

## Jacob's Legacy

Scripture Reading: Genesis 33:1-20

In this series, we have made a brief study of Jacob's early life, using **Genesis chapters 25-32**. In the beginning of Jacob's life, we saw some very dramatic turbulence in the family. A struggle for power and authority left Jacob fleeing his home to escape the wrath of his brother Esau. Jacob encountered the grace of God at a place that he would call Bethel. The Lord revealed Himself to Jacob and a covenant was made. A personal relationship was established – established on the promises of God. From now on, Jacob would live by faith. Jacob became a changed man, but he had more changing to do. God was planning to cause growth and development of this patriarch through the experiences he would have at the home of Uncle Laban. After twenty years of serving Laban, the grace of God, which led Jacob away from his home, was now leading him back home. A new level of change and maturity was about to happen. The Jacob who left his home was not really the same Jacob who was returning. But Jacob was facing a major problem. When he left home, his brother Esau was angry and had threatened to kill him. Would Esau still be of the same mind twenty years later? Jacob literally wrestled with God at a place he named "*Peniel*" ("*peh-nee'-el*"), which means "*the face of God*." This time of wrestling with God delivered Jacob from the fear of his troubles (Psalm 34:4-9). Though he would walk with a limp the rest of his life, Jacob was now established by God as a leader and a fighter for the cause of God and truth. He was named "*Israel*" – which means "*Prince / leader / fighter / contender*."

In **Genesis chapter 33**, Jacob and Esau met. Esau's anger and jealousy were gone. Though Esau is declared to be a carnal man (Hebrews 12:16-17), yet he is to be commended for receiving his brother forgivingly, gently and lovingly. Esau showed contentment with God's provision for him and showed good will to his brother Jacob. Two principles to ponder here are Proverbs 16:7 and Matthew 5:43-45. God pacified Esau's material desires (Psalm 17:14). To study Jacob's entire life would require a much bigger series. As stated before, Jacob's life, along with the life of his son Joseph, dominate the rest of the book of Genesis. Much more could be gleaned. Though this narrative has been somewhat brief, the importance of Jacob's life and legacy needs to be summarized and appreciated.

### The God of Jacob

In about a dozen places God is called **The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** (Genesis 50:24; Exodus 3:15; Acts 3:13; 7:32 cp. Matthew 22:29-33). The world's three major religions all honor Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Acknowledging Isaac and Jacob reduces the focus to Judaism and Christianity. About seventeen times God is called "**The God of Jacob**." Jacob's name is used as a title for the twelve tribes of Israel (Psalm 53:6; Isaiah 48:1; Ezekiel 20:5; 39:25). Of the twelve tribes, the tribe of Judah and the seed of David brings focus on the Messiah and the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, when distinguishing our view of the Bible, and of the true God, it is good for us to refer to God as **The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. But also consider that God is the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This full distinction clarifies the Christian view of the true God – the God of the Bible and of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-5; 15:5-6; II Corinthians 1:3; 11:31; Ephesians 1:3; 3:14-15; Colossians 1:3; I Peter 1:3; I John 5:10-12 cp. Romans 9:1-13; 10:1-4).

**The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shows God as one who establishes a covenant with His people.** See Genesis 17:1-9 (Abraham); 26:24 (Isaac); 28:10-15; 32:9 (Jacob) cp. Exodus 3:6,15; Mark 12:26; Acts 7:32. A relationship with God is **based on His promises, not the works of the law** (Romans 1:2; 4:13-16; 15:8; Galatians 3:13-29; Ephesians 3:6; I John 2:25). Consider the significance of the title ***“The God of Jacob”*** as you are given **encouragement to trust Him** (Genesis 49:22-26; II Samuel 23:1; Psalm 20:1; 46:7,11; 75:9; 76:6; 81:1; 84:8; 94:7; 114:7; 132:2; 146:5; Isaiah 2:3; 29:23; 41:8-14; Micah 4:2; Acts 7:46). Jacob helps us to identify with the heritage of those who fear God’s name (Genesis 28:10-22; Psalm 22:23; Isaiah 29:22-24; Jeremiah 10:14-16 cp. Psalm 61:5).

### **The Humiliation of Christ**

This is a term used to describe the incarnation of Christ. The Son of God became flesh (Galatians 4:4). He identified with sinners, though He Himself was pure and without sin (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:6-17 cp. II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). The genealogy of Christ shows a list of people who have faults and sins (Matthew 1:1-7 is just a sample). Jacob is in this genealogy. If you keep studying the book of Genesis, you will see that Jacob and his family had many inglorious, sinful moments in their lives – murder, incest, kidnapping, bondage, and lies. Note Jacob’s testimony in Genesis 49:7. That Christ would be *“not ashamed to call them brethren”* (Hebrews 2:11) is an amazing testimony to the grace and saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ!

### ***“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”***

This is a quote from Romans 9:13, which is a reference to Malachi 1:2-3. These are deep and challenging statements. In Romans 9:6-13 Paul is distinguishing between the mere physical Israel (descendants of Abraham) and the spiritual Israel (true believers – God’s elect). Abraham had other children, but only the one born of Sarah was chosen to be used of God to bring forth the promises of God. Isaac had twin sons by Rebekah, but God made a choice of Jacob over Esau to be the heir and the patriarch of the chosen lineage of Christ (Genesis 25:23). In Malachi 1:1-5, God is declaring the love He has for the nation Israel. Though He gave them difficulties, disciplining them for their disobedience, yet He loves them and has plans for their future. By contrast, God does not love what the people of Edom (the descendants of Esau) have done and is going to judge them as a nation, bringing them to destruction, but delivering Jacob / Israel (Obadiah 1:1-21). This was written over a thousand years after Esau lived.

These teachings describe the righteous and sovereign work of God in the affairs of men. What God does in the matter of nations is also a concern in the matter of individuals (Romans 9:14-16). God can visit the sins of people for generations. He can also show mercy to any individual who repents and turns to Him (Exodus 20:3-4 cp. Romans 2:1-11; Revelation 20:11-15; John 6:37; Matthew 11:25-30; Psalm 145:8-21).

## Extra notes for “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated”

**Luke 14:26** – Jesus tells us to hate your father, mother, children brothers, sisters, and yourself. It is not an active, hostile kind of hatred. It shows a focus on another love – love for God that makes all other loves look like hatred. God’s love for people can be seen like this, too. He has a gracious basic love for all His creatures. But there are some who are part of His special plan and He has a special intimate love-life with them. They are “*the apple of His eye*” (i.e. The pupil – a very sensitive place, carefully protected – See Deuteronomy 32:9-12 [vs. 10]; Zechariah 2:5-10 [vs. 8]; Psalm 17:8).

### What should we do with difficult passages like Romans 9:13?

Don’t ignore them or explain them away.

- Pray and seek – humbly, reverently, patiently, diligently.
- See Proverbs 2:1-5; Matthew 7:7; II Timothy 2:15.

Don’t isolate the passage and interpret it separately from the rest of Scripture.

- Keep it integrated with the rest of Scripture and the truth that you understand.
- See Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Isaiah 28:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:19-21 cp. Acts 20:26-32; I Corinthians 14:32-33