

Old Testament Eras

Jacob (Israel)

Background

In the sermon this past weekend we focused on Joseph and his brothers after Jacob died. To do that we reviewed quite a bit of Jacob's life, but of course we left a lot out as well. Today, we'll focus on two significant accounts that we left out. Before we do, at your table, share one aspect of Jacob's life that you found interesting, or had forgotten.

Jacob's Dream – Genesis 28:10-22

1. It's estimated that Jacob has traveled about 70 miles by now. He's probably exhausted, and lays down to sleep. He dreams. What does he see?
2. Remember, Jacob had received the blessing through an act of deception. Now, he hears the blessing from the lips of God Himself! For what reasons would that have been so valuable for Jacob?
3. God provides some specific details in this blessing that would have been encouraging for Jacob. At your table, see how many of these encouraging details you can identify. After a few minutes we'll share them with the group.
4. When Jacob wakes up, we're told that he was "afraid." Explain that reaction.
5. Jacob renames that place "Beth-el." "Beth" means "house," –el is an abbreviation for "God." So "Bethel" means, "house of God." Jacob then makes a vow.
 - What do you *like* about his promise? What makes you a bit *uncomfortable*?
6. In John 1:51 Jesus 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 was drawing a comparison between Himself and that stairway which Jacob saw in His dream. In a commentary on this section, Professor John Jeske comments: "*In Jesus Christ, God built a bridge on which He comes to us and on which we can return to Him.*" (Peoples' Bible, p236) For what reasons do you like that "bridge" picture?

Jacob Wrestles With God – Genesis 32:22-32

7. Martin Luther describes this as one of the most obscure passages in Scripture. Why would God choose to do something like this? We'll probably not be able to completely understand it, but there are a number of truths which we can glean. Let's explore:

- While they're wrestling, God doesn't seem to be Jacob's friend. Rather, God appears to be his _____ .
- But, if God really wanted to be Jacob's opponent, and defeat him, God could have done that in an instant! By *not* doing so, God was teaching Jacob that ...
- By throwing Jacob's hip out of joint, God was reminding Jacob that ...
- The name "Jacob" literally means, "heel-grasper." It develops into the word that means, "Deceiver." As God asks him, "What is your name," what thoughts might be going through Jacob's head?
- God gives Jacob a new name: "Israel." It means ...
- Even the limp was a blessing, for it reminded Jacob that ...

8. Concerning Jacob's statement that he wouldn't let go unless the "man" blessed him, Prof. Jeske comments: *"God didn't want Jacob (and He doesn't want us) to be timid with Him. He delights to allow us to win victories over Him ..."* Consider each of the following:

- For what reasons are we tempted to be timid?
- What truths give us the confidence to NOT be timid?

Systematic Theology

If we have time

In systematic theology, we strive to find everything the Bible says about a particular topic. Systematic theology is often broken up into 5 to 6 categories. Prolegomena, Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology. Portions of Scripture from Jacob's Era show up all over the place in the indexes of our systematic resources! Look for Genesis 25-50 in your index.

Prolegomena (The "before conversation")

Theology (The study of God)

Anthropology (The study of man)

Christology (The study of the Christ)

Soteriology (The study of salvation)

Eschatology (The study of the last things)

Next Week's Old Testament Era—Moses!

If you'd like to preview our lesson on Moses during the week, Moses is the focus of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Consider reading through the headings in all four books before next week! It won't take you very long at all!