

January 15, 2023

Ladders

Genesis 28:10-19



Special Music: We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder    Bernice Johnson Reagon & Vocal Group

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-qQsW6pdVM>

**Genesis 28:10-19**

**10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran.**

**11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.**

**12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.**

**13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.**

**14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring**

**15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”**

**16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”**

**17 He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”**

**18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.**

## **HOLY GROUND**

**I lay my head upon a rock**

**And sleep,**

**The deep, deep, subconscious sleep**

**Where angel's wings**

**Cause the winds to whisper**

**Leaves aglitter in the moonlight.**

**Creation's song deprives me of ego.**

**Those Angels climb, descend,**

**Climb, descend,**

**On heavens ladder**

**From Holy Ground**

**To God's own throne**

**A cadre**

**To cater to both God**

**And human flesh.**

**A vision of a greater plan**

**Expands in limitless thought**

**And parts the clouds**

**To remind me**

**This space,**

**This place,**

**Is Holy Ground**

**Jacob had a dream. That is very evident from our scripture today. If you grew up going to Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, you will know the story and may even be able to sing the song that goes with it:**

**We are, climbing, Jacob's Ladder**

**We are, climbing, Jacob's Ladder**

**We are, climbing, Jacob's Ladder**

**Soldiers, of the, Lord.**

**The song could have originated as early as 1750 and it was sung as a spiritual by African American Slaves. While slaves were not allowed to talk while working in the fields, they were encouraged to sing. Singing seemed to increase work output. The song was later adopted by many white Christians and became a regular part of worship. The songs lyrics are meant to encourage Christians in a growth of knowledge and Spiritual gain with every step of the ladder. And while that is a noble illustration and one often preached, it holds little credibility with the actual story of Jacob's dream.**

**There is nothing in the scripture that gives us the meaning of Jacob's dream. The great dream interpreters, like Daniel and Joseph, come much later. What we do have is a young man running from the revenge of his older brother. He has been sent by his mother and father to go to live with his uncle. On his journey, he stops for the night, cuddles up with a rock for a pillow and falls asleep. He then has this strange dream where there is a ladder extending out of heaven down to earth with angels going up and down the ladder. We don't even**

know if the ladder is wide enough for angels to pass each other in this process or if they are going one at a time. We do know that the top of the ladder is fixed at the foot of God's throne and where it touches the earth, that place is considered Holy Ground. We do know that when Jacob wakes up, he takes the stone that he has been sleeping on and uses it as a marker to show that this space is, indeed, Holy Ground.

We can draw many implications from this dream. Many theologians have taken a shot at interpreting it. And I would never say that any of them are wrong. But I will say that God did not reveal any more information on this dream to me either. So, in all fairness, I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about the dream itself and what I do not know or has not been revealed to me.

But Preacher, if you aren't going to talk about the dream, aren't you just wasting everybody's time? I don't think so. While I am unable to speak much to the interpretation, I think it is very important for us to understand the significance of this time and place in Jacob's life. What happened here that is so very significant that we need to talk about it? If we don't have a clue about what it means, there are plenty of other things in the Bible that we can talk about.

This is where we are. This is where God had led us in this study of Jacob & Isaac and building Legacies. We talked last week about how God doesn't really have much to work with here in order to mold a leader, someone who will command nations. He has a young man that is a corrupt, conniving, thief, who cares little for anyone but himself. He will use whatever means necessary to

**improve his position in life to the detriment of anyone who stands in his way, including his family. What to do? What to do?**

**We know that Jacob's dad, Isaac, had his God moment when he was just a small boy. His father Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Jacob to God when God stopped him and gave him a lamb to sacrifice instead. But we simply don't read about Jacob having a God moment up until now. What is a God moment? It's that moment when our eyes become wide open, and we grasp the significance of our relationship with God. Some people want to call it Being Saved. Others believe it comes with Baptism. There are those who feel it happens when the Holy Spirit enters our lives. Some people can have that moment standing in the yard looking at the stars when they get a tiny glimpse of the simple but chaotic complexity and size of Creation itself. Every God moment comes when a single human consciousness connecting with their creator at the deepest level possible. That moment when God gets so real to us that cannot doubt His existence and His love for us. And yes, that can happen in a dream as well.**

