

## Jacob 7 - From Frog to Prince

We now come to the final installment on messages from the life of Jacob. It is also the best message because he is now at the point where, although he has had some very direct contact with God, he is definitively converted. He had been very much like so many people, religious but lacking in that singular moment where you realize that you didn't know God before, but now you get it. This has been called an epiphany, a "come to Jesus moment," an awakening, a Damascus road experience, seeing the light, and has been described many other ways. "*The Epiphany*" is a reference to Christ being revealed as God incarnate, especially to the Gentiles when the kings of the East came. The word literally means *to shine upon*. There comes a time when you "see the light," or you could say that you had an epiphany. The phrase "come to Jesus moment" has been used more lately in a disrespectful way to describe a meeting or moment where one undergoes a difficult but positive and powerful realization or change in character or behavior. It comes from 19th century revivalism and modern evangelistic meetings where someone comes to Jesus for salvation. It is reflected in hymns that we sing like *Jesus I Come*. "Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus I come, Into Thy freedom gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee." We invite people to come to Christ for salvation all the time. Each person must have a time where they finally "get it" and know that they have met with Christ in their heart. It might have been momentous or it might have been a simple time, but the reality of your sinful condition and the awareness that God was there to call on for salvation had to come together when you recognized Him as your Savior. It is possible for someone to think they had been saved, only to realize that they had not gotten it right and therefore and must repent and to *truly* come to Jesus.

### 1. Wrestling with an angel

Most people who are familiar with the history of Jacob wrestling with the angel of God probably think of the actual physical contest and its outcome. There are actually three stages to Jacob's wrestling.

- Jacob was put on spiritual alert.

The first step was God putting Jacob on spiritual alert.

Gen 32:1-25 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

2And when Jacob saw them, he said, This *is* God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

*Mahanaim* is the plural of army or encampment. Jacob was made aware, perhaps even reminded, of the fact that there are spiritual forces all around us.

- Jacob went through internal, spiritual conflict.

Next, we are reminded of the conflict that Jacob is going through in his spirit during his conversion. He reacts to the moment in his usual way of dealing with things. He tries to set up meeting his brother to his advantage.

3And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

4And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

5And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

6And 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.

7Then 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;

8And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape. **[Jacob devises a scheme to be able to have a way to escape...but we will look at this specifically when we get to vs. 13]**

9And 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:

But, Jacob has a moment of spirituality and turned to God in prayer, but there is something different in the way he addresses the Lord. The notable thing in this prayer is that this is the first time you hear words of humility from him. This is a clue about the conflict that was going on him.

**10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;** for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

11Deliver 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.

12And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

But the flesh likes to hang on and Jacob struggled with temptation. As Jacob worked his way through this crisis, he went back to preparing his scheme.

13And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which

came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;

14Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

15Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.

16And he delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

17And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whither goest thou? and whose *are* these before thee?

18Then thou shalt say, *They be* thy servant Jacob's; *it is* a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he *is* behind us.

19And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

20And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. 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.

We should note, at this point, that even though Jacob is going to finally see the light after his wrestling with the angel, this doesn't mean that the struggle with the old nature is eradicated. In the next chapter, he first sends over the most expendable part of his family, the handmaids and their children, followed by Leah, the less favored wife, and her children, and then finally Rachel with Joseph. Nevertheless, his attitude toward Esau was changed and he became conciliatory, anxious to get along with Esau and to make amends with him.

The battle that Jacob faces next is designated as the change point in his life in a big way. He sent the company over

ahead of him along with his family and all that he had.

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

25And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

It is commonly understood that the angel is a *Christophany*, an appearance of Christ in human form in the Old Testament. Ultimately, the struggle is always between us and God alone. Sometimes people try to throw family, friends, and future into the struggle, but we each must answer for ourselves without blaming our decision on anyone else. Jacob didn't walk away from the struggle, but saw it through to the end. Even though the Angel did not choose to prevail against Jacob, there was no way that Jacob was going to prevail *against the Angel*. The Angel could have stopped the fight at any time He wanted to, but He waited till the end of the contest to touch Jacob's thigh and put his leg out of joint. Even without physical victory, Jacob hung on, but not out of senseless resistance. His desire for a blessing would come out of this.

