

=EVENTS FROM GENESIS=

Lesson 15
Jacob's Ladder

AIM: to teach my pupils the spiritual significance of Jacob's ladder and the experience that he had at Bethel.

POINT OF CONTACT: Bring some kind of a ladder to class and get the pupil's attention by the use of the ladder, attracting them to the study of Jacob's ladder for the lesson for the day.

INTRODUCTION: Jacob is going to the land of Padan-aram where Laban (his mother's brother) lived. He is going there for two reasons:

1. He is going to choose a wife from his mother's people. Notice this in Genesis 28:1-10. (Stress here the importance of choosing the right mate.)
2. He is going because of fear. Esau, his brother, is angry at him and has vowed to kill him. Jacob is, in a sense, running from Esau. People who have strife with the brethren always end up with trouble. (Explain here the importance of our having love in our hearts toward all the brethren and not being critical or unkind in our personal relationships.)

On his first night out from Beer-sheba, Jacob came to a place where he made a pillar of stones and lay down to sleep. At this place, he dreamed. In the dream he saw the Lord appearing unto him and also saw the ladder from earth to Heaven with angels ascending and descending on the ladder. Let us notice the significance of the story.

I. GOD'S PROMISE TO JACOB AT THE LADDER.

1. God promised to be with Jacob. Genesis 28:15a, "And, behold, I am with thee." This is a fabulous promise. Jacob had a trip of approximately 500 miles to take. God promised to be with him all the time. (We should stress here that God is always with us. Tell the little boys and girls that they are never outside the sight of God. When they take a test at school, when they play on the school grounds, as they play in the yard, as they obey or do not obey their parents at home, God sees everything they do. There are no secrets hidden from Him. There is no such thing as a secret sin!)
2. God promised to keep Jacob. Genesis 28:15b, "and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land." This means security, but it means even more than that. The word "keep" here means to "direct." In other words, God promised to lead Jacob. This leadership is provided for every child of God. (Stress here, especially to the young ones, the importance of seeking God's leadership and being aware of His willingness to lead.) God promised to feed, clothe and shelter Jacob during this 500-mile journey. Bear in mind, there were no conveyances to ride. This was all a journey on foot. Think of it—500 miles to walk! No wonder God promised to bless him on the journey and support him in the way!
3. God promised to finish His purpose in Jacob's life. Genesis 28:15c, "for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." God promised that He would protect Jacob until His purpose and will was finished. This is God's promise to each of us. (Stress here that there is safety only in the will of God.)
4. The grace of God is evident here. Jacob had been crooked! He had been deceitful! Now he is asleep. Jacob did nothing to merit this experience. It is all by grace. Here we have a beautiful picture of salvation. There are many who think Jacob was actually saved here. This is probably the first real experience that he had with God in his entire life. The fact that it was the place of his salvation is argued by noting that he said, "this is the gate of heaven," Genesis 28:17c. Many years ago, some supposed that the gate or entrance into Heaven was actually above this spot and that when the angels of God descended to any place on the earth, they came through that opening to the place and returned the same way. Jacob perhaps thought this as he saw the angels coming. Whether this is true or not, no one knows; but we do know it was all by the grace of God, not because of Jacob deserving it.

- II. THE LADDER ITSELF. Jacob saw the vision of the ladder from earth to Heaven and angels of God going up and down. A multitude of words have been spoken concerning Jacob's vision of the ladder and its significance. Let us notice the possible meanings given to us here.

1. It teaches us the ministry of angels. The Bible says that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. The Bible teaches that each Christian has a guardian angel. The angels care for us, supply our needs, protect us, and in general, minister to us. Angels fed Elijah with food from Heaven. Angels will come back with the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels carry us into God's presence at death. Angels announced the birth of Jesus. Angels told Joseph to flee into Egypt with the Christ Child. Angels reminded him when he could return. Angels ministered to Jesus after His temptation. Angels told of the resurrection of Jesus. There are many other things in the Bible that angels did. We should be aware of their ministry.
2. The ladder also teaches that God watches over His own. Jacob, no doubt, was trying to make it to the city of Luz by night. However, he fell short of the city and had to sleep beneath the stars. Here is a wayward young man on a journey across "no man's land." Yet, God was aware of him. God watches over us. Let us never forget it! There is no place where the Christian can go outside the watchcare of the Heavenly Father.
3. One thing we know for sure that the ladder teaches is: It is Jesus Christ. Read John 1:51 in connection with this. At the top of the ladder was God. At the bottom was man. The ladder was a way for God to come to man and man to come to God. This is Jesus Christ! God became man through Jesus Christ, and man becomes as God through Jesus Christ. God came to earth through Jesus Christ, and man can go to Heaven only through Jesus Christ. Read in conjunction with this John 10:9; 14:6. Stress again John 1:51.
4. Notice that Jacob was sleeping on a stone here. A heap of stones could be found at Bethel, and this is still the case today! There is a tradition that the stone set up by Jacob was later brought to Jerusalem; and after a long lapse of time, it was brought to Spain, then to Ireland, then to Scotland. On it the king of Scotland sat to be crowned. Tradition has it that Edward I had it brought to Westminster Abbey, and there this stone, called "Jacob's Pillow," is now placed under the chair when the king sits to be crowned. Our group saw this stone when visiting Westminster Abbey some years ago. Many believe, to this day, that this is the same stone on which Jacob slept. Whether it is or not is not important. The important thing is that even a stone can be a soft place to sleep when one is fellowshiping with God!

III. JACOB'S PROMISES TO GOD.

1. Jacob probably was converted here. Notice the words in Genesis 28:21b, "then shall the LORD be my God." Though Jacob did not become the Christian he ought to have become, and though he had to pay for his trickery by being tricked himself, nevertheless he did make his decision for God here. (Stress here that salvation is a definite time of decision.)
2. He pledged himself to God's house. Notice in Genesis 28:22 the word "Beth-el," meaning the "house of God." He named this place Beth-el, "beth" meaning "house," and "el" meaning "of God." (Stress faithfulness to the house of God—staying for preaching on Sunday morning and coming on Sunday night and Wednesday night. Stress this to the pupils.)
3. Jacob pledged to tithe here. Genesis 28:22b, "of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." As soon as Jacob was converted, he began to tithe. It is very interesting. There are those who say that tithing was under the law; hence, we do not do it today. This event in Jacob's life took place hundreds of years before the law was ever given, meaning that tithing was a Scriptural practice before the law, during the law, and even now, after the law. (Explain what tithing is and encourage the pupils concerning the blessing of tithing.)