

**Jesus, Jacob's Ladder (John 1:43-51)**  
**The Gospel of John: That You May Believe**  
**Southern Hills Baptist Church**  
**August 28, 2016**

**WELCOME**

Happy Sunday! It is good to be with you tonight, opening up God's Word together. If you have your Bibles head over to John 1. This is our 7<sup>th</sup> and final week in John 1.

**Significant Moment**

As you turn over to John 1 let me open up by sharing a significant moment in my spiritual life with you. I want to share with you something that completely changed the way that read and appreciated over 70% of the Bible.

**A Strange Thing - OT**

Of course I am speaking about the Old Testament. When I was younger in my walk with Christ the Old Testament was a strange thing to me.

- It was full of crazy specific laws that forbade things that were really common in my life, like clothes of mixed fabric and bacon.
- It commanded animal sacrifices, which seemed cultish.
- It had very specific laws about outward conformity for worship to take place.
- It showed a nation that continued to fall back into idolatry in the most literal ways, fashioning "gods" out of metal, making these people feel very archaic and unrelatable.

**Something So Different - NT**

And the New Testament was so different. Grace, freedom, forgiveness, love, these were all topics spoken over more plainly and directly. These themes overtly dominate the tone of the New Testament. All the intense Old Testament laws about worship and sacrifices had been done away with. Jesus was on the scene, preaching the Gospel, the coming Kingdom of God. The New Testament spoke about sin in terms that I related to more easily.

**An After-Thought**

With this being the case the Old Testament became a bit of an after-thought. I understood it was necessary. I believed it was inspired by God, but it simply wasn't where I lived and thus it provided little to me and was in large part set aside.

**All About Jesus**

Then, years ago, I was listening to a podcast from a theologian I greatly respected and he was talking through the value of the Old Testament. He said something in a bold way that I had never heard before. He started explaining that the Old Testament was all about Jesus. Now, I had always understood that the Old Testament prophesied about Jesus, but he was taking it much further than that. He was explaining that if you couldn't see Jesus on every page of the Old Testament then you were reading it wrong. Jesus was the main character of the Old Testament. God gave us the Old Testament not only to pave the way for Jesus, but so that we may know Jesus more fully in this life.

He pointed to a couple passages of Scripture that spoke to this truth...

**John 1:45**

[45] Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

### **Luke 24:27**

[27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

### **Luke 24:44-45**

[44] Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” [45] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

### **2 Corinthians 1:20**

[20] For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

## **All Of It – Law, Prophets, Poetry**

Jesus explains very clearly that it is the whole of the Old Testament that speaks of Him. He references the 3 divisions of the Old Testament, the law, the prophets, and the books of poetry, the Psalms.

## **OT Comes to Life**

When you understand this, when you learn to start reading your Old Testament in this light it changes everything about the Old Testament. The Old Testament really comes alive.

- You start to learn how each aspect of the Old Testament was pointing forward to Christ so that the supremacy of Jesus would be magnified and exalted.
- You stop seeing the Bible as a book divided into two halves and start seeing it as one unified story where God is using history to ramp people up for His coming Son.

This truth had a big impact on my love and appreciation for the Old Testament. This truth is why my favorite sermon series we have done to date is when we walked through major stories of the Old Testament a couple of years ago. We spent a few months in the Old Testament and Jesus was made much of.

## **Taught and Demonstrated**

Tonight, in John 1, this truth is not only taught, but it is demonstrated as Jesus Himself shows us how He is the fulfillment of one of the most stunning images of the Old Testament. My hope for tonight is that as we walk through our passage we would not only get to know Jesus more fully through the interaction that He has with Nathanael, but that we would appreciate Him more deeply as we understand Him as Jacob’s Ladder.

## **Opening Prayer**

With all of this said, let’s pause for a moment and ask God to do a work on our hearts through His Word this evening.

