

Series: Questions

Title: What is Thy Name? Wherefore Dost Thou Ask My Name?

Text: Genesis 32: 29

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As I was organizing my notes for our Questions series, I came across a question that I missed in Genesis 32. So this morning, we will go back and look at this question that God asked a sinner.

I preached from this passage in Pennsylvania in 2010 then here, in a midweek service in 2011. But I have never preached from it on a Sunday morning. So it will be familiar with some of you. But as Paul said to the Philippians, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” (Php 3: 1)

The message is always the same wherever we are in the book. We have found that to be so in our Questions series, in the book of Isaiah, the Psalms, and the letter to the Ephesians—no matter where we are in the scriptures, the message God declares is the same: 1) All flesh is grass; 2) Thy God reigneth—especially in the salvation of his people for salvation is of the Lord. And wherever we are in the book, God always makes the gospel fresh in the hearts of his people.

In Genesis 32, we have the account of a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. He is the man who wrestled with Jacob. We know it is Christ by comparing three scriptures. In—**v30: And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.**

Then in John 1: 18 we are told, **No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.**

2 Corinthians 4:6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

When God reveals himself in the heart of a sinner, he does so in the face of the GodMan, Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men. So this man who wrestled with Jacob is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Jesus the Son of God.

We will begin by focusing our attention on two questions which Christ asked Jacob.

Genesis 32:: 27: And [Christ] said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob...29: And Jacob asked [Christ], and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And [Christ] said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

Why did Christ ask Jacob these two questions? As I have stated with each of these questions in which God asks a sinner a question, God never does so to get information for himself. As we have seen God always asks the sinner a question to reveal something to the sinner himself.

This passage shows us how God brings his child to prevail with God.

I. FIRST, GOD BRINGS HIS CHILD TO PREVAIL WITH GOD BY BRINGING HIS CHILD TO THE END OF OURSELVES—Genesis 32: 27: And

**[Christ] said unto him, What is thy name?
And he said, Jacob.**

A. At this time in his life, Jacob was already a believer, born of the Spirit of God. He had been converted at Bethel around 20 years prior to this.

1. Then most recently, God had given Jacob a promise.

Genesis 31: 3: And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and **I will be with thee.**

2. But Jacob heard his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men—wasn't that his kindred? Didn't God say I will be thee? But we read...

Genesis 32: 7: Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed:...

- Remember, Jacob had deceived his father and stolen Esau's birthright

- The last time Jacob saw Esau, his brother swore that he would kill him, so Jacob fled.
- But then Jacob did not believe God. Now, God has told, “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. The elder shall serve the younger.”
- Now God has promised him, “I will be with thee.”
- Yet, Jacob is glorifying Esau with this fear and distress!
- Christ said,

Matthew 10:28 And **fear not** them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

3. So Jacob is a believer in the middle of a terrible trial. And he did like we so often do in the face of great trial.

- He began praying to God—He petitioned God based on his promise—that’s good. He even confessed to God he was afraid of Esau—that’s fine.
- But, at the same time, he leaned heavily on the arm of the flesh. He went to scheming. He sent a present out to Esau of:

Genesis 32: 14: Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, 15: Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals....

He told his men to send them in droves—in waves—I suppose so it would look like the gifts would just keep coming Esau’s way from Jacob.

20:...For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

- So Jacob divided up all his men.
- Then he sent his wives and children to where he thought they would be safe
- And he left them there.

Application: Now, what are you reminded of as Jacob prays and then in all this distress he does all this plotting and scheming? Turn to James 1.

James 1: 2: My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3: Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4: But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. 5: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7: For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8: A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Have you walked where Jacob is walking? Here is a man who has been a believer for 20 years. But this flesh is grass, brethren! Oh, be thankful that we are saved by the grace of God. Before God blesses his child, God will bring us to the end of ourselves. So we come to:

Genesis 32: 24: And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

B. God waited and God brought Jacob to be alone. That may look like a sad and bad place to be for ole' Jacob but it's the best place he could be. Now, Christ will get some things settled in Jacob's heart.

