

## ☞Heaven's Gate

### Genesis 28:10-22

☞The gate I'm referring to today is the place where heaven intersects earth. It's **the place we encounter God's presence**. I want OBC to be that place.

Listen to what the Scripture says about gates (*insert "God's presence"*)...

The enemy waits by the gate (*God's presence*) to destroy us (Judges 16:2)

It's sad when the elders don't meet at the gate (Lamentations 5:14)

We enter his gates with thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4)

Jesus said we should enter by the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13)

The gate is called righteousness (Psalm 118:19-20)

Jesus said that he actually is the gate (John 10:9) He is our righteousness. Jesus is the one that makes it possible for us to enter through the gate and experience God's presence.

In Genesis 28 we see Jacob's revelation of the gate of heaven. He stops for the night and has a powerful dream. Upon waking he says, "This is the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." (v. 17) There's a lot of symbolism here, but today we'll focus on how the gate relates to experiencing God's presence.

Jacob's dream of the gate reveals two key things...

### ☞1. A Picture of God

Angels, who are ministers for God, are going up and down the ladder... **God is involved in earthly matters**. He is not the god of Deism who created the earth and then left. Above the ladder stood the Lord... God is over and above all others. **He is the one true God**. "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac..." **God is personal**. He has been involved in our history and our lives today.

### ☞2. A Promise from God

"I will give you this land..." **God has a place and a plan for his people**.

"You will spread out... people will be blessed through you..." **God will help us be productive and powerful in ministry**.

"I am with you... I will not leave you..." **God promises his presence to his people**.

God is personally involved in your life. He has a plan for you to be productive and powerful. He is with you. **We need God's presence today!** God's presence is the ultimate blessing.

If you dig into Jacob's story, you will find that he wanted God's blessing from his father, Isaac. But, he approached this in the wrong way at first (with his brother Esau)...

He had unholy motives and he used unholy means to try to secure God's blessing.

He wanted the blessing for his own greatness.

He used deception and manipulation to get the blessing because he was impatient.

Sometimes we think we can manipulate God into blessing us... "God if you'll bless me, I'll never do such and such again." Sometimes we think we can control God's presence... "If we just hyped everything up, then God would show up and bring a blessing."

**We cannot force God to do anything.** He will do what he wants when he wants. We can and should pursue God's presence in our lives, but he will reveal himself when he wants and in whatever way he chooses. We don't control him! In fact...

☞ Here in Genesis 28, we find Jacob receiving **Revelation in the Routine**. He was simply on a journey and taking a break for a night's rest. He wasn't having a special service or even an intense time of prayer when God revealed himself in a powerful way. There's nothing wrong with special services and intense times of prayer. I recommend them.

☞ However, the key is to remember that **God can reveal himself whenever and wherever he chooses**. For us, the thing is to be ready. Are you ready? Will you respond when God moves in your life?

In verse 16 Jacob says, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it." This is sort of the flip side of Samson's story. The Lord had left Samson and he was unaware of it. Now, with Jacob, the Lord was right there, but he was unaware. We often are unaware when God is moving right here, right now. We need to be ready at all times to encounter God's presence and power!

*Let us become more aware of your Presence...*

☞ Jacob arrived at **a Certain Place**.

He had left Beersheba and was on his way to Haran.

Beersheba = well of an oath

Haran = mountain

☞ He was **between a promise and an obstacle** when he encountered God. Sometimes God speaks into our lives with a promise, but then we run into a roadblock that seems to put a stop to his promise. Hang in there! That may be just when God reveals himself in a fresh, new way. For OBC, we've received promises of revival and growth. It's been years ago and our average attendance is actually down. It seems like an obstacle. So I could say OBC is between a promise and an obstacle.

In Jacob's case, this place was nothing special at all. It was just a place to rest. Yet he encountered God in a powerful way. It could be **anyplace at all**.

*--Jack Hayford... (re: his pastorate) I had simply consented to come here on a temporary assignment, feeling led by God to accept an invitation to assist this declining church... I did not expect we would do anything more than help out for perhaps a year or so.*

Pastor Jack had no idea he had come to a sovereign place, even though it seemed like just a certain place. This certain place would become The Church on the Way, one of the most famous churches in the world. God can make visitation anywhere.

☞ Jacob used **an Ordinary Stone** to rest. Verse 11 says simply it was one of the stones there. Again, nothing special at all. However, before our story ends, Jacob took this simple stone and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on it.