*Dear Heavenly Father,  
Your Word amazes me. In my hands rests a collection of 66 books written by 40 different authors, from 3 different continents, spanning a 2,000 year period and it is all telling one story, the story of your Son come from Heaven to save a people for Himself. May we revel in that story tonight. May we rejoice in the hope it offers us. May it change us from the inside out.  
We pray this in Jesus’ perfect name,  
Amen.*

## Our Text

Hear the Word of God. John 1:43-51...

### John 1:43-51

[43] The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." [44] Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. [45] Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." [46] Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." [47] Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" [48] Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." [49] Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" [50] Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." [51] And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

## THE SETTING – 2 INVITATIONS (vs. 43-46)

The setting of our passage is established with two different invitations.

### Invitation 1 – Jesus Invites Philip to Follow Him

The first invitation comes from Jesus to Philip. It is a simply invitation. Jesus called Philip to "Follow Him."

### Variation of Calls

Something to take note of is the variation in the calls that Jesus has made upon His disciples.

- Andrew and John learned about Jesus from John the Baptist and the testimony he gave of Jesus as the Messiah. After spending some time with Jesus, Jesus asked them, "What are you looking for exactly?"
- Peter's following of Jesus came about differently. He was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew who came and excitedly told him of the good news. When Peter encountered Jesus, Jesus spoke prophetically over Peter's life, showing His divine knowledge and making a pronouncement about the future of Peter.
- In our text tonight we are told that Jesus found Philip. No one brought Philip to Jesus, but Jesus went out and found Philip.

Again, take note of the different ways that that these men came to follow Jesus.

- Some of these men may have needed to have their motives questioned, so Jesus asked, what are you looking for?
- Another maybe needed inspiration and thus Jesus made prophetic promises to him by renaming Him.
- Another perhaps was shy or really lost in life so Jesus sought him out in grace.

### Tailored Callings

We don't know all the details of the conversions of these men, but what we do know is that Jesus interacted and called each of them differently. Something we are going to see in our text tonight in some bold ways is that **Jesus knows you far better than you know you. He knows who you are and what you need and when He calls you to Himself He does so perfectly, giving you what you need in that moment.**

- Some people need a hammer dropped so Jesus confronts
- Others need to be inspired and caught up in something bigger than ourselves so Jesus reveals a sliver of His splendor and glory
- Others need to be approached tenderly so a bruised reed Jesus will not break.

Isn't that beautiful? Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus knows you and will approach you with what you need as He calls you to Himself?

### **We All Have Different Stories**

Everyone in this room has a different story as to how they came to know Jesus and that story was tailored by Jesus based off of what He knew you would need. **Isn't it amazing that you are more than a number to God? He cares about you personally and knows you intimately.** It is easy to feel like a number in many settings we find ourselves in.

### **I Am A Number**

At work I have a Team Member ID. It is a 7-digit number that is unique to me that identifies me from the other 90,000 employees at the company I work for. The company I work for does their best to help employees feel valued and not like just another number and I appreciate that, they do a good job, but at the same time these I'll tell you, Whole Foods as a company works to make sure people don't feel like numbers, but whenever I have to type that number in to a system at work or identify myself with that number when talking to someone in HR or Benefits it is hard not to feel like a number. It is a reminder that this company has so many people working for it that the only way to keep them straight is to give them a number.

### **Not A Number to Jesus**

Our Savior doesn't operate that way! **He knows you by name and as we will see shortly He knows you at an intimate level.**

### **Seeking Out Philip**

Jesus knew Philip and we read that He went and sought Him out. Why? We don't really know. We don't know Philip that well from this text, where he was at in life, or his disposition. Jesus did though, even though Philip didn't know Him and Jesus went to Him!

### **Called To The Same Thing – Jesus**

While the call of Jesus may differ from person to person, what Jesus is calling us to is always the same. He is calling us to "follow Him." That will never shift. **Jesus may approach us differently, but regardless of how He approaches us the goal of His calling is always the same. He is the goal. He is the treasure. He is the Lord that we kneel to. He is the way, the truth, and the life.** There is salvation in no other name.

