

# Jacob's Dream, God's Promise

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 July 2026

Preacher: Andy Pynch

[ 0 : 00 ] This morning, we return to our series in Genesis. We're making our way little by little throughout the book of Genesis. And if you remember, or you've been with us for any amount of time, we're doing that as we work through Romans at the same time.

So, we've taken a break from Romans and looking at the life of Jacob because those are the examples that Paul gives us in Romans. So, if you have your Bible, turn with me to Genesis chapter 28.

And we're returning to the story of Jacob after a week off, hearing from Jeff Kreisel, one of our RUF guys at the Air Force Academy. This morning, we find ourselves in Genesis chapter 28, verses 10 through 22.

This is God's word. Jacob left Beersheba and went towards Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night because the sun had set.

Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.

[ 1 : 12 ] And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac.

The land on which you lie, I will give to you and your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south.

And in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 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. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.

And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. So early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

[ 2 : 20 ] He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. And then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.

And this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house. And all that you give me, I will give a full tenth to you. Let's pray. Lord, this morning we come hearing your word.

We pray that you might use it in our lives, allow us to see the glory that only you have. Father, may we see who you are more fully.

May we see Jesus and all the connections between him and this story. And we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. I'm thankful to be with you again this morning.

I've been away for a couple weeks with Army training and then with vacation. And as Matthew is taking some much-needed rest, I'm thankful to be here. And we spent some time on vacation with friends and family on the East Coast, time outside, time watching the World Cup.

[ 3 : 44 ] I don't know if you're caught up in the World Cup fever or you're mad that I brought up the World Cup on July 5th because it's very un-American. No matter where that finds you, I am a fan of the World Cup.

But in watching some of the games, I was reminded of my favorite story about the World Cup. And it has nothing to do with soccer at all. In fact, it has much to do with a dog.

A dog named Pickles. You see, Pickles was the black and white collie that was charged with saving the World Cup. The dog that found the thing that was most precious in all of world sports. And he did so while peeing on a parked car. You see, Pickles was out for a walk with his owner. And he stumbled across something nearly 50 years ago. He leaned down to sniff something and use the restroom. And under the wheel of that parked car, he found something wrapped in a newspaper. And Pickles found something that had been discarded.

[ 4 : 50 ] Not leftover fish and chips, which you think a dog would find in London. But in fact, he found the World Cup trophy wrapped in newspaper. The trophy that weeks before had been stolen and then left out in the gutter like garbage.

Right before the 1966 World Cup in London's backyard. Pickles was the savior of the day. When Scotland Yard or Sherlock Holmes or James Bond had no clues, Pickles saved the day. There were no leads, no hope of recovery. And this dog saved the world's most famous sporting event. The most iconic trophy.

Now, simply put, Pickles didn't become a national hero just because of this. But England went on to win the 1966 World Cup in their own backyard with their own dog, saving the day. That seems really silly until we start thinking about this story. Something that was precious left in the gutter. Not wrapped in newspaper, but forgotten about.

[ 6 : 02 ] Not the World Cup trophy, but something more valuable. The promises of God just thrown in the gutter. Forgotten. The promises like this that we see in verses 13 through 15.

I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and your offspring. And your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth. Spread abroad from the east to the west, to the north and to the south. And in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.

Those are the promises of God. Now, you might be thinking, I'm not stupid enough to leave something so precious just in the gutter.

To leave it under a parked car where it could be run over. To wrap it up in newspaper. To be found by some God. No, wait. Some dog. I'm not so silly to do that.

[ 7 : 09 ] No, you're not. I think we might actually be worse than that. You see, we have all these precious promises. But then we say things like, I just don't have time.

I would really like to read my Bible and know more about God. But I just don't have the time. I'm just way too busy. I wish I had time to spend with other Christians.

But I'm so, so busy. Work is really heavy right now. I wish I prayed more. But, you know, I'll get around to it when I feel like it.

And then that time when you feel like it never comes. Weeks go by. Months. Maybe even years. I want to talk about the gospel with my friends and family.

But, you know, I'm just really annoying at work. Or I'm really annoyed with my annoying co-worker. And I don't actually want to talk to him.

