

SEEKING RECONCILIATION

Returning to the promised land required Jacob to face up to the problems that his sin had created there before he left. His mother had promised to send for him when Esau's anger had abated, but there is no record of any contact with her again. Jacob knew that returning home initiated a potentially dangerous encounter with Esau.

JACOB MEETS ANGELS v 1-2 – Jacob would have been acutely aware of his own helpless situation. He had no army, just his wives, children and servants. Yet the Lord unveiled to him a hidden source of strength and protection in the angels of God. Jacob had seen the angels in his dream when he first left home to find his wife, and God reminded him that they were still occupied in that service for God (Gen.28:15). Wherever he set up camp, God and His angels would be with him too. Therefore, Jacob called it 'Mahanaim' meaning 'two hosts'. We cannot see the spiritual realm, but that does not mean it does not exist. Angels continue to minister to those who will be 'heirs of salvation' (Heb.1:14), and are watching how the church relates to the authority of God (1 Cor.11:10). They marvel, peering down from heaven to gaze at the way in which Christ has redeemed mankind from their fallen state (1 Peter 1:12).

REACHING OUT TO ESAU v 3-6 – Jacob wanted to convey to Esau that he came in forgiveness not war. So, he sent messengers to him explaining his respect for Esau, his complete financial independence and desire for his gracious acceptance. The disconcerting reply however, was that Esau had already set out towards him, with four hundred men! Esau did not know of Jacob's chastened character, and thus prepared to meet him on their past territory of rivalry and conflict. We are not told how he knew of Jacob's intentions to meet with him, but there was clearly very effective means of communication despite the many miles between them. The news of an approaching army filled Jacob with fear and dread, despite God's assurances.

CALLING UPON GOD v 7-12 – ever a man of action, Jacob organised his comparatively small company, people and animals alike, into two smaller groups, hoping one would be spared. He disliked doing that. Dividing his family was a terrible thing so he cast himself upon the Lord acknowledging:

- the Lord's Sovereign direction and leading (v 9)
- his own unworthiness for his calling (v 10)
- his humble journey (v 10)
- his fear (v 11)
- his need to be protector and guide for his family (v 12)
- God's promise to bless him and multiply his descendants (v 12)

Then he slept and waited upon God (v 13). Sometimes we face overwhelming situations that makes us anxious despite knowing and trusting in God. Following Jacob's example of combining practical preparation with heartfelt prayer that claims God's promises brings peace and assurance into the situation.

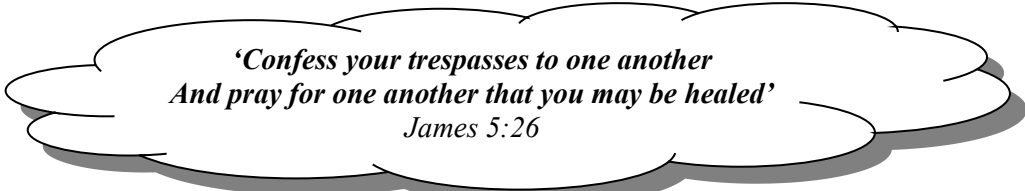
MESSAGES OF PEACE v 13-20 – in the morning, Jacob sent a succession of peace offerings ahead of his family group to pacify his brother. The batches totalled about 550 animals in all. Each servant was given a specific message to convey on Jacob's behalf, and it was one of great humility. They were to say 'a present from your servant' to 'my lord Esau' and 'your servant Jacob' comes behind us. Reconciliation was dependent upon Jacob assuming a position of generosity and complete humility. When we come to Christ and are 'born again' of the Spirit of God, there may be a history of family conflict. Jacob waited twenty years to address his, but in the end, it had to be confronted if Jacob was to fully enter in to the blessing of God. Reconciliation with family is important to God and a vital part of testimony but requires great generosity of spirit, careful planning and faith in God's protection.

The angelic hosts are real and powerful. What role have they played in Israel's history, and on earth today?

(2 Kings 6:13-18, Mat 18:10, Psalm 103:20-22, 2 Thes 1:6-10)

Compare Jacob's prayer with the Lord's prayer in Matt. 6:9-13. Compile a 'script' that could be used as an example of how to pray about a specific need or fear, using the same principles.

What sort of 'peace offerings' could we offer in order to start a process of reconciliation with estranged members of our family? How do we know when this should begin?



***'Confess your trespasses to one another
And pray for one another that you may be healed'***
James 5:26