



Overview - God is Faithful! --- Lord, You Are Faithful!!!

It is strange how our human reasoning can convince us that the most illogical things are logical. That's what is happening today! In our day, some people now think they can be equal with God and decide that they or their children are of a different gender than the one God made them to be. People today wrestle with issues that should not be issues at all. But this all began all the way back in the garden! Why did Adam and Eve eat the fruit?

Adam and Eve wrestled with pride - they wanted to be like God! Satan told Eve, ***"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"*** (Gen 3:5), Eve ate the fruit because she saw ***...that the tree was desirable to make one wise...*** (Gen. 3:6). Satan told her that she could be like God! That's why she and Adam ate the fruit. They were repeating the same sin Satan had committed! Think about it! Seeking wisdom from a fruit? Illogical!

Surely Adam and Eve must have thought Cain was the man who had been promised by God to wound Satan's head (Gen. 3:15). But, Cain's pride caused him to wrestle with jealousy and he murdered his brother! Cain was not the promised One. Instead of bringing life, Cain brought death. Abraham wrestled with fear and instead of seeking the Lord's guidance, he lied to protect himself, more than once! Isaac wrestled with his insecurities as he moved from place to place. When he arrived at a new location, his top priority was to dig a new well and if he found water, he would stay there - until he became afraid again... He built no altars and did not worship God during those days.

All of these people were wrestling with something in their lives. When you look at each of them, you realize that what, or rather who they were ultimately wrestling with was God! And they always lost! They chose to hang on to pride, jealousy, fear, and insecurities instead of hanging on to the Lord.

When you come to **Genesis 32**, we find a man who does something that is almost unbelievable! He physically wrestled with God! How can that be true? But it must be true; it's in God's Word! But how can it be? How can anyone physically wrestle with God and live? And, **Genesis 32** doesn't just say that Jacob wrestled with God; it also says that he won! That's what we're going to look at... The man who wrestled with God and won.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

How do we describe Jacob? Jacob, the deceiver! Jacob, the con man! Jacob - an expert at manipulation! That describes Jacob for most of his life. The name Jacob in Hebrew is Ya'aqob - From the Hebrew word "aqob" - *to supplant, circumvent, take by the heel, follow at the heel, assail insidiously, overreach...* Jacob the supplanter. (*Supplanter means, to take the place of (another), by force, scheming, strategy, or the like.*) He was holding on to his twin brother's heel when he was born. He is Jacob, the grabber! He spends a good part of his life grabbing onto everything that he can get. Before they were born, Jacob and his brother were fighting each other in the womb. They didn't get along much better while they were growing up. It must have been hard for their mother and father. An intense rivalry develops. Esau becomes what we might call "A Man's Man" and Isaac seems to love him more than Jacob. Jacob becomes what we might call "A Mama's Boy" and Rebekah seems to love Jacob more than she loves Esau. ***When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents (Gen. 25:27).*** Esau was an outdoorsman.

Probably just as comfortable sleeping under the stars as he was anywhere else. But this seemingly odd statement about Jacob ***“living in tents”*** indicates something important. Jacob was about material belongings. He was about comfort and luxury.

Each child is trying desperately to win the love and affection of both parents. Think about this: When parents choose one of their children over another, husband and wife will have problems with each other as well. Rebekah instructs Jacob to lie to his father and steal the entire inheritance from Esau. Talk about taking sides! Over time, arguing over an inheritance has destroyed more family relationships than we can begin to imagine. Chances are good that you may have experienced something like that. Through trickery, Jacob receives the blessing Esau should have received according to birthright.

Jacob lived up to his name. He deceived his own father. This drove a wedge between the brothers and as a result, Jacob had to leave home. Solomon was right when he wrote, ***A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a citadel (Prov. 18:19).***

There are so many good lessons to learn from the life of Jacob. Jacob spends many years working for his future father-in-law in order to marry his two wives. During this time, the deceiver is deceived and Jacob gets a little taste of his own medicine from Laban. What should God do with this man who is so self-centered and dishonest? Yet, again for the sake of Abraham and the future of Israel, God blesses and protects Jacob just like he did for Isaac. Jacob, the deceiver, prospers not because he is a good con man and definitely not because he is a good person, but because of God's Grace.

