

Faith Is Action



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PORTAL OF GLORY

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“But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you” (Rom.8:11).

A Cancer Diagnosis

In July of last year, my routine annual mammogram found a lesion which was malignant. The good news, it was very small, only 6mm. In late September, I had surgery, a lumpectomy to remove just the tumor and tissue around it and four lymph nodes, and it went very well. (When having a lumpectomy instead of mastectomy, radiation is also done.) When the lab reports came back, the tissue they took around the tumor all had clean margins, and my lymph nodes were also perfectly clean. Since the tumor was caught so early, and all the margins and nodes were clean, I would not need any more surgery! *Praise God!* Nor would I need chemotherapy, *except there was*

a snag: The tumor tested positive for an aggressive type of cancer (HER-2neu+). The oncologist wanted me to have chemo along with another drug that specifically targets those positive receptors. This would take three months, followed by 5-7 weeks of radiation. I decided to get a second opinion.

Meanwhile, as the weeks passed, I was pressing on, preaching every Sunday, except the one following surgery. The Lord had given me tremendous peace from the first day I was told the mammogram was suspicious. I never cried or had a meltdown. I was amazed how calm and upbeat I had remained through all the tests and procedures. I got a little discouraged the day I was told about the HER-2+, the most discouraged I had felt in the three prior months put together. But I did not lose it—I put the brakes on. I might have gotten watery eyes, but the tears never fell down my cheeks. I decided I was not going there, even though I was con-

cerned about the prospect of chemo.

A Dream of Glory

The Sunday after my surgery, the Lord gave me a glorious, phenomenal, stupendous, fabulous, (I don't have enough adjectives), dream. When God gives you something like this, there's usually a good reason for it. God knew I was going to hear that bad report—I'm calling it *a snag*—and the enemy would try to overshadow the glorious report of clean margins and nodes with that one *but*. It was a three-part dream and I will jump to the last part, because it's the part that is so phenomenal.

The setting was a rural area that I understood to be a vacation/camping destination, a scenic landscape of green hills and valleys, with a large pond between two hills, where I was standing. On my left, I saw many RVs and campers parked up on a hill overlooking the pond. It was very serene, and I was strongly impressed that it was a place where people came to get away from the stress of everyday life in the cities. I was with a group of people, but I did not see anyone's facial features. It was not about who the people were, but what they were doing.

Two ladies whom I judged to be about my age, said they were walking over to another area to see something exciting, and I decided to go with them. They walked ahead of me side-by-side, and they looked identical from the back, making me wonder if they were twins. I had to be

careful as I walked, because the ground was uneven in places, and there were tree roots and dips I had to be mindful of, so I would not stumble. We came upon a long line of people *to our left* who were waiting to get into what looked like an opening in the hillside, and we had to stop. I was stretching to see what was up ahead that everyone was so eager to enter, when I realized the two ladies were gone. I asked someone where they went, and they pointed to a large cabin *to my right* that had a long screened porch.

I went inside and was surprised to see how huge the porch was. Even more amazing, on the opposite side were dozens of campers and mobile homes parked diagonally. Oddly, the right side of each one had no walls, but was a part of the screened porch. It was the dining area for each camper which literally joined the screened porch. This meant when the people sat down to eat, they were part of a kind of dining/fellowship hall. The left half of the campers had walls, and I knew them to be the bedrooms, where the people could sleep in privacy. I was imagining how wonderful it must be when everyone gathers together to eat and fellowship.

My next recollection is being in an area which reminded me of a tunnel, because there was some kind of ceiling over my head. But it was not dark; it was a pearlescent seafoam color, and I could see daylight pouring in from an opening on the right. To my left, was *a sharp left turn*, and

I could not see around the corner. Then a woman entered the tunnel from the right, carrying a bright red suitcase. Just as she got to where the turn was, she stopped, put the suitcase down, and looked over at me. I said to the person with me, “*I am going with her,*” and I crossed over to where she was standing.

Suddenly, I became aware of the sun beating down on me, and I looked up to the heavens. The ceiling gone, the sun was piercing through the shadows of tall trees, and its rays were focused directly on me. It was hot, but it felt wonderful. It got brighter and warmer and I felt its warmth and light strengthening me as strong vibrations of energy penetrated my body. It did not hurt; it actually was pleasurable. My whole body was enveloped with warm light and love, and I lifted my hands in worship to God. As I worshiped, the sensations grew stronger, and the more I cried out, the more it poured on me. *And it was glory!* If I had to sum it up in one word, I’d say, *ecstasy*. I wondered how much power my body could take in, *but I did not want it to stop!*

“Gloria Santiago!”

