

GENESIS 32:13-21 (PREPARING FOR AN ENCOUNTER)

Introduction: Today we have another interesting portion of the life of Jacob. The nine verses are all a part of the whole story, and yet they are set off and distinct from both the prayer of the previous verses and the encounter with the angel in the following ones. These offsets are important to analyze as offsets.

When they are, we can more easily determine why the details were included and we can get great insights into how God is working in history and through this marvelous unfolding plan.

Text Verse: "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:1

Through the whole Bible, from its earliest verses, we see hints of One who is coming, One who is anticipated, and One who fulfills all of the pictures which are given. Malachi specifically said that He was on His way, but at other times, we need to look carefully behind the lines to see it. This is what we will experience yet again today and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Gift for Esau

¹³ So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:

After Jacob's great prayer of faith, he stayed in the same place as where he was. Without moving on, he prepares a gift for Esau. Both actions might seem like the great prayer of faith wasn't very great after all. Is Jacob lacking faith?

Instead of moving forward, he lags behind. And in giving a gift, on the surface it does seem as if he's lacking faith that God will protect him.

However, and as I've said in the past, if you want something from God, it doesn't in any way stop you from acting.

The old saying, "Help yourself and God will help you" was as true for Jacob as it is for us. There is no lack of faith in his actions. Instead he's being prudent. As Matthew Henry says, "God answers our prayers by teaching us to order our affairs with discretion. Jacob prayed, and now he's acting with discretion."

Even the book of Proverbs shows this is true -

A man's gift makes room for him,
And brings him before great men. Proverbs 18:16

Jacob isn't at all distrusting God's help or protection. Instead he is using the means God had already blessed him with to bring about His help and protection. LIFE APPLICATION - insurance, door locks, security systems, etc.

¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,
¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.

This is a total of 580 animals described here. The camels alone would have been immensely valuable both for their milk and for the other uses employed in the region.

The ancient writer Pliny says that, "The she-camel gives milk continually, not ceasing till great with young; the milk of which, when mixed with three parts of water, affords the most pleasant and wholesome beverage."

Jacob divides up the animals in proportion to their ability to mate - 1 male for every 10 females of the goats and sheep, 1 bull for every 4 cows, etc. Jacob would know the right proportions as he had been tending flocks all his life.

He puts together a magnificent gift for Esau and will arrange them in a way that when they are presented the intent will be to completely pacify him before they meet. He's not being at all stingy and he knows from the blessings of the last twenty years of work that God will continue to bless him in the future.

¹⁶ Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves.”

There are five groups of animals and so there are five droves being made ready to meet Esau prior to him meeting Jacob. These droves are being placed in the hands of his servants and they are being directed to go prior to the meeting with Jacob and to keep a specific span of distance between the droves.

In other words, they're not to follow too closely to each other but there should be some distance between each. Jacob is setting, in advance, the distances in order to allow Esau to adjust to each and think on each before meeting another drove.

Each is given in a specific order by Jacob to prepare him for the next drove and to let Esau know that Jacob is still ahead. By doing it this way, there would be a prolonging of the time before the meeting. Esau would be expected to stop, observe the gift, and think on its greatness before the next came.

As with all of these stories, the details are given for a specific reason, and as they always do, they point to something which is which centers on the Person of Jesus. Why five droves? What a distance between them? Why these particular animals?

II. The Servants' Message

¹⁷ And he commanded the first one, saying, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?’

Jacob gives very explicit instructions concerning what the servants are to say. At the specific interval given by Jacob, Esau will meet the servant and Jacob already knows that he will ask who he is, who his master is, and where he is heading.

He also knows that he will be curious about the flocks as well. There is a distinct message we're to learn and it's not at all unsurprising when we understand who Esau pictures, who Jacob pictures, and who the servants are, and what the flocks represent.

¹⁸ then you shall say, 'They *are* your servant Jacob's. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.'"

The servants are instructed very specifically, they are to say that they are "your servant Jacob's." Said differently, Jacob is placing himself as a servant of Esau and the droves which are being conducted are a present to Esau. They are also instructed to tell Esau that Jacob is behind them.

Esau is eventually going to meet up with him. There is a date of destiny where the two boys, separated so long ago, will again come face to face. Before they do, Jacob is preparing Esau for the meeting; it is a preparation where two past rivals will hopefully attain reconciliation. Are you seeing the pattern yet?