Jacob worked for Laban for twenty years. Laban cheated Jacob many times during those twenty years! You have to wonder if each time it happened, Jacob was reminded of what he had done to his brother. Jacob told Rachel and Leah, ***“You know that I have served your father with all my strength. 7 Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times...” (Gen. 31:6-7).*** We can see that God is using Laban's treatment of Jacob as a way to teach Jacob a lesson. The Lord wants Jacob to be like the Lord, not like Laban. Finally, he is told to go home. ***Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you” (Gen. 31:3).*** So what does Jacob do? He sneaks off in the middle of the night so to speak. He left without telling Laban he was going. Laban didn't take too kindly toward that. And there was a confrontation between Laban and Jacob, but God intervened and protected Jacob yet again! (You can read about that in ***Genesis 31.***)

Today, we are going to look at Jacob's return to his homeland and what happened along the way. He is going to meet Esau, but first, he will meet another man...

1. Jacob's Journey Home

Jacob's journey home from Laban's was a very eventful trip. ***Genesis 32*** gives us one major event but gives us almost no information about it. ***Gen. 32:1-2 - Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. 2 Jacob said when he saw them, “This is God's camp.” So he named that place Mahanaim.*** Mahanaim means two camps or two companies. It was here in this place that Jacob realized that his entire family, servants, and all his belongings were sharing a place with angels who made up the camp of God. I think this is when Jacob finally realized that he had to make a choice. Which camp would he choose? His personal belongings and the material things of this world or the spiritual things of God. It is in this place where Jacob's life is truly going to change. Here is what happens next...

Gen. 32:3-5 - Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4 He also commanded them saying, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob, “I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; 5 I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.”’”

In other words: I left everything behind with you when I left and I am returning as a rich man, so I don't need the stuff you inherited from our father... He is saying, I have not come back to claim what is mine because I have my own stuff. He is trying to put Esau's mind at ease and maybe receive forgiveness. But it does not work. **Gen. 32:6-8 - The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; 8 for he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape."**

Esau is on his way with 400 men! This can only mean one thing in Jacob's mind, Esau is coming to kill him and possibly his whole family. And at this point, he's probably right. Jacob is still struggling with his faith. He needs to choose to follow in God's camp, but he is scared of his brother, Esau. I think it is a sign that Jacob still does not get what God is doing! Jacob first named the place Two Camps! But God sent His Angels to join Jacob's camp! I think, as far as God was concerned, there was only one camp! Has he completely forgotten about the company of angels that are with him? Maybe not...

Jacob has run away in the past, but this time, instead of running, Jacob does something that is so... un-Jacob like! Jacob divides his belongings up and sends them on ahead... flocks, herds, and riches are sent to Esau. "Jacob, the grabber" is becoming "Jacob, the giver"! Jacob is giving up the things that have meant so much to him for so much of his life. He actually sends all of his belongings on to his brother until finally he has only his two wives, his eleven sons, and two servants left.

Then Jacob does something he has not done very often. He prays to the Lord! **Gen. 32:11-12 - "Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. 12 For You said, 'I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.'" Wow! How things have changed! On his way to Laban some twenty years earlier, Jacob prayed, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey... then the Lord will be my God" (Gen. 28:20-21).**

God had been using the previous twenty years to humble and teach Jacob to stop relying on his own abilities and rely on the Lord instead. Jacob is finally in a place where his own abilities will not be enough. He has given up all of his material belongings and sent them on to Esau, but it is not enough. Jacob then decides to give up what was most precious to him, his wives and children. Jacob gets up during the night and sends his wives, his children, and his servants across the river Jabbok and out toward Esau. **Gen. 32:23 - He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.**

Jacob is now alone in the night at the stream called Jabbok.

I read these verses and thought there has to be something right here that the Lord wants us to understand. Jabbok – what is this stream called Jabbok? I looked that word up in the Hebrew dictionary and was amazed. The word Jabbok in Hebrew literally means, "emptying." He is at the emptying stream. That's what it was called!