We can see from previous chapters those things that influenced Jacob but in this chapter we zoom in on the conflict in his heart as he faced his most important challenge. Similarly, there is always a back story to our salvation experience. There are those things in life that shape our understanding as well as the work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. The things we are exposed to from our education, our family culture, the emotional and psychological challenges we face, our larger social experience, the times we live in, and our physical condition all influence and lead up to the decision we must make regarding Christ. There are unfortunately many who will not last until the end because they don't want to be bothered. It is especially sad to watch

people drop out of the fight for their soul because they are satisfied with unjustified skepticism, a short attention span, vague arguments, and the distractions from the world.

## 2. Aha!

People are happy to just sort of get along in life and don't have enough spiritual hunger to keep pursuing God until they get the true blessing He has for them. Jacob evidently knew what his true need was because he wouldn't let go until he got a blessing. He saw his spiritual need and then came the *Aha!* moment.

Gen 32:26-30 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

And there is the evidence that Jacob got it. This awakening can come in various forms.

Rom 10:8-15 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; **[the blessing is so close!]**

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. **[All you have to do is ask!]**

14 **[Paul then summarizes how people arrive at the realization**

**of salvation]** How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Luke 23:42 **[A life of sin and judgment led the thief on the cross to recognize his need to turn to the Savior]** And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. **[This conveyed the essence of coming to Jesus, although we often include more in our soul winning presentation]**

Jacob was a changed man. When the angel blessed Jacob, he reminded him of what he was, the manipulator, the supplanter, the usurper.

27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he 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.

Notice that the angel didn't say that Jacob had prevailed *over* him. He prevailed *with* God, not *over* God. He hung in there through the whole match and didn't throw in the towel. Jacob had simply lasted long enough to get the blessing from God. Jacob was no longer Jacob, now he was Israel, the prince of God.

30And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

There are so many saints recorded in the Scriptures, but some of their testimonies give some exciting details of their enlightenment.

- Peter elegantly pointed out how there was no one else they could turn to, "...thou hast the words of eternal life." Jesus told him later, "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren." This must have sounded strange at the time, but then Peter found himself denying Christ three times. On his third denial, Peter really knew how deep sin can run in the human heart. What must have gone on in his heart?

Luke 22:61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Mark reported that Peter thought on what he had been told by Jesus and he wept. To be converted, in this sense, is not a reference to being born again, but to being thoroughly convinced. Peter's full appreciation for what it means to know Christ came on the sea shore after the resurrection when he had thought to go back to fishing.

John 21:15-17 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest



thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

It is true that Peter was already saved, but this is a different kind of conversion come to Jesus moment where he *fully* understood.

- Paul was on the road to Damascus when a bright light blinded him and he heard the words of Christ, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." This was Paul's come to Jesus moment. He knew the Scriptures and had watched the testimony of Christ's martyrs suffering at his hands. And now, he was faced with the overwhelming presence of Christ. There was no other response possible than to tremble and ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:4-6

- Thomas wouldn't believe until he saw the prints of the nails in Christ's hands, so Jesus came, showed him, and invited him to put his hands in the scars. Thomas could only cry out, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

- Moses met God at the burning bush and received the call to lead God's people through the Red Sea to the Promised Land being led by a fiery pillar by night and the glory cloud by day.

- Isaiah met God in a heavenly vision and cried out "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isa 6:5)

- Mannaseh

2Chr 33:9-15 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of

Jerusalem to err, *and* to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

10And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

11Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

12And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he *was* God.

14Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

15And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast *them* out of the city.

- Jonah had to be swallowed by a whale before he was ready to serve God.
- Samson saw the light after he lost his eyes and took down more Philistines in his death than he did in his whole life.

We each have a testimony of how God reached us. I love my brother's testimony. As an 11 year old kid, he had been put on the spot and went forward at the end of the service when all he wanted

to do was get home and play. He went to the front of the church and went back home still lost on the way to Hell. Although he had grown up going to church sporadically, he finally started attending faithfully when he got married and tried to conform to his image of what married couples are supposed to do. For three months he finally paid attention to the Gospel and tried to rationalize away the need to do anything about it. But then, as he describes it, "For the first time I came to understand and AGREE with God that I was hopeless, helpless and hellbound because I was an unrepentant sinner and that Christ's work on the cross for me was the only hope for salvation. That's when, while driving home from church, that I turned to Denise and told her I wasn't saved and we went back." He met with one of the church leaders who began to go through the Gospel with him. At each step he said, "Yeah, I did that" until he got to the one step where he was told he had to ask Christ to save him. He stopped him there and said, "*That's* the part I need to do." He came to Jesus and Jesus saved him. Many of you have heard Nancy's testimony. She was trying to obtain eternal life the best way she knew how, although she was incorrectly taught. She was ready to set her sister straight who had come to saving faith and challenged her to read the Scriptures for herself. She started to have her eyes opened as the *Word of God* challenged her. It eventually came to a head and she finally understood that her good works and obedience could not give her eternal life. It was not a mere intellectual understanding of a doctrinal point, but a meeting of the minds where God spoke to her heart and she knew Him. She came to Jesus and Jesus saved her.

