

## HEROES OF FAITH - JACOB

Genesis 28:10-22

"Jacob - He Saw a Dream"

INTRODUCTION ... I suppose that most people that we call "heroes" can also be called "dreamers" ... they dream/imagine some success/accomplishment, or they make plans so clear/detailed they can almost see things happen before they really do happen. Today's HERO OF FAITH - JACOB was a dreamer ... but his dream was different ... it did not come from his own mind/sub-conscious ... HE SAW A DREAM that came from God the Lord. First listen to the Scripture lesson

I. "Hi! I'm Jacob ...

"If you were here last week, then you heard my father ISAAC tell his story of how he blessed his two sons - my brother ESAU and me. I am not proud of what I did to get that blessing; in fact, I am ashamed! ... I deceived my aged father - I cheated my brother - I lied - I did not trust God to do things in the way that He planned. I got the blessing ... but now my brother wants to kill me - I have to leave from home and parents to hide from him - I have to go to a far-away land to people I don't know - and I feel the shame of what I have done! You see how we sometimes get what we want through sin, but we also get a lot of trouble and pain with it.

"So here I am - miles from home ... the sun is setting ... I find a place to spend the night - like I did many times as a shepherd ... I sleep on the ground - with a rock as a pillow (not very soft!) ... with my fear & shame and my conscience telling me I did wrong, my sleep was restless ... then I saw the dream: the ladder to heaven - the angels going up & down - the Lord standing at the top, saying - 'I am the God of your father and grandfather; I will be with you; I will give you this land, many children, and a special blessing for all people' - the same promise He spoke to my father and grandfather! ... then I woke up."

II. What did that dream mean???

Sometimes we wonder if a dream has a special meaning ... No! - unless it is clear that God is speaking to the dreamer through that dream ... here it is clear that God was doing that! Here the Lord wants to emphasize that ...

1) His grace/forgiveness is greater than Jacob's sin - and our sin too! He does show mercy ... "Christ has set us free" (Epistle - Galatians 5.1, 13-25) ... His mercy is great enough to accept and cover all our sin, because Jesus died for all sin - yes, for all the times we let our physical desires rule us - for all our jealousy and anger, all our divisions and separations from family and friends, for all the arguments and bad feelings (sometimes just as bad as between Jacob and Esau!) ... Jesus died and rose again to forgive it all! ... and He has forgiven it all!

2) That's the special blessing the Lord promised to Jacob, as to Isaac and to Abraham before: through one of their descendants all people on earth will be blessed ... Jesus was that Descendant, and through Jesus God's grace spreads to reach all sinners - those who are descendants of Jacob (the Jews) and to those who are not (the Gentiles) ... that grace of God reaches us and makes us clean.

3) The Lord will be with Jacob wherever he goes ... and He was with him - and blessed him! - in the many places he went during the rest of his life! We sometimes turn things around: "I will follow You [Jesus] wherever You go" (Gospel - Luke 9.51-62) ... and find that we can't do it - we are weak in faith, the things of this world pull us back. Again, Christ sets us free ... and He gives His Spirit to us - and that Spirit does in us the things we cannot do ourselves! The Spirit puts-down our sinful heart and controls that ... then He leads us to "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith-fulness, humility, self-control." The God of grace is with us! - He forgives & saves us! - He leads us in right living!

CONCLUSION ..... Jacob called that place "Beth-el" (the house of God) ... he believed what God showed him in the dream ... he continued on his way with God's blessing - even though he was not able to go back home for 20 years! Every place that we meet God's grace in Jesus - our church, our home - that place is "Beth-el" for us ... we believe what He tells us ... and we continue on our way with God's blessing and love!