

Jacob Transformed - Part 1 Genesis 28-31

Are you in control of your life or is God? Are you willing to let God take over?
In Genesis 28-31 God begins the process of breaking Jacob's fear and pride through a terrifying encounter and through facing the pain caused by his own sin.

I discovered this week that a remarkable amount of time and money has gone into attempts to measure people's happiness.

- Researchers consistently run into 2 problems. Happiness **hard to measure elusive**.
- **Hard to measure** because it is entirely subjective and it is measured by self-reporting. Ask a person in the morning and he might be happy. By the afternoon he is miserable.
- Which relates to the second problem: happiness is **elusive**. Typically people tie their happiness to 3 things
 1. RELATIONSHIPS: stable, secure, rewarding
 2. JOBS: stable, secure, rewarding
 3. WORLD: stable and secure politically and economically
- All of these things are outside of the person. They can be very unstable, and difficult to control. For many people, their happiness fluctuates wildly
 - <http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/measure-happiness.htm>
- Last week we began our study of Jacob, an unhappy man. Morning or evening, answer the same. Grasping, chasing, unsettled.
- Jacob grew up knowing he wasn't favored by father. Huge hole. Tried to fill it by controlling his own life, by controlling his world. Jacob was a planner, a schemer.
- Stole birthright and blessing from his brother. Got what he thought would make him happy, but didn't plan on his brother wanting to kill him to get it back. Jacob is on the run.

READ Genesis 27:41-45; 28:10-11

- Jacob is a man who needs to be transformed; needs to give God control of his life.
- Next 2 weeks we will look at the circumstances God uses to transform him from a man who is driven by fear and filled with pride, into a man who has yielded his life to God.
- First, God allows him to see a vision of the terrifying glory of God.

I. Terrifying Glory of God

- Fleeing from consequences of his own deception and sin
 - Schemes have backfired -
 - *Physically alone*: in a barren, rocky wasteland, in the middle of nowhere.
 - Bethel ~50 miles into 500 mile journey.
 - Certain place; no name; nothing special there.
 - Barren, rocky wasteland; middle of nowhere
 - *Socially isolated*: He was separated from his family and fleeing for his life.
 - Never saw Rebekah again. One person he knew loved him.
 - No servants, relatives or friends with him.

- *Materially deprived*: He had nothing but the shirt on his back.
 - Inheritance had not yet been divided because Isaac still alive. No animals, possibly given a small amount of silver or gold
 - Away from Promised Land. Wanted father's wealth, covenant, favor
 - *Spiritually distant*: Jacob was distant from God
 - Jacob was not seeking God
 - Jacob did not know God yet.
 - "I am the God of Abe and Isaac [NOT Jacob]"
 - Knew about his father's God, but no personal encounter with God. Like a kid growing up in a Christian home who knows something of his/her parents' faith
 - Heaven seems closed – it was dark
 - Jacob was alone in every possible way.
- Found by God – 28:12
- What did Jacob discover in this vision?
 - Heaven is connected to earth.
 - Jacob is not, in fact alone.
 - Connected everywhere.
 - Just a place, any old place. Exact place doesn't matter.
 - God pulls back the veil for a brief time to show Jacob reality.
 - 2 Kings 6:15-17
 - Heaven is concerned with earth
 - Angel = messenger. God is active in the affairs of earth
 - "ladder" = same image comes to all of our minds
 - Angels are not negotiating a ladder as some go up and others down
 - Jacob would have thought about a stairway/ramp, not a ladder
 - SLIDE: Babylonian Ziggurat. Ancient Near East built stairways up to gods
 - Vision significant to Jacob. Reminded him of Tower of Babel.
 - Tower of Babel
 - Stairs are built by man. Effort through which man ascends.
 - Essence of RELIGION. What can man do to ascend to god(s)?
 - Islam – 5 Pillars
 - Buddhism – 8-fold path
 - Judaism – 10 commandments; 631 rules. Tutor; humble us.
 - Jacob couldn't climb that stairway. God had to come to him.
 - Person of Jesus – John 1:43-51
 - Heaven is full of grace. Heaven promises grace – Gen 28:13-15
 - God makes unconditional promises to Jacob
 - I will be with you (he was alone)
 - I will watch over you (vulnerable, defenseless)
 - I will bless you (Jacob was penniless)
 - Jacob is not praying, seeking, looking for God. He is just a sinner living with the consequences of his sin. That is where God seeks and finds us.
 - Romans 5:8
 - Heaven is terrifying –
 - Gen 28:12. ANGELS are scary.
 - Gen 28:13. God stood over him, or God stood beside him.
 - Gen 28:16-17

