

## Genesis 32:22-32

### Prevailing in Defeat

This event is the first of the Christophanies what we will be examining this Christmas season. It details the account of Jacob's wrestling match with God. Remember that Jesus told us plainly that one has ever seen God... anyone that has seen God has actually seen Jesus. Before His incarnation Jesus appeared in various forms, at various times to be the physical presence of God so that man could interact with Him in a meaningful manner; and so that man could comprehend something of what God was doing and saying. These encounters necessarily HUMANIZE God. They portray Him in a manner that is necessarily LESS than His Divine totality; remember that is the whole POINT of these appearances. He sort of turns down the wattage on His person so that we might interact... This is the key paradox of the incarnation: Fully God and Fully Man, God made flesh, the God-Man Jesus showed us God in a manner that was unlike anything we have ever known before or will ever know again, He is a singularity in all of history...

But in these early appearances He is still doing the same thing in one form or another. He is taking something we could never get our heads around and making it accessible. That means that God is holding back - so in this encounter, we have something that needs to be established here at the very outset - No one who understands anything of God would believe that God could not outwrestle anyone... there is something else going on here: God is teaching, changing and transforming His servant just as He is always doing in us. This event in the life of Jacob is a wonderful illustration of the wonder of the new birth... when God meets us to do battle, His intention is not our destruction but rather our complete metamorphosis...

## **I. OLD LIFE**

a. The place named Mahanaim - it means "double camp" Jacob was always a man who lived a double life, he was us in so many ways. Even those who stand around the edges and dabble their toes in religion.

- b. There is always a double nature to our lives.  
We have our purposes in what we do, what is in our lives, what happens and God has His.
  - i. Jacob saw something of this truth, although he would come to see more of it
  - ii. He recognized the truth that his purposes and God's promise ran parallel in this moment...
  - iii. We all come to a place where we sense that God is near us... and that He has come to do business with us

c. Sorrow and despair lead

- i. Jacob was expecting to have to war against his brother - coming with 400 men...
- ii. He was expecting to be attacked and lose much
- iii. He was facing a terrible and dreadful conflict and had little to no hope of emerging intact, let alone victorious
- iv. Some writers contend that Jacob was plotting and expecting to overcome his brother with his subtlety - but I think he was staring at defeat

and just trying to figure out how to emerge with his life and his family's lives.

v. Part of the process is the realization that we are empty and undone...

d. Abandon all

i. He sent many gifts, to purchase pardon and appease for the evil he had done to his brother

ii. He divided his possessions up into 2 companies, so thinking one would be a total loss and the other might hopefully escape

iii. He divided his family up into groups and sent them apart from himself so that they would not be killed in case things went terribly wrong

e. Wrestle and struggle

i. Alone and pondering

ii. Alone and praying

iii. Alone but not alone.

iv. Scripture tells us that a man came and wrestled with him all night

- v. This man did not prevail - notice that it does not say "could not" - this literally is a simple description of fact, not potential. It reminds us that the wrestling match is not about testing the strength of God but of proving the determination and mettle of Jacob... much of our struggling with God falls into this category. God is proving us out...

## II. TOUCHED BY GOD AND CHANGED

- a. Every single one of us upon emerging from our own dark night of the soul, bear a mark, a scar, a limp... there are none who truly wrestle with God and emerge unscathed. For seeing ourselves as we truly are is a terrible thing. It leaves us altered... scarred... cleansed by the fire, but scarred as well.

- i. Isaiah

**Isaiah 6.5**

- ii. Paul –

## Acts 9.8-9

iii. Peter

## Luke 5.1-11

iv. Understand that even Jesus bore the marks of His own night of wrestling with God –

### Luke 22:44 (NKJV)

<sup>44</sup> And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

### Revelation 5:6 (NKJV)

6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

b. Seeking a blessing

- i. Jacob wanted to have the blessing of God upon him, he wanted to know that God would fight for him... but this blessing had already been given.

Genesis 28.13-15

Genesis 31:3 (NKJV)

3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

- ii. Jacob wanted to KNOW that God would not abandon him... that He could be relied upon. He was proving to himself that God was trustworthy... it's a funny thing that our own character flaws are what we expect to see in others as well as in God.
- iii. God was proving to Jacob that this was really the blessing he sought. For at the other times he had received the blessing of God in one form or another, Jacob still sought his own means to

secure it. He was always striving, conniving, and scheming... his very name means "he who grasps the heel" - or "supplanter"

c. New name, new identity

i. No longer supplanter, but Israel, "Prince with God"

1. Co-heir

**Romans 8.16-17**

2. New name given to those who overcome - Jacob did not overcome God but did indeed overcome his own fleshly limitations...

ii. God promises a new name to his people as a whole, Israel shall be re-christened according to God's pleasure –

**Isaiah 62.1-7**

1. New name



2. Give him no rest
  3. Seeking the blessing with all our might...
- iii. God promises a new name to all who overcome

Revelation 2:17 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it.*” ’

Revelation 3:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him My new name.*

d. Seeking God's favor - there is a needed determination from us, not in means of our salvation, but God is preparing and shaping us in order to produce this steel in us. He is not willing that His sons be soft or His daughters frivolous... we must seek after Him with a full determination to not be put off...

i. The Syro-Phoenician woman –

**Matthew 15.21-28**

ii. Unjust judge

**Luke 18.1-8**

iii. It is important to note that God, our Father is teaching and changing US... we are not changing Him, nor are we changing His mind...

1. Moses – Golden calf

**Exodus 32.7-14**

2. refusal to enter the promised land

### Numbers 14.6-25

- iv. There is a simple thing going on here which is important, God turns us according to His own will and pleasure.

### Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord,  
*Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever  
He wishes.

### Proverbs 16:9

A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord  
directs his steps.

- v. We THINK we are in control, but God is ALWAYS in charge of everything!!

## III. NEW LIFE

- a. Seeing God

- i. Jacob begins to understand that something great is happening here... he has to have had some indication before this moment for the name he gave the camp indicates he knows something powerful and important is going on...
- ii. He asks now, what is your name? And gets the same non-answer that is given throughout scripture...

Exodus 3.13-15

Proverbs 30.4-9

- b. Knowing God
  - i. We learn to know our God by the outworking of His character in our lives.
  - ii. We learn to know our God by the power of His Word to us
  - iii. We learn to know God by the way in which He strikes against us with the truth of His power and His person. It is always a wrestling, it is always a challenge, there is always a flavor of

conflict... but it is always exactly what God has always intended to do from the very beginning

c. Altered forever, marked by God - Jacob, Israel was never the same man after this. He still struggled and failed, but he was truly changed. And so too are we when we are shaped against the anvil of God's unchanging purpose.

**2Corinthians 5.16-21**