

GENESIS 33: A REUNION OF BROTHERS

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Has the fear of the unknown caused you to take matters into your own hands?
 - i. We tend to take control of as much of life as we can
 - ii. But this is where our trust in God is revealed
 - a. Do we trust Him with the unknown? Or do we trust ourselves?
 - b. This is the theme of Jacob's life

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Jacob sees Esau is coming
 - i. So he places his wives and children behind him
- B. Esau arrives and embraces Jacob
 - i. Jacob introduces his family
 - ii. He insists that Esau accepts his gift
- C. Esau asks Jacob to come with him to his home in Seir
 - i. Jacob does not go but instead goes to Succoth
 - a. There he built a house and booths for his livestock
 - b. Then he moved to Shechem where he bought land and built an altar

III. LIFTED UP HIS EYES – V. 1

- A. Like Lot lifted up his eyes
 - i. He is still looking with his own vision
- B. He saw the army of angels and he saw God face to face
 - i. Genesis 32:1-2 ***Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp!" So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.***
 - ii. Genesis 32:30 ***So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."***
 - iii. Now all he can see is Esau
- C. He had significant encounters with God but he still struggled to trust in God
 - i. James 1:22-25 ***But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and***

perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

IV. LAST OF ALL – V. 2

- A. Jacob shows his favoritism for Rachel and Joseph by placing them last¹
 - i. Will cause problems with Joseph's brothers later on

V. WENT ON BEFORE THEM – V. 3

- A. He was now positioning himself in front rather than behind

VI. BOWING HIMSELF TO THE GROUND – V. 3

- A. Out of fear
- B. Instead of walking with a limp
 - i. Would have shown Esau God's grace in his life²
- C. Showed he didn't want any authority over Esau
 - i. Just like he previously showed he didn't want to take any wealth from him³
- D. The nations were supposed to be bowing down to him
 - i. Genesis 27:29 ***“Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!”***
- E. This is a form of deception
 - i. Manipulation or flattery⁴
- F. Abraham only bowed to the Lord
 - i. Genesis 18:2-3 ***He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, “O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.”***

VII. ESAU RAN – V. 4

- A. In contrast to Jacob's bowing

VIII. THEY WEPT – V. 4

- A. Probably for different reasons

¹ Sailhamer, J. H. (2008). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (T. Longman & D. E. Garland, Eds.; Revised Edition). Zondervan.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic: Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World: OT Commentary, Genesis 25-50*. David C. Cook.

³ Guzik, D. (2018). *Genesis 33 - The Meeting of Jacob and Esau*. Enduring Word. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-33/>

⁴ Armstrong, S. (2012, October 7). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 33*. Verse By Verse Ministry International. https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_33

- i. Esau – out of joy for seeing his brother
- ii. Jacob – out of relief that Esau has forgiven him⁵
- B. Esau’s reception was completely unexpected
- C. Jacob had made all kinds of arrangements to earn Esau’s favor
 - i. They all turned out to be unnecessary

IX. GRACIOUSLY GIVEN YOUR SERVANT – V. 5

- A. Jacob is recognizing God’s grace in his life

X. BOWED DOWN – V. 6-7

- A. Wives, children, servants did not have more authority than Jacob did
 - i. Since Jacob bowed down, so did they
 - ii. Even though Jacob should have held authority over Esau

XI. MY LORD – V. 8

- A. Jacob called Esau “my lord” even though Isaac made Jacob Esau’s lord

XII. I HAVE ENOUGH – V. 9

- A. God has blessed Esau as well
 - i. Even though he didn’t receive the blessing
 - ii. But it was all material blessing
 - a. It was enough for him

XIII. MY BROTHER – V. 9

- A. He should have called Jacob “my lord”

XIV. LIKE SEEING THE FACE OF GOD – V. 10

- A. Jacob had just seen the face of God
 - i. Last time he saw the face of God, he was delivered from God’s wrath
 - ii. Now he feels like he has been delivered from Esau’s wrath
 - a. Just like he had prayed previously
 - b. Genesis 32:11 ***Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.***
 - iii. But he never told Esau he had actually seen God