- Fear = terror and adoration combined.
 - Gen 28:12. *Hinneh* = There! A stairway. Look! Angels! Behold! God!
 - He went to sleep thinking he was alone. Dark. No one around. God was already here. God was always with him. Comforting and frightening.
- This is the beginning of the breaking of Jacob’s fear and pride
 - He begins to fear the right thing, God
 - He begins to see himself in comparison to God’s greatness
 - Just a beginning. Jacob has finally met God. God revealed Himself, but Jacob hasn’t changed. Jacob is still Jacob. How do we know? Observe his worship.
- Faltering in worship – Gen 28:18-22
 - His worship is conditional
 - Seeking God for His hand not His face
 - His worship is small
 - He doesn’t ask for much! Strikes a grand bargain with God, but God has already promised him so much more. Chasing after what God has already promised.
 - He doesn’t promise much.
 - God gets a part because God is a part. God is not the whole.
 - This is a start, but Jacob just doesn’t get it yet. More breaking that is required for Jacob’s transformation

II. Terrible pain of his sin – Gen 29:1-6, 9-12

- Continues his journey and arrives in Haran
- Hope fulfilled
 - Upon arriving, he found what he was looking for
 - Sent to find a wife; but actually trying to fill a void
 - Gen 29:9-20
 - Girl of his dreams. Absolutely stunning. Captivated.
 - Shows off – moves the stone himself.
 - Kisses her, weeps. Awkward first date.
 - Doesn’t negotiate. Exorbitant.
 - Not mature love. Infatuation.
 - Laban sees an easy mark
- Deceiver deceived. Jacob gets *out-Jacobed*. Gen 29:21-23
 - Ironic, tragic twist.
 - Jacob had dressed up as his brother, deceived father in the dark
 - Leah dressed up as sister, deceived groom in the dark
 - Furious, just like his father was furious. Gen 29:25
 - Laban responds. Gen 29:26-28
 - Why didn’t Jacob object? Gen 29:26
 - Jacob in pain. But Jacob finally realized the pain he had caused.
- Pain in his family
 - Pain for Leah – Gen 29:16-17, 30
 - Jacob was the victim of favoritism. Now he victimizes Leah.
 - Gen 29:32-35. Praised the Lord, but the competition had begun
 - Pain for Rachel – Gen 30:1-8
 - More competition – Gen 30:9-12; Gen 30:17-20
 - Jacob not living the dream. Not innocent, but everyone miserable.

- Pain in his labor
 - Worked 14 years for his two wives. Many mouths to feed; no wealth.
 - Gen 3:25-26. Jacob: “let me go”
 - 6 more years to build up his own wealth.
 - Gen 31:38-42

- Two great arenas of life (family and work) were a disaster
 - Home is miserable, wealth is tenuous. Great reality show.
 - Jacob is experiencing the consequences of his own sin.
 - To see more of God, Jacob needed to see more of himself
 - Jacob is being prepared for another encounter with God.

Application

Has your life harmed others?

- Whether through pride or fear have you taken control of your life and others have suffered?
- Confess to God
- Confess to others
- Make restitution

Have you encountered the One True God?

- Hard to stay proud when we begin to see God’s greatness.
- No reason to fear others when we see the only One we should fear.
- No reason to scheme to get what we think we need.
- God is great and God is gracious
- Perhaps you need to meet Him for the first time.
- Perhaps you need to encounter His greatness again.