

JACOB AT BETHEL

A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning February 27th, 1859

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“Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated.” Romans 9:13

UPON this greatest of all differences between man and man; upon this greatest of all contrastive destinies; upon this greatest of all extremes of day and night, for on the one side there is no night, and on the other side there is no day; upon this greatest of all extremes of favor and wrath, of blessing and cursing, of salvation and condemnation, of degradation and glorification; upon this solemn scene, the apostle enters with great depth of feeling, with great care, and with great solemnity. He seemed to feel what we all, at times, more or less feel; he looked around, and saw his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh, still in the gall of bitterness, in the bond of iniquity; and it appears that his countrymen reckoned him a dreadful enemy to them and to their nation. And therefore, Christ was reckoned a great drawback, a great hindrance to their national prosperity; and so you will find, that Caiaphas as the high priest, gave it as his advice, that Jesus Christ should die, and that they should get rid of him; and then, that the children of God, (that is, the children of Israel after the flesh; for that is what Caiaphas meant by the children of God,) would be gathered together in one; if we can get rid, he said, of this Jesus of Nazareth, our nation will prosper. And now, this same Paul being a zealous follower of the same Jesus Christ, he also is regarded as an enemy to the nation. It appears that they looked upon him in this light; and therefore, to contradict this, and to show that the great truths which he had received, did not harden his heart, and did not make him unconcerned about the souls of men, and did not make him an enemy to his nation, he says, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh;” not that he did really wish himself accursed from Christ; but he had a strong feeling; and this phrase must be taken as indicative of that which could not be literally expressed; it is a sort of hyperbole to denote that he would undergo anything for their welfare; therefore, he met the accusation, and at the same time expressed the deep feeling that he had for the souls of men, as well as for the glory of God. But you will observe, that this deep feeling which he had for the souls of men, did not lead the apostle to set aside God's truth; it did not lead him into error; it did not lead him into that state of mind, in which it appeared to him, that the truth of God was in his way, and so he would set God's truth aside, and adopt a system, which would be more in accordance with his natural feelings; he did not do this. No. He goes on afterwards to say, “Not as though the Word of God has taken none

effect; for they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, in Isaac shall your seed be called; that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Therefore, the apostle, before he comes into the solemnities of our text, into the great subject contained in our text, thus expresses himself; and in this way he harmonizes his concern for the souls of men with the truth of God; and he well knew that while he felt this concern for the souls of men, that the real welfare of the souls of men can be brought about only by the truth. We must not therefore, make God's truth subservient to our feelings, but our feelings must be subservient to that truth. He therefore goes on, withholding nothing, and thus comes to the language of our text to illustrate his point, that there are a people that are already virtually and eternally lost, that are hated sovereignly by the great God, and hated eternally by him; and that the others are loved sovereignly by the blessed God, and loved eternally by him. So that our text before we have done with it, will, after all, prove to be a great and a solemn parallelism; so that here are the two lines, the hated and the loved, running along parallel with each other, both of them originating in the sovereignty of God, and both continuing according to that sovereignty. But that will not be our subject this morning; for it is most likely these words will occupy our attention for two, if not three, Lord's-day mornings.

My subject this morning, then will be, not God's love to Jacob, but *the evidences of God's love to Jacob*. Now, where the Lord loves, he deals with the objects of his love in accordance with that love; and the Lord's dealings with Jacob are a pattern of the way in which he will deal with all the true seed of Jacob; so that if we are a part of those who are loved, then that must be evidenced by the Lord dealing with us in substance, I don't say exactly in form and circumstance, but in substance, or essentially, as he dealt with Jacob. And the Lord, we find, in dealing with Jacob, produced the fruits of his love in Jacob; for Jacob's conduct corresponded with the dealings of the Lord with him; although I am aware that the excellency of Jacob, and that before we have done, will appear as conspicuous as anything we have to say, lay in that which is not appreciated by man.

We shall have much to say, as we go along upon this; and herein lay the excellency of Jacob: he abode faithfully by the truth which God revealed to him; so that he was no apostate; and as the Lord loved him without a drawback, so he loved the Lord without a drawback; and there was no essential drawback in Jacob's character; there were many circumstantial drawbacks; but the accidental and the essential are very different; the circumstantial, and that which is essential: there is a mighty difference between the two.

I shall, therefore, notice the Lord's dealings with Jacob under five departments; first *revelation*; secondly, *preservation*; third, *nomination*; fourth, *salvation*: fifth, *glorification*: and these five will, I think set before us the matter in that way, that will bring out something of the truth here declared concerning him, "Jacob have I loved."

