

Genesis - Lesson 32

Genesis 32

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Memory verses for this week: *2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

Introduction: We continue our study on the book of Genesis this week as Jacob returns and meets his brother Esau after a 20 year absence. If you remember in our earlier lessons, we studied about how he defrauded his father and took the birthright from Esau, and he promised to kill Jacob when their father died.

I. Jacob Fearfully Prepares to Meet Esau

Gen 32:1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

Gen 32:2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Jacob continues his journey homeward and angels of God come out to meet him. He had just left one enemy (his father in law Laban), and now he was about to meet Esau. He has no reason to expect anything from him but bitterness over what he had done to get the father's blessings by deception. We certainly do not always receive what we deserve, and how wonderful it was that God sent the angels to reassure him at the borders of Canaan. Jacob says this is God's host and names the place Mahanaim. The name means two hosts or camps. Could there have been two hosts of angels, one before Jacob and the other after Jacob?

This isn't clear, but the bible is very clear on one thing, and that is that we are protected by angels that we most likely will never see. God allowed many Old Testament and a few New Testament saints to see angels, but today we are to trust God and seek His will through Jesus Christ and the revealed Word of God.

Matthew Henry in his commentary about the angels watching over Jacob and also us today.

Jacob, having got clear of Laban, pursues his journey homewards towards Canaan: when God has helped us through difficulties we should go on our way heaven-ward with so much the more cheerfulness and resolution. Now, 1. Here is Jacob's convoy in his journey (Gen 32:1): *The angels of God met him*, in a visible appearance, whether in a vision by day or in a dream by night, as when he saw them upon the ladder (Gen 28:12), is uncertain. Note, Those that keep in a good way have always a good guard; angels themselves are ministering spirits for their safety, Heb 1:14. Where Jacob pitched his tents, they pitched theirs about him, Psa 34:7. They met

him, to bid him welcome to Canaan again; a more honourable reception this was than ever any prince had, that was met by the magistrates of a city in their formalities. They met him to congratulate him on his arrival, as well as on his escape from Laban; for they have pleasure in the prosperity of God's servants. They had invisibly attended him all along, but now they appeared to him, because he had greater dangers before him than those he had hitherto encountered.

Note, When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts. We should think it had been more seasonable for these angels to have appeared to him amidst the perplexity and agitation occasioned first by Laban, and afterwards by Esau, than in this calm and quiet interval, when he saw not himself in any imminent peril; but God will have us, when we are in peace, to provide for trouble, and, when trouble comes, to live upon former observations and experiences; for *we walk by faith, not by sight*. God's people, at death, are returning to Canaan, to their Father's house; and then the angels of God will meet them, to congratulate them on the happy finishing of their servitude, and to carry them to their rest.

Gen 32:3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Gen 32:4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

Gen 32:5 And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

Gen 32:6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

Jacob sends messengers to Esau to let him know that he is returning. He first tells the messengers where they were to go which was in the land of Seir in the country of Edom. Next he tells them what they are to say. Note, he calls Esau "lord", and tells them to tell him that his servant Jacob had sojourned with Laban and stayed in that land until now, but he comes with his flocks, wives, children, and servants.

And most of all the reason why they are there. So that hopefully Esau would act in grace and welcome him back. When they returned, the messengers tell him that we found Esau thy brother and he is coming to meet him with 400 men with him. I am sure this was a fearful response since Jacob expected possible evil from his brother.

Gen 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

Gen 32:8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

Not knowing his brother's heart, the messengers message brought fear and distress to Jacob. He comes up with a plan that might allow not everyone to be destroyed by dividing the animals and people into two companies that perhaps one or the other might escape if attacked.

Gen 32:9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the

LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

Gen 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

Gen 32:11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

Gen 32:12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

Jacob now shows great wisdom by his prayer. This is a remarkable prayer and certainly should be studied carefully. When we are in distress and don't know where to turn, we should always go first to the Heavenly Father, He knows more about our situation than we know ourselves, and he cares very much for us and wants the best for our lives.

Note in Jacob's prayer, he first pleads the covenant. He pleads on the basis of God's Word. When the Devil tries to shake you, remind him and yourself of what God has promised. He has NEVER lied and everything He ever promised has come to pass or soon shall for the few things left to happen in the future. Jacob confesses his own unworthiness and sinfulness. He then gives God the glory for all his success. This is a pattern we need to pay attention to.

The bible teaches us how to pray, and acknowledging our sins is crucial and asking for forgiveness to restore our fellowship with God. We should pray that God's will be done in our lives. We then are to bring our petitions before God and glorify God for what he has done for us and for what He will do for us.

Jacob asks for deliverance for himself and his family. God had earlier promised to bring him back to his homeland, and he reminds God of the promises made at Bethel.

Gen 28:13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

Gen 28:14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Gen 28:15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

God delights in us clinging to His promises. One time the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray like John had taught his disciples. A lot of people call this the Lord's prayer, but I think the "model prayer" is what this one is. The prayer in John is more likely the "Lord's prayer" when he prayed for the disciples and all of us.

Luk 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Luk 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

Luk 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

Gen 32:13 And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;

Gen 32:14 Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

Gen 32:15 Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.

After prayer with God, Jacob prepares to meet Esau. He prepares gifts to give to his brother, and the presents were assembled as explained in verses 14-15.

Gen 32:16 And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

Gen 32:17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?

Gen 32:18 Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us.

Gen 32:19 And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

Gen 32:20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

Jacob comes up with a plan that he reveals to his servants. It was a crafty, subtle plan. It broke a lot of distance between the main group and all these servants driving the animals to be given as a gift. When Jacob meets Esau, he will have a good feeling as to whether he is meeting friend or foe.