### **Philip Follows**

Philip responded to Jesus' loving call to follow Him by doing just that. I am sure there was more to this interaction than these words as Philip not only followed after Jesus for the day, but determined that Jesus was the Promised Messiah, which we see in verse 45 when Philip goes and tells Nathanael that he had found the One that Moses in the Law and the prophets had written about.

### **Invitation 2 – Philip Invites Nathanael to Come and See**

This leads us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation in our text, the invitation of Philip to Nathanael to come and see the Messiah. After Philip is approached by Jesus and likely spends time with Jesus, he goes out to find a friend

to share the incredible news with. The Messiah was here. Everyone needed to know. Nathanael was a friend who needed to know so he goes and talks to Nathanael.

### **The Prophesied One**

The way that Philip describes Jesus to Nathanael is significant. Jesus is the One whom Moses, who wrote the books of the law, and the prophets wrote about. **This statement acknowledges that the Old Testament as a whole testifies to the coming Messiah.** I spoke to this in my introduction tonight, but **the storyline of the Old Testament is a storyline that is building towards Jesus.**

- Every law that was given is fulfilled in Jesus.
- Every law that was given pointed us forward to Jesus, our better Sacrifice, our better High Priest, our better King.

The prophets pointed us forward to Him.

- He is the one who will usher in the coming kingdom of God.
- He is the seed of the woman that will crush the head of the serpent.
- He is the suffering servant.

Everything, all of the Old Testament, is about Jesus in what it points forward to, in the paths that it is preparing, in how it is to be fulfilled, in how problems are eternally solved.

And Philip stands before his friend Nathanael and tells him that he has encountered this One, the One whom all the Scriptures have been written about! Philip gives one more descriptor about Jesus, He is from Nazareth.

### **Anything Good From Nazareth?**

Nathanael's nature, that Jesus is about to speak to, is revealed in his response to this, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Clearly Nathanael doesn't think highly of old Nazareth and he isn't the kind of guy to hold back. Perhaps Nathanael thought that no one of importance could come from a city that was small and unimportant like the little town of Nazareth. It is also possible that Nathanael simply didn't like Nazareth as it was likely a rival city to Cana, where Nathanael was from. Maybe he viewed Nazareth like Texans view Oklahoma. **Can anything good really come from Oklahoma? No, really, I am asking... ;-)**

### **Come and See**

Despite this sour reception Philip challenges Nathanael to come and see who this Jesus is and I am sure out of a great deal of curiosity Nathanael does. I mean, it isn't every day that a friend says, "We have found the Messiah! Come and meet Him!"

### **THE MIRACLE – JESUS' DIVINE KNOWLEDGE (VS. 47-48)**

As we continue on in verse 47 we get to see Nathanael encounter Jesus and it is nothing short of miraculous as Jesus reveals His divine knowledge of Nathanael. Let me reread verses 47-48...

#### **John 1:47-48**

[47] Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" [48] Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

So Nathanael has decided to go and see who this Jesus character was and as he approaches Jesus, Jesus makes a proclamation about Nathanael, saying, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" In saying this Jesus was making a miraculous proclamation as to who Nathanael is.

### **Jacob = Trickster and Manipulator**

He begins by saying that Nathanael is an Israelite indeed. This is a reference to Nathanael's honesty. Remember, the name Israel was the name of a man before it was the name of a nation. Israel was the name God gave Jacob. You remember the story of Jacob. He was a manipulator, a trickster, a con-man. He tricked his brother out of the birth-right blessing that was due him and deceived his father in order to receive it.

### **Israel – A New Name for a New Man**

Israel was the name that God had given to Jacob after Jacob had finally submitted to God and given up his deceptive, controlling ways.

