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THE GATE OF HEAVEN

– *APRIL 13. – GENESIS 28:10-22. –*

**"I am with thee and will keep thee, whithersoever thou goest."
– V.15.**

OUR LESSON relates to the Patriarch Jacob. He was something over forty years of age at the time he left home, forsaking all the family possessions which belonged to his purchased birthright. He counted all earthly possessions as insignificant in value compared with the great Promise made to Abraham, of which he had become heir. That his brother Esau cared nothing for the spiritual Promise and was quite content to get possession of the earthly inheritance of Isaac, is manifest from the subsequent story.

In his journey toward Haran, Jacob lighted upon the little town of Luz. Following the custom of many in Palestine today, he did not ask for lodgings, but merely placed a stone for his pillow, wrapped himself in his outer mantle, and lay down in a quiet place to sleep. He had always been the home boy, the philosopher, his mother's pet; and although he was now a man in years, we are to remember that the race was longer-lived at that time and slower of maturity, by about one-half. Practically he was just entering manhood's estate. His deep religious convictions, his faith in the God of his father and his grandfather, his desire for a share of the Divine blessing, had made him an outcast. Doubtless he felt lonesome and heart-sick. He was leaving the only friends he had in the world, and going forth practically penniless, to find some kind of service.

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"JACOB HAVE I LOVED"

This is the Scriptural statement and is borne out by the Lord's dealings with Jacob. He had shown his courage, his devotion, his

faith. God would reward him. At this time he was needing encouragement, and therefore was given a dream of beautiful import. In the dream he saw a ladder extending from his side clear up into Heaven. It was crowded with angels going and coming.

At its further end, in his mind he saw the God of Glory and heard Him speak; and the words were wonderful – full of interest and encouragement. God here gave Jacob the assurance that not only had he secured his father Isaac's blessing, but that God recognized the transfer – recognized him as the legal heir to the great Abrahamic Promise, which is the basis of all hopes, Jewish and Christian, for themselves and all the kindreds of the earth.

God's message was: "I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, thy father; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the east, and to the west, 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."

This phraseology is much the same that was given to Abraham and was confirmed to Isaac. Now it was confirmed to Jacob. He was thenceforth in Covenant relationship to God. Better than he knew, all his efforts would be so supervised as to work together for his highest welfare.

NEITHER A JEW NOR A CHRISTIAN

Jacob was not a Christian; and we are not to think for a moment of the Lord's providences over him as being of the same kind as those of the Church of this Gospel Age. He was not invited to be a sharer of the "high calling." He was not promised a change of nature

to Heavenly condition by resurrection, or in any other way. All of the promises to him were earthly, as were those made to Abraham.

Neither was Jacob a Jew. There were no Jews yet. The nation subsequently called Israel and afterwards known as the people of the Jews were Jacob's children; but they were not yet born. They became a distinctive people and nation not merely by being Jacob's children, but by being brought into Covenant relationship with God through Moses and the Law Covenant of Sinai.

Thus we see that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not under the Law Covenant, and not under the Gospel arrangement, constituted a class by themselves. To them especially (and in conjunction with them some of the noble Prophets and worthies of the Jewish Age) belonged certain great promises of God in respect to the land of Canaan and the blessing of the world. Not being a part of the spirit-begotten Church of this Gospel Age, they can have no share with Messiah in His Spiritual Kingdom, which shortly is to bind Satan, overthrow sin, scatter darkness and superstition and flood the world with a knowledge of God. They were not invited to share this "high calling."

However, a special call, or invitation, or promise, was made to them, not made to any others. In fulfilment of that Promise, these patriarchs are to be granted human perfection in the resurrection; and being made superior to the remainder of humanity, they will be qualified to be the princes or rulers of all the earth, representatives of the Spiritual, Heavenly, invisible Kingdom of Messiah.

Thus instead of any longer being recognized as the fathers, or patriarchs, they will by and by be recognized as the first children of Messiah, as the first ones to whom He will give the perfection of earthly life. Thus reads the prophecy: "Instead of Thy [Messiah's] fathers, shall be Thy [Messiah's] children, whom Thou mayest make princes [rulers] in all the earth." – Psalm 45:16.

