

## THE GENERATIONS AFTER ABRAHAM (1)

Isaac, Abraham's son through the promise of God, had a miraculous birth. Isaac's parents were past the age of childbearing when God allowed them to conceive. Isaac later had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the oldest and by culture should have been the heir of the nation that had been promised to his grandfather Abraham. But God does not think like men think!

God said to Isaac's wife, Rebekah,

*"Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other, and the OLDER shall serve the YOUNGER" (Genesis 25:23).*

### SUMMARY OF GENESIS 26-36 (Please read if you can find the time)

Neither Esau nor Jacob had really good moral qualities in their youth. Their mother, Rebekah, favored Jacob and Isaac favored Esau. This favoritism caused problems in their family. Jacob and his mother plotted to secure the blessing from Isaac, which enraged Esau against his brother. Jacob had to leave home because of his brother's desire to kill him. Jacob moved several hundred miles away to live with close relatives. He married two daughters of his mother's brother. The two daughters each gave Jacob a woman servant so they might also bare children for Jacob. During the 20 years he was away from Canaan (the promised land), these four women bore him 12 sons and one daughter. His favorite wife, Rachel, bore the two youngest sons, Joseph and Benjamin. The favoritism he showed this wife and these two sons later led to much trouble and jealousy in the family.

Jacob's business arrangements with his father-in-law ended in hard feelings so after 20 years he headed back to Canaan with his large family and plenty of wealth. However, Jacob was quite fearful as he returned since he did not know the attitude of his older brother Esau. When Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, he was greatly distressed and fervently prayed to God. He said:

*"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.'" (Genesis 32:9-12 NIV)*

(Notice that when Jacob faced a crisis he got through it by calling upon God and reminding Him of his promises. Believers have a tremendous advantage over unbelievers. We have a God who keeps his promises. We can count on them. Even when things look dark and scary, our faith in God will get us through. We know on the other side of the storm there will be peace. God has promised to never forsake us. This is why godly people have withstood terrible difficulties, even death, because they know that God will eventually bring victory.)

That night, as Jacob waited for Esau's arrival, God's angel wrestled with Jacob. Jacob realized his opponent was superior in strength but Jacob held on and would not let go. He demanded a blessing from this heavenly being. The angel said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28). The new name, ISRAEL, meant PRINCE. His new name became the name of the new nation that would come from him and his 12 sons.

Jacob teaches us a lesson here about wrestling with God. He teaches us a lesson about prayer. We must love the Lord with all our heart, all our mind, and all our strength. We must hunger and thirst for his blessings and we will not let go of God. Hold on to his promises. Pray fervently. All of us have lived sinful lives like Jacob and we must want God's blessing of righteousness. According to Jesus, we must "pray and not lose heart". We must "ask, and seek, and knock" to receive his blessings. God only answers the prayers of those who fully trust in his promises and will not let go.

The next morning, Jacob found out that Esau came in peace. Both of these brothers who started their lives with wicked ways, had come to know God and were able to receive each other. The sooner we turn to God the better off we will be in regard to earthly relationships.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. Name the two sons of Isaac.
2. Which son was to be greater than the other?
3. What Bible Character wrestled with God's messenger?
4. The heavenly messenger changed Jacob's name to \_\_\_\_\_.