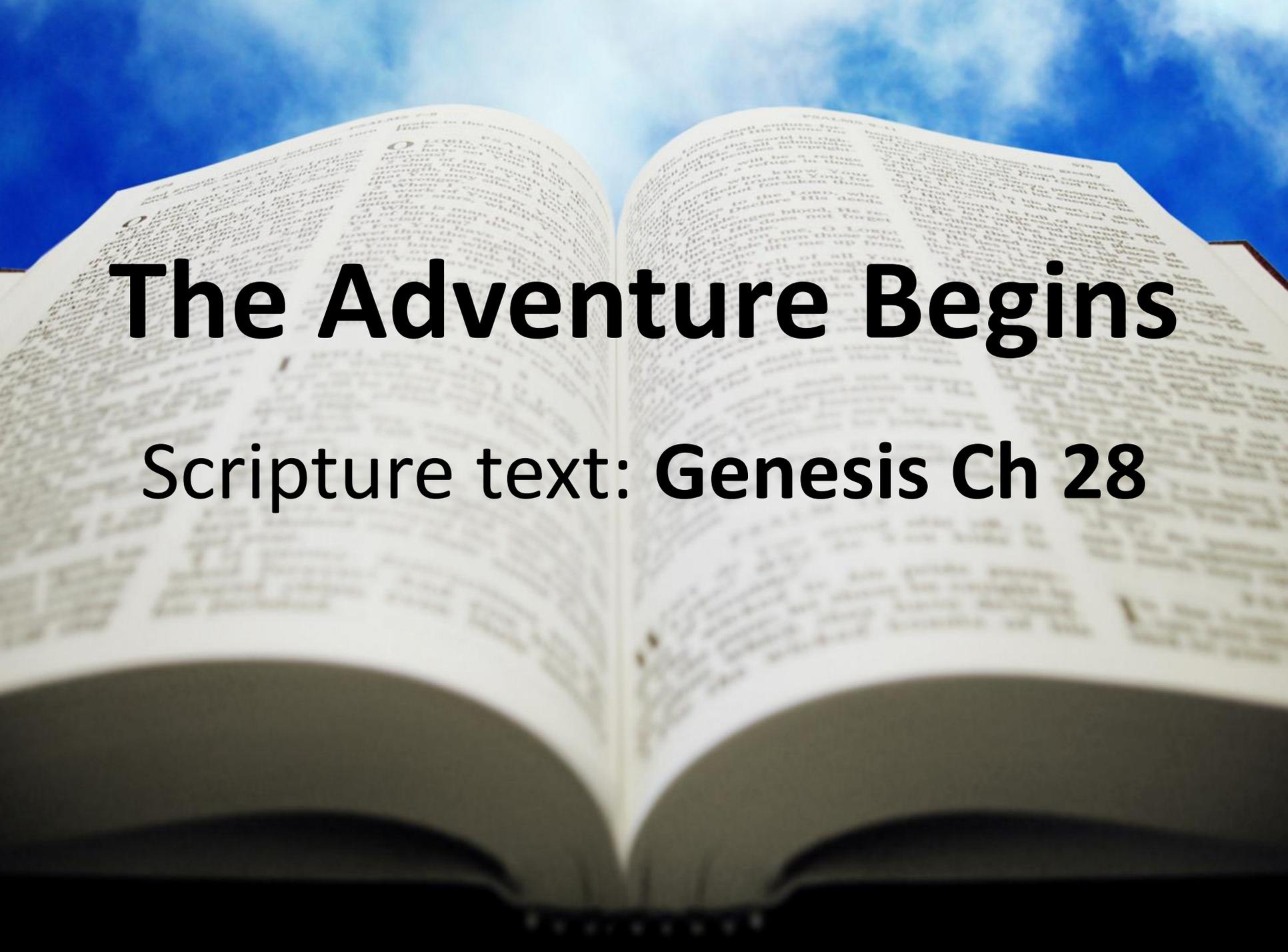


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# **The Adventure Begins**

Scripture text: **Genesis Ch 28**

We can accurately say that **the rest of Genesis presents the life of Jacob**, including his **trials with Laban** (Genesis 28–31), with **Esau** (Genesis 32–33), and **with his sons** (Genesis 34ff). The story of **Joseph is actually a part of Jacob's history**.

