

3 Scriptural Elements for Encountering God in Your Dreams

Do you ever think of dreams as gates of heaven? Some dreams are messages from God. Some dreams come from our souls; they are dreams we cause ourselves to dream (Jer. 23:16). Some dreams come from the enemy. But some dreams are actually doors into heavenly encounters where, as we sleep, our spirits access gates God has established. That is what happened to Jacob—quite by accident on his part.

“He dreamed and saw a ladder set up on the earth with the top of it reaching to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ... Jacob awoke out of his sleep, and he said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven’” (Gen. 28:12,16-17).

Jacob journeyed to a specific place. Verse 11, one verse before this passage, says that he went to a “certain” place, and the Hebrew suggests it was an appointed location. In other words, it was a special place. When we glance at history, we discover it is the same place where Jacob’s grandfather Abraham (Abram) had built an altar to the Lord:

“He continued on his journey from the Negev and came to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place where he first made an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord” (Gen. 13:3-4).

Jacob found himself in a place of rich spiritual history. It had been dedicated to the Lord, and it was a place of encounter. Abraham had built his altar out of stone, and when

Jacob showed up, he took a stone—likely a stone from the altar itself—and used it as a pillow, of all things. And as he slept, he dreamt. His spirit awoke to the spiritual reality of his location, and he saw heaven opened, encountered angels and spoke with God.

When he woke up, he realized what had happened. Abraham had called the place Bethel for a reason. *Beth* means “house,” while *el* means “god.” Jacob had spent the night at the house of God—it was a gate of heaven.

This story in Genesis contains three elements that help us understand how God can use dreams: the stone, the sacrifice (the altar) and the gate. If we seek encounters with God, we don’t have to search the wilderness of Judea for altar stones used in previous seasons. We can have encounters wherever we are—because of these three elements.

The Significance of the Stone

1 Peter 2:4-6 says, “Coming to Him as to a living stone who is rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house as a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For also it is contained in the Scripture, ‘Look! I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes in Him shall never be put to shame.’”

Jesus is the stone we lay our heads upon. Each night as you go to sleep, focus your attention on God’s presence. Remind yourself that you are in Jesus and He is in you (John 14:20). Lay your head, your thoughts, completely on Him and what He has done for you. Ask God to make you more aware of a single fact: that your entire life and faith stand upon the foundation stone. They stand upon Jesus.

The Significance of the Sacrifice

“Therefore, brothers, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that He has opened for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and since we have a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse them from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22).

Just as Jesus is the stone, He is also the sacrifice. We have access to heavenly places through the blood of Jesus poured out. The veil that separated us from the Most Holy Place of Heaven was ripped open with His flesh when He died on the cross (Matt. 27:50-51). We can now confidently draw near to God’s presence. We don’t have to be afraid, and shame doesn’t have to hold us back. We can confess our sins and come into His presence confidently, knowing that the Father accepts us because of the work of His Son.

The Significance of the Gate

“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).

Jesus is the gate. He is the door. He is our access to Heaven. It doesn’t depend upon your gift or ability or even your spirituality or maturity—it depends on Jesus. He is the only means to real heavenly encounters. Imagination may open our minds to see what we know, but only Jesus can draw us into the reality of a heavenly encounter. Ask Jesus to speak to you and to draw you into the encounters He wants you to have.

When God Shows Up

At this point, the theme of this article is probably obvious: Encounters with God are all about Jesus. He is the stone, the sacrifice, the gate. If we make our lives about Jesus, we will find ourselves practically falling into encounters when we need them the most.

Jacob recognized what was going on only after the encounter. I don't believe he understood why he was doing what he did until that moment. Maybe he didn't realize the history or anointing on the place, but God did. Maybe it wasn't normal for him to use a stone as a pillow, yet even there, God was leading him. Jacob was in the middle of running from his brother. There was a threat on his life. As he wondered about his future, God set up an ambush. God made sure Jacob went to the right place at the right time to enter a gate of Heaven and hear the promise that would define his destiny.

Having left everything familiar to go somewhere new, Jacob was in transition and likely had many questions. Maybe he was even questioning whether or not he was included in the extravagant promises made to his family. But when Jacob needed it the most, God showed up. He will do the same for you.

There is no formula to finding gates of Heaven. In fact, it's best to leave formulas far behind, because they can mean climbing over the fence instead of coming in through the door. You don't have to be the most spiritual person in the world to have a stunning, incredible encounter with God. Just keep your mind and heart focused on Jesus and trust in the blood that was poured out on your behalf. It speaks a better word over you than your past or reputation (see Hebrews 12:24). Know that He is with you and, when you need it, He will speak destiny. And somewhere along the way, you may just find that a dream is more than a dream—it is a gate into a heavenly encounter. {eo}

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