



REFLECTIONS

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" ... this is the gate of heaven."

Genesis 28:17

Jacob's Dream

First, can you imagine using a rock for a pillow? The shape of it must have been important to Jacob's selection. I picture the rock to be flat, about five inches thick with rounded edges. And even though the Bible doesn't say so, it seems that Jacob would have wrapped it with something to make it softer and less abrasive. Still, a rock doesn't sound like an inviting pillow to me. But that's what Jacob slept on one night in his journey to Haran to meet his cousin and his wife to be. (You might want to stop here to refresh your memory of the story of Jacob's dream told in Genesis 28.)

One might think Jacob's dream that night would have featured visions of his future wife in all her beauty; instead, the dream placed Jacob in sight of a busy stairway with angels moving up and down them like Christmastime at Macy's before elevators. A figure stood at the top of the stairs where he might have expected his Uncle Laban to be; only it wasn't Laban. *"There above it stood the Lord..."* (Genesis 28:13)

This part of the story reminds me of the curious scene my brother-in-law witnessed while sitting at his father's bedside during his final hours. He watched his dad's arm slowly rise with the motion of his index and middle fingers signaling a walk up the stairs. The scene gave me pause to wonder what my father-in-law was seeing.

But there's still more to Jacob's story. *"When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'"* (Genesis 28:16-17)

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel... Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey... then the Lord will be my God and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.' (Genesis 28:18-22)

Now, let's add few more pieces that may cast further light on the dream: (1) Jesus explained, *"No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father."* (John 6:46) (2) Jesus declared, *"I am the good shepherd; ...and I lay down my life for the sheep."* (John 10:14-15) (3) Then he said, *"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."* (John 10:9) *"No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6)

So, I wonder if Jacob's dream draws a picture of life's final journey to heaven? Since no one has seen the Father, isn't Jesus, the Good Shepherd, at the pinnacle of the stairway after laying down his life for us? Isn't Jesus the gate of heaven—and the only way in? And I wonder if my father-in-law signaled us about angels lifting him to the gate?

I believe I know the answers. I know my father-in-law does.

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Richard +

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