

## **THE LADDER IN JACOB'S DREAM**

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*Lesson: Genesis 27:41-46.*

Do you remember the story of Esau and Jacob? Do you remember how Jacob deceived and cheated his brother and his father? Jacob had bought the birthright from his brother. This was the right to be called the firstborn, and become the chief of the tribe after his father had died. He bought it from his brother for a mess of pottage that he had prepared. And then later he stole the blessing of his father from his brother Esau. Remember how he did that? First of all he fooled his father into thinking that he was Esau by putting the hairy skin of a goat on his arms and on the back of his neck. His father was blind and he knew that when he came in and said he was Esau, his father would call him over so that he could touch him. Then his father would know that he was not Esau, because his skin was smooth and didn't have any hair on it, whereas Esau's skin was hairy. So he put the skin of a goat on both of his hands and on the back of his neck, so that when his father touched him, he said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but your hands are the hands of Esau." Thus he told his father that he was not Jacob, but Esau. He deceived him and got the blessing that should have gone to his brother Esau.

This broke three of the Lord's laws. First of all he broke the law that we should honor our parents, for to deceive and lie to our parents dishonors them. Then he broke the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," for he stole the blessing that belonged to his brother. And he broke one more commandment "Thou shalt not bear false witness," for he lied, both to his father and to his brother.

After these things had happened, Esau learned all that Jacob had done, and he was very angry, for his brother had cheated him and stole his blessing from him. And his brother said, "Because my father is old, and will soon die, I will wait until the days of mourning are over, and then I will kill Jacob for all that he has done against me." Now when Jacob learned this, he was afraid. And he ran away from home. Because of the evil things which he had done, he had to leave his home, his country, and all his friends, and go to live in a far distant place. You can imagine what he thought as he ran away from his home, from fear of what his brother would do to him. He must have been very sorry that he did these evil things. He must have wished that he had done differently. And he must have thought that even the Lord Himself had turned against him, and didn't love him any more.

So that night, far from his home, without any one near him out in the fields, he had to lie down to sleep, with no covers, no pillow, no house and no friends,

because of these evil things that he had done. He made a stone his pillow, and he went to sleep.

While he was sleeping, the Lord spoke to him. Jacob saw a ladder or a staircase in his dream, with many steps going up towards heaven. And he saw angels going up this staircase, and coming down. And at the very top, he saw the Lord God Himself. And the Lord spoke to him, and said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. I will be with you, and will help you, and will give you this land which you see to be yours and your children's, if you will only obey my commandments. If you will only follow my teachings."

And then Jacob woke up, and he remembered the dream and that the Lord had spoken to him in the dream. So he took the stone that had been his pillow, and set it up as a pillar. He anointed it with oil and then he prayed and made a vow to the Lord. He said that if the Lord would be with him to help him, and would bring him back again safely to the land of Canaan, then he would serve Him all the days of his life, and he would give Him one tenth of everything that he had. He would give this to the Lord as a thanks offering.

Now this story of Jacob is very important to us. One very important thing we can learn is that no matter what evil thing we do, the Lord will not turn away from us. If we will only feel sorry for that evil, and ask the Lord to help us to do what is right, He will forgive us our evils and help us to prepare for heaven.

Do you know the Lord has given to each one of us the same thing that He showed to Jacob in the dream? He has given each of us the ladder, which goes up to heaven on which there are angels going up and coming down. Can you think of what that ladder is, the ladder that shows us the Lord? It is the Word of the Lord. The Word is a ladder because in the Word there are many steps of truth that lead us to the Lord. There are many *degrees* of truth, and as you grow older you can open up one after another to see more deeply into the Word. You can see how that is if you stop and think just a minute; a little baby can see the Word as a book, but a little baby can't even open the cover to see what's inside. But as he grows older, he can use his hands and he can open the book; he has moved up one step. He doesn't see the book just as a book; he now sees it as pages with writing in it. Later on he can read the writing, so he's moved up another step. But we do not know what some of the words mean while we are still children. Later on, as we learn the meaning of the words, then we move up another step. We see something within the Bible that we could not see before. And still later, we can understand a deeper meaning within the plain teachings of the Word.

I want to show you how that works, too. If we say, "I see", we mean that we can see the people around us, and we can see trees and dogs and all sorts of things. But there is a deeper meaning to the words "I see." Suppose you come to a word you do not understand. You can think about it, but you do not see its

meaning. Then somebody tells you what it means; and then you look at it again and say, "Oh now I see". Well that doesn't mean that you just see the word; you had already seen that. It means that you see the meaning that is within the word. So now, not only do we see people around us with the eyes of our body, but we can see the meaning of words; the meaning of the stories of the Word with the eyes of our mind. And that's the deeper meaning of the words "I see". We gradually see the deeper meaning within the Word; we move up step by step from the time we are babies and can only see the book, until we can see the real meaning of the Lord's teachings. This is the ladder, which was represented in Jacob's dream. And the most important thing about this ladder is that the Lord Himself is at the top of it. As we learn the deeper meaning of these words in the Word of God, we will be led to see the Lord Himself in it, teaching us and leading us. For the Lord Himself *is* the Word. Now you can see how important it is for us to read the Word day by day, so that the Lord may guide us on the path that leads to heaven. *Amen.*