

Climbing Jacob's Ladder

Jesus is our ideal "Jacob's Ladder" who came to earth, from the line of Jacob, through the provisions of God, and redeemed us so that we may live in heaven for eternity

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: [2] By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

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Forward

According to the Bible, Jesus is our ideal "Jacob's Ladder" who came to earth, from the line of Jacob, through the provisions of God, and redeemed us so that we may live in heaven for eternity.

And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

Joshua 21:43

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The nation of Israel is God's chosen people with a heritage going back to the twelve tribes, then to Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, the father of the faithful. The faith of Israel's founding fathers is quite amazing.

Each was chosen by God to be the one through whom God's promises would be fulfilled. Genesis describes some of the events in their lives, events God deemed necessary for us to learn more about them and their faith.

As we examine the founding fathers of Israel, we see that each grew in faith, going through three common stages: testing, trusting, and reliance. Ultimately, they trusted God completely which is why they became founding fathers.

God gave to Abraham great and wonderful promises. These promises were passed on to Isaac and to Jacob and to all believers who believe and accept them through the provisions passed on to them through Jesus Christ.

You too, may climb the ladder to God's great and wonderful promises.

Chapter 1

Climbing Jacobs Ladder

The term "Jacob's Ladder" has become a common phrase—it has been used as a movie title, a book title, a name of a flower, and even as a name of an electrical device. But from where did this phrase originate?

Genesis 28:10-12 first mentions "Jacob's Ladder" when it says, "Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 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. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway/ladder resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."

It is in this passage that God reveals Himself to Jacob and reaffirms the covenant He made with Abraham, promising Jacob (who will later be named Israel) that his offspring will be many and that the Promised Land will one day belong to his descendants. In this vision Jacob sees something similar to a ladder or a stairway which signifies a connection between God and man. In this instance, it was God who provided the means necessary to link Himself to man as opposed to the men of Babel in Genesis 11 who tried to reach heaven by their own actions, aside from the help of God.

Genesis 28:10-17

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; [14] And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, how dreadful is in this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Jacob's conduct hitherto, as recorded, was not that of one who simply feared and trusted in God. But now in trouble, obliged to flee, he looked only to God to make him to dwell in safety, and he could lie down and sleep in the open air with his head upon a stone.

Any true believer would be willing to take up with Jacob's pillow, provided he might have Jacob's vision. God's time to visit his people with his comforts, is, when they are most destitute of other comforts, and other comforters. Jacob saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, the angels going up and coming down, and God himself at the head of it.

This represents,

1. The providence of God, by which there is a constant intercourse kept up between heaven and earth. This let Jacob know that he had both a good guide and a good guard.
2. The mediation of Christ. He is this ladder; the foot on earth in his human nature, the top in heaven in his Divine nature. Christ is the Way; all God's favours come to us, and all our services go to him, by Christ, John 1:51. By this way, sinners draw near to the throne of grace with acceptance.

By faith we perceive this way, and in prayer we approach by it. In answer to prayer we receive all needful blessings of providence and grace. We have no way of

getting to heaven but by Christ. And when the soul, by faith, can see these things, then every place will become pleasant, and every prospect joyful. He will never leave us, until his last promise is accomplished in our everlasting happiness. God now spake comfortably to Jacob.

He spoke from the head of the ladder. All the glad tidings we receive from heaven come through Jesus Christ. The Messiah should come from Jacob.

Christ is the great blessing of the world. All that are blessed, are blessed in him, and none of any family are shut out from blessedness in him, but those that shut out themselves. Jacob had to fear danger from his brother Esau; but God promises to keep him. He had a long journey before him; to an unknown country; but, Behold, I am with thee, and God promises to bring him back again to this land. He seemed to be forsaken of all his friends; but God gives him this assurance, I will not leave thee. Those whom God loves, he never leaves.

