

GENESIS 31-32:21

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 31 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that in our last study we saw that eleven sons were born to Jacob from Leah, Rachel and their maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah.

And in Genesis 30:25-26 we are told, **“And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you.’”**

Just to put things in order for us, it was after Joseph was born that Jacob felt the call of God upon his life to return home to the land of Canaan.

He worked for his uncle Laban in Haran now for fourteen years, but Jacob recognized this was not his home.

The only problem is that Laban does not want Jacob to leave, and the reason is probably not what you would think.

He didn't want Jacob to stay so he could be close to his daughters Rachel and Leah, and not because of his grandchildren.

Then why did he want Jacob to stay?

He wanted Jacob to stay because God was blessing Jacob and since Jacob worked for Laban, he was benefiting from this. Jacob was a cash cow to Laban you might say!

So Jacob makes a deal with Laban to stay with him for a time and then, when it is time for him to leave all the speckled and spotted sheep and goats would be his and the solid colored ones would belong to Laban.

And for Laban, he thinks this is a good deal because the dominant gene in these animals would be the solid-colored ones and thus, it would favor Laban.

But, just in case there was a problem and God blesses Jacob, Laban put Jacob in charge of his own animals and thus, if God did bless, he would benefit! He also put Jacobs flocks under the charge of Laban's sons.

And even with all that, we are told in Genesis 30:43, "**Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.**"

Now, as we come to chapter 31 of Genesis, we see that Jacob has been working for Laban another six years, twenty years in all.

And Jacob feels it is now time to go home. This was not his home, and thus, the longing to go back to the land of Canaan, to the land that God had promised them!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Genesis chapter 31, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

GENESIS 31**VERSES 1-2**

Please understand why Laban's sons were so upset with Jacob.

It is not that Jacob stole anything from Laban, but Jacob was gaining more and more, and Laban was losing out.

Thus, what they saw was that Jacob was stealing away their own inheritance, it was being taken away from them.

And folks, when envy gets into the picture, truth seems to be distorted, as is the case here.

In fact, as they tell their father what is going on, they poison his heart even more towards Jacob and now tensions were growing.

God was blessing Jacob and they did not like that.

And keep in mind that Laban, when this deal was made with Jacob, thought it was a great idea, but now he has changed his mind.

And envy is a dangerous sin to deal with.

Praise God we don't have to deal with that anymore, right?

Wrong, it was a problem back then, it was a problem in Paul's day, and it remains a problem today!

In I Corinthians 3:3 Paul wrote about what was happening in the church in Corinth. He wrote, "**for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**"

Even James deals with this issue in James 3:16 as he wrote, "**For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.**"

And that is what we are seeing here. Look at the mess that was happening, the confusion. This envy brought about bitterness in the hearts of Laban's sons as well as in Laban's heart!

In Ecclesiastes 4:4 Solomon tells us, **“Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.”**

In other words, why work hard because when you do, everyone wants what you have. Does that sound familiar? It should because that is the growing attitude of American's today. Obviously not all of them, but enough of them that want something for nothing, they don't want to work but they do want to get paid, and we see a huge worker shortage in our nation because of that!

Also, please understand that Solomon is looking at this from a human perspective and he saw it as truly empty, why bother working hard.

You see, he said in Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, **“‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher; ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?’”**

In other words, his perspective is under the sun, worldly, not of God and thus, he came to this wrong conclusion about work. But it is not done in vain, it is not empty no matter what others may say or do to us.

In fact, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

You see, what we do for the Lord is not in vain.

In James 1:25 we read, “**But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**”

There truly are blessings as we serve the Lord, as we work out our faith.

Thus, we are to work hard in spite of what others may say or do to us.

Paul puts this into perspective for us when he tells us in Colossians 3:17, “**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”

“Lord, help us to bring glory to you in all that we do!”

Let me ask you this question before we move on.

If Jacob was doing what the Lord wanted him to do and the Lord was blessing his work, why all this trouble?

I believe God was going to use this to stir the nest to get Jacob to fly, to soar in his faith.

You see, God wanted Jacob back in the Promise Land, the land of Canaan and now it was time to fly!

