



The Sermon

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Genesis 28:10-22

"A Startling Encounter with God"

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TRANSCRIPT

Well, it's that time. It's time for us to look together into the Word of God. This is the Lord's Day; and we have sung praises to our God, and we now want to hear from the Word of God. And God speaks to us through His Word, not an inaudible voice, but in something much stronger. He speaks to us through His written Word. And we've come to a wonderful passage of Scripture today. We're in Genesis 28. So if you'd take your Bible and turn with me to Genesis chapter 28, and today we're going to be looking at verses 10 through 22. And the title of this message is "A Startling Encounter with God. A Startling Encounter with God." As always, I want to begin by reading the passage and setting it before you, then I'll pray, then we'll work our way through this text.

Genesis 28, beginning in verse 10: "Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; 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 your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will be spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants 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.'

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 Jacob arose, rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.'" This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word. May it find a home and a resting place in your heart and in your life. Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, whenever we approach Your Word we realize that we are stepping onto holy ground, that Your Word is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is a lamp unto our path. It is milk and meat for our soul. It is a fire in our bones. It is a hammer that breaks the rocks asunder. It is seed that contains life and brings forth fruit in our lives. Your Word is all of these things and much, much more. It is a sword that cuts to the very depth of our being. It reveals ourselves to ourself. It makes You known to us. Its light shines into the dark places.

So Father, today as we look at this text, may Your Word be all of these things to us, at different times, during this message in different ways. And to each and every one of us who find ourselves at different places in our spiritual growth with You, may You meet each and every one of us at exactly our point of need today. May You do business in our hearts. May You rend the heavens and come down. May You revive Your people. May Your presence be unusually manifested in our midst through Your Word and by Your Spirit. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

Again, the title this message is "A Startling Encounter with God," and in these verses we see that there are times in our spiritual lives when God makes Himself unusually known to us, and it is in a life-changing way. Such an encounter in our spiritual lives is often unexpected and may catch us off guard. But we come to see God in a far greater and more glorious way than we had ever seen Him before. We come to see God in His holiness. We come to see Him in His sovereignty in a more expansive way.

We come to see Him in His grace and in His love in a more personal way and in a more intimate way than we ever have before. We should always be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet there are those pivotal moments in our spiritual life when we seem to be catapulted to the next level as the veil is pulled back, and we are allowed to suddenly behold God in ways that impact us and strike us to the core of our very being. I have had such times in reading certain books that take me into the Word of God more deeply and more carefully. I remember reading the Puritan book by Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, in which he preached through the Westminster Confession, and for me it was as though I, a boy, became a man spiritually, as I came to see and understand God in ways far beyond I'd ever seen Him before.

Such happened to me when I read A. W. Pink's book *The Attributes of God*, and then reading his book *The Sovereignty of God*. It was as if I stepped into an elevator and was suddenly taken to the top and had a far greater perspective of who God is; and it seemed to happen in a moment. It happened to me when I read R. C. Sproul's book *The Holiness of God*. I knew that God was holy, theologically and doctrinally; but then to suddenly behold God in a way that had far greater impact upon my life, for me it was a startling encounter with God.

Moses certainly had such an experience when he stood at the burning bush, did he not? And Joshua had such an encounter with God the night before Jericho. And Isaiah had an encounter with God that shook him to the core of his being in the year that King Uzziah died: "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and the cherubim filling the temple, and they're crying out, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; heaven and earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the threshold began to shake, and I said, 'Woe is me, for I am undone. I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of glory.'" And Isaiah would never be the same again because of this startling encounter with God.

Ezekiel had such an encounter with God, as God appeared to him in a vision of flaming fire. And we could talk about Peter's encounter with Christ with the miraculous catch of fish, and Peter had to simply say, "Depart from me, Lord, for I'm a sinful man." Again and again and again throughout Scripture God's servants come to a pivotal point in their life in which they find themselves one-on-one with God, and they are shaken to the core of their being, and they are never the same again. Every day of our Christian life is not like that, but there are those mountain peak times in which God has

appointed the time, and God has appointed the place when He will meet with us in ways that are far beyond what we knew Him to be before.

