



## GENESIS 28

### JACOB'S LADDER

*Here in Genesis 28, God uses a dream to show Jacob that heaven is near, that He is not a distant God. Jesus later makes reference to this imagery in John 1:51, saying to Phillip that "you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Jesus is this direct access to heaven, for all who repent and trust in Him. - JT*

**1** So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman. **2** Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. **3** May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. **4** May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham." **5** Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

**6** Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite woman," **7** and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. **8** Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac; **9** so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

**10** Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. **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. **19** He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

**20** Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear **21** so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God **22** and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

### Study Notes

#### [BlueLetterBible.org](https://www.BlueLetterBible.org) Commentary

**Went toward Haran:** Jacob traveled eastward toward the ancestral lands of his grandfather Abraham (Genesis 11:31-32) and his mother Rebekah (Genesis 24:3-4).

**Then he dreamed:** In this desolate wilderness, Jacob had a significant dream as he used a stone for a pillow. One can only imagine the strange flood of feelings in Jacob at this moment: the fear, the loneliness, the isolation, the excitement, and the anticipation. This was an important time in Jacob's life.

**A ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it:** In Jacob's dream, there was now access to heaven. Jacob now knew God was closer than he ever thought before and there was real access and interaction between heaven and earth.

“The God of Bethel is a God who does concern himself with the things of earth, not a God who shuts himself up in heaven, but God who hath a ladder fixed between heaven and earth.” (Spurgeon)

Jesus made it clear in John 1:51 that *He* is the access to heaven. *He* is the means by which heaven comes down to us and by which we can go to heaven. Jesus Messiah is the **ladder**. *And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”* (John 1:51).

Jesus *is* the way to heaven. He does not show us a way; *He is* the way. *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).

**I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac:** Jacob had no doubt heard about the great God who appeared to Abraham and to Isaac, but now this same God met Jacob in a personal way. This was a life-changing experience for Jacob.

**The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants:** These words were for comfort and hope to Jacob at this critical crossroads in his life. Essentially, God repeated to Jacob the terms of the covenant He gave to both Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and to Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5).

**I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you:** God gave to Jacob the same kind of promise found in Philippians 1:6: *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.* God won't let us go until His work is complete in us.

Behold, I am with you: “That God should give to Jacob bread to eat and raiment to put on was much, but it is nothing compared with ‘I am with thee.’ That God should send his angel with Jacob to protect him would have been much; but it is nothing compared with, ‘I am with thee.’ This includes countless blessings, but it is in itself a great deal more than all the blessings we can conceive of” (Spurgeon).

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**Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it:** Jacob was right in sensing the presence of the LORD there. If he thought that God was in some places but not in others, he was wrong.

King David knew that God was everywhere: *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?* (Psalm 139:7)

**He called the name of that place Bethel:** The city of Bethel would play an important (though not glorious) role in Israel's history. Among the cities of Israel, it is second only to Jerusalem in the number of times mentioned in the Old Testament. Later, when speaking to Jacob, God referred to Himself as *the God of Bethel* (Genesis 31:13).

**If God will be with me:** This can also be translated “since God will be with me”; but knowing Jacob, he undoubtedly meant it in the sense of “if God will be with me.” God gave him a promise, yet he still tried to bargain with God, even promising God money if He fulfilled His promise.

The way Jacob prayed, it was evident God's mere word was not enough for him. He had to see God do it before he would believe. We should not be the same way, but we often are. God says, *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19); He says, *“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him,”* (Nahum 1:7). We should believe these things, even before we see them.

**Jacob made a vow:** Unfortunately, there was a great contrast between God's promise and Jacob's vow. One was totally God-centered; the other was terribly man-centered. God was gracious enough not to take His covenant back when He saw such an unspiritual response from Jacob. Instead, He was willing to be called *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (Exodus 3:6).

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# JACOB'S LADDER

GENESIS 28

#49

**YOU SHALL SEE  
HEAVEN OPEN  
AND THE ANGELS OF GOD  
ASCENDING AND DESCENDING  
UPON THE SON OF MAN**

**JOHN 1:51**

