



JACOB'S LADDER

Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth,
and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God
were ascending and descending on it.
(Genesis 28)

Picture Jacob sleeping with his head on a rock in the dark of night. He dreams of a ladder or stairway extending from the earth to heaven with the Lord standing above it and angels ascending and descending. This dream was such a comfort to Jacob, letting him know that the Lord was with him on his journey. The inner meaning of this story can bring comfort to us as well because it describes the way the Lord and His angels support us on our life's journey—especially when we read or hear the Lord's Word and make it part of our lives.

READ: "Surely the Lord Is in This Place" by the Rev. Kurt Asplundh

Jacob's ladder pictures the way we all can be uplifted from this earth and led to heaven through the truths of the Lord's Word.

READ: "The Stairway to Heaven" family talk by the Rev. Fred Schnarr

It is the Word that connects our minds on earth with the minds of the angels in heaven and with the Lord Himself. When we use the knowledges from the Word then our mind not only receives the loves and affections of the angels, but our good loves rise up to give happiness to the angels. This is why Jacob saw angels "ascending and descending."

PROJECT: Jacob's Ladder (ages 3-6)

Color and cut out the picture showing the Lord and Jacob. Then make a ladder (about 3 inches tall) using craft sticks and toothpicks (for the rungs) and glue the ladder so that the top rung is just below the Lord's feet. Make angels for the ladder or color and cut out the angels provided with the project.

SING: "Jacob's Ladder" by Lori Odhner

PROJECT: Jacob's Ladder Collage (ages 5-9)

Color the ladder and the picture of Jacob. Make your own pictures of angels. Cut these out and assemble to make a collage picturing Jacob's dream.

PROJECT: Jacob's Ladder Mural (*ages 5-12*)

Have children make pictures of angels of various sizes (because angels near the top of the ladder would appear smaller), then arrange on poster board (or a bulletin board) with a ladder, Jacob, and the Lord to make the mural.

COLORING PAGES:

Jacob Dreamed of a Ladder by Lisa S. Buss

Jacob's Dream by Nancy Ebert

Stairway to Heaven by Nancy Schnarr

PROJECT: Picture Jacob's Dream (*ages 6-10*)

Use the wax resist method to picture Jacob's comforting dream. Use oil pastels (or wax crayons) to draw Jacob, a stairway or ladder, and angels in white garments going up and down the ladder. Then brush the picture with light blue watercolor (or a teaspoon of powdered poster paint mixed with ½ cup water) to make the night sky.

PROJECT: Jacob's Ladder Diorama (*ages 7-12*)

Color the background scene with the ladder. Color and cut out the figures of the angels and Jacob sleeping, then attach them to the scene.

HOW THE LORD TEACHES US IN HIS WORD

*When the Word is read, the Lord comes in and teaches.
(Arcana Coelestia 6516:3)*

The Lord teaches us when we read or hear the Word. When we read the Word regularly—perhaps one or two chapters each day—we open ourselves to being guided by the Lord. And if we try to use what we learn to do good things and turn away from evil, it is as if we are being lifted up a stairway with angels at our side.

READ: "What Is the Word?" family talk by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss, Sr.

When you pick up any part of the Word and read it, then the Lord is talking to you. Because it is His Word, He wrote it, and it is as if He was speaking to you in His own voice. Every time you hear the Word or read it, then the Lord is very close to you, helping you to understand and love what He has said there.

READ: "The Use of the Word" family talk by the Rev. Norbert Rogers

In His Word, the Lord tells us the kinds of things that can help us become angels in heaven.

READ: The Lord Gave Us the Word (*for preschoolers*)

To give little ones an introduction to the use of the Word, print out the pages with their simple text and lovely color illustrations and share it with your children.

PROJECT: The Word Has Layers of Meaning (*ages 8-12*)

Make a little book to illustrate the layers of meaning within the Word.

SING: Father in Heaven, Who Gave Us the Word

PROJECT: Open Word Snowflake (*ages 9 and up*)

Print, fold, and cut the pattern to make a beautiful paper snowflake of the open Word.

COLORING PAGE: The Word of the Lord by Lisa S. Buss

Shows the Lord holding His Word as if inviting us all to read the stories and learn the truths....

ACTIVITY: Bookmarks About the Lord Teaching Us in His Word (*ages 12 and up*)

Print and use these illustrated bookmarks with quotations from the Lord's Word.

