

**THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS
XXXVI.) RECONCILIATION
GENESIS 33:1-20**

Q: Where did we leave off? Please summarize the setting for us.

Q: What is reconciliation?

A.) THE ENCOUNTER (vv. 1-11)

1.) **Caution (vv. 1-3)**

Q: What does this last act of caution tell us about Jacob-Israel?

- He is still insisting on worrying about the 'what if' and assisting God's promised deliverance.
- The three divisions indicate a desire to at least save some if things don't work out too well.
- The three divisions show how Jacob values those in his family and the levels of favoritism he shows to his children. The concubines and children from them are most expendable. Then, Leah and her children. Rachel & Joseph are most valued and loved.

Q: How do you think this impacted his family?

- Must have made them all feel expendable, with clearly some more than others.
- Would have exasperated inter-family rivalries, jealousies, fear and paranoia.
- Likely contributed significantly to how and why Joseph was later ostracized from, hated and feared by all his other brothers who – amongst themselves – maintained filial love despite different mothers.

2.) **Reception (vv. 3-5)**

Q: What are your initial thoughts and perceptions about this meeting?

- Jacob from the start approached with a clear expression of humility and respect.
- It was a customary practice in that time that when approaching a king or tribal leader, one should bow seven times.
- Of course, this also means Jacob is recognizing Esau as a rightful 'king' of this Land even though it is Jacob's by birthright, blessing and the promise of God.
- It is a very emotional reunion.
- Somewhat shocking, it is Esau who immediately proves himself to be a significantly changed man.

3.) **Contrast (vv. 3-5)**

Q: What contrasts do you notice between the brothers in this encounter?

- Jacob approaches slowly and uncertainly, while Esau meets him with spontaneity and enthusiasm.
- Jacob is formal, Esau is filial (brotherly).
- Jacob was still focused on the past, Esau obviously learned from and put the past behind him.
- In contrast to when they grew up together, Jacob was the one who was tense & high-strung, and Esau who was loose and hospitable.

4.) **Repair (vv. 6-11)**

- This whole section is about Jacob & Esau each seeking to repair and officially both put their past (especially it's mistakes, offenses and grievances) in the past.
- It is particularly noteworthy that Jacob refers to his gift to Esau as “*my blessing*.” Of course, he could not really give back the blessing, but he could demonstrate remorse and respect by offering to share the fruit of the blessing.
- Esau's reluctance to accept was equally an expression that he had already forgiven Jacob and that there is no debt to be paid.
- Jacob's further insistence that Esau accept was a further acknowledgment that his desire was not just for Esau's forgiveness, but it was his own desire also to bless his brother.
- Throughout this exchange, on both sides, the connecting theme is GRACE – God's, Esau's and Jacob's. Because God first blessed each of the brothers in grace, and they each recognized and accepted this gift, they could then further offer the gift of grace to one another! Jacob's remark about Esau's face being like God's is a reference to the 'shine of Grace.'

Q: What can we, personally this morning, take away from this example?

B.) RECONCILIATION ALLOWS SEPARATION (vv. 12-17)

- AFTER this wonderful reunion and reconciliation, the brothers part ways rather than dwell together. They separate rather than combine.
- It is an agreed, voluntary and peaceful separation.

Q: Why? How do you think God might have felt about this?

- It was, in fact, wise, respectful and a following of God's will, purpose and instruction.
- God had different future plans and desires for each of them.
- Though brothers and reconciled, they still had two very different natures and approaches to life. To stay together in regular, close, physical proximity would have inevitably lead once again to unnecessary and prohibitive conflict.
- It was best for their relationship and best for their fulfillment of God's purposes for each of them to live as reconciled, loving brothers AND at the same time with a physical separation and with it freedom to be the individuals God made them and pursue the plan God has for them.

Q: What might be some situations we have or could find ourselves in today where this could be equally true and valuable?

C.) **STAKING THE PROMISE** (vv. 18-20)

- What a glorious moment! The longtime aimless nomad finally prepares to make a permanent settlement. And he does so where he's supposed to be – in the Promised Land!
- First, he pitches tents at Succoth.
- Then, after some time, he proceeded to Shechem and camped there. Shechem, by the way, also happens to be where God first appeared to Abram after he entered the Land (12:6-7).
- He then proceeded, by God's grace and blessing, to buy a parcel of land and thereby permanently establish himself, his people, and his future generations in the Promised Land!
- He then, like his Grandfather before him, built there an altar to God to praise and credit Him for His provision, grace, and faithfulness to the Promise.
- Through the name, he acknowledged that this is all because of the grace of God, the God to whom he is personally connected. Jacob also here fully embraces the new name God had previously given him – Israel. In doing so, he further commemorates Yahweh as the God who gives him victory over his struggles.
- On this spot, then, a center of worship to the One True God is established in the midst of an idolatrous, rebellious land.
- The permanency of this place as an anchor to the Promise is continued to be seen through the generations. Joseph will later be buried in this same spot (Joshua 24:32). And much, much later, even after the division of the Nation of Israel, this spot would give a special visitation by the incarnate Jesus Christ and is where He confirms the nature True Worship and touches the first person who will prove to be a witness to many (John 4:6).

Dr. Ross summarizes the lesson of this chapter:

“If people would trust the Lord to deliver them, they would not be so anxious, so willing to relinquish that which God has given to them and done for them; they would face the difficulties with the expectation that the Lord would resolve the matter; and they could look back on such times with a triumphant acknowledgment of God's deliverance. They may find it proper to make restitution for past wrongs, not in order to appease the enemy, but as witness to the faith in God's working in their lives. Reconciliation is a work of grace, to be sought by faith and acknowledged in praise.” (pg. 567)