

## **Elder Vernon Johnson**

### **Numbers**

#### **Esau's pursuit of Jacob with four hundred men**

In Gen. 27 we get a hint of Esau's anger at Jacob because of Jacob's taking away his birthright and his blessing: 36 "And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" In verse 41 we find that Esau purposed to kill Jacob: 41 "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."

Because of Esau's purpose to kill Jacob, Rebekah sent Jacob to her brother Laban in Haran: 42 "And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;"

When the time came for Jacob to return to Canaan, Esau came out to meet Jacob with a band of four hundred men: Gen. 32:6 "And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him." Jacob was distressed to hear the news: 7 "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; 8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape."

Jacob then prayed unto the Lord: 9 "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. 11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. 12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." In his prayer, Jacob humbled himself, recounted the promises of God, and laid hold by faith upon those promises.

Four hundred is closely associated with the subject of bondage in the scriptures. This scene is not about the bondage of Jacob and his distress, for in his

distress he sought the help of the Lord, who had promised and had all power to deliver. This scene is about the bondage of Esau. Before the twins were ever born God loved Jacob and hated Esau: Rom. 9:10 "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Esau was not of those that God chose before the foundation of the world and, thus, Esau was not born of the Spirit of God.

The fleshly nature and its depravity are described in the following verses of scripture:

1. Rom. 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes."

2. 2 Pet. 2:12 "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; 13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; 14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:"

Based on his depraved nature and following the example of his predecessor Cain who slew Abel: 1 John 3:12 "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous," Esau had set about to slay Jacob. The non-elect are in bondage to their own flesh nature and hate the upright and would slay the upright except for the restrictions of society and its vengeance. Esau was in bondage to his flesh nature. Further all of the non-elect and all the elect prior to their spiritual birth are in the same bondage to their depraved flesh nature.

It is only after we are born of the Spirit of God that we are delivered from that bondage: Rom. 8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Thanks be to God for that deliverance.

