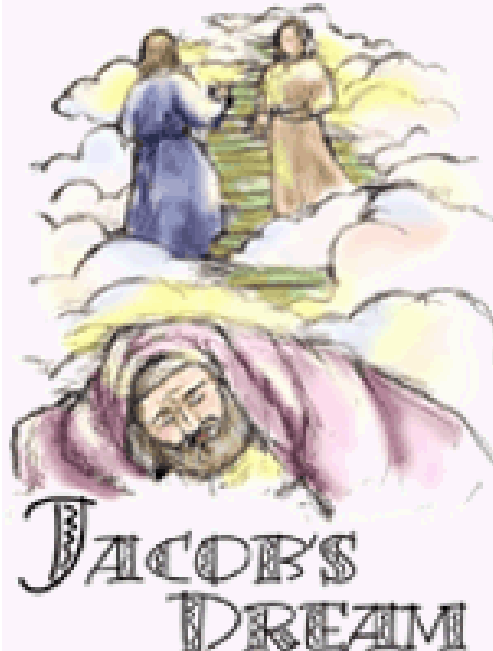


HALLELUJAH EXPERIENCES

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, June 10, 2007



Genesis 28:10 -19

Jacob left Beer-Sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the 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. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him 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**; and 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 all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. **Know that 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.**" Then Jacob woke 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 Jacob rose early in the morning, and he 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 that place **Bethel**; but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Revelation 3:20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

Here Ends Our Scripture Reading

This is a very easy to understand incident. Jacob slept – his head was resting on a stone – he had a dream that he would become the father of many offspring and that God will bless him and make him the father of a great nation. **One has to know and understand who this Jacob really was before one can appreciate the story of him hearing God speaking to him kindly in a dream.** You see – Jacob was a real scoundrel. He could resist everything **except temptation**. He certainly believed that the best way to get rid of **temptation is to yield to it**. No doubt, Jacob was **shrewd!** Do you remember how Jacob deceived his old, nearly blind father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing meant for his older brother, Esau? Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright. Esau was angry and threatened to kill his brother. Esau sought revenge and **Jacob fled into the hills for his very life.** **Nevertheless, the unexpected happened. Somehow, Jacob sensed God's presence,** even while he was alone and far away in the desert.

Sometimes we do encounter God at **unlikely** times in our lives and at **unlikely** places. Jacob was a fugitive running away. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night. He was uncertain what would happen next. He took a stone and used it for a pillow.

Jacob might **have been asleep** when he heard, "The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; **He was certainly wide awake when he responded:** "**Surely the LORD is in this place--and I did not know it!**" Jacob suddenly understood. He could hide from his brother but there was no way to get away from his God. "**How awesome is this place!** This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The place where Jacob spent the night was a special place because he had encountered God. He built an altar ~ and called the place **Bethel (house of God)** For him God was there! ~ Jacob responded with Worship and Praise!

That is why some of us are here today. **Somewhere along our journey, God has revealed himself to us.** We come to Church and worship in heart and spirit to affirm the relationship we have with **GOD**. Sometimes though, it is not easy to express what we really feel. Many people have the tendency not to show their emotion and hold back. Let us not be all that inhibited. Loved ones, as long as I am your Minister, please know that you are free to express your feelings during worship. Sometimes a heartfelt **"AMEN" or "HALLELUJAH"** can only add to the joy and atmosphere of worship! When the Worship leader stretches out a hand in blessing – please feel free to respond by blessing him right back. Children can often so freely express their feelings! During the past two weeks, Tienka and I had the privilege of having two of our granddaughters with us. Laughter and sincerity filled our house. They sure say it as they experience it! When they left, our home felt empty and nothing was in its place anyway.

When sincere emotion moves your heart, please do not fight the temptation to express your awareness of God's presence. There is something unique and special about true worship and praise to God.