God does that in our own lives as He moves us, molds us, prepares the work for us and as the nest is stirred, we too begin to fly again, moving to the next step in our Christian life as God uses us for His glory!

But how is Jacob going to know for sure that the time to leave is now?

Yes, the circumstances seem to point in that direction, but they can fool us.

Look at the next verse and you will see how Jacob knew it was time to leave.

VERSE 3

For those twenty years that Jacob was serving Laban, did he know that God was preparing for this time, to return home?

I don't know but we see that God gave him a desire to go home in Genesis 30:25.

Then the situation changed for Jacob as things became unbearable, Laban and his sons were very angry at Jacob and how God was blessing him.

And now we see that the Lord spoke to Jacob telling him that he is to return to the land of Canaan. It was time to go home!

Jacob didn't just leave because of the bad situation he was in.

He left because of God's Word to him – "**return to the land of your father's.**"

And God's Spirit – "**I will be with you**" all lined up with the circumstances he faced and thus, he knew it was now time to go!

Let me share this with you because so many act upon a situation without getting direction from God.

There is this harbor in Italy, not sure if it still is used this way, that can only be reached by sailing up a narrow channel that has dangerous rocks and shoals [reefs] on either side.

Because of that, over the years, many ships have been wrecked. The navigation is very dangerous!

So they came up with a way to guide these ships safely into the port.

Their idea was very simple.

They put up three lights on three huge poles in the harbor.

Now, how does that help?

Listen carefully.

When these three lights are perfectly lined up and seen as one, the ship can proceed forward, and they will safely make it to the port.

But, if the pilot sees two or three lights, he knows that he is off course, he is in danger and he needs to readjust his course to get back in line, to be safe and make it to port.

Folks, God has also given to us three lights or beacons to guide us. Thus, if these three beacons line up as one, then you are safe to proceed forward.

But, if two or three are seen, they don't line up, then we need to readjust to get back in line, to be safe!

These three beacons of guidance are,

1. THE WORD OF GOD – THE OBJECTIVE STANDARD

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT- THE SUBJECTIVE WITNESS

3. THE CIRCUMSTANCES – THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Folks, my we be guided by God's beacons of light that will guide us in where and when we are to go, they will guide us safely through the situations we face in life.

Jacob saw these three beacons line up and he knew it was now time to go home!

And folks, God will lead us the same way.

VERSES 4-13

So as God spoke to Jacob, he is now going to gather Rachel and Leah together, his wives, and tell them what God is going to do and what they, as a family needed to do.

I like that he calls them out into his field, and I think the reason for that is so Laban or his sons won't hear what they are going to do, go home!

I also like the fact that Jacob is being the spiritual head of the family and we also see that Rachel and Leah were aware of his work ethics.

They saw how trustworthy, how faithful, how hard Jacob worked in spite of the way their father Laban treated and cheated him.

In fact, in those twenty years of service with Laban, he changed Jacob's wages ten times. And I don't think it was the full twenty years, it would seem like these last six years of his service this went on, because the first fourteen years of service were for Laban's daughters in marriage!

And folks, we are not talking about a pay increase here. He changed his wages so that he could benefit, and Jacob would end up with less.

But, as he tried to cheat the man of God out of what was his, God intervened and blessed Jacob even more!

What I great lesson this is for us to learn.

Man may try to cheat us, rip us off but God is aware, and He will take care of things as long as we are faithful in what we are doing.

It is as Psalm 118:6-9 tells us, "**The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me. It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in princes.**"

I have seen this in my own life. Many years ago I applied for a Nursing Supervisor position, which would oversee the Intensive Care Unit, the Cardiac Care Unit, the Emergency Room, Surgery, and Telemetry.

I was only in my 20's at the time and they required a bachelor's degree for this position, and I only had an Associate Degree in Nursing.

But I applied anyway because I felt the Lord was leading me to and the situations seemed to point in that direction.

Well, I got the job and a huge pay increase.

Everything was great until one day the evening and night supervisors went into the office of the Vice President of Nursing, without her being there, and looked into her filing cabinet to find out what they were paying me.

