

Reading Schedule for March 11-17, 2019

There are parts of this section of Genesis that I remember, but some of it will be a helpful review as we see God building the family of Jacob. In this section we will see that Jacob is the ancestor of the Messiah and his name would be changed to Israel, “one who wrestles with God.”

March 11 – Genesis 32: “So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.’” (v.30) The unexpected and sudden introduction of this man who wrestles in the dark with Jacob captures something of the event itself. By the time their contest comes to an end, Jacob is convinced that his opponent is God himself. God visited Abraham in human form in chapter 18, so this is not surprising. The nature of the encounter is the surprising part as Jacob wrestles with God. This is a very key transition because it is symbolic of God shaping this man, Jacob into the person he wanted him to be. Have you wrestled with God? Why not take Jacob’s example and hang on until God blesses you?!

March 12 – Genesis 33: “But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.” (v.4) This is not what Jacob was expecting. You can tell by the serious and prayerful preparation of Jacob that he was expecting a conflict. This is a marvelous illustration of forgiveness. Esau reveals by his response to Jacob that he has no animosity towards his brother. The description of their reconciliation may well have influenced Jesus’ parable of a lost son returning to his father (Luke 15:20). This is an amazing and hopeful story that should encourage each of us to be more courageous in moving towards relationships that are at odds. Forgiveness is a powerful response that can mend even the deepest hurt. What do you learn from this inspiring story of Jacob meeting Esau?

March 13 – Genesis 34: “Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, ‘You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.’” (v.30) This story is faintly in my memory because most likely I’ve wanted to forget it. The devastation of rape and the bribery of the pagan people, as well as the revenge of two of Jacob’s sons is such a disappointing story. In seeking revenge, Simeon and Levi lied, stole and murdered. Even though their desire for justice was right, their ways of achieving it were wrong. Because of their sin, their father cursed them to his dying breath (Genesis 49:5-7). For generations, their descendants would lose out and they would experience the consequences way beyond their own life. When tempted to return evil for evil, leave revenge to God and spare yourself the dreadful consequences of sin. What stands out to you in this story? What is there to learn for our own spiritual application?

March 14 – Genesis 35 & 36: “There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.” (35:7) I appreciate how Jacob wants to remember the inspiration of encountering God is such a personal way at Bethel. Bethel means “house of God.” In this way, Jacob experienced God. I want us to encounter the Lord. If we build into our lives the practice of praying to him,

reflecting on His Word, and quieting ourselves before God, I believe the Holy Spirit will stir our hearts with a sense of God’s presence. It may not happen every time, but it will happen. In verse 10 we are reminded that Jacob’s name is to be Israel. I appreciate that Jacob wanted to stay close to God despite life’s disappointments. This is a good lesson for us. In the best sense of the word, I want you to struggle with God. I pray that you will be close enough to the Lord that he can shape your life. The Apostle Paul said, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is . . .” The truth will set you free. Seeking God intimately and regularly will be used by him to transform your life. Will you take the first step?

March 15 – Genesis 37 “When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, ‘What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?’” (v.10) Even though Joseph was right, his confidence seemed to be arrogant. We begin the inspiring story of Joseph. The Lord would have to do a deep work in this young man’s life. He would prepare him for something way beyond our imagination. But at this point his brothers despised him and his father was frustrated with him. Again, deception and revenge are woven into the fabric of this family. In many ways, the family is quite dysfunctional. They were selfish, stubborn and arrogant. What stands out to you as we are introduced to Joseph?

March 16 – Genesis 38: “At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah.” (v.1) It is difficult for me to single out one aspect of this immoral story. Chapter 38 is in contrast to chapter 39 because Judah was immoral and Joseph remained strong in the midst of sexual temptation. This is a confusing story and behind it reveals the position of women in that society. If a wife committed adultery, she could be executed. But Judah saw no harm in hiring a prostitute for a night. However, he was ready to execute Tamar, because if she was pregnant, it had to be the result of prostitution. I am still contemplating the implications of this story. I am most disappointed that Judah tried to cover up his sins by blaming someone else. How do you respond to this complicated chapter?

March 17 – Genesis 39: “She caught him by his cloak and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.” (v.12) This is the incident I was referring to yesterday. Joseph did all that he could to avoid Potiphar’s wife. He refused her advances, and finally ran from her. This is a very good example for us. The New Testament clearly says, “flee sexual immorality.” Sometimes we are to resist sins, but other times we are to run from them. Joseph is a very good example for us, even as we live in a very sexually saturated world. It may even seem to Joseph that God had abandoned him, but this would not be true. How does Joseph’s example speak to you?

PRAYER: Pray for our Food Bank. I’m always conscious of the fact that this is our greatest opportunity to share the love of Christ with so many who may not know him.