Genesis 28:10-22  Blessed from Heaven to Earth

Introduction
What do you do when you are broken, alone and rejected?

- There are some that might say that when we are at our worse, especially when our pain is the result of our own actions, God has turned His back on us.
- This story, and the whole Bible, stands to say that the times when we are down, sleeping in the grave we dug with our own bare hands, those are the times when we are most likely to encounter the Living God.
  - When we have no friends
  - When we have no money
  - When we’ve sinned big and are reaping the rewards
  - Those are times when God often steps in

At least that’s Jacob’s story.

Overview
Tim Keller points out three times the heavens are mentioned
- the sun had set = The Darkness of Heaven (v.10-11)
- a ladder appeared stretching down from heaven = The Openness of Heaven (v.12-17)
- the sun rose in the morning = New Life, lived surrounded by Heaven’s Activity (v.18-22)

The Darkness of Heaven (v.10-11)

A. Jacob is at his Worse
✓ He had stolen the blessing from Esau, and his plan backfired
✓ Esau is now plotting Jacob’s death (Gen 27:41)
✓ He has to leave home
  - 500 mile journey
  - To stay with people he’s never met
  - Not sure how he’ll be received
✓ 50 miles into the journey

Narrator paints a vivid picture
- “Certain Place” = unnamed, no landmarks, middle of nowhere
- “Stone as a pillow” = no other options, penniless, no possessions

Jacob is:
✓ Alone
✓ Poor
✓ Dishonored
  - Instead of being blessed
  - He is separated from everything he knows
  - Word getting out about his deceit
✓ Leaving the Promised Land
  o When Isaac was looking for a wife, the cardinal rule was “Don’t leave the land.”
  o Now, he has to get out before he’s killed

B. Have You Ever Had a Jacob Moment?
The one who dressed up is now stripped of all his masks.

And under those masks, it’s not a pretty picture.

2. The Openness of Heaven (v.12-17)
A. God meets Jacob at his Point of Desperation (God’s Words)
“And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”’” - Genesis 28:13–15

- Jacob was Alone
  o “I am with you” (v.15)
  o You won’t be alone forever … you will have offspring (v.14)

- Jacob was Poor
  o I will give you this land (v.13)
  o A recap of the promises given to Abraham (see Gen 13:14-16; 22:17-18)

- Jacob was Dishonored
  o I will establish you as the third patriarch
  o People will call God, “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”
  o I’m with you … you are blessed, even in this mess

- Jacob was Leaving the Land
  o I will bring you back (v.15)

Spurgeon wrote of this truth: “How precious it must have seemed as it came to Jacob in that den of a place, where he lay with the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the earth for his bed, stones for his pillow, and God for his companion. ‘I am with thee. Tomorrow when thou shalt open thine eyes thou wilt look back to the west and say, “I have left my father’s house and my mother, Rebekah, behind me”; and the tears will be in thy eyes; and thou wilt look to the east and say, “I am going to the house of my mother’s kindred, and I know them not, save that I have heard concerning uncle Laban that he is hard and grasping; and I know not how he will receive me.” But is not that a precious thing to start upon a journey with—I am with thee—I, the ever blessed? Though thy mother is not with thee, I am with thee.’”

These words were life to Jacob’s soul
  - But they did not come alone.
  - God is not just a God of Words.
  - He is the WORD made flesh ...
B. The Vision (v.12-13a)

“And he dreamed, and behold, there was 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 ...” - Genesis 28:12–13

✔ A Ladder
  o More like a stairway or ramp
  o Wide, expansive

✔ Angels
  o Not hallmark card versions
    ▪ Every time you see an angel they say “Fear Not”
  o Going up and down the stairs
    ▪ Taking work from God
    ▪ Return to God because that part of the work is finished
    ▪ The dynamic activity of heaven

✔ The Lord
  o Debate:
    ▪ Standing above the ladder
    ▪ Or
    ▪ Standing above Jacob
      • See footnote beside him
  o Which is it?
  o Both
    ▪ Some scholars argue powerfully that the Hebrew points to God standing over Jacob
      • A foreshadowing of the great wrestling match they’ll have in a few chapters
    ▪ But God is definitely in both places
      • He rules from His throne in heaven
      • He is close to us in the pit
        o “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” - Psalm 34:18

C. The Ladder is From Heaven, it is not a Stairway To Heaven

Every World Religion is a Stairway To Heaven
• Buddhism = Nobel Eight-Fold Path
• Islam = Five Pillars
• Judaism = 10 Commandments
• Hinduism = Karma / Samsara / Nirvana

Christianity is the Only Religion where the Ladder Comes Down to Us

Story of Jesus & Nathan

“Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of
God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” - John 1:46–50

Jesus is the ladder

“And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”” - John 1:51

He is the Way, the Truth and the Life

3. New Life Under the Activity of Heaven

A. Jacob’s Response

Sets up the stone as a pillar

“Then Jacob made 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 clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.”” - Genesis 28:20–22

Principles of a Tithe

Not in the law

It’s spontaneous and joyful

But this is terrible

“If”

- If God will be with me
- If God will keep me in this way that I go
- If God will give me bread to eat
- If God will give me clothing to wear
- If God will bring me back to my father’s house again in peace
- Then the Lord will be my God
- Then the stone will be God’s house
- And then I will give a full tenth to you

What if God had given Jacob an “If” / “Then” Blessing?

If you stop lying, I’ll be with you

If you get one thing right in your life … just one … then I’ll give you this land

If ...

B. God’s Blessing is All of Grace

- We can’t Tithe our way or work our way into God’s favor
- God doesn’t give up on us.
- Jacob started this story at his worst possible moment.
- That doesn’t turn God away …
Conclusion
Are You Have a Jacob Moment?

Are you sitting under the darkness of heaven?

Prepare for prayer

My Statement

Prayer