When they found out they were upset and complained to the Vice President of Nursing, and they ended up decreasing my pay!

Now in my mind they should have been fired, that was confidential information and after this she locked her filing cabinet, but they didn't get fired.

It would seem like I lost out on this, but I didn't.

You see, God gave me a wonderful experience as a Nursing Supervisor without the education requirements that I needed, and my pay was still very good!

And I think God was preparing me for the next step, to move on, He was stirring the nest.

It truly is as David said in Psalm 27:1, "**The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?**"

With that perspective, we should not be afraid. God is in control. Thus, we need serve the Lord faithfully in spite of what man may try to do to you for He will bless you through it, He has a plan, and He has a purpose, trust in Him!

Also note what Jacob said in Genesis 31:3 of the Lord speaking to him, that was just the basics and here in Genesis 31:10-13 he expounds on some more of the details of what God was showing him, what God was saying to him.

The Lord is instructing Jacob to go back to Bethel, back to the house of God, back to the place he first had an encounter with God. But why?

Because it is important, especially during difficult times like Jacob was going through, to remember the times when God spoke to him and brought him through those difficult times, and we need to do that as well!

You see, it is as we look back and see the hand of God upon our life that God gives us the strength for the present situation we are facing and that was what God instructed Jacob to do. He is still the same God. He does not change. He will meet our needs just as He has done in the past.

The call for Jacob is to return home, to return to the Promise Land, the land of Canaan and Jacob is now preparing for this journey.

VERSES 14-16

We have seen how much Rachel and Leah get along, they don't!

And as much as Rachel and Leah didn't agree on much, here we see them agree that their dad, Laban, was not interested in them, only the dowry that he was to keep for them.

The only problem is that he spent it all! In fact, they saw the wealth that Jacob obtained as a retribution for what their father did to them. They only got back that which he took from them is the way they felt.

Thus, they saw no ties to keep them from leaving. In fact, it was so bad they felt like strangers in their own family!

So they will go with Jacob to the place God has called him.

Henry Morris gives us this insight as he wrote,

Rachel and Leah revealed in their words . . . that they had long resented the way their father had essentially “sold” them to Jacob.

He had treated them as “strangers” or “foreigners,” rather than as his own daughters.

The exorbitant price which Jacob had paid for them - fourteen years of free service to Laban - made them love Jacob but resent their father.

Rather than treating this payment like a dowry, to provide a financial base for his daughters’ future well-being and security, as should have been done, he had “devoured” it all himself, using it probably to build up his own holdings, and had given nothing to them personally.

They rightly felt that, since their husband had been responsible for the great prosperity of their father, and since this was in effect what Jacob had given in order to marry them, these possessions by all rights should have come to them.

- Henry Morris

But think about the task that Jacob was placing upon himself. And the trust that Rachel and Leah had in Jacob providing for them on this journey!

Obviously this was no small task, to pick up your roots that have been planted for twenty years in Haran and travel some 500 miles back home.

They had servants, children, livestock, flocks; all kinds of possessions that needed to go with them and thus, the journey would be very slow.

On the positive end of it he had the support of Rachel and Leah, which was very important.

They told Jacob, “**Whatever God has said to you, do it.**”

It is as one writer put it, “*Those that are really their husbands’ helps-mate will never be their hindrances in doing that to which God calls them.*”

I have to say that God has truly blessed me with a beautiful wife, a helpmate.

One example is when we moved up here from Chicago. She was leaving all her friends to move to a place where she knew no one!

And yet, without hesitation, she basically said what Rachel and Leah said when I told her that I felt God calling us to Manitowoc, it was time to move.

She basically said to me, “**Whatever God has said to you, do it.**”

What a blessing to have a wife who is supportive of the work that God has called me to. Even now she is supportive of the work, and I try to take the time to spend with her and I have to work on that.

And folks, it is not always easy. She watches over me and takes good care of me.

And this was Jacob; he was blessed to have the support of his family as they embark on this venture of faith!

VERSES 17-21

Jacob was unsure of how Laban would respond so he left without telling Laban.

If Laban wanted, he could have taken the possessions of Jacob, Laban’s daughters and the children from Jacob.