### 3. Strength is made perfect in thy weakness

There is another important aspect to this story. Jacob was no longer Jacob, now he was Israel, the Prince of God. This is the essence of the title. Like the fairy tale, Jacob was part of mankind

who had lost his first estate and had become loathsome. The princess kissed the frog who turned into a prince. In Jacob's case, he was touched in the thigh, was made halt for life, and became a true prince.

Jacob was crippled for life. Now, that might seem a little odd, but being halt for life speaks of how he now had total dependence on God. He could not rely on his natural strength and wit. Now he would have to lean on God.

This part of Jacob's conversion is critically important to our understanding of conversion and salvation. It is critical because we have to understand that for salvation to be true, it has to be absent of self. Jacob's weakness speaks of the lack of ability we have to provide anything for salvation. There was never any threat of Jacob actually winning. At any time he could have been zapped in his heart and killed instead of his thigh and crippled. His prevailing through the night was only by God's permission so that Jacob could truly learn by his testing. His leg was a mild reminder for the rest of his life that he was nothing.

The first lesson in this is that salvation is by God's grace, not the strength of our righteousness or our ability to do good works. But the second lesson is that our life as a child of God is not performed by our ability, but by God's strength.

1Cor 1:26-29 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29That no flesh should glory in his presence. **[When someone**

**who seems less qualified is able to be used by God, there is no doubt as to who should get the glory: God]**

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. **[Any success we have is Christ's success, not our own]**

2Cor 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

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

10Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Phil 4:12-13 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

People need to be careful how to apply these Scriptures. They are not just there to be used like a motivational speaker to challenge you to perform to achieve your dreams. Instead of

challenging you to be like the "Little engine that could" go up and over the hill ("I think I can, I think I can") rejoicing in himself afterward ("I knew I could, I knew I could"), our message is "I know God can if He wills and I surrender and depend on Him and give Him the glory." This is not about us achieving success in our agenda against all odds and the power of our will. This is about discovering, like Jacob, God's agenda and surrendering to Him. Our weakness is God's opportunity to show what He can do using us. Someone might try to argue and wonder why God can't do all that without making us weak. They make the mistake in thinking that their strength is "all that" to begin with. It reminds me of playing football with my Dad when I was little. Two neighborhood kids came over to play with me and my brother. I was the youngest so when my Dad came out I was on "his team." Three against two seemed kind of unfair. My Dad got the ball and I tried to block for him. Then with the three kids hanging onto his legs trying to tackle him, my Dad walked across the field for the touchdown. "We" scored! When God allows us to be afflicted, the truth is that we were *already* weak, we just didn't know it. When affliction comes, it should serve to remind us of what we *really* are. Our affliction is a blessing to remind us of Who the strong victor really is to keep us from being lifted up in pride. By all means,

2Tim 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But remember, that is God Who is working through you. We will always be deficient in ourselves, but don't let that stop you from stepping up for God for Him to show what He can do. In Christ, there is no failure. If people don't respond to you sharing the Gospel with them, the only failure is the failure on their part to receive what God is trying to tell them through you. *In Christ, there is no failure.*

What is *your* testimony? What was your *come to Jesus* moment? Whatever you do, make sure you have come to Jesus. Don't forget, this can be said of your salvation experience, but it can also be said of your humble acknowledgment to start genuinely serving God, to quit playing at Christianity, or to commit to serving faithfully.

1. Wrestling with an angel Gen 32:1-25
2. Aha! Rom 10:8-15, Luke 23:42, 18:13, 22:61, John 21:15-17, 2Chr 33:9-15
3. Strength is made perfect in thy weakness 1Cor 1:26-29, Gal 2:20, 2Cor 12:7-10, Phil 4:12-13, 2Tim 2:15