

Jacob Wrestles with God

Genesis 32 - 33

by Don Falkos

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Jacob sent a message to his brother Esau. "I'm coming home." When the messengers came back they said, "Your brother is coming to meet you and there are four hundred men with him."

Jacob was frightened. He divided his people into two groups, thinking, "If Esau attacks one group, the other group can escape."

He prayed, "O God, you told me to return home. Save me from my brother's anger."

Jacob gathered five herds of animals and sent them on ahead. He told his servants, "Keep some distance between the herds, and when Esau meets you, each of you is to say the same thing, 'These animals are a gift to my lord Esau from your servant Jacob who is coming behind us.' "

That night, when Jacob was alone, a man came and wrestled with him until daybreak. Then the man struck Jacob on the hip, throwing it out of joint.

Jacob was tenacious, "I won't let you go until you bless me."

The man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob. Instead, you will be called Israel" – a name that means "Wrestles with God." Then the man blessed Jacob.

Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive."

The sun rose. Jacob could see Esau coming. He limped out toward him, bowing to the ground seven times as he approached. But Esau ran forward, threw his arms around Jacob, and kissed him. The two men wept.

As Esau left for home Jacob assured him that he would follow, but he didn't. He went the other way and settled outside the city of Shechem.