

April 22, 2007 (LS)

STRIVING WITH GOD AND MAN: PART 1
GENESIS 32.1–33.20

A God establishes his camp(s) (32.1-2)

B Jacob prepares to “wrestle” Esau (32.3-21)

C Jacob wrestles with God (32.22-32)

B’ Jacob “wrestles” Esau (33.1-17)

A’ Jacob establishes a camp (33.18-20)

1. GOD ESTABLISHES HIS CAMP(S) (32.1-2)

Ministry after the battle (1): Finished battle with Laban; now commanded to go back into the land.

Comes to the Jordan River (v. 10) where angels meet him. Note the land progression parallel to Gen 2 layout: Garden within Eden, Land of Eden, Rest of the world. Jacob has been in “the rest of the world,” crosses over the initial boundary of Promised Land (= Euphrates; cf. Gen 15.18), and now is about to enter into “Garden Land” (meets angels).

He will not enter this gate without going through the sword. But what we see here is Jacob’s entrance back into the Garden. It is man’s restoration and exaltation. But that doesn’t come without a fight.

Note the parallel between Bethel and here as well. God promised his presence with Jacob in a hostile land. Now he is coming back into the land after the battle with Laban and the angels of God minister to him.

Note the parallels between Jacob and Jesus: Receives God’s promise and commission in baptism (declared to be God’s Son), driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to do battle with the enemy, comes through that battle and is ministered to by the angels.

Jacob, as a foreshadowing of Christ, has gone into battle and won, out in the untamed world, outside the land of Eden as it were. Now, the angels come and minister to him. He is maturing to be the man, the new Adam, who will gain access back to the Garden and will rule over the angels.

Preparing for the next battle (2): Comforted after battle but preparing for the next battle.

“God’s camp” - Mahanaim = “two camps;” camp has military resonance. God’s hosts—his angels—surround him as a mighty army. God’s people are incorporated into that host, joining in the army.

Progress in the plan of God: Jacob has won an initial victory, but it is not time to rest in that victory. That victory has prepared him for yet another battle.

God’s plan is to make man mature. Being mature is that state in which man is made glorious or glorified. The way maturity comes about is through various trials and struggles. It is through wrestling with situations, hardships, difficult decisions, etc. that we become mature.

2. JACOB PREPARES TO “WRESTLE” ESAU (32.3-21)

Sending out his angels (3): Jacob sees the pattern of God and conforms to it (cf. Bethel).

“Angels” and “messengers” in vv. 1, 3, 6 are all same word. Direct correlation between what Jacob sees—i.e., what is revealed to him by God—and what he does consequently. God sent out his angels before him to Jacob, now Jacob is sending out his angels before him to Esau.

Also, Jacob is learning to be a God-like king. Jacob has initially assumed lordship over the angels.

The old Esau (3): Description of Esau: (1) “brother” - Esau is the one that Jacob had disinherited earlier. He is the one with whom Jacob had struggled in the womb. He was Jacob’s initial combatant.

(2) “Seir” - Family of words related to a description of Esau at his birth; “hairy.” He is beast-like. (This is important to the entrance back into the land. The beast to whom the Garden was given over—the serpent—is lord over the land.)

(3) “Edom” = “red;” assoc. with birth and with the stew (lit. “red”) for which he sold his birthright. This is the reason he is called “Edom” (Gen 25.30).

Esau is still the same Esau Jacob left behind.

Preparing the tribute (4-5): “my lord Esau,” “your servant Jacob” - a time of waiting between the promises given—the anointing to be lord—and the actual retention of the land. Indeed, it will only be as Jacob becomes Israel that he will take possession of the land as God promised.

One thing that we should not forget is that Adam handed over dominion to the serpent, the beasts, of which Esau is one. He is the seed of the serpent. He has control of the land. (Cp. David/Saul relation; Jude 8-10)

Preparing for battle (6-8): Esau is coming with 400 men. Esau has committed to kill Jacob (28.41). Now he is coming with an army from the “four corners” of the land.

Jacob understands this as military aggression and prepares for battle. Divides into two camps to preserve household; committing each “camp” to a camp of angels (remember Mahanaim, v. 2)

Covenant prayer (9-12): the God of my father Abraham and the God of my father Isaac, YHWH. All of these appellations refer to God’s covenant.

The basis of Jacob’s prayer is the relationship that God established with him. That relationship was in continuity with and the same covenant as God had made with Abraham and Isaac. The promises made to them have been given to Jacob. He is appealing to God’s covenant.

YHWH (trans. as LORD) is the covenant name of God. It is a name that indicates that God fulfills his promises. God introduces himself to Moses as such in Exodus 6. There he tells Moses that the fathers knew him as “God Almighty,” *‘el shaddai*, but by this name they did not know him.

This was said in reference to God fulfilling his promises in the Exodus. YHWH is the covenant-keeping, covenant-fulfilling God.

The appeal to YHWH is also based upon a specific word/promise/command given to Jacob. “YHWH *who said to me.*”

Jacob humbly recognizes (lit.) his smallness, his unworthiness. God has shown him *covenant love, chesed*; a rich Hebrew word loaded with covenant baggage. This is combined with God’s *faithfulness, ‘emet*, the word family of “Amen.” (It can mean “truth” as it is translated in the NKJ, but it is better understood as *faithfulness*.)

Jacob is not afraid to admit his fear. Even with all of God’s promises Jacob is afraid of his brother and his destruction.

His faith does not mean the absence of all fear and/or dread of suffering. But his fear does not ultimately determine what he does. Even though he felt fear, his actions were based upon what God commanded and promised; in short, *faith*.

Offering a tribute (13-21): (1) recognition of Esau’s present status in the land. He sends him a *tribute offering (minchah)*, recognizing the kingship of Esau (note again “my lord,” “your servant”).

(2) Dealing with same old Esau. Jordan: Esau is a totally present-minded man whose God is his belly. Just as Jacob bought Esau off for the birthright with a bowl of “red,” a bowl of stew, now he is buying him off again with the things he craves the most.

(3) “Face” language - v. 20, “and you shall also say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.’ For he [that is Jacob] said, ‘I will cover [atone] his face with the tribute offering that walks before my face, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will lift up my face.’”

He will “cover” Esau’s face (appease him) Then he sees God face-to-face and names the place Peniel. Then, when he meets Esau in ch. 33 he tells him that he has seen Esau’s face as one sees the face of God (33.10). Jacob eventually comes to realize that God is the one with whom he is wrestling. Though it may be an uncomfortable thought and one we must struggle with, God’s face is seen behind the face of Esau.

(1) Obedience to God does not always lead you out of difficult times, but sometimes right into the teeth of them.

(2) Our faith is based upon the word of God, not the conjured up aspirations of our own thinking.

(3) Our faith does not always mean the absence of fear, but it compels us to obey God even in the face of our fears.