

Experiencing The Godhead - Lesson #3
The Mystery of the Stairway - Part 2 of 2

Matthew 13:52 TPT, Underlined is my emphasis

He responded, "Every scholar of the Scriptures, who is instructed in the ways of heaven's kingdom realm, is like a wealthy home owner with his house filled with treasures both new and old. And he knows how and when to bring them out to show others."

Purpose:

In this lesson we continue the study of mysterious stairways in scripture. Previously we looked at two passages of scripture, and now we will look at two additional passages. However, the second scripture is a commentary by Jesus on the first scripture, but we will look at both scriptures as the third and fourth mystery. In my opinion this is certainly the most important of the mysteries, especially as it explains how Abba Father has made preparations for believers to visit heaven prior to death even in the book of Genesis.

A Fictional Story:

Once upon a time there was a young angel, Planao, who was being mentored by an older angel. Planao explained to his mentor that when he would be sent to earth to do ministry he would become frustrated because it would take him so long to get there that sometimes he would arrive late. His mentor was a little confused, so he asked, "What method of travel are you using? Planao replied, "Well, some of the teenage angels told me to take the ladder over on the west side of the river of life". He went on to explain that as "he would be going down the ladder others would be coming up so to be polite he would swing around to the back side and wait until everyone had passed, then he would swing around again and start down. However, so many were coming up the ladder causing him to stop time after time that it was getting very frustrating." The mentor was stunned and said "Don't tell me you believe those teenage angels! They're just pulling a trick on you. Look in the mirror. You've got wings, so just fly or be transported wherever you need to go. That ladder is just for _____". (Fill in the blank)

Third Mystery

Genesis 28:10-13a & 16-17 Underlined is my emphasis

New American Standard Bible (NASB)	Common English Bible (CEB)
<p>¹⁰ Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ 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. ¹² <u>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.</u> ¹³ And behold, <u>the Lord stood above it...</u></p> <p>¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, <u>and this is the gate of heaven.</u>"</p>	<p>¹⁰ Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran. ¹¹ He reached a certain place and spent the night there. When the sun had set, he took one of the stones at that place and put it near his head. Then he lay down there. ¹² <u>He dreamed and saw a raised staircase, its foundation on earth and its top touching the sky, and God's messengers were ascending and descending on it.</u> ¹³ Suddenly the Lord was standing on it^[a]...</p> <p>¹⁶ When Jacob woke from his sleep, he thought to himself, The Lord is definitely in this place, but I didn't know it. ¹⁷ He was terrified and thought, This sacred place is awesome. It's none other than God's house and <u>the entrance to heaven.</u></p>

Before proceeding, please go back and read each of the verses that are underlined, but this time look carefully to see if you observe anything unusual, something that seems odd or even wrong.

Let's begin by looking into some of the main parts of the above verses following the NASB translation.

Vrs 12 "He had a dream" – Dreams and visions are two of Abba Father's primary ways of leading and guiding his children when He wants something done a particular way. The church has been great about teaching us that the bible is one way God speaks to us, and it is extremely important, but sadly most churches have been very silent about teaching the importance of dreams and visions. If you grew up in a church like that, you will need to forgive them, but also start studying what the bible teaches about dreams and visions. For instance when Abba Father sent Jesus into the world as a baby, think how many times He used dreams, rather than bible verses, to guide people:

1. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant he had a hard time accepting it, so Abba Father gave him a dream (Matt 1:20).
2. The wise men were given a dream to know which way to return home (Matt 2:12).
3. Joseph was told through a dream to take Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt (Matt 2:13).
4. When it was time for Joseph and the family to return to Israel, he was given a dream (Matt 2:19).
5. Joseph was warned through a dream not to return to Judea but to go to Galilee (Matt 2:22).

Please don't think that I'm saying that Abba Father doesn't use scriptures for many different purposes including guiding us, but if we leave out dreams and visions we will miss receiving important information. In fact, scripture makes it clear that in the last days dreams and visions will be extremely important. Read what Peter said, quoting the prophet Joel, on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:17-18 The Passion Translation (TPT):

17 'This is what I will do in the last days—I will pour out[b] my Spirit on everybody and cause your sons and daughters to prophesy, and your young men will see visions,[c] and your old men will experience dreams from God. 18 The Holy Spirit will come upon all my servants, men and women alike, and they will prophesy.

