

Genesis Chapter 33 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Chapter 33 Overview:

Overview of Genesis 33: This chapter records the confrontation between Jacob and Esau. The chapter can be divided into two parts: (1) The meeting of Jacob and Esau in verses 1- 16 and (2) Jacob comes to Succoth and Shalem where He builds an altar 17-20.

Genesis 33 : 1-3 - 1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. 2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. 3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother

- As the new day developed, Jacob saw Esau and his four hundred men approaching.
- Jacob, not noted for his courage sent first his handmaidens and their children and then his wives and their children (Rachel—being the last) to meet Esau.
- He was trying to provide a buffer between the presumed wrath of his brother and himself.
- Finally, Jacob himself walked over to Esau and “***bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.***”
- The sins of his past against his brother now had come home to roost.
- So, Jacob in fear went forward to meet him.

Genesis 33 : 4-11 - 4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. 5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant. 6 Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. 7 And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. 8 And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. 9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. 10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. 11 Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

- To Jacob’s amazement though Esau was no longer angry.
- His anger had dissolved and they had an emotional meeting.
- Esau asked who all of the people were and Jacob introduced his family to him.
- He also wanted to know the meaning of all the livestock which had preceded him.
- Jacob told him they were a gift to find grace in the sight of his *lord*.
- Esau declined the gift of the livestock, but Jacob insisted so Esau accepted.
- To Jacob’s credit, he honored the Lord in acknowledging that God had dealt graciously with him.

Genesis 33 : 12-17 - *12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. 13 And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. 14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir. 15 And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord. 16 So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.*

- Esau invited Jacob to come to his home at Seir.
- Jacob declined perhaps out of embarrassment and fear or perhaps for the reasons he stated of concern for his family and flocks.
- Jacob offered to come on his own, but he didn't actually go.
- Instead he continued a short distance to a place which came to be known as **Succoth** which is just east of the Jordan river.
- He there built a house and *booths* (i.e., shelters) for his flocks.

Genesis 33 : 18-20 - *18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan- aram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. 20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe- Israel.*

- Then he came to **Shalem** (which likely was what later would be called Jerusalem) and there he pitched his tent (made his home).
- Apparently, the house he had built at Succoth was just a temporary dwelling.
- In the region of Shechem he bought land and there more permanently pitched his tent.
- And “*he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel,*” which means ‘**the mighty God of Israel.**’