

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Jacob-Israel – 28 May-3 June 2022

Christ said to Jacob, and “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). If you overcome, as to all who overcome, He will give “a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Revelation 2:17).

Sunday: Wrestling With God – Can we wrestle with God in prayer based on Genesis 32:24-30? People often speak of wrestling with God in prayer, as Jacob did. There is no evidence that Jacob knew that it was the Lord that was wrestling with him, until the morning broke, and his thigh was put out of joint by the touch of his antagonist. Indeed, we very well know that no man would have the hardihood to engage in a contest of strength with the Lord, if he knew Him to be the Lord. The angel appeared to him as a man, and Jacob doubtless thought that he was being attacked by a robber. We can well conceive that Jacob was in sore trouble all night. The time was fast approaching when he must face his angry brother, and he dared not meet him without the full assurance that all was right between himself and God. He must know that he was pardoned for his past wicked course. Yet the hours that he had designed to spend in communing with God, were being spent in wrestling with a supposed enemy. So we may be sure that while his strength was all engaged in resisting his antagonist, his heart was uplifted to God in bitter anguish. The suspense and anxiety of that night must have been terrible. Jacob was a man of great physical power and endurance. Watching the flocks night and day for years had demonstrated this, and had, at the same time hardened his frame. So he continued the struggle, and held his ground all night. But it was not thus that he gained the victory. We read that “by his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power, over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him; he found Him in Bethel, and there He spake with us; even the Lord of hosts; the Lord is His memorial” (Hosea 12:3-5). By his power Jacob prevailed with God, but it was not by his power and skill as a wrestler. His strength, was in his weakness. Notice that the first intimation that Jacob had that his opponent was other than an ordinary man, was when his thigh was put out of joint by the Divine touch. That revealed in an instant who his supposed enemy was. It was no human touch, but the hand of the Lord that he felt. What did he then do? What could a man do in his condition? Picture to yourself a man wrestling, where so much depends upon the strength of his legs, and having one of them suddenly dislocated. Even if he were merely walking, or simply standing still, and one of his legs should suddenly be put out of joint, he would instantly fall to the ground. Much more would he fall if he were wrestling. Such would have been the case with Jacob, if he had not at once thrown himself upon the Lord, with a firm grasp. He would most naturally grasp the nearest object for support; but the knowledge that here was the One whom he had been longing to meet, would make his grasp more than an involuntary action. His opportunity had come, and he would not let it slip. That Jacob did at once cease wrestling, and cling to the Lord, is not only most apparent from the fact that he could do nothing else, but also from the words of the Lord, “Let Me go.” “No,” said Jacob. “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” It was a case of life and death. His life and salvation depended upon his holding on to the Lord. The words, “Let Me go,” were only to test him, for the Lord does not willingly leave any man. But Jacob was determined to find a blessing indeed, and he prevailed. It was by his strength that he prevailed, but it was by the strength of faith. As Paul would say, “When I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). In that hour Jacob fully learned the lesson that the blessing and the inheritance come not by might, nor by strength, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

Monday: The Brothers Meet – In Genesis 32, what good reason did Jacob have for fearing Esau and what prayer for deliverance did he make? “And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy

seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” (verses 9-12). The reason why Jacob was so urgent when he found out with whom he had been wrestling, was that he felt that he had come to a crisis in his life; he had no earthly friends who could help him, his own brother was his sworn enemy; and he knew that if God did not interpose to help him he was lost. He knew also that this calamity had come upon him because of his own wicked course. And since sin separates from God, he knew that if Esau met him before he made his peace with God, he would be eternally lost. For this reason he had sought that retired place to pray. We can imagine the agony of mind which he suffered while he was wrestling with one whom he doubtless supposed was a robber; he had retired to seek the Lord in this emergency, and precious time was rapidly passing while he was being kept from his purpose by this stranger. As soon as he found that his antagonist was the Lord, whom he had come to seek, he ceased wrestling, and threw his arms about the Lord, while he declared, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (verse 26). This holding onto the Lord was indicative of strength of his faith, and example for all who seek blessings from the Lord.

Tuesday: The Violation of Dinah – In Genesis 34, how did God deal with Simeon and Levi in their revenge for Dinah? Levi was with Simeon in this wicked work, but Simeon seems to have been the leading spirit. The prince of Shechem had ruined Dinah, the only daughter of Jacob. It is easy to imagine how an only sister would be loved and cherished by her brothers, and especially by the sons of Leah who was also the mother of Dinah. When Jacob reproved Simeon and Levi for the murder, their only reply was, “Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?” Love for their sister evidently prompted the act of revenge. The words addressed to Simeon by Jacob, show that God does not overlook sin in any one. The fact that their only sister was ruined, was no excuse for committing that terrible act of vengeance. When the sons of Jacob gathered around their father to receive his parting blessing, the sight of Simeon and Levi brought vividly to the mind of the dying patriarch the detail of this murder committed some forty years before, and he exclaimed, “Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret.” As if he shrank from the very thought of his name being tarnished by their wicked course, he continues, “Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel” (Genesis 49:5-7). Both tribes were “divided” and “scattered” but differently! The Levites held positions of honour, and were scattered over the country as religious educators and priests. The dispersion of the tribe of Simeon arose from corrupting elements in the tribe itself, which reduced their numbers and finally resulted in driving them from their inheritance. When the land was divided among the different tribes, Simeon had no part given him; but as the allotment of Judah was too large for that tribe, Simeon was allowed to occupy a portion of the inheritance of Judah. Afterward some of the Simeonites were obliged to seek new territory, separated from their brethren (1 Chronicles 4:27, 39).

Wednesday: Prevailing Idolatry – In Genesis 34:30–35:15, what lessons can we take about true worship from what happened here? We cannot worship God and idols. When the Lord directed Jacob to go to Bethel, he said to his household: “Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, ... and I will make there an altar unto God” (Genesis 35:2-3). Here it was understood that they were unclean in the sight of God, not fit to approach unto his altar while the strange gods were among them. Jacob buried their idols in the earth.

Thursday: The Death of Rachel – In Genesis 35, how much grief befell Jacob at the death of Rachel and what evidence is recorded that he carried this grief longer? We are told: “From Bethel it was only a two days’ journey to Hebron, but it brought to Jacob a heavy grief in the death of Rachel. Twice seven years’ service he had rendered for her sake, and his love had made the toil but light. How deep and abiding that love had been, was shown when long afterward, as Jacob in Egypt lay near his death, Joseph came to visit his father, and the aged patriarch, glancing back upon his own life, said, “As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath” Genesis 48:7. In the family history of his long and troubled life the loss of Rachel was alone recalled” {PP 206.3}.