One evening near the conclusion of a performance of Handel's Messiah, a little girl seated in the front of the Sanctuary captivated the attention of the audience. The choir and congregation were standing to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. This little girl was so moved and stirred by what she was experiencing, that she suddenly shouted **"Hallelujah!"** She was off key, but her praise came with so much emotion that it was a living lesson in authenticity for the congregation. **This, I believe was similar to a true act of worship!**

I have seen people having similar experiences even at their darkest moments. **I have seen many a deathbed transformed into joy when a brother or sister sensed that God was with them and they need not fear.** There was the day more half a century ago, engraved in my life when I as a 15-year-old kid experienced God's overwhelming presence and surrendered my life to God. **Although I have failed God many times since then ~ my God has never, not even once, failed me!**

In the movie, "Shaw shank redemption" ~ prison inmates unexpectedly heard the most beautiful music coming to them over the prison loudspeakers **Hardened criminals were transformed for a precious few moments as wonderful music filled the air.** Hollywood illustrated very effectively, what a **"Hallelujah"** experience can look like. Same thing happened to the New Testament Tax Collector, **Zacchaeus. He sensed God's presence while speaking with Jesus ~ and his life was never the same again.**

In the middle of nowhere, Jacob had such a **"Hallelujah!"** experience ~ an encounter with the living God. His only response, the only one that seems fitting at that moment was to call it **Bethel ~ house of God.** From that moment on, Jacob was never the same again! Before Bethel Jacob deceived his father and cheated his brother out of what lawfully was Esau's. **In reality, Jacob was nothing but a crook.** His transformation took place that night. Since that moment, he was a new and different person. From then on, he stayed in touch with God's transforming power. His children and their children would bless the world.

Is it still true? Can God's power touch and move you and me in such a way that the same transforming power be unleashed in our midst? Great deeds are being done; enormous changes are coming about whenever ordinary people like you and **me respond to God's presence in our lives.** Like Jacob, we can also have **"Hallelujah"** experiences with God. Sadly, there is also a saying: *God often visits us, but most of the time we are not in!*

The place where Jacob spent the night and had his dream became a holy place for him. At that unlikely place and unlikely time, he had his "Hallelujah!" experience with God. That night – that moment – that place would direct his faith – and inspire him until the last of his days on earth!

Much, much later John, the author of the book of Revelations, while alone, deported to an island called Patmos had a similar dream. In his dream, he saw someone that he describes as "The Son of Man" *Revelation 3:20* **Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.** You and I grew up with that winsome painting on many walls. Jesus, knocking on a door. Only one doorknob, on the inside! The door of your and my life! **Why not do so today? Again or for the first time! Open the door and this day will become your lasting "hallelujah" – experience.**

"Into my heart, into my heart ~ come into my heart Lord Jesus. Come in today ~ come in to stay ~ Come into my life Lord Jesus!"

AMEN

PASTORAL PRAYER – HALLELUJAH EXPERIENCES

God, our Father in and through Jesus Christ, Our Lord!

Help us find you!

Help us find you through the wonders of the world - through the skies that color, heavens that tremble, hills that rise, Mountains that soar, canyons that descend, plains that extend, machines that produce, structures that tower, engines that fly.

Help us find you through nature-through a drop of water, the seven seas, massive mountains, high hills, pointed peaks, a blade of grass, the flight of birds, the harmony of flowers, the rhythm of life, the pulse beat of growth.

Help us find you through the arts -through the conflict of a drama, the grandeur of a cantata, the cheer of a carol, the joy of a hymn, the colors of a painting, the rhythm of the dance, the flow of words, the lines of a temple.

Help us find you through the lives of people-through the laugh of a child, the winsomeness of a lad, the glow of youth, the vigor of manhood, the understanding of womanhood, the wisdom of age.

Help us find you through Scripture-through the vision of Abraham, the wrestling of Jacob, the purity of Joseph, the strength of Deborah, the conscience of Amos, the faith of a centurion, the vigor of Peter, the humility of Mary, the forgiveness of Stephen, the love of Paul.

Help us, O God, to find you today through the life of the man of Galilee, who walked the highways of the Holy Land, leaving behind pictures of you, our Father.

Be with us as we now bring our offerings – as we worship, sing, read, and pray. **Meet** with us and let this place become a holy place for us today, because of your presence. **Reveal** yourself to us through your spirit – and **let** this worship become a hallelujah experience for us this very day!

In Jesus Name, we pray! AMEN