III. Jacob is Behind Us

¹⁹ So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him;

When reading this verse, it's not to be thought that there were only three droves of animals. Rather, just as the first, the second, and the third were instructed, so were all five of the droves. Jacob is being specific with each and every herdsman.

They are given words to speak and it is those words only that they are to convey to Esau. The manner of the words is fixed and unchanging even if

the herdsman comes at a different time, they have a unified message to pass on. Again, think about who is being pictured and why God is including such minute detail.

We'll see the reason why in a few minutes. God is giving these seemingly unnecessary details because they are, in fact, necessary, and they're telling us what is coming later in history.

²⁰ and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.'"

Once again, the word of instruction is given, "Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us. He is there. He is waiting. You will meet him soon enough. Esau, your brother is there and we are here to tell you about him and give you these gifts along the way."

The repetition here is to make sure that they will be extremely careful to speak exactly as they are told. Jacob is ahead - it is a point of immense importance. The gifts would have no significance without the guarantee of a meeting. It would be like giving a wedding ring with no intention getting married.

I hope you're thinking about what's being pictured here. Esau would have been slighted to have all the gifts without an appearance to back them up. How unworthy he would feel without the face to face meeting.

²⁰ (con't) For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."

And we're told the reason for the instruction that he's giving. There is going to be a meeting and Jacob is preparing Esau for it so when they actually meet, as he says, *ulai yissa phanai* "perhaps he will accept me." (3:58)

It's a term that some literally translate as "I will expiate his face." In other words, "Any wrath or disagreement will be removed and there will be happiness between us once again." The estranged brother will perhaps accept him. Is this sounding familiar yet?

²¹ So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

After sending off the gifts of the droves, Jacob stayed behind and, as it says "lodged that night in the camp." The question is, which camp? It's important to know which because there were the two camps mentioned before. God's camp and his camp.

In the coming verses it says that he sent his family across the river and he stayed on the other side. Therefore, he is staying in the area of Mahanaim - God's camp. This will be apparent from the meeting with the Angel of the Lord that he has in the next sermon.

The distinction is important because the five droves are being met while Jacob is in God's camp. The details today have been given to us to show us about the coming of Jesus and the different stages which precede His coming.

IV. The Five Gifts Explained

Let me share with you the wonderful details. The first thing to remember is that each of these stories, although all connected, are individual stories. They are select instances of people's lives which are taken to show different things... coming things. That's why the divisions are so logical as you read the Bible.

Each division, although a portion of a continuous, true account, is still a select piece of the life of a person which is meant to show a particular truth. Sometimes in one portion the person, be it Abraham, or Jacob, or whoever is a picture of God the Father. In the next story the same person may picture the people of Israel.

In today's story, we are seeing a pattern we've seen before. Esau represents Adam and his seed, and Jacob is picturing Christ. The nine verses we've looked at have logically been broken down into three thoughts I gave you: A Gift for Esau; The Servants' Message; and Jacob is Behind Us.

What we are seeing here is the coming meeting between the Lord Jesus (the incarnation) and man. Jacob is going to the land of Canaan after a long time away. Jesus, likewise, is returning after a long period. It was He who walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam, but that ended when Adam disobeyed.

From that time, He dwelt apart from man. Esau, who pictures Adam has been living in the land of Seir. I've explained it in several sermons, but Seir means "hairy." Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness. Man is an aware being, he is sentient, and he is conscious of his fallen state.

The first section today dealt with gifts for Esau. This comprised verses 13 through 16.

¹³ So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: ¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.

¹⁶ Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves."

The Lord has given certain gifts to man to help him along the path toward the our anticipated meeting with Jesus. They are called dispensations. He has worked with man in a progressive way, slowly unfolding his promised plan of redemption.

The five groups of animals look to the five dispensations of God's dealings with us before the coming Christ. These dispensations have come at specifically spaced intervals, just as Jacob sent out the gifts in specifically timed intervals.

The first dispensation was *Innocence*. Man lived in the Garden of Eden, even if it was for a short time. While there, he disobeyed God and was cast out as judgment. But before this, the first promise came - it was the first gift of grace; a promise that One would come to right the relationship. It is found in Genesis 3:15 -

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Esau meets his first flock; Adam met his first gift of grace - a promise of victory over the serpent. This dispensation is reflected in Romans 5:12 - "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..."