Now, was Jacob right in doing this?

I don't believe so.

What makes me think that this was a wrong way for Jacob to act, to flee from Laban.

Remember what the Lord said to Jacob at Bethel in Genesis 28:15, **“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”**

And now in this chapter God tells him to return home, do you think he will make it?

Of course he will, God said He would finish the work He started, but Jacob was not sure.

Thus, his plan was to leave before Laban finds out, sneak away!

I like the way that Barnhouse expounds on this. He wrote: *“He could have announced his departure and gone in the glory of an army with banners. But fear made it impossible to reap the full measure of blessing. He sneaked away into the will of God instead of departing in triumph.”*

Now we are also told that Rachel stole the **“household idols”** or the Teraphim.

But why would she do this?

Some feel to get back at her father by taking away his protection from this god, and that is possible.

It is also possible that by taking these Teraphim, it represented the deed to the inheritance.

We do have documentation of this in the Nuzi Tablets of the 15th century B. C., and thus, none of her brothers would be able to lay claim to their father's possessions, it was hers!

No matter what, these were idols, false gods and not the true and living God!

Now, being married to Jacob she had far more than Laban will ever have, but she did not see what she already possessed and longed for less, if that makes sense.

But if you think about it, we do that. We have all we need from God, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. And yet we long for less, we long for what the world has for us!

I think that is what Rachel was doing here since her dad had used up all of her dowry!

So as Jacob heads out he is traveling toward the mountains of Gilead, some 300 miles from Haran and it was a tough journey.

Think about it. He left a place of safety to go to a place of uncertainty.

Remember when he left the land of Canaan his brother Esau wanted to kill him and he doesn't know how he feels, if he still wants to kill Jacob. And we will see that played out as we continue our study here in Genesis, the fear that Jacob has regarding Esau.

And think about this. All Jacob had to go on was the Word of God opened up to him by the Spirit of God and the circumstances he faced to go on, and that was enough, he knew it was time to go!

We too have the Word of God opened up to us by the Spirit of God to lead us where we need to go, what we need to do. May we listen and obey!

VERSES 22-24

How did Laban not know that Jacob left for three days?

I think it was because they lived far apart from each other.

They each had their flocks and there had to be a distance between them. Because of that he didn't notice their departure for three days.

So Jacob has a three-day head start when Laban finds out and Laban is not a happy man, to say the least.

And Laban is in hot pursuit of Jacob, and he catches up with him in seven days, in the mountains of Gilead.

Now it was not such a great feat considering Jacob was traveling with this massive caravan and Laban wasn't!

He could go much faster than Jacob and thus, it was not that hard to catch him. But God spoke to Laban before he reached Jacob and basically said, ***“Hands off son! Don't touch him and be careful what you say to him!”***

Laban was not a believer, but God did get his attention on this one. And that tells me that Laban was coming after Jacob and not in a good way, but God intervened!

VERSES 25-29

First we see Laban try to make Jacob feel bad for what he did, how he snuck away without telling Laban. He tells Jacob he wanted to throw a party for him and his family, strike up the band. Give me a break, he was not going to throw them a party and Jacob knew that.

He tells Jacob that he wanted to kiss his daughters and grandchildren goodbye and now he was deprived of that. Give me a break, he didn't care for them, he only wanted the profit he obtained from Jacob working for him. And once again Jacob did not buy that one either!

So when that didn't work he tries to intimidate Jacob by saying, ***“I could have made mince-meat out of you if I wanted!”***

And then he tells Jacob, and again, I am paraphrasing, ***“But God stopped me from tearing you to pieces!”***

I think Jacob was initially concerned about this, that is what the Scriptures tell us, but I don't think he is concerned any longer.

Yes, Jacob's faith waxes and wanes but so does ours because we don't rest fully upon the Lord and the promises He has given to us. May we learn the lesson!

VERSES 30-35

Jacob tells Laban the reason he left was because he was afraid that he would take his daughters back.

And Laban tells Jacob that someone stole his god!

Let me be clear on this. If your god can be stolen or lost, he is really not that good, is he?