Gen 32:21 So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

Gen 32:22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

Gen 32:23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

Time had come to cross over the brook and head towards home. He lodges the night with the company and then takes his family and servants and cross over the ford Jabbok. The whole possession is then sent over.

II. Jacob's Fateful Meeting at Peniel

Gen 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

Gen 32:25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

Gen 32:26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

After the angels of God had met him and he had prayed his marvelous prayer of faith, it is unfortunate that Jacob lapsed back into his old ways so quickly. He immediately devises a plan to appease his brother with large gifts. There was no faith in this. So Jacob has some lessons to learn and God will teach him. Either we lean on God or on our plans. It is never wise to rely on our own abilities because we are so weak. Jacob was met by one sent from God (probably the Lord himself) and wrestled into submission. Verse 24 says Jacob was left alone. Being left alone is the only way we get to know ourselves and our ways. The bible commands that we be still and know that God is God.

Psa 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Verse 24 says there wrestled a man with him. We believe that it is wrong to imply that Jacob sought to wrestle with him. It was the man that wrestled with Jacob. Jacob resisted with all his might. You ever been there? Maybe God is dealing with you about something in your life, and you refuse to go God's way. You want to do it your way. You may struggle against God, but believe me, you won't win that battle. God may let you go your way for a span of time, but ultimately God's Will will be done or you will be one sad person out of the perfect will of God. Of course it was the Lord that wrestled with Jacob.

Hos 12:2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

Hos 12:3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

***Hos 12:4** Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;*

Though He is called an angel, nevertheless, He is the same one that came to Abraham.

***Gen 18:1** And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;*

Gen 18:2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

Gen 18:3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Gen 18:4 Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

Give Jacob some credit for perseverance. Being stubborn can be such a great trait if it is being stubborn for the right reasons. Here it was not for the good, because Jacob wanted his way, and he wrestled all night. If it was the Lord, then why did it take Him so long to prevail? God is gracious and long-suffering when dealing with His people.

Sometimes he lets us struggle with our own little ideas and plans before he makes himself perfectly clear and reveals the reality of our situation. Finally, when Jacob saw he prevailed not, he asked to be released.

Jacob was extremely stubborn and had so much self-will. God touched the hollow of his thigh and caused it to come out of joint. This shows how quickly the Lord could disable Jacob when He was ready. A lot of the struggling we go through is simply for us to learn who is in control. Even at this point of great pain, Jacob clings for a blessing. He is no longer resisting, but simply clinging. This is the right and proper way.

III. Jacob's Name Changed To Israel

Gen 32:27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

Gen 32:28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Gen 32:29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

Gen 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

God asks him "What is thy name?" The Lord knew his name, but the question was asked in order for Jacob to declare his true nature. He is Jacob, the supplanter, the trickster. In verse 28, God commands his name changed to Israel, which means "Prince with God." Jacob asks something he should have known, and this he reveals in the next verse. He called the name of the place "Peniel" meaning "I have seen God face to face" How can anyone see God and live? God appeared in human form to Jacob and in darkness.

Albert Barnes said this about Jacob's new name of Israel.

"What is thy name?" He reminds him of his former self, Jacob, the supplanter, the self-reliant, self-seeking. But now he is disabled, dependent on another, and seeking a blessing from another, and for all others as well as himself. No more Jacob shall thy name be called, but Israel - a prince of God, in God, with God. In a personal conflict, depending on thyself, thou wert no match for God. But in prayer, depending on another, thou hast prevailed with God and with men. The new name is indicative of the new nature which has now come to its perfection of development in Jacob. Unlike Abraham, who received his new name once for all, and was never afterward called by the former one, Jacob will hence, be called now by the one and now by the other, as the occasion may serve. For he was called from the womb [Gen 25:23](#), and both names have a spiritual significance for two different aspects of the child of God, according to the apostle's paradox, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" [Phi 2:12-13](#). "Tell now thy name."

Disclose to me thy nature. This mysterious Being intimates by his reply that Jacob was to learn his nature, so far as he yet required to know it, from the event that had just occurred; and he was well acquainted with his name. And he blessed him there.

He had the power of disabling the self-sufficient creature, of upholding that creature when unable to stand, of answering prayer, of conferring a new name, with a new phase of spiritual life, and of blessing with a physical renovation, and with spiritual capacity for being a blessing to mankind. After all this, Jacob could not any longer doubt who he was.

*Gen 32:31 And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.
Gen 32:32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.*

The battle took its toll, and Jacob now limps. Like Paul's thorn in the flesh, this would be a ceaseless reminder to Jacob, so that he would never forget this experience. God was here dealing with Jacob's flesh. He did not eradicate it, but He only shrank it. We can never fully escape the effect of our fleshly nature here on this earth, but God can certainly shrink it and cause us to lean upon Him for control.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who met Jacob at Mahanaim?

The angels of the Lord.

2. What does Mahanaim mean?

The name means two hosts or camps

3. How did Jacob address Esau?

My Lord

4. On what basis does Jacob plead for God's protection?

Via the covenant God had promised to him.

5. Explain how Jacob prepares to meet Esau.

He separates the animals into two troops and sends the gifts of animals with the servants in the front scattered out.

6. What happened to Jacob at Peniel?

Jacob met God directly and wrestled with him all night to learn that God was in control and he was to trust Him in all matters and not his craftiness.

7. What does Peniel mean?

I have seen God face to face

8. Who was it that wrestled with Jacob?

The Lord himself.

9. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. What does Jacob mean? What does Israel mean?

Jacob means the supplanter or the trickster. Israel means "Prince with God."

10. How did the Lord deal with Jacob's flesh at Peniel?

God was here dealing with Jacob's flesh. He did not eradicate it, but He shrank it. From this day forth, he was reminded of the battle by his limp, and learned to lean more on the Lord and less on the flesh.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.