

TEACHING HINTS AND HELPS

This section contains teaching material for the various grades and from different points of view.

For Bible Class Teachers.

AN ANALYSIS

In his journey to his native land Jacob had to pass through the country of his brother Esau whom he had defrauded of his birthright. His memory and conscience reminded him of this conduct, and he "was greatly afraid and distressed," v. 7. He skillfully arranged a plan for conciliating Esau. He determined to try the effect of costly gifts, and then appealed to God to deliver him from the hand of his brother, vs. 9-12. He had already undergone much afflictive discipline, and needed more. He was not yet cured of craftiness. He encamped at the brook Jabbok, selected his gifts and caused them and his family to pass over the brook, and that night, for reasons not given, he "was left alone," v. 24. We note:

1. *The mysterious combat in which he engaged.* "There wrestled a man with him." (a) The combat was partly physical. The language of the narrative plainly conveys this meaning. The whole scene was real and not enacted in a dream. The injury Jacob received in the conflict was physical. He was crippled in his hip joint. (b) The combat was partly spiritual. When Jacob found himself disabled, and recognized the divinity of the One who wrestled with him (v. 30), he held fast, and became importunate in prayer. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." v. 26. He was overcome, vanquished as a wrestler, but prevailed in the spiritual struggle. So the prophet Hosea testifies, ch. 12: 3-5. He was made weak that he might be strong, 2 Cor. 12: 10. His prayer was already answered. (Isa. 65: 24.) God had in effect said to him, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Ch. 28: 15; Heb. 13: 5.) (c) The One who wrestled with Jacob was the Eternal Son of God—the Angel of the Covenant. (v. 30.) This is distinctly stated in Hos. 12: 3-5. His loving condescension in thus subduing and permanently

humbling His unworthy servant, and yet giving him the victory, faintly foreshadowed what He did when He appeared in the fullness of time, not to be ministered unto but to minister, Matt. 20: 28.

2. *The new name and the blessing Jacob received*, vs. 27-29. (a) He is asked his name (v. 27) not for information. The Lord knew it, but He would remind him of "his former self as needing to be put away." "Put off, therefore, the old man," Col. 3: 9. He is to be no more Jacob, the supplanter, but Israel, the Prince, the prevailer with God, and with men, v. 28. The new name is given "to him that overcometh," Rev. 2: 17. (b) The new name was received in answer to importunate prayer. (c) Instead of being told the name of the wrestler, Jacob gets a blessing. "He blessed him there," v. 29. How much this meant we cannot tell. He had prevailed with God—had power with God, and therefore with men. It is so always. The one who is mighty at the throne of grace is mighty in the pulpit or the pew.

3. *The memorial instituted by Jacob.* (a) He gave a new name to the place, Peniel, "the face of God." This was suitable, and the outcome of the prompting of his heart. God also put what occurred that memorable night on permanent record in His word. (b) Jacob had an ever-present memorial of the events in his person in that he halted upon his thigh. He could not forget this "thorn in the flesh" designed by the Lord to keep him humble. (2 Cor. 12: 7-9.)

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

Concentrate upon the night wrestling, but bring out briefly, though very clearly, how Jacob came to be in it. Beginning from the vision at Bethel, follow Jacob to Laban's home, mention his long service, his marriage, his children, his prosperity, Laban's jealousy, his setting out again for his old home, his guilty conscience concerning Esau and his dread of that ill-used brother, now grown great and powerful. Tell how the angels of God met him, 32: 1, and then the various precautions he took to ensure a safe meeting with Esau, ending with the droves