

## Genesis 32: Jacob Wrestles the Lord

### *Jesus is Necessary*

#### Section 1: 32:1-12

*Jacob went on his way, and God's angels met him. <sup>2</sup>When he saw them, Jacob said, "This is God's camp." So he called that place Mahanaim.*

*<sup>9</sup>Then Jacob said, "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper,' <sup>10</sup>I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. Indeed, I crossed over the Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps. <sup>11</sup>Please rescue me from my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. <sup>12</sup>You have said, 'I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted.'"*

A few observations:

- Jacob is scared.
- Jacob divides the camp for safety.
- Jacob refers to God as "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac".
- Jacob pleads with God.
- Jacob remembers the promises of God.

#### Discussion Questions:

- ❖ How does fear of people or circumstances impact our faithfulness to God?
- ❖ How does a half-hearted commitment to the Lord set you up for failure?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember God's Word as you navigate through life?

#### Section 2: 32:13-23

*<sup>21</sup>So the gift was sent on ahead of him while he remained in the camp that night. <sup>22</sup>During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two slave women, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of Jabbok. <sup>23</sup>He took them and sent them across the stream, along with all his possessions.*

Jacob is trying to soften Esau. Jacob desires to have Esau relent from his wrath. Jacob is scared, despite God promising to be with him. We've mentioned before the contrast between man's wisdom and God's wisdom. And we see here that Jacob's wisdom is to buy Esau's favor. Which is something that is common practice even today. Have you ever found yourself trying to "buy" someone's forgiveness? If you are a husband, you know exactly what I mean.

If Jacob had remembered the promises of God...as stated in the last section; why didn't he just confidently march into Esau's presence? Again, knowing and acting are two very different realities.

#### Discussion Questions:

- ❖ Have you ever wronged someone...how did that impact your relationship with them?
- ❖ Do you ever find it hard to act according to God's Word?
- ❖ Do you ever find yourself in a situation where you know the right thing to do but you just don't want to do it that way?
- ❖ Why is God's way always better than our way?

### Section 3: 32:24-32 Jacob Wrestles with God

*<sup>24</sup> Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. <sup>26</sup> Then he said to Jacob, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."<sup>27</sup> "What is your name?" the man asked. "Jacob," he replied. <sup>28</sup> "Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup> Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he answered, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.<sup>30</sup> Jacob then named the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life has been spared." <sup>31</sup> The sun shone on him as he passed by Peniel—limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup> That is why, still today, the Israelites don't eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket: because he struck Jacob's hip socket at the thigh muscle.*

Jacob enters the struggle spiritually weak while being physically strong. Jacob walks away physically weak while becoming spiritually strong.

This moment changed so much. This is the moment we see the story of Jacob transition. His name, his relationship with God, his relationship with Esau and his relationship with his children. So, who exactly was Jacob wrestling with that would cause such a great change? I believe this is what we call a Christophany. Which is an appearance of Jesus in the OT.

- Hosea 12:3 (CSB) - *In the womb he grasped his brother's heel, and as an adult he wrestled with God.*
- Also, in verse 30 Jacob states: *"For I have seen God face to face".*

Jacob physically wrestled with Jesus. This physical struggle with God...actually represents his lifelong spiritual struggle with God. Jacob is struggling to surrender all of himself to God. Have you ever been there? Have you ever found yourself battling with God? Jacob's struggle is not unique. We all have moments we struggle with God. Jacob's struggle with God actually is a foreshadow of things to come.

- The nation of Israel. Jacob's struggle and wrestling with God will become a characteristic of the nation of Israel. Through the wilderness, Judges, the prophets and kings...the story of Israel is a story of wrestling with God.

God changes Jacob's name to Israel and touches him...thus changing him forever. Even though Jacob walks away physically weaker than ever before...he is spiritually stronger than ever before. We will see in chapter 33 that Jacob goes from hiding from Esau to confronting Esau head on. We will see Jacob transition to saying "my God". This is a significant moment in Jacob's life.

Jacob's struggles with God are also paralleled in the life of Saul. In Acts we read of Saul's struggle against God...until, like Jacob, he saw the Lord face to face. After the face-to-face meeting...Saul is blinded, he would be known as Paul and his life is changed. Even though Paul walks away physically weaker...he is spiritually stronger.

#### Discussion Questions:

- ❖ Why does an encounter with Jesus change everything?
- ❖ What does it mean to be spiritually strong?
- ❖ How does a personal relationship with our heavenly Father make us spiritually stronger?
- ❖ Why is being spiritually stronger better than being physically stronger?
- ❖ Are you willing to do everything necessary to become spiritually stronger? If so, what does that look like?