

## Esau and Jacob - Conclusion

**Author:** Larry W. Wilson

Two issues were presented in last month's *Wake Up Report!* that require a short review. First, to appreciate the context of Jacob's actions, we need to remember that Jacob was about seventy years old when he deceived his father, Isaac. In other words, Jacob's deception was not a youthful indiscretion.

Jacob covered himself with animal skins, put on Esau's clothes, and then lied to his father to steal Esau's birthright. Second, we know that Esau was a free spirit; he loved to roam the "open country," whereas Jacob was content to live among the tents of his parents.

Esau was not a spiritual man, whereas Jacob had a heart for God. Moreover, Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob. These dynamics converged into a tragedy when Rebekah and Jacob conspired to rob Esau of his birthright by deceiving Isaac. This summary has been provided because Esau and Jacob represent two classes of sinners – the "non-religious wicked" (Esau) and the "religious wicked" (Jacob).

I call one group the "religious wicked" because outwardly, they are religious, but their conduct is wicked. A great gulf exists between being *religious* and having a character that pleases God. All religions have wicked people in them. It is paradoxical that a person can have heart for God and behave like the devil.

The devil is thrilled when "religious" people profane God's holy name. Millions of people will have nothing to do with God because they have witnessed the disgusting behaviors of those who claim to be religious! For example, the Pharisees in Christ's day were religiously devout, but their ways were evil.

For a while, Judas appeared to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, but his ways were evil. Corporately speaking, the nation of Israel claimed to be God's people, but their ways were often an abomination to Him. **"And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the Lord's people, and yet they had to leave his land.' "** (Ezekiel 36:20)

### Three Groups of People

I believe God sorts the people on Earth into three groups: The religious wicked, the non-religious wicked, and His saints. A sinner becomes a saint when he surrenders his life to the Holy Spirit and experiences the miracle of "sin-sorrow" in his heart. It's like being born all over again!

*Sin-sorrow is a divine gift that arrives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Sin-sorrow produces reformation, an eagerness to provide restitution, as necessary, and a determination to glorify God in every aspect of life. Sin-sorrow should not be confused with guilt-sorrow.*

Cain built an altar to worship God because Cain was a religious man, but God rejected Cain's offering because Cain refused to provide the required sacrifice. Cain became angry with God and furious with his brother because God exalted the altar of his younger brother. Cain killed Abel out of jealousy. He coveted the respect and honor that God gave Abel.

God saw Cain kill Abel and God confronted Cain with his sin. Cain was not sorry that he had killed Abel. When Cain learned that he would be cursed for his sin, Cain experienced guilt-sorrow. He became sorry that he had been cursed. God evicted Cain from his home and exiled him from working his beautiful gardens.

For the rest of his life (which probably lasted several hundred years) Cain would have to wander about as a marked man and he cried out to the Lord that his punishment (not his guilt) was more than he could bear. (Genesis 4:9-13) Again, there is a huge difference between sin-sorrow and guilt-sorrow.

According to the apostle Paul, Esau was a godless man. (Hebrews 12:16 ) This is why Esau belongs in the category of the non-religious wicked. Many people in this category (atheists and agnostics) have good hearts (humanly speaking), but they do not know "sin-sorrow."

When Esau learned that Jacob had stolen his blessing, Paul says that even though Esau was furious, ". . . **He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.**" (Hebrews 12:17) Esau was agnostic and he chose to stay that way by shutting out the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He was not interested in walking with the Lord or assuming the spiritual responsibility that came with the birthright. Esau wanted his father's blessing (human approval), but he did not want the obligation of trusting and obeying God.

Because Jacob sinned against Esau and Isaac, he had to leave his mother and the security of home. As he trudged through the open wilderness, the weight of his transgressions became more overwhelming than the weight of his backpack. At some point in his trip, "sin-sorrow" overtook Jacob and he realized for the first time that he was unworthy of the very birthright that he had stolen!

The Holy Spirit finally managed to open Jacob's eyes when he was seventy years old. He realized how far he had fallen from glorifying God in word and action and that he had insulted God by doing things that God hates. Even more, he had profaned God's holy name in Esau's eyes by defrauding him. Jacob saw his hypocrisy as Esau saw it and was crushed. I can imagine that tears rolled down Jacob's cheeks as he confessed his sins to God. I am sure he cried, "Lord, have mercy on me! Look at the huge mess I've made!"

Sin had robbed Jacob of his home and his brother's respect. He was a fugitive from justice, seeking refuge in the wilderness. (Ironically, in a number of ways, Jacob was not very far away from the wilderness where Moses would flee centuries later after killing an Egyptian and where his offspring, the twelve tribes of Israel, would wander for forty years.)

