

Gen 32:12 MEETING WITH OUR PAST

PRELIMS. I want to say that I have a unique understanding of Jacob's life!! I believe that **Peniel** [Chap 32] is the time of his conversion! Almost everyone says it is **Bethel** [Chap 28].

For me, Bethel was his **awakening** – his **realisation** of God! He became aware of God in a way he did not before “*Surely God is in this place and I did not know it*”[16]! *Then he makes a vow “***If** God will be with me and **will keep** me in this way that I go...so that I come again to my father's house **in peace** then the Lord shall be my God...and of all that You give me I will give a full tenth to You*” 28:20-28]! This is Jacob ‘**proving**’ God faithful to His promise – the promise He just made “*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 **promised** you*”[28:15].

So, what we have here is a man meeting with his past! A man convicted of his sin and concerned about the **consequences** of it! His past life (his chickens) are coming home to roost! Jacob deceived his twin brother **twice!** *He is “*greatly afraid and distressed*”[7]! **APP** How do uncaught guilty murderers live today? Those who have **just cause** to be afraid when they see the police van coming up their street? *Jacob knew it was **God** that was coming to meet him “*This is God's camp*”[2]! *This passage is relevant for each one of us – for we are **all guilty** before **God!**

*Jacob's **first reaction** – **mitigation!** To try and **lessen** the offence, to gloss over the whole affair and make out it is ‘a storm in a teacup’! “*I have sent (these gifts of oxen, cattle) to tell my lord **in order** that I might **find favour** in your sight*”[5] Jacob even tries to ‘make friends’ through the generosity of his **wealth** and to demonstrate he is now a ‘big gun’ in society and **wealds power** in a number of areas!

APP How often ‘big names’ escape due punishment because of whom they are, and the wealth they have! But we too, of a humbler state, also seek to ‘escape’ the due reward of our sins in whatever

way we can – we **mitigate** our sin against God, saying ‘Everybody does that nowadays, things have changed!’

*Then Jacob **prays!** “*O God...*”[9] Meeting with our past can cause us to bend our knees when nothing else can! People pray in trouble when they do not pray at any other time in their lives! They are, at least, **prepared to try** prayer! Anything in a **crisis**, even prayer!

* “...*God of my father Abraham...*”[9], not ‘**My** God’ as one would expect if he had newly been converted!

*He **confesses** “...*I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown your servant*”[10] When God deals **spiritually** with us, we begin to **realise** that we have **sinned** and that we are just **not worthy** of His love and affection. “*When I look up into the heavens...what is man that you are mindful of him?*”

He asks for **deliverance!** “*Please deliver me from the hand of my brother*”[11] When God deals with us, we need **deliverance!**

*Then Jacob **sends a bribe!** “*For he thought I may appease him with a present...perhaps he will accept me*”[20b] **APP** We do that spiritually too! When we want to have God’s favour, we go to Church and pray more often or maybe do some ‘good works’! But if it is salvation we are after, we need to learn, nothing but the **blood** of Jesus Christ will save the soul from eternal death!

*Then we read “*And Jacob was left alone*”[24]! We need to be alone when we are in spiritual turmoil and speaking to God! There are times when we need to be alone – in fact our society has problems with being alone – thus all the mps, walkmans, music!

*Without any explanation, suddenly “*a man wrestled with him*”! Who was this? Where did he come from? I believe this was a **pre-incarnate visit of the Son of God**. Up till now, the gospel was **hid from** Jacob because he was still in his fleshly nature. He was not a spiritual person. “*The god of this world has blinded the minds of*

the unbelievers, to **keep them from seeing** the light of the gospel”[2Cor 4:4] Where is God **most clearly expressed**? In Jesus Christ! He, is the “*the **image** of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*” [Col 1:15] & “*express image of His person*”[He 1:3]

And **then what** does Paul say? “...to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the **face** of Jesus Christ” [2Cor4:6] Jacob was **now seeing** Jesus face to face!! Look at [v30] “*I have seen God **face to face***”[30]

This was **the Angel** Jacob spoke of in his **old age**, when he was blessing his sons “*the **angel** who **redeemed** me from all evil, bless the boys*”[48:16] And Isaiah speaks about the children of Israel “*the **angel** of His presence **saved** them*”[Isa 63:9] Well, surely, if ever, there was the presence of God it was here!! **APP** Do you know what we mean when we say, ‘God was there that night’? Are there times when **you** can say, you were in God’s presence’?

*Then Jacob was **given a new name**! Like in **marriage**, a bride is given a new name because she is under new management, a new master, a new life! Isaiah foretold of God’s people having anew name “*..and they shall be called by a new name*”[Isa 62:2]. And in the last book, the Church of Philadelphia “*...him that overcometh ...I will put upon him a new name*”[Rev 3:8-12]

*The “*sun rose upon him*”[31]! A strange reference?! “*unto you that fear My name shall the **Sun of righteousness arise with healing** in His wings*”[Mal 4:2] Jacob certainly ‘feared’ God!

*This **experience**, as do **all spiritual** experiences with God, **affects our walk** in the world! “*...**limping** because of his **hip**”[31] Jesus said it was **better** “*for you to enter **lame** into life, than having **two feet** to be cast into hell*”[Mar 9:45]*

Our meeting with God always changes us, and changes our behaviour – one way or another! We will become **more humble**, or **more proud/bold** and self-sufficient!

APP Well – what are the **great lessons** to be learned from this

passage of God's Word? The one great lesson surely is:

To take God at His Word! God met Jacob at Bethel – **to** make a wonderful **promise** to him! *“I **will** keep you wherever you go...I will not leave you”*[28:15]

How **meaningful** was that to Jacob? Don't know! **Until** he faced a **crisis!** Until he met his brother who threatened to kill him!

And then **what?** This *“But **You said** I will surely do you good”*[12] God's **promise!** You can rely on that!

Remind God of what He promised us?

God has promised to do good to **everyone** who comes to Him and puts their trust in Him *“**whoever** comes to Me, I will **never** cast out”* [John 6:37] *“Come to Me all who labour and are heavy laden, and **I will** give you **rest**”*[Mat 11:28]