

## TEACHING HINTS AND HELPS

This section contains teaching material for the various grades and from different points of view.

## For Bible Class Teachers

## AN ANALYSIS

It has been truly said that "Abraham was a man of active faith, Isaac a man of passive submission, and Jacob a man of struggling trial." In this lesson he appears at Bethel, on his journey from Beer-sheba. Probably he arrived there at sunset when the gates were shut, and was obliged to sleep in the open field. In the record of that night's experience, we note:

1. *Jacob's vision—what he saw and heard.* (a) He saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and "the Lord stood above it." Whether the ladder was of the ordinary structure, or consisted of mountain terraces, is of no consequence. The main thing is that it symbolized what the Lord Jesus, who "stood above it," accomplished. He removed the gulf of separation between God and man, united heaven and earth. He is "the way," John 14:6; the "new and living way," Heb. 10:20. He "hath reconciled us" to God, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19, and thus secured to us the ministry of angels and all blessings pertaining to time and eternity, John 1:51. (b) Jacob not only saw a marvellous symbol of reconciliation, but also heard the voice of the Lord assuring him specifically of two things. First, that all the covenant promises made to Abraham and Isaac would certainly be fulfilled in his experience and that of his posterity, vs. 13, 14. Second, that He would be with him as his keeper, guide and accomplisher of every word that had been spoken. Thus his birth-right and his personal safety were guaranteed.

2. *Jacob's impressions from the vision.* (a) He was convinced of his own ignorance. "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not," v. 16. The confession of personal ignorance is the first step towards the acquisition of knowledge. The great truth to which Jacob was oblivious—that God is

everywhere—is ignored by multitudes. (b) Jacob "was afraid"—filled with awe. Why was this? The vision and the words given him were pre-eminently encouraging. He saw the Lord standing, ready to help, as Stephen saw Him, Acts 7:55. Promise after promise was made to him. Why this fear? It is the solemn reverence becoming "the house of God and the gate of heaven," v. 17. The vision of God so impressed prophets and apostles, Isa. 6:1-5; Rev. 1:17. If we have no such feeling, it is because we are ignorant of God.

3. *Jacob's vow.* (a) The awakening of feeling, strong emotion, led to prompt action. "He rose up early." He set up a memorial pillar. He gave the place a new name suggested by his experience, vs. 18, 19. Pious feelings should always find expression in corresponding actions. They do so when real, and not hypocritical sham. It is not enough to say "Lord, Lord," Matt. 7:21. The naked and hungry need more than kind words. Jas. 2:15, 16. (b) The vow was a voluntary covenanting with God—Jacob's response to what God had promised. "If God," etc.; i.e., since, or inasmuch, as "God will be with me," etc., v. 20. This is not an expression of doubt, but of confidence. (c) The vow was to cleave to the Lord as his God, v. 21, and to serve him with his substance. "I will surely give the tenth unto thee," v. 22. Abraham did the same, ch. 14:20. This giving of the tenth afterwards became the law, Lev. 27:30.

## For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

There is some danger of the interest being absorbed by the mere framework—the departure of Jacob from home, his lonely journey, his hard bed and stony pillow, the ladder and the angels—unless care be taken at each step to go to the heart of the lesson, a lesson exceeding rich in instruction. Perhaps this outline may assist. It will be well, however, not to announce the headings beforehand, but to so present the story as to lead up naturally to each heading in turn.

1. *A man who left God out of account.* Go