For Jacob, such a time came in the passage before us. He had an encounter with God, and God had an encounter with him. It was unexpected. It was startling. It was convicting. It was affirming and encouraging and empowering for the mission that lay ahead. And I trust even as we look at this passage today that God will meet with us, and that God will meet with you personally and individually, and that our lives will be catapulted forward.

As we walk through this passage I want you to note, first, "Jacob's departure," that's in verses 10 and 11, because as this account begins, Jacob sets out on his journey prescribed to him by his parents Isaac and Rebekah to escape the revenge of his twin brother Esau, who has purposed to kill him. So we read in verse 10, "Then Jacob departed from Beersheba." The first word "then" indicates that as soon as his father Isaac and his mother Rebekah had said, "You've got to leave, your brother is trying to kill you," then immediately at that moment, without delay, Jacob departed from Beersheba. Beersheba was where Abraham had lived, where Isaac had lived, and where Jacob has been.

And we read, "and went toward Haran." Haran is to the north. Haran is 500 miles away to the north. This will not be a short journey, it'll be a long journey to get as far away to safety as possible from the revenge of his twin brother. It's in northern Mesopotamia. It's where Laban lived, who was the brother of Rebekah, and where his parents told him to go in order to find a wife and to escape his brother. And so this was an unsettling time in Jacob's life. I mean, his brother is literally trying to shed his blood and to kill him because of how he deceived him into receiving the blessing. And Jacob is having to leave the security and the familiarity of home and parents to undertake this long and arduous journey. I mean, put yourself in Jacob's shoes. He's alone, he's single, he's without a spouse, he's without a companion, he's lonely, he's away from home, he's facing the unknown, and he is exposed to dangers.

And so in verse 11, "He came to a certain place." This certain place we know from verse 19 is Bethel, and it's about 50 miles north of Beersheba. And so probably about a two-days journey, maybe slightly more than that. So he's barely begun one-tenth of the journey, "when the sun is set, and he

spent the night there," we read. And so before the sun would set, he finds a stone and makes it a pillow. We read, "and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and laid down in that place." So he bedded down for the night. And unknown to Jacob, this will be the place in which unexpectedly and suddenly and dramatically he will encounter God. It will be a divine appointment. And divine appointments are always orchestrated by God. They're always in His timing, not our timing. And it's always at the appointed place, not our appointed place. Jacob cannot cause this to happen, this will come about because of the sovereign initiative of God.

And the same is true for you and me, that we will only know God to the extent that He allows himself to be made known to us. And it is God who must pull back the veil, and it is God who must appear and reveal Himself to us, just as He will do to Jacob. And if God has made Himself known to you - His majesty and His glory, and the supremacy of who He is - you are a very favored and privileged person.

Well, this takes us now to "Jacob's dream" in verse 12. Jacob's departure now leads to Jacob's dream. And it was at this time that Jacob encountered God in a very personal way. We read in verse 12, "He" - Jacob - "had a dream." Now the difference between a dream and a vision, in a vision the person is awake, and there appears almost like watching a movie on the back wall what God chooses to make known. But in a dream the person is asleep, and in the subconscious there is a revelatory dream.

"And Jacob had a dream, and behold," - meaning "look at this" - "a ladder." There is a ladder that suddenly appears in this dream, and the ladder is a stairway. It's like a ramp, an ascending ramp that is directed upwards. It says, "was set on the earth" - so it's resting on the earth right where Jacob is sleeping - "with its top reaching to heaven." I mean, it's soaring all the way to the heights of heaven and connecting earth and heaven. It's connecting the visible world in which Jacob lives with the invisible world where God is.

"And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." The angels are the heavenly hosts. They are the ministering spirits, the servants of God's purposes, and they carry out God's purpose and plan. They are seen in heaven with six wings; and with two wings they are flying almost like hummingbirds, ready to receive the order from God and to be dispatched from glory, and to descend down to the earth and be executors of His

sovereign will. "And they are" – here seen – "ascending and descending," meaning they are very actively involved in the affairs of this earth, unseen to natural eyes. But here in this supernatural dream they are clearly in view as Jacob is asleep.

