

Jacob's Ladder

Fleeing from Esau, Jacob dreams of a stairway to heaven with angels ascending and descending, and God renews the covenant.

Genesis 28:10-22

CHARACTERS: Jacob, God, Angels

THEMES: God's presence, Covenant, Heaven and earth connected

JACOB WAS RUNNING for his life. After deceiving his father and stealing Esau's blessing, his brother wanted to kill him. His mother sent him away to her brother Laban in Haran, far to the north.

As the sun set, Jacob reached a certain place and stopped for the night. He took a stone, put it under his head, and lay down to sleep—alone, afraid, far from home.

Then he dreamed. A stairway rested on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. Angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And there above it stood the Lord.

'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac,' God declared. '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 through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'

But the promise went further: '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.'

Jacob woke from his sleep. 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it,' he said in awe. He was afraid and added, 'How awesome

is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'

Early the next morning, Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar, pouring oil on it. He named the place Bethel, meaning 'house of God.'

Then Jacob made a vow: 'If God will be with me and watch over me on this journey, and give me food to eat and clothes to wear, and bring me back safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God.'

The deceiver was beginning to encounter the God who could transform him.