First: Now, I first notice, REVELATION. Now, that same revelation which the Lord made to Jacob, he makes to all Jacob's seed; and the effects which that revelation produced upon Jacob, are produced upon all his seed, so as to bring us to where John says we shall be brought, if God loves us; "We love him, because he first loved us." Now what was the kind of revelation? Why, the first part of the revelation was a way from earth to heaven. The Lord revealed to Jacob a ladder; "This ladder was set upon the earth, and the top thereof reached unto heaven." Now, what sort of

ladder must that be, that can reach from earth to heaven? "The Lord stood above it," it is said. Let us see if we can get at this mystery; for we have no right to conclude that the Lord loves us, only on the ground of some revelation made to us in that way that it is not made to the man that knows not God. Now, this ladder unquestionably means the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not think that I am speaking irreverently, when I say, the dear Savior had to make this ladder, that should reach from earth to heaven. And I think I am right in this idea, because the Savior in the last verse of the first chapter of John, said to Nathaniel, "Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Jesus Christ then had to make the ladder that should reach from earth to heaven. And if you ask, what that ladder is? my answer at once is, his mediatorial work. And when the Savior said, "It is finished," that ladder was set up; and it has never been taken down, and never will be taken down, until the last of God's elect shall thereby ascend up into the presence of God. And therefore, it simply means, then, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the way to heaven. This ladder points out the Savior as the way from earth to heaven. And it is very significant that "The top thereof reached to heaven." See how clear the matter is. Just apply this to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior went to the end of the law; his work is perfect. If we notice any of the characters which he sustains, we shall find that they all reached all the way. But however, let us keep to the one, his finished work; let us look at that one aspect of it for a moment, that it is finished. Now, it is that that brings us to heaven. We want nothing else; let us be put into the way of his righteousness, into the way of his atonement; that he is the end of the law; that the heavens can be opened unto us in no way but by this finished work of Christ that reaches to heaven; that we can have access to God in no way but by this finished work of Christ: now we want nothing else to bring us to heaven but this work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So then, friends, if we are brought into the way of his righteousness, let it be known to you that "He that believes in him is justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." If we are put into the way of his perfect work, that perfect work will bring us to heaven without any works whatsoever of our own. Though there will be works of our own, as I shall presently show, yet it is the ladder alone, the work of Jesus Christ, his precious atonement, that reaches to heaven. Oh, put me into the way of his righteousness! there all impediments are out of the way; there is no hindrance. Put me into the way of his perfect work; there is no hindrance. And you see this ladder reaching to heaven, carries with it the idea of something very high. And then, "The Lord stood above it." There is something very expressive in that; as though it should represent God the Father looking, or standing upon, as it were, the finished work of Christ; as though God the Father will meet us nowhere but at the top of the ladder, nowhere but where Christ finished the work; that he will meet us nowhere but where the work of Christ is finished, where it is complete; because there, at that place, the top, if I may so speak, the end, there transgression is finished; there sin is ended; there entire reconciliation is made for iniquity: here God the Father receives his people; and here it is, in this way, that the Holy Spirit comes to us; in a word, it is the way in which God deals with man, and man with God. What say you, then, to this revelation? Is it so with us? Are we brought to see that nothing but the way of Christ's finished righteousness can bring us from under the law, and bring us to heaven? Are we resting upon that, looking to that, wanting no other way but that? Now, that is the first part then, of the revelation that was made to Jacob. And notice again the Savior's words, "You shall see heaven opened." Yes, heaven is opened; the love of God is opened unto us; the counsels of God are opened unto us; the everlasting covenant is opened to us; an inheritance eternal is here opened to us; life is opened to us, rest is opened to us; everything is opened to us in this way, by the complete work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second part of this revelation is *relationship*. The Lord said, "I am the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac." That is the second part of the revelation. Just so now; if the Lord be our teacher, he will reveal to us this relationship. It is a relationship in Christ Jesus. There is an infinite and an eternal difference between the Lord being the God of Adam, and his being the God of Abraham; the first simply means *creation and legislation*; but his being the God of Abraham means discriminating grace, means eternal blessedness, means a world of glory to come, means an everlasting forgiveness, means indissoluble oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the second part of the revelation, then, this relationship with Christ Jesus. Now who was it that constituted, that formed this relationship? Let us hear the word of the Lord upon the matter. It is said that "he passed by the nature of angels he did not mean to enter into such a relationship with angels: "he passed by the nature of angels, and took upon him the seed of Abraham." But who were the seed of Abraham? The first chapter of Ephesians, with many other Scriptures, will show us that they were a people chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; and being chosen in Christ, and given to him, when Christ came and took our nature, he took upon him this people; in this way became Surety for their sins, Surety for their souls, Surety for their persons, Surety for their eternal welfare; everything resting upon him. Oh, it is a glorious relationship; a relationship founded, I say, on the complexity of the dear Savior; originated in the good pleasure of God, confirmed by the Mediator's precious atoning blood, and will be carried out by the immutability of the councils of the blessed God. Now, are these two things revealed to us? Are we brought into the way of Christ's finished work? and is this finished work of Christ's revealed to us, as to endear the Father to us who made this provision for us? Is it so revealed to us, as to make us in that completeness of his work, love the dear Savior? Is it so revealed to us as to make us in that, love the blessed Spirit? Does it endear to us the Eternal Three? Why, you cannot be brought into this way without answering in the affirmative. Why, you will say, who can help it? Here is God the Father, with nothing but love for me; he has laid all my sins upon his dear Son. Here is Jesus Christ with nothing but love for me; he gave himself for me, he took all my sins away. Here is the Holy Ghost with nothing but love for me; he has testified that Christ has by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified. Oh, here it is the Christian may joyfully live, and here the Christian may joyfully die; and here we dwell with our God for ever. Here is the relationship, then. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac." Would you wish that matter to be broken up? Would you like that matter to be altered? No, says one; I should not like the matter to be broken, up or altered; but I think it may be preached too much. Do you? Where is your Scripture for that? The apostle says that his mission was "to preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ;" and that relationship to him is not capable of being lost, it is an indissoluble relationship to him, is this not one of the essential riches of Christ? And that we can have too much of this freedom, too much of the spirit of adoption, too much of God, too much of Christ, is what I never could, since I knew the Lord, understand, and do not wish to understand. My Bible says that God is to be all and in all; and if God is to be all and in all ultimately, how can we have too much of him now? That is my answer to all such objections.

