

## Gen 32 – Jacob Wrestles God and settles old conflicts.

THEME: Crisis in the life of Jacob; wrestling at Peniel; Jacob's name changed to Israel.

Jacob wrestles God. Jacob (heal grabber / deceiver). Jacob also knows about living the consequences. God saved him but let him know God's law of sowing and reaping is as sure as gravity. Jacob deceived his brother and his Dad, and stole his brother's birth right. The consequences were: had to flee from his family never to see his mother again, tricked by Laban multiple times and served under him for 21 years, you would think this was enough, but no Jacob was stubborn. Hmmmm...Reminds me of someone I know. Jacob is about to face his brother and fearful, when God shows up. What we see is Love and Power balanced. - Cody

Chapter 32 is the high point in the life of Jacob and can be called the turning point in his life. However, this is not Jacob's conversion, by any means. In spite of the fact that he was living in the flesh, this man was still God's man. This is the reason that we are told to be very careful about judging folk as to whether they are Christians or not. There are a lot of people who do not look like they are Christians, but I am almost sure that they are. Whether they are or not is in the hands of the Lord. They just don't act like Christians—that's all; they give no evidence that they are. And this man Jacob gave no such evidence, except in very faint instances when God appeared to him and he did respond in a way.

Jacob, who is God's representative and witness in the world, has been a bad witness, but he cannot continue that way, and so God is going to deal with him. To tell the truth, God will cripple him in order to get him. The Lord also disciplines us: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth ..." (Heb\_12:6). That is His method. He disciplines in that way. Lot also did not look like he was a child of God—but he was, for Peter says that Lot "vexed his righteous soul" (see 2Pe\_2:7-8). But I tell you, Lot certainly was put through the fire. He escaped the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the Lord put him through the fires of testing. This is Jacob's experience also. He got his college degree at the college of hard knocks. Uncle Laban was president and dean of the school. At graduation, this boy Jacob gave a pitiful valedictorian address. It took him twenty years to get his degree, and he certainly worked for it. Old Laban changed the requirements ten times. Every two years, Jacob had a new contract with Uncle Laban, and it was always to Jacob's disadvantage. This was the experience of this man.

We come now to this test in which God is going to have to deal with Jacob because he is going to represent God. God will deal with him and will move in on him in this thirty-second chapter. At the beginning, I would like to write this verse of Scripture over this chapter: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa\_40:29). This is the experience of Jacob. – McGee

***Gen 32:1-2 So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.***

God is beginning to deal with Jacob directly in order to bring him into the place of fruit bearing and of real, vital service and witness for Him. – McGee

En route to Canaan, Jacob met a band of **angels** and called the place **Mahanaim** (*two hosts* or *double camp*). The two camps may be God's army (v. 2) and Jacob's entourage. Or two hosts may be a figurative expression for a great multitude (v. 10). – Believers Bible Commentary

***Gen 32:3-5 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob***

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***says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight." ' ' "***

This fellow Jacob is still clever, isn't he? He just cannot let go, even after his experience with Laban. He is returning back to the land, and he remembers the last time he saw Esau twenty years ago, when Esau was breathing out threatenings against him. Notice that Jacob sends servants and instructs them, saying, "When you get to Esau my brother, say to him, 'My lord Esau.'" Of all things! And then he has them refer to himself as "Thy servant Jacob." That's not the way Jacob had spoken before. He had manipulated for the birthright and had stolen the blessing. He had been a rascal, but now his talk is different. I guess he had learned a few things from Uncle Laban. "My lord Esau ... thy servant Jacob."

***Gen 32:6-8 Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."***

This message absolutely frightened poor Jacob because he didn't know what all that meant. Esau did not indicate his intentions to the servants at all. I suppose that Jacob quizzed them rather thoroughly and said, "Did you detect any note of animosity or bitterness or hatred toward me?" And I suppose that one of the servants said, "No, he seemed to be glad to get the information that you were coming to meet him, and now he's coming to meet you." But the fact that Esau appeared glad was no comfort to Jacob. It could mean that Esau would be glad for the opportunity of getting revenge. Anyway, poor Jacob is upset.

Jacob is in a bad way, he thinks. With this brother of his coming to him, he divides up his group. He is being clever. He reasons that if his brother strikes one group, then the other one can escape. Notice what Jacob does now. He appeals to God in his distress:

**Are we this way too? God sends us out, and as soon as we respond and go, the enemy attacks with our biggest fear. It is usually associated with an area of unresolved sin. Notice: He divided up the family, and then prayed. Do we sometime react first, and then pray?**

***Gen 32:9-12 Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' "***

This man now appeals to God and cries out to Him on the basis that He is the God of his father Abraham and the God of his father Isaac. I begin now to detect a little change in Jacob's life. This is the first time I have ever heard him say, "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies." For the first time, he is acknowledging that he might be a sinner in God's sight. Do you know that there are a great many "Christians" who do not acknowledge that they are sinners? For years I knew a man who was incensed that I would indicate that he was a sinner. He told me all that he had done and that he had been saved and now was not a sinner. My friend, he is a sinner. We are all sinners, saved by grace. As long as we are in this life, we have that old nature that isn't even fit to go to heaven. And do you know that God is not

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going to let it go to heaven? Vernon McGee cannot go there. That is the reason God had to give me a new nature; the old one wasn't even fit to repair. This fellow Jacob is beginning now to say that he is not worthy. When any man begins to move toward God on that basis, he will find that God will communicate with him.

Jacob makes this very interesting statement: “for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.” He went over the Jordan with just his walking stick, his staff—that's all he had. Now he is coming back, and he has become two companies. This is Jacob for you.