God manifested himself and his favour, to Jacob, when he was asleep. The Spirit, like the wind, blows when and where it listeth, and God's grace, like the dew, tarrieth not for the sons of men. Jacob sought to improve the visit God had made him.

Chapter 2

Abraham

Abram was a descendant of Noah through Noah's son Shem. In fact Shem and Abraham probably interacted with each other since Shem died only twenty-five years before Abraham died. The heritage of Abraham's ancestry was one of faith. Clearly there was something in Abraham's character that made God realize that Abraham would accept the blessings he had in store for him (Genesis 18:17-19).

God told Abram to leave his home and go to a land he would show him (Genesis 12:1; Acts 7:2-4). Abram, Sarai, and Lot left for Canaan and arrived at Shechem where God converted his earlier promise into a covenant by telling Abram that this land would be given to his descendants.

Abram built an altar and worshipped there. Then he travelled south some twenty miles to an area between Bethel and Ai where he built another altar to the Lord. For the first time we are told that Abram "called upon the name of the LORD." Perhaps it took time and reflection, but Abram was sure God was watching over him (Genesis 12:7, 8).

Abram had many experiences in which he learned to trust God. Soon after arriving at Shechem, there was a famine in the land and he travelled south to Egypt (Genesis 12:10). Abram had good reason to move to greener pastures. He had family, servants, and flocks to care for and that would be impossible during a famine in Canaan.

When Abram arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh took Sarai into his household to be his wife. God protected Abram and Sarai by plaguing Pharaoh's house. Through this Pharaoh learned that Sarai was actually Abram's wife, not just his sister. Pharaoh rebuked Abram for misleading him about Sarai and forced Abram to leave. Abram returned to Bethel, and again he called upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 13:4). Upon Abram's separating from Lot, God confirmed the covenant with Abram and said he would give all the land Abram could see to him and his descendants.

God used time to develop the faith of his people. Eleven years passed and Ishmael was born to Hagar, Sarai's maid. Thirteen years later God interacted with Abram again. He changed Abram's name to Abraham (father of a multitude), and confirmed his covenant (remembered through circumcision) with Abraham and his seed.

God changed Sarai's name to Sarah (Princess), and promised she would have a son to be named Isaac (he laughs), and that through Isaac God would fulfill the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis chapters 16 and 17).

God continued to reveal himself to Abraham through the experiences of Sodom and Abimelech.

God revealed his plan for Sodom and Gomorrah. Though the Scriptures are not specific about what God would do, Abraham correctly concluded that Sodom would be destroyed and his thoughts went to his nephew Lot.

Abraham asked for the cities to be spared if there were but ten righteous living there. We can reasonably conclude that Lot's family size consisted of six if one includes Lot's future sons-in-law.

Abraham must have thought that there would be at least four more in all of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. But there were not ten righteous and the cities were destroyed.

In this experience Abraham learned of the severity of God (punishment for sin), and of his mercy (willing to accommodate Abraham's request to save the cities if there were just ten righteous). Abraham, watching from a distance, probably concluded that Lot and his family were also destroyed. He left the area and travelled south.

Departing from Hebron, he settled into the territory of Abimelech (Genesis 20:1). Abimelech rebuked Abraham for letting him take Sarah as a wife, returned Sarah, compensated Abraham, and allowed Abraham to dwell in the land.

Time passed, Isaac was born and weaned, Abraham made his way to Beersheba, and Ishmael was sent away. When Abimelech saw God's blessing upon Abraham, he made a covenant with him. For the third time we are told that Abraham called upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 21:33).

Abraham was learning to acknowledge God's hand in his affairs and to trust God. Upon reflecting on the providence of God in his life, Abraham built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. Would that we all bow down in gratitude and thankfulness in worship of God for our experiences.

Abraham's greatest test would involve the one through whom the covenant was confirmed by God's oath. Isaac was probably in his mid-teens. Forty years had passed since God had called Abraham at the age of seventy-five. During that time Abraham had come to trust God implicitly.

