

***"The Attack on the Heir and His Family Continues:  
Jacob's Great Trial of Faith"***

**Review:**

***So far in our fellowship around this great theme, "The Long War Against God", we have seen God working miraculously in Abraham's life -- and then in Isaac's, as well.***

***In our last fellowships, the scene shifted to Abraham's and Sarah's grandson Jacob and saw how through deception Jacob had demonstrated his parents birth-naming wisdom, for his name literally means "supplanter", or, even, "thief".***

***Out of fear for his life after Jacob had schemed together with his parents to gain not only his brother's birthright, but also his father's blessing, we read that Jacob, for his own protection from his brother's death threats, was sent off for a wife to the land of his ancestors in Haran. This would deliver him from the immediate threat of Esau's plotting to murder him as well as providing a solution, in Rebecca's brother Laban's family, to to marriage problem.***

***Let us begin by reminding ourselves of the details of this inspired account in the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings . . .***

***Rebecca's words at the end of chapter 27 speak volumes regarding her state of mind that has led to this dramatic event of sending her son hundreds of miles away from the Land of the Promise to the home of her own beginnings in Haran:***

***Gen 27:46*** And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

***Well, as we saw, the "few days" of verse 44 actually became many years (actually, 20!) as Satan's plot to destroy the family of the Seed of the Woman is brought to pass -- but, Satan's plan through Laban did not succeed as he had planned. Satan's "alternative" strategy was thwarted, as we saw, and the Seed of the Woman prophecy was again preserved whole as Almighty God's trustworthiness to his promises is again proven in Jacob's life.***

***Isaac agreed with Rebecca's plan and and Jacob was sent away. Note that they are fully convinced that this plan will allow the accomplishment of the Seed of the Woman promise through his son Jacob. And, so should Jacob be as well, since as he begins his journey to Haran, God appears to him at Bethel and restates his promise to him regarding his eventual heritage.***

***But little do Isaac and Rebecca know of how God's will shall be accomplished. Satan is not finished yet and will be a mighty foe still, as we shall see, as he works to overcome the work of God, now through Jacob.***

***But Satan responds be preparing a new plan for Jacob's eventual destruction and that will be to use Laban . . .***

***Gen. 29:16-20***

16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

17 Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.

18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

19 And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

***Laban clearly has ulterior motives here but God overrules and blesses Jacob throughout those 20 years. He also restates his overarching care for him and his family restating that he is indeed "the God of Bethel" and he sends Jacob and his family finally away from Laban's servitude and back to the Land of the Promise.***

***His reminder to Jacob in chapter 31 is significant in underscoring the continuity of the promises concern the seed and the land.***

***Isn't it wonderful when God reminds us of the promises we had forgotten? In this case, not only were they God's promises, but also Jacob's vow that he had made to God, probably in unbelief so many years earlier.***

***[READ ] Gen. 31:13*** I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

***And so the journey back to the Land of the Promise has begun.***

***[READ ] Gen. 31:17-18***

17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;  
18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

***Now you know the rest of this story. Jacob testifies to Laban with these words as they make a mutual covenant of peace:***

**42 [And Jacob said] . . . except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.**

- ***So what have we seen here? Jacob was blessed by Almighty God in accordance with God's promises to Abraham and Isaac, even though he had not come to trust VERY PERSONALLY AT ALL as the True and Living God, and as the One who had promised already to care for and protect him as the vehicle of the Seed of the Woman.***

**Our Outline Today: "The Attack on the Heir and His Family Continues (part 2): Jacob's Trial of Faith:**

***Our outline consists today of "point" and "counterpoint":***

- ***God's Preservation Prefigured (Gen. 32:1-2)***
- ***Jacob's Fear of Death Revealed (Gen. 32:3-8)***
- ***God's Preservation Promise Proclaimed (Gen. 32:9-12)***
- ***Jacob's Failure to Trust Revealed (Gen. 32:13-23)***
- ***God's Preservation Provided (Gen. 32:24-32)***

**I. God's Preservation Prefigured (Gen. 32:1-2)**

***[READ ] Gen. 32:1-2***

1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim [or, "double-camp"].

- ***Ah, Jacob is NOT alone as he travels back to "Esau-land"!***

- ***But, wonderful as this is, Jacob will soon be put to the test, as we shall see.***

***[Any comments / questions?]***

***[If the “point” was that God’s Preservation was Prefigured by mighty angels sent for that very purpose, then the “counterpoint” was this . . .***

***II. Jacob’s Fear of Death Revealed (Gen. 32:3-8)***

***[READ ] Gen. 32:3-8***

***3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.***

***4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:***

***5 And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.***

***6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.***

***7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;***

***8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.***

- ***Jacob, in doubt and unbelief, creates an escape plan due to fear of Esau***
  - ***The forerunners went to Esau and returned with the report of 400 armed men approaching menacingly.***
  - ***The plan is to split the band up into two.***
- ***This is not a “divide and conquer” strategy but a “divide and survive” strategy.***

