

## HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!

### Gen. 28:10-22

Bumper sticker: "My God is not dead; sorry about yours!"

more recently, "My God is not dead; I talked to Him this morning!"

Both were born out of theological climate of the sixties, they still speak in our modern context.

Theologians of the sixties weren't saying God was literally dead.

Their theology, much like early deists, was that God *might as well be dead!*

God doesn't make much difference because He never intervenes in our lives anyway.

Like clockmaker, God made the universe, wound it up, and went off to handle more important issues, leaving it to run on its own. **He's too busy to be involved in our lives.**

Many Christians' concept of God isn't much different.

We would never dare *say* God is dead or unconcerned with our lives.

Yet, many are "*practical atheists*." God never intervenes directly and He's probably too busy to be concerned about issues in our lives anyway.

### ARE YOU A "PRACTICAL ATHEIST?"

Francis Schaeffer's message: "*God is there, and He is not silent!*"

**Risk: Missing God's involvement in everyday living.**

[That issue underlies Jacob's encounter with God in **Gen. 28:10-22**]

**God begins to transform Jacob from a "deceiver" into "one who overcomes" with God – a victor! .**

**What changed him? Jacob came to the end of himself.**

He was desperate. Jacob is in over his head.

He got himself into a mess he can't get out of.

He went *a step too far*, manipulating parents; outsmarting his brother.

**Esau is out to get him.**

### JACOB TRANSFORMED INTO A VICTOR

[1st event occurs as Jacob is on his way to Uncle Laban's house. ]

**First encounter with God**

**Gen. 28:10-22**

He isn't sure what's ahead. Perhaps for the first time he's really afraid.

Jacob's in a mess he can't control; he's not sure what to do about it.

Jacob escaped for his life – his brother, Esau, was determined to kill him.

He was out in a wasteland, headed to his mother's home, to find a wife.

On the way to Haran, Jacob stops for the night.

He had to sleep on ground (no air mattress!), with a rock for a pillow.

### GOD'S PROMISE 28:10-15

*Jacob is worried about survival!*

At that point, he wasn't sure about all the "*blessings*" he received.

He wondered whether he would live to enjoy them!

With his head on a rock for a pillow, he sure didn't *feel* very blessed!

The place is bleak and barren—it's a desolate place to spend the night.

Jacob is all alone—for the first time in his life.  
That night God appears and promises to bless and protect him (10-13).  
This time it isn't Jacob's scheming that gets God's blessing!

God takes the initiative

Jacob—the deceiver—doesn't deserve it.

*God does it! –that's grace!*

**28:10-15            "I am with you"**

*"I will watch over you wherever you go"*

*"I will bring you back to this land."*

**Vision of "Jacob's ladder" 10-12**

We *AREN'T* climbing Jacob's ladder!

In fact, *Jacob* isn't climbing Jacob's ladder!

In fact, this *ISN'T* Jacob's ladder!

The ladder is a stairway "placed toward earth"

It comes out of heaven toward earth.

God is reaching out to Jacob—NOT the other way around!

Top is in heaven; bottom on earth.

Angels are going back and forth

They move from God's throne to Jacob's barren wilderness.

They are sent by God to minister to Jacob in the wilderness.

—just as they would later minister to Jesus!       =>

**God is taking care of him—even in the wilderness.**

**Jacob can stop worrying!**

**Jacob can stop scheming!**

**Jacob can trust God!**

**Renewal of covenant [Abraham => Isaac => *Jacob*!] 13-15**

**God confirms His blessing** (to Jacob as He had to Jacob's ancestors)

Many of these benefits have an application for us also, but not in the same way

—God hasn't made the same promise to us.

**God is the same God. 13a** —the God of his fathers

**God will give him the land. 13b**

**God will multiply his descendants 14a**

**All peoples will be blessed through him. 14b**

**God is with him 15a**

**God is watching over him to care for him. 15b**

He will provide all Jacob needs.

**God will bring him back! 15c**

**God will not abandon him 15d**

*Jacob doesn't deserve it! That's grace!*

**JACOB'S CONFESSION 28:16-17 His response:**

Jacob responds that if God will indeed bless and protect him, he will worship Him here (16-22)

**Jacob suddenly saw what he had never seen before!**

He suddenly realizes that God is there with him.

**God was in that place.**

**He was in God's house!**

This is God's place and He is with him!      Awesome!

It looked like a deserted wasteland, but God was there.

That's often the way God's presence works.

Things seem so *ordinary*—maybe even desolate.

It's hard to think God is present with us, watching and caring for us.

*Yet He's always there.*

If God could be present at Bethel, He could be present *anywhere*!

We just need to have our eyes open to become aware of His presence.

Ps. 139, David reminds us that God is always there: *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."* (139:7-10)

No matter where we find ourselves; no matter what our experience,

God is there, guiding us, holding us fast!

**Jacob had been living as if God weren't there**, as if he had to "pull everything off"

Jacob's deception, scheming to get his way, was based on faulty premise.

He had been acting as if God wasn't there

He had been acting as if God didn't care

He had been acting as if God had gone fishing

He had been trying to do everything himself.

He had been trying to open his own doors of opportunity.

God had to bring him out to a wasteland, where there wasn't even a Motel 6, to show him He had been there all along.

**He suddenly becomes aware that God is there**—God is with him.

God promises to give him everything he needs.

God had been there all along.

Jacob just didn't see Him.

He'll never be the same again because of his encounter with God.

