

# A Study of Genesis: Sanctuary and Grace

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**Scripture Focus:** Genesis 27:41 – 28:5

Sanctuary: A place of worship, a place of refuge. The first recipient of sanctuary as refuge in Genesis was Cain, lest the murderer of his brother become the murdered. (Gen. 4:15-16) Now Jacob becomes the seeker of sanctuary, lest the defrauder of his brother becomes the murdered.

Notice it is his mother, Rebekah, who sends Jacob away to find sanctuary. And Isaac too has his directive in sending Jacob on his way. Both parents have motives in doing so, goals they hope to accomplish. At this point, the pursuit of sanctuary is not at God's behest or God's blessing.

- What is Rebekah's motive in sending Jacob away as found in 27:42-45?
- What is Jacob's motive as found in 27:46 - 28:5?

Let's think a little more about "sanctuary," as we depart from this story, until next week.

- Think of the word "sanctuary." What comes to mind? Consider what sanctuary means in a practical or secular sense (not religious or spiritual). For instance, what is accomplished when a "bird sanctuary" is established?
- Now, what might "sanctuary" mean spiritually as it relates to our fellowship with and relationship to God?

The Psalms are full of references to "sanctuary," or related terms such as "refuge," more than 150 times! A couple of examples include Psalm 91:9-10 and Psalm 73:1-28. In Psalm 73 the particular reference to sanctuary is in verse 17, but you must read the entire psalm to understand what going "into the sanctuary of God" accomplished related to the psalmist's (Asaph's) understanding.

What should become clear is that dwelling in a sanctuary is first and foremost about protection, indeed a refuge that preserves the life of the protected against that which threatens. That is what we have in God through Christ Jesus. It is also a place where we have nourishment.

For instance, each Sunday we meet in a sanctuary which IS a sanctuary for us. We are protected, we are nourished resulting, hopefully, in growth (by the Word of God and in Holy Communion). We may not always like what we are fed, we'd prefer chocolate to brussels sprouts, but we are given what we need to become more of what God has called us to be. We are also nurtured by the Holy Spirit as we receive comfort and encouragement.

Then we get to ask ourselves, to what extent are we actively engaged in providing sanctuary for others? Think about this in the simplest terms. Do our kindnesses and concern for others serve as a sanctuary? Is our friendship a type of sanctuary? Of course, we might extend this to consider broader forms of sanctuary for those who need to be welcomed, protected, nourished, and nurtured. Do we offer to others what has freely, by God's abundant grace, been offered to us?

"I have made the Lord God my refuge..." (Ps. 73:28) "You shall also love the stranger, for you too were once strangers..." (Deut. 10:19).