

The Worrying and Wrestling of Jacob

Genesis 32:1-32

I. JACOB'S PLANNED MEET WITH ESAU (Genesis 32:1-8)

A. Jacob's Meeting with Angels (Genesis 32:1-2)

1. Jacob went on his way and was met by angels (Genesis 32:1).
 - a. As Jacob "*went on his way*" after his meeting with Laban had ended, he was met by a great blessing, namely, "*the angels of God*" (Genesis 32:1).
 - b. The moment of this manifestation was most providential in that shortly after he would have much anxiety to learn that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men (Genesis 32:6).
2. He named the place *Mahanaim*, meaning two hosts or camps (Genesis 32:2). This refers to Jacob's camp and the camp of angels. (Note: This location is mentioned again during the reign of David [See 2 Samuel 17:24; 2 Samuel 17:26-27; 1 Kings 2:8-9]).
 - a. The manner of this manifestation was that of an army of God's angelic warriors (host) who were watching over Jacob.
 - b. This is reminiscent of the later event with Elisha and his servant when the Syrian army surrounded them in Dothan (2 Kings 6:15-17).
 - (1) Carnal eyes cannot normally see God's holy army; but when God wishes, He can open the eyes of man and allow them to see like Jacob, Elisha and his servant saw.
 - (2) The manner, like the moment, was appropriate. Jacob needed an army to protect him, and this manifestation fit that need very well.

B. Jacob's Sending of Messengers to Esau (Genesis 32:3-5)

1. Unto the land of Seir in the country of Edom (Genesis 32:3)
2. Seeking grace in the eyes of Esau (Genesis 32:4-5)
 - a. The details of the message (Genesis 32:4, 5)
 - (1) Jacob's message was two-fold.
 - (2) One, he wanted to let his brother know that he was returning to the land from staying with Laban all these years. Two, that the Lord had blessed him with a family, goods, and wealth during his stay.

- b. The design of the message (Genesis 32:5)
 - (1) *“I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight”* (Genesis 32:5).
 - (2) Jacob certainly wanted to appease his brother Esau, to let him know that Jacob was a changed man.
 - (3) So, Jacob asked for grace and did not insist on his rights, instead, he lets Esau know that he is no longer that way.

C. Jacob’s Messengers Return from Esau (Genesis 32:6-8)

- 1. Esau was coming with 400 men to meet Jacob (Genesis 32:6)
 - a. An army of men
 - (1) Jacob learned from his messengers that Esau was on his way with 400 men.
 - (2) By all indicators this seemed to imply that he was coming to meet Jacob with force.
 - b. An absence of reply
 - (1) Though Jacob’s messengers went to speak to Esau, it would seem, they did not do so. Instead, it seems they heard of or saw the large group and made their way back to Jacob.
 - (2) This was an ominous warning of possible trouble for Jacob.
- 2. This made Jacob very distressed (Genesis 32:7)
 - a. Shortly after the manifestation of God’s host to Jacob, Jacob receives word that he is possibly facing a bloody meeting with his brother Esau.
 - b. How often in life is good news followed by bad news, but as we’ve already seen in past lessons, as well as life’s experiences, God prepares us for the bad news by first giving us strength through His word and experience with Him in our lives (Genesis 28:15; Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 13:5).
- 3. Jacob devises a plan in dividing his people for safety (Genesis 32:7-8) Note: Jacob already had two camps (Genesis 32:2)
 - a. He divided his physical camp into two camps.
 - b. This would make it more difficult for Esau to attack and destroy the entire camp. Note: Jacob could take no offensive position as he had no army, but he could take a defensive measure by dividing the camp into two parts.