The next part of this revelation is that of the promised seed, or rather the promised land, I should say; "the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it." I can never, or hardly ever think of this promise, or refer to this promise, without thinking of a good old Christian I knew many years ago, who is now in glory. He got just as far as the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." That was almost always his answer. I used to say, Well, how are matters with you now? He was a very rich man; he had nothing very much to trouble him in this world; but in his own soul he was tried;

and I was glad of it. Well, he said, I seem to hang upon that; I am a poor sinner; I have a little hope there; I stand on that Scripture. Then I said, you mean to say you rest there? Well, he said, I seem to rest upon that Scripture more than upon any other; because I cannot say I am not poor and needy, but I can see I am poor and needy; that I do need the Lord's mercy and salvation. Well then, I said, there is a promise for you; let us take the words of the Lord to Jacob, "the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it." Well, if you get that land you will do well; for it says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Ah, he said, if I get that land, I shall do well. A little time after that he said, Really what you said to me the other day has so cheered me; and he gave two sovereigns; one for myself, and one to give away to the poor; and I thought that was a very good way of expressing his feelings; and really, he said, it has made me feel so comfortable that really I seem to be more happy than ever. It is very beautiful; "the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it." Jacob was lying on the promised land: it was on the promised land that he was lying. So, it is now; the Lord brings a poor sinner to hope upon some word, some promise, some Scripture; and then the Lord says, "The land whereon you lie will I give unto you." Oh, it is a great thing to have a piece of land in this gospel sense of the word to rest our souls upon. The promise is yea and amen, and never was broken yet.

