

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #73

Genesis 33:1-20

What is so unique about the name change of Jacob to Israel is that after the name change “Jacob” occurs 45 times and “Israel” occurs only 23 times. What this suggests is that in the aftermath of his wrestling experience with Jesus Christ, the old Jacob shows up more than the new Israel. Furthermore, when God is named in connection to the patriarchs, He is not called the God of Abraham (formerly Abram), Isaac and Israel, but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. One reason for this is because Jacob, more often than not, looked more like the man than the old man than the new and never is that more evident than in our text here.

Jacob is about to have a peak, God-ordained experience because he is about to make right a twenty year old Wrong. God had been leading him to make restitution with Esau and has promised to protect him and bless him for it. Making restitution for Jacob was a “spiritual necessity.” As Dr. Kent Hughes said, “His conscience would not allow him to sidestep this” (Genesis, *Beginning & Blessing*, p. 403).

EVEN AFTER PEAK MOMENTS OF SPIRITUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT, ONE WHO DOES NOT FULLY TRUST GOD WILL CONTINUE TO MANIFEST A LIFE OF INSTABILITY AND PROBLEMS.

ACTION #1 - Jacob sees Esau. 33:1-3

(Response #1)- Jacob’s wrong response. 33:1-2

The dividing of the children to Leah, Rachel and the two maids and lining them all up with the children first all appears to be so innocent, but it is another Jacobean plan of scheming .

(Response #2)- Jacob’s right response. 33:3

Jacob limped to the front of his family and bowed down seven times, which is a demonstration of complete humility. Jacob does give glimpses of being a changed man, but as Dr. Allen Ross observed, he “is a comic figure, for he stumbles through life by his wits - and yet it works out” (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 564).

ACTION #2 Esau meets Jacob. 33:4-11

The tragedy of this text is that Esau, Who is not God’s elect, acts more in tune with the ways of God than Jacob, who is God’s elect. When Esau saw Jacob, he ran to him, hugged him, fell on his neck, kissed him and wept (33:4). When he saw Jacob’s women and children, he wanted to get to know them (33:5-7). Verse 8 informs us that he was perplexed as to why he first met the droves of servants, with all their presents. Jacob informed him that it was to buy his forgiveness.

Verse 9 makes it clear that Jacob could not buy forgiveness from Esau, it was granted by grace. There is absolutely no doubt from Verses 10-11 that Jacob is connecting this restitution to God. God was the One prompting him to resolve this by making some form of restitution.

There are three indicators that Jacob had truly repented:

- 1) He did go face his brother - face to face, man to man.
- 2) He did bow down before his brother in total and complete humility.
- 3) He did desire to make compensating restitution for the wrong he had done.

ACTION #3 – Jacob deceives Esau. 33:12-17

Just as soon as wonderful restitution had been made and wonderful reconciliation had occurred, Jacob goes back to his old ways once again and deceives Esau. Jacob said he would follow Esau to Seir (33:14), which Esau thought he was going to do (33:16). Seir was located to the south and east and was outside of the promised land, which God gave to Esau (Deut. 2:5). Esau was giving a gracious invitation to Jacob to follow him to Seir. But instead of actually doing this, he went to Succoth (33:15), which is located to the north and west. Jacob was back to his old ways. Once again he is lying and deceiving Esau.

Some of the greatest tragedies in eternity will have been Jacob-types who will be seen and known for what they really were. These will be believers who will give the appearance that they are really walking close with Jesus Christ when in their lives are lives of deception. If ever there is a lesson to learn from Jacob, it is to be real, honest and true before God and men.

ACTION #4 - Jacob moves to Shechem. 33:18-20

Before we can understand what is truly happening here, we need to remember that God commanded Jacob to leave Laban and go back to Bethel (31:3,13). God wanted Jacob in Bethel (35:1), but Jacob is not going to Bethel, he is going to Shechem. This is partial obedience, not complete obedience. Jacob is not following God, he is following himself. Partial obedience doesn't accomplish much of anything.

Instead of Jacob telling Esau God's will, he has deceived Esau who thinks he is coming to Seir (33:14), and he has disobeyed God, who has commanded that he go to Bethel (35: 1). Jacob is back to his old ways and it will be this very matter that will lead to the tragedy of Genesis 34 - the rape of Dinah. When Jacob built an altar and called it "El-Elohe-Israel" which means the strong, mighty God of Israel, it was something he hadn't fully believed or he be scheming.

What a tragedy Jacob-types are. They are truly God's elect, but they never fully deal with anything and they never fully follow God. They really never get on track and accomplish the will of God. The Spirit of God convicts them on Sunday, but on Monday they are right back to their old, Worldly Ways.

Are you one of God's elect? You cannot buy or earn the forgiveness of God, you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and accept His forgiveness by pure grace. If you are one of God's elect, do you look more like the old man or the new man? Are you more like Abram or Abraham? Are you more like Saul or Paul? Jacob or Israel? Jacob was able to fool Esau, but not God!