

Genesis 32:1-21 The Transformation of Jacob

I. Jacob Is Growing Toward Faith (1-21)

I. Jacob Continues To Be Watched Over (1-2)

A. Jacob is Met By God's Angels (1)

1. This encounter with the angels uses some of the same terms as Jacob's vision of the ladder at Bethel
2. Jacob is shown the camp of angels to remind him that even after 20 years, God is still watching over him
 - a. This was the intent of the vision at Bethel
 - b. God is reminding Jacob that He is still keeping His promise

B. Jacob Marvels At That Place (2)

1. Jacob still doesn't seem to comprehend the whole truth of the angels
 - a. He marvels over the place where he sees the angels
 - b. He calls this place "the Camp of God"
 - c. Again Jacob relates this place with God's presence (just as he did at Bethel) instead of understanding that God promised to be with Him everywhere he went.
2. Mahanaim – means "two camps" – there is debate as to what he means by "two camps" – Is this his camp and the angels? Is it Laban's camp and the angels?
 - a. Mahaneh often denotes a military camp (see 1 Chr. 12:22; Ps. 34:7; Ps. 91:11-12)
 - b. If this is so, it should have given Jacob rest knowing that God's army is with him as the promise bearer

II. Jacob Prepares To Meet Esau (3-8)

A. Jacob Hopes To Appease Esau (3-6)

1. Jacob sends messengers to Esau (3-4a)
 - a. Jacob is not hiding on his way back to the land
 - b. Jacob doesn't have to send messengers to Edom – It seems like Jacob genuinely desires to be reconciled with Esau
2. Jacob's message to Esau (4b-5)
 - a. He expresses his humility (4b)
 - i. Notice that he calls Esau his "lord" and refers to himself as Esau's servant
 - ii. This could be nothing more than humble courtesy – but some take it to be Jacob attempting to reverse the roles that were given by Isaac's blessing (he is trying to make amends for stealing the first-born status)
 - b. He tells where he has been (4c)
 - c. He tells how he has prospered gaining cattle and servants (5a)
 - d. He expresses hope for reconciliation (5b)
 - i. He sends word hoping to find favor (i.e. grace) with Esau
 - ii. "that I might find favor in your sight" is a common phrase used by a subordinate to his superior

3. Jacob receives a disturbing word about Esau (6)
 - a. The messengers return saying that Esau is coming to meet Jacob
 - b. The messengers say that Esau is bringing 400 men with him
 - i. This implies that Esau is coming for battle
 - ii. Remember that Abraham took only 318 men to fight against the five armies that took Lot prisoner
 - iii. The last thing Jacob heard when he left was that Esau wanted him dead

B. Jacob Prepares For The Worst (7-8)

1. Jacob is terribly afraid (7a)
 - a. Jacob is rightly afraid, remembering Esau's rage against him
 - b. Jacob has wronged Esau and knows that he deserves punishment
2. Jacob divides his camp into two (7b-8)
 - a. Some see this as a lack of faith on Jacob's part
 - i. He should have trusted the promise of God
 - ii. He had just seen the angels' camp showing God's protection
 - b. Some see this as an example of Jacob's heart
 - i. Jacob separates them in order to protect life
 - ii. He plans that if Esau attacks one group, the other can get away
 - iii. Jacob is thinking of the safety of his family and planning accordingly to minimize the damage

III. Jacob Prays To His God (9-12)

A. Jacob Calls On His God (9)

1. He is the God of Jacob's fathers
 - a. Jacob identifies God by the promises and faithfulness he has shown to Jacob's fathers
 - b. God has always protected His promise to Abraham and Isaac – even against the consequences of their own actions
2. He is the God who promised care over Jacob
 - a. Jacob also calls on the God who promised His presence at Bethel
 - b. Jacob identifies God with the promise of provision and safety which God gave to Jacob

B. Jacob Humbly Praises God's Faithfulness (10)

1. Jacob finally comes to grips with his own sinfulness
 - a. Jacob recognizes he is unworthy of all God has done for him
 - b. Jacob recognizes that it is simply grace that allowed him to prosper in Laban's house

c. God has been faithful to His word – Jacob remembers God’s faithfulness and humbly comes before God to continue His protection.