The next part of the revelation, is the promised seed. "In you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now, this means Christ, as being appointed to bruise the serpent's head; this means Christ, as being appointed to accomplish the warfare, to establish pardon, and to bring in that which the Lord has promised. But again, "I am with you, and will keep you in all places whither you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." Just so it is now, "I am with you, and will keep you." Oh, say some, but Jacob was not kept; look at all the cunning things he did. Ah, he was kept safe for all that. Oh, but he did so and so, and so and so, and so and so. That's it; that's just the spirit of the present age; if they can so represent the prophets and the ancients that there was something about them as a reason why the Lord blessed them, and took care of them; then our modern Pharisees, duty-faith men, free-will people in disguise, gain their point; they cannot understand it. But here is the promise; God entered into a positive promise that he would be with Jacob and keep him. I shall have, therefore, to trace out the fulfilment of this promise; and it must be fulfilled not by means of Jacob's goodness, and yet we shall have to show there was a goodness in him too. The Lord said he would keep him; the promise is yea and amen; and if the promise be not fulfilled, then the Lord has left his own positive promise. The promise is in Christ Jesus; mark this; the seed of the woman is mentioned, first, in whom we are to be blessed. "I am with you, and will keep you in all places whither you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." And the Lord did do so: it is easily proved. Go back to our old idea; we shall have to amplify, and we shall have to prove it, even on Jacob's dying bed, that he was kept in God's truth; he was kept in the faith of it, in the love of it, in the life of it, in the freedom of it, and kept in decision for it, to the last; and therein lay the preservation. People now days if they can preserve a good name, and preserve plenty of money, and plenty of fleshly respect, and plenty of human applause, Oh, they say, the Lord has done wonderful things for me; he has been very good to me; while at the same time, that man has gone over to duty-faith, or free-will, or some false gospel. Ah, that man is getting on well. Yes, as the ox that is fattening for the slaughter; just the same; and the preservation is no preservation at all, except for damnation; that's what it is. Such a man is not preserved in the truth, he is not preserved in the gospel sense of the word. Now the Lord then revealed these promises. Let us come down to our own soul's experience;

I ask every one of you, that know your own hearts, if the promise was not positive that God would be with you, if the promise was not yea and amen, that would be with you; if his being with you rested on anything else, could you hope in such a promise, if it were not absolute, as certain as the eternal being of the blessed God? If you know your own heart, you could hope in nothing else. I could no more hope in a duty-faith promise, in an Arminian promise, than I could hope in the wind; not the slightest whatever. And therefore, if you are humbled down, truly, and know your own heart, and know what you are, you will feel sure, that if the promise be not thus positive, independent of your goodness and your badness, there is no hope of the Lord being with you. But I will (says the Lord,) keep you where you are; I have brought you now into the truth; I have brought you into the way to heaven, into this new covenant relationship, and into these promises, and I will keep you there, I will keep you where I have brought you. Yes, and so he did.

Well now, let us look at the effects of these revelations. The effects were delightful. At first Jacob was afraid. There is a sermon in printⁱ, that ridicules Jacob in his being afraid of God; and says, "If he had been a man of faith, he would not have been afraid; that there was no occasion to be afraid of God." There is a sermon that calls him "*contemptible Jacob* in this, that calls him *a mere bargain maker*. Jacob is ridiculed all through this part of the chapter." Well, let men do so; let us examine the matter by the light of God's truth. He was afraid. What fear was it? Was it a slavish fear? No. Was it a fear of terror? No. It was a fear of reverence; solemn reverence; it was a fear that no natural man could never enter into. The Lord spoke to Cain, and he did not fear, not the same as Jacob did. The Lord spoke to Laban, and he did not fear, not the same as Jacob did; and the word of God speaks to natural men now, but they do not fear in the same manner as the child of God does. Let Jacob explain himself, "The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." It was a fear of reverence. I did not know, Lord, that you were here; you know that I fear you; you know that I love you; you know I prize you; for although this was the first revelation recorded made to Jacob, Jacob was a good man long before this, at least I think so. I shall have to prove before I have done with the subject, that Jacob was 76 years old when this revelation was made to him; and yet some think he was not a good man when he complied with the advice of his mother. What! you are going to apologize for it, then, say some. No, I'm not going to do that. That was not an essential matter, after all; it was only a circumstantial matter. I can easily prove that when I come to it; yes, and ten to one, if I don't prove to you that some of you have done similar things. I'll try it, at any rate; I'll bring you in if I can to let down your pride; ah, that I will. But did Jacob appreciate the revelation the Lord made to him, did he understand it? No, says duty-faith, he did not; he was afraid of God, and did not appreciate what God had done. This is what men say. Let us see whether he did appreciate it. Well, what do you think of it, Jacob? Why, he says "This is none other than the house of God." What! this ladder, this way from earth to heaven, is that where God dwells? Yes, he dwells in Christ Jesus. What! this new covenant relationship, is that where God dwells? Yes! What! in these promises, is that where God dwells? Yes; Jacob wraps up the various parts of the revelation made to him, and says, all the parts form the one great meeting place of God and man. "This is none other than the house of God." And what next? "And the gate of heaven;" the gate of heaven. So with you, if you are brought into the finished work of Christ, into new covenant relationship, as Jacob was, into the knowledge of the promised seed, as he was; into the revelation of the yea and amen promises, as he was; you may sum up the whole as he did, or at least be content with his summary that "this is the house of God." O Lord, let me dwell here, let me dwell here in this way to heaven; let me dwell here in this dear relationship; let me dwell here with this promised seed; let me dwell here with these yea and amen promises. Let mortal life, the world, and everything in