So Jacob tells him to check for himself and if anyone took it, then they will be put to death and you can get your god back.

Jacob didn't realize he placed a death sentence on Rachel; she is the one who stole the Teraphim!

As Laban looks for his god, he goes into everyone's tent and then finally he reaches Rachel's tent.

But she deceives her father; I guess she learned well from him. She placed the idol in a camel's saddle and then sat on it and as her father entered her tent, she explained to him that she could not stand up because she was having her menstrual period! Thus, Laban could not find his god.

What a family this is and yet, as Griffith Thomas wrote, ***“Amid much that is sad and even sordid in this story . . . amid craft, deceit, and lying on almost every side, we cannot fail to see the hand of God overruling and making even the wrath of man to praise Him.”***

Now, as we read on, we will see that this is the last straw for Jacob and, you might say, he blows a gasket! Listen to what we are told.

VERSES 36-42

Jacob was not going to let Laban get away with this. He knew that Laban came to steal from him and unless God intervened, Jacob did not have a chance.

And after twenty years of taking all this garbage from Laban, Jacob lets him have it.

You see, Laban did not have anything against Jacob. He served Laban faithfully for twenty years.

He did not take advantage of Laban's flocks. He cared for them. In fact, even when a wild beast killed one of the animals that Jacob was watching, he bore the loss.

You see, if you could bring the carcass of that animal back, showing that the beast did not devour it all, the owner of the animal would not make you responsible for the loss.

Jacob did not do that. He bore the loss.

Jacob took his job seriously. He watched over the livestock of Laban in the heat of the day, in the cold of the night, when he wanted to and when he didn't want to, when he was tired and when he wasn't tired!

I think that is a beautiful picture of a faithful shepherd, a pastor! It is a picture of someone watching over the flock that God has entrusted to them.

Paul put it like this in Acts 20:26-32 as he was encouraging and warning the Ephesian pastors, **“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”**

Also, in II Timothy 3:16 Paul tells us, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

And he continues on in chapter 4, starting in verse 2, **“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5.

Pray for pastors and church leaders that are fulfilling the ministry that God has entrusted to them and to the flock that they are overseeing, feeding and warning them.

It is truly important because they are leading God's people either towards the true and living God or away from Him! It is a battle not only from outside the church, but wolves are rising up from within the church with their doctrines of demons they are teaching!

THEREFORE - PRAY!

Let's see how Laban responds to what Jacob just told him.

VERSES 43-50

Laban tells Jacob that all he has is really his, it is really Laban's and out of the kindness of his heart he has given all this to Jacob.

Isn't that nice, not true, but it sounds good. But it was not true, it was a lie, but a nice touch!

Jacob worked for it and God blessed him and if Laban had anything to do with it, Jacob would have nothing.

But God spoke to Laban to keep his hands off Jacob, so Laban tries to make himself look good in a bad situation. But it didn't work!

So Jacob and Laban make this covenant and set up boundary stones and call this place Galeed or "**This heap is a witness between you and me this day.**"

In other words, if you cross over this line that is drawn in the sand, these stones, I will kill you! Don't you just feel the love?

Not only that, but they also called the place Mizpah or “**May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another. If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us - see, God is witness between you and me!**” Genesis 31:49-50.

In other words, if you do something with my daughters God will get you if I don't!

Now this is interesting because the Christian merchandizing world, several years ago, not knowing the Scriptures, used this as an enduring charm.

In fact, half of it you would keep, and the other half would be given to the person you love with the idea God is watching over you while we are apart. No, that is not what it means.

Barnhouse explains it like this. He wrote, “*In effect, the pillar of Mizpah meant, ‘If you come over on my side of this line, the pact is void and I will kill you.’ The covenant breaker would need God to take care of him, because the other would shoot to kill”*

Mizpah was never meant to be a nice sentiment!

As you look at Jacob and Laban there is not a lot of love and there is not a lot of trust between them.

VERSES 51-55

As some read this, they feel the point being made is there needs to be a separation from the in-laws as Genesis 2:24 tells us, “**Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**”

As true as that might be for a family to grow, I don't believe that is the point here.

Then what is the point?

