

Jacob's Dream

Genesis 27:42-46; 28:1-22

Level D | Lesson 2 | Teacher Overview



And Jacob took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

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. And behold, the Lord stood above it....

Genesis 28:11-12

For Teachers

This lesson has several activity options. You may wish to choose 2-3. Reading through all of the options will help you identify the activities that are best suited to your group's size, student mix, available supplies, and the time you have to prepare. You may also want to mix and match activities from other age levels.

Activity Options

1. Talk About It
2. Look Closer: The House of God
3. Explore: The Gateway to Heaven

Talk About It

Reading: Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob fled from Esau after tricking his father into giving him the blessing of the firstborn. Stopping to sleep, he set up a stone as a pillow and dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven on which angels ascended and descended. From above, the Lord spoke to Jacob. In the morning Jacob set the stone up as a pillar and named the place Bethel (House of God). He vowed that if God was with him, He would be his God.

1. Jacob is the third generation of the Old Testament “patriarchs”. Who were his father and grandfather? (Abraham (Sarah), Isaac (Rebekah))
2. Each of the patriarchs represents a spiritual stage in a person’s life. Jacob represents young adulthood. What kinds of change do people experience as young adults? (become more responsible for their lives; leave home; first job or college; experience personality changes)
3. Jacob left home to escape his brother’s anger and set out alone for his uncle’s house in Haran, 500 miles to the north. What might his journey have been like? (on paths of hard-packed soil; no hotels or restaurants; slept by the road)
4. Jacob’s dream gave him hope about the way ahead in the dark of night. Do you feel the Lord at your side in dark times? What actions could you take that would enable you to feel His presence? (read the Word; discuss your difficulties with someone who could lead your thinking in a constructive direction, e.g. a parent, minister; do what the Word teaches)
5. The word used for “ladder” literally means “way”. Sometimes people picture a stairway leading to heaven instead of a ladder. Jacob saw angel messengers going between himself and the Lord. What messengers go between ourselves and the Lord? (our thoughts go up to the Lord; His thoughts come down into our minds)
6. The stairway rested on the earth. Similarly the Word rests on our “earth”. It is written in human language, about human events. Reading the Word can lead our thoughts higher to the spiritual ideas that are hidden within it—the “Word that [Is] God.” We reside in two worlds (natural and spiritual) that often seem to oppose each other. How do we reconcile the two? What, on this earth, can raise our thoughts to higher or spiritual ideas? What, here, connects us to that other world?
7. In the Word stones correspond to true ideas and oil corresponds to love. What does pouring the oil of love on true ideas from the Word mean? (to love the truths of the Word, think of them as holy, and use them in a life of willing service)
8. What might knowing this story prompt you to tell someone who felt alone in facing difficulty? (the Lord is always with us; we can see Him if we go to the Word)

Look Closer: The House of God

At a Glance:

Jacob's dream of angels going up and down a ladder depicts how the Lord connects people with Himself and with heaven. Through His Word, the Lord leads people to understand and love Him. In this activity, students will read about how the Lord accommodates His good and truth in the Word. They will then think about how they could break down a skill or concept they know well in order to teach it to someone who doesn't know anything about it.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- copy of *The House of God*
- copy of *Climbing the Ladder*
- pen or pencil

Teacher Preparation:

- It may be helpful to the students to create one or two additional examples of accommodation.



Directions:

1. Hand out "The House of God" and read it aloud with the students, pausing for questions or comments.
2. Introduce the activity: In the Word, the Lord accommodates the truth and good that is in His mind to our human minds. We can understand this better if we think about how we might accommodate a skill or concept that we know well to someone who doesn't know anything about it.
3. Hand out pens or pencils and Climbing the Ladder pages.
4. Read the instructions and examples as a group.
5. Have each student fill out a blank ladder. Offer suggestions as needed. Some possible skills or activities: making a cake; handling money; learning a new language; playing a sport; playing a musical instrument; knitting; telling time; writing a paper for school; painting
6. If they wish, students may share their "ladders" in pairs or with the whole group. Remind students that there is no one right order. Everyone will accommodate or break down a task a little bit differently.



The House of God



Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.... This is none other than the house of God... (Genesis 28: 16-17).



The Word is God’s truth itself coming from the Lord. On its way down into the world it is accommodated. Therefore when a person possessing a heavenly love reads it the Word connects him to heaven and through heaven to the Lord, as a result of which he receives enlightenment and instruction (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9382:3).



