

God's Calling in the Old Testament

Lesson Eleven

GOD CALLED JACOB (2) (Gen. 29:1-29; 31:1-7; 32:24--33:4; 35:1, 6-7; 47:7, 10)

Burden to Impart:

Through Jacob's life we see how God changes and transforms His called ones through their many trials, sufferings, and dealings. As a youth, he was a crafty "heel-holder" who cheated his father and brother and had to flee for his life. After he was dealt with by God his name was changed from Jacob (meaning "heel-holder") to Israel (meaning "prince of God"). As a youth, Jacob cheated people and had to run away from them. As a transformed and mature man, even a prince of God, Israel was welcomed by a foreign country and even blessed the king of Egypt.

Memory Verse:

"And He said, Your name will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel" (Genesis 32:28).

Facts to Teach:

1. After God appeared to Jacob at Bethel, he continued on his journey until he arrived at his uncle Laban's house. This time the cheating heel-holder, Jacob, met his match, Laban was older and craftier than Jacob. He tricked and cheated Jacob over and over again during the twenty years Jacob stayed there and worked for him. He tricked Jacob by giving him his oldest daughter to be his wife, after Jacob had already worked seven years to marry the younger one, Rachel. Also, Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times (Gen. 31:7).
- After twenty hard years of work, sufferings, and dealings from his uncle Laban, Jacob gathered his large family and herds of cattle and fled away secretly from Laban's house. Twenty years earlier Jacob fled from his father's house, from his brother, Esau. This time he was fleeing from his terrible uncle, Laban.
 - Jacob was going back home. However, he was very frightened that his twin brother, Esau, would still be angry with him and might kill him for the things he had done to him as a youth.
 - One night while Jacob was alone and fearing what his brother Esau would do when he met him, God appeared to Jacob again. God did not appear to him in a dream this time, He appeared to him in the form of a man. Because Jacob did not know who the man was, he was afraid of him. He thought he might be sent from his brother, Esau, to kill him. So Jacob wrestled with that man all night long. Eventually he realized that the man who he was wrestling with was not an enemy at all, it was his God! He then wrestled harder! He told God that he would not let Him go until He had blessed him (Gen. 32: 26). God blessed him. He also touched his hip and dislocated it. Jacob had to limp and use a cane for the rest of his life. The greatest blessing to Jacob that day was that God gave him a new name. He changed his name from Jacob ("heel-holder") to Israel ("prince of God").
 - To Jacob's surprise, Esau had no anger toward him, but happily welcomed him and his large family (12 sons and 1 daughter)back home. When Jacob was safely in his homeland,

God told him to go back to Bethel and make an altar to worship Him. This was the very spot where God had first revealed Himself to Jacob twenty years earlier, when he was just a young heel-holding cheat. God had kept the promise He had given him then: he was always with Him, kept him safe wherever he went, and had brought him back to his homeland. He was truly the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

- In his old age Jacob moved to Egypt due to famine in the land of Canaan. He was now truly a “prince of God.

When he met the king of Egypt he did not bow down to him and thank him for his kindness. No! Through the many years of his sufferings and God’s working on him, he stood before pharaoh as the man his name signified, a prince of God. What did the prince of God do when he met the king of Egypt—he blessed him. (Gen: 47:7, 10). He also blessed his own son Joseph, Joseph’s two sons, and his eleven other sons.

Summary: so Jacob, a naughty cheater, who firstly ran away from his brother and later from his uncle, was met by God, dealt with by God, and transformed by God to such a degree that he became Israel, a prince of God. Once he was chased away by his own relatives, now he was welcomed by strangers, even the king of Egypt. Once he seemed to be a curse to people, now he was a blessing. When God first appeared to him his name was Jacob, a heel-holder, a cheater. When God finished His work on him his name was Israel. A prince of God.