[ 8 : 07 ] Because it's just so embarrassing. Or awkward. Or I don't really like him. I'll just wait for them to bring it up. And then they never bring it up.

Or we get so frustrated with our spouse. And we think things will never change. Or as parents, we think, why am I spanking my child? Or disciplining my child? Or hoping that this will never happen again.

And yet, here we are. And we start to lose hope. We think things will never change. Or this is how it will always be.

God's promise to be with you. His sovereign care. His love. Those become things that we don't draw strength from. Or think on. We just leave them aside.

They're fairytale ideas. And our lives don't become marked by that. But by unbelief. Unbelief. We don't throw away promises in the gutter.

[ 9 : 09 ] But we don't wrap it up in newspaper. We don't leave it under a parked car. But we might as well. Because we forget about them. And they don't affect our lives.

They don't affect our dinner tables. Our offices. Our cubicles. Our formations. They don't affect our parenting. They don't affect how we think with our checkbook.

With our Netflix streaming. With our internet search history. How we parent and shepherd grandchildren. Or how we think about our neighbors. And so we might as well leave it wrapped up. Under a parked car. But the good news is. God knows this. And it's not just us. It's Jacob too. So Jacob has forgotten the promises of God.

But this morning we're going to see. He's recovering them. He's recovered them. And then he responds to that recovery. So first let's turn our attention. To that recovery of God's promises.

[10:08] Our passage begins this morning. Not with Jacob. Pursuing after God. As you might think. But he's doing everything but that. He's not running away. Like Nineveh running away.

But he might as well be. He's on the hunt for something. And he's not on the hunt for God. He's on the hunt for a wife. And he goes on this journey as we see. He leaves Beersheba.

And went towards Haran. Now he's not bopping down to fountain. Or braving Denver traffic. We need to think long journey. Like I'm going on a summer road trip of 500 miles.

And please pack snacks kind of journey. Okay. Except he's not driving at all. He's walking. And why is he on this journey? Because he wants a wife. Look with me at verse 11.

And where does he find himself in the middle of this journey? He comes to a certain place and stayed there at night because the sun had set. And taking one of the stones of this place, he puts it under his head.

[11:10] And he lays down that place to go to sleep. How many times throughout the Old Testament do we see weary travelers make their way to the city center only to find themselves in the comfort and hospitality, gaining hospitality from strangers?

But that's not what happens here. He's kind of alone and afraid out in the wilderness. And remember, his brother, who? Esau. Is not a man who's afraid of the dark or afraid of the wilderness. But he might be. And as he does so, God meets with him. And it's precisely in the midst of this wild and under the stars that God meets with him.

Not in any normal kind of way. Verse 12 says this. And he dreamed and behold, there was a ladder set upon the earth. And on the top of it, it reached to heaven.

And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. Jacob falls asleep with his rock pillow. And he dreams this dream. And God meets with him.

[12:19] And it's magical, otherworldly, indescribable, inconceivable. And as he sees this, he sees angels coming up and down.

And if that's not enough, what happens next? Not just angels, but God himself. If this sounds eerily familiar, but with a better ending, think about Genesis 11.

It's a tower, but it's a tower full of stairs built from God's people up to God. Why? Because they wanted to see him and enjoy his presence? No, not at all.

But they wanted to be like God. And God comes down and says, what are these little ants doing? And he dashes down that staircase and that tower, spreading God's people all over the earth because of their disobedience.

When we read this story, we need to think about a better version of those stairs or those tower of stairs or that ladder up to heaven. And so when we read this story, we need to think about how God is coming down to Jacob instead of God's people and their disobedience building up to be like him.

[13:34] God descends down and sends angels down and angels coming back up. And just like that, God is with his people. God has come down to them.

God comes down in another form as well. In the message of the gospel, God comes to us and meets with us. It's not us that goes up to him and makes ourselves worthy or palatable or clean or holy or lovely.

But God comes to meet with us just like God comes to meet with Jacob by sending down a ladder. All of this is absolutely impressive.

And it's not simply stairs with angels on it, but it's that something more that God's presence is there. God is really there. So look with me at verse 13. He continues with all these promises.