### **Nathanael was an Israel, a man of Integrity**

So Jesus was saying, you are an Israel, not a Jacob, you are a man of integrity, not a man of deception and deceit. This is confirmed in what Jesus follows this statement up with when He tells Nathanael that he is a man who has not deceit in him. Again, this is testifying to Nathanael's integrity.

### **In Nathanael's Shoes**

Imagine yourself in Nathanael's shoes, walking up to meet this Jesus that you have heard incredible stories of and before you even get close enough to stop walking He begins making pronouncements about who you are and your character.

### **Accurate Assessment, But How?**

Nathanael was taken off guard. He wondered how Jesus knew him. His response indicated that Jesus' assessment of him was accurate. He was a man of honesty and integrity. This statement left Nathanael wondering how Jesus knew this about him. Had Philip told Jesus about Nathanael?

### **Jesus Sees the Heart and the Activity**

So Nathanael asks, how do you know me? Jesus' answer is miraculous. He shows that He not only can see into Nathanael's heart, but he can see wherever Nathanael is. He tells Nathanael that before Philip had come and talked to him, He, Jesus, had seen Nathanael sitting under the fig tree.

### **Impossible Knowledge**

Philip couldn't have known this. Philip couldn't have reported back to Jesus on this because this is where Nathanael was before Philip had shown up. **Jesus is demonstrating His divine knowledge of all things. This is clearly seen in Nathanael's response to Jesus' statements.** Nathanael begins to proclaim Jesus to be deity, calling Jesus the Son of God, the King of Israel.

### **A Miracle – Divine Knowledge**

**What could have caused skeptical Nathanael to make these incredibly bold proclamations? He had seen a miracle. Jesus had spoken to things that He should have no knowledge of.** Jesus had never met Nathanael, yet he is able to speak to who Nathanael is in intimate ways. Nathanael had spent the afternoon alone under a fig tree and yet Jesus knew where he was and what he was doing!

### **Spirit of Knowledge**

Nathanael had witnessed a miracle! What could explain this divine knowledge? As we consider Jesus' divine knowledge of things that would be unknowable to anyone else I would remind you of the prophecy that was given of Jesus from Isaiah 11:1-2...

[1] There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. [2] And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Jesus, as the Messiah, as the Son of God, has the Spirit of knowledge that rests upon Him. This is an amazing thing to consider. Jesus has all knowledge!

### **Application – Jesus Knows You**

Stop and think about what this means for you for just a moment. Just like Nathanael, Jesus knows your heart.

- He knows what weighs heavily on you.
- He knows what you are passionate about.
- He knows the secret worries you are carrying, but haven't shared with others.
- He knows what motivates all of your actions, good and bad.
- He knows who you are at the deepest levels.

This should bring you incredible comfort as you never walk alone in this life if you have placed your faith in Jesus. **He knows you fully and He serves as your Great High Priest. What a blessing!**

### **He Loves You Despite Knowing You**

What is even more incredible is that Jesus loves you despite knowing everything about you.

- He loves you intensely despite the fact that He knows the dark desires that sit within your heart.
- He knows the angry and hateful feelings you harbor from time to time and still came for you.
- He knows the lustful thoughts that you hold on to and still came to seek and save you.
- He knows when you long for His gifts more than Him and He still laid down His life for you.

This is what blows me away as I think of Jesus' divine knowledge. **He knows everything about me and yet still loves me. What incredible love!** How often do you stop to remember that God loves you at that level?

We have a hard time loving people when they sin against us in one way or another, don't we? When we see the bad side of a person we often recoil and run from them. Jesus knows all of you. He has seen it all and yet is lovingly pursuing you! What kind of love is this?!? It is greater than anything we could give, that is for sure.

### **Sees You Wherever You Are**

Not only does Jesus see into your heart, into your inner being, but He sees you exactly where you are. He sees you when you are stuck in traffic. He sees you when you are overwhelmed at work. He sees you when your kids push your last button. He sees you when you are alone and are feeling lonely.

