



You are an overcomer

September 3, 2018

GENESIS 32:28 NKJV – (28) And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

The names Jacob and Israel are used alternately throughout Scripture in reference to the second son of Isaac. Jacob’s birth name, Jacob, means “supplanter, deceiver”; it was given to him because, when Jacob was born as the second of a set of twins, “his hand [was] grasping [his twin’s] heel” (**Genesis 25:26**). True to his name, Jacob grew up as a conniver, deceiver, and cheat, and he eventually supplanted his brother’s position as heir to the birthright.

After Jacob’s struggle with the Lord at Peniel, the Lord gave Jacob a new name: Israel. And God gave the reason: “Because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome” (**Genesis 32:28**). Later, God appears to Jacob/Israel again in Bethel, reaffirms the name change, and gives him the same covenant that Abraham had received (**Genesis 35:9–12**). Thus the “heel-catcher” became “one who struggles with God.” It was before he met with God in Bethel that Jacob purposefully put away his idols and purified himself (**verse 2**).

After the name change, some passages in Genesis refer to Jacob as “Jacob” (**Genesis 33:1; 34:7; 35:15; 37:1**) and others as “Israel” (**Genesis 35:21; 37:3; 43:6; 46:1**). Some have suggested that the name Jacob represents his old nature and Israel his new. That is, he is called “Jacob” when functioning in his carnal old nature, but he is called “Israel” when he is acting out of his new nature.

God was changing him. He still has a way to go after this, but he is progressing. And so this is the reason, in part, that God gives him a new name. God often did this in the Bible to signify a major transformation or new promise in someone’s life. But there is another important angle to this name change and others in the Bible—they signify ownership. We don’t have the right to name that which we do not own. I know that sounds crazy when it comes to naming our children, but hopefully you get the idea. In changing Jacob’s name that night, God was reminding Jacob that God owned him.

Have you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior? If so, you belong to Him and therefore, we are an overcomer of what is reality. In the end, however, it is best not to make too much of the Jacob/Israel distinction, since some passages include both Jacob and Israel within the same immediate context (**Genesis 37:1–3**). Also, there are several psalms that use both names side by side: “Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!” (**Psalms 53:6**) and “He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel” (**Psalms 78:5**). The parallelism of the poetry identifies the names Jacob and Israel as synonymous, and both names can represent the nation as well as the individual.

Just know, if you are His, you are an overcomer! If not His, acknowledge you need a Savior. **LET JESUS KNOW YOU NEED HIM.**

SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 16:33

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: To know God’s names is to experience His nature.