Footnotes:

- b. Or "gush forth," or "run greedily." The Aramaic can be translated "I will be splashing my Spirit-Wind over all flesh" (humanity).
- c. Or "divinely appointed appearances." The Greek word for "visions", *horasis*, can also mean "our eyes opened to have divine encounters and see into the spiritual realm." These are not daydreams but visions of the heavenly realm. (See Strong's Concordance, Greek 3700 and 3706.)

Vrs 12 "a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven" –

The majority of 60 translations use the word "ladder", however as you can see in the table above the CEV uses "a raised staircase", while 20 other translations uses either "stairway" or "staircase". It's important that you note that the ladder is set up "on the earth with its top reaching to heaven". If you have a problem with your roof and call someone out to fix it they will set the ladder up on the ground and lean the top on the edge of the roof. That is so they can climb up to work on the roof and when finished they will climb back down. So the implication is that the ladder or stairway is set up so someone can go up and then back down, not to climb down on and then up. So the purpose of the stairway is for someone to go up to heaven and then come back down. But who is supposed to use this ladder or staircase? Hum? Got an idea?

Vrs 12 "and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." – Before proceeding, I ask again, do you see something unusual, odd, or possibly wrong with this particular phrase?

The ladder or stairway is set up on earth so someone can ascend and descend on it, but if these are actual angels that have been sent out by Abba Father to minister to people, then are the directions wrong? Angels reside in heaven and if they were being sent out on a mission they would be leaving

heaven (descending) and then returning (ascending). So maybe it's not angels that are using the ladder; and maybe the translators were wrong and assumed it was angels. Out of 60 translations only five (CEB, EXB, TPT, VOICE, & YLT) chose not to follow tradition but instead use "messengers". The Hebrew word is *mal'ak* (Strong's [h4397](#)), which the KJV translates in the following manner: angel (111 times), and messenger (98 times). So translators had to look to context to decide which word to use in a particular verse, and there isn't anything in the context that makes it absolutely clear that it's angels.

Using the NASB translation, the following are the only other scriptures (except the verse we will study as the fourth mystery) that mention the movement of angels (underlined is my emphasis):

Judges 13:20 For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. (Note vrs 3 & 9 how the angel appeared)

Daniel 4:13 I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

Daniel 4:23 In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven...

Matthew 28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven...

John 5:4 ...for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water;...

Revelation 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun,...

Revelation 10:1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud;

Revelation 14:6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven,...

Revelation 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven,...

Revelation 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven,...

Note that the only method of movements is either by flying, or ascending in a flame of the altar. Also note that when an angel was sent out that it descended or came down from heaven.

Vrs 12 "And behold, the Lord stood above it..." – Then Jacob saw the Lord, our heavenly Father, standing above it (NASB) or "on it[a]" (CEB), while the CEB has a marginal note: "Or beside it or beside him". It seems to me that it's Abba Father that is standing beside the ladder or stairway in such a way as if he is inviting people to come up (In the next section I will explain why I believe it's Abba Father").

Vrs 17 "and this is the gate of heaven" – The word "this" refers to the ladder or stairway that Jacob saw in the dream. Jacob received revelation that the ladder or stairway was the actual way into or entrance into heaven. So whoever came up the ladder or stairway would enter into heaven and experience all that it involves. In the fourth mystery we are told what, or more exactly who, the ladder is.

So it's apparent that even in the book of Genesis that our heavenly Father was making preparations for people to come to heaven for a visit and then return to earth. Therefore the mystery of the stairway in these verses is that it's people that are using the ladder or stairway to go up to heaven and then return to earth. After death isn't the only time believers go to heaven!