### **Never Alone**

**The truth is that we are never alone. We have a Savior who sees us wherever we are and the Scriptures tell us that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us with the Father.** Meaning that Jesus is praying for us! **Who better to have praying for us other than the Son of God who sits at the right hand of the Father and knows our inner being fully and who knows our situation completely.**

## THE WORSHIPFUL RESPONSE – NATHANAEL’S WORDS OF PRAISE (VS. 49)

We have an amazing Savior! This is surely what Nathanael recognized in his encounter with Jesus. Let’s take a moment and reread verse 49 to hear Nathanael’s response.

### John 1:49

[49] Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Here we see a few more titles used to introduce Jesus to us. John 1 is chalk full of titles for Jesus so it is only appropriate to close out this chapter with more descriptions of His greatness and position.

### Rabbi

First, in confessing the greatness of Jesus, Nathanael calls Jesus Rabbi. Rabbi was a title that was bestowed upon respected teachers. It wasn’t used of just any teacher, but teachers who had followings, teachers who were mentoring people. **To call someone Rabbi was to communicate that someone was a teacher that had influence in his or her life.**

### Is He Your Rabbi?

Just as Nathanael has responded to Jesus by confessing Him as Rabbi we need to respond in the same way. **Is Jesus Rabbi in your life? Is He the teacher who holds the most sway and influence in your life?** He should be, right?

- He is God become man.
- He is truth incarnate.
- He is the maker of all things.
- He is the giver of life, meaning, and purpose.

So who should have more sway in your life than Jesus? No One! Yet, yet, we allow others to have more influence in our lives at times. Sometimes we are interested in going with the flow of popular culture so we tune Jesus out. Sometimes we are more interested in what we want and what we think is best so we stop listening to Jesus.

We need to remember the greatness of Jesus each and every day so that we will sit under Him and follow Him as our Rabbi.

### Son of God

The next title that Nathanael proclaims is that of “Son of God.” We talked about this title 2 weeks ago when John the Baptist used it of Jesus. This title ascribes deity to Jesus. The title Son of God speaks to the fact that Jesus is of the same nature as God. Sons share the same nature as their parents. **Therefore if Jesus’ Father is God, then by His very nature He is God.**

### Uncreated Son

Now let me be careful here. When we talk to Jesus as Son we are speaking to His functional position within the Trinity. We are not speaking to the idea that Jesus was perhaps created in some way. Our children did exist prior to conception, right? This isn’t the case with Jesus, He has always been and will always be. We have talked about this on multiple occasions already in John 1 when we read that Jesus was there in the beginning with God and that all things were created through Jesus and there was nothing created that was created apart from Jesus, meaning that it is impossible for Jesus to be created Himself, right?

### All About Divine Nature

This title Son of God is simply meant to convey that Jesus is God by His very nature. Listen to how John explains this in chapter 5...



### **John 5:18**

[18] This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

So Nathanael's response to Jesus' divine knowledge is to ascribe deity to Jesus. Jesus is God.

### **King of Israel**

The title that Nathanael uses next to speak to Jesus' greatness is that of King of Israel. This was a messianic title, a title used of the coming Savior that God had promised Israel. Here is but one of many examples...

### **Zechariah 9:9**

[9] Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This is a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. He is king! This prophecy also foretells Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, which we will see in John 12.

So as Nathanael calls Jesus King of Israel he is really calling Jesus the Messiah, the one who was prophesied of all the way back in Genesis 3, the seed of the woman that would crush the head of the serpent. Jesus is the coming Savior.

### **Titles of Praise**

Both of these titles, Son of God and King of Israel are exclamations of praise from Nathanael as he ascribes titles to Jesus that would have been blasphemous anywhere else. There is only one fit to hold these titles and that is Jesus.