**☞ God can use every day, ordinary situations to speak to us.  
God can use every day, ordinary people like you and me to do his will.**

1 Peter 2:5

you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house

**☞ He takes us (ordinary stones), pours the Holy Spirit (the oil) on us and works in us to become pillars in his house.**

Revelation 3:12

The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it.

If you feel like an ordinary stone, remember that God is still using you. In the context of Revelation 3, we find that he wants us to endure patiently and hold on to what he has given us. That's what we talked about last week. **Hold on to those promises.** Don't give up. Don't lose heart. Sometimes when things become routine and we haven't felt God in a while, we are tempted to give up and move on. But God calls us to hang in there! He is building his house, and you are part of it!

*Your Promises, Elevation Worship*

*When the weight of the world begins to fall*

*On the Name of Jesus I will call*

*For I know my God is in control*

*and His purpose is unshakable*

**☞ Doesn't matter what I feel**

**Doesn't matter what I see**

**My hope will always be**

**In Your promises to me**

Most all of us feel like we're nothing special; just ordinary people. But God loves to empower and work with ordinary people!

☞ While Jacob is in a Certain Place using an Ordinary Stone, he has **a Surprise Dream**.

Here we are again with God's sovereign choice of when, where and how he reveals himself. Jacob wasn't trying to find God this night; he was simply trying to sleep.

Remember verse 16? "I was not aware..." I believe this is the issue most of the time. It's not that God isn't there; it's that we are unaware.

☞ I've experienced **the presence of God** and the moving of the Holy Spirit **in public** worship times. I've also experienced that in my **private**, personal quiet time with God. But there have also been random times and events when I experienced God working. It has happened in simple **conversations** and various **circumstances**. And I'm sure there have been other times that God was working and I didn't even know it! That has happened from time to time when I preach. On occasion I feel like I bombed in my sermon, but almost invariably someone will say that God was really speaking to them at that time.

God has not left you! He is still working in your life, whether you feel like it or not.

Remember...

2 Corinthians 5:7

...for we walk by faith, not by sight.

And yet, sometimes we miss God's presence simply because we're not paying attention. We should pray every day, *"God, work in my life today. Use me for your will. Help me ☞ to hear your voice and follow the Spirit's lead."* Then **be ready at any moment for God to interrupt your agenda**.

Finally, after coming to a Certain Place, using an Ordinary Stone, and having a Surprise ☞ Dream, Jacob makes **a Personal Commitment**.

He had a life changing encounter with the Living God and he made a vow...

1. **"The Lord will be my God..."**
2. **"This stone will be God's house..."**
3. **"I will give a tenth..."**

1. ☞ **Obedience**. **"The Lord will be my God..."** I will obey the Lord. Whatever he says, goes. His word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will follow him wherever he leads.

2. 🎧 **Openness.** “This stone will be God’s house...” I’m a living stone in his house, and he is always welcome in me. After all, it’s his house. He can take up residence in my heart and mind. Any rearranging he wants to do is okay with me. I am his house.
3. 🎧 **Offering.** “I will give a tenth...” I will offer myself and all I have to God. He can use me anyway he sees fit. He can direct how I use the “stuff” he has given me. My life is his. That means my mind belongs to him. My body belongs to him. My possessions belong to him. I surrender everything to him!

**We need God’s presence!** Are you ready for an encounter with God? It could happen anytime, anywhere! Ultimately, as we look at Jacob’s unexpected encounter and see his 🎧 response to obey, open his heart and offer himself, we are talking about **surrender**. We need God’s presence. He calls us to surrender our whole lives to him. When we do, he promises to be with us and he can work in us at any time. **We can experience the presence of God!**

**Will you surrender? The altar is open again today.**

🎧 **Start video**

**Will you simply offer yourself to God in obedience and openness to his agenda? Is it okay if God interrupts your plans? Is it okay if his visitation is not exactly as you’re hoping and expecting? Will you look and listen for him in the Routine? Will you accept that he wants to use the Ordinary you? Will you surrender yourself to him?**

🎧 (after video) **Will you surrender?**

Your **time, talents,** and **treasures?**

Your **plans** and your **purpose?**

Your **hopes** and **dreams?**

Your **victories** and **defeats?**

Your **comforts** and your **pains?**

Your **relationships?**

Your **all?**

🎧 **CD – I Surrender (Hillsong)**

**Close with a time of prayer, focusing especially on surrender to God.**