Then I began to cry out loudly: “*Gloria Santiago! Gloria Santiago!*” Over and over I declared it as my body drank in the powerful vibrations. I knew I was being penetrated with the glory of God. I am not sure how long it went on, but when it finally subsided, I lay there quietly,

taking it all in, and wondering if it would start up again. I did not want to move just in case it would. Finally, I spoke and I thanked the Lord for this glorious heavenly experience. I kept wondering what *Gloria Santiago* meant. I knew it was Spanish and *Gloria* means *glory*, but I didn’t know what *santiago* meant. I knew I had been under a portal of glory, and I replayed it again and again in my mind until I fell back to sleep.

The next morning I googled it, and the first post I clicked on was *Portico Gloria Santiago*. It is an ancient cathedral in Spain built in 1188-1211. With over 200 Romanesque style sculptures, the portico (main entrance) is the artistic high-point of the cathedral and often considered the greatest work of Spanish Romanesque sculpture. Its three large arches are decorated with angels and foliage, prophets and apostles. The portico represents the Written Law, the Law of Grace, and the Natural Law. *The central arch represents the final destination of true Christians: Glory and resurrection!* This opening is twice as wide as the other two and contains a depiction of Saint James. I could not make a connection of James to my dream, but I was excited in my spirit that I had entered into some type of *portal of glory!*

I then googled *santiago*. It is Spanish for *Saint James* (*san/saint; tiago/James.*) I knew James was the first of the apostles to die a martyr’s death, but I still didn’t see a connection to my dream. Then I saw a post

Staircase to Heaven

stating that the origin of *tiago* is actually from the Hebrew. I knew that *James* is the Greek form of *Jacob*, which in Hebrew is spelled *YACOV*. (The *y* becomes *j* and the *b* becomes *v*). Now I saw that the connection was not about *James* of the NT, but *Jacob* of the Old. But how?

As I mused on this, I heard the question in my spirit: *What is significant about Jacob?* I immediately knew what it meant. When Jacob fled to the wilderness after his brother Esau vowed to kill him, he had a dream of a ladder reaching from the earth to Heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. God spoke to him about his future, and when he awoke, he said: “*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven*” (Gen. 28:17).

I realized God had opened a portal to Heaven over me, and poured out His glory upon me!

His resurrection power had permeated my entire body. I began thinking, if there were cancer cells that escaped the original tumor through blood vessels, and could be seeding somewhere in my body, *they got zapped when the glory came down!* While I realized I couldn't go to my next appointment and tell the oncologist, “*Heaven opened up, and power and glory came down and zapped me!*”—I knew I had to hold onto this extraordinary experience as part of my treatment plan!

“And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

“And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD GOD of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

“And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

“And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:10-17). The gate of Heaven—the portico of glory!

Jacob had fled his home and family after he had stolen the blessing of the birthright from his brother Esau,

his older twin. He and his mother had devised a scheme to deceive Isaac into thinking that he was Esau, and he got the blessing of the firstborn from his father. When Esau returned and found out what occurred, he was livid and vowed, “When our father is dead, I will kill you,” so His parents sent him away.

Another reason they sent him away was Esau had already married not one, but two heathen women. These women vexed the soul of Rebecca and brought grief of mind to both her and Isaac. It is no wonder God allowed the birthright and the blessing to be taken from Esau. We see he did not respect the teachings of his father and grandfather and lightly esteemed his birthright when he sold it to Jacob for *a bowl of beans*. This is why God rejected Esau and did not allow him to inherit the birthright and the blessing. In Hebrews 12:16, God called him *a profane person*. This is someone who pollutes that which is holy. People who use profanity pollute the language that we need to communicate with one another.

Jacob had a long journey, over 500 miles, to his parents’ family where he could choose a wife, just like his dad Isaac had done. It would take a while to get there, and I don’t how many miles a day he could travel, but he had gone about 58 miles when this occurred. He used stones for his pillow. Folks, this was not the Holiday Inn; this was not even Motel 6. It was the wilderness, a harsh,

inhospitable desert place, and he was alone. Remember, it was Jacob who was the home-body. He was the one who liked to stay home around his parents and take care of the domesticated animals. He had a very strong bond with his mother. But there in this wilderness, all alone, far from everything he was accustomed to, he had left everything that was familiar and comfortable to him.