### **Application – How Will You Respond to Encountering Jesus?**

So Nathanael's response to Jesus' divine knowledge is that of worship. That ought to be our response as well. Every Sunday when we gather you have the opportunity to encounter the person of Jesus through the preaching of His Word and through songs of praise to Him. You don't have to wait an entire week to encounter Jesus however, you can encounter Him daily through the reading and study of His word, through prayer, and many other avenues. What will your response be? **Are you content to sit through the study of God's Word tonight and simply process information or will you respond in worshipful praise like Nathanael did?**

The person of Jesus deserves a response of praise. May we give that response tonight and every other opportunity we have to encounter the person and work of Jesus, for His glory and our joy!

### **THE PROMISE – GREATER THINGS (vs. 50-51)**

Jesus responds to Nathanael's praise with an amazing promise that closes out our passage. Let's reread our final 2 verses and rejoice over the greatness of Jesus.

### **John 1:50-51**

[50] Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." [51] And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

## Greater Things

I love Jesus' response.

*You thought me knowing everything about you was impressive? My divine knowledge was enough to prove who I was to you? Brother, you have not seen anything yet. Just wait. What's ahead is so much greater, so much bigger, so much more majestic, and it will take you off guard. You won't see it coming.*

## Not Bragging, Simply Stating Facts

As Jesus says this to Nathanael He doesn't say it in a braggadocios or proud way. He simply states facts. Facts He knows to be true, as the Spirit of All Knowledge rests upon Him. He knows what is coming and He knows how people will respond. He knows that what is ahead is far greater than the mere taste that the early disciples have had of His power thus far.

## The Greater Things Described – Prophecy Fulfilled

Jesus goes on to describe the greater things that are coming by revealing some truth from the Old Testament that these men likely had not pieced together yet. Jesus says that they will see the Heavens opened and angles of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. This is a reference back to an incredible event in Jacob's life.

## Jacob's Story

We have already mentioned Jacob briefly, but he was the son of Isaac. He was the second son of Isaac to be specific, which meant that his older brother was to receive the larger inheritance, greater name, and bigger blessing. Jacob along with his mother was a schemer. They both wanted Jacob to receive this greater inheritance, name, and blessing so they committed identity fraud. This is likely one of the first recorded incidents of identity fraud in human history. Jacob and his brother Esau were opposites. Esau was a rugged outdoorsman, burley and hairy. Jacob, we are told, was much more smooth skinned. He helped around the home more. So Jacob dressed up as Esau, putting on skins, working up a bit of a sweat and stink, and went to his father Isaac. Isaac had really poor eyesight at this point in his life so the disguise fooled him and Jacob received the blessing.

## Gotta Run!

Now you can imagine that this didn't sit well with older brother Esau, right? Esau was enraged and vowed to kill Jacob. So Jacob fled, what other option did he have? His brother was a skilled hunter and had all the motivation in the world to bury him. So Jacob left the land that had just been promised to him and went off to hide out at his uncle's place.

## The Dream

On the way God approaches Jacob. Let me read you the account...

### Genesis 28:10-17

[10] Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. [11] 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. [12] And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! [13] 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 to your offspring. [14] 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. [15] 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." [16] Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not

know it.” [17] 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.”

### **God’s Unreal Faithfulness and Sovereign Election**

Jacob’s story is incredible. It is incredible primarily because of God’s unbelievable faithfulness and sovereign election. By any human or earthly measure Jacob shouldn’t have been the heir to Isaac. Jacob shouldn’t have received this incredible blessing. He conned his way into it. He should have been punished. Yet, we see God rolling with Jacob and continuing the covenant that he had made with Abraham through Isaac and now Jacob. We go on to learn in Romans 9 that the favor Jacob received came about by God’s sovereign election by His good pleasure so that God might so that it is He who chooses and He has every right to do so as God!

### **The Ladder/Staircase**

The key thing we need to see in this story though is the fascinating dream that Jacob had. We read that he saw a ladder that spanned from the earth up into the heavens. The word for ladder might be better understood as a staircase from the Hebrew word used here. So Jacob sees a staircase leading into the heavens with angels walking up and walking down.