1. Notice, it does not say "there Jacob wrestled with a man."

- In Jacob, we do not see a man wrestling with God in fervent prayer. It says there "Christ wrestled with him."

2. And it says “until the breaking of the day.”

Application: Brethren, why did Christ wrestle with Jacob all night long? Jacob has been attempting to do what is an utter impossibility. He was trying to partly depend on God and partly save himself. So Jacob has got to be brought to see that he has absolutely no strength in himself to do anything.

C. As long as we are trying to do something in the strength of our flesh we will not prevail with Christ—Genesis 32: 25: And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh;

1. When Christ saw that Jacob prevailed not with Christ because Jacob was trying to prevail by the arm of his flesh, by his strength.

- His own wisdom and strength is why Jacob was so unsettled and so fearful as we just saw in this chapter.
- When we look to our wisdom instead of Christ our Wisdom—we get so confused.
- When we look to our strength—instead of Christ the Power of God—we do not prevail with God.

2 Co 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. [Christ's strength is made perfect in our weakness] Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

But we have got to be brought to the end of self before we will glory in our weakness and rejoice that we have no strength, and rejoice that the Power of Christ is all our strength. But we can't even be brought to our weakness by our strength.

2. So Christ touched the hollow of his thigh—v25: **and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as [Christ] wrestled with him.**

3. Now, Jacob has no strength. All he can do is hold on to Christ and beg for Christ to bless him—v26: **And [Christ] said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And [Jacob] said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27: And [Christ] said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.**

- Now let me tell you what Hosea said Jacob was doing right here—**he wept and made supplication unto him.**
- Christ broke Jacob's heart and he wept from his heart
- He confessed to Christ his nothingness.
- He confessed he is Jacob: supplanter, cheat, no good scoundrel
- With no strength, no wisdom, no ability
- Utterly dependent upon Christ to do everything for him

4. And Hosea says that is how “he had power with Christ, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him:” (Hos 12: 4)

5. By God bringing Jacob to the end of himself, Jacob “took pleasure in his infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: and when he was weak, then he was strong.” (2 Cor 12: 10)

Genesis 32: 28: And [Christ] said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

II. SECONDLY, GOD BRINGS HIS CHILD TO PREVAIL, BY BLESSING US BY GIVING US HIS NAME—
Genesis 32: 29: And Jacob asked [Christ], and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.

And [Christ] said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

A. In all of these studies, when God asks a sinner a question, it is to reveal something to that sinner. The Lord asked Jacob this question—I believe—to make Jacob realize whose name he had been given.

1. Jacob had been given the name of the one who just gave him that name. The name the Lord gave to Jacob is the Lord's name.

• **Turn to Isaiah 49: 1:** Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2: And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; 3: And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 3: And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

2. Christ named Jacob Israel and Israel is Christ' name.

- **As a prince**—Christ is the Prince of peace
- **As a prince thou had power with God**—Christ is the Power of God
- **Thou had power with God and with men**—Christ is the GodMan, Mediator.
- He had power God and his elect children and making us one through his blood by his one offering—
- Perfectly satisfying God
- And satisfying his brethren in whose heart he subdues like he did Jacob
- **and prevailed**—He shall not fail till he hath set judgment in the earth
- Jesus Christ is Israel—the Prince of peace, who has prevailed with God and men.

3. He gives his people his name and it is in that name that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings from God our Father.

Jeremiah 23:6: In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS....33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

4. And I believe Jacob got the message because Christ always prevails—v30 **And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31: And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.**

- Christ the Light shined into that dark place, called Jacob, and the day dawn, and the day star arose in his heart:
- 2 Co 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

If Jacob were here this morning, I believe he would tell us the lesson he learned that night is this:

Proverbs 3: 5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Therefore I take pleasure in this ole' hobbled leg of mine—for Christ's sake: for it is a constant reminder to me—that when I am weak, then am I strong.

Amen!