

# I WAS NOT AWARE OF IT

Faith Practices: Wonder

January 8, 2023

*When Jacob awoke from his sleep. He thought,  
"Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."  
He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place!  
This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."  
Genesis 28:16-17*

## **When Jacob sees behind the curtain of the ordinary**

<sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. <sup>11</sup> When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

<sup>16</sup> When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

<sup>18</sup> Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup> He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

<sup>20</sup> Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear <sup>21</sup> so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God <sup>22</sup> and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

Genesis 28

1. "This place" had been (Genesis 12:8-9) and will continue to be (Genesis 35:14-15) a "thin place"
2. God had always been providing for Abraham's family and for the promise!
3. Jacob's wonder was the beginning point for his journey of (mostly!) faith and integrity

## **News from a country we have not yet visited (with thanks from C. S. Lewis)**

<sup>9</sup> *I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."*

<sup>12</sup> *I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

Revelation 1

<sup>54</sup> *When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

Acts 6

<sup>13</sup> *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

Luke 2

*In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.*

<sup>2</sup> *At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. <sup>3</sup> I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.*

<sup>4</sup> *On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, <sup>5</sup> I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. <sup>6</sup> His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.*

Daniel 10

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

<sup>4</sup> *At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

Isaiah 6

## The wonder of knowing God

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3

1. Want to be in wonder? Watch where God's power get displayed.
2. Paul is in such awe that he runs out of adjectives to tell us where and how we will encounter the work of God and the love of Christ – like Jacob we'll find that Jesus has been dwelling with us all the time!
3. Lewis was right, we are too easily pleased (“Weight of Glory”) – the church should be wondrous

## Living in “holy curiosity” (Einstein’s definition of wonder)

1. Practice childlike faith and curiosity

<sup>15</sup> People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>17</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Luke 18

2. Slow down to see God's creation and providence from a new perspective

<sup>10</sup> “Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.”

Psalm 46

## Resources for further studies in faith practices

“Faith Practices” is available from Faith Alive at <https://www.faithaliveresources.org/Products/810786/faith-practices.aspx>

Spurgeon’s sermon “A Wonder” at <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols28-30/chs1812.pdf>

Maclaren has some good thoughts on Genesis 27 at [https://www.ccel.org/ccel/maclaren/gen\\_num.ii.i.xxxv.html](https://www.ccel.org/ccel/maclaren/gen_num.ii.i.xxxv.html)

Vern Poythress has a good introductions to Genesis at <http://www.frame-poythress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013ChristianInterpretationsOfGenesis1.pdf> and <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/let-there-be-light>

Several of the “wonder” articles I looked at this week:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/passion/201509/7-ways-spark-your-sense-wonder>

<https://berghconsulting.com/13-ways-to-cultivate-your-sense-of-wonder/>

<https://www.thispilgrimlife.com/cultivate-wonder-kids/>

<https://richinwhatmatters.com/2022/03/05/reclaiming-the-wonder-of-ordinary-life/>

Lewis addresses wonder in his “[Weight of Glory](#)” essay at with a good analysis at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-weight-of-glory-c-s-lewiss-remarkable-and-surprising-sermon/>

“In speaking of this desire for our own far off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you—the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence; the secret also which pierces with such sweetness that when, in very intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow awkward and affect to laugh at ourselves; the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell, though we desire to do both. We cannot tell it because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience. We cannot hide it because our experience is constantly suggesting it, and we betray ourselves like lovers at the mention of a name. Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. Wordsworth’s expedient was to identify it with certain moments in his own past. But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshipers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.”

C.S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory”