

Jacob and Esau were Reconciled Together

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Lord instead of trying to do things in their own strength. That was a difficult lesson for Jacob to learn to apply in his life and may also be for many today. In this topic, we will see what the Lord did as Jacob chose to depend on the Lord when he met his brother, Esau.

Genesis 33:1-3 says, “Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.” Jacob had met the Lord and now he was going to meet his brother. The first thing Jacob noticed, while they were still a distance away from Jacob, his flocks and his family, was that Esau was not alone. The servants had said Esau was coming with four hundred men and Jacob could see that these men were with Esau. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” This was going to be his first test to see if he would try to depend on himself or if he would trust in the Lord.

Jacob had divided his family into two different companies so that one group might escape if Esau and the men with him were to attack. However, we see that they were all back together in one group as Jacob prepared to meet Esau. We see what Jacob did as Esau and the men got closer. Jacob had each of the four mothers take her children with her. Then, Jacob placed Bilhah and Zilpah with their sons in the front. Then, Leah and her sons followed behind the maidservants and their children. Finally, Rachel and Joseph were at the back. In this way, Jacob made it clear that Rachel was still the favored wife. However, Jacob then showed that he had a growing trust in the Lord. Jacob went ahead of his entire family so that he was the person that Esau met first. As Jacob got closer to Esau, he began bowing himself to the ground. He bowed himself a total of seven times. Jacob hoped to show Esau, by this action, that he had humbled himself and recognized his brother was the older brother and needed to be respected.

Meanwhile, we see that Esau had also had changes in his attitude toward Jacob. Genesis 33:4-7 says, “But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, ‘Who *are* these with you?’ So he said, ‘The children whom God has graciously given your servant.’ Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.” Esau did several things to show Jacob that he was forgiven. First, we see that Esau ran to meet Jacob. It had been more than twenty years since the two brothers had seen or talked to each other. By this action, Esau showed that he was very happy to see his brother again. Second, Esau embraced his brother and gave him a big hug. This is a common action when family members have not seen each other for a long time. In addition, Esau wanted Jacob

to know he was forgiven. The anger and hatred Esau felt when Jacob fled more than twenty years earlier was no longer there. Instead, that anger had been replaced by a strong desire to see his brother again.

Third, Esau kissed his brother. This showed that his anger and hatred had been replaced by love and concern. Finally, we see that they both wept together. These were not tears of anger or bitterness. Instead, they were tears of joy because they were reconciled to each other. Many times, when people become angry and refuse to speak to one another for an extended period of time, they forget the cause of the original conflict and feel sorrow for the broken relationship. However, many times people are unwilling, because of their own pride, to be the one who takes the leadership to restore that relationship. Here, Esau showed that he was very thankful Jacob had chosen to come to him and their relationship had been restored.

Esau was so excited to see Jacob he had not even noticed that there were other people behind him at first. Once he felt their relationship was restored, Esau looked behind Jacob and saw that there were women and children behind him. This caused him to ask the question, “Who are these with you?” That gave Jacob the opportunity to introduce his children and their mothers to Esau. That is why he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” Jacob still used the phrase “your servant”. Jacob explained that these were the children the Lord had given to him while the two brothers were separated from one another. First, the two maidservants with their children came close to Jacob. Both the maidservants and their children bowed down to Esau just as Jacob had done. Here, we see that Jacob had carefully instructed his family what they were to do when they met Esau. They showed their humility and respect toward Esau.

Once Esau had been introduced to the maidservants and their four children, then Leah, her six sons and her daughter all came and bowed down to Esau. They also showed their respect by bowing to Esau. Jacob was then able to introduce them to Esau. Finally, Rachel came and brought Joseph with her. Like the others, Rachel and Joseph also bowed down to Esau. This attitude of respect and humility by Jacob and his entire family showed Esau more about the changes in attitude that Jacob had. Esau could see the changes in the attitude of Jacob and his family. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Although these verses were not written until nearly two thousand years later, they summarize the attitude of Jacob and his family toward Esau.

Genesis 33:8-11 introduces the next question of Esau, when those verses say, “Then Esau said, ‘What *do you mean by* all this company which I met?’ And he said, ‘*These are* to find favor in the sight of my lord.’ But Esau said, ‘I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.’ And Jacob said, ‘No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.’ So he urged him, and he took *it*.” Here, we see that this question is about the five hundred and eighty animals Esau had met before he met Jacob. Esau wanted to know why Jacob had given these animals to him.

Jacob explained that the purpose of this gift was to find favor in the sight of Esau. Jacob again called Esau “my lord”. Esau recognized that this very large number of animals was a huge gift. The original conflict over the blessing was due to the fact that Esau wanted the double inheritance that went along with the blessing. This gift of these five hundred and eighty animals may have been nearly as much as Esau would have received by a double inheritance. The anger of Esau over the loss of the blessing was gone. He had been reconciled with his brother and so he said to Jacob, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” Esau did not feel that he needed that gift. Genesis 36:6-7 says, “Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock.” Here, we see that Esau had also gained many cattle and other animals while Jacob was in the land of Haran. As a result, he later chose to move away from Jacob so there would be enough grass for them both to feed their cattle, sheep, goats and other animals.

It was very important to Jacob that Esau take this large gift of animals. That would let him know that there was not any lingering anger in Esau that might still be hidden. Jacob said, “...I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me...” Jacob had seen the face of the Lord the previous night. Now, he had seen the face of his brother. The Lord had taken away his fear and given him a new attitude which he had shown as he talked with his brother. Jacob had also seen that the Lord had changed the attitude of Esau toward him, and they had been reconciled to one another. Jacob could see by the actions and words of Esau that his brother was pleased to see him again. This brought great joy and peace to the heart of Jacob. A few hours earlier, he had received a blessing from the Lord. Now, he wanted Esau to receive a blessing from him.

The fact that Jacob said he wanted to give this gift to his brother as a blessing gave the gift a whole new meaning to Esau as well. As a result, when Jacob urged him to receive this gift for that reason, we see then that Esau received the gift. Jacob had earlier made a covenant with Laban, based on the fear of Laban that Jacob would return at a later time to claim the inheritance, because someone had the gods of Laban. In contrast, just as Jacob had received a blessing from the Lord, he now wanted his brother to receive his gift as a blessing. That is why Esau chose to receive that gift when Jacob urged him to receive the gift. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to give a blessing to others instead of taking from others. Our children will follow our example as they see that we give a blessing to others, when we combine our teaching with our actions, so that they see us bless others in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to bless others.