

The Birth of a Nation

A Study in Genesis 25-36

Cosmic Wrestling
Genesis 32:1-32
April 11, 2021

And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. - Genesis 32:24

I. TWO CAMPS

- As Jacob left Canaan, he met the angels of God. Now as he returns, he meets them again (Gen. 28:10-17, 32:1-2).
- Jacob names the location “Mahanaim” (“two camps”). Likely referring to two companies of angels, but possibly to his camp and the camp of the angels (Vs. 2).

II. A FEARFUL REPORT

- Jacob desires to reconcile with his brother Esau, and the words he puts into the mouths of his servants reveal his planned approach. He will be humble (Vss. 4-5; Prov. 15:1).
- Esau is approaching with 400 men, thus Jacob prays to God and puts a plan into action (Vss. 7-12; Neh. 4:7-9).
- Jacob’s prayer reveals how he has changed as a man and servant of God.
 1. He addresses God as God.
 2. He recounts his unworthiness and need for God.
 3. He pleads for assistance.
 4. He reminds God of his promises.
- Jacob now sets out to appease his brother. He does so with an enormous gift (or offering) sent out ahead of him in waves. (Vss. 13-21; Luke 14:31-33).

III. WRESTLE-MANIA—GOD VS. JACOB

- Jacob makes provisions for the safety of his family, and then he waits...for what, we do not yet know (Vss. 22-23).
- God meets Jacob, and wrestles with him until Jacob is left exhausted and only able to cling to God (Deut. 10:20, 11:22, 13:4, 30:20; Josh. 22:5; 23:8; Ps. 55:22; John 5:19, 30, 8:28, 9:33, 15:5).
- Jacob’s name is changed to “Israel” (“he strives with God”), and he is left in awe after his intimate encounter with God.

KNOW: Jacob has utilized the dual powers of prayer and good planning. He has learned to trust in God, and God responds by physically demonstrating to him that he is helpless without the LORD.

DO: Work hard. Think well. Cling to God.

Suggested Reading:

Daring to Draw Near: People in Prayer by John White (LifePoint Library #248.32)

Spiritual Mindedness by John Owen (LifePoint Library #248.4 OWE)

Questions/Discovery Points for Life Groups/Families

Please Read Genesis 32:1-32

1. Why are angels waiting for Jacob when he obeys God and returns to Canaan?
2. God did not tell Jacob to reconcile with his brother, why does he make the attempt?
3. What do you think of Jacob’s plan to appease Esau? What can we learn from it as we attempt to reconcile with others?
4. In what ways are you seeing a different Jacob than the one we’ve come to know thus far in the Genesis narrative?
5. Why does Jacob move his family away from him and place them across the river?
6. What do you take from his wrestling match? Who does he wrestle, an angel or God?
7. What are your application points from this passage/message?