

A Stairway  
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Genesis 28:10-22

Opening: We all have places of significance; physical locations that bring back memories of a special time in our lives. They are landmarks along our journey that, when visited, cause our minds and hearts to be flooded with emotions. What are some examples of those places of significance? Sometimes in our travels we encounter signs or markers that document that a location is a place of historical significance. Often, we pass a location with no idea of the significance. (i.e., Parking garage in Arlington/Rosslyn, VA.) Someone placed a marker so people would know the significance of that place.

In today's text we find Jacob, the future father of the twelve tribes of Israel, camping in a wilderness spot as he journeyed back to his mother Rebekah's hometown of Haran. He was looking for a wife, but he was also running for his life, running from his angry brother Esau. That desolate campsite would become a place of significance for Jacob. It was there he would shift from knowing ABOUT the God of his ancestors to KNOWING Him personally. In that place under the stars God would reveal promises of His presence, protection, provision, and power for Jacob. Jacob would respond in worship.

The point: We humans need reminders of significant events and seasons in our lives. Old photos, scrapbooks, old songs, visits to special places, even certain smells can take us back in our memories and rekindle our emotions to remember what is important. As followers of Christ, we also need to set up markers that remind us that God is actively working behind the scenes giving us His presence, protection, provision, and power. We need daily reminders that, if we have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, no matter our location or circumstances we can say with Jacob, *"Surely the Lord is in this place!"*

Before we read the text -- some context. When we left the dysfunctional family of Isaac, Rebekah, and their twin sons Jacob and Esau conflict had come to a boiling point. Through dealing, deception, and Esau's reckless nature, Jacob had supplanted him as the first-born of Isaac's sons. Esau was bent on revenge, plotting the murder of Jacob.

Rebekah again began to orchestrate things for Jacob's advantage. Both parents wanted Jacob to find a hometown girl as a bride and NOT a pagan wife like the two Esau had already married (Gen.27:46). So, they sent Jacob on a 500-mile journey with two purposes: find a wife and escape Esau's vengeance.

**(ESV) — 10** Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. **11** And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. **12** 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!

- In this setting why wouldn't Jacob have a bizarre dream? This dream wasn't induced by a stone pillow, though, it was a vision straight from God Himself.
- In scripture God sometimes spoke to people through dreams and visions.
- Some translations say this was a "ladder" and some a "stairway."
- Regardless of the architecture, God showed Jacob angelic beings coming and going from Heaven to earth.
- What truth about God did this angelic escalator convey? Why would it encourage Jacob in his situation at that time? Why is it encouraging to us today?
- In 2 Kings chapter six Israel was under attack and the Prophet Elisha was assuring them of God's protection. Elisha asked God to pull back the curtain in **2 Kings 6:17 (ESV)** — **17** Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
- Though the Israelites couldn't see it, God was working, and they won the battle.
- I enjoy documentaries about how things are manufactured or how major events are planned. We all crave a look at what goes on "behind the scenes" that we don't normally see. God pulled back the curtain to show Jacob His activity.
- Wiersbe: "*Jacob discovered that he wasn't alone but that God was with him! The God of Abraham and Isaac was watching over him and His angels were there to guard and serve him.*"<sup>4</sup>
- **Psalm 34:7 (ESV)** — **7** The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- Jacob would not need an interpretation of the dream. God Himself spoke.

**13** 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. **14** 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. **15** 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."

- Do verses 13 and 14 sound familiar? Why is that?
- Look at verse 15. What promises did God make specifically to Jacob?
- Why were these words especially significant to Jacob at this time in his life?

**16** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." **17** And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

- Jacob's reaction in verse 16 is almost comical. "*God is here, and I didn't know it!*"
- Silly Jacob! God is everywhere! How might WE sometimes lose sight of that fact?
- Sometimes we hear: "*The presence of the Lord was all over that place!*"

- While that statement is true, how is the implication incorrect? If it feels like God “showed up,” what really happened (look at Jacob’s words in verse 16)?
- The promise of God’s presence to His people is recorded many times in the Old Testament. Here are a few examples:

**Deuteronomy 31:6–8 (ESV)** —7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous...It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

**In Joshua 1:5 (ESV) — God Himself said to Joshua: 5** No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

**1 Chronicles 28:20 (ESV) — 20** Then David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished.

**Psalms 46:7 (ESV) — 7** The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

- How do we know God’s promise of His presence applies to us today?

**Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 (The Great Commission) (ESV) — 20b** And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**In Hebrews 13:5b (ESV) the writer assures us: — 5b** ...he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

- In the Old Testament God’s presence showed up (burning bush, angels, pillar of fire and a cloud). How does God assure Christ-followers of His presence today?
- How does knowing God is always present encourage us?
- How does it discourage us from sinful behavior?
- God showed Jacob that He was always working in the background. He also gave Jacob promises of protection, provision, and power. The greatest promise was His constant presence. Look at Jacob’s response to this amazing experience:

**18** So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. **19** He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. **20** 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, **21** so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, **22** 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.”

- Jacob responded as we all should. He put up a marker of remembrance so God’s people would know about God’s promises, then he worshiped the Lord.
- The word “if” in verse 20 can be interpreted as “since.” This wasn’t Jacob bargaining with God, but stating his gratitude for God’s promises.
- Scripture calls raising a stone of remembrance an “ebenezer” (1 Sam.7:12).
- The old hymn “Come Thou Fount” proclaims: “*Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by thy help I’m come...*”<sup>1</sup> I put up a marker to remember God’s help!

- Other thoughts?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Let's look at how God's promises in this passage apply to us today.
- We have a ladder that connects us to Heaven. His name is Jesus and no one comes to the Father except through Him.
- When we repent of our sin and trust Him as Savior and Lord, we have a direct connection to God now and the promise of spending eternity with Him forever. We also have access to the same promises God gave Jacob in verse 15:
  - God is always working behind the scenes for our good and His glory.
  - God promises to "keep" us (protection and power) wherever we go.
  - God will always be with us (presence) and never leave us.
  - God will bring us home to spend eternity with Him.
- As wonderful as those promises are, we get distracted and forget about them.
- We need markers to remind us of those tremendous promises from God.
- When we read, highlight, and memorize scripture God uses His Holy Spirit living in us to open our eyes to remind us of all the times He has been with us providing His protection and power wherever we were.
- As I read this text, I kept thinking of songs that reinforce the truth it teaches.
- The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir had a great song called "God is Working":

*"Though you cannot see  
And you can't quite understand  
Remember God is still in control  
He has promised not to leave us somehow*

*God is working, He's still working  
God is working even now  
Through we often don't know just how  
God is working, He's still working  
God is working even now"<sup>iii</sup>*

- A modern Gospel song called, "He is Here" also came to mind:

*"I sense an awesome moving of the Holy Spirit  
And I see His countenance resting on your face  
I know that there are angels hovering all around us  
For the presence of the Lord is in this place*

*I searched for peace among the shadows, dark and lonely  
Gave up on finding that strong and lasting love  
I tasted all the things that sin could think to offer me  
But today I feast on manna from above*

*He is here, Hallelujah  
He is here, Amen  
He is here, Holy, Holy  
I will bless His name again*

*He is here, listen closely  
Hear Him calling out your name  
He is here, you can touch Him  
You will never be the same<sup>iv</sup>*

- This week let's ask the Holy Spirit to show us markers of remembrance that:
  - God is always WORKING
  - God is always WITH US
  - God is FOR US
  - And He has promised His POWER, PROTECTION, and POWER.

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<sup>i</sup> THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT © 2007 Warren W. Wiersbe

<sup>ii</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/come\\_thou\\_fount\\_of\\_every\\_blessing](https://hymnary.org/text/come_thou_fount_of_every_blessing)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.justsomyrics.com/2152150/brooklyn-tabernacle-choir-god-is-working-lyrics.html>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.songlyrics.com/gaither-vocal-band/he-is-here-lyrics/>