I imagine he could have been having self-doubts. Maybe he was thinking to himself, *Will I ever see my mom and dad again?* Actually, the Bible doesn’t record that he ever saw his mother again. That’s kind of sad, isn’t it? Maybe he was thinking to himself, *Did I do the wrong thing by going along with my mother’s plan to deceive my father? Maybe I shouldn’t have done it.* Maybe he thought to himself, *And what about Jehovah? Is Jehovah displeased with me because I stole my brother’s birthright?*

Technically, Esau forfeited the birthright when he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of beans, saying: *“What profit is this birthright if I die from hunger?”* In my mind, even though they shouldn’t have done it the way they did to deceive Isaac; nevertheless, I believe Esau had already forfeited it. His father laying his hands on him and giving him the blessing would have been the confirmation, but Esau had already given it up. He had no faith in the blessings of God. If he believed the covenant that was handed down to him from Abraham and

Isaac, he would have known that he wasn't going to die of hunger. God is not going to make you a great nation and let you starve to death. The truth is, Esau had no respect for the spiritual things of God.

Jacob lay down that night to sleep and had a glorious vision of a ladder reaching to the gate of Heaven—a portal of glory. Angels were *ascending and descending*; they were going up and down, and up and down. Angels are God's messengers, and they don't have to sleep. The fact that they were ascending and descending tells us their cycle of ministry goes on 24/7. They receive orders from Heaven; they descend to earth; they execute the orders; they ascend to Heaven and report that they have completed their mission, and they get new orders. They descend and repeat the cycle.

The Ministry of Angels

We are told in Hebrews 1:7 & 14, they are "*ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.*" They are sent forth on our behalf and are assigned to us during our lifetimes. Psalm 34:7 says, "*The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him and delivers them.*" The word *fear* is not meant in a phobic sense as in being *afraid*, but in the *reverent* sense. I guarantee you, if an angel shows up visibly to you, you will be afraid. Every time they show up in the Bible, the first thing they say before they deliver their messages is, "*Fear not!*" Our

human bodies will react to their supernatural presence and power.

"*They encamp around about us...*" That means *north, south, east and west*—360°. The angels on His payroll work the night shift on earth and are on duty 24/7. Our God is a 24/7—360° God! "*For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their own hands, lest thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone*" (Ps.91:11-12). This means in a time of danger, they will quickly rescue us. It may be a last-minute rescue. I envision them swooping in to prevent me from falling, or something bad happening to me. Sometimes the rescue doesn't come until that instant that we need it, but when we need it, it will happen right in time!

Psalm 103:20: "*His angels excel in strength.*" When you excel in something, you are greater at it than everyone else. God's angels are stronger than Satan's angels who come against us, and if God needs to, He can send more. He has myriads of angels: "*But you are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.... and to the innumerable company of angels*" (Heb.12:22). Sometimes we come up against a fierce enemy of the wicked one, one of his arch angels of darkness, but we don't have to be afraid, because God has His angels who *excel* over all the powers of the enemy. Jesus declared: "*Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the powers of the enemy: and*

nothing by any means shall hurt you” (Lk.10:19).

Psalm 103:20: *“His angels do his commands, hearkening unto the voice of his word.”* This is why we should always speak the Word of God, because it releases activity in the supernatural realm for God to dispatch His angels to bring it to pass. When human endeavor cannot bring it to pass, God will send His *messengers*, His *warrior angels* on our behalf, and they are not wimpy! *“He makes his angels a flaming fire”* (Ps.104:4). You have probably heard accounts of supernatural deliverance in a time of extreme danger: Someone was about to be kidnapped, or shot, or killed, and all of a sudden, the perpetrators high-tailed it out of there with no explanation. Later, the story comes out that they saw huge giants with flaming swords standing by, and they fled in fear. God opened their eyes and let them see His mighty, fierce angels. Just like when Elisha was surrounded by the enemy in the city of Dothan, and his servant said, *“Alas, my lord, we are surrounded by enemy troops!”* Elisha prayed for God to open his spiritual eyes. Then he saw the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire *surrounding them*. Elisha said, *“Fear not: For they that be with us are more than be with them”* (2Kgs.6:8-17).