**Rather than try and take this dream apart, I want us to think of this moment as Jacob's God moment, the moment that he realizes that God is directly involved in shaping his life. No, I do not believe that God moved Jacob to steal his brother's birthright or his blessing, but God knew it was going to happen. Nothing is hidden from God. He knows the past, present, and future of everything.**

**We often forget that. Don't you know Esau had a number of conversations with Isaac where he asked, "Why did God allow this to happen to me.? If God**

knew it was going to happen, why didn't he prevent it?" We continue to ask the same type of questions today. "Why did God give me cancer?" "Why did God take my child?" "Why did God destroy me financially?" "Why did God take my family away?" "Why did God allow the tornado to destroy our house?"

God didn't do any of that. God loves us and wants only the best for us. But we live in a world where bad decisions are made all the time, where people can often be selfish and self-serving. This planet that we call Earth has a fragile eco-system that we take for granted. Volcanoes, landslides, floods, rain, hail, snow, ice, wind, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, hate, war, anger, and corruption have all been around since time began. Disasters will come. God isn't sending those disasters into our lives. But He does prepare us for the challenges we face. He also prepares us to help others during those times. When we witness the awesome nature and power of Creation, we can also think of those moments as God moments.

The thing about God moments is that they are so significant in our lives that we often mark them in some way, just like we do our birthday or our anniversary. We commemorate them in a special way to remind us of their significance. Jacob was so stunned by this God moment that he took the rock that he had been using as a pillow and set it upright. He then poured oil on it, anointing it. This indeed was Holy Ground. It was in this dream that God told him that he would be the father to many nations. It was in this dream that God Himself gave Jacob a greater blessing than the one for which he had tricked Esau.



**“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.**

**Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring**

**I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”**

**At this point, he doesn't even have people. As a matter of fact, if he doesn't keep moving, he might not live to see tomorrow if Esau catches up to him. Remember, this is long before Moses came to take the people back from Egypt, before the people suffered under the pharaohs, before Jacob and family moved to Egypt to flee the great draught, before Joseph's brothers throw him into a well and then sell him into slavery. This anointed stone serves as a reminder that this is the starting of a new point as Jacob begins his journey on become the father to many nations. Here is a promised legacy from God being given to a man who realizes at this moment that he is unworthy of it.**

**The dream is not a reward, but rather a moment that God encourages Jacob to become worthy of the mantle that is being placed on his shoulders. God shows Jacob that he knows what the future holds and how beautiful it is going to be. Jacob is being forced to make a choice. Is he going to continue to make poor and dishonest decisions or is he going to step into the role of father of many**

nations guaranteed by God? Will his only legacy be one of childish scheming and trickery in an attempt to create his own legacy, or will Jacob embrace the legacy that God has planned for him? Will his descendants be known as thieves and scoundrels or as the Children of God?

That's a lot of weight to carry as a young man. But God chooses His leaders well. And then He has the patience to equip them properly.

Can we say the same thing about our legacy? Will we leave behind us a legacy of being a Child of God? Being a Child of God can be hard in a world as messed up as ours is. But following God's lead, point the light to Christ, and lifting others out of their misery, anger, and pain is the way we carry the mantle, the legacy of Christ with us wherever we go.

I know that it can be hard to understand and even contrary to logic, however, as Christians we don't want a legacy where we are the heroes picking ourselves up by our bootstraps. We've already chosen the path of Christianity which means that it is Jesus picks us up by our bootstraps. Our legacy comes from helping others be lifted up, and letting them know that it is the love of Christ and the grace of God that allows us to do that. God does not call us to self-sufficiency. He calls us to Christ sufficiency. Christ is all we need.

If we truly understand that, if we recognize it as a God moment, let us mark it as a turning point in our lives and trust Jesus to show us His vision and desire for our legacy.

**GOD BLESS YOU ALL**

**AMEN**

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