And verse 13, "And behold, the Lord stood above it," – Yahweh, the Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth – "above it," – high and lifted up, towering above the universe, presiding over the affairs of this entire world. The Most High God, exalted high and lifted up, peering down upon Jacob.

Now what is the significance of this ladder reaching from the earth to heaven, and the angels moving up and down, and at the very top above it all is God Himself, and the buzz of this activity of the angelic being? They're not static, they're not stationary. They're dynamic, and they're active. This ladder is intended to communicate to Jacob God's personal involvement, God's direct involvement in the affairs of this world, that God is not disconnected, that God is not unrelated to what is taking place upon the earth, and God is not unrelated to Jacob's life. This ladder shows God's direct connection between His rule in heaven and what transpires on the earth and specifically with Jacob's life.

This ladder resting on the earth reached up to the heavens. Yet God is not like the God of the deists, who is like the proverbial watchmaker who builds the watch and winds it up and sets it down and then walks away from it to let it unwind on its own. God is not the Creator of heaven and earth, and built it and made it and set it there, and then God has walked away for the affairs of this world to just unfold on their own, as if there is any such thing as good luck or bad luck, or chance or a happenstance, or an accident, or good karma or bad karma that is ruling what is taking place on the earth. The stars are not controlling the destinies of people here upon the earth. All of that is just less than an old wives' tale.

In reality what Jacob is seeing is what you and I must see, that God is the architect of His plan for human history, but He is also the administrator who brings it to pass, and it is the doctrine of providence that God is causing all things to work together for good, Romans 8:28. And Ephesians 1:11 says that He – listen to this – that "He works all things after the counsel of His will, that God has exalted His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.

That is the lesson of the ladder. That is the message of this stairwell. And as Jacob is heading out now into the unknown, he is alone, but he is not alone. God is with him, and God is going before him, and God is opening doors. And God will protect him, and God will preserve him, and God will provide for him, just like He does with you and me.

Right where you're seated right now there's a ladder that rests at your feet, and it extends up to the heights of heaven. And the Most High God is above it, and He is directly connected to the affairs of your life. He ordained and appointed the day of your birth. He appointed your gender. He appointed your IQ, the color of your skin, where you would grow up, who your parents would be. He has appointed every detail of your life. You're fearfully and wonderfully made. And He has already appointed the day of your death, and your days are numbered. And He is guiding you and directing you. He's opening doors, He's closing doors. You're never alone.

There is a stairway to heaven right where you sit. There is a ladder that reaches to the heights of heaven, and God is above it; and God is actively, intimately, directly involved in the affairs of your life. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. Yes, He is transcended, high and lifted up; but there is also the doctrine of the imminence of God as well, that He is near, that He is close, that He is within us.

So God now speaks. Jacob has seen the ladder and the angels ascending and descending, and he has seen God above this ladder. And now God speaks in this dream: "I am the Lord," - that's Yahweh - "the God" - Elohim - "of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac." And by this God is identifying Himself as the promise-giving, promise-keeping God in the Abrahamic covenant, that God will make a great name of Abraham and his descendants, just as Jacob is one of his descendants; and that God will do something in Jacob that will have an impact upon the entire world.

He says, "I am the Lord," - the God of Abraham - "the God of your father Abraham, the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants." It's the Promised Land. It's the land of Canaan. It's the land of which God directed Abraham when He called him out of Ur of Chaldees, and then he traveled to Haran, and then down south from Haran into this land of the Canaanites. And God says, "I will give it to you." It's a land flowing with milk and honey.

And verse 14, "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth," - there will be such an exponential multiplying effect of your descendants - "and you will spread out" - referring to the descendants - "to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south." What God is saying: "I will do in you and through you what will reach the four corners of the earth. What I do in you and through you will have a global impact to the north, the south, the east, and the west, in every direction. And it looks ahead to the coming Yahshua, the Messiah, the greater son of Abraham, who will become the Savior of the world, who will become the only Redeemer of lost sinners when they call upon His name.

