

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.

The Tree of Life for week ending 09/15/02.

**God blesses Jacob when he returns to his own country, and He continues to bless us
in our country, client nation U.S.A.**

This week we remembered the tragic events that occurred one year ago on 9/11/01, and it is at times like this that we all realize how weak and inadequate we are, and how our greatest need is to turn to the God of all mercy and the Father of all comfort. It was a time for us to turn to God and to pray as a nation so that the evil attacks against our nation would spread no further. It is also a time for us to remember the comfort and encouragement found in passages like **Psa 46:1-11**.

***Psa 46:1-11** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.*

Throughout the year there were those who believed and taught that we were now in the fifth cycle of discipline. We have seen that that is not the case.

In the **First Cycle** of Discipline the general population becomes cowardly and afraid of war, and has no motivation for patriotism or the spiritual life, **Lev 26:14-17**.

In the **Second Cycle** there is depression, an empty social life, and no national pride, and people work hard for nothing (inflation), **Lev 26:18-20**.

In the **Third Cycle**, the population is thinned out by violence. Crime spreads out of control, commerce comes to a halt, and there are natural disasters, **Lev 26:21-22**.

In the **Fourth Cycle** there is great uncontrollable crime, military invasion and the beginning of military defeat, disease from overcrowding, a shortage of food causing starvation, and even greater natural disasters, **Lev 26:23-26**.

The **Fifth Cycle** of discipline, which includes complete military defeat, is found in **Lev 26:27-38** and amplified in **Deu 28:49-67**. After studying these verses, who can believe that we are even close to the Fifth Cycle of Discipline?

As we have seen, what happened was not the judgment of God upon our nation. However, what happened was a *wake up call* to our nation and also to the church. Remember that everything that happens in life is a result of the *angelic conflict*. It is true that we have problems in our nation; however, we are still the greatest nation in the world. September 11, 2001 was a trigger for a great spiritual revival, and *you* can be part of it with a positive attitude, or you can speculate what cycle of discipline we are in, and claim that this is all the believer's fault. America was attacked because Satan, who promotes all anti-Semitism, desires to destroy Israel. The main reason we were attacked is because of our national stand with Israel.

These so-called "militant" Muslims who have convinced themselves that Israel is evil and that the United States is the great ally of evil and the "great Satan" still do not have the guts to call on their so-called "god" Allah to fight us. And of course their god is not the omnipotent "Lord of Hosts"; their god is the god of this world, Satan.

Just warfare is always from the Lord, **1Ch 5:19-22**. Our God teaches us that peace is maintained through a military deterrent. Military victory brings peace. Jesus Christ ordained the principle of peace through military victory, **Psa 46:7-9**. Jesus Christ controls history through warfare. He protects a righteous nation, **Psa 55:20-23**. It is our duty to watch and pray and realize what is happening in our nation and how vulnerable and defenseless we really are, and to seek God for spiritual answers. We all must realize how fragile life really is, how meaningless our portfolio, our 401k, our house, our bank account, and our stocks and bonds really are, and that what is really important is our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gen 32:24-29 *Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. And when He saw that he had not prevailed against him, He touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while He wrestled with him. Then He said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked Him and said, "Please tell me your name." But He said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And He blessed him there.*

Jacob desired a blessing, and the Lord Jesus Christ granted his request because the blessing he needed was a change of nature, an elevation of character, making him a stronger, truer, man, and this is one of the greatest blessings God can give.

Gen 32:29 *Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.*

After the Lord Jesus Christ had asked his name, Jacob felt he must also ask this Man's name. He realized he had experienced a unique encounter with the divine presence, and he never had met God in this form before. He had seen and heard God in dreams and visions, but here is an actual physical Person with whom he had been struggling. Was this

actually Jehovah, the God of his fathers, to whom he had so often prayed? From what He had said and how easily he injured him, it must be. Here is a picture of God withholding the answer to one request so that our persistence will allow us to understand our need for greater requests.

Gen 32:30 *So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."*

Jacob named the place where he wrestled with the Lord "Peniel," meaning "the face of God." He recognized that this was God manifest in the flesh, a pre-incarnate *theophany* of Jesus Christ.

Gen 32:31 *Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh.*

This was the beginning of a great change in Jacob's life. He will finally become serious and dedicated to Bible doctrine, and he will eventually reach spiritual maturity, where he will be thoroughly tested.

Gen 32:32 *Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.*

With his bodily infirmity, he was a stronger man than he had ever been before, and he was better able to meet Esau as a lame man than he had been before in the pride of his strength. Strength of soul is the highest form of strength.

God does bear with us for a long time. He bears with our self-confidence and self-sufficiency, but He must and will bring us to the end of ourselves. Not until these truths are comprehended will we cease to contend against God, and gladly take our place as clay in the hands of the Potter, being content for Him to command our lives for us.

The wrestling match that we have now seen in detail was a tremendous event in the life of Jacob. It was the moment in which he stepped up to a new level in his experience—"Israel," a prince with God. However, it is one thing to step up to a new spiritual level; it is quite another to maintain it. Many believers have had tremendous spiritual experiences in which they knew God had touched their lives and blessed them, but unfortunately, they forget their experience and fall off back into the cosmic system, the devil's world.

This is the same type of attitude that the Exodus generation displayed after so much had been done for them, **Psa 106:6-13**. Some believers, when they reach a new stage of spiritual growth, still continue to grow and are blessed throughout their lifetime. Others, after tasting a great spiritual victory or experience, eventually withdraw from it. However, after experiencing the power and faithfulness of God, it is all but impossible to actually go back to the devil's world and enjoy it. We see this in Peter's words when the disciples were tested in **Joh 6:66-68**, "As a result of this [teaching difficult things] many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. Jesus said therefore to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered Him,

‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.’” Once you have tasted the words of eternal life, nothing else will ever fulfill that need.

We saw three major failures of Jacob in **Gen 32**.

1. The first failure was in his manner of meeting Esau, verses 1-11.
2. The second failure was in the deceit to which he resorted to free himself from Esau’s company, when Esau offered him the protection of his armed men, verses 12-16.
3. The third failure was in settling at Shechem, a place he will totally regret and that represents going only “half-way” with the Lord.

After wrestling all night, the first thing Jacob sees is Esau coming with 400 men, and he still thinks Esau is coming to kill him. How often do we find that a great blessing like that which came to Jacob during the night is sent to prepare us for a great trial?! God prepares us and then tests His preparation in us. We should never ever let down our guard after a spiritual victory or during a time of prosperity. In fact, many believers fall away from doctrine because they can not handle the persecution or the pressure that comes with doctrine. We should actually welcome it as people testing and operate in the Royal Family Honor Code of **Rom 12:14**, *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not”*; or **1Co 4:12**, *“When we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure.”* As in **Gal 4:29**, those who live according to the Spirit will be persecuted by those who are living according to the flesh. Therefore, when persecution does come, we must draw heavily upon all the resources of strength and comfort that have been stored up through our relationship with God and our commitment to His Word. And this is exactly what Jacob did not do!

2 Sam 22:35-36

“He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation, and Thy help makes me great.”

For a more detailed study, order last week’s tapes, IA11-207 to IA11-208.