

GOD IN THIS PLACE

INTRODUCTION

James Dunn *“The character of Abraham’s faith is determined by the character of the God in whom he believed.”*

DISCUSSION

If you had to describe your character to people, how would you describe yourself?

If you had to describe THE CHARACTER OF GOD, how would you describe it?

EXPLANATION (Romans 4)

Have you ever felt like you wanted to believe with faith alone, but felt like you didn’t have enough faith?

When, what happened?

Why is faith in God more important than faith in yourself?

APPLICATION (Romans 3:28 and James 2:23-24)

Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

Can you point to one thing you truly believe based upon your actions?

What?

After Sunday morning, how would you describe the relationship between faith and works?

MISSION

Why do Christians so often focus on the minimum salvation requirements when talking about the gospel?

What should our focus be...or more correctly, how would you explain to someone what it means to “be saved?”

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

Read Genesis 29:1-30 and ask yourself the following questions:

What was the last poor decision you made that came back to bite you in the butt?

Why do you think God allows sin to still happen?

Family & Group Discussion

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PART 44 GOD IN THIS PLACE GENESIS 28:10-22

Genesis 28:16

Ephesians 2:8-9

Romans 4:22

Romans 3:28

James 2:23-24

Exodus 4:31

Exodus 14:11-12

Romans 1:5

Romans 4:1-3; 17-21

Genesis 18:13-14

Joshua 24:2

Genesis 12:4

Romans 4:22-25

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Christmas for Kids
December 8th

Ornament Exchange
December 11th, 6p

Youth Christmas Pty
December 15th

GC Christmas Parties
info@ourelement.org

The Hobbit Movie
December 16th

Christmas Eve Services
7, 9 & 11pm



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or all upcoming events at: ourelement.org/calendar

GOD IN THIS PLACE

Genesis 28:16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.”

Like all of Genesis, today we again see God seeking His children with grace, truth, and love. Jacob, like Abraham (in chapter 15), received a confirmation of the promised blessing while asleep in the night. Abraham received God’s word “in a vision,” and Jacob saw the Lord in a dream. In both narratives, however, a divine confirmation was given regarding the establishment of the same covenant of promise:

- 1) the gift of the land,
- 2) the promise of great posterity,
- 3) blessing to all the nations.

In a remarkably similar fashion, the viewpoint of both chapters turns to the future “exile” of Abraham’s descendants and the promise of a “return.”

Abraham’s vision looked forward to the sojourn of God’s people in Egypt and also to the Lord’s deliverance in the Exodus. Jacob’s dream looked forward to his own sojourn to Haran and to the Lord’s eventual return of Jacob to the land promised to Abraham. In both cases the promise was that God would not forsake them and would return them to their land. The purpose, then, of the account of Jacob’s dream in this chapter is to show that in all the events of the narratives that follow we are to see a fulfillment of the promise made to Jacob.

Later, when Jacob returns from Laban’s house after many years, he returns to this same place, Bethel, where God again blesses him and promises to give him the land he had already promised to Abraham (35:12).

Jacob erected a “pillar” at the outset of his journey and named the place “Bethel” (28:18-19), so also when he returns, he erects another “pillar” and names the place “Bethel” again (35:14-15). At either end of the Jacob narratives, then, the writer has placed the reminder that God was with Jacob in all that he did and that God was faithful to his promises. Just as God is always faithful to us.

Saving faith is never presented to us by Jesus as, “Here’s the least amount of doctrinal truth you have to affirm to make the cut.” What Jesus *does* say is, “*through me, through my life, my death, and my resurrection...the presence, power, favor, and love of God is available. So, follow me. Trust me about everything, including, of course, your ultimate eternity as a free gift of grace you can’t earn.*”



This is what God says to Jacob all the way back in Genesis.

Saving faith is the posture of total dependence, complete trust that enables us to receive life from God. *James 2:23-24 and the Scripture were fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.* In context, James is not saying works needs to be added to faith for salvation, he is making the point that when faith is real, our lives and actions follow that faith.

When Jesus comes, he’s seems most interested in changing what we do! If you claim to believe something but your actions are different, your actions are a more reliable indicator than what you claim.

Romans 1:5 Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations. “The obedience of faith” literally means the obedience that COMES from faith; it’s simply the actions that show what it is that you really believe.

Abraham is deliberately not presented in the Old Testament as a brilliant spiritual genius who innovated the concept of ethical monotheism. He’s just a guy. He is full of ignorance, confusion, superstition, cowardice, and passivity. Why is his faith so strong? Because he chooses to leave his home and wait for a son that only God can bring, because he is not in denial about the fact that there is nothing he can do.

This story does not depend on Abraham’s certainty. IT DEPENDS ON GOD! The hero of this story isn’t Abraham. The hero of this story is God.

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