

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com
E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE

Close Encounters of the God Kind – Jacob’s Story

SERIES

DATE

3/12/2023

KEY SCRIPTURE

Genesis 28:10-22

SYNOPSIS

Jacob encountered the Lord in a dream and committed his life to God.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Close Encounters of the God Kind – Jacob's Story

Last week we talked about the Echoes of Encounter. Obed-Edom had a close-up God-experience that changed his life and affected his family for generations. We need to encounter the Living God. We need his presence with us! How many want an encounter with God?

Genesis 28:10-22

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." 18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

v. 10 from Beersheba to Haran

Beersheba = well of an oath

Haran = parched; crossroad

Jacob is going from a place of plenty to a crossroad; a place that's dry and barren. If you're transitioning from good to not-so-good circumstances or you're at a crossroad, you just might be on your way to encountering God. If you have been in a dry season, it may be that God is just about to meet you and bring you out.

☞ **God loves to turn negative circumstances into positive encounters!**

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. **God turns the enemy's plans around.**

Nahum 1:9

Whatever they plot against the Lord he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time.



Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Things looking bleak for you? Hang on, God may be up to something!

v. 12 Jacob's dream of a stairway

☞ **God is connected with our earthly situation.** His angels are continually ministering between heaven and earth. Sometimes it seems that God is aloof, but that is not so. This dream 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."

☞ **Jesus is the way to heaven.** (John 14:6) Not just heaven, as in eternal life, but heaven, as in living today in God's presence and power; heaven on earth. **You can walk with God and have an ongoing connection with him.** This all comes **through Jesus Christ.** There is no other way. Jesus is the way; the only way. You need to invite him into your life and follow him.

v. 13 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. You can't follow God through someone else. 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.**

Whenever we encounter God, 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."

As a result of this encounter **v. 20 says that 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? Even if there's some cost involved?

In Jacob's case he vowed to **v. 22 give you a tenth.** Here's a principle of giving that precedes the law. This giving principle is throughout the Scriptures, and here, it was part of Jacob's vow. He understood that everything he had came from God in the first place.

God has given you forgiveness and eternal life. Don't you feel compelled to give something to him? Give him your life and be ready to follow him however he leads. You need to decide. 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 an important result of encountering God. We often think it's for our own benefit, but that is not the limit of God's intent. In Genesis 12:3 God told Abraham, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Matthew 5:13-16 tells us that we are the salt and light of the earth. We are supposed to point people to God by the way we live and by what we say.

☞ **God's presence is not just for personal benefit, it's for public blessing.** People need the Lord! Perhaps we don't experience God's presence or see the full extent of revival simply because our motives are all wrong. James 4:3 talks about that.

v. 15 I am with you; will watch over you wherever you go; will not leave you until I have done what I promised

Sometimes it may seem as though you're all alone, but God is always with you. In Isaiah 43, God promised to be with us even when life seems overwhelming like a flood. In Matthew 28, Jesus said he would always be with us to the very end. Not only is the Lord always with us but, 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.

2 Corinthians 1:20

no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.

☞ Keep on trusting and waiting. **God's promises never fail.** What has he promised to you?

v. 16 ... unaware of it

It is possible for us to be in God's presence and not even know it. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on those early disciples, but the people nearby didn't realize what was happening and just thought they must be drunk. When Saul had his encounter on the Damascus road, those around him only heard a sound, but didn't realize what was actually happening. When Moses encountered God in the burning bush, he didn't realize right away that God was in the fire.

☞ **God can show up anytime and anyplace.** We need to just **be ready**. Jacob had revelation in the routine. It was an ordinary day and an ordinary night. He became aware of God's presence while he slept. Sometimes we need to quiet ourselves and listen so we can hear God.

Psalms 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God." Some have paraphrased that to mean, "shut up and listen." God often speaks in that gentle whisper, like Elijah heard in 1 Kings 19, so we need to turn down all the noise of distractions and busyness to hear him. I think this can also mean that we need to just tune into God. Sometimes, he's right there, speaking and ministering, but we are not tuned in. Like an old-fashioned radio dial, we need to be intentional about tuning in and connecting with God.



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

Bethel = House of God

Luz = separation

A separated, lonely, empty spot became the place of God's habitation. What seems to you to be empty and lonely may become the place you experience God most powerfully. In 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! But God encountered him and renewed his strength; he gave him new direction. When Saul, the persecutor encountered God, he became Paul, the preacher. Abram became Abraham. Our story of Jacob continues a few chapters later with another God-encounter that changed him from Jacob, the one who undermined his brother, to Israel, the one who prevailed with God.

☞ **God can suddenly change your situation!**

You might have lived a rough past, but God can give you a royal future. You might have struggled with strong sinful tendencies, but God can set you free and give you total victory. You may have struggled with poverty, but God can make you suddenly prosperous. You might feel like the least, always coming in last place, but one encounter with God can change you into a frontline leader. 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.

God is on the move in the world today. People are encountering him in droves. I want to be among that number.

☞ **(music begins)** Let's **be ready** for a God-encounter. Let's **tune in** to his presence; let's **listen** for his voice. Let's **commit**, or **recommit** ourselves to wholeheartedly **following** him. Let's **trust** his promises and **believe** for his best. It's coming!

Altar Ministry. Are you ready to commit or recommit your life to God? Do you need a God-encounter? Do you need a change in your situation? Let's come and pray together.