The second dispensation is that of *Conscience*. Man lived in the world and his law was through his instilled conscience. If we could live according to this God-instilled premise, then all would be well, but man once again fell short of this standard.

Before the destruction of the flood which came as the second judgment, the second gift of grace was seen. It is found in Genesis 7:8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Esau meets his second flock; Adam meets his second gift of grace. The continuation of humanity through the Flood.

This dispensation, Conscience, is reflected in Romans 1:18, 19 -

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them."

The third dispensation is that of *Government*. Man was given ruling authority over all the earth and was given a covenant in connection with this. If man could properly govern his affairs under God's overarching authority, then he would be granted this right as a united group of people.

However, man cast off God's rule and intended to rule in his own right without God's overarching authority. Because of this, judgment was again pronounced on man. Their language was confused and man was scattered across the world.

Before the judgment of the confusion of languages, came the third gift of grace. It is found in Genesis 9 -

¹³ "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Esau meets his third flock; Adam meets his third gift of grace. God promises humanity's continuance. This dispensation, Government, is reflected in Romans 13:1 - "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."

The fourth dispensation is that of *Promise*. From one particular man and his chosen descendants would come a blessing upon the world. This dispensation is found as given to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 13, to Isaac in Genesis 26, and to Jacob in Genesis 28.

During this dispensation, the chosen line was expected to be faithful to God and trust in His word and His assurances. Those who interacted with them were to treat them in a manner which realized their unique role leading to the coming Redeemer.

When those who interacted with them failed to acknowledge this, it would lead to judgment on them. This is seen time and time again as people failed to treat God's chosen line in a manner conducive to the promise.

The ultimate act of this judgment is found in the plagues upon Egypt who had mistreated His people. Despite their mistreatment and their bondage, the fourth gift of the promise was given. It can be found in Genesis 15:13, 14 -

"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions."

Esau meets his fourth flock; Adam meets his fourth gift of grace. God promises protection of the covenant people leading to the Messiah. This dispensation, Promise, is reflected many times in the Bible. In the New Testament, it is seen in Romans 11:29 -

"For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable."

The fifth dispensation is that of Law. During this period, man was given God's law, by which, as it states, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD." Leviticus 18:5

In this law there were promised blessings for obedience and promised curses for disobedience. The curses included exile from the land of promise, but as God's people, even in punishment, He promised to keep them as a sign to the people of the world to demonstrate His holiness and covenant care.

Despite their failure to obey, and fail they did, God once again provided the grace necessary for the people. He did it in several ways. One was by providing a Day of Atonement for His people. But even that wasn't enough and judgment came in the form of exile from their homeland.

Even though this judgment came, so came another form of grace. God's fifth gift of grace came prior to the judgment, just as each has. It was the promise of return from exile -

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where

the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers." Deuteronomy 30

Esau meets his fifth flock; Adam meets his fifth gift of grace. This dispensation, Law, is reflected in Romans 3:19-20 - "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

In the second portion of our verses today came the servants' message. This comprised verses 17 and 18.

¹⁷ And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?' ¹⁸ then you shall say, 'They *are* your servant Jacob's. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.'"

Jacob gave the words to the servants and so they didn't speak on their own, but only what they were told. In the same way, during each dispensation, the Lord spoke directly through His servants the prophets. They are those who have testified to His word.

A prophet's words are given by God in order to carry His message to Adam's line, just as these servants were given a message by Jacob to Esau. The call of the prophet is something that occurs in order to ensure His message is as He intends. Let me give you an example of the prophets' call. In Jeremiah 1 we read this -

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." ⁶ Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth." ⁷ But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I *am* a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I

command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, For I *am* with you to deliver you," says the LORD.

These prophets have been directed to speak to Adam's line about the gifts and how to handle them. But they have also been directed to speak something more, something wonderful. The One who is coming will be a Servant, just as Jacob says he is Esau's servant.

In the third portion of our verses today came the thought "Jacob is Behind Us." This comprised verse 19-21.

¹⁹ So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; ²⁰ and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." ²¹ So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

God's prophets not only spoke of righteousness and judgment, but they also told of the coming Savior; they told of Jesus. "Yes, here are your gifts, but Jacob is behind us." "Yes, here is how you are to live, but Jesus is coming."