C. Jacob Makes His Request To God (11)

1. Jacob pleads that God would protect him from Esau’s wrath
2. Jacob has come to the point where his scheming won’t help him. He admits to God that he is afraid and cannot help himself
3. Jacob is also afraid for his family

D. Jacob Cites The Promise of God (12)

1. Jacob cites God’s promise to make him into a great nation with innumerable offspring
2. Jacob now understands that God’s blessing and protection are not because of his own goodness, but because God is faithful to His promise

IV. Jacob Makes A Final Effort To Appease Esau (13-20)

A. He sets apart a gift for Esau (13-15)

1. Jacob sets apart hundreds of animals to present to Esau
2. Some see this as Jacob trying to return the “first-born” double portion to Esau
3. Regardless of this, it is true that Jacob is attempting to make restitution for what he has done to Esau – Jacob is demonstrating the fruits of repentance

B. He separates each drove (16)

1. He separates the animals into several droves which will pass sequentially by Esau
2. Perhaps he thinks the repetition of gifts will somehow dissuade Esau from attacking

C. He instructs the droves to present before Esau (17-20a)

1. Jacob tells his servants to call Esau “lord” and Jacob “your servant”
2. The gifts will go before Jacob and announce his repentance

D. Jacob hopes the gift will appease Esau (20b)

1. Jacob is trying by word and deed to appease Esau
2. Jacob thinks that there is a chance that Esau will accept him

II. Jacob is Changed By God (21-32)

I. Jacob Remains Alone In Camp (21-23)

- A. Jacob stays the night in the camp (21)
- B. Jacob sends his immediate family away (22-23)

1. The text makes sure we know that Jacob was alone

II. Jacob Encounters His God (24-29)

A. Jacob Wrestles with God (24)

1. The text simply says “a man” wrestled with him all night – we will find out later that this is indeed God
2. Although this verse is short, the wrestling match continued all night long

- a. It must have been extremely exhausting and confusing for Jacob
- b. This would be a picture of all of Jacob's life – he wrestled with God throughout his life, doing things his own way and refusing to walk in the promise

B. Jacob is changed by God (25-28)

1. Jacob's Hip is Put Out of Joint (25)

- a. The man sees that he is not prevailing against Jacob – this doesn't mean that Jacob is stronger than God. It means that all God's efforts do not deter Jacob to submit
- b. God is far stronger than Jacob and could have won at any time. With a single touch, Jacob's hip is thrown out of joint and he is permanently crippled.
- c. Although Jacob is said to have "prevailed" against God, his victory is not because he is stronger or more powerful

2. Jacob Refuses To Let Go (26)

- a. The man commands Jacob to let him go
 - i. The match is over. Jacob has lost. He can only cling to the man as his leg hangs limp and useless
 - ii. God tells Jacob that he must let him go because day is breaking
 - perhaps this is a mercy because no man can see God and live – maybe the daylight would have revealed the man's appearance
- b. Jacob refuses to let go until he is blessed
 - i. Jacob realizes that this is no ordinary man
 - ii. Understanding that he is wrestling with God, Jacob refuses to let him go until he secures the blessing
 - iii. What Jacob had stolen by sin and scheming, he now begged for at the feet of Almighty God. He refuses to be without the blessing. He would rather die

3. Jacob's Name is Changed (27-28)

- a. Jacob admits his sinfulness (27)
 - i. The man asks Jacob his name
 - This isn't because God didn't know his name
 - Jacob means "supplanter" "heel-grabber" and Jacob must admit to who he is before God. He is a fraud and a sinner.
 - ii. Jacob cries out his name, recognizing that he had not only sinned against Esau, but he is a sinner at his very heart.
- b. Jacob is changed by God (28)

- i. God removes the name “heel-grabber” from him. Jacob will no longer be known as the scheming man he once was.
- ii. God gives him a new name – Israel which means “strives with God” (or God strives)
- iii. He is given this name because he has striven with God and man and prevailed (the man who is God fought with Jacob)
 - How did he prevail?
 - Was it by his own strength, power, or will?
 - No. It was by humble submission, understanding he is unworthy and wicked, but clinging to God alone for blessing. Remind you of the gospel?

C. Jacob is Blessed by God (29)

- 1. Jacob asks to know the man’s name and is answered with the question, “why do you want to know my name?”
- 2. It is possible that the giving of a name shows submission – Jacob is forced to give his name as he is beaten. God does not give his name but ends the conversation abruptly. Jacob has not beaten God
- 3. Although victorious, God blesses Jacob there

III. Jacob is Forever Affected By His Encounter (30-32)

A. Jacob Marvels At Seeing God’s Face (30)

- 1. Jacob realizes that it is God with whom he has been wrestling
- 2. Jacob also realizes the incredible danger he was in – we know that no one can see the face of God and live

B. Jacob Remains Scarred From His Encounter (31)

- 1. Jacob has been changed at his heart by this encounter, but he has also been changed physically
- 2. Wrestling against God has taken its toll on Jacob. He will forever be marked by the struggle.
- 3. Jacob will walk with a limp for the rest of his life

C. The Nation of Israel Commemorates His Encounter (32)

- 1. This struggle with God will forever be noted by Israel