God asked Abraham to go to the land of Moriah to offer his son. Immediately Abraham departed to give back to God the son God promised would be used to fulfill the promises God had made to him:

“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him,

‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death” (Hebrews 11:17-19, *NIV*).

Because Abraham acted according to his belief, God promised him by oath that his seed would bless all the nations of the earth: “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:16-18, *NASB*).

God did indeed provide himself a lamb, as Abraham said to Isaac, but it was provided before the foundation of the world. In due time Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, the promised seed through Abraham, offered himself willingly for the sins of the world. The sacrifice offered by Abraham that day was a ram provided by God, showing that Abraham's offering of Isaac was accepted as if he had been slain on the altar.

Abraham had learned to trust God completely and that belief was accounted to him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). Abraham's faith and experiences impacted his household and those around him.

Even as a lad, Isaac knew what sacrifice was. He observed that they did not have a lamb for the burnt offering and Abraham replied prophetically that God would provide one.

Isaac submitted to his father and permitted himself to be offered. God accepted Abraham's offering as though it were completed and confirmed his blessing to Abraham and, consequently, to Isaac as well. Isaac continued under his father's care and was prepared for his own relationship with God. Abraham's chief servant trusted in the God of Abraham to bless the selection of a wife for Isaac.

Chapter 3

Isaac

Little is recorded about Isaac after his experience at Mount Moriah. Certainly he benefitted and learned from his father's experiences with God. Isaac manifested a great degree of patience and trust in divine providence to guide his affairs as heir to his father, Abraham. Isaac, as a type of Christ, was fully submissive to the will of his father even as Jesus submits to the divine will in selecting the church to be his bride and joint-heir in the complete fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.

Isaac established residence in the Negev or south country (Genesis 24:62) apart from Abraham, assuming Abraham was still dwelling around Beersheba after returning from Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:19).

Perhaps Isaac timed his visit to his father in conjunction with the expected return of Abraham's servant who was sent to obtain a wife for him. Rebekah sees Isaac in the fields, is welcomed by him, and becomes his wife.

Isaac, like the other founding fathers, needed to learn the sovereignty of God. Twenty years pass before God does what is necessary to implement his promise to Abraham. In response to Isaac's intercessory prayer, Rebekah becomes pregnant and delivers twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Perhaps the experiences of Abraham and Sarah gave Isaac and Rebekah the grace they needed to be patient; there is no record of complaint from either of them.

Isaac is initially blessed because of his father's faith, not his own.

Abraham died and was buried and another famine afflicted the land. Isaac headed east to Gerar near Abimelech, and contemplated going south. God told Isaac not to go to Egypt, effectively keeping him in the promised land, and that because of Abraham's faith, God would perform the oath he swore to Abraham with Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5).

Isaac stayed in the land of the Philistines and because of God's blessing, became rich. Abimelech feared Isaac's power and sent him away peacefully.

Isaac finally found a place over which the Philistines did not contend and said, "At last the LORD has made room for us" (Genesis 26:22, *NAS*).

Trusting God to give him the land in his own due time and way, he relinquished his claim and returned to Beersheba. That night, God assured Isaac of his blessing reaffirming the covenant made with his father, Abraham.

Then the Scriptures record the first time Isaac builds an altar and calls upon the name of the Lord. Isaac establishes residency and permanency by digging a well.

God's timing is amazing. Immediately after God's affirmation to Isaac, Abimelech made a peace agreement with Isaac and reminded Isaac of what he already knew: "You are now the blessed of the LORD" (Genesis 26:29, *NAS*).

Abimelech departed early in the morning, and that same day God further blessed Isaac's acknowledgment of God by making the well productive. Isaac now unreservedly walked with the Lord.

Isaac eventually died at the age of 180. Although his two sons lived in different locations, they came together to bury him (Genesis 35:29).

Isaac never left the land promised to him; he lived out his days in the areas of Beersheba and Hebron in the south. Though he never left, neither did he receive the land as his inheritance. As with his father before him, Isaac was a man of God.