### **Access to God from God**

Now we are not given any explanation in the text as to what is meant by this incredible sight, but let’s think through it for a minute. **We have a stairway that is connecting heaven, God’s dwelling place, to Earth, our dwelling place. This is incredible. This stairway is providing access to God.**

### **From Heaven**

It is a stairway that is **coming from the Heavens as well. Humanity has never, nor could never create something like this.** So the access to God that is being pictured is access that God in His grace has granted, right?

### **Conduit for God’s Work**

Additionally, we see angels going up and down the staircase. **Angels are God’s messengers. They carry out God’s will and tasks. We see them deliver good news in the Scriptures. We see them bring God’s power in the Scriptures as well.**

### **Close, Not Far**

So as Jacob sees this He recognizes that the God of his fathers is **not far and distant, but near and close. God is coming down to His people and He is doing so in power. He is a God who is active in the care of His creation.**

### **Jesus’ Revelation**

Now we turn back to John 1 and we see Jesus say something simply incredible. Jesus takes this story that has captivated Israel about God for such a long time and reveals something incredible. He is the ladder!

### **I Am the Ladder!**

Jesus says...

- I am the ladder.
- I am the stairway.
- I am the bridge between Heaven and Earth.
- I am the only access point to God.
- I am the conduit that carries the greatest expression of God’s grace,

- I am the channel by which God's greatest work will be accomplished,
- I am the revealer of Heavenly truth,
- I am the one mediator between God and man,
- I am salvation.

Maybe all that Jesus was saying in this image could be summed up in the words of Jesus in John 14:6...

### **John 14:6**

[6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

### **Jesus is Enough**

How glorious is our Savior? It has been a couple years since we gave them out, but we gave out these little wristbands that say, "Jesus is Enough." That's right, they are wristbands, not bracelets. Men do wear bracelets, we wear wristbands, totally different. But we gave out these wristbands that were meant to be a reminder that when you have Jesus, you have everything you need.

- He is our access point to God.
- He is the only path of salvation.
- He is grace and truth in human form.
- He is the shepherd of our souls.
- He is our righteousness.
- He is the only one who could have purchased the salvation our souls needed.
- He is our sacrifice.
- He is our redemption.

### **Let Your Heart Soar!**

**If all you have is Christ, then you have all you need. Can we just rejoice over this?!? Does your heart soar when it hears this truth? Do you treasure this reality?** I do. My soul soars. It embraces this truth as it is flooded with unspeakable hope!

### **SUMMARY**

We opened up tonight talking about how Jesus is the main character of the Old Testament. Everything in the Old Testament is building up to Him. It did so in ways that those in the Old Testament didn't always recognize, and Jacob's ladder is a great example of that. Jacob saw that God was close and working in the midst of His creation. This was true, but more than that this dream was meant to show someone greater that was coming, someone who would be that stairway from Heaven to Earth and back. It was meant to show us Jesus! Images like this one only help us see the greater and grander beauty of our Savior, don't they?

Praise be to our Savior, the Son of God, the King of Israel, the Son of Man, the stairway to Heaven. He is our sufficiency, our salvation, and our satisfaction.

Let's close by going to Him now in prayer.

Jesus.

You are all that we need. You are life. You are truth. You give meaning and purpose. You give hope in darkness. You provide the impossible. You find the lost and wandering. You give sight to the blind. You are altogether lovely. Our hearts rejoice to know that we are yours. The grace you show us plumbs depths we will never know the bottom of. You have divine knowledge. You know the thoughts and intents of our inner beings. You have seen the wickedness that dwells in each of us and yet you still came to be this stairway, unleashing God's grace at a level we could have never imagined. This truth is humbling, hope-inspiring, and captivating. Please don't let us live our lives without being captivated by it daily. We need you. We want you. Give our hearts a greater hunger for you. Help us to taste and see your goodness so we don't look for satisfaction anywhere else. We pray this in your name,  
Amen.

