

## GOD WRESTLES WITH JACOB

Genesis 32:1-33:11

Key Verse 32:28

**Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."**

1. **Skim through 32:1-23. On his way, what did Jacob see (32:1)?**

Many angels of God. He saw camps of angels.

**How did he respond to the sight (32:2)?**

He named that place "Mahanaim." He did not have any feelings about the sight.

**What problem did he have?**

Fear of facing Esau whom he had deceived and snatched away his blessings from. It was fear of death and of losing everything he had acquired thus far, family and wealth.

**Why was he so fearful?**

It was because of his strong character of never-give up, and of his value system.

First, his value system was very noble and great that he valued invisible birthright and his father's blessing. His never-give-up character was very good that he could achieve a lot of things.

Second, but this character and value system drove him to be a fighter, deceiver and liar making many people angry.

Third, he was destined to face this moment because it was from his personality. Thus far, he successfully fled from his fate. He was like a hit-and-run baseball player. But now finally his deceiving character caught him. He had to pay the price of his own past life, the price of his sin.

**What measures did Jacob take to soothe his inner fear and distress (32:3-21)?**

He did four things to overcome his fate of facing dreadful Esau.

First, he sent messengers ahead of him. He notified Esau. (3)

Second, he divided his group in two to save the second in case the first would be attacked. (7)

Third, he prayed which he never did for the last 20 years. (9)

Fourth, he sent many gifts - gift bombing. 200 female goat, 20 male goat, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys. It was a lot of amount. He sent these gifts to Esau in four times with the same message. Still he did not give up, but did what he could do in the given situation.

**What shows that these measures did not solve his inner problem (32:22,23)?**

He had to get up during the night because he could not sleep. All his achievements and his wives and children became burden to him. So he sent them to the other side of Jabbok River.

And he stood alone there embracing all agony and fear by himself. It was time for him to stand before God all by himself.

**2. Read verses 24 and 25. Describe the wrestling match at night (24,25).**

Jacob was left alone. God wrestled with Jacob till daybreak. God could not overpower Jacob. So God touched the socket of Jacob's hip and it was wrenched.

## **What does this show about Jacob's personality?**

Jacob's strong personality was revealed very clearly.

First, his spirit of struggle. He was in great distress. But once he started a wrestling match, he would never want to lose it.

Second, his spirit of not giving up. It was the time for Jacob to be knocked out. But in such a difficult situation, even God could not overpower him. In his life, Jacob had many times that he had to give up and lose things. But he never gave any of them up and won all he wanted. He was really diehard.

## **Why did God have to come in man's form and have a wrestling match with him?**

Jacob was the only one whom God had to wrestle with even in physical form because he was a difficult type to change.

Actually, God had been wrestling with Jacob throughout his life to change him into a patriarch of faith invisibly. Jacob had been driven to the corner many times. But Jacob never gave up on himself in all circumstances. He fled from the situation successfully with his never-give up and hard working spirit.

Now in the passage, he was driven to the corner again. But still he did not give upon himself. In great fear and anxiety, still he was doing something. He was a slave to his own cursed nature. He could not help but struggle. He was an inborn grasper.

So God appeared to him in a form of human being and had a wrestling match with him to break him down. God had a wrestling match with him to change him. It was only by God's grace that Jacob could be changed into a spiritual person.

His socket means his human integrity and strength. God broke it so that Jacob might not depend on his human strength any more.

My God is the God of Jacob, who drove me to the corner so that I could give up on myself. When I gave upon my life, God changed me into a spiritual person. So many people are like Jacob pursuing worthless things in the world blindly. God drives them to the corner where they must surrender and give up on themselves and on their lives in the world. God blocks their ways and drives them to the corner, and hems them in and there, they break down and surrender themselves to God. When they are released from the grip of their cursed sinful nature, God changes them into spiritual men and women of God. I praise the God of Jacob.

3. Read verses 26 through 28. After match, what did he demand God to do (26b)?

"I will not let you go unless you bless me."

He had acquired a lot of blessings. But such things were not true blessings. Rather, his desire to grasp all blessings made him a deceiver and was leading him to destruction. So now he desperately begged God for true blessing crying. Hosea 12:4.

He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there--

Now Jacob wanted to be blessed by God, instead of grasping blessings by himself. He realized that true blessing came from God, and it was internal and spiritual, not external or physical.

How did God bless him (27, 28)?

God changed his name into Israel.

In order to give him true blessing, first God asked, "What is your name?" God wanted him to know what kind of person he truly was. The true blessing is about man's inner person. **(The real blessing starts from recognizing what I am or What kind of person I am. When we realize this, God gives us a new person - Israel.)**

What kind of person was Jacob? He was Jacob, who was gripped by the cursed desire of grasping things from others. This cursed desire was leading him to destruction at the Jabbok River, but still he was wrestling according to his sinful character. His sinful character of grasping and of fighting with men was himself, "Jacob", a deceiver. As Esau his twin brother once said, he was rightly named, "Jacob". Jacob must have despaired about himself fully at this moment that he was a hopeless and helpless sinner.

"Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

#### 4. **What is the significance of his name change?**

God's blessing upon Jacob was to change his name into Israel. This is true blessing God gives us in two ways.

First, God released him from the grip of his cursed character.

His sinful nature had been working in him so powerfully that Jacob could not help but be a deceiver and extraordinary grasping person. He was a slave to this sinful cursed nature.

But now God freed him from this cursed nature. God changed his inner character. Suddenly, worldly desire for success and for getting blessings and competitive passion, which had bothered him throughout his life was taken away, and deep peace filled his heart. Jacob finally found freedom from his strong personality. He was changed. The God of Israel is the God who frees us from the power of our cursed personality and changes us into a new creation.

Second, God gave him a new personality of struggling with God.

"Israel" means "he struggles with God." Possibly, this name was caused because Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Jacob struggled hard with God to receive God's blessing. He was determined that he would not to let God go unless He blessed him. So through this struggle, finally, Jacob got God's blessing and was changed.

Israel is the one who wrestles with God to get blessing from God, not from men. Israel is the one who is determined to receive God's blessing no matter what.

God took away Jacob's cursed character and gave him Israel's blessed character. When Jacob lived Jacob's life struggling with men, he made everybody around him angry. But when Jacob lived Israel's life struggling with God, he became a source of blessing distributing God's blessing to others. Israel's blessed character made him a blessing.

The God of Israel is the God who takes away our sinful character and gives us new blessed character of struggling with Him. "Unless you give me a clear answer, I will not leave this prayer seat. I will keep bothering you. You'd better give me an answer right now." The nation Israel is the nation of this kind of people.

### **Why did Jacob ask God's name?**

When he was changed into Israel, he wanted to know who God was more. His desire was changed from things of the world to God.

### **Why did Jacob call that place "Peniel"?**

Because he saw God face to face, yet his life was spared.

### **What happened to Jacob after he was changed into Israel (31)?**

His deep inner fear or agony disappeared. Verse 31 is one of the most beautiful literary expressions, which shows Jacob's inner heart. The sun rose in the heart of Jacob when he met God personally and was changed.

The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

### **5. Skim through 33:1-11 and describe Israel's meeting with Esau. Why did Jacob say that seeing Esau's face was like "seeing the face of God"?**

They embraced each other. It didn't turn out as Jacob expected. It turned out good.

He could see Esau differently now after he had struggled with God. He did not see him as a rival but as brother and friend.

When his relationship with God was sound, his relationship with others became sound too.

When we struggle with God we see things from a spiritual point of view.