

What did god say to you? Jacob Pt 3

Description

9Then God [in a visible manifestation] appeared to Jacob again when he came out of Padan Aram, and said to him, "Your name is Jacob;
You shall no longer be called Jacob,
But Israel shall be your name."
So he was called "He who strives with God" or "God strives" or "Prince of God."
"I am Heb El Shaddai, the sufficient and powerful One. God Almighty.
Be fruitful and multiply;
A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall be born of your The midsection of the body between the lower ribs and the upper thighs."
12The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac
I will give to you,
and to your descendants after you I will give the land."
13Then God ascended from Jacob in the place where He had spoken with him.

Genesis 35:9-13 AMP

We've been taking a deep look at the life of Jacob and his relationship with God, which I must admit has been enlightening for me as I have been re-reading and meditating on the word. In part 1 & 2 we looked at 2 of the crossroads in Jacob's life where God personally visited him to reaffirm his calling on his life, and the promises that if Jacob was obedient to follow God's word, he would receive. At this point in Jacob's life in regards to the verses above, he had already deceived his brother Esau, had a vision of angels ascending and descending towards heaven (Jacob's ladder), obtained 2 wives, 2 concubines/mistresses, and 12 sons, been deceived, cheated, and pursued by his father-in-law/uncle, wrestled with an angel overnight, AND re-connected with Esau. That was a whole mouthful of events to list, but it is important to note and remember that God is continually with us regardless of the events or difficulties that we may experience, whether self-inflicted or brought about by life.

The passage above picks up after Jacob has re-connected with Esau after at least 14 years of being separated (I derive that timeline off the fact that he worked 7 years to marry Rachel, and then an additional 7 years after that because of Laban's deceit). After he and Esau meet, they immediately go separate ways, because I believe God's primary purpose wasn't for Jacob to reconnect and dwell with Esau, though I believe their reconnection and forgiveness was important, but his purpose for Jacob returning was for him to occupy the land that he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob. Here God visits Jacob for at least the 3rd time in his life (part 1&2 are the other events), and again conveys the same message; "A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and this land I will give to you, and to your descendants after you." Why does God reaffirm a message that he had already provided Jacob on previous occasions? God understands (wo)man so much so that he will repeat himself periodically to encourage our faith so that we don't give out along the way. God is also consistent and doesn't change as (wo)man does over time, however it is important that even though God doesn't change, the way that he may express his love, discipline, etc may evolve over time (we'll revisit that at another time). God visits Jacob here very similarly to the way that he visited his grandfather Abram centuries earlier when he re-named him and his wife Abraham and Sarah. Here

God for the 2nd time tells Jacob that he is now known as Israel meaning “he who strives with God” as a reminder of the night when he wrestled with God all night until he was blessed, and foreshadowing his descendants (both physical and spiritual) who will strive with God for centuries to come as they struggle between serving and rebelling against a God who loves them. Why does God choose now to rename Jacob? I believe that at this point Jacob had shown himself to be faithful and consistent to God’s commands, he was obedient when God called him to move from his father’s land, and then when he was commanded to return, he chose to overcome fear and trust God when it was time to meet Esau, and he chose to trust that God would honor his faithfulness even while Laban changed his wages and attempted to cheat him while he worked for him (Genesis 31). This trust and faithfulness caused Jacob to be approved by God, and this resulted in God renaming him Israel, and reaffirming his original promise to him. God named him according to his deeds, and the way that God viewed him, whether it was true at the moment, or to be realized in the future. Israel’s name was true in that he had strove with God spiritually and mentally, and that God viewed him as a prince, or almost part of a royal line in that he was a descendant of Abraham who God considered a friend, and that Israel himself would be a conduit through whom God would save humanity. We must be careful to understand that God does not always appear to affirm us as he did for Israel on those 3 occasions, but his words and promises are clearly found in his word, and if we spend enough time in his word, then we are better positioned to hear his voice when he speaks to us. Whether we receive or hear a new name for ourselves is not important, because when we accept Christ in our lives, we become a new (wo)man in CHRIST!

Reflection Time

What has God said to you? Do you realize or feel that you are a new person in Christ? Have you accepted the promise(s) that God has given to you either through his word (scripture), or personally provided to you spiritually? What are you looking for or hoping to still hear/receive from God to help you to move according to his word? Do you have enough faith to believe God when he speaks to you?

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