Fourth Mystery (Jesus' commentary on the Third Mystery)

John 1:50-51 Underlined is my emphasis

New American Standard Bible (NASB)	The Passion Translation (TPT)
⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, " <u>Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.</u> " ⁵¹ And He said to him, " <u>Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see ^(A)the heavens opened and ^(B)the angels of God ascending and descending on ^(C)the Son of Man.</u> "	⁵⁰ Jesus answered, " <u>Do you believe simply because I told you I saw you sitting under a fig tree? You will experience even more impressive things than that!</u> " ⁵¹ I prophesy to you eternal truth: ^[a] <u>From now on^[b] you will see^[c] an open heaven and gaze upon the Son of Man^[d] like a stairway reaching into the sky^[e] with the messengers of God climbing up and down upon^[f] him!"</u>

These verses are taken out of Jesus' encounter with Philip and Nathanael in John 1:43-51, so I'd suggest you go back and review the whole story. If you don't have TPT translation available, click [here](#) to read John 1:43-51 on the biblegateway website. I will use the TPT translation to make my points below.

Vrs 50 "[You will experience](#)" – Brian Simmons, the primary translator of the Passion Translation, expands the idea of what Jesus was saying to Nathanael. "Experience" implies that what was going to happen to Nathanael was so much more than just seeing something; all of his physical and spiritual senses would be involved.

Vrs 51 "[From now on](#)^[b]" – What Nathanael was going to experience would not be a onetime event, it would be something that would continue to happen over and over. The Passion Translation footnote states that the wording is taken from the Aramaic translation rather than the Greek.

Vrs 51 "[you will see](#)^[c]" – Did Jesus mean that only Nathanael would have this experience? Again The Passion Translation note provides insight: "c. Or you [plural] (Underlined is my emphasis) will spiritually see." Thus this experience is a promise for every believer today. But what will (not maybe, or perhaps) we see or experience?

Vrs 51 "[an open heaven](#)" – In the Old Testament an open heaven primarily referred to the physical heaven above the earth rather than the third heaven where our heavenly Father is enthroned. But at Jesus' baptism the third heaven was opened up and the Holy Spirit descended and rested on Jesus (Matt 3:16-17). Since then heaven has remained open to all believers. Compare Acts 7:51 The Message (MSG) 55 ...But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, hardly noticed—he only had eyes for God, whom he saw in all his glory with Jesus standing at his side. He said, "Oh! I see heaven wide open and the Son of Man standing at God's side!"

Maybe we fail to have this kind of experience because we are not full of the Holy Spirit, nor do we experience persecution like Stephen did.

Vrs 51 "[and gaze upon the Son of Man](#)^[d]" – Wow, I love it that Brian chose the word "gaze", which implies so much more than "see". Here is one definition off the web: "to look steadily and intently, as with great curiosity, interest, pleasure, or wonder." An example for a man might be the first time he laid eyes upon and gazed at the woman he knew he would eventually marry. For a woman it might be the beautiful wedding ring that her future husbands offers to her as he proposes, which she can't take her eyes off of. For my wife it would be what she experiences every time she walks into Joann's Fabric store and starts through the isles as she begins to touch the materials as she oohs and ahhs. Wouldn't you like to have that gazing kind of experience with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ in all of his glory?

If you're not familiar with the term "[Son of Man](#)", it was a term Jesus used to refer to himself.

Now combine the phrases: "[you will see](#)^[c] [an open heaven and gaze upon the Son of Man](#)^[d]" - How does that amazing statement relate to Jesus' prayer in John 17:24 TPT Underlined is my emphasis?

["Father, I ask that you allow everyone that you have given to me to be with me where I am! Then they will see my full glory—the very splendor you have placed upon me..."](#)
How can we be with Jesus where he is, at the right hand of the Father in the throne room of heaven, unless we have an opportunity to visit heaven? Jesus promised that the heaven would open and we would gaze upon him.

Vrs 51 "[like a stairway reaching into the sky](#)^[e]" - Jesus makes it clear that he is the ladder or stairway that Jacob observed in his dream in Genesis 28 passages we studied above.

This brings up an important question. If Jesus was the ladder, then who was standing above the ladder that Jacob saw in the dream?

Gen 28:12 Names of God Bible (NOG) Yahweh was standing above it, saying, "I am Yahweh,

Just a few weeks ago we were led to one of Sid Roth's programs where he was interviewing a Messianic Jew, of all things an ordained minister of the Southern Baptist Convention, the denomination I grew up in and was ordained through. After watching the program I decided I had to get the book that was advertised on the program. I've finished reading the book and it's been extremely helpful in understanding the names of God used in the Old Testament and which ones refer to Abba Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The book explains that the term "Yahweh" refers specifically to our heavenly Father, or our Abba Father, and it explains so much more than the YouTube video does. Plus the DVD provides much more detail than shown on Sid's show. Below is the link to Sid's program, so I would highly encourage you to watch it and then seriously consider purchasing the DVD and book. It's one of the best books I've ever read on this subject.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-i7P0yMu_8&list=WL&index=11&t=0s It's about 28 minutes long.

