

“Wrestling with God”

Genesis 32:22-32

AND JACOB WAS LEFT ALONE. v.22-24a

1. Jacob was cornered by the circumstances of his life.

- 20 years with Laban’s household. God prospered him with family and possessions – but could not go back.
- But going forward meant seeing his brother Esau—who was coming to meet him with 400 men! 32:6

2. Jacob was living in fear of Esau. 32:11, 20

3. Jacob sent his whole family and all his possessions across the Jabbok River ahead of him. v.22-23

4. And Jacob was left alone. v.24a

- Blaise Pascal: “All men’s miseries derive from not being able to sit quiet in a room alone.”
- God to Jacob (28:15): I am with you; I will keep you wherever you go; I will bring you back to this land.

JACOB’S FACE TO FACE ENCOUNTER WITH GOD. v.24b-30

1. A mysterious “man” wrestled with Jacob all night. v.24b; Ref. Gen.18; Hos 12:3f; Ex 3:2-6; Judges 13:17-22

- This “man” was God Himself—a *theophany*: A visible manifestation of God. Gen. 18:1-2; Hos. 12:3f
- The assailant seems to reveal Himself as God. v.28
- Jacob understands this mysterious figure as God. v.30 → Jacob was wrestling with God!

2. As morning comes, the Wrestler put Jacob’s hip out of joint to end the wrestling match. v.25-26

- Now Jacob *has to* cling to the LORD—because he cannot stand on his own. v.26

→ Jacob: I will not let you go unless you bless me!

3. The LORD changes Jacob’s name—and blesses him. v.27-30

- Jacob: ‘he takes by the heal’ or ‘he cheats’
- Israel: ‘he strives (or wrestles) with God’ → Not *against* God, but *alongside* God.
- Jacob names the place Peniel or “face of God.” v.30

THE SUN ROSE UPON JACOB. v.31-32

1. Jacob limped forward. v.31

- Newly aligned with God. Submitted to Him in a new way.

→ He had been face to face with God. He can certainly now come face to face with Esau.

2. The nation of Israel commemorated this event by a dietary restriction. v.32

APPLICATIONS

1. Moses wrote Genesis 400 years later to the nation of Israel. (The original recipients of the Genesis account.)

- The descendants of Jacob (Israel) were about to encounter the descendants of Esau (Edomites).

2. Redemptive-historically—how does this point to/reflect Jesus Christ?

- John 1:14, 16-18: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

3. The fear of man vs. the fear of God.

- The fear of God swallows up the fear of man. Ref. Isaiah 8:11-14; Acts 5:27-29; Galatians 1:10
- Isaiah 8:13-14: But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. ¹⁴And he will become a sanctuary....
- Proverbs 29:25: The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

4. The blessing of brokenness, pain, and humility—consider the benefits of your difficult condition...

- Psalm 9:12b: He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- Isaiah 57:15: For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.
- Psalm 34:18-19: The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.