

THEME: *Jacob meets Esau; Jacob journeys to Shalem.*

In the previous chapter we saw the high point in the life of Jacob, which was his encounter with God. On that night “a man” wrestled with him, and the “man,” not Jacob, did the wrestling. Jacob was not looking for another fight. He has Uncle Laban in back of him and Brother Esau ahead of him, and the last time he saw both of them they were breathing out threatenings against him. This man Jacob is not in a position to take on someone else. Therefore, the “man” took the initiative; He was the aggressor. He was, as we have seen, the preincarnate Christ. Jacob resisted Him until the touch of God crippled him. Then, recognizing at last who He was, Jacob clung to Him until He blessed him. From this point on we will begin to see a change in Jacob. As we follow his life in the chapter before us, we will think that we have met a new man. To tell the truth, he *is* a new man.

Gen 33:1-3 *Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.*

Jacob wants to spare his family; so he separates them from the others. I would love to have a picture of Jacob meeting his brother Esau! I suppose that while he was a mile away from him, he started bowing. He is coming with his hat in his hand because Esau has four hundred men with him, and Jacob doesn't know if he is coming as friend or foe. - McGee

Gen 33:4 *But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.*

Well, they are twins, they are brothers. Let bygones be bygones. It looks as if God has certainly touched Esau's heart because he had sworn vengeance that he would kill Jacob. - McGee

Gen 33:5-7 *And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.*

As Esau drew near, Jacob lapsed back into fearfulness and merely natural behavior, arranging his household in such a way as to afford maximum protection for those he loved most. Jacob bowed himself to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. Esau, by comparison, was relaxed, warm, and effusive as he met Jacob first, then Jacob's wives and children. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gen 33:8 *Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord."*

Apparently Jacob believes for a moment that his strategy of approaching his brother has worked. But it wasn't necessary. Listen to Esau—what a change! - McGee

Gen 33:9-11 *But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with*

me. Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took it.

Esau is saying, "You didn't need to send that to me. I have plenty already." This is almost a humorous scene. Up to this time, each was trying to get something from the other. This was especially true of Jacob. Now we find Jacob in a new role altogether. Here he is insisting that his brother take a gift. Esau says, "You don't have to give it to me. I have plenty." But Jacob insists that he accept it. Believe me, something has happened to Jacob! - McGee

He protested mildly against the extravagant gift of livestock but finally consented to accept it. Jacob seems to have shown undue servility to his brother, speaking of himself as his servant. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gen 33:12-14 Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you." But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

Esau is saying, "Now as you return to the land, let me go before you, show you the way, and be a protection for you." Jacob says, "I'm moving my family, and we have little ones, also we have young among the flocks and herds. We can't go very fast. You, of course, with that army of four hundred will probably want to move much faster; so you go ahead." - McGee

Gen 33:15-17 And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord." So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Esau lived in southern Canaan in Seir, the "land of Edom," at this time. After their father's death, he moved to Mount Seir, which God subsequently gave to Esau for a possession (Deu_2:5). - McGee

When Esau suggested that they travel back together, Jacob pretended that this would be impossible because of the slow pace required by the children and young animals. Jacob promised to meet Esau in Seir (Edom), although he had no intention of doing so. Even when Esau tried to leave behind some of his men to travel with Jacob's household, the latter refused the offer without revealing the real reasons—fear and suspicion. – Believers Bible Commentary

Now let us not pass by so quickly and easily here that we do not pay attention to what has happened. A great change has come over this man Jacob. You see, all of Jacob's clever scheming to present a gift to his brother Esau has just come to naught. God had prepared the heart of Laban not to harm Jacob, and God had prepared the heart of Esau to receive Jacob. Now he has peace on both fronts. Esau did not want the gift of Jacob because Esau himself had an abundance. When Jacob insisted, he took the gift out of courtesy. Both these brothers seem to be generous and genuine in their reconciliation. We have no reason to doubt it. Since Esau is now prosperous, and since he attached no particular value to his birthright anyway, there is no reason why he should not be reconciled to his twin brother.

Gen 33 – Jacob and Esau met

Now the sunshine is beginning to fall on Jacob's life. Laban is appeased and Esau is reconciled. God had arranged all of this for him. Had Jacob been left to his own cupidity and his own cleverness, he would have come to his death in a violent manner. Before too long Jacob is going to look back over his life, and when he does, he is going to see the hand of God in his life, and he is going to give God the glory. However, the evil that he has sown is yet to bring forth a full harvest. Trouble is in the offing for this man. It is there waiting for him.

Esau rides off to Seir, and we bid good-bye to him for the time being. He will be back, however, for the funeral of his father Isaac, as we will see in chapter 35. - McGee

Gen 33:18-20 Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

Instead of traveling south to Mount Seir, Jacob went northwest. At length he arrived at Shechem and settled there, erecting an altar which he (perhaps presumptuously) called El Elohe Israel (God, the God of Israel). Twenty years earlier, when God had appeared to him at Bethel, Jacob had vowed that the Lord would be his God, that he would give a tenth of his wealth to the Lord, and that he would establish Bethel as God's house (Gen_28:20-22). Now, instead of returning to Bethel, he settles thirty miles away in the fertile area of Shechem, probably for the sake of his livestock. (Shechem represents the world.) God does not speak directly to him until several years later, when He calls on Jacob to fulfill his vow (chap. 35). In the meantime, the tragic events of chapter 34 take place.- Believers Bible Commentary

V 18-19 - Jacob is sometimes criticized because he stopped here at Succoth and at Shalem and did not proceed on to Bethel. Actually, we ought not to expect too much of Jacob at this time. He's been crippled, and he is just learning to walk with his spiritual legs.

v.20 Jacob builds an altar here, just as his grandfather Abraham was accustomed to building altars wherever he went. The fine feature is that Jacob identifies his new name with the name of God. He calls it El-elohe-Israel which means, "God, the God of Israel." This indicates real growth in a man who is just learning to walk. Let's put it like this. This man is on the way to Bethel, but he hasn't arrived there yet. First he journeys to Succoth.