I Am With You

After Jacob had seen the awesome vision of the angels on the heavenly staircase, God reiterated to

him what He had told his fathers Abraham and Isaac: *“I am with you, and I will keep you in all places wherever you go...”* Even while Jacob was in that wilderness all alone, far from everything that was near and dear to him, God let him know, *“You are not going it alone. I am with you wherever you go—I am with you on the mountain top; I am with you in the valley low; I am with you in the floods and the stormy seas; I am with you in the wilderness; I am with you in the fiery furnace; wherever you go—I am with you.”*

Up to now, JEHOVAH had been known as *“the God of Abraham and Isaac,”* but from then on He would be called *“the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”* Here’s a curious thing, later in his life, on his way back home, Jacob would have a problem with fear again—fear of meeting up with Esau after all those years. He reached a place where he got desperate with God, and the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and *“he wrestled with him,”* and God changed his name to *“Israel,”* and said, *“You have wrestled with God and prevailed.”* Israel—SAR—prince, and EL—God. *Jacob was a prince with God.* Why then don’t the Jewish people call JEHOVAH *“the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel”*? They named their nation *Israel*; they call themselves *Israelites/Israelis* to this day. Why is He not the God of Abraham, Isaac and *Israel*—instead of *Jacob*? In my opinion, because whenever you see in Scripture some-

one refer to God as “*the God of Jacob*,” especially in David’s Psalms, the person is in trouble. For instance:

“*The LORD—JEHOVAH hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion*” (Ps.20:1). “*Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD God*” (Ps.146:5). The God of Jacob is the God of those who are in trouble. Jacob knew sore troubles, and he was going to have a lot more troubles over the next 20 years. He would experience bitter things, such as when he thought his son Joseph, the apple of his eye, was killed by a wild animal. For years he mourned for his son. The point: The God of Jacob is the God of those who are in trouble. David said the God of Jacob helps, strengthens, and defends us when we are in trouble. This is why I believe He is called “the God of Abraham, Isaac and *Jacob*.” So whenever you’re in a place where you need defense against an enemy, He will defend you.

God waited till Jacob was in the wilderness to show him that extraordinary ladder between Heaven and earth. He never saw the ladder at home where everything was good and easy, but when he was in a desperate place, feeling abandoned, rejected, and probably scared of what might come. There was nothing in Jacob’s life up to this point that he had experienced that could have cre-

ated this dream. When you and I have spiritually meaningful dreams, we usually can interpret them by symbols in the Bible, but Jacob didn’t have the Bible’s descriptions of angels and what takes place in spiritual warfare behind the scenes.

The Case of the Double Y

When he awakened, he was overwhelmed by what he had seen. I want to share a little tidbit with you: The Hebrew word for *awaked* is **YIKATZ**. Notice that it is spelled with a double “y.” There is no grammatical reason to spell it this way. It would be like spelling *yellow*, **YELLOW**. But there is an important spiritual reason: In Hebrew, **JEHOVAH** is actually **YAHWEH**. (The *j* is pronounced as *y*, the Hebrew letter **YUD**, so we would say **YEHOVAH**.) Just like we often use initials to shorten names, they did too. So in Psalm 68:4, **JEHOVAH** is shortened to **JAH (YAH)**. Thus, in *awake—YIKATZ*—the extra **YUD** stands for **YEHOVAH**. It means when Jacob awoke out of his dream, *Jehovah was with him!* (The same Hebrew word is used in reference to Samson when he *awoke* after Delilah had cut off all his hair, but it is spelled **YIKATZ**. It doesn’t have the extra **YUD**, *because Jehovah wasn’t there!* The Spirit of God had departed from him.) When Jacob awoke, he knew **JEHOVAH** was there, and he said, “*Surely the LORD is in this place and I knew it not.*” Notice he did not say *was* in this place—but *is* in this place. The ladder had been pulled back up into

Heaven and the portal of glory closed, *but Jehovah was still there.*

I Didn't Expect It!

“Surely the **LORD** is in this place and I knew it not.” The meaning is, “I did not expect Him to be here in this place.” Jacob did not expect God to show up in glory in the wilderness—far from His father’s house, far from the altars his grandfather and father had built in worship to **JEHOVAH**. He was alone in a forsaken place, *and he never expected God to show up there.*

Saints of God, *that is exactly when and where God will show up with His glory!* Sometimes we pray, “Show me your glory. Show me a vision,” and it doesn’t happen. I have found that most of the time it happens when I’m not expecting it. I wasn’t expecting that glorious dream of the glory, but God knew I needed it then! He knew in a few days I would be given a report that would be unsettling to me. He shows up when you are in a desperate place; He shows up when you need the glory of God to lift you up out of the shadows, out of the pit of despair.

