asleep... the God who comes to us.

When Jacob recounts this experience to his son Joseph in **Gen. 48:3-4**...

He calls God "El-Shaddai." = the God who has everything you need...

which is defined by what He actually says to Jacob in Gen. 28

So, God speaks to Jacob... the first time in his life that he hears the voice of the Lord.

It is instructive how God so often waits to reveal Himself to us until we are alone and at the end of our resources.

Jacob is in the wilderness with nothing. God speaks.

God makes a promise to Jacob... the same promise He made to Abraham. This is His covenant.\

It is just like the blessing that Jacob received from Isaac... with two important differences.

1. (vs. 14) "in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The blessing of God is always intended to impact others... the whole world.

This blessing will find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, His apostles, and you...

2. (vs. 15) "Behold, I am with you... will not leave you."

God's blessing comes with His personal presence. We cannot do without it. Jacob will learn how much he needs it.

So, then Jacob wakes... and we discover that God has made a promise to a guy who didn't know the first thing about God.

He decides that the place is special... that God is in the place... so he names it, "Bethel" = "the house of God."

Then he built a little altar of the stones he slept on... as a monument.

Then he makes a promise to God, "God, if You make me successful and keep me safe, then You will be my God."

Which is really quite silly... God has just told him that He's committed to him.

But, we often make little bargains with God that turn out to be foolish.

We realize later that God is so much bigger than we thought.

But, that's just fine. There was a time when you and I knew nothing about God. He has to start with us somewhere.

You might be 40 right now and feel like you know nothing at all about God.

That's fine, Jacob was at least 40. Better to begin walking with God at 40, than never to begin at all.

And, in the end, the walk lasts forever...

so when you and I have been with the Lord for 2,000 years, the extra 24 will make no difference at all.

With Jacob, God has just begun the process by which his life will be transformed... and at his greatest time of need.

Now, we are not Jacob... but Jacob's God is our God. And, this God has transformed Jacob's life instantly... as He does with us.

1. He is no longer alone. God Almighty is with him wherever he goes whether he knows it or not.

2. God is going to bring him back. He is no longer a wonderer, but a pilgrim with a purpose in this world.

3. God will be working on Him until He is finished. God has made a promise to him and will keep it.

Has God found you yet? When did God first meet you? How much did you know then?

What difference has it made in your life? Remembering helps us to trust Him for the future.