Now let look at how **the Adventure unfolds** and take to heart the **lessons that can be learned here**. For it is better to learn from someone else's mistake, then to learn the hard way!

The real reason Rebekah engineered Jacob's departure from home was **to avoid the anger of Esau** (Gen. 27:41–46), but her excuse was that she wanted Jacob to find a **godly wife** (see 24:1–9). Esau's worldly wives were causing **trouble in the home**, as is always the case when God's people marry **outside of God's will**. Rebekah actually planned to send for Jacob when the time was right, but this plan failed. **Jacob never did see his mother again**. Once again, **“faith is living without scheming.”** We all need to heed the warning of James 4:13–17.

**James 4:13-17** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"-- **yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.** What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "**If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.**" As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So **whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**

It is **wonderful when a son can leave home with his father's blessing!** But Jacob could not depend on his father's faith.

**Genesis 28:1** Then Isaac called Jacob and **blessed him and directed him,** "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women.

He had **to meet God and make some decisions of his own.** Unfortunately, it took **more than twenty years for Jacob to come to a place of real surrender,** and how dearly he paid for his unbelief and rebellion!

**Genesis 28:2-5** Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and **take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. God Almighty bless you** and make you **fruitful and multiply you**, that you may become **a company of peoples**. May he give the **blessing of Abraham** to you and to your offspring with you, that you **may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!**" Thus Isaac sent Jacob away. And he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

**Genesis 22:14-18** So Abraham called the name of that place, "**The LORD will provide**"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, **I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring** as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And **your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,** because you have obeyed my voice."

**Psalm 105:6-12** O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, **his chosen ones!** He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, **which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance."** When they were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it,

Verses 6–9 illustrate **the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit**: Esau (the flesh) **deliberately disobeyed** the Lord and brought even **greater sorrow** into the home.

**Genesis 28:6-9** Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and **that as he blessed him he directed him**, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women," and that **Jacob had obeyed his father** and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. So **when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father**, Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, **Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael**, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

**Galatians 5:17-21** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.** Now the **works of the flesh are evident:** sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, **as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**Genesis 28:8-9** So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father, **Esau went to Ishmael** and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, **Mahalath** the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

**Mahalath (ma'-ha-lath)** = Harp; wind instrument; a musical instrument. Making sick; sickness; appeasing.

**Nebaioth (ne-bah'-yoth)** = High places; productive; husbandry. Prophecies; increasings.

**Genesis 28:10-12** Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And **he came to a certain place and stayed there that night**, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. **And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.** And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!

**Note that Jacob was not a young man when he started out on this venture.** He was at least seventy-seven years old.

Genesis 47:9 states that **Jacob was 130 when he went to Egypt**. Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into Egypt, and was thirty when he was presented to Pharaoh (41:46). Add, then, Joseph's thirteen years as a servant to the seven years of plenty and two years of famine, and you have Joseph at about thirty-nine years of age when Jacob came to Egypt. This means **Joseph was born when Jacob was ninety-one**, and Gen. 30:25 indicates that when Joseph was born Jacob had already fulfilled **his fourteen years** of service for his wives. This **indicates that Jacob was about seventy-seven years old when he began to walk "on his own."**

Jacob traveled about seventy miles from Beersheba to Bethel, **a three-day journey**. That night, he took “one of the stones” to rest against as he slept, and God gave him a vision of a ladder (or staircase, as some translate it) from heaven to earth. John 1:43–51 is the NT explanation of this verse. **The ladder symbolizes Jesus Christ**. Jacob is a perfect picture of the lost soul—in the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from the father’s house, **burdened with sin, and ignorant of the fact that God is near him and wants to save him**.

**John 1:43-47** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "**Follow me.**" Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "**We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote,** Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "**Come and see.**" Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

**John 1:48-51** Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "**Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.**" Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? **You will see greater things than these.**" And he said to him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**"

**The ladder pictures Christ as the only way from earth to heaven.** He opens heaven for us and brings heaven's blessings to our lives. And **He alone can take us to heaven.**

Jacob thought he was in a lonely wilderness and **awakened to discover he had been at the very gate of heaven!** Relating this further to John 1:43–51, we note that **Jacob was an Israelite who was full of guile (deceit)**, while v. 47 describes Nathanael as an Israelite without guile.

