

Series: Transition

August 27, 2017

## **Title: A New Song**

### **[Slide 1]**

**Text: Isaiah 42:8-13**

## **Jacob's Dream**

### **On the run:**

It had been another long day on the run. Now the young man lay on the ground, with a rock for a pillow, listening for any sound – a scuffed stone, a broken twig – that would betray the presence of his mortal enemy.

Was it just a few days ago that he had been living at home in Beersheba? His brother Esau was the outdoor type, always hunting and exploring. He, on the other hand, was the homebody: fooling around in the kitchen tent, scheming ways to get ahead in life.

And that was the problem: too much scheming had got him into this mess! He had figured out a way to trick his blind father into thinking he was the older brother and thus secure his father's blessing. He had dressed up to feel like and smell like Esau; he had gotten the blessing. But when Esau discovered the swindle, he had threatened to take matters into his own hands and get rid of his cheating little brother.

So now Jacob was on the run, exiled from mother, father, and everything else he had ever known. He had only the clothes on his back and the hope that his two legs could carry him out of harm's way before Esau tracked him down.

### **Jacob's Dream:**

He eventually fell asleep in his hilltop hiding place. When he did, he had a strange dream:

### **[Slide 2]**

*Genesis 28:12-15 NIV*

*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.*

**[Slide 3]**

*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....All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.*

**[Slide 4]**

*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."*

When Jacob woke up, he realized that he had been face to face with the LORD. He named the place Bethel: House of God.

**Covenants:**

So just what happened for poor, on-the-run Jacob that fateful night in Bethel? What had happened is that the great Creator God had come to him in a dream and *renewed* His covenant with Abraham's grandson.

God chose the covenant as the basis of His relationship with human beings made in His image. This covenant relationship was modeled on the treaties that kings made with each other. Throughout the story of the Bible, we see God entering into a covenant relationship with people. In covenant language, He is the Great King; they are called to be His loyal subjects. He is Lord; they are His servants. He is Father; they are his sons and daughters. When God appeared to Jacob in the dream, He did so as the King and Lord of the covenant that He had made with Jacob's grandfather, Abraham.

Covenants were written up in a well-defined form that began with the more powerful king stating his name and an historical reference that justified his role in the agreement. And that is what we find happening in Jacob's dream. The LORD says to him,

**"I am the LORD**, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac."

Then the LORD goes on to reaffirm the very covenant He made with Abraham. The great covenant promise was not just for one person or one generation; it was now being *renewed* in the life of a terrified and disoriented descendant running away from the Promised Land! No matter the failure, no matter the loss, no matter how long the exile from family and homeland, God would keep His promise:

*"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land."*

## **A New Time!**

### **Exile:**

Fast forward some 1400 years and another "Jacob" is stuck in exile far from home. This time it is the people known as Israel, bearing the name given to Jacob after another encounter with God. Like their forefather Jacob, Israel had tried to scheme and cheat her way to success, and it had backfired. Her enemies had destroyed her cities and her land. Her people had been carried off into exile. For Israel it seems like the ancient covenant has been long forgotten, a myth from an earlier and simpler time.

For Israel in exile the past has been virtually erased. The Temple, which housed the ancient covenant, had been burned to the ground. Its treasures sat in the temples of Babylon's gods. No more Promised Land. No more promises at all. Perhaps it was time to close the door to the past and move on.

### **The God of the Covenant:**

But then the same God who came to Jacob returns to Jacob's descendants in a prophetic vision. He announces that Israel will once again be His "servant" in a covenant relationship. He will once again be her "Lord." And then this sovereign LORD makes the supreme covenant announcement:

### **[Slide 5]**

*Isaiah 42:8 NIV*

*"I am the LORD; that is my name!*

*"I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."*

"I am the LORD; that is my name!" Here is the same covenant-making God renewing the ancient covenant with a new generation. This is how He had identified Himself as Covenant Partner to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses and Israel. He declares His Name. The Lord of the Covenant is present to renew His covenant with exiled Israel. As the Lord of this covenant He demands complete loyalty and honor.

It's time to begin again. The promise that the LORD made to Jacob still holds:

*"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land."*

### **A new time!**

A renewed covenant means a fresh start. It means no more of the "same old/same old." It means that God Himself has turned a fresh page and the story that was stuck in the failures of the past can take a new turn! God is up to something:

### **[Slide 6]**

*Isaiah 42:9 NIV*

*"See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."*

God reminds His people that everything He said would happen did in fact come to pass. This is part of the covenant history of their relationship. When they were faithful to God as Covenant Partner, they experienced His protection and blessing. When they broke faith with God as Covenant Partner, they paid the price for their disloyalty. This is what God means when He speaks of "the former things" that have happened.

But this is a new time. God says: "New things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

God is announcing nothing less than the renewal of the ancient covenant.

### **A New Song**

**A new time calls for a new song:**

A new beginning calls for a new song – a song of praise and honor to the God who makes things new:

**[Slide 7]**

*Isaiah 42:10-12 NIV*

*Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.*

**[Slide 8]**

*Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops.*

*Let them give glory to the LORD and proclaim his praise in the islands.*

Here is a song that isn't just sung in church or temple. It rings out from the forgotten wastelands of the earth: from within the sea and from the wilderness, from desert tents and cliff tops!

**Jacob's vow:**

Remember Jacob, the young man who dreamed of a staircase to Heaven? When Jacob woke up the next morning he sang his own new song of praise to God's glory.

First, he turned his stone pillow into a memorial of God's presence:

**[Slide 9]**

*Genesis 28:18-19a NIV*

*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. He called the place Bethel [which means "House of God"]*

Then he made a vow to put his trust in the LORD as his Covenant Partner:

**[Slide 10]**

*Genesis 28:20-22 NIV*

*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, so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God 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."*

The covenant was renewed.

### **A New Song:**

One Friday evening at the beginning of Passover, a son of Jacob was laid to rest on a stone bed in a rock-carved musty tomb. He had been exiled outside the city walls of Jerusalem and put to death on a Roman cross. No Covenant God for Him! He was cursed, despised, rejected.

But on Sunday morning the rock-cut tomb was transformed from the death's door to the doorway to eternal life! The exile's stone pillow became a monument to Jesus' victory over death. The LORD, the God of the ancient covenant, returned in the person of His Son to be our Covenant Partner.

Now it is to you and me that God says: "I am the LORD; that is my name!" It is our turn to turn our stone pillows into monuments to God's presence. It is our turn to commit our life journey to Him.

When we do God will do for us what He did for Jacob and Jesus:

### **[Slide 11]**

*Isaiah 42:13 NIV*

*The LORD will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.*

And that's something to sing about.