The Passion Translation note [e] on John 1:51 states: "Jesus, as the stairway, is both in heaven and on earth as he speaks this to Nathanael. What mysteries surround him!", implying that Jesus was in two places at the same time. I differ with him and believe it is Abba Father standing beside the ladder welcoming those that come home for a visit and then being sent back to earth to finish their work.

Don't you get homesick? The writer of Hebrews mentions this strong feeling as a normal attitude of believers that even Old Testament believers had, much less New Testament believers can experience:

Heb 11:13-16 The Message (MSG) Underlined is my emphasis

Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

Heaven is our home, and good parents will always be watching and waiting for their married children to come home for a visit. That is certainly Abba Father's heart as demonstrated in Luke 15:20 as the father of the prodigal son is out watching and waiting for his son to come home. This is one of the reasons why Susan and I have made it a practice to always walk out the door to greet our physical and spiritual children when they come for a visit. However, you will have to decide if you believe it's Jesus or Abba Father standing above the ladder.

Vrs 51 "with the messengers of God climbing up and down" – The Passion Translation breaks from tradition along with the Voice and YLT translations, to use the word "messengers" rather than "angels". Here is part of the note from the Passion Translation (Underlined is my emphasis):

"... This is an obvious reference to "Jacob's Ladder" as the fulfillment of his dream found in Gen. 28:10-22. Jesus Christ is that stairway that joins earth to heaven and brings heaven to earth. The word for "angels" can be translated "messengers" and could be humans given access into the heavenly realm through the blood of Jesus...".

The subject of Jesus' blood giving us access into heaven will be discussed in a future lesson.

One of the amazing things I've noticed after watching and reading many testimonies of pastors and lay persons that have visited heaven is that they've returned with a burden to share the message they

received while in heaven. I guess that makes them messengers. Wouldn't you like to have that experience?

Vrs 51 "upon[f] him!" – These two words helped me to be convinced that it was humans and not angles ascending and descending on the ladder. Jesus makes it clear that he is the ladder that makes it possible to humans to enter into heaven. Angels don't need Jesus to enter or exit heaven. Only humans require Jesus to enter into heaven, whether it's for a visit or immediately at the moment of death.

Conclusion:

The Holy Spirit chose to place this account of Jacob's vision in Genesis and then had Jesus verify the truth that believers would be able to ascend into heaven and return to earth. That indicates that our Abba Father planned for believers to have an opportunity to see into or visit heaven through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Today the possibility of visiting heaven is being revealed as the Holy Spirit is illuminating many scriptures that have deeper meanings than we've realized, plus multitudes of believers are having the experience of visiting heaven and returning to give testimony to what they experienced in heaven. For most of us the problem is doubt and unbelief, mainly because we don't have a biblical foundation to support this truth. I believe Abba Father, in his infinite wisdom, has withheld from me the experience of visiting heaven to drive me to search the scriptures so I can lay a biblical foundation for our faith to rest on. May your faith be stretched to take hold of EVERYTHING that Jesus' blood and body makes available to us NOW, not just going to heaven after we die.

Additional Resources about visiting heaven:

Videos: James Durham on Sid Roth's program - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI81emJmimg>
Crystal McVea on Joni Table Talk program - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHcaGaf6Zck>

Books: Gazing Into Glory: Every Believer's Birth Right to Walk in the Supernatural by Dr Bruce Allen
100 Days in Heaven by James Durham

Blessings,
Jim & Susan McCorkle
www.rtbministry.net

PS: In the fictional story at the beginning of the lesson, Planao is the Greek word meaning "to be misled". Is it possible we've been misled to believe that heaven is only a place that can be reached after death?
2nd PS: If you have a different opinion or understanding of the two mystery verses we've discussed, we encourage you to share with us. We have a learner's heart.