The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that a house corresponds to the human mind (see *Apocalypse Explained* 208). So, the house of God must correspond to the Lord’s mind. Sometimes we call a church a house of God. In this activity we will explore what Jacob meant by referring to the place where he had his dream as “the house of God” and see how the Lord brings things down to our level or accommodates things to us.



Think about the process you go through when you write something. Before you begin writing, you have to think of something to write or choose a topic. What you write first exists in your mind. People write books to communicate what is in their minds—what they know or think or feel. This is also true of the Word. It existed in the Lord’s mind before it was written down. This is why the very beginning of the gospel of John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”



Books are written for particular audiences or for particular people. For example, some books are written for small children with simple words and many pictures. Books for older children are longer, have chapters and fewer pictures. Most books for adults are longer still, with few or no pictures and use a larger vocabulary. Some books are written for very specific audiences, like professional textbooks for doctors or engineers.



Writing things in different ways is often called “accommodating” to the audience. Accommodating means to adapt the way you say something to help the person you are talking to understand it. It means changing the form of something without changing its essence. For example, you would probably be bored reading a book about skyscrapers intended for small children. On the other hand, you would probably be confused or feel lost reading a book for professional engineers or architects.



The Word is written in a way to accommodate important spiritual ideas to people of all ages. It is accommodated more than any book written by a person, because it reveals what is in the Lord’s mind to human beings instead of communicating what is in one human mind to another.



Each level of accommodation is like a step on a ladder. The Lord’s ideas come all the way down from heaven to “earth”—that is, to the level of human thought. But the angels on the ladder do not move in only one direction. They go up—ascend—as well as come down—descend. And so for us it is not enough to simply read the Word or memorize parts of it. We need to think about what it teaches and keep trying to understand it more deeply. Most importantly, we need to try to live by what it teaches, to bring the truths to life, for this is what will make us truly happy.

Ideas adapted from “The Wonder of the Lord’s Word” by Rt. Rev. George de Charms.

Explore: The Gateway to Heaven

At a Glance:

Jacob woke from his dream and announced “This is the gate of heaven.” Students will explore the idea of gates and gateways by reading passages from the Word, and discussing and answering questions.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- copy of *The Gateway to Heaven*
- copy of *Gateway to Heaven Readings*
- pencils or pens

Directions:

1. Distribute pages to the students.
2. Start the activity by encouraging brainstorming about gateways. Gateways play a significant part in many cultures, e.g. triumphal archways, city gates. Many churches and commercial companies use the term gateway as part of their names. What is significant about a gateway?
3. Read the *Gateway to Heaven Readings* aloud together.
4. Discuss the answers to the questions as a group.



Climbing the Ladder

Choose an activity and write the name at the top of the ladder on the right. Think about it as if you were up high somewhere—perhaps in a tree house—and you are letting down a ladder to enable another person to climb up to join you. You can't tell them everything at once. They need to understand the basics before you can tell them some of the fine details. You have to teach them how to do the activity step by step. Write the steps of the activity on the rungs of the ladder at the right, starting with the simplest ones at the bottom. You may want to figure the steps out on the back of the page first. An example is given below.



Math
Learn fractions
Learn to divide
Learn to multiply
Learn to add and subtract larger numbers
Learn to add and subtract single digit numbers
Learn to read numbers
Learn to count in sequence

The Gateway to Heaven

The *Gateway to Heaven Readings* page provides teachings from the Word to use as a reference when discussing the following questions.



1. Gateways provide access to many kinds of things. Brainstorm as many types of gateways as you can.
2. What do gates and gateways do?
3. The children of Israel marked entryways in their homes with the Ten Commandments to remind them of the law of the Lord as they went in and out of their homes. What protects the thoughts of our minds as they come and go through the doorway of our minds?
4. Jacob saw a stairway reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. This vision changed Jacob's outlook and he recognized that he was at the "gate of heaven." In what way is the Word the gate of heaven?
5. What does *standing* at the gate of heaven mean?
6. How do we *enter* the gate of heaven?
7. Why might the way to heaven seem narrow or difficult and the way to hell broad and easy?
8. Some spirits once saw the broad and narrow ways described in Matthew 7 in the life after death. As their spiritual eyes were opened they saw new things. In what ways can knowing the truth open our eyes to see different things?
9. While Jacob rested his head on a stone he had a vision of a ladder rising to heaven. The book of Revelation offers a new heavenly vision for the New Church: a holy city descending from heaven with gates that are always open set on a foundation of precious stones. Compare these visions. Look for similarities and differences. In what ways might this point to a new faith in the New Church?
10. When Nathanael became a disciple the Lord promised him that he would "see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). In what way can this be a reality in our own lives?