it, all pass away; but if I am brought to do well here, then here I have “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;” let palaces and mansions go, let the universe itself go, let the whole pass away, I shall be left in my Father’s house where there are many mansions, there to dwell for ever and ever. Jacob was not contemptible, but admirable. “This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” He could not forget it. You would not like to forget this, would you, Jacob? I would not forget it forever sir. He took the stone which he had laid for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar of memorial, would not forget this forever, sir. Oh, let the very place be remembered. “And he poured oil upon the top of it.” That was all he could do, he had nothing but his staff and little bundle, and so on; he poured oil upon it, anointing the pillar of memorial. Where shall I look for the antitypical anointing: Christ Jesus, who was anointed; and there stands the Savior now, the great memorial of God’s everlasting love to our souls. Therefore, this pillar shall be God’s house, that is, the memorial of it. And he did not forget it; so, my hearers, with us; if taught of God we shall desire, not to forget; not to forget the gospel; not to forget where we were as sinners; not to forget how we were saved, how we are saved, and how we shall be saved. “He called the place Bethel:” *the house of God*: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.” Now, Luz means *separation*. So, Jesus Christ was consecrated, set apart first, from all eternity, for the great work, for which he appeared in the world; his people were in the counsels of God set apart; they were the city set apart, sanctified of God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus, and called. Therefore, he who was to become God’s house was set apart first; they who shall become of God’s house were set apart at the first.

But then Jacob, in the next department, is reviled now days as a *bargain maker*. “He vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me.” Contemptible, they sayⁱⁱ, for Jacob to say such a thing. But, friends, suppose, with all our inability to understand the *if* (for myself I see no difficulty in the *if*;) suppose with all the contempt that is poured upon Jacob for making that vow; suppose after all the learned do in tearing that vow to pieces, and holding him up to ridicule for his weakness and unbelief in making such a vow, suppose, after all this, it should turn out that God himself in after days referred to that vow, and expressed his approbation of it; what would you say then? Who would you side with then? The man who ridicules Jacob in making such a vow, or the God that mentions it, and sanctions it; on which side will you be? Ah, but you haven’t proved it yet. But I will before I close; and that must not be long first. Well, “Jacob vowed a vow, and said, if God will be with me.” I do not wonder at the *if*; it was not an unbelieving *if*; he knew God would be with him; it was not an infidel *if*; it was a modesty *if* an *if* of reverence, an *if* of humility. Recollect, my hearers, that Jacob, just a few days previously, had fallen in with that foolish plan of his mother’s; there he was wrong, if you please; seeking a temporal blessing, for it was only a temporal blessing that he sought; after all Jacob did not seek to get a spiritual blessing by the plan he adopted. That’s where people err. I shall have to show you, from God’s own word, when I come to that part, that the blessings which Isaac bestowed, and the blessings which God bestowed, are distinct; the one being temporal, and the other spiritual. Now Jacob had just done what he was ashamed of; and the Lord met him upon the very back of that. Therefore, Jacob, conscious of what he was, said, “If God will be with me.” O Lord, *if* you will; is it possible that you will be with such a wretch as I am, such a sinner as I am, such a deceiver and liar as I have been; such a poor creature as I am? I knew better too, and yet I did it. “*If* the Lord will be with me.” Oh, is it possible? Why does he speak in this way? Because there is any doubt? No! It is humility; it is reverence, in contrast to impudence, to presumption. The *if*, does not necessarily imply uncertainty. “If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself.” Does the *if* there, imply uncertainty? Certainly not. “*If* I go not away,

the Comforter will not come;” no uncertainty there. The *if* then, here, is an *if* of humility, of reverence. “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; then shall the Lord be my God.” The Christian can understand this. But if the Lord be with you, and show himself on your behalf, then he is your God in a manifest way. That appears to me to be the meaning of it. And I think to show this, Jacob set up this stone in the same place, for a pillar, and said, “This shall be God’s house:” after he had said the “*If*,” he set up that stone to be a memorial. Does not that show that his vow was a vow, not of unbelief, but of reverence?

