The Parable of Jacob’s Reunion with Esau [Genesis 32-32]

After Jacob left Laban. He got to a place where he met God’s angels and he called the place the Camp of God and named it Mahanaim. From there, Jacob sent his servants ahead of him to Seir where Esau lived to find favour with him. Jacob’s servants returned to tell him that Esau was on his way to intercept them with a convoy of 400 of men. Jacob – in fear – prays to God for protection, divides his camp in two, and sends many gifts ahead of him to Esau to atone for himself. Jacob then meets and Angel and they wrestle till the Angel changes Jacob’s name to Israel. After this, Jacob is reunited with his brother Esau who is happy to see him. Esau makes an offer to Israel to come live with him in Seir, but Jacob tactfully declines and instead moves with his camp to Succoth where he settles with his family.

# Keys to Interpreting the Parable

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| The Elements in the Parable | Spiritual Meaning |
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| The Characters | |
| Jacob | Christ |
| Esau | God the Father |
| Jacob’s Family | The Church |
| Esau’s 400 Men | God’s Angels |
| Jacob’s two camps | Can be seen as Israel and the Gentiles |
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| The Locations | |
| Mahanaim and Peniel the Camp of God and the place Jacob wrestled with the Angel [Gen 32:2, 22-30; Hos 12:3-4] | Heaven, God’s Camp where Jesus contends for His people with God [Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1Jn 2:1] |
| Seir where Esau lived | Heaven, the dwelling place of the Father and His heavenly servants |
| Succoth where Jacob settled | The New Jerusalem, Home of Christ, and His people |

