

☞ An Encounter with God

We need to encounter the Living God. We need his presence with us! How many want an encounter with God?

Genesis 28:10-22

v. 10 from Beersheba to Haran
Beersheba = well of an oath
Haran = parched

Jacob is going from a place of plenty to a place that's dry and barren. In fact, he's all alone; it's night; he's in the wilderness. And, he's used to being a homeboy while his brother was a wilderness kind of guy. (Genesis 25:27)

If you're feeling alone in the wilderness, you just might be on your way to encountering God. In the natural, this kind of situation is perceived negatively, but sometimes God is in it. God loves to turn negative circumstances into positive encounters! Moses was in the desert when he encountered God at the burning bush. Gideon was hiding in a wine press when God called him.

This entire event in Jacob's life was brought on because Esau was thinking of killing him. (Gen. 27:42) Sometimes the enemy intends to ruin us, but God turns it into a powerful encounter instead. Things looking bleak for you? Hang on, God may be up to something! I want to help you see what God is up to...

☞ **The Vision** v. 12 Jacob's dream of a stairway to heaven

God is connected with our earthly situation. His angels are continually ministering between heaven and earth.

This is actually a picture of Jesus. John 1:51 says, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." He is the way to heaven. (John 14:6)

Hebrews 7:24-25

because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. **25** Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

v. 15 I am with you; will watch over you wherever you go...

☞ Sometimes it may seem as though you're all alone, but **God is always with you.**

Isaiah 43:1-2

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. **2** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Matthew 28:20

surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

We need a clear vision and understanding that God is already with us. Jesus is interceding on our behalf. In fact, sometimes we simply miss his presence because we're not paying attention.

☞ **The Vigilance** v. 16 ... unaware of it

We can be in God's presence and not even know it.

Samson experienced God's power, but when it left him, he didn't know it. The Pharisees looked Jesus square in the face and didn't realize he was God.

☞ God can show up anywhere and anyplace. **We need to just be ready.**

Have you ever had a "random" encounter with God?

☞ Jacob became aware of God's presence while he slept. **We need to quiet ourselves and listen so we can hear God.**

Psalms 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God

1 Kings 19:11-13

...the Lord was not in the wind... the Lord was not in the earthquake... the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. **13** When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said...

☞ **The Voice**

When God speaks, things can change suddenly. Think of creation... "God said..." God is speaking. Are you listening?

v. 13 he calls himself the God of Abraham and Isaac

Later will be called God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... Jacob had to make a personal decision to follow God. We see this in verse 21, when he calls him "my God."

☞ You can't follow God through someone else. **Listen for yourself.** Your parents can't get you to heaven; your spouse can't get you to heaven; your pastor can't get you there either. You have to make a personal decision to follow Christ.

God's voice is calling to each and every one of us. Some he calls into full-time ministry; some he calls to be the backbone of the local church; he calls all of us to serve in some way; and he calls us all to a closer walk with him. Whenever we encounter God in person and power, we must make a decision... Believe or not believe? Follow or not follow? Surrender or not surrender?

Joshua 24:15

if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

☞ **The Vow** v. 20 Jacob made a vow

This is all too rare today. **We need to be people who keep our promises and commitments.**

Jacob's vow was about following God for the rest of his life. How about you? Is your decision for God permanent? Will you stick with it no matter what?

v. 21-22

☞ He vowed to **relinquish control**... "will be my God."

He vowed to **receive the Lord**... "will be God's house."

He vowed to **release his possessions** to God... "will give a tenth."

This was part of Jacob's vow. He understood that everything he had came from God in the first place. Here's a principle of giving that precedes the law. We encourage giving 10% of your income to God. It's a biblical principle that started before the law and was endorsed by Jesus in the New Testament as well. At the very least we should understand this... God has given you forgiveness and eternal life. Don't you feel compelled to give something to him?

You need to make a decision. Will he be your God or not? Will you follow and serve him for the rest of your life or not?

v. 13 all people will be blessed through you

Here's the primary purpose for encountering God. We often think it's for our own benefit, but that is not God's intent. In Genesis 12:3 he said these exact words to Abraham. God's presence with us is not just for our enjoyment and benefit, but it's to bless others. People need the Lord! Perhaps we don't experience God's presence or see revival simply because our motives are all wrong. Cf. James 4:3

God made a vow as well... v. 15 I will not leave you until I have done what I promised

v. 13-15

He promises that he is willing to give an inheritance.

He promises that he will be with us wherever we go.

He promises that he will watch over us.

☞ **God's promises always come through.**

Joshua 21:45

Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Philippians 1:6

he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Keep on trusting and waiting. God's promises never fail. What has he promised to you? It may have been a long time ago, but God will keep his word. Your situation could change in a heartbeat.

☞ **The Vicissitude** (= a change occurring in the course of something)

God can change your situation! What seems to you to be empty and lonely, may become the place you experience God most powerfully.

1 Kings 19 – Elijah encountered God at the cave... he was alone; he was on the run; he was afraid; he was in a cave!

Romans 4:17

the God who... calls things that are not as though they were.

Abram = exalted father... Abraham = father of many nations

Saul the persecutor of Christians became Paul the Apostle.

Jacob = one who undermines... Israel = one who prevails with God

When God reveals himself in power; things can change very quickly. When you get a clear vision of God; when you hear his voice... things can radically and rapidly change...

☞ **2 Kings 7:1-2** (*Elisha to the Israelites under siege*)

This is what the Lord says: About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria." **2** The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, "Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?"

☞ Your situation may seem hopeless, but **with God all things are possible**. He can work in such a way that things suddenly do a 180. Here, in Jacob's case it changed his whole outlook; it

changed his surroundings; this was the first step in a total makeover for Jacob. Later he will change his name after another encounter with God. In this instance it changed the place.

v. 19 called that place Bethel; used to be called Luz

Bethel = House of God

Luz = separation

Boone OBC is Bethel, the House of God; we will not be Luz.

☞ Let's remember and see that God is already with us.

Let's be attentive and look for God at work.

Let's listen for God's voice in our daily situations.

Let's trust his promises because he never fails.

Let's commit ourselves to following him.

Let's be ready for the change he may bring.

Let's encounter the Living God!