But, in conclusion now, if you step out of the 28th chapter into the 31st chapter of Genesis, just open you Bibles, and look at the 13th verse of that chapter, and you have these words, as Jacob was about to return, the Lord intended he should return, according to his promise, to his country and to his kindred, the Lord said, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you *vowed a vow unto me*; now arise, get you out from this land, and return unto the land of your kindred.” There is God’s own sanction of his former promise, “I am the God of Bethel.” Oh, twenty years have rolled away since that, and are you the God of Bethel still? Is the ladder still up? Are the heavens still open? Does the relationship still continue? Is the promised seed still flourishing? Are the promises still the same? Is it then, that with you there is not the shadow of a turning? Are you still the same, after all my crooks, and windings, and quarrels with old Laban, for I have had as many quarrels with him as there are days in the year almost? And, I have changed a thousand times, but then, Lord, are you still the same? Yes: I am the same God now, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto me.” I accepted the vow; you know what you said, “Of all that you shall give me.” Why, it was a good, safe vow; it was not a boasting, it was a sure vow, “Of all that you shall give me.” With all his *ifs*, he would not go away, from the Lord. “Of all that you shall give me:” then you are not going to bring anything to the Lord, Jacob? Oh, no: “Of all that you shall give me, I will surely give the tenth unto you.” Jacob vowed a vow; and Jacob did so: “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar.” So then, these twenty years’ difficulties, (and he certainly had some, and a great many too), had not altered either the Lord or Jacob. There now, just now you said Jacob had changed a thousand times. Yes, in matters natural, but not in matters spiritual: no, no! Now, Jacob, I know you are still the same you have not forgotten the ladder; you have not forgotten the relationship; you haven’t forgotten the promised seed; you haven’t forgotten the yea and amen promises. Now, I am the same, and you are the same, therefore, we will meet upon the same ground as we met upon before: “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and vowed a vow unto me.” Therefore, I will take care of you; you know what I said to you, Jacob; I said, I would bring you again into the land. That is twenty years ago: “Now, therefore, arise, get you out from this land, and return unto the land of your kindred.” I told you what I would do; I am the same, and you are the same. I know, Jacob, you have changed your position in temporal matters, but in spiritual things you are the same; I am the God of Bethel still, and you love the same God, and the same truth. Thus, then, friends, you see from the 31st chapter, that God sanctions the vow given in the 28th chapter. I don’t know what effect public ridicule of God’s ancient servants may have upon your minds, but the effect it has upon my mind is to drive me to search God’s blessed word, and to cry for that wisdom that descends *from above*.

ⁱ The sermon referred to here is Sermon number 239 by Charles Spurgeon. It was preached just over a month before James Wells sermon (Spurgeon on January 16th 1859: Wells on February 27th). Following is an extract from that sermon. It is given so that the reader may judge for him or herself which is the yea and amen gospel truth.

Spurgeon's sermon is available on from multiple sources on the internet. He stated: "I was struck the other day with that vision that Jacob had at Bethel: it seemed to me a most extraordinary development of Jacob's bargain-making spirit. You know he lay down, and God was pleased to open the doors of heaven to him, so that he saw God sitting at the top of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. What do you suppose he said as soon as he awoke? Well, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Why, if Jacob had had faith, he would not have been afraid of God: on the contrary, he would have rejoiced that God had thus permitted him to hold fellowship with him. Now, hear Jacob's bargain. God had simply said to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you liest, to you will I give it, and to your seed." He did not say anything about what Jacob was to do: God only said, I will do it,— "Behold I am with you, and will keep you in all places whither you goest, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." Now, can you believe, that after God had spoken face to face with Jacob, that he would have had the impudence to try and make a bargain with God? But he did. He begins and says, "If—" There now, the man has had a vision, and an absolute promise from God, and yet he begins with an "If." That is bargain-making with a vengeance! "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then" —not without—mark, he is going to hold God to his bargain—"then shall, the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that you shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto you." I marvel at this! If I did not know something about my own nature, I should be utterly unable to understand it. What! a man that has talked with God, then begin to make a bargain with him! that has seen the only way of access between heaven and earth, the ladder Christ Jesus, and has had a covenant made between himself and God, a covenant that is all on God's part—all a promise—and yet wants after that to hold God to the bargain: as if he were afraid God would break his promise! Oh! this was vile indeed!"

ⁱⁱ Again with reference to Spurgeon.