Jacob took everything he had and sent it over the emptying stream. Jacob began with all of his material belongings and lastly sent what was most precious – his family - his wives, his maids, which were secondary wives, and his children! He gave every material thing he had and then sent what was most precious to him in order to pay whatever price needed to be paid for the sin that had destroyed his family twenty years earlier. Connect that to the New Testament... Can you think of someone else who gave everything and finally had to send the one that was most precious to Him? The Father made everything and gave it to us, but that would not pay for the sin that had destroyed the family of man and

God. He had to send His One and Only Son! That's why the scriptures talk about Him, the Lord, emptying Himself for us...

Phil. 2:6-8 says, ...who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jacob emptied himself at the Jabbok (the emptying stream). Jacob has given up everything. Finally, he is empty of all of the things that have filled him - self-centeredness, greed, deception, and desire for material belongings. Finally, it is just Jacob - alone in that place there by the Jabbok. The emptying stream! - **And then someone else appears...**

2. Jacob's New Name

Gen. 32:24 - Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

A man appears in the camp with Jacob and he and Jacob begin to wrestle. There's no evidence that the scriptures indicate that this is symbolic or contains some hidden meaning. Jacob and this man literally wrestle until the sun is coming up. This is yet another evidence of Jacob's strength. Jacob was not the youngest of men at this time. He may have been in his nineties. But he must have been in very good shape since he lived to be 147 years old. Stop for a moment and think about why these two started to wrestle. What conversation went on when the "**man**" got there? Jacob's last order from God was to return to his land - Which was on the other side of the river and still a good ways away. I can almost hear a conversation - "You are going to your home land! - No I am not! I am staying here at the river! - You are getting in that water! No, I am not! I am staying on this side of the river..." Can you imagine what it was like? No doubt the "**man**" was there to confront Jacob... But instead, Jacob began to wrestle with him... And Jacob was holding his own!

Gen. 32:25-26 - When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The "**he**" was the one wrestling with Jacob. Jacob was winning! So the Man touched Jacob's hip and hurt Jacob and as a result, Jacob was unable to continue wrestling. His hip was injured. But he could still do one thing... HOLD ON! Who was Jacob? - The grabber! He knew how to hold onto stuff! But his stuff was gone! He was finally in a place where all he could do was to hold on to this "**man**"!

Then the man asked Jacob an odd question. ***Gen. 32:37 - So he said to him, "What is your name?"*** and then, ***...he said, "Jacob."*** It seems obvious that the one who is wrestling with Jacob knows his name, so why would he ask him what his name is? I believe he did not ask him for the purpose of finding out his name, but rather that he asked him so that Jacob himself would think about his name. (kind of like the "where are you" in Gen. 3) Who are you? He said, "**Jacob.**" Remember what that means? Supplanter! Jacob admits, "I am Jacob, the deceiver! Jacob, the con man! Jacob, the manipulator!" It's like Jacob is confessing his sins. But the Lord was changing who Jacob was! No more would he be a deceiver! ***Gen. 32:28 - He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."***

Gen. 32:29-30 - Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

Do you see the significance of this? This was the Lord Jesus! Some say this was just an angel, but they would have to argue with the only eyewitness there, Jacob, who said he saw God face to face. Then the "**man**" says, ***"...you have striven with God..."*** (Elohiym)! This was a pre-incarnate

appearance of Jesus! The Lord appeared to Abraham and Isaac and now He has appeared to Jacob. Jesus in person!

We need to understand that **chapter 32** is the defining divine turning point in Jacob's spiritual life. He meets the Lord face to face and everything changes from the inside out. Even his name. It's no longer Jacob, the supplanter, but it is now Israel which means God wins! Jacob's name was changed because he believed in the name of the Lord!

The name Israel means God prevails! God has become more than just his vending machine from which he pulls out his next need! God and Jacob now have a relationship based upon the Grace of God through the faith of Jacob. Jacob will make mistakes. He will struggle with being the new man God is making him into - Israel (God wins!) and the old man - Jacob (the deceiver). But through it all, Jacob will not let go of God. God will never make anyone let go of Him! God won! Because God won in Jacob's life, Jacob won! Because Jesus has won the victory, we win!