It's not just angels, but it's God himself. And when he speaks, he communicates not something new like, hey, Jacob, I'm fixing to do something great in your life. Let me tell you something new.

[14:50] What does he say? He reminds him of something old, something that he heard around the kitchen table that his parents reminded him of, something that he knew at every waking moment, but with a twist.

What's that twist? It's not that God would do this all through Abraham, but now he applies it to Jacob and says, I'm going to give this to you.

We see a little bit of a shift in this and how God speaks of himself or how he recognizes him.

We see a shift in names. And ultimately we end up with God declaring to him that familiarity that I'm your God and I'm the God of Abraham and of Isaac and all of these promises.

And it's precisely those relationships with his forefathers that God reminds Jacob of and then says, all those promises are now yours and I'm giving them to you.

[ 15 : 53 ] And in you shall the earth be blessed. I will give you the land and to your offspring, not Abraham's, but yours. It's not just a repetition or reiteration of this promise, but it's given to Jacob as well.

This is your land, Jacob. These are your children. But there's also something more. Look at verse 15 with me. 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've done what I have promised.

God's presence is the thing that he promises him. That he ensures what could be more valuable than all these gifts.

It's the very presence of God himself. Now, when we think about this story, it's really kind of dangerous if we think with the wrong perspective.

To think that Jacob is rewarded because he is so faithful with this dream and this reiteration of promises or expansion or application just to him.

[ 17 : 09 ] Jacob is not the hero as we've seen in our time in Genesis. He's a hero in some sense. Should we emulate Jacob? Yeah, with our faith in God.

But Jacob does some really terrible things. And God meets with him, not because he's faithful, but because he's down and out. He's not really trusting the Lord.

And the Lord seeks him out. There's a famous theologian named Gerhardus Voss who's really nerdy. And he says this about Jacob. Of all the patriarchs, Jacob lives the least ideal life.

And what he means by that is that God speaks to him at what he calls a low ebb of his spirituality. That Jacob is not faithful right now.

That he's kind of running away. That he's not trusting. And so God invades his life and speaks to him in a dream. In this dark reality, God seeks him out and comforts him.

[ 18 : 11 ] It's the reason that we read John 1 earlier. Jesus kind of makes this connection and it can be difficult to see. He makes reference to himself and he says, like angels descending and ascending.

He's referencing himself, Jesus Christ, as that ladder that makes a bridge from heaven to earth, from God to mankind. Christ has made a way for sinners through his sacrifice on the cross.

And through our faith in Jesus Christ, we have access to God's presence. And that way, this ladder or staircase that Jacob sees is pointing forward to Jesus.

Christ has made a way for us and God has come to sinners. We have not sought him out. And as we walk in darkness, we need to return to these promises and realize they're not just made to Abraham.

They're not just applied to Jacob, but they're made to us too. A promise of God's presence. A promise of his mercy and all these other things, this heavenly land where all things are made right, where there's no more tears or darkness or sadness.

[ 19 : 27 ] Of descendants, not of children, only of flesh and blood, but people that put their faith in Jesus Christ. Promise not just of that, but a promise of God's presence as well, just as it was made to Jacob.

Christian, do we seek out the presence of God? So often we do not. We do not. After recovering these promises, what does Jacob do next?

He responds to these promises. Let's turn our attention to that now. Look with me at verses 16 and 17. Responding to God's promise of his presence, he says this.

Well, he doesn't say anything first. He wakes up out of this dream and says, surely the Lord is in the place and I did not know it. And he was afraid. I would be too if I just saw that.

And said, how awesome is this place? There's none other than the house of God. And this is the gate of heaven. Jacob realizes what has happened and realizes the importance of this event.

[ 20 : 35 ] And he wakes up and he responds in two ways. He wakes up. He uses the pillow that he used that was a rock. And he constructs a pillar, a monument to God.

And does so in response. And says, not just this place is special, but it's special. It is the place of God. And he renames it. And he builds a monument there.

He calls it the gateway to heaven, the house of God. Now, some will look at this and say, clearly Jacob doesn't understand what has gone on because he builds a monument.

And then he'll get it right later. He'll understand his obligations to God. But Jacob's response here is one, I want to do something because of what I've seen.