For first time he expresses his own personal faith in Yahweh

He builds a memorial

Then Jacob **worshipped** God

*Becoming aware of God's presence and blessing inspires worship.*

[So Jacob makes a journal in stone; he sets up a memorial, to remind himself and future generations that God was with him there:]

**JACOB'S PILLAR 28:18-19**

Jacob builds a memorial—a reminder

This is "*Bethel*"—it's God's house!

[He makes a vow to commit Himself totally to this God,  
if God will keep His promise "*to never leave him nor forsake him.*"]

**JACOB'S VOW 28:20-22**

If God will be with me . . .

If God will watch over me . . .

If God will provide what I need . . .

If God will bring me back, . . .

=> *Then, this place will be recognized as "God's house"*

I will acknowledge you by giving a tithe

of all that *YOU GIVE ME!* recognition *it all* belongs to Him!

Jacob "the grasper" becomes a giver.

*When He realizes what God has given to him, he stops grasping and starts giving!*

Jacob responds by acknowledging God's presence and promising to identify with Yahweh, if He *indeed* goes with him and watches over him.

We have just such a promise! (Josh. 1:5; Heb 13:5-6; Matt. 28:18-20)

How often do *WE* spend time looking for something that's right in front of us? —right under our nose?

How often do we, like Jacob, spend time looking for God like that?

We look and look, while He's there all the time.

At least **FOUR WAYS GOD SHOWS HIMSELF TO US:**

**1. Obvious answers to prayer**

Anyone notice how God has worked in Donny Klosinski's accident?

**2. Unexpected evidences that God is taking care of us**

Donny K's accident is clear.

Our protection in ice and fog on I-80 going to Kearney

**3. Surprises in the way things work out—unusual linkage or timing**

Doug Rumford—36 Japanese Bibles delivered to local Gideons by mistake

**4. Assistance God gives to enable us to serve Him in a special way**

God just opens the door to an unexpected opportunity to serve Him.

*How about you?*

*Have you spotted God this week? Or at least recently?*

*"Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name.*

*Praise the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits . . ." (Ps. 103:1-5)*

Have you realized how often God intervenes, in the midst of our scheming to work things out, and demonstrates how futile our scheming is?

*Scripture is filled with such cases:*

**1. Jacob**

**2. Abraham's** scheme to have a child. God's plan: to give him a child through Sarah.

One of greatest sources of frustration for Abraham, Isaac, and future generations, was Ishmael, the result of Abraham's plan.

**3. Joseph's** plan to get out of prison: cupbearer tells Pharaoh to get him out of there!

The cupbearer forgot. God had a better plan.

Pharaoh needed help and Joseph was where he was supposed to be. It didn't seem like it!

*Where would he have been that day if he were a free man?*

**4. Ruth and Naomi**—They had a plan to send Ruth for food.

God sent them to a relative who would marry her and provide ALL their needs.

*Would God have been able to get them together if Naomi hadn't had a scheme?*

**5. David**—trying to escape from Saul, God caused Saul to make a restroom stop in the very cave where David was hiding, and placed Saul in his power!

**6. Zaccheus**—wanted to see Jesus, worked out a scheme to run up ahead, climb up a tree and hide, so he could see Jesus. Jesus was looking for him!

Not only did he get to see Jesus, Jesus went to his house to stay.

*What if he had never climbed the tree, could Jesus have found Him?*

**GOD IS THERE ALL THE TIME!**

God was there all the time! We're just slow to recognize His presence.

Like Jacob, we struggle and scheme, because we're not aware He's there.

We don't take time to observe the evidence of His presence.

We don't write down the "sightings."

*How about in your life? Have you seen Him recently?*

*Do you sense God's presence? Is there evidence of God's working in your life?*

Jeremiah 29:11-14: *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 **You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,**"*

**We know that God is everywhere.**

We know He's here, but sometimes we search for Him, as though He were missing.

Sometimes we feel so alone; we don't *feel* like He's here. We don't *feel* like He cares.

Sometimes we find ourselves crying out saying, "God, I believe in you. I want to walk with you, but right now I need a greater sense of your presence in my life."

Sometimes we feel that way because we haven't taken note of the evidence we do experience.

Sometimes we're just too busy to take note of God's presence, so we don't know He's been there.

**It doesn't always *feel* like He's with us!**

Tim Sledge suggests that at our modern pace, had we been in Moses' place, most of us would have run right by the burning bush. Who has time to stand there looking at it to realize that it isn't being consumed. We'd have been long gone before we ever knew it was unusual. We would have never met God in the bush that day!

**We don't keep track of the evidence**

**We need to go on a "God hunt" and take note of the "God sightings" in our life.**

When the "sightings" of the King begin to multiply, life becomes exciting.

When we keep track of His involvement in our everyday lives, we can stay excited about dreaming His dreams for us.

When we stop spotting God in our life, we become as secular as the rest of the world. We begin to look and act just like the "God is dead" theologians.

What real difference does God make in our lives anyway?

Have you seen Him recently?

How is He showing Himself in your life?

If we kept a notebook of our "sightings" we would all be amazed at just how near God really is, and how often He shows us that *He is there and He does care!*

He's there all the time!

We just need to keep track of our "sightings!"

We need to remind ourselves, and to praise Him for the joy of His presence.

If we would take note of the times that He's there for us, we might not be so afraid to dare to dream HIS dreams for us!

God still hasn't delivered Jacob from his troubles, but he has seen the Lord!

He was there all the time!

Therefore, Jacob worshiped!

When WE become aware of God's presence, even though we're still in a bleak barren place, we can worship!

***Awareness of God's presence and protection inspires us to worship Him, and to make a commitment to follow Him wherever He may take us!***