"When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in

which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'

"When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.' Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.' " (Genesis 28:11-22)

God gave this vision to Jacob for at least two reasons. First, because Jacob had experienced sin-sorrow, God assured Jacob that His covenant would be conveyed to him. Of course, Jacob did not have a godly character at the moment, but he had become a saint because he had experienced "sin-sorrow" and repented of his sins.

Jacob resolved that if and when possible, he would make things right with Esau. Second, the vision separated Jacob's past from his future. From this date forward, Jacob would live according to God's will. His greed would be displaced with contentment – receiving with gratitude whatever God provided for him. His dishonesty would be displaced with honesty. (See Genesis 30:33.)

Some people have wondered how God could skip over Esau and pass His covenant to Jacob because (a) biologically, Jacob was not entitled to the birthright and (b) legally, Jacob was not entitled to the birthright blessing because he acquired it through fraud. So, consider the following thoughts.

We know that God rejected Cain's offering because Cain did not meet the requirements. God's approval is not determined by man's will. God is not bound by biological order. God's covenant is not limited to the firstborn. In fact, God did not convey His covenant to Jacob until Jacob had repented of his sins against Esau and Isaac. God only selected Jacob as the heir of His covenant after the sinner became a saint!

Jacob served Laban for twenty years and Laban defrauded Jacob more times than Jacob could count. I am sure that Jacob saw his past mirrored in Laban's deceitful actions many times. Nevertheless, God's grace changed Jacob's heart. He was diligent and honest in his ways and

he waited patiently upon the Lord for each blessing. After twenty years of serving Laban, the Lord told Jacob to return to his homeland. (Genesis 31:3-13) Jacob obeyed and he managed to get away from his grasping and overbearing father-in-law, only to face his brother Esau coming with 400 men.

"[As he was nearing home] **Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He instructed them:** [notice the humility] **'This is what you are to say to my *master* Esau: "Your *servant* Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. [After 20 years of service] I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes."** '

"When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, 'We went to your brother Esau [but we did not speak to him – we were afraid when we saw the number of men], **and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.'** **In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, 'If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape.'**

"Then Jacob prayed, 'O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, "Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper," I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant.

I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, "I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted." '

"He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.

He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, 'Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds.' He instructed the one in the lead: 'When my brother Esau meets you and asks, "To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?" then you are to say, "They belong to your *servant* Jacob.

They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us." ' . . . For he thought, 'I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.' " (Genesis 32:3-20, insertions and italics mine)

This story has a very happy ending. Jacob and Esau were reconciled. **"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. 'Who are these with you?'**

he asked. Jacob answered, 'They are the children God has graciously given your *servant*.' Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

"Esau asked, 'What do you mean by all these droves I met?' 'To find favor in your eyes, my lord,' he said. But Esau said, 'I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.' 'No, please!' said Jacob. 'If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me.

For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.' And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it. Then Esau said, 'Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you.' " (Genesis 33:4-12, insertion and italics mine)

Two brothers separated by sin were united through the humility and repentance of one. Esau saw a profound change in Jacob. Instead of the arrogant and stingy brother who counted every penny twice, Jacob had become humble and exceedingly generous. Esau immediately saw that Jacob's greed for money had been displaced by love for people.

Jacob's arrogance had been displaced by genuine humility. Even Esau, a godless man, was touched by what he saw! Evidently, he and Jacob lived together in peace thereafter for there is no record of further hostility between them. In fact, both men laid their father to rest. **"Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."** (Genesis 35:28,29)

**(Note:** It is ironic that Isaac thought he was going to die more than twenty years before he actually died. In fact, it was Isaac who sent Esau on a mission to capture wild game because he thought he was near death. (Genesis 27:2-4) Isaac's action alerted Rebekah and she conspired with Jacob to seize Esau's birthright. (Genesis 27:6-13) Rebekah died during Jacob's absence, but Isaac lived on and he must have been overjoyed when Jacob returned home. He must have been very pleased when he learned that God Himself had passed His covenant to Jacob and of all things, there is no evidence that Esau was unhappy about it!)

## Jacob's Time of Trouble

"[After hearing that Esau was coming toward him with four hundred men,] . . . **Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.**

"So Jacob was left alone, and [sometime during the night, Jacob was ambushed by a man who he thought was a spy from Esau's army] **a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him** [that is, the 90 year old Jacob would not give up], **he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with**

the man.

**Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.' But Jacob [realizing the man in his grasp was The Angel of the Lord] replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered. Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled *with God* and *with men* and have overcome.'**

"Jacob said, 'Please tell me your name.' But he replied, 'Why do you ask my name?' [You already know Me!] **Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.' The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.**" (Genesis 32:22-32, insertions and italics mine)

There are several interesting aspects in this story. First, Jacob discovered the consequences of greed when he was separated from his doting mother. She had spoiled Jacob from the realities of life by giving him everything he wanted. Second, Jacob's sins against his brother and father forced him into exile, a situation where the Holy Spirit could bring about "sin-sorrow."

Third, Jacob repented of his sins and at seventy years of age, God put a right spirit and a clean heart within him. Fourth, to purify Jacob's character, God gave Jacob a harsh master (Laban). His father-in-law was a member of the "religious wicked" group and he mirrored Jacob's previous ways. Finally, God in His infinite wisdom, knew that Jacob needed an "extreme makeover" and once Jacob became repentant, the Holy Spirit made it happen!

At the Jabbok River that night, Jacob soberly faced an old sin. Esau, the warrior-brother he had defrauded twenty years ago, was coming toward him with 400 men. Jacob knew this day would come and he made several deliberate actions. He had forwarded a large portion (maybe half) of his herds to Esau in an effort to appease his brother, but was it enough? Would Esau forgive him or kill him? Jacob was troubled because he wanted peace with Esau. Even more, he wanted to know that God was pleased with his efforts to appease Esau. (See Matthew 5:23,24.)

I can imagine that Jacob was sitting on a rock, scanning and listening through the darkness for any evidence of movement. Suddenly, Jacob was attacked from behind. Instinctively, Jacob fought back. At first, Jacob may have thought that he was struggling with a spy from Esau's camp.

As the battle continued, Jacob realized that he was not wrestling with an ordinary man. It dawned on him that he was wrestling with The Angel of the Lord! God struggled with Jacob because He wanted to see if this ninety year old man truly wanted His approval. When Jacob realized that he was wrestling with God, his struggle changed.

Instead of fending off his attacker, Jacob did everything possible to hang on to Him! This is why the angel said, "**Let me go, for it is daybreak.**" (Genesis 32:26) In my mind's eye, I can see an exhausted Jacob being pulled about on the ground and his arms were wrapped around one leg

of the angel.

The angel said, "**Let me go!**" But Jacob would not let go because he knew that once God left, his question would remain. So, Jacob said, "**I will not let you go unless you bless me.**" Jacob had done his best to make restitution with Esau, and the only thing that mattered now was the assurance that God was pleased.

The angel said, "**Your name will no longer be Jacob [the cheater], but Israel [the overcomer], because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.**" (Genesis 32:28) The moral of this story is that God honored Jacob with a name change because Jacob had overcome his defects.

It was a struggle for Jacob to be honest with Laban because Laban was a thief, but it was the right thing to do. It was a struggle for Jacob to give Esau the restitution he deserved, but Jacob did so because it was the right thing to do. It was a struggle for Jacob to wrestle with God until he received the assurance that his sin had been forgiven, but he did so.

The good news is this: Everyone who struggles to live right and make things right, as necessary, will receive God's blessing and approval. God will also give each person a new name! ". . . **To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.**" (Revelation 2:17)

John wrote, "**For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.**" (1 John 5:4) Every saint has to experience Jacob's time of trouble. Every saint has a carnal nature and this nature wars against our efforts to live right in God's sight and make things right as needed. The Bible predicts that a day is coming when Jesus will remove the carnal nature from His saints\* and "the children of Israel" will be free from sin at last. (Hebrews 8:10) Jesus said, "**So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**" (John 8:36)

God considers each born again person to be a child of Abraham and Israel. (Galatians 3:28,29) Paul wrote,

". . . **For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel [that is, biology cannot make you a descendant of Israel]. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. . . . In other words, it is not the natural children [born of the flesh] who are God's children . . . .**" (Romans 9:6-8. See also Galatians 3:26 and Romans 8:14.)

If you have grown weary of struggling with sin, don't give up! Jacob didn't give up. Ask the Lord to renew your determination. Ask the Lord for courage to fight the good fight of faith. Ask the Lord for strength to do what is right and the determination to make wrongs right as far as possible. Hang on to the Lord's leg until you get the blessing that you want!

If we follow Jacob's example, we will receive a peace that passes understanding, and a crown of righteousness awaits us. (2 Timothy 4:8) Paul understood the importance of struggling forward. He wrote, "**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called**

**me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)**

\*Note: For further study on the sealing that occurs during the Great Tribulation, please read Chapters 4-6 (Justification, Predestination and The Sealing, respectively) in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*, or you can download these articles at <https://www.wake-up.org/Alpha/Subjindex.htm>.

Press on,  
Larry Wilson