Chapter 4

Jacob

Isaac's son Jacob bought his older brother Esau's birthright with one hot meal; then he obtained the blessing Isaac intended for Esau (Genesis 27:36).

Isaac thought he did not have much longer to live so he decided to pass his chief blessing to Esau. Rebekah overheard Isaac's intention and told Jacob to impersonate Esau and receive that blessing.

But because Esau hated him for what he had done, Jacob fled to his uncle Laban in Haran.

He essentially relinquished his earthly inheritance to Esau. Before he left, Isaac blessed him and confirmed to him the Abrahamic blessing: "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you that you may become a company of peoples.

May he also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham" (Genesis 28:3, 4, *NASB*).

Appreciating Jacob's character and respect for the blessing, God appeared to him in a vision confirming the original promise made to Abraham and renewed to Isaac: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants ... and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And behold, 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 promised you" (Genesis 28:13-15). Jacob vowed that if God would indeed keep him on this journey and bring him back to his father's house in safety, then Jehovah would be his God.

God's blessing was on Jacob. He served Laban fourteen years for Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel, followed by six years for his flocks. Laban's attitude gradually changed to jealousy because of Jacob's prosperity. God told Jacob to go back home. Lest Jacob think the increase of his flocks was because of his own ingenuity, God reminded him in a dream that it happened because of God's care over him.

God also reminded Jacob of the vow Jacob made to serve God when he first fled from Esau and, in effect, told him to honor it. In obedience, Jacob left, Laban pursued, and God intervened so Laban would not harm him. God restored what Jacob gave up when he fled Esau, namely the natural blessing that was associated with the birthright.

Jacob knew he must make peace with Esau, so he sent messengers to Esau asking for favor in his sight.

Esau was on his way to see Jacob accompanied with four hundred men. Jacob was afraid and divided his possessions into two companies. Having done all he could, he prayed for deliverance from Esau reminding God that he sent him this way, and that he, Jacob, was not worthy of all the Lord had given him, and that God had promised to make his descendants too great to be numbered.

Jacob sent his family across the brook, and he stayed behind. That night, Jacob wrestled with an angel to obtain God's blessing through Abraham. His persistence in obtaining the blessing revealed how much he desired it.

The angel changed his name from Jacob to Israel because "you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28, *NAS*). With the blessing, Jacob also received a reminder of his dependence upon God: from that day forward Jacob limped.

Jacob still had to reconcile with Esau if he was to live peacefully in the land. So he gave many gifts to Esau before meeting him.

When they finally met, the two who greeted, embraced, and wept in joy were not the same who separated twenty years earlier. God indeed had been with Jacob, and Jacob knew it. He returned to Shechem, built an altar, and although the Scriptures do not specifically say he called upon the name of the Lord, he called the altar "Elohe-Israel" ("the mighty God of Israel," Genesis 33:20).

Jacob returned to the land of his fathers to where God had told Abram that "this land" would be given to his descendants (Genesis 12:6,7). God sent Jacob to Bethel, the place where Jacob had originally vowed to make God his God if he returned safely.

Jacob departed for Bethel and kept his word. He cleansed his house of idols and built an altar to the Lord.

In response to Jacob's commitment, God reaffirmed the promise made to Abraham and Isaac before him: "And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (Genesis 35:12).

Jacob stayed in the land promised him until God told him to leave. At the age of one hundred thirty Jacob began the journey to see his son Joseph in Egypt. He was determined to go, but stopped first and worshipped at the altar Isaac had built in Beersheba.

Evidently, as much as he wanted to see his beloved Joseph, he did not want to leave the land God had promised him. God affirmed that he should go and that he would make of him a great nation.

Encouraged, Jacob departed, never to return to the land he was promised. He went to Egypt under God's direction and died there at the age of one hundred forty seven (Genesis 47:28).