This is the first of at least seven recorded revelations from God to Jacob (see 31:3, 11–13; 32:1–2; 32:24–30; 35:1, 9–13; 46:1–4). **The angels on the ladder were an indication of God's care.** They appeared again to protect Jacob when he was about to face Esau (32:1–2).

**Genesis 32:1-2** Jacob went on his way, and **the angels of God met him.** And when Jacob saw them he said, "**This is God's camp!**" So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

## ***The Voice***

**Genesis 28:13-15** And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

**Visions apart from the Word of God can be deceiving**, so God spoke to Jacob to assure him. A person is not saved by angels or visions; **he is saved by faith in God's Word.**

Note the promises that God gave to Jacob:

*A. The land (v. 13).*

This promise was first given to Abraham (13:14ff) and was reaffirmed to Isaac (26:1–5). **The Holy Land belongs to the Jews**, even though they do not possess all of it. One day, Israel will “possess her possessions” (Obadiah 17).

**Obadiah 1:17** But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and **it shall be holy**, and the **house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.**

*B. The multiplied seed (v. 14).*

This assured Jacob that **God would give him a wife**; otherwise he could not have descendants (see also 13:16 and 22:17). **Today, there are Jews at every point of the compass.**

*C. God's personal presence (v. 15).*

This verse suggests that Jacob would wander about but God promised to be with him. Why? Because God had a plan for Jacob's life, and He would see to it that His plan was fulfilled (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:28–29). Though in the hard years ahead Jacob had **to reap the consequences of his sins, God was still with him to protect him and bless him.**

**Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**

**Romans 8:28-29** And we know **that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

**Genesis 28:16-19** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "**Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.**" And he was afraid and said, "**How awesome is this place!** This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. **He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first.**

**Genesis 28:20-22** Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "**If God will be with me** and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, **then the LORD shall be my God**, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, **shall be God's house**. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

## The Vow (28:16–22)

“This is the house of God!” exclaims Jacob, for the name “Bethel” means “house of God.” **His experience that night not only changed him, but it changed the name of the place where he slept.** To commemorate the event, Jacob set up a pillar and **made it into an altar**, pouring out a drink offering to the Lord. Years later, when he came back to Bethel, Jacob **repeated this act of consecration** (35:9–15).

**This act of faith** (even though caused by fear) **was Jacob's way of dedicating himself to God.** (See Phil. 2:17, where "offered" is literally "poured out.") **It is a wonderful thing that by faith a believer can turn a "pillow" into a "pillar"!**

There are **two interpretations** suggested of Jacob's vow: (1) that **he is bargaining with God** by saying "If ... if ..."; (2) that **he is showing faith in God**, for the Hebrew word can be translated "Since ... since ..." **This is actually the first vow recorded in the Bible.**

**It is likely that both interpretations are true:** Jacob believed God's Word, but there was still enough of the "old man" in him to try to bargain with God the way he bargained with Esau and Isaac. **He was so accustomed to "scheming"** that he tried to scheme his way into God's blessing! **This was finally exposed and dealt with** at Jabbok (Gen. 32). **Jacob did return home in peace** (Gen. 35:27–29), and he practiced tithing (v. 22). **He realized that his dedication to God meant nothing unless his material goods were under His control as well.**

Abraham had practiced tithing (***Genesis 14:20*** and *blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!*" And **Abram gave him a tenth of everything.** ), and in both cases the Law had not yet been given. Those who say that the tithe is not for this age of grace miss the fact that the early saints practiced tithing. It was their expression of faith and obedience to the Lord who guided them, guarded them, and provided for them.

**Jacob did not always live up to this vow** in the years that followed. He “met his match” in Laban, who was a schemer himself!

**For twenty years the two of them tried to outsmart each other, but, in the end, Jacob had been disciplined and God had kept his promises.**

It is good for us believers to have a “Bethel” in our lives, a place where we meet God in a serious way and make some definite commitments to Him. **If we get away from the Lord, we can always come “back to Bethel” (Gen. 35:9–15) and renew our dedication.**

Jacob is an **illustration of the conflict between the two natures**, for he was always battling the flesh and trying to depend on his own abilities and plans. How good to know that **God watches over His wayward children!**

**Genesis 35:9-15** God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "**Your name is Jacob; no longer** shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name **Israel**. And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. **So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.**