It will be noted that Jesus, speaking of His glorious Kingdom to come, said, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" [outward display]. (Luke 17:20.) He also said to the disciples, "Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more." (John 14:19.) And when describing what would be seen and recognized at His Second Advent and the establishment of His Kingdom, Jesus said not one word about any one seeing Himself or any one of the Apostles in Kingdom glory. But He did say, "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets." – Luke 13:28,29.

Jesus and His Bride Class – the Apostles and saints of this Age, from every nation and denomination – will indeed be the real Kingdom and have the real supervision and power; but they will be invisible, as the Scriptures declare. All these will "be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," by the First Resurrection power. No longer earthly beings, they will be spirit beings, the Elect, being "made partakers of the Divine Nature." (2 Peter 1:4.) As St. Paul again declares, the Resurrection change must come before the Church can enter the Kingdom glory; for "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." – I Corinthians 15:50.

WHAT THE DREAM MEANT

In order to rightly appreciate this dream or any part of the Gospel Message, it must be remembered that man, originally in covenant relationship with God, was cut off therefrom by disobedience in Eden. The covenant of everlasting life could not stand with any who were sinners. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

But God had planned from the beginning a redemption of Adam and his race from this death sentence, this curse of destruction. He could not take Abraham back into His family, having purposely so arranged the condemnation that it could be set aside only by the work of a Redeemer. The Covenant made with Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, and now to Jacob, was merely a promise that God in due time would through their posterity send the

Redeemer, the Deliverer, and through these bless all the families of the earth with the privilege of return to harmony and fellowship with God, as sons of God.

The ladder represents this thought of direct fellowship between Heaven and earth, between God and man. The foot of this ladder was close to Jacob. Through his Seed this great work of opening up relationship with God and men would be accomplished. The vision of God at the further end and His encouraging words were to stimulate Jacob to faithfulness and appreciation of this great Promise as a pearl of great value – worth much more than the mess of pottage which he gave for it; yea, worth much more than home and its comforts. The dream had its intended effect. Jacob was encouraged, not only for that time, but through the remainder of his days. More than this, that dream has been a comfort and refreshment to all of God's people made aware of it through the Bible.

And this lesson applies to Christians of today also. With the fuller light of the Apostolic teaching and the guidance of the Holy Spirit we understand that before Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Holy Prophets of the past can bless the world as the honored seed of Abraham in the flesh, another work must be done. That other work will be done by our Lord Jesus. The death of the holy, harmless, undefiled Lamb of God constituted the entire **[R5200 : page 79]** foundation for the complete outworking of the Plan of God's Mercy for our race.

During this Gospel Age a secondary feature has operated; an elect, select company, a Bride class of joint-heirs with the Master, has been called out of the world from Jews and Gentiles, to constitute the Spiritual Seed of Abraham. If this ladder of intercourse and communion came down to Jacob, still more does it come down to and center in The Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the Head and the Church His faithful members.

When Jacob awakened, he felt overwhelmed. To have the Almighty thus indicate His care and blessing and approval, and to assure him of His protecting care in the future, seemed wonderful to the friendless man. He said, Surely this place may be called God's House and the Gate of Heaven! And so ever since, the Church has delighted to be known as the House of God – Bethel. By and by as the great Temple of God, composed of living stones, Jesus Himself being the Chief Corner Stone, this Bethel will be the Gate of Heaven, through which will come to mankind all the glorious things which God has promised – Restitution, perfection, Paradise – for all the willing and obedient.

Jacob took the stone he had used for a pillow, set it up as a monument and poured oil upon it, as signifying its sacredness to God. His example since has been imitated by the Egyptians, in setting up great columns pointing heavenward, and also imitated by the Babylonian steeples, and by Christians in the cathedral steeples and church spires. All of these, however, unwittingly point to Heaven, and prefigure the fact that there is by and by to be a ladder, a communication between Heaven and earth. That ladder will be the Messianic Kingdom.

Tradition tells us that subsequently Jacob's stone was taken to Jerusalem, and there used in conjunction with the crowning of the Jewish kings. Tradition says that that stone was taken by Jeremiah when the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem. Tradition further says that it was carried to Ireland and for a time used there for crowning their kings. It says also that this same stone is now in Westminster Abbey, and forms the seat of the throne on which the British sovereigns are crowned.