Jacob said, “I had no idea God could meet me in the wilderness.” Nobody likes to go in the wilderness, but when you do, don’t despair, because God will show up and say to you, “I am with you right here and now, and I will be with you wherever you go. I will be with you for the rest of your life through your journey on this earth, and I will bless you with

blessings beyond your expectation and your imagination.”

Jacob said, “*How dreadful is this place. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.*” The word *dreadful* has evolved over time. Then it did not mean dreadful in the *scary, foreboding sense*, but like we would say today—*awesome*—even though awesome is starting to get so watered down, it probably won’t mean this eventually. When someone gets a new pair of tennis shoes, people comment, “Man, those shoes are awesome!” *No, they’re not—they are shoes!* Unless an angel brought them from Heaven, they are not awesome. I prefer to use *awe-inspiring, reverential* in reference to God.

It reminds me of what Peter said in his epistle, years after the fact, about the day on the Mount of Transfiguration when he, James, and John saw Jesus turn into a burning, blazing light. He said, “*We were eyewitnesses of his majesty on the holy mount. We are not telling you some fables we cunningly devised. No! We saw His majesty, we saw the heavens open, the portal of glory open, and we heard the voice that came from the excellent glory, This is my Beloved Son!*” (2Pet.1:16-18).

Jacob said, “*This is the house of God,*” and named it *Bethel*. In Hebrew **BETH** is *house* and **EL** is *God*. He said, “*This is the gate of heaven.*” It was a portal into God’s glory through which he saw the connection between heaven and earth and

between God and man. God is not afar off. If you don't get anything else from this message, I hope you understand— *God is not far off*. He is very nigh unto us, and many do not realize how real the heavenly realm is, because they are so earthbound, carnal, natural-minded and caught up with the amusements of the flesh. I am not talking about being sinners in the world; I'm talking about saints who are living on a carnal, natural plane. Romans 8:5-6: "*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death (separation from God), but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*"

Jesus said many are too caught up in natural things: "*What am I going to wear? What am I going to eat?*" Often today it is: "Let's go here on vacation; let's go there; let's do this; let's do that," and their whole lives are consumed by these. I am not denigrating any of those things, but Jesus said, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" (Matt.6:31-33).

Jesus Is the Ladder

When Jacob saw the ladder, the link between heaven and earth, and God and man, *he didn't know who the ladder is!* But we know, because Jesus told us in the Gospel of John:

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and finding Philip, saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city

of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.

"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:43-51). Jesus plainly said, "*I am the ladder, the staircase to Heaven.*"

Previously, Jesus had called the two sets of brothers, James and John, and Peter and Andrew, and also Philip. Right away Philip became an evangelist and went to go tell his buddy Nathanael, saying, "I want you to come and see this man. He is the exact one that Moses and all the prophets prophesied would come. *He is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of*

Joseph.” And with much skepticism Nathanael replied, “Really? What good can come out of Nazareth?”

Nazareth was a city of Galilee built up on a hill and not on the trade routes; therefore, you would have to go there on purpose; you couldn’t just pass through it. It was settled by a clan of family members who were in the direct line of the kings of Judah. During the Babylonian captivity, the last king of Judah had been dethroned, ending the kingdom. As the exiles and their posterity returned from captivity, over a period of hundreds of years, this particular clan decided to found a city off the beaten track. They did not want to draw attention to themselves, and they stayed together intermarrying amongst themselves. By then Rome had put Herod on the throne as *the king of the Jews*. He was insanely jealous and paranoid and had killed his wife and sons, because he believed they were trying to steal his throne. He was maniacal, as seen in what he did in ordering the slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem when he learned of the prophecy that a ruler of Israel would rise from there (Micah 5:2). This is why this royal line of Jews built their city on a hill away from the travel routes, so as not to put a target on themselves. Herod might get the idea to kill all in the direct line of the kings and the house of David.

Thus, we can understand why Nathaniel was skeptical about Messiah coming from Nazareth; also as

noted, the prophecy stated He would be born in Bethlehem—not Nazareth. He asked a skeptic’s question, but the difference between him and many skeptics today is, *he was willing to search it out*. When Phillip told him to come and see for himself, he came. There are skeptics today who go around asking insincere rhetorical questions, but are not truly wanting to know the answers. They won’t invest the time to search it out.

