

021620 Growth Group Study

Besieged By God

Gen 28:10-22



Background: We come to place in the Jacob story that is every parent's nightmare, when a son or daughter goes off into exile. The conditions are anything but ideal. "The security of the sun has been replaced by the dangers of night. The comfort of his parents' tents has been replaced by a rock. Behind him lays Beersheba, where Esau waits to kill him; ahead of him is Haran, where Laban waits to exploit him. He is situated between a death camp and a hard-labor camp" (Bruce Waltke). Though terrifying, exile can be a place of profound transformation. When we are offstage in extreme loneliness, we are better to hear the tender voice of God pursuing us. Once Jacob hears God's word, his ordinary journey is transformed into a holy pilgrimage. May it be true of us as well.

Sermon Text: Gen 28:10-22 (ESV)

I. Jacob Sleeps, God Descends (10-15)

A. On the run: Jacob arrives at a "no place"

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.

B. The Oracle: God speaking

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! 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."

II. Jacob Awake: He Worships (16-22)

A. Jacob's awe in that "place"

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."

B. Jacob's response to the dream: a "no-place" becomes a "holy place"

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.

C. Jacob's response to the oracle: worship

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."

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- b. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- c. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sermon questions

- a. Have you ever found yourself in exile like Jacob? Was it forced upon you or was it an exile of your own making? What hope did you find there?
- b. Have you ever had to escape or run from difficult family issues? What were they and what did the escaping/running look like?
- c. Have you ever experienced "emotional exile" (i.e. depression, anxiety, hopelessness, etc)? If so, what were the circumstances that led to that? What did you learn from it?
- d. Have you experienced "spiritual exile" from God where you felt far from him or you doubted your faith? If so, what were the circumstances? What did you learn from it?
- e. How might God be prodding you to make your soul more conducive to heaven's descent, instead of being forced into that condition by way of a flight into the wilderness?