***[Any comments / questions?]***

***[Now the second “point”, that . . .]***

***III. God’s Preservation Promise Proclaimed (Gen. 32:9-12)***

***[READ ] Gen. 32:9-12***

***9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:***

***10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which***

**thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.**

**11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.**

**12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.**

- ***Jacob pleads with Almighty God for preservation.***
- ***He starts with a humble statement of his own unworthiness (verse 10), BUT also his thanksgiving indeed for the unlimited mercy and truth.***
- ***He asks for deliverance, BUT does so by reminding God of his earlier promises! And it all has to do, he testifies in this prayer, with the preservation of the SEED (verse 12).***
- ***But his fear and doubt remains, as seen by his two band survival strategy.***
- ***The reference to passing over the Jordan river seems to refer to his earlier trip to Haran. The reference to the staff here is important.***
  - ***He had only the staff originally, but now has wealth as indicated by the two bands.***
  - ***But his doubts are also revealed in his testimony here.***

***[Any comments / questions?]***

***Now the “point” of “God’s Preservation Promise Proclaimed”, the “counterpoint” follows in . . .***

#### ***IV. Jacob’s Failure to Trust Revealed (Gen. 32:13-23)***

***[READ ] Gen. 32:13-23***

**13 And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;**

**14 Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,**

**15 Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.**

**16 And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.**

**17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?**

**18 Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us.**

19 And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

**21 So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.**

**22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.**

**23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.**

- ***But Jacob does not trust the Lord entirely, and executes his backup plan, which is to offer gifts to his brother in exchange for his family's safety.***
- ***He is in fear for his and his family's lives (verse 11)***
- ***Comparing verse 13 and verse 22 however, we see the details here and they are important to understand.***
  - ***The river Jordan lies ahead.***
  - ***The gifted animals and servants are sent across the river, it seems.***
  - ***But Jacob's family is sent instead over the brook Jabbok.***
  - ***Jacob, himself, stays behind. And he is all alone, he thinks, to consider the challenges ahead.***
  
- ***Indeed, this is an extreme trial of Jacob's faith.***
- ***But perhaps he is acting as their intermediary and has placed himself between his family and the expected enemy, for they cannot be harmed unless he is taken out of the way first. Nevertheless, without the Lord's help, all he seems to have for defense is his staff!!***

***[Any comments / questions?]***

***Our final "point" today as we conclude:***

**V. God's Preservation Provided (Gen. 32:24-32)**

***[READ ] Gen. 32:24-32***

**24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.**

**25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.**

**26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.**

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

- *Jacob is alone, alone indeed, he thinks.*
- *But he is not alone at all, for there is a man with him and who wrestled with him -- all night!*
  - *Who was this “man”?*
  - *Hos 12:2-6*

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

4 **Yea, he had power over the angel [malek in Heb., same word in verse 1 translated “man”], and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;**

5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.
  - It is pretty clear that this “man” was “the angel of the Lord”, the preincarnate Son of God. Other encounters would include the one with Abraham and the one with Lot.
  - *Notes for study:*
    - “Jacob = contender (25:22). Used of the natural Jacob and his natural seed. Israel used for spiritual Jacob and his spiritual seed.
    - Israel = "God commands, orders or rules". Man attempts it but always, in the end, fails. Out of some forty Hebrew names compounded with "El" or "Jah",

God is always the doer of what the verb means (cp. Dani-el, God judges).

- prince = commander, orderer. Here used not to dignify but to reproach. Cp. 12:15, princes (courtiers); 26:26, chief of soldiers; 39:1, officer; 40:2, chief; 40:3, jailor; 47:6, herdsman; Exo 1:11, taskmasters, &c.
  - hast thou power = hast thou contended. Jacob had contended with Esau in the womb, and thus got his name Jacob, which is referred to here in reproach, not in eulogy.
  - prevailed = succeeded. He had contended for the birthright and succeeded (25:29-34). He had contended for the blessing and succeeded (27). He had contended with Laban and succeeded (31). He had contended with "men" and succeeded. Now he contends with God and fails. Hence his name was changed to Isra-el, God commands, to teach him the greatly needed lesson of dependence upon God." -- Companion Bible notes on Gen. 32:28.
- ***So Jacob's name is changed, to Israel (meaning, "God commands"), Jacob realizes that he has been wrestling with God himself, and in fact, it surely seems, with the preincarnate Son of God. He is humbled and names that place Peniel, or, "the face of God", for, as we see in verse 30: "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."***
  - ***Jacob again and again has proven that he is "the supplanter" or the "contender" or even, "the thief". BUT GOD HAS OVERRULED EVERY TIME!! WHAT A LESSON CONCERNING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ALMIGHTY GOD.***

***[Any comments / questions?]***

**Application & Exhortation:**

- ***Satan's use of man's weakness & sin can never prevent God from accomplishing his purpose***
- ***God always blesses his people through his promises, his grace, his mercy, his kindness & his goodness***
- ***We can respond with faithfulness in our walk (which is always, by necessity, a response in faith to God's promises to us), OR with***

***unfaithfulness, by turning aside from God's promises, from God's word of truth for today.***

- ***God's blessings can therefore be turned against Him - the very strategy of the evil one and the purpose of his evil cosmos or world system, primary tools in his long war against God.***
- ***But God's faithfulness, his mercy and grace are greater than all the sin of man; and knowing this makes all the difference!***