XV. MY BLESSING – V. 11

- A. Jacob had received the blessing and now he was offering a blessing to Esau

⁵ Armstrong

- i. He was offering it out of generosity now instead of fear

XVI. HE TOOK IT – V. 11

- A. People did not accept gifts from enemies, only from friends⁶

XVII. AHEAD OF YOU – V. 12

- A. Or, along with you

XVIII. LET MY LORD PASS ON – V. 14

- A. Jacob didn't want to be near Esau⁷

XIX. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE WITH ME – V. 15

- A. Jacob assumed they were there for battle
- B. But they actually came to protect Jacob and his family on their journey⁸

XX. FAVOR – V. 15

- A. Hebrew *chen/Chanan*
- B. Repeated five times
 - i. Verses 5, 8, 10, 11, 15
 - ii. Reveals God's grace in delivering Jacob from Esau

XXI. SEIR – V. 16

- A. South of the Dead Sea

XXII. JACOB JOURNEYED TO SUCCOTH – V. 17

- A. west of Jabbok river on east bank of Jordan river
- B. Jacob deceived Esau
 - i. No indication Jacob ever went to Seir
- C. This is the fifth city that Jacob named
 - i. Represents God's grace on his journeys

XXIII. HE CAMPED BEFORE THE CITY – V. 18

- A. Like Lot settled outside Sodom

XXIV. A HUNDRED PIECES OF MONEY – V. 19

- A. The value of this is unknown

XXV. THE PIECE OF LAND – V. 19

- A. Abraham bought a cave and a field for burial

⁶ Guzik

⁷ Guzik

⁸ Sailhamer

- B. Isaac dug wells
- C. Jacob bought a piece of land near Shechem
 - i. But God had told him to return to his home
 - a. Genesis 31:13 ***I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.***
 - b. Instead he built a house in Succoth and bought land in Shechem
 - i. His disobedience would result in trouble later on

XXVI. HE ERECTED AN ALTAR – V. 20

- A. He offered sacrifices to God for the first time
 - i. 1 Samuel 15:22 ***And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.***

XXVII. EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL – V. 20

- A. Means God, the God of Israel
- B. Jacob had taken on his new name

XXVIII. JACOB WAVERS IN HIS FAITH

- A. He placed himself in front of his family
 - i. Unlike when he made his family cross the river first
- B. He unquestioningly gave God the glory for all he had
- C. But he groveled before Esau with the purpose of flattery and manipulation
 - i. Because he was still afraid of Esau
- D. He obeys God’s command and refuses to go to Sier with Esau
 - i. But only halfway, as he doesn’t return to Bethel
- E. He settles outside Shechem, where he shouldn’t be
 - i. But he builds an altar to worship God for the first time
- F. Shows a man who is growing in faith but still struggles

XXIX. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Jacob is well known as a shepherd
 - i. Represents the leadership in Israel later in the prophets and gospels
 - a. Jacob is a good shepherd but he doesn’t shepherd his family very well
 - ii. He shows an outward religiosity but inwardly he still struggles to trust God
 - a. This is what Israel would struggle with

b. But Jesus came as the good shepherd

XXX. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. Why do you think the author doesn't use Jacob's new name that God gave him in this chapter?

- B. Do you think what Jacob does in this chapter reveals a good model for reconciliation? Why or why not?

- C. Why do you think God prefers obedience to sacrifice?

- D. What are some areas in your life in which you struggle to obey God? What do you think needs to happen for you to become a doer in that area instead of just a hearer?

- E. What fears cause you to waver in your faith? How can you protect against this?

XXXI. FURTHER STUDY

- A. Why do you think the author of Ecclesiastes says that the way Jacob approached Esau was evil? See Ecclesiastes 10:5-7.

- B. What point is the author trying to make by comparing Jacob's approach to Esau with Abraham's approach to the Lord in Genesis 18?

- C. Read the parable of the lost son in Luke 15:11-32. Note the similar language in verse 20 to Genesis 33:4. Why do you think Jesus compares the meeting of the father and the son so closely to the meeting of Jacob and Esau?

- D. List all the ways the parable of the lost son inverts the story of Jacob and Esau. Why do you think Jesus drew so closely on this story to tell this parable? Why did Jesus change the role of the brother?

- E. To whom was Jesus telling this parable? How does this relate to the story of Jacob and Esau and why is that important in understanding the message of the parable?