II. JACOB'S PRAYER FOR SAFETY (Genesis 32:9-12)

A. Jacob's Prayer for Protection (Genesis 32:9-11)

1. He reminded God of their relationship (Genesis 32:9a)
 - a. Through Abraham—God of my father Abraham
 - b. Through Isaac—God of my father Isaac
 - c. Now through him—the LORD which saidst unto me
2. He reminded God of God's Command (Genesis 32:9b)
 - a. *"Return unto thy country."*
 - b. *"Return...to thy kindred."*
 - c. *"I will deal well with thee."*
3. He declared his own unworthiness (Genesis 32:10)
 - a. Jacob recognized he was *not worthy* of the least of God's mercies and truth. The world is not worthy of such things (Matthew 10:37-38; Matthew 22:8; Romans 8:18; Hebrews 11:38).
 - b. This mind-set is proper for any servant of God (Matthew 3:11; Matthew 8:8; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8; Philippians 2:3; 1 Timothy 1:15).

B. Jacob's Prayer for Deliverance (Genesis 32:11)

1. He asked for God's deliverance.
2. He expressed his fear of Esau.
 - a. Note: Jacob bared his heart to God, and God heard his prayer.
 - b. Note: It is when we are honest with God from our heart and soul that we can find true respite and refreshing from communing with the Lord (Luke 18:1; Philippians 4:6-8).

C. Jacob's Reminder to God of God's Promises (Genesis 32:12; Genesis 28:13-15; cp. Exodus 32:13)

1. God would do good unto Jacob.
2. God would make his seed as the sand of the seashore.

III. JACOB'S PREPARATION FOR THE WORST (Genesis 32:13-23)

A. Jacob Sends a Present unto Esau (Genesis 32:13-21)

1. The prodigiousness of the present (Genesis 32:14, 15)
 - a. Well over 500 animals comprised this gift.
 - b. The size of the gift certainly affirmed how greatly God had blessed Jacob.
 - c. The size of the gift also indicated just how much Jacob would sacrifice for peace and safety. Jacob was not being cheap (Job 2:4; Mark 8:36; Luke 12:15).
2. The purpose of the present (Genesis 32:20)
 - a. That he would appease Esau for the peace that had been broken between them because of sin.
 - b. Jacob knew that he needed to show some substantial fruit of his intent, not just words. (Note: This is seen as a by-product of repentance [Matthew 3:8] [Proverbs 28:13], and in the Christian life [Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 5:9-11]).
3. The partitioning of the present—*“He delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves... put a space betwixt drove and drove”* (Genesis 32:16).
 - a. The partitioning was for service—mixing certain animals with one another could cause unintended harm. Such things as behavioral issues as well as intermingling.
 - b. The partitioning was for show—by dividing up the animals into groups it would emphasize the great amount of the gifts.
4. The proclamation with the present—*“Thou shalt say, They be ty servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau, and, behold, also he is behind us”*(Genesis 32:18).
 - a. The proclamation that each servant was to say unto Esau was one of charity and respect.
 - b. The repetition of the message along with the gifts would help emphasize that Jacob was a changed man.

B. Jacob Sends His Family Across the Brook of Jabbok (Genesis 32:22-23)

IV. JACOB'S WRESTLING BEFORE THE MEETING (Genesis 32:24-32)

A. Jacob's Wrestling Match (Genesis 32:24)

1. He wrestled alone (see Matthew 26:56—the disciples forsook and fled).
2. He wrestled with the Lord (see Genesis 32:30; Hosea 12:3-5).
3. He wrestled all night long.
4. He wrestled until daybreak (cp. 1 Kings 18:42-44; Luke 18:1-7).

B. Jacob's Unusual Encounter (Genesis 32:25-29)

1. The Lord touched Jacob (Genesis 32:25)—he was never the same again.
2. The Lord blessed Jacob (Genesis 32:26, 29).
3. The Lord renamed Jacob (Genesis 32:27-28).
 - a. His name—Israel: *a prince of God* (2 Timothy 2:12)
 - b. His fame—power
 - (1) With God (Galatians 1:10; James 5:16-18)
 - (2) With man

C. Jacob Is a Changed Man (Genesis 32:30-32)

1. His new confidence (Genesis 32:30; Philippians 4:13)—“*my life is preserved.*”
2. His new vision (Genesis 32:31a; Proverbs 29:18; Philippians 3:14)
3. His new walk after the sun's rising (Genesis 32:31b-32; 2 Corinthians 5:7)