When Jesus saw him afar off, He remarked: “*This is a true Israelite in whom there is no guile.*” The word *guile* literally means *bait for fish*, what you put on a lure to catch fish. That’s what skeptics do: They word their questions in such a way so as to trap somebody and make them look bad when they try to answer. They don’t want to give them a chance to speak freely and truly, because if they did, great wisdom and truth might come out, and they are not really interested in the truth for the truth’s sake. They know how to manipulate people to make them seem foolish. But it’s good to know that God has some *Apostle Pauls* for these kinds of folks. Today, He has men like Josh McDowell and Lee Strobel, former skeptics themselves, until they did the honest thing and searched the Scriptures and saw they are true. They are like the *Bereans* whom Paul preached the Gospel to: “*They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:10-11).

Jesus called Nathanael a true Israelite. He didn't mean that he was a natural son of Abraham—a Jew, but what a true Israelite should be, his motives and moral character—someone who has a pure heart. He had asked the question without cynicism. He just needed clarification. When you have doubts, it's okay to go to God with your doubts, as long as you're not doing it out of a proud heart. If you present a truly humble heart, you can ask the Lord about your doubts, because He knows you need clarification; that you are not looking for a stumbling block—you're looking for a stepping stone, and the Lord will oblige you, just like Jesus did Nathanael.

He asked the Lord, "*How do you know me?*" Jesus said, "*Before Philip even got to your house, I saw you sitting under the fig tree.*" The significance of sitting under the fig tree alludes to a custom of Jewish men. It meant they were in their own house, because God had said when He brought them into the Promised Land, "*I will bless you, bring you into the land, and give you your own house, and you will sit under the fig tree.*" Jewish men, especially rabbis, would sit under a fig tree, have their private devotions, read the Torah, meditate, and pray. Consider too, they lived in a tropical climate and had no air-conditioning. Fig trees have very large leaves (perhaps why Adam and Eve used them to make their underwear), which made them great shade trees.

When Jesus said that He saw him sitting under the fig tree, what was Nathanael doing? It is a good possibility he was having his devotions. maybe reading the Torah, *and maybe he was reading Genesis 28, where Jacob saw the heavens opened, and the ladder from Heaven come down, and angels descending and ascending on it.*

From Skepticism to Revelation

While this is incubating in your mind, let me share a tidbit I read in my research about the Syriac writings. It claimed Nathanael was an infant in Bethlehem during the time when Herod gave the edict to kill all babies under age two, and his mother hid him under a fig tree, and he was spared. Whether this is true, and Jesus told him this, I don't know. One thing I know for sure, Jesus communicated something specific to Nathanael, because immediately, Nathanael did an about face and said, "*Teacher, you are the Son of God!*" Remember, Philip had called Him "*the son of Joseph.*" Now Nathanael has gone from *skepticism* to *revelation!* He, the skeptic, declared Him to be *the Son of God*. How quickly he turned about, because when you are a true skeptic, all you need is truth, and you are hooked. There are some who want to know the truth; they're the ones I want to talk to. But the Word says, "*A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being con-*

demned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11).

Whenever Jesus talked to the Pharisees and scribes, He rebuked them sharply, because they were not genuine; they crafted their words trying to snare Him. Jesus did not *rebuke* Nathanael for his doubts—He *removed* his doubts with the truth. He said “If you are impressed because I told you I saw what you were doing under the fig tree, you haven’t seen anything yet! I tell you, you will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man, because I am the bridge between heaven and earth—I am the link between God and man.” Jesus said: “*I am Jacob’s ladder!*”

He said in John 14:6, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me.*” Jesus is the ladder that bridges the gap to the Father. We were in the wilderness of sin, and *on the cross, Jesus became Jacob’s ladder, the staircase to Heaven.* I hope you’re encouraged to know that when you’re in your severest trials, and your trust is in *the God of Jacob*, don’t castaway your faith. God will be there with you and for you. We have so many more advantages than Jacob had. We have the Scriptures. We have David’s psalms and the prophets’ words, such as Isaiah’s comforting promises. We have the records of what God did for those heroes of faith and how He brought them out. Then we have the words of Jesus: “*For he hath said, I will never leave thee; nor forsake thee. So that*

we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb.13:5-6).

There will always be bad reports; maybe a cancer diagnosis like I had; there will always be trauma in life, things going wrong, but we know there’s a ladder that spans earth and heaven, and we can climb that ladder, one rung at a time, in our prayer closets.

My prayer is that each of you would experience *a portal of glory*, a foretaste of the glory to come. Because one day soon, “*a door in heaven will open, and Jesus will shout, Come up hither!*” (Rev.4:1). And that staircase to Heaven will catch up all of us to the city and presence of the King of kings.