

JACOB . . . who saw a ladder he couldn't climb  
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(Genesis 28:12)

Things had not worked out according to plan, and Jacob was beginning to feel miserable. His home, his friends, and most of all, his mother, to whom he was devoted, had all been left behind. Weary, and pathetically alone, he journeyed into the wilderness; for Isaac his father had said unto him, "Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother  
And he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep"  
(Gen. 28:2-11).

#### God's Gracious Love-Sublime

As weariness overcame him, Jacob forgot the hardness of his pillow and slept; and suddenly the stillness of the night became alive with drama. "And he dreamed, and beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and beheld the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed" (vv. 12, 13). Enthralled, and greatly afraid, the fugitive watched the parade of angels; and the more he saw, the more he trembled. Probably he was too overcome to realize the greatness of divine affection. The Lord did not claim to be Jacob's God, for that important matter had still to be decided. Yet He was the God of Abraham and Isaac, and to these patriarchs He had given covenant promises. He had promised to be with their seed in all places whithersoever they went, and in spite of the lamentable delinquency of this deceitful sinner, God was still true to His covenant.

#### God's Great Ladder-Sufficient

and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven." Perhaps Jacob recognized that the company on the ladder was very select, for none but angels ascended and descended. Yet God was demonstrating that there was a way by which entrance could be made into His presence. It is interesting to notice that the angels were first ascending the ladder. One would expect that the order would have been reversed. This ladder was not let down from heaven it was set up on the earth. The angels were not descending and then ascending again. They were first going into the presence of God, and then ultimately returning to earth. It might be that Hebrews 1:14 can explain the ancient problem. "Are they (the angels) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? The angels are with us, guarding, guiding, and assisting the saints. The ladder might easily be the ladder of prayer, upon which they carry our petitions to the throne of grace, and on which they return with the answers.

#### God's Guilty Listener-Startled

"And Jacob 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" (v. 17). Not even the magnificent promise of God's help could remove the dread from his

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soul. He was desperately guilty, and no man may be at  
home in God's presence unless pardoning grace has  
removed the stains from his conscience. Poor Jacob was  
terrified, and was glad to continue his journey. Yet in all  
the strange vicissitudes of his life, God never forsook him;  
and when these early lessons had been fully learned, when  
he had wrestled and prevailed with the Lord at Peniel, he  
discovered that God's great ladder was indeed a bright  
and a glorious reality. Perhaps he would have understood  
far more had he been able to hear the words of the Saviour,  
for in after days Christ likened the ladder to Himself.  
"And Jesus said unto Nathaniel, Verily, verily, I say unto  
you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels  
of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man"  
(John 1: 51). And probably Jacob would have understood  
even more had he been able to sing with the hymnist-

Oh, safe and happy shelter!  
Oh, refuge tried and sweet!  
Oh, trysting place where heaven's love  
And heaven's justice meet!  
As to the holy patriarch  
That wondrous dream was given,  
So seems my Saviour's cross to me  
A ladder up to heaven.

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