

Genesis 28
1 John 5: 1-5

The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror. The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you.
(Isaiah 28: 19)

The Shock of the Truth

There's a church in Mont Belvieu, Texas, which has as a slogan, "Try God – you've tried everything else." On the surface, this may seem a bit flippant and lacking in reverence, a kind of "Madison Avenue" approach to evangelism, but there is a truth in such a phrase, especially for those who have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to avoid Him.

When a person encounters God – truly encounters Him, and not just what we *think* He is like – there is always a shock that comes with finding out what you've been told is true. He *does* exist, and there's a way He wants us to live which pleases Him... and a way that does not.

The passage from Genesis 28 is the account of the Patriarch Jacob on his way from Canaan to the land of his ancestors, fleeing from his brother Esau. Stopping for the night at Luz (later to be re-named Bethel), Jacob has dreams of an open portal to Heaven where the Lord reveals Himself as the God of his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham. The covenant made with Abraham is re-established with Jacob, though Jacob is shown to be a deceiver and a man of intrigue, which was why he had to flee from Esau in the first place. Awaking, Jacob's first thought is how awesome the place is, declaring it "none other than the house of God; this is the gate of Heaven." (Genesis 28: 17)

Jacob's first reaction upon learning decisively that God is more than the stories his father and grandfather told him is to worship the Lord and make vows to Him, asking to be brought safely back to Canaan, and rescued from Esau's desire for revenge. God, of course, does far better than that (as anyone who has read the story knows) as Jacob himself is changed by surrendering to Him and placing his life in God's hands. He is no longer *Jacob* – the deceiver, who has lived his life and made his way by his own cleverness and wits – but *Israel* who has struggled with God and man and overcome. God's blessing (by extension, the blessing promised to Abraham) is upon him, and from Jacob comes the 12 sons who will be the founders of the tribes of the nation of Israel.

Jacob's reaction is the response that a person *should* have to the knowledge of God: *Yes, I have sinned against Him and separated myself from Him, but He's offering me a way out and a second chance...I don't know why, but He's offering...* Jacob recognizes the inexplicable, infinitely generous love of God being offered to him in a startling way. Unfortunately, this reaction is not typical. The passage from Isaiah referenced above illustrates the ultimate response of those who have been presented with the truth, but for various reasons have elected to run from it. The day eventually comes when the truth, instead of being presented in a "soft landing" before the person (like at first), instead comes crashing down upon them. The false idols and philosophies they have worked so hard to maintain are shattered around such people, when they could have

simply left them behind for the truth of the Kingdom of God. The reality of God becomes a thing of horror as it is presented in ever more stark reality – and there is no longer anywhere to run or hide from it.

There are several reasons why people run; if you're a believer, you might remember a few of the ones you relied on before you finally discarded them and accepted Jesus as savior. Reduce the arguments to their essentials, however, and it comes down to us as free moral agents – what God made us as, complete with the power to choose God's way or our own – not wanting to surrender full control of our lives to anyone, even to our Creator. So we tell ourselves, *well, maybe there isn't any God out there after all and I don't have to worry about it* (more eloquently expressed in Psalm 14).

Creation itself testifies as to the presence of its Creator (Romans 1:20), and no one is without excuse because if you're honest with yourself, that testimony is powerful. It was in a class in Anatomy and Physiology in college, studying the operation of the muscles at the individual actin and myosin fiber levels that first convinced me of His existence. But even if the theory of evolution is correct and the timeline of creation is far longer than we think, there must be a starting point... and a Starter. Evolutionists ridicule the idea of "spontaneous creation," that every species on earth sprang to life in its full-grown, adult form, partly because in that scenario the mechanism for creation cannot be proven but requires belief (not to mention implying that there is a Creator at the end of it). But does it not require the same "leap of faith," as it were, to accept an alternative theory that cannot explain the triggering mechanism for the slow change process evolution relies on, nor can adequately explain the starting point for the entire process?

In saying the above, I am not trying to advocate for or against creationism or evolution. I am trying to show that "evidence" is not merely something that can withstand double-blind studies. If we are honest with ourselves, then we must conclude that the fingerprints of God are everywhere; the issue then becomes one of whether or not we want to see them. And one day, all of us will.