In the Garden of Eden, right at the beginning, the Lord Himself promised, "He is coming." In the second dispensation, Enoch said, "He is coming." In the third, Noah - a preacher of righteousness would have continued the proclamation, "He is coming."

Just as Jacob assured Esau through each gift, Jesus assures Adam's line through each dispensation. He is behind us and He is coming. Jesus Himself, after the resurrection showed that all the prophets, from the very beginning, spoke of His coming and His glory -

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all

the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:25-27

This is the marvel of these nine short verses today. They are a promise of a future meeting between Jacob and Esau, between Jesus and Adam. They are verses of hope and of restoration. In these verses were five sets of gifts. They were gifts of grace and reconciliation, and each points to a particular dispensation as well.

The order in which the gifts were presented wasn't given, but I believe the order is as follows. The dispensation of *Innocence* is seen in the lambs. The lamb is an animal of innocence. At the Passover, the innocent lamb died in place of the firstborn, picturing Christ's innocent death -

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth." Isaiah 53:7

The dispensation of *Conscience* is seen in the goats. The goat is a hairy animal and, as I noted, hair in the Bible denotes awareness. The dispensation of Conscience was the time of awareness which followed the time of innocence.

The third dispensation, *Government*, is seen in the donkey. The donkey is a picture of ruling status. The judges and leaders are noted as riding on donkeys numerous times in the Old Testament. And the same is spoken about Jesus, in both testaments, as riding on a donkey in His kingly, ruling role.

The fourth dispensation is *Promise* and is reflected by the camels. The term for milk-camel is *meniqot*, a word derived from *yanaq*, meaning "to suckle." The term is used by Sarah at the time of Isaac's birth, the son of promise.

The very notion of suckling is one of promise and anticipation. Isaiah in particular uses this term numerous times in anticipation of the Lord's promises to His people.

The last dispensation before Jesus' coming was *Law*. This is seen in the cows and bulls. Many animals were a part of the sacrificial system of the law, but the bull in particular was used as the substitute for the sins of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

The high priest is the administrator of the law and he prefigures Jesus as our Mediator. He is prefigured by this particular gift to Esau. As you can see, all of this has been pictured in these nine verses today. Five droves and five dispensations. The gifts were presented to pacify and bring about eventual reconciliation.

The fulfillment of that reconciliation is, of course, found in Jesus - the One whom all of these things are pointing forward to.

Closing Verse: Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19

Next Week: Genesis 32:22-32 (He Struggles With God and Man) (81st Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Five Gifts of Grace

So he lodged there that same night
And took what came to his hand
As a present for Esau his brother alright
And the present was quite grand

Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats also
Two hundred ewes and twenty rams he chose
Thirty milk camels with their colts were selected to go

And forty cows and ten bulls he counted nose by nose

Also twenty female donkeys he selected
And ten foals for them he detected

Then he delivered them to the servants' hand
Every drove by itself one at a time he sent
And he said to his servants so they would understand
"Pass ahead putting distance between the droves, and so they went

And he commanded, saying to the first one
"When Esau my brother meets you and asks concerning who
To whom do you belong, and where are you going my son?
Whose are these in front of you?

Then here is what you shall say
"To your servant Jacob they belong
It is a present sent to my lord Esau this day
And he also is behind us, soon he will come along

So he commanded the second and the third
And all who followed the droves saying
In this manner you shall speak to Esau, with this word
That your servant Jacob is behind us, at the camp he is staying

For he said, "I will appease him with this grace
With the present that goes before me
And afterward I will see his face
Perhaps he will accept me favorably

So the present went on before like a lamp
But he himself lodged that night in the camp

Jesus too lodged in God's camp as the gifts were given
But eventually He appeared so we could move from death to livin'

Each of the dispensations was meant to teach us a lesson

Of how we needed God's direct hand of grace
Without His word and Jesus, we'd all be a guessin'
As to how to live rightly and to again see His face

But Jesus did come during the fifth dispensation
And we behold His glory through the word He has decreed
Now we can impart to all the wonderful declaration
That through His cross we are reconciled indeed

Thank You O our glorious and splendid Creator
Receive praises and honor from each of us
For You have become our Vindicator
Through the work of Your Son, our Lord Jesus

Marvelous and beautiful are all of Your ways
And so we shall exalt and praise You all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...