The point is this. Laban was a man of the world and Jacob needed to separate himself from the world and he does.

He also needs to separate from the gods of this world, and we will see him do that in Genesis chapter 35 in a few weeks as he returns to Bethel.

It is as Boice wrote, ***“This is the last we hear of Laban in the Bible, and it is good that this is the end of him. Laban is of the world, and Jacob needed to be freed from this world in order to live wholeheartedly for the God of his fathers.”***

Please understand that Laban could have turned to the true and living God, he could have received the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but he didn't! He wanted the blessings and benefits from God, but he did not want a relationship with God.

Morris makes this point in regard to Laban, ***“Rather than seeking to follow the truth of God's plan as witnessed by Jacob, he merely resented and coveted the blessing of God on Jacob. He finally ended up with neither. His life constitutes a sober warning to a great host of semi religious but fundamentally self-worshipping and self-seeking men and women today.”***

Yes, many do the same today, they want the blessings of God, but they do not want a relationship with Him, and it does not work like that!

What Jacob did was not easy and yet it is what God called him to do and he obeyed. And I think that is a good lesson for us as well.

May we learn that lesson and walk by faith as God leads us.

It is as Peter said, **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”** I Peter 1:13-16.

Let us walk in the light as He is in the light, following as He leads us!

GENESIS 32

VERSES 1-2

Jacob was fearful of Laban and now he is fearful of his encounter with his brother Esau.

Thus, God shows him why he shouldn't be fearful; God has his angels in the camp with him.

And Jacob calls the place Mahanaim or ***“double camp.”***

Not only was Jacob and his group there, but so were the angels of God. Thus, two camps! And these angels of God were there to watch over them, protect them.

That should have given Jacob great encouragement – not only did the Lord tell Jacob he would return home, but now the Lord's angels are watching over him!

And what was true in Jacob's day I believe is true in our day as well. In Hebrews 1:14 Paul tells us, **“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**Are not the angels all ministering spirits (servants) sent out in the service [of God for the assistance] of those who are to inherit salvation?**”

That should bring us great comfort, knowing that God has sent His angels to protect us, to watch over us and some of them have a bigger job than others!

How is this going to change Jacob’s perspective of meeting his brother Esau, who twenty years earlier wanted to kill him?

It should give him the confidence to forge ahead, that God is in control, and He is watching over Jacob and his family.

Like I said, it should, but let’s read on and see how this encounter affects Jacob’s life.

VERSES 3-6

Jacob is still not too sure so he is going to test the waters you might say before he jumps in.

He sends his servants to meet up with Esau and explain to him that Jacob doesn’t want or need anything from him, and he just wants to work things out.

As Jacob’s servants go to the land of Seir, where Esau was living and is located east and south of the Dead Sea, and they see Esau coming but things were not looking good.

At least it did not look good in their mind. Esau is coming to meet Jacob with 400 of his men! And I believe the text is telling us that Jacob’s servants didn’t even talk with Esau, they saw this “**army,**” at least that is what they thought, coming and they high tailed it back to Jacob to warn him of the danger. This can’t be good!

As fearful as his servants were, not Jacob, right? I mean, the Lord said to Jacob, “**Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.**” Genesis 28:15.

Not only that, but we just read that the angels of God are encamped around him, and yet, he is still fearful!

Didn’t God say that He would bring him back to Bethel, it was His promise to Jacob. Yes, He did!

Then, in the land of Haran, with his uncle Laban for twenty years, “**Then the Lord said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.’**” Genesis 31:3.

And like I have said, on this journey home we just read that God’s angels are with him.

So Jacob should not be fearful, his faith should see him through this, God promised.

Well, let’s see how he responds to this news.

VERSES 7-8

Why was Jacob so fearful?

Because twenty years earlier his mother Rebekah told him, “**Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?**” Genesis 27:43-45.

Rebekah never sent word to Jacob that all is well, that Esau was not angry, and he can return home. Thus, he still must be angry and wants Jacob dead!

So Jacob, the schemer, is coming up with a plan to protect what was his by dividing the camp into two companies.

What that means is that if Esau comes and destroys one of the camps, the other one will get away.

