

## The Lord Met Jacob that Night

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to trust the Lord to solve their problems and their fears. Then, we want to help them learn to explain to others how they too can also learn to trust the Lord. In this topic, we will see that the Lord met Jacob the night before he met his brother.

Genesis 32:22-26 says, “And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’” In these verses, we see that Jacob was preparing to meet his brother. In preparation for that meeting, Jacob had to get everything he had across the Jabbok. The word translated “brook” means *torrent of water* and is translated river more often than it is translated brook (56 times compared to 46 times). A ford means the place where a torrent of water is easiest to cross. Since Jacob had to get all of the animals and other things he had across, in addition to his family, this probably took several hours. Once everything had crossed the Jabbok safely, we see that Jacob was left alone on the other side.

Suddenly, in the dark of the night a Man began to wrestle with Jacob. This wrestling match lasted the rest of the night. The two were still wrestling when it was getting close to daybreak. That was probably a long night for Jacob because he did not know who was wrestling with him. Since, he could not see the Man clearly in the dark, Jacob probably felt like he was fighting with his life in order to survive. That would certainly cause him to continue to wrestle as long as he had any strength. The One who was wrestling with Jacob saw that He did not prevail against Jacob. The word translated “prevail” means *to prevail or overcome*. Since Jacob continued to fight, it meant the One wrestling with him had not overcome him. Then, the One who was wrestling with Jacob reached out and touched the socket of his hip. Suddenly, the hip of Jacob was out of joint, and he could no longer fight.

When Jacob realized that he could no longer fight because of his hip, he held on to the One who had been wrestling with him so the person would not leave. Then, the One who was wrestling with Jacob said, “‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’” Instead of letting go, Jacob just held on to the person tighter. Then, Jacob said, “‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’” Jacob realized that he was not wrestling with an ordinary man. This person that Jacob was holding had put his hip out of joint just by touching it. Jacob realized that the blessing from this person was much more important than the blessing he had received from his father twenty years earlier. That is why Jacob said he would not let that person leave until he received a blessing from Him. Verse 30 tells us Jacob realized who that person was when that verse says, “‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’” This statement makes it clear that this was actually an Old Testament appearance of Christ. Jacob had wrestled with Christ, and he wanted the blessing that only the Lord could give to him. However, before the Lord answered Jacob, the Lord asked

him his name.

Genesis 32:27- 29 says, “So He said to him, ‘What *is* your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob.’

And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’ Then Jacob asked, saying, ‘Tell *me* Your name, I pray.’ And He said, ‘Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?’ And He blessed him there.” Jacob had said he would not let go unless the One holding him would bless him. Instead of receiving an answer, the One who questioned him asked him to give his name. Jacob responded by giving his name. Suddenly, Jacob received an answer that he did not expect. He was told that his name would be changed, as he heard the words, “‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’” “Jacob” means *the heel catcher, the supplanter, or the deceiver*. In contrast, “Israel” means *Prince with God, he who struggles with God, or God rules*. Throughout the rest of the book of Genesis, we will gradually see the name “Israel” used more frequently and the name “Jacob” used less frequently.

The various meanings for Jacob and Israel can be seen throughout his life. When Jacob was born, he was holding onto the heel of his brother Esau. Later, Genesis 27:35-36 says, “But he said, ‘Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.’ And *Esau* said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’” In these verses, we see that two different words are used to describe Jacob. Isaac used the word “deceit” to describe Jacob, while Esau used the word “supplanted”. The early character of Jacob certainly fit the description of the name that had been given to him at birth.

However, the Lord gave Jacob a new name. As Jacob grew in his understanding of the Lord, we see more and more that Israel began to fit the character of the name the Lord gave him here. Jacob was not ready to let the Lord go until the Lord blessed him. He struggled all night with God. This was an Old Testament appearance of Christ and He allowed Jacob to wrestle or struggle with Him all night before touching his hip. In Genesis 35:1, we read, “Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.’” Genesis 35:9-10 says, “Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, ‘Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.’ So He called his name Israel.” Genesis 48:11 adds, “And Israel said to Joseph, ‘I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!’” Here, we see that as he came to the end of his life, he was called Israel. He had learned to let God rule in his life.

We see that Christ then gave Jacob a blessing. Genesis 32:30-32 says, “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: ‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’ Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob’s hip in the muscle that shrank.” Jacob had been blessed by the Lord, but he would limp until the day of his death as a reminder of his dependence upon the Lord. Paul had a similar thing happen in his life many years later. 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 says, “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest

upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." It is in our own weakness that we learn to depend on the strength of the Lord.

Jacob then gave a new name to that place as he called it "Peniel" which means *face of God*. Jacob realized he had seen God face-to-face and that his life had been preserved. This was due to the fact that it was God the Son, Christ, who actually wrestled with him. No man can see the face of the Father on this earth and live. When the Father was speaking with Moses, in Exodus 33, the Father told him, in verse 20, "But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'" However, Jacob had wrestled with Christ and had prevailed. In addition, Christ had told him that he had struggled with God and with man. As Jacob limped across the ford of the Jabbok just as the sun rose, the limp was a reminder that he could not depend on his own strength. Instead, Jacob now had to meet his brother in the strength of the Lord, because he was helpless to defend himself if his brother would try to attack him.

We go on to see how the Lord caused the hip to come out of the hip socket. We read that the muscle shrank when the Lord touched his hip. When Moses wrote this book, well over four hundred years later, we see that he explained that the people of Israel did not eat the muscle, because the Lord had caused it to shrink. Many times, people do certain things or avoid them because that is what they have been told to do or to avoid. By including this statement in Deuteronomy, the descendants of Jacob were now able to understand why they did not eat that particular part of the muscle.

Jacob crossed over Peniel about the time of the rising of the sun. He knew he would meet Esau later that day. He also knew that he could not defend himself from his brother. Jacob had told the Lord that he feared his brother. This meant Jacob had to choose to trust the Lord and could not depend on himself. This is often one of the hardest lessons for those who follow the Lord to learn. However, it is one of the most important lessons for every follower of the Lord to learn and apply daily in their lives. Throughout the rest of the book of Genesis, we will see that the name of Jacob is still used many times. As we get closer to the end of the book, we will see that the name Israel is used more often. Jacob gradually grew in his dependence on the Lord so that his character began to match his new name more and more. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply this same lesson in their lives. Then, they will be able to help others learn to teach this same lesson to others to help them grow in their dependence on Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn this lesson.