

THE STEPS OF TRUTH

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Reading: Genesis 27:41-46

In the story of Jacob and Esau, Jacob deceived and cheated his brother and his father. First, he bought Esau's birthright from his brother. This was the right to be called the firstborn and to become the chief of the tribe after their father died. Jacob bought this right from his brother for a bowl of pottage or stew. Later he stole the blessing of his father from Esau. Jacob 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. Jacob deceived Isaac and got the blessing that should have gone to Esau.

Jacob broke three of the Lord's laws. First of all he broke the law that we should honor our parents, by deceiving and lying to his father. Then he broke the commandment "You shall not steal," by stealing the blessing that belonged to his brother. And he broke one more commandment "You shall not bear false witness," when he lied to both Isaac and Esau.

When Esau learned what Jacob had done, he was very angry. Esau decided that after Isaac died, then he would kill Jacob. Jacob learned of this, and he was afraid. So he ran away. Because of the things he had done, he had to leave his home, his country, and all his friends, and go to live in a distant place. You can imagine what Jacob may have been feeling. Perhaps he was sorry for the evil things he had done and wished that he had done differently. He must have felt as if even the Lord had turned against him.

So that night, far from his home, alone in the fields, Jacob lay down to sleep with only a stone as his pillow. And while he was sleeping, Jacob saw a ladder or a staircase in a dream, with many steps going up toward heaven. He saw angels going up and coming down this staircase. And at the very top, he saw the Lord Himself. The Lord spoke to him and said,

I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.... Behold I am with 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 (Genesis 28:13,15).

Then Jacob woke up, and he remembered that the Lord had spoken to him in his dream. So he took the stone that had been his pillow and set it up as a pillar and anointed it with oil. Then he prayed and made a vow to the Lord, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going...so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You" (Genesis 28:20-22).

The story of Jacob is important to us for several reasons. One thing we can learn from it is that no matter what evils we do, the Lord will not turn away from us. If we feel sorry for doing the

evils and ask the Lord to help us to do what is right, He will forgive us and help us prepare for heaven.

And there is another thing that this story of Jacob teaches us. For the Lord has given each one of us the same thing that He showed Jacob in the dream. He has given each of us the ladder that goes up to heaven, on which there are angels going up and coming down. That ladder is the Lord's Word. The Word is a ladder because in it there are many steps of truth that lead to the Lord. There are many degrees of truth, which we can open up, one after another, to see more deeply into the Word.

Think about it this way. A tiny baby can see the Word, but can't open the cover to see what's inside. But as the baby gets a bit older, he can use his hands and open the book. The child has moved up one step. He doesn't just see the book as a whole; now he can see it as pages with writing as well. But he can't yet read the writing. Much later on, the child learns to read, so he's moved up another step. But he may not know what all of the words mean. Later on, as he learns the meaning of more words, he moves up another step. He sees something within the Bible that he could not see before. And still later, a person can come to understand a deeper meaning within the clear teachings of the Word.

Another way to think of this process is to take the words "I see." If we say, "I see," we mean that we can see the people and things around us. But we all know that there is a deeper meaning to the words "I see." If you do not understand a certain word, and then somebody explains it to you, you may look at it again and say, "Oh, now I see." Of course, that doesn't mean that you just see the word; you had already seen that. It means that you now see the *meaning* within the word.

In a similar way, we can gradually learn to 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 finally see the real meaning of the Lord's teachings. This is the ladder, which was represented in Jacob's dream. The most important thing about this ladder is that the Lord Himself is at the top of it. As we learn the deeper meaning within 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.