Jacob really cried out to God. That night was a very difficult night for him, and he didn't have any aspirins he could take. – McGee

***Gen 32:13-16 So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. Then he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves."***

This is Jacob's tactic. He will send out a drove, a very rich gift, for his brother, and when that first drove arrives, Esau will say, “What is this?” The servants will reply, “We are bringing you a gift from your brother Jacob.” Esau will receive that gift and then ride on a little farther to meet another drove of the same size. He will ask the servants, “Where are you going?” They will say, “We're going to meet Esau with a gift from his brother Jacob.” And he will say, “I am Esau.” Believe me, by the time Esau gets down where Jacob and the family are, he will be softened.

Jacob has prayed to God and has reminded the Lord, “You told me to return to my country. You said You would protect me.” But does he believe God? No. He goes right ahead and makes these arrangements, which reveals that he isn't trusting God at all. I am afraid that we are often in the same position. Many of us take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. We just spread them out before Him—I do that. Then when we get through praying, we get right up and put each little burden right back on our back and start out again with them. We don't really believe Him, do we? We don't really trust Him as we should. – McGee

***Gen 32:17-21 And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?' then you shall say, 'They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.' " So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.' " For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.***

Jacob next sent three successive droves of animals totaling 580 head as gifts for Esau, hoping to appease him. Esau would get the gift in three installments. Jacob's maneuvers manifested his unbelief or at least a mixture of faith and unbelief. – Believers' Bible Commentary

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***Gen 32:22-23 And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.***

This is the night of the great experience in Jacob's life. The land where he crossed the Brook Jabbok is very desolate. When I was there, I purposely got away from my group and took a walk across the bridge that is there today. The United States built a very lovely road through that area for the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan. There are several things in that area which you would not be able to see if there wasn't that good road, because it is quite a wilderness area. I took pictures of sheep that were drinking down at the Brook Jabbok. The crossing there is a very bleak place, right down between two hills, in that very mountainous and very rugged country. Here is where Jacob came that night. He is not a happy man, and he is filled with fear and doubts. You see, chickens are coming home to roost. He had mistreated Esau. God had never told him to get the birthright or the blessing in the way he did it. God would have gotten it for him. That night Jacob sends all that he has across the Brook Jabbok, but he stays on the other side so that, if his brother Esau comes, he might kill Jacob but spare the family. And so Jacob is left alone. – McGee

***Gen 32:24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.***

There are several things I would like to get straight as we come to this wrestling match. I have heard it said that Jacob did the wrestling. Actually, Jacob didn't want to wrestle anybody. He has Uncle Laban in back of him who doesn't mean good at all, and he has his brother Esau ahead of him. Jacob is no match for either one. He is caught now between a rock and a hard place, and he doesn't know which way to turn. Do you think he wanted to take on a third opponent that night? I don't think so.

This is the question: Who is this one who wrestled with Jacob that night? There has been a great deal of speculation about who it is, but I think He is none other than the preincarnate Christ. There is some evidence for this in the prophecy of Hosea: "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us; Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial" (Hos\_12:1-5). "The LORD is his memorial"—or, "the Lord is His name." It was none other than Jehovah, the preincarnate Christ, who wrestled with Jacob that night. – McGee

***Gen 32:25-26 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"***

What happens now? Jacob is just holding on; he's not wrestling. He is just holding on to this One. He found out that you do not get anywhere with God by struggling and resisting. The only way that you get anywhere with Him is by yielding and just holding on to Him. Abraham had learned that, and that is why he said amen to God. He believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness. Abraham reached

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the end of his rope and put his arms around God. My friend, when you get in that condition, then you trust God. When you are willing to hold on, He is there ready to help you. - McGee

The hip joint involves the two largest bones in your body and 5 strong and dense ligaments hold the joint together. The injury is extremely painful and dislocation requires a tremendous amount of force – typically a car accident today. Jacob walked with a limp all his life as a reminder and to humble him.

1. See the Love and Patience of God. He wrestled with Jacob all night. Have you ever felt you were wrestling with God? How can we live our lives so God does not have to wrestle with us to get our attention – much less take out our hip?
2. When we find ourselves in those situations, are we throwing in the towel, or not letting go until we get the blessing?

***Gen 32:27-32 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.***

Although Jacob lost the encounter physically, he won a great spiritual victory. He learned to triumph through defeat and to be strong through weakness. Emptied of self and of confidence in his own cleverness, he confessed he was Jacob, a supplanter, a "con man." God then changed his name to Israel (variously translated as "God rules," "one who strives with God," or "a prince of God"). Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (the face of God) because he realized he had seen the Lord. – Believers Bible Commentary

No different than our own children, God asks us to trust Him and fall back. David did it with lion and the bear before he faced the giant. Jonah knew the heart of God and ran because he did not want his enemies to experience God's grace, but as the waters closed in the fish came. The world would say this is disaster, but it was God's deliverance. In our lowest times in the very act of disobedience, God is there to save us always, if we cry out. Jacob started out life as heal grabber, but God gave him a new name and even dislocated his hip to humble him and get his attention. Then, you see a changed humbled Jacob in the end (see Genesis 47:7-10).

### **Application:**

- **Don't shrink from the Giants of your life – God knows your situation as he has you hemmed in.**
- **Don't run from God or hide from Him. Where are you going to run? He will chase you if you're His child.**
- **Humble yourself and obey. Your stubbornness sometimes just ends up in scars and limps.**

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2-3 Jacob and Joseph

Date: c. 1930-1876 BC

2-3

