



Summer 2017 – **Genesis 28: a rock, a hard place, a stairway and a gateway ... Part One**  
(7 May 2017, Paul Langham)

Reading: Genesis 28:1a, 3-5, 10-19 (NIV UK)

*<sup>1</sup> So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. ... <sup>3</sup> May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. <sup>4</sup> May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.’ <sup>5</sup> Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau. ...*

*<sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.’*

*<sup>16</sup> When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’ <sup>17</sup> 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.’*

*<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.*

*<sup>20</sup> 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 <sup>21</sup> so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord will be my God <sup>22</sup> 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.’*

## **1 Living according to prophetic blessing**

Are you trusting God?

To trust someone involves trusting both

- Their character, and
- Their word

The bible talks of 2 different forms of God’s Word

- Logos – the written word for all humankind which is the bible (his ‘always’ Word)
- Rhema – the spoken words of God to individuals or communities (his ‘now’ Word)

God’s ‘now’ word can never contradict his ‘always’ word.

Jacob is the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of the family that was to become the Jewish nation

1. Abraham married Sarah with whom he had Isaac
2. Isaac married Rebekah with whom he had twins – Esau and Jacob

In this passage, Isaac blesses his son Jacob to receive the blessing first spoken by God over Abraham (1-4)

- People

- Territory
- Influence (blessing others)

This enables Jacob to live in peace, despite his character and circumstance.

In my talk, I gave a number of examples, both personal and from other people, of the impact of the prophetic.

I stressed that no work or activity of the Spirit – whether a miraculous healing or a word of prophecy – is in itself a validation of character. In other words, the simple fact that God blesses me with rhema words does not automatically improve my character – such words do not absolve me from the business of ‘tending my soul’, paying attention to sin, coming to confession, seeking the sanctification which the Spirit also brings.

I paused the sermon at this point, to ask the question: ‘Are you sitting under or sitting on a prophetic word from the Lord?’

That’s the first question for individuals or small groups this week – do you know what God has spoken over you? Are you living under it, sitting under it, following it ...? Or are you sitting on it, not responding to it? Is there a word you have forgotten or stopped waiting for?

Take some time now to reflect on this ...

## **2 A stone for a pillow ...? (11)**

Whenever I read this passage, I am struck by this stone (pardon the pun).

It always seems incongruous – did he at least put a blanket on top? Scripture doesn’t say.

To me, this begs another question – are we able to sleep (rest, be at peace) in the midst of whatever life is like at the moment? It seems to me that Jacob was in a rocky place both literally and metaphorically (if you know the details of previous chapters, he has cheated his brother and run away in fear of his life – he’s on his way to distant family he can only hope will treat him well (and that’s another story!).

He stops for the night, takes ‘one of the stones’ and sleeps on it.

I am reminded of Jesus on lake Galilee, fast asleep in the midst of a storm the experienced fishermen who were his followers were convinced was going to end their lives.

My second question is: Can we find peace to rest, not be escaping life, but in the very midst of it? Whatever Jacob’s stone represents to you today, can you use it as a pillow?

It may be that the answer to my first question will enable you to answer the second ...

Take some time now to reflect on this ...

*Paul Langham, May 2017*