"And in you" - verse 14 - "and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed," those families that put their trust in this greater son of Abraham. Not every family on the earth will receive the spiritual blessings of heaven, but only those who have been born again, only those who have repented of their sins, and put their faith and their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And out of every tribe in kindred and tongue and race of people there will be the blessing of God bestowed. In fact, in the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 42, God says to His Son the Lord Jesus before He comes into this world, "It's too small of a thing for You to only save Israel. You're too great, You're too glorious. You need to inherit the nations." And the Father will give the nations to His Son as His inheritance, either to save them or to judge them. But Christ is too glorious to be restricted to just one little nation Israel. Israel was intended only to be the launching pad from which the message of the gospel would go to the ends of the earth. But Israel chose to hoard it and keep it to themselves, and so now through the church there is to be the fulfillment of the Great Commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Verse 15. Please note, in verse 15, five times God says "I." Not "you" and not "we," but "I." This is God and God alone undertaking and undergirding His own purposes and His own causes; and God by His sovereignty bringing to pass His story for history.

So verse 15: "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to the land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." What an extraordinary promise this is, that God is making to Jacob, that, "As you embark on the rest of this 450 to 500-mile journey, every step of the way, I am with you; and I will protect you, and I will provide for you, and I will ensure the success of your journey. And I will find a wife for you when you arrive, and then I will bring you back, and my story will continue. Jacob, you are but one link in this chain of



descendants that is extending from Abraham all the way to the manger in which Jesus was born."

So Jacob has reinforced that God is with him, that God is for him, that God is everything to Jacob. And you and I need to be reminded that God is with us. Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, "And lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age." He is with His people. His name is Immanuel, which means, "God with us." He is omnipresent, but He is especially present with His people to live inside of them.

Even if you've come to church today as a single or as a widow, you didn't come alone. God came with you, and God sits with you. And when this service is over and you return back to your house or your apartment or wherever it is that you live, God will be with you on that journey back to where you live; and when you walk back into the door, God will be there to greet you. And God will fellowship with you, and God will sit with you. He is always with you. This ladder is always connecting you to God.

Well, I want you to note, third, not only Jacob's departure, and Jacob's dream; the third, "Jacob's discernment." Jacob's got to sort this out. And so we read in verse 16, "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep" - no doubt, startled and shaken and sobered - "and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.'" Jacob is learning who God is. Jacob thought he was here alone. Jacob thought that he was by himself. And now he comes to understand that God is in this place, and God will be in the next place, and God will be in the next place, wherever Jacob is. But in this place especially, God has burst onto the scene of his life and made Himself known suddenly and instantly in a far greater capacity. "Surely the Lord is in this place."

And let me just pause here for a moment, give you a theological footnote, "The doctrine of the simplicity of God." We know that God is omnipresent, that God is everywhere present, and wherever God is, here's the doctrine of the simplicity of God: All of God is everywhere. There's not a portion of God in this country and a different part of God on this continent, and God's wrath is over here, but God's love is over here, as if God can be divided up into parts, and each attribute of God is like a spoke on the wheel or arrows being shot out in different directions. No, it is the simplicity of God, which means that God is not complex. There is a wholeness about God; and all of God is everywhere God is; and God is everywhere. And so as he recognizes

the Lord is in this place, he will gradually learn something of the simplicity of God, that the entirety of God is with him, not bits and pieces, but the whole of God.

And notice his response in verse 17, the beginning of verse 17: "He was afraid," just like you and I would have been afraid. There's no silly giggling going on here. There's no high-fiving God. There's no trivial, childish, sophomoric response to God. He is shaken to the core of his being, he was afraid. And this word "afraid" is a Hebrew word that means "to be gripped with reverential awe." It means "to be filled with the fear of God." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

And we never outgrow the fear of God. We never come to the point in our relationship with God where we stop fearing God; that's when you stop growing and are lukewarm. And at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, "This is the end, this is the conclusion of everything. Fear God." So the beginning of wisdom is to fear God, the conclusion of everything is to fear God, and everything in between is to fear God, to take God very seriously, that He holds your life in the palm of His hands, that He has total master control of your life. And it is this God who is with you.

