

# GENESIS

## Lesson 49

## The Twins Are Reunited

### Jacob Meets Esau

<sup>1</sup> Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. <sup>2</sup> He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. <sup>3</sup> He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

<sup>4</sup> But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. <sup>5</sup> Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked.

Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant."

<sup>6</sup> Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. <sup>7</sup> Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

<sup>8</sup> Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?"

"To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said.

<sup>9</sup> But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

<sup>10</sup> "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. <sup>11</sup> Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

<sup>12</sup> Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

<sup>13</sup> But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. <sup>14</sup> So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

<sup>15</sup> Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you."

"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord."

<sup>16</sup> So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. <sup>17</sup> Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.

<sup>18</sup> After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. <sup>19</sup> For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. <sup>20</sup> There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.

Genesis 33:1-20 [NIV]

In this lesson, we examine Jacob and Esau's reuniting after twenty years, and, further, we compare that reunion with the last time they spoke to each other, recorded in Genesis 25:32-34:

<sup>32</sup> "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

<sup>33</sup> But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 25:32-34 [NIV]

By comparing these two sets of scripture, we can readily see that God had really changed Esau's heart by the time of their reunion. Some observations from a simple comparison of the two passages:

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*In Genesis 25, it is asserted that "Esau despised his birthright." However, in Genesis 33, we find that Esau is eager to be reconciled to his brother Jacob, even at the same time that Jacob is still fearing for his safety.*

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1. In Genesis 33:1-7, what do we see occurring that demonstrates Jacob's fear?
2. How did Esau greet Jacob, in contrast to Jacob's approach? (see Gen. 33:4)

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*Following a tearful reunion, we see that Esau was a changed man; in Genesis 33:9, we see him referring to Jacob as "my brother."*

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3. How does Jacob refer to Esau, as he is still fearing the old relationship? See Genesis 33:5,8, and 13-15.

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The behavioral contrasts and the humility of their reunion are apparent. God has brought about a change of heart—in both Esau's heart and Jacob's heart. They are once again a family reunited. Esau returns to his home in the south at Seir, and Jacob moves his family to Shechem, east of the Jordan river in Canaan—finally returning after twenty years of living in Paddan Aram. In Genesis 12:6, we are reminded of the importance of Shechem: as the place where Abraham first camped when God led him to Canaan. Now, three generations later, God returns Jacob and his family to that same location. Jacob knows that God's providence was in all of this, reuniting him with his twin brother Esau and returning him to the land that God promised to Abraham.

This lesson is an excellent example of how God can change the hearts of family members, even when there has been a deep division for a long period of time. This lesson should strengthen our resolve to pray for family members in the belief that there is nothing God cannot do in the hearts of family members. *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* [Matthew 19:26]

In the next lesson, we will be taking a look at the descendants of Esau. Then, in subsequent lessons, the focus of the book of Genesis from Chapter 37 to Chapter 50 (the end of the text) will be on Joseph.

I pray that God is continuing to bless you as you study with us. Genesis is a book of beginnings, and our study of Joseph will soon lead us through the humble beginnings of God's chosen people.

In Christ,

Wes