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## INSPIRATIONS: “STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN”<sup>1</sup>

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### Genesis 28:12 NIV

*He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*

Here recently, the term “bridging the gap” has been very strong upon my heart. A couple of years ago, I believe God gave me a dream about this very principle. In the dream, there was an all-white church and an all-black church. One church asked the other for help to complete a project, but met with resistance. “Why do we have to help?” the church folks asked. “Because we’re a small church and can’t do it by ourselves,” was the reply. In this dream, the person in the middle “mediating” between the two churches began to talk about the church not being divided, because Christ is not divided. As the dream progressed, I saw two buildings with an archway between them – “bridging the gap” between the buildings. This dream occurred long before I ever knew Victory World Church in Atlanta existed; however, I did know that I would soon be settling in Atlanta and looking for a church home.

Last week, I began to sense in my spirit a need for us to “bridge the gap.” As I was praying at church, I began to sense in my spirit that we often times ask God to come down and meet us, but He’s not the one that ever moves. He is always where He is. When we sense His presence in a place, I don’t believe it’s because He’s changed His location, but because we’ve changed ours. Our choir sings a song that says, “Come up here. Come up now. My beloved.” And, that’s what I believe we do. We go up to Him. But, how do we get there?

In the Old Testament, the only way the people could get into God’s presence was through the priest. To fully understand the process, one must understand the temple and the Levitical priesthood. But, let’s just sum it up and say there had to be a sacrifice and there was always a washing that happened before the priest could enter the Holy Place. Once inside the Holy Place, there was the golden candlestick, the table of showbread, and the golden altar of incense BEFORE he was allowed to enter into the Holiest of Holies, which contained the Ark of the Covenant (God’s presence). I believe one of our problems today is that, at times, we don’t have a good enough understanding of the Old Testament to understand the New Testament and what it means to be New Testament Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> This was originally written October 23, 2003; however, it is very applicable to current world events amidst political and racial divides that exist. Therefore, I chose to convert it into a newsletter and share it. In the process, I fixed a few typographical errors. I pray it will bless every soul that reads it.

I see a stairway to heaven that is built upon the praise and worship of God's people. But, just like with Jacob, there was obedience before he had the vision of his "stairway to heaven," upon which the angels of God could ascend and descend. In the same manner, there must be obedience in our lives for that stairway to exist in the praise and worship atmosphere for the angels of God to ascend and descend. But, how do we build that stairway? How are we obedient? By doing the most basic concept we are commanded to do: *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2 KJV).*

When we renew our minds with the Word of God, people see less of us and more of Jesus. Yes, Jesus is the only mediator between man and God. We can only go boldly before the throne of grace because of the finished work of Jesus. And, I'm not just talking about the cross either. Too often we keep Jesus hanging on the cross of our lives and thus for others to see Him as defeated and rejected. What do I mean by this? Jesus' work did not stop at the cross. If it did, He would not have told Mary Magdalene to not touch Him because He had not ascended unto His Father. Yes, the work of the cross was finished. But, Jesus had to *"...appear in the presence of God for us ..."* (Hebrews 9:24 KJV). Otherwise, we still would not have been granted access to the throne of grace, nor would our sins have been forgiven. Does not the Word teach us: *"And almost all things are by the law and purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission (Hebrews 9:22 KJV).* Yes, it does. But, it's the complete work of Jesus: the death, the burial, AND the resurrection that we must focus on, not just the death.

What does this have to do with the stairway to heaven? I believe we open up the stairway to heaven during praise and worship when we die to ourselves and are raised again in Christ. Each time we lay down something of ourselves, I believe we place a step on this stairway for the angels of God and for those who are not of "clean hands and a clean heart" to step on in order to "bridge the gap" between the congregation and the manifested presence of God. But, we have to recognize that it's the power of His resurrection that changes us; otherwise, it is too tempting to live a defeated Christian life. If Jesus is still dead on the cross, He has no power to change us. But, if we recognize that He is alive, that He ascended to the Father, and that He has all power and authority given unto Him, THEN and only then do we believe we are truly equipped to die to self and live for Christ. Paul stated it so clearly when he said, *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21 KJV).* In order to gain anything in the Kingdom of God, we have to be willing to die to ourselves. Then, we can live for Christ. But, if we're not willing to let go of the things of this world, we cannot live for Christ. And, some lost soul is going to stay lost, because we confessed Christ with our mouth, but not with our lives.

As ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), it's our responsibility to represent Him to those who don't know Him. So, every time I go to say or do something, I pray this question will ring out within

me, “Is what I’m going to say or do representing Jesus?” If the answer is yes, I have the liberty to do it. If the answer is no, then I don’t have the liberty to do it, because my walk is my witness and how I place a step on that staircase to help “bridge the gap” for someone who needs to enter into God’s presence. I pray I will always be willing to place one more step on that “stairway to heaven,” not only in times of corporate praise and worship, but also in my personal time of praise and worship as I live my life before men. Because whether we realize it or not, our lives should be acts of worship (sacrifice) that praise God and bring glory to the name of Jesus, thus glorifying the Father. Simply put, that means I can’t just go around doing and saying whatever I want to do or say without thinking about how my actions reflect on Jesus whom I have confessed as my Lord AND Savior. Just like a child’s actions reflect upon the parents, our actions reflect (or not) Jesus in our lives. I think the young generation has summed it up best with “What would Jesus do?” But, instead of that just being a catch phrase in our lives, I pray it will be a moral compass by which we live. And, each time we do what Jesus would do, a piece of us falls off and is placed in our stairway.

Father, may everything that is in me that is not of You come out and be placed in that “stairway to heaven,” so others may enter Your presence. All glory, honor, and praise to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Praise be unto Jesus, the Christ!

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