He was afraid, rightly so, and said, "How awesome is this place." This place? It's just dirt, it's just rocks. There's no cathedral here. There's no Sir Christopher Wren massive church building here. There's no stained glass windows. There's no oriental carpet. There's no dark wood-stained pews. There's no white wainscoting. There are no gold sconces. How awesome is this place. Why? Because God is in this place, because God has revealed Himself, because God came to church, because God showed up, because God manifested Himself to Jacob. That's what made this place awesome.

So Jacob says, "This is none other than the house of God. This is where God lives. This is where God dwells, out in the middle of nowhere, out in the boondocks. This is the house of God. This is where God made Himself known to me, and I encountered God. And this is the gate of heaven. This is my entrance into the realization of the presence of God. This is my gate of entrance into the knowledge of God that is now growing by the moment. This is an awesome place." And this word "awesome" is the exact same Hebrew word that is used in the same verse for "he feared the Lord." This is a fearful place, in a good way.

Anyplace where God meets with you and makes Himself known to you is an awesome place. And you have such a place right now in this somewhat crude little building, with walls knocked out, and cement floors, and no aisles hardly to walk around. This is where God meets with us, He meets with us here every Lord's Day. And when this Book is opened, we learn more about God, as we already have today, and we learn about God's Son. We learn about God's grace and His mercy. We learn more and more about His holiness, His sovereignty, His simplicity, His aseity. We just keep pushing the fenceposts out to learn more and more about God.

I want to tell you, this has become an awesome place for me. I've preached in cathedrals. I've stood in Geneva and preached in Calvin's pulpit, St. Pierre's cathedral on the 500-year anniversary of his birth. That place now filled with atheism and agnosticism and liberalism and ecumenicalism. It's not much of an awesome place anymore. I've preached in St. Giles cathedral in Edinburgh where John Knox preached. It's not much of an awesome place anymore. The architecture is, and the history is, but God's not showing up. But this humble, little place has become an awesome place, because this is where God meets with us, and we grow to know more about God.

Finally I want you to see "Jacob's dedication" in verses 18 to end of the chapter. This was a significant moment in Jacob. This wasn't just a passing little experience." No, this was an encounter with God; and Jacob had to mark the place. And so we read in verse 18, "So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and" – and he does five things: to mark the place, to mark the occasion, to mark what has just happened here number.

Number one, "He set it up as a pillar." What he had laid his head upon, he flipped it over so that it is now not horizontal, but it is now vertical, and it now is a memorial stone. It now is to bear witness of what has taken place here. So significant was this in his spiritual journey, it marks the spiritual significance of encountering God.

So that's first. Then second, "and poured oil on its top." He anoints the memorial stone with oil; and it's really symbolic of the presence of God. It's symbolic that God has been in this place, just like the oil would later be poured out upon the high priest, and it signified the power of the Spirit was upon him as the oil was poured upon the head of the king of Israel, and it would run down. It signified the presence of God upon the king's life. And

it probably also signifies that Jacob is consecrating himself to this God. Paul would later use this imagery, "being poured out as a drink offering." And as he pours out this oil, Jacob is consecrating his life to God.

And then third, in verse 19, "He" - Jacob - "called the name of that place Bethel." Previously it was called by the name of Luz. So he renames it, and he renames it because it is no longer of secular use, it is now a spiritual significance. And he names it Bethel, which means "house of God." "Beth" means "house," "el" means God. Bethlehem, house of bread; bethel, house of God. "This is where God showed Himself to me."

And then fourth, in verse 20, "Then Jacob made a vow," - he made a solemn oath, he bound himself to God - "and he said, 'If God will be with me and keep me on the journey that I take,' - in other words, "What all lies ahead; and who knows what's around the corner, and who knows what is waiting for me, and who knows who this woman will be that I will marry who are descendants of Laban. God will keep me on this journey, and God will give me food to eat and garments to wear. God will provide for me; and if I don't have it, then I don't need it. God will provide whatever I need. His name is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide."