But remember what Jacob saw earlier, there was already two companies in the camp, his and the angels of God who were there to protect him, who were watching over them.

He should have said, *“I don’t know if my brother Esau is coming in peace or if he wants to kill me. I hope for peace but if not, the Lord is with me, and He will protect me!”*

But he did not do that!

VERSES 9-12

Make no mistake about it, Jacob was fearful, he did not believe he would survive this situation and that lead him to prayer, and that is a great place to go.

Bring your fears, your hurts, your pain, your sorrow before the Lord.

First Jacob stood upon the Words of God – **“the Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you.’”** Genesis 32:9.

Folks, we too need to stand upon God’s Word, His promises to us, as Jacob was doing here.

Then Jacob sees his unworthiness before a holy and righteous God. He doesn’t deserve anything from God and yet, in His grace, in His mercy God extends His love to Jacob and to us.

Folks, we are not worthy to receive anything from God and yet, He blesses us exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think.

And then Jacob goes to his petition – **“Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.”** Genesis 32:11.

Folks, once again God is waiting to hear from us, to bring our requests before Him and lay them at His feet, that is what Jacob is doing here.

And lastly, Jacob stood on the promises of God – **“For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”** Genesis 32:12.

Jacob remembered God’s Word to him. And so, with a humble heart he asked God to answer his prayer.

George Mueller was a great man of faith and a great man of prayer and one day he was asked about his prayers.

The question was this, *“What was the most important part of prayer?”*

His answer is interesting, and I think correct. He said, *“The 15 minutes after I have said, ‘Amen.’”*

You see, as you finish praying your faith will be seen in what you do!

Let’s see how Jacob does after he prays, does his actions reflect his belief?

VERSES 13-21

Just in case his prayer didn’t work, his back-up plan was to appease Esau with these gifts.

And Jacob has five herds that are going to be sent out with a distance between them and the servants overseeing them. And they will present these gifts to Esau, a gift from his brother Jacob.

Think about all that he was sending to Esau so Esau would not kill him. There were 580 animals. That tells me Jacob must have owned thousands of animals or else he could not give that many to Esau.

That meant the traveling was slow, very slow and they could not outrun Esau with his army because Esau did not have all that livestock with them!

Now here's the thing. If Jacob truly trusted God, he would have been in front to meet Esau and not send these gifts on ahead.

Folks, faith grows as we exercise it, we put it into practice. I see Jacob's actions here as nothing more than a carnal attempt to save his life by attempting to buy his brother Esau's good favor.

Some of you may remember the popular Christian song that says,

All to Jesus, I surrender, all to Him I freely give;

I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.

I surrender all, I surrender all,

All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

In a sense, Jacob did what he thought was right! In other words, ***“I surrender all the goats. If that isn't enough, I will surrender all the sheep. If that isn't enough, I will surrender all the camels . . .”***

What did Jacob refuse to surrender?

Jacob refused to surrender himself to the true and living God, trusting in the promises of God, the promise of protection!

Do you see that?

Do you understand that?

Do you trust in your ability to do things apart from God?

That is what Jacob was doing here and now the Lord is going to get his attention!

We will pick up our study here next time beginning in verse 22 of Genesis chapter 32 as Jacob is going to wrestle with the Lord and the Lord will change his name from Jacob to Israel!

Let me share with you a few verses that deal with surrender before I close, because for us, it is one of the hardest things for us to do and yet, it is so important.

In Jeremiah 10:23-24 we are told, **“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O Lord, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.”**

We need the Lord to direct our steps, our lives because left on our own, we are only headed for disaster!

In Psalm 50:15 we are told, **“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”**

To rest in the Lord means that you have come to the end of yourself. But, like Jacob, we can come up with all kinds of plans, but they will never succeed like what God has for us.

And lastly, in Matthew 26:39, as Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane before He is arrested and crucified, we are told, **“He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’”**

It is not always easy to surrender to the will of God, but it is what is best for our lives. May we remember that.

May we not be schemers coming up with all kinds of plans to deliver us from situations, but trust in the Lord, rest in His promises, and then walk by faith!