Just before his death when blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob spoke of God's blessing: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day" (Genesis 48:14-16). Like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob was a man of God.

Chapter 5

Legacy for Israel Today

In fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, repeated to Isaac, and confirmed to Jacob a long time ago, the nation of Israel exists under God's care today. This nation exists because of the faith of these three men, Israel's founding fathers. Each of them had many experiences through which they learned to fully trust God, and to make Him sovereign in their lives.

Abraham had to prove that he trusted God even to the point of giving up his son. Isaac learned the sovereignty of God and was willing to wait for God to work out his plan in his own way. Jacob proved that he desired the spiritual blessing that came with the birthright more than the natural blessing.

Faith grew in stages in the lives of each of these faithful men until each reached the point of complete reliance upon God.

The nation of Israel will also progress in faith until, like her founding fathers, she has complete reliance on the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never received the land God promised to give them, their offspring, the nation of Israel, now has a portion of the land.

God will keep his promise to the founding fathers of Israel in the resurrection when they will finally, personally, possess the land and realize the fullness of God's promise.

Chapter 6

God's promises extends to all believers

A person can receive all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant—even if he or she is not a literal descendant of Abraham

Galatians 3:26-29

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The law did not teach a living, saving knowledge; but, by its rites and ceremonies, especially by its sacrifices, it pointed to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. And thus it was, as the word properly signifies, a servant, to lead to Christ, as children are led to school by servants who have the care of them that they might be more fully taught by Him the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in Christ.

And the vastly greater advantage of the gospel state is shown, under which we enjoy a clearer discovery of Divine grace and mercy than the Jews of old. Most men continue shut up as in a dark dungeon, in love with their sins, being blinded and lulled asleep by Satan, through wordly pleasures, interests, and pursuits.

But the awakened sinner discovers his dreadful condition. Then he feels that the mercy and grace of God form his only hope.

And the terrors of the law are often used by the convincing Spirit, to show the sinner his need of Christ, to bring him to rely on his sufferings and merits, that he may be justified by faith.

Then the law, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, becomes his loved rule of duty, and his standard for daily self-examination. In this use of it he learns to depend more simply on the Saviour.

Under the Gospel State True Believers Are All One in Christ

Christians enjoy great privileges under the gospel; and are no longer accounted servants, but sons; not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints as the Jews were.

Having accepted Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and relying on him alone for justification and salvation, they become the sons of God.

But no outward forms or profession can secure these blessings; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. In baptism we put on Christ; therein we profess to be his disciples.

Being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so we should die unto sin, and walk in newness and holiness of life.

The putting on of Christ according to the gospel, consists not in outward imitation, but in a new birth, an entire change.

He who makes believers to be heirs, will provide for them. Therefore our care must be to do the duties that belong to us, and all other cares we must cast upon God. And our special care must be for heaven; the things of this life are but trifles.

The city of God in heaven, is the portion or child's part. Seek to be sure of that above all things.

Galatians 4:1-7

Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The apostle deals plainly with those who urged the Law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ, and endeavoured to bring believers under its bondage. They could not fully understand the meaning of the law as given by Moses.

And as that was a dispensation of darkness, so of bondage; they were tied to many burdensome rites and observances, by which they were taught and kept subject like a child under tutors and governors. We learn the happier state of Christians under the gospel dispensation.

From these verses see the wonders of Divine love and mercy; particularly of God the Father, in sending his Son into the world to redeem and save us; of the Son of God, in submitting so low, and suffering so much for us; and of the Holy Spirit, in condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers, for such gracious purposes.

Also, the advantages Christians enjoy under the gospel. Although by nature children of wrath and disobedience, they become by grace children of love, and partake of the nature of the children of God; for he will have all his children resemble him. Among men the eldest son is heir; but all God's children shall have the inheritance of eldest sons.

May the temper and conduct of sons ever show our adoption; and may the Holy Spirit witness with our spirits that we are children and heirs of God.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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