Verse 21, "and I return to my father's house in safety," - all of this takes place. He says - "then the Lord will be my God. Then I will know experientially that God is my God." And there's a world of difference between God being God and God being my God. It implies a personal relationship, not just the outward trappings of religion, but the inward reality of a relationship with God that we know comes only through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Actually, not just know about God, but to actually know God in my heart of heart. "Then the Lord will be my God."

And so I need to ask you, "Is God your God, or is He just God? Is He the God of your parents, is He your God? Is He the God of your spouse or is He your God?" He's got to be your God, it's got to be personal, it's got to be internal within you, that you know God. John 17:3, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the one true living God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Do you know God?

Verse 22: "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house." It will be recognized as God's house, And let me tell you, this is a great

beginning for Bethel, is it not? But just like many churches and like many denominations and like many nations, it will not always be the house of God, and it will be altars built here to Baal, to false worship in later days. And some of the places on the earth where God has done His greatest works are now hell holes of darkness, sanctuaries of Satan, to quote Jesus, because they've departed from the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. And even Bethel will lose it. It's a warning to each and every Christian ministry, church, denomination, as many are on the slippery slope cascading down into agnosticism and atheism.

But at the end of verse 22 is the fifth step that Jacob takes to consecrate this moment in himself, and he says, "and all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You." Jacob recognizes that everything that he has has come from God. I don't know what all theology he had, the complexity of it, the nuances of it. But we do know this, that he understood that everything that he has has come from God.

And you know that as well. You may not have been to seminary, you may not have a doctorate in theology, but you know better than many who have a doctorate, that "every good gift, every perfect gift comes down from God above, the Father of unshifting shadows, with whom there is no variation," James 1:17, that "every spiritual blessing has come from God in Christ," Ephesians 1:3. You know that. And if you know that, you have to give back to God. "And he gave one-tenth."

In order to be converted, the entirety of you must be converted, and that includes your pocketbook. To be converted means from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet, and that includes everything in between must be given to God. And Jacob's all in with God. Listen, God doesn't need your money, this church doesn't need your money. You know who needs to give? You. You need to give, because of what it does in your life and in your heart. It's hard to receive more blessings when you have a clenched fist.

So what does this say to us, or first of all, to believers here today. You may have a startling encounter with God. You'll not have it in a dream, you'll have it in the written Word of God. God has spoken to you in His written Word everything that He has to say to you, and He has nothing else to say to you. He has spoken to you in sixty-six books over a period of fourteen hundred years, fifteen hundred years, through forty-plus authors in three different languages on three different continents; yet it all comes together

to form one Book, and it is living an active and sharper than any two-edged sword.

If you desire to have an encounter with God, then come to this awesome place and sit under the preaching of the Word. Go to your awesome apartment or house and read your Bible, and study your Bible, and meet with God; and God will show up, and God will manifest Himself to you, and God will reinforce His promises to you. And if you're an unbeliever here today - and I close with this - this very image in this dream of this ladder, this stairwell from earth to heaven, Jesus in John 1:51 said, "This ladder is Me." And He said in John 1:51, He said to Nathanael, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Jesus is this only access to God. Jesus is this only connection to God. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." And if you've never come to Christ with saving faith, may God unplug your ears this very moment, and may God remove the fog in your mind, and may God open your heart this very moment, and may the gospel of Jesus Christ at long last enter into the depth of your being, and you receive it, and you believe it, and you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior. He is the only way for you to get to God; there is no other way. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the end of death. There is salvation in no other name, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

And so this ladder was but a foreshadowing of "the Ladder," capital L, Jesus Christ, who left heaven and came to the earth, so that you and I who are on the earth can one day leave this earth and go to heaven. He became the Son of Man, that you and I might become sons of God. He was born of a virgin, that you and I might be born again. He has come all the way down to us, that He might take us all the way up to the heights of heaven. What a ladder He is. Do you know Him? Have you believed upon Him? Is He your Lord and Savior? Can you say today, "This is my God and my Lord and my Savior"? Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, what a text, what a passage, what a scene, what an encounter. Lord, take from this passage and work it into the fabric of our souls. May we be living epistles of this scene, in Jesus' name. Amen.