# Table Summary of the Parable

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| Description of Event | Spiritual Meaning |
| Preparation to Meet Esau | ***Christ Represents Mankind, the Last Adam.*** |
| Jacob just parted with Laban | Christ has just obtained Israel and the Church. |
| The angels of God met Jacob and Jacob calls the place the camp of God [Gen 32:1-2] | Christ goes to heaven, to the camp of God |
| He prepares to see his brother Esau whom he had offended years ago | Christ prepares for the judgment |
| Jacob sends word to Esau [Gen 32:4-5]    *Jacob is the one who sends to/for Esau.*  *Though Jacob knows that meeting with Esau is dangerous, as Esau had vowed to kill him, yet we must note that it was Jacob and not Esau who initiated the meeting.* | The meeting of Jacob and Esau is representative of the meeting between man *(the Last Adam, Christ)* and God. It is judgement day. It is the end of this age.  So, with Christ in heaven, the camp of God, he initiates the end of the age, the judgment of the world. |
| 1. He is Esau’s servant | Man is fully subject to God |
| 1. He has been staying with Laban |  |
| 1. He has been blessed with servants and flock | The Last Adam has been blessed with the earth and all that is in it |
| 1. He seeks Esau’s favor | He seeks the favor of God and heaven |
| Esau sets out with 400 men to come and meet Jacob and Jacob’s servants inform him of it [Gen 32:6] |  |
| Jacob is afraid and divides all he has, servants and all his animals into two so that, in case Esau attacked him, one group may possibly escape, and he may not lose all [Gen 32:7-8] |  |
| Jacob prayed to God [Gen 32:9-12] |  |
| Acknowledging his undeserved blessings from God |  |
| Asking God for protection from Esau and |  |
| * Reminds God of his promise to him | Jesus is both Adam and the Son of God.  Though God is wroth with man and the earth, nevertheless, God’s promise is upon His Son, Jesus Christ. |
| Jacob sent animal gifts of goats, sheep, cattle, camels, and donkeys ahead of him to Esau one after the other to atone/appease Esau [Gen 32:13-21] |  |
| Jacob divides his family [Gen32:22-23] in preparation for the next day |  |
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| Obtaining God’s Blessing | ***Jacob stays back in the camp of God and wrestles with ‘God’ till he obtains God’s blessing to rule as God.***  ***Christ will remain in heaven, interceding for the Church till he has secured the blessing of God to rule as God.*** |
| Jacob stayed back alone in the camp *(of God [Gen 32:2])* [Gen 32:21,24] | Christ remains in heaven. |
| Jacob, desiring to be blessed by God, wrestled with God till daybreak | Christ remaining in heaven, struggles with God till daybreak, till the dawning of the new age. (For clarity, see: What is the Morning) |
| The angel wanting to return to heaven dislocated Jacob’s hip bone, yet Jacob wouldn’t let him go. |  |
| He requested Jacob to let him go, but Jacob insisted he had to bless him before he left and so he had to bless Jacob. | Christ will persevere in spite of all the challenges that will face him. |
| He changed his name from Jacob *(“heel grabber”)*, a name representative of his struggles for blessing to “Israel” meaning “He will rule as God”. | *In this name was a promise to Jacob that he would one day become deity.*  At the end of his stay in heaven, when the new day, the new age will be about to commence, Christ will reign as God. Christ in the coming age will be God to the earth.  Christ will be given a new name [Rev 3:12]. |
| Jacob’s name was changed as a reward for his perseverance with God and men |  |
| Jacob requested to know the name of the deity he had wrestled with, but he wasn’t told. |  |
| He passed Peniel where he had wrestled with God as the sun was rising *(i.e., as the new day began)* | * *Peniel is the place where Jacob wrestled with God.* * *The rising of the sun is the beginning of the new day.* * *The rising sun is Christ himself and speaks of the resurrection of the dead for he will rise with healing in his wings.*   Christ will cross Peniel, he will leave heaven at the beginning of the coming age of righteousness. |
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| Meeting with Esau | ***Jacob’s meeting with Esau is the very end of the age, it is after he has bowed the seventh time, it is after the seventh day.*** |
| Jacob sees Esau ahead [Gen 33:1] |  |
| He arranges his family thus   1. He at the head [Gen 33:3] 2. His maidservants and their sons [Gen 33:2] 3. Leah and her sons [Gen 33:2] |  |
| Jacob bows seven times to the ground as he approached his brother Esau [Gen 33:3] | Bowing seven times speaks of the seven days of this age. It speaks of Christ’s submission to God all through the age from the first day to the last.  By this the Spirit is pointing to the end of the age, the final judgment |
| But Esau runs to him embracing and kissing him [Gen 33:4] |  |
| Esau sees Jacob’s wives and children and they all approached and bowed down [Gen 33:5-7]. Jacob refers to them as “the children God has graciously given your servant”. | The Lord Jesus, the true Israel, acknowledges himself as God’s servant and that everything he has comes from God. |
| Esau asks why the gifts, and Jacob states that the reason for sending the gifts ahead of him was to find favour in Esau’s eyes and insists that Esau accept them from him. [Gen 33:8-9] | Accepting the gifts from Jacob means that Esau will not pursue his wrath against Jacob any longer.  God accepting Christ’s gift to him, means that Christ, the Last Adam, and all his flock will live under the favour of God, without the fear of the past wrath being visited on him. |
| Esau says he has enough, but Jacob insists he takes the gift if indeed he had found favour in Esau’s eyes but Jacob insists he takes the gift. Jacob states that seeing Esau’s face is like seeing the face of God [Gen 33:9-11] | To atone for the earth, Christ gives gifts to God.  The gift of flocks points to the gift the church as a gift to God.  Seeing Esau’s face is like seeing the face of God because in both cases it means death. No one may see God and live. In the same way, Jacob ideally ought not to see the face of Esau and live because of his offence against Esau. |
| Esau wants both he and Jacob to go to Seir where Esau lived. Jacob, however, requested that he follow slowly behind that he could not move at the pace of Esau because of the children in his company and the flock. He said if he drove them hard, even for a day, they would all die. [Gen 33:12-14] | Christ cannot go to heaven with all mankind but must take his time with them.  If men are driven to hard, even for a single 1,000 year day, they will all perish. Christ takes his time to groom men for glory. |
| Esau offered to leave some of his men with Jacob, but Jacob said there was no need, all he needed was favour in the eyes of Esau [Gen 33:15-16] | Jesus will not accept any angel from God to come rule the earth with him. Angels will not rule on earth in the coming age. |
| Esau went back to Seir [Gen 33:17] | God returned to heaven while Christ stays back on earth. |
| Jacob did not go to Seir, but rather camped at Succoth where he made shelters for his livestock [Gen 33:17] | Christ stays back on earth. He builds shelters, cities for his people where he may nurture them. Christ will stay on earth and rule over men. |