The Gateway to Heaven **TEACHER COPY**

1. Gateways provide access to many kinds of things. Brainstorm as many types of gateways as you can. The following examples may help to get the students thinking. Encourage them to tell you instead of reading the list to them.

physical doors, gates or entryways
knowledge is a gateway to new awareness
an education is a gateway to a career
breaking a bad habit is a gateway for a new start

new experiences are a gateway to knowledge
a job application can be a gateway to a new job
there are gateways on the internet

2. What do gates and gateways do? **give access, protection, a sense of security, connect two different things or states, etc.**
3. The children of Israel marked entryways in their homes with the Ten Commandments to remind them of the law of the Lord as they went in and out of their homes. What protects the thoughts of our minds as they come and go through the doorway of our minds? **conscience, true ideas from the Word**
4. Jacob saw a stairway reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. This vision changed Jacob's outlook and he recognized that he was at the "gate of heaven." In what way is the Word the gate of heaven? **it is where earthly ideas expressed in natural language meet heavenly ideas; it is where we meet God**
5. What does *standing* at the gate of heaven mean? **knowing true ideas but not yet acting on them**
6. How do we *enter* the gate of heaven? **by putting true (heavenly) ideas into action; making God part of our lives**
7. Why might the way to heaven seem narrow or difficult and the way to hell broad and easy? **it can feel difficult to put our own desires aside for the sake of what is right**
8. Some spirits once saw the broad and narrow ways described in Matthew 7 in the life after death. As their spiritual eyes were opened they saw new things. In what ways can knowing the truth open our eyes to see different things? **it enables us to distinguish between good and evil**
9. While Jacob rested his head on a stone he had a vision of a ladder rising to heaven. The book of Revelation offers a new heavenly vision for the New Church: a holy city descending from heaven with gates that are always open set on a foundation of precious stones. Compare these visions. Look for similarities and differences. In what ways might this point to a new faith in the New Church? **the gates to the holy city are always open; Jacob's ladder was seen at night, the holy city is always light; Jacob's rested his head on a rock, the holy city has gemstones at its foundation**
10. When Nathanael became a disciple the Lord promised him that he would "see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). In what way can this be a reality in our own lives?

Gateway to Heaven Readings

GATES

These words which I command you today shall be in your heart....You shall write them on the **doorposts** of your house and on your **gates**. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

The holy Jerusalem...had a great and high wall with twelve **gates**, and twelve angels at the gates.... (Revelation 21:10,12 parts)

JESUS SAID....

I am the **door** of the sheep. (John 10:7)

See, I have set before you an open **door**. (Revelation 3:8)

Behold, I stand at the **door** and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:19)

Enter by the narrow **gate**; for wide is the **gate** and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the **gate** and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13,14)

When the disciple Nathanael declared his belief in Jesus, Jesus promised he would “see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (John 1:51).

FROM THE HEAVENLY DOCTRINE...

By means of the Word there is a communication between heaven and earth...the Word deals with goodness and truth, by which a person is enabled to live in eternal happiness (*True Christian Religion* 200).

When a person does what the truth teaches, truth enters his or her intentions, and from these his or her actions, and so the entire person. True ideas that are simply known facts are not part of a person's will or life since a person's will or intentions are his life. When a person is intent on truth it stands at the **gateway** into his life; and when he is both intent on it and practices it, that truth is present within the entire person. (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4884).

People who are being regenerated by the Lord ascend from the world into heaven. People are raised from outward things to inward ones, because they are raised from the level of the natural person, where outward things exist, to that of the spiritual person, where inward things exist. Moses represented this kind of ascent when he took on the representation of the outward holiness of the Word. For the outward holiness of the Word is the **gateway** to the state of good, and so to heaven (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9435).

Spiritual matters occupy the highest region in the human mind, like the soul in the body. They occupy that place because it is the **gateway** through which the Lord enters a person (*True Christian Religion* 482).

I once watched as the **broad road** and the **narrow road** mentioned in the Word were shown to some spirits. The broad road was planted with trees and flowers and looked beautiful. But various types of snakes which they did not see were hidden there. The narrow road had no trees or flowerbeds but looked sad and dreary. Yet along that road angel children were among lovely tree and flower gardens, which those spirits however did not see. At that point they were asked which road they wished to take. They said, The broad one. Suddenly their eyes were opened and they saw the serpents along the broad road, and the angels along the narrow one. They were then again asked which road they wished to take. They remained silent. As long as their sight was opened they said that they wished to take the narrow road; but as long as it was closed they said that they wished to take the broad one (see *Arcana Coelestia* 3477).