And then he makes a vow. Not just any vow like, Lord, please help me. I'm about to die. And if you save my life, then I will do this for you. Jacob's vow is somewhat different.

[ 21 : 34 ] He sees what God has done and he responds in faithfulness. I think that's why here that Jacob builds the monument. He responds in faithfulness, not just to build the monument, but as John pointed out, to give back to God.

He's responding not in danger at his own life, but into peering into God's reality. In this vow, though, Jacob's coming back to what he heard already in verse 15, that God will be with him and will keep him wherever he goes.

His rock, his life, his money, all the means are at his disposal and he gives them all back to God.

Now, when we hear the story of an Old Testament figure, there can be some difficulty in trying to figure out what it means, not just for him, but for us.

What is Jacob's response or Jacob's life? Why does it matter to us? After all, isn't God different for him than he is for us? I was with my kids this week and they were playing with these other children and this mom started talking to me about how God was different for David than he was for us.

And I said, no, not at all. God is the same then as he is now, just as God is the same for Jacob as he is for us. So what do we do with that?

[ 22 : 57 ] How do we figure that out? Does it mean that I want you to use a rock pillow? No, maybe. No, not at all. Does it mean that I want you to build a monument, a statue in Colorado Springs?

No, not at all. But as we've seen over and over as we walk through Genesis and the lives of these Old Testament figures, we're to respond to an interaction, to an experience with God with reverence and awe.

We're to respond not by running away, but by coming to him. And we see that in Jacob as well. We see a desire for God's presence now that he's experienced him.

And we see that he wants more of the Lord. And as Christians, we should desire the presence of the Lord as well. And Jesus has helped us in seeing that this ladder from heaven to earth is him.

We should want more of Christ. And when John records this in his gospel, when he compares himself not to a ladder this time, but to a vine, he talks to us about abiding in Christ, our connection to Christ.

[ 24 : 11 ] And in that, we're invited, just like Jacob, to be with the Lord. Not after we've dusted ourselves off. Not after we've put away all of our sin.

Not until we've picked ourselves up and cleaned ourselves off. And then we can come to him. How often do we think that? No, Jacob is somewhat running.

And God meets with him. Christ meets us in the midst of our sin and invites us to abide with him. He loves us in spite of our sin.

And he wants to be with us. Not after we've made ourselves right. He wants that for you, for me. He wants that today.

Our response to him should be desiring to do that. And using all the means necessary to pursue after that. And we experience him not through a dream, but through his word.

[ 25 : 17 ] Through time with other Christians. Through the sacraments. And we experience God and abide with him. Why would we not use the means that we have?

Why would we say, ah, I just am so busy. I'm just so tired. Maybe when it's a little bit easier. Maybe when work calms down.

Jacob represents to us a good charge to come to the Lord. Jacob's actions when he wakes up are a good test for us. We see how much we kind of want it.

Jacob responds not just to the ladders or stairs or dreams. But he responds in seeking out the presence of the Lord and delighting in him.

How much more should we delight in the Lord now that we have Christ? That we can see clearly what Jacob only saw through an image of a ladder. We should desire him.

[ 26 : 17 ] We should want God's presence. The question is, do you want God? Do you desire him? Or do you want to be anywhere but with him?

Jacob responds and says, well, that's cool. And then moves on and goes on his road trip of life. And it's meanders, right? Faithfulness.

Knuckleheadedness. Doing all these kind of crazy things. But for a moment, his life has changed. And ultimately, we'll see that later as we walk through Genesis. And he responds not by just thinking, oh, this has happened.

But he moves towards worship with all that he has. His rock, his time, his money, his desire to be in the presence of the Lord. When we think of Christ and his death on the cross, a more miraculous event has occurred.

But do we respond by coming to him, desiring his presence in worship? Or do we respond with something else? Let us not forget the promises of God.

[ 27 : 28 ] Let us recover them. Be reminded of them. And respond by coming to him in worship. Let's pray. Lord, this morning we're reminded in the person of Jacob of our need of Jesus.

Your desire for us to respond in faith to Christ. And Father, may we do so. May we do so for the first time. And Father, may we respond with even greater faithfulness as Christians.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.