

## EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

### Message #71

### Genesis 32:1-13a

Jacob is leaving Mesopotamia and going back to Canaan in perfect obedience to the Word and Will of God. Laban chased after him, but God sovereignly protected and delivered him. Things looked good and the path is clear to get back to the promised land, but there is still an unresolved twenty year old matter, the matter of Esau. In fact, the name Esau occurs nine times in this chapter, which means this is the critical theme (v.3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19). Dr. S. L. Johnson said, “It is certain that our sins do find us out and, if we fail to make amends, God arranges matters so that we must, in spite of ourselves” (S. L. Johnson, *Genesis*, #48, p. 3).

**THOSE WHO FOLLOW GOD’S LEADING AND OBEY GOD’S WILL MAY BE CERTAIN THAT GOD WILL SOVEREIGNLY CARE FOR THEM AND DELIVER THEM FROM THREATENING AND HOSTILE SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER HE WILL MAKE HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT FACE PAST UNRESOLVED ISSUES.**

God does not want His people to run away or quit, He wants them dealing in truth and he wants them to face things. Jacob was on top of the world because he was finally leaving Laban and Mesopotamia, but there was still an unresolved matter back in Canaan.

**HISTORICAL REALITY #1** - The believer who obeys God may be certain of the presence of God’s angels . 32:1-2

As Jacob moved toward home, the name Esau must have surged in his mind. That is why these angels are so important. The phrase “the angels of God” occurs only two places in the O.T. and both are in connection with Jacob (28:12; 32:1), which immediately connects us to Israel (32:28).

In both references, a specific place of angelic occupation is involved - Bethel (28:12, 19) as Jacob was on his way out of the promised land, and at Mahanaim (32:2), as Jacob was on his way back into the promised land. We may conclude from this that “the angels of God” are specifically headquartered at the place where God’s elect is supposed to be located. In fact the Hebrew Word “Mahanaim” is one that means an army camp, or an encampment of the army (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 465). **These angels told Jacob you are doing God’s will and we are with you.**

Most of the time God’s people never see God’s angels, but simply rely on God’s Word and assume they are there. Over and over again, God reveals in His Word that His angels do care for His elect. We may be certain that when a N.T. believer is really zeroed in on doing God’s will, angels are closely involved in the process - Philip (Acts 8:26); Cornelius (Acts 10:3); Paul (Acts 27:23-24). According to Matthew every child is monitored by angels (Matthew 18:10). According to Hebrews, every N.T. believer is monitored by and ministered to by angels (Hebrews 1:14). According to Revelation, every local church has a key angel (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). According to Paul in Ephesians and Peter in I Peter angels actually observe the development of God in a believer’s life (Ephesians 3:10; I Peter 1:12).

**HISTORICAL REALITY #2** - The believer who obeys God may be certain of the presence of hostile circumstances. 32:3-13

Jacob had God's promise of blessing and protection and he had the assurance that he was being guarded by God's angels, but the threat of Esau was very intimidating to him, so he devised a human plan in order to try and make amends. W. H. Griffith Thomas said, "Unconfessed sin, unforgiven wrong, must be dealt with and put right. Righteousness must precede peace" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis*, p. 293).

**Action #1** - Jacob sends messengers to Esau. 32:3-5

**(Responsibility #1)** - Go to Esau's country. 32:3

**(Responsibility #2)** - Speak to Esau. 32:4

**(Responsibility #3)** - Give gifts to Esau. 32:5

**Action #2** - Jacob's messengers report to Jacob. 32:6

The messengers went back to Jacob and informed him that they had met with Esau and Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. According to Hughes, this was the standard size of a militia (Kent Hughes, *Genesis Creation & Blessing*, p. 398). By the response of Jacob, he assumes they are coming for a negative reason. So the following reactions are all based on faulty conclusions:

**Action #3** - Jacob reacts to the news of Esau's response. 32:7-13

**(Reaction #1)** - Jacob plans. 32:7-8

Jacob divided his people and possessions into two groups, thinking that if Esau attacked one group, the other could escape. **One thing to notice is that Jacob does not run.**

**(Reaction #2)** - Jacob prays. 32:9-12

This is the first recorded prayer of Jacob and it indicates he was beginning to see the need to depend on God and not his own scheming.

**Element #1** - Jacob acknowledges his lineage link to God. 32:9a

**Element #2** - Jacob acknowledges his actions are consistent with God's word. 32:9b

**Element #3** - Jacob acknowledges his unworthiness before God. 32:10a

This is a major transformation of Jacob's character for at one time he believed he was so worthy of God's blessings that he could lie or cheat or rob his brother in order to get it.

***Element #4*** - Jacob acknowledges God's blessings of provisions and prosperity. 32:10b

***Element #5*** - Jacob acknowledges God's promises of protection. 32:11-12

**(Reaction #3)** - Jacob stays. 32:13

The Hebrew word “spent the night” is one that means Jacob was stubbornly committed to doing God’s will (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 434).

When you find yourself facing difficult and hostile situations, stay faithful to God and His Word. Pray and ask for His help. Stay put, don’t run and God will protect you, direct you and bless you.