

As we turn to Genesis 29, Isaac blesses Jacob once again, telling him not to marry a Canaanite woman. Instead, he must travel to his grandfather Bethuel's homeland of Paddan-aram and take one of his uncle Laban's daughters as his wife. Isaac prays that God will bless Jacob and his offspring with Abraham's blessing, and that the land where he dwells as an alien will one day belong to him. Jacob does as Isaac says. When Esau sees that Isaac doesn't want his sons to have Canaanite wives, he goes to Ishmael and marries Ishmael's daughter Mahalath.

On his way to Haran from Beer-sheba, Jacob stops and sleeps for the night, using a stone for a pillow. He dreams of a ladder reaching to heaven; angels ascend and descend on the ladder. In the dream, the LORD stands beside him and declares his promise to give this land to Jacob and his many offspring, blessing the earth's families through them. He further promises to be with Jacob wherever he goes. When Jacob wakes up, he is awestruck by the encounter with God. He takes the stone and sets it up as a pillar, calling the place Bethel. He vows that the LORD will be his God, and that out of what God gives him, he will always give back one tenth.

Like Abraham before him, Isaac sends Jacob to marry a woman from among his own people, who worships his God, instead of a local woman. Though Isaac had originally intended Abraham's blessing for Esau, he now seems to be reconciled to the fact that it belongs to Jacob, that Jacob will carry on Abraham's and Isaac's blessings of land and offspring. Esau, meanwhile, tries to do something that will gain his parents' approval.

As we look at this account, we see several applications:

1. God meets us where we are and reminds us of his promises. As people, we are forgetful and insecure. God is perpetually reminding us that he will finish what he started from generation to generation, from Abraham through Jacob to his descendants. (13-15)
2. Our response to God's promises is worship. When God meets us and affirms his love for us, our natural response is gratitude. Gratitude is a natural response to God's grace. Where are you seeing God's goodness? Where are you seeing God's faithfulness? How are you responding with a grateful heart through worship? (16-19)
3. As people, we are empowered by God to commit ourselves to him. In this account, the natural response of Jacob after worship was to recommit himself to the Lord. Because of God's faithfulness to us, we can commit our lives to him. This is the prevenient nature of God's love. (20-22)
4. So, what's the deal with the ladder? Jacob is given a vision of a pathway between heaven and earth, descending, and ascending. The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus descended from heaven to earth and ascended from earth into heaven. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. By Christ descending to earth, we can ascend on high. Jesus is our pathway of peace and He provides us a means to commune with our creator.

As you pray this week, I ask for you to pray for these following requests.

For the Gospel,
Pastor Bryan

GENERAL REQUESTS

Pray for Jubilee Church in Paradise. Over the last month, the senior pastor and associate pastor died of Covid. It was a tragic series of events. Pray for the wives of the pastors who passed, their congregation, and their new lead pastor, Josh.

Pray for the local churches of Chico. Amid the events of the last 4 years (Oroville Dam Crisis, Camp Fire, and Covid), it has been challenging in Butte County for ministry. Pray for the senior pastors and their staff. We are finding that many people are experiencing burnout. Pray that God would give church leadership the courage and confidence to lead well, in season and out of season.

Pray for our coming Darkness to Light service on Friday, December 17. Pray that the service would minister to the hearts of those who are hurting. Pray that Pastor Ed and Chris Thompson would be anointed in their leadership so that those grieving would have hearts prepared to celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas.

Pray for the preparations in our church for the Christmas Eve Services. Pray that Pastor Brad would be given the energy and stamina to lead us through 3 services (1:00, 3:00, and 5:00 p.m.). Pray that Pastor Bryan would be anointed with a message that would touch the hearts of those there. We are praying that this once-a-year celebration would translate into people finding community and connection at Grace.

Continued prayers for our nation. Pray that people would seek joy over happiness and Christ over personal comfort. As we near Christmas, we pray that people would make Christ Lord and live their lives for God alone. Pray that the challenges people face in this season would force them to put their trust in Jesus. Pray that believers would see their high calling to share their faith this Christmas.

Jen Roberts: Please pray for Afghanistan refugees to have shelter and food during this cold winter. Also pray that the children will be permitted to get an education in the country they have escaped to. The children are growing restless with long periods of time being out of school. Please pray for YWAM missionaries who are working to get necessities and visas for refugees. They have a limited time to be processed or they will be sent back to Afghanistan. Pray also for safety for those who are still trying to escape and those who are helping them.