The scriptures tell us in **Rom. 10:8-10** - ***But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.***

God is calling us to follow Jacob's example and let go of the things that are keeping us from following God. Let go of the things that keep us from truly believing with all of our hearts and believe in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Names have meanings! His Name is Savior, Lord, and Prince of Peace. Do you truly believe in His name?

If not, you can right now. Empty yourself. Give up control and give it to the Lord. Pray right now that the Lord will become the Lord and King of your life. After Jacob's encounter with the Lord, he was a changed man and became a great man of faith. He would never have to face the challenges of life alone again. The Lord would always be with him.

Application and the Gospel: Finding Jesus on Every Page

Jacob is a picture of Christ in this. We can see Jesus all over these pages, not just in a wrestling match. **Phil. 2:5-7** says, ***Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.***

"...but emptied Himself..." - There is a phrase in theology known as *kenosis*. **Phil. 2:5-7** is known as the *Kenosis* passage and there is a huge debate on what He emptied himself of. One thing is for sure! HE DID NOT EMPTY HIMSELF OF HIS DIVINITY!!!!

Here are 5 things He did empty himself of...

1. GLORY - He emptied Himself of His heavenly glory! ***"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was"*** (**John 17:5**). Why did He do that? Because He cared more about you than His own glory.
2. WILL - He emptied Himself of His own will and submitted to the will of the Father! He gave up His free exercise of His will. ***...who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father...*** (**Gal. 1:4**).
3. UNLIMITED ABILITY - He placed upon Himself limitations! ***"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone"*** (**Matt. 24:36**).

4. WEALTH - He gave up His heavenly wealth! ***For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).***

5. UNION WITH THE FATHER - He cried out on Calvary - ***"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt. 27:46)?*** 2 Cor. 5:21 says, ***He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."***

Jacob emptied himself and became a picture of Christ, who lowered Himself and gave Himself for us.

In **Gen. 32:29**, Jacob asks what the man's name is and the man says to him – why would you need to ask my name? Jacob met the Son of God! When he was finally willing to give up everything and empty himself, he met Jesus Christ! This was the turning point of Jacob's life. From this point on, Jacob walks differently (physically and spiritually). Jacob wrestled with someone who was both God and man (**Gen. 32:28**). When you empty yourself at the Jabbok, you are going to meet the Man who came down from Heaven who was also fully God and He would ask you, ***"What is your name?"*** You know who He is! The question is who are you? That's what the Lord wanted Jacob to confess! "Jacob, the deceiver!" No more!!! Now your name is GOD WINS! ISRAEL! Does your name bring glory to God?

I believe that Jacob had known Him for many years, but for the first time, he has actually emptied himself of himself and is clinging to nothing and no one except the Lord. Jacob realized that he had seen God face to face. **Gen 32:30 - So Jacob named the place Peniel**, (pronounced - pen-oo-ale') ***for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."***

There is an old saying, *"Vital faith need not be idle faith!"* James tells us that faith without works is dead. Jacob is exercising living faith from this point on! How did he do it? Jacob has put that faith to work by sending everything away and emptying himself before God. When he does, he sees God face to face! Jacob still had his family after this. Esau is going to return his belongings! The difference is that Now Jacob begins to use those things and his family for the Glory of God! The place on the Jabbok River where Jacob was, became known as "Peniel", pronounced pen-oo-ale', which simply means "facing God." Is it possible that some of us have turned our faces away from Jesus? We need to send our things over the Jabbok – empty ourselves – coming to Peniel - the place where we face God – just us clinging to Jesus Christ. We need to turn and face God.

So many people know Him because they are a Christian but don't face Him. Maybe it's time for many of us to wrap our arms around Jesus and refuse to let go until He blesses us. He can change our name – He can give us a new name in our family, in our Church, and in our community. He can change the way we are seen by others! He can change the way we walk! What a lesson from the life of Jacob!

Daily Bible Reading

Day 1 GENESIS 40:1-23, GENESIS 35:28-29

Day 2 GENESIS 41:1-57

Day 3 GENESIS 42:1 to 43:18

Day 4 GENESIS 43:19 to 45:15

Day 5 GENESIS 45:16 to 46:27

Day 6 GENESIS 46:28 to 47:27

Day 7 GENESIS 47:28 to 49:28