ENLIGHTENMENT FROM THE LORD

When a person possessing a heavenly love reads it
the Word links him to heaven and through heaven to the Lord,
as a result of which he receives enlightenment and instruction.
(*Arcana Coelestia* 9382:3)

Heavenly loves—such as loving the Lord and the neighbor—open our minds to receive heavenly light or enlightenment from the Lord. People with these loves want to help other people so they are reading the Word with a useful purpose in mind. It is said that these heavenly loves soak up heaven's truths like a sponge soaks up water!

READ: "A Deeper Meaning to the Bible" sermon by the Rev. Peter M. Buss, Jr.

The Lord our God wants us to believe in Him and obey Him. He wants us to understand not only what He commands, but why. He longs for us to see what kind of God He is—the Creator and Redeemer of the world, who is intimately aware of each and every detail of our lives, who is a close and personal God, who uses countless Divine means to lead each of us to make wise choices. All this is why He has opened up the Bible by revealing the internal sense of His Word in the books which we call the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church.

JOURNAL PAGE: What Truths Have Opened Your Eyes?

Reflect on the way that truths can open our eyes by thinking of some truths that have helped you in your life or by applying a truth to a hypothetical situation.

READ: "The Wonder of the Lord's Word" teen article by the Rt. Rev. George de_Charms

If we merely read the Word, even if we memorize what we have read, we still may not truly understand it. We have to *think* about what we have read, reflect upon it, and search out its meaning. And, more than this, we must live it. We must live according to what the Lord commands in His Word. Only this will lead to our happiness, which is why the Word has been given.

SPIRITUAL TASK: What Is the Lord Trying to Tell You?

Try to keep a journal as you read the Word, writing down passages that strike you as especially beautiful, comforting or helpful in your life. Review these after several days or weeks to see if you can discover what parts of the Word are currently speaking to your heart and mind.

SING: Lord, Look Down from Heaven on Us

CLIMBING UP THE STAIRWAY

The pieces of knowledge which enable the human understanding to climb,
while God holds it in His hand and guides it,
can be compared to the steps of the ladder seen by Jacob.
(*True Christian Religion 24:2*)

It is really the Lord who lifts us up but we need to do our part by seeking the truths of His Word. As we turn to the Lord in His Word, He can teach us what is good and revitalize our lives in ways that help us draw closer to Him and to heaven.

READ: “The Ladder That Joins Us to the Lord” by the Rev. Norbert Rogers

Just as the ladder joined together the Lord, the angels, and Jacob, the Word joins together the Lord, the angels, and people. As we read the Lord's Word, He can make a ladder in us so that we can be connected with the angels and with the Lord Himself.

READ: “Ascending and Descending” a sermon by the Rev. Fred Chapin

The angels going up and down the ladder seen by Jacob illustrate the process by which the Lord can make us spiritually alive. We, in a way, ascend to the Lord by learning how to live from the Word. As we put truth to use in our lives, the Lord helps us see truth more clearly from a love of good—pictured by the angels descending the ladder. We can picture ourselves climbing a wonderful ladder or stairway connecting us with heaven if we look to the Lord's Word as our guide in daily life.

READ: “Jacob's Dream” by the Rev. Arne Bau-Madsen (*adapted for preschoolers*)

When you come to worship the Lord, if you listen carefully to the Word, then just as the angels in the dream came *down* the stairs from the Lord to Jacob, so the reading from the Word will come into your mind from the Lord. And the prayers and songs that you say and sing will rise up toward heaven and the Lord, just as the angels went *up* the stairs from Jacob to the Lord.

READ: “Steps of Truth” teen article by the Rev. Harold Cranch

The Lord has given each of us the ladder that goes up to heaven, on which angels are going up and coming down. That ladder is the Lord's Word with many steps of truth that lead to the Lord. As we learn to see the deeper meaning in the Word, we move up the ladder step by step, toward the Lord.

PROJECT: Becoming an Angel (*ages 3-6*)

This project for little ones introduces the project of making a collage of Jacob's Ladder by asking children “Wouldn't you like to be an angel someday? As you grow up and read the Word, and do what it says, you can be an angel.”

PROJECT: The Lord in Heaven (*ages 9-12*)

Make a three dimensional model of the Lord and angels on the stairway, picturing the communication that we have with the Lord through the stories of His Word.

ACTIVITY: On the Stairway to Heaven (*ages 6-12*)

Print the beautiful stairway with the Lord at the top and the two pages with angels to cut out. As you read (or listen to the Word) each day, place an angel on the stairway to illustrate how reading the Word connects us with heaven. (Note: If you wish to extend this activity, you may want to make the ladder longer or place panels at each side so that more angels can be added.)