

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS XXXIV.) APPEASEMENT CAN BE WRONG GENESIS 32:1-21

Q: What is appeasement?

Q: Is it good, bad or neutral?

A.) THE SITUATION

- So far, we have seen Jacob flee from his brother Esau over the birthright and blessing and then end up settling with Laban for 20yrs. while being taken advantage of by his father-in-law. Nevertheless, God used this time to refine and mature Jacob while also blessing him with a large family and prosperity. The day then comes that God Himself tells Jacob it is time to return to the Promised Land with his family in order that God may continue to carry forth His plan for the world.
- Except there is still a great potential obstacle immediately before them. **What is it?**
- That means going through Esau. How will he respond? What could this mean?
- In Human Terms, if Jacob were to find Esau still bitter and set upon revenge and/or determined to take back the inheritance by force, he'd surely have no chance.
- The temptations of doubt, insufficiently, and unworthiness threaten Jacob.
- Jacob leaves one obstacle/enemy who opposed him outside of the Promised Land (Laban) and now prepares to confront another who is within the Land.
- **As we study this, keep in mind how this situation parallels the struggles all believers have between the dual enemies of the world on the outside and the flesh from within.**

B.) A TRAVELING PARTY OF TWO CAMPS (vv. 1-2)

- Once again, in his time of need on the cusp of a great challenge of faith and circumstance, Jacob is given an extraordinary message from God via His angels.
- Once again, the message is to have faith and persevere in the path God has put him on, for the divine Hand of protection will journey with him.
- **Hebrews 13:5-6**
- The immediate result for Jacob is to see God's Presence and name the place accordingly.

Q: What might be the meaning and significance of calling this place Mahanaim - "Two Camps"?

- A convergence of Earthly-Heavenly; man-God; weakness-strength

C.) PREPARING FOR DANGER (vv. 3-8)

Q: Is Jacob here being prudent or faithless? Why?

- Yes, dividing into two groups would have been common and smart tactic for a tribe approaching and expected potential overwhelming danger. There is no question that common sense and vast majority opinion would consider this prudent and anything else plain foolish and irresponsible.
- HOWEVER, we cannot just ignore or put aside the qualifying factor Jacob is traveling upon Almighty God's clear and unmistakable call as well as His promise of protection and completion.
- In that light, Jacob is clearly here demonstrating a 'hedging' against God's faithfulness and/or sufficiency.

Q: How does division contrast with the significance of the place and experience Jacob just left: Mahanaim - “Two Camps”?

- He quickly forget the divine partnership and saw only a human one.
- Further, Jacob demonstrates a willingness to sacrifice half of God's what he was given through God's blessings in order to hope to hold on to the other half; rather than trusting in God to preserve all.

D.) REMEMBERING THE DELIVERER (vv. 9-12)

- Interestingly, *after* Jacob hedges his chances through human means, *then* he turns to what should have been his strategy from the beginning!
- He remembers that it is God Almighty who is his deliverer and to whom he must go to and rely on for strength.
- In spite of his first hedging, this itself is actually a model prayer and example for us. Consider:
 - 1.) He bases his prayer upon the received Word of God.
 - 2.) He recognizes and confesses his own unworthiness.
 - 3.) He identifies and presents himself as a servant of the Most High.
 - 4.) He acknowledges and thanks God for His previous blessings and leading.
 - 5.) He throws himself upon God for deliverance.
 - 6.) He concludes by re-affirming God's faithfulness and the certainty of His Word.

Q: Does this then mean that Jacob changed direction and is doing right?

- No! It simply means he is hedging. He is doing before God what he knows is right and expected, but he isn't willing to completely trust in that.
- In his prayer he refers to himself as God's servant, but then turns right around and offers himself to Esau as his servant despite God's Word that Jacob is to be the heir and Esau the servant.
- Though he pledges faith in God and cries out to Him, Jacob nevertheless continues to be controlled by his fear and guilt.

E.) PANICKING TO APPEASEMENT (vv. 13-21)

- Now the time of actual crises and decision comes. Rather than calmly trust in the LORD, Jacob panics in his fear of Esau's retribution and guilt over his own role of deception and ambition.
- Out of this panic and guilt, he quickly turns to a strategy of appeasement with his brother Esau.
- He adds all the power and weight to this appeasement effort by dividing up all that he is ultimately willing and expecting to have to give up to buy peace into five separate groups that will each be presented one at a time with some space in between.

Q: What is especially significant about this?

- Rather than trust in God, Jacob continues to hedge his trust upon his own craftiness.
- Rather than seek to find grace in the sight of his brother Esau, Jacob tries to win peace and reconciliation through bribery.
- Rather than risk his brother's (and neighbor) animosity or conflict, Jacob offers to give up his own blessing and calling from God!
- **This latter sounds particularly shocking, and yet think deeply about how many times you and I have done the same in different circumstances?!**

SUMMARIZING LESSON:

IS APPEASEMENT ALWAYS RIGHT OR BEST?

What is really more important to me: God's call and blessing or that of another?

- When God tells us to move forward with His blessing, but our brother/sister/friend/neighbor wants what God has given to us, what do we do?
- Is it ever right to give up what God reserved and gave just for us in order to please or have peace with someone else?