



A SINGLE ROUTE

And [Jacob] dreamed and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. (Genesis 28:12, ESV)

SURELY YOU DREAM OF GOLF. If you play the game enough you're going to find yourself waking up wishing you weren't in bed, but walking that beautiful course you were playing the moment before you awoke.

Or maybe not. I have a friend who tells me that she has a recurring dream where she simply cannot take the club back. It's stuck in the set position. Like any other dreams, I suppose, not all golf dreams are good ones.

When it comes to Scripture, it can be a bit tricky to know what to do with dreams. They are the nemesis of kings and the milieu of prophets. Even when their content is plain, their meaning leaves us guessing. And so it is with Jacob's dream of the ladder.

On the run from his brother Esau, who wanted to murder Jacob for stealing his blessing, Jacob laid his head to rest on a stone in the field and fell off to sleep. Certainly, there are salespeople who would tell you right now that his pillow was the problem! But what we become aware of in reading forward through this dream—and many of those in Scripture—is that it was from the Lord. And its essence was this: An avenue, in the form of a ladder, was opened up for Jacob to see heaven. Angels ascended and descended the ladder, confirming this connection. Then God appeared, standing at the top of ladder, from where he looked straight down on Jacob and renewed his promise for this descendant of Abraham. Through Jacob, the progeny would increase, the land would be secured, and the nations would be blessed through this household of faith.

From the distance of 4,000 years, it can be easy to leave such a dream in history. But the classic commentator Matthew Henry made a strong connection between Jacob's ladder and the "one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5). There is a narrowness to this route, surely, a singularity of salvation through Jesus. But Jesus himself drew this strong affiliation: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51). In this way, Jacob's dream is our reality. We find our place in God via that "ladder," via Jesus our Savior.

Opening questions: A golfer's dreams

Are your golf dreams good or bad? Do you dare attribute them to anything in particular?

Jacob's dream

Read Genesis 28:10-19. How convinced was Jacob that this dream was from God? In what specific ways did he respond to this recognition of God in this place?

Jesus alone

How does the idea of Jesus as the only way to God sit with you? Why might you or others you know resist this idea?

Read John 14:5-7. How did Jesus present himself as the avenue to encounter the God of heaven, his Father?

Read Romans 9:1-4, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, and Hebrews 9:25-28. How do these passages show that the writers were convinced of the exclusivity of Jesus and his work in providing salvation?
