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FINDING OUR ROOTS

INTRODUCTION- Lately, it seems that the Spirit has been speaking more clearly, and that the things that we knew in semi-darkness are entering a brighter Day. The striving within us has mostly been to know Christ better and in so doing, to answer the age-old question "Who am I, and what am I here for?" In other words, to uncover our true identity. In my experience on this quest, I find myself with two very real identities. On one end I am the external person that was born 93 years ago, and on the other end, I find one who has been there forever. The one is always preoccupied with the needs of the outer man, and the affairs of this world, while the other seeks God and things that pertain to the Spirit. One is looking forward to the grave while the other knows that there is much more to life. I am reminded of Rebekah whose twins were struggling in her womb, and when she inquired of God, He told her, *"Two nations are in thy womb, and two manners of people shall be separated from thy bowels..."* (Gen.25:23) It is evident that these two nations were opposite of each other; they abhorred each other yet, in the end, the one stronger in the flesh was subdued by the one who had fought with God and prevailed. In the light of a new Day, we know that this is our story too. Within our own being, there are two distinct kinds of persons, each opposite of the other. The stronger is the flesh man who fights to dominate the weaker, who is a babe in the Spirit. This is the story of Jacob, who was called a manipulator. In reality, Jacob was led of God who had met Him in a dream, as he traveled all alone and afraid, fleeing from the brother who wanted to kill him. It was on that journey, that Jacob saw God and the angels going up and down the ladder, and it was there that God gave unto Jacob the same promise that He had given to Abraham, and which is also our promise in Christ. *"And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."* (Gen.28:15) Jacob's life is a clear type of the struggle that we face as the one who is called of God and has received the promises of God, but is plagued by the twin brother, the man of flesh who is enraged and out to kill the man of Spirit within. This story is a clear revelation of our two identities; the one who was born after the flesh, and the one who is being born again after the Spirit. To get more understanding on this, the Spirit took me on a fast re-run of how I came into the knowledge of Christ and of my true identity in Him.

I HAVE LOVED THEE WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE- Indeed, before we ever knew Him, He loved us. I had no "religious" bringing up as a child, yet I had experiences that left deep impressions on me, so that when I finally met the Lord at the age of 30, I recognized Him as the One who had always loved me. I did not have to be convinced by sermonettes or books; I only needed to hear the Word and I believed. I was born in France, 15 miles North of Paris. When I was about six years old, I had a dream that I never forgot. In the dream *"I saw a very big ship parked on the train tracks of the Railroad Station of my hometown. It looked very festive with flags of many colors waving in the breeze all around the ship's deck. I knew that it had come to take me to a place with palm trees."* At that time, I knew nothing of ships or palm trees, but the dream was clear and very impressive. I never mentioned it to anyone, but I always remembered it.

In 1942 I was twelve years old, living in Paris during the German occupation. I was riding my bicycle where truck traffic was the busiest and the lanes were narrow; my mother had forbidden me to ride in that area. I was following much too close behind a truck, and had to suddenly swerve to avoid running into it; my brakes had failed. I hit another truck head-on coming up in the other direction. I was thrown off my

bike and hit the fender, then went flying under the back wheel of the truck. The flesh of my right leg, all around the knee, was crushed to the bone, although the bone was not broken. Medicines and doctors were scarce at that time. Many weeks after my initial surgery, I still could not walk, and despite daily applications of ointments and sulfa powder, (antibiotics did not yet exist or were not available), the flesh around my knee was rotting, and gangrene was setting in. One day, when the doctor assigned to me came to look at my wound, he decided to amputate the leg in order to save my life. The amputation was scheduled for the next day. During that night, for the first time in my life, I began to earnestly pray. I prayed, "God, if there is a God, please don't let them cut off my leg." I cried that night, I was so afraid. The next morning they began to prepare me. When the breakfast servers came around the ward, they skipped me. I could neither eat nor drink anything. I waited all morning for them to take me to surgery. By lunch time, the lunch cart came and handed me lunch. I told them, no, I am scheduled for surgery. They said that it had been canceled. Later, I learned that this particular doctor had been suddenly needed somewhere else; this often happened when doctors were urgently called to treat German soldiers. The next morning I was visited by a different doctor; he was an older man, and he was very kind. He looked at my leg and talked to the nurses gathered around my bed. Then he went to look for something and came back. He had found what he said was a silver nitrate pencil. There was no talk of putting me to sleep or of numbing my leg; he just began to work quickly, digging trenches in the wound with the pencil of silver nitrate. He dug deep all over the wound. Some of the flesh was dead but it was still painful, and the nurses held me and talked to me. In my heart I knew that God had worked through this doctor to save my leg from amputation, and perhaps my life as well. Within a short while, I was able to get up and I began to learn to walk again. After about three months in hospital, I went to stay with my grandmother to finish healing. I knew that the God I had called upon in my fear, had answered my prayer.

In early 1944, in a dream, *"I saw small airplanes flying low over Paris. Each small plane was a khaki color with a bright star painted on their tail. I was somewhat familiar with the German and English planes, but I had never seen these before. They came by multitudes, as if it were an invasion, flying so low that I could see the striking blue eyes of the pilots."* I told the dream to my father, and he told me to tell no one else. Later on June the 6th, what became known as the largest invasion by land, air and sea in human history took place on the beaches of Normandy; it was DDay. It came at the enormous cost of the sweat and blood of young, dedicated and so very brave American and British soldiers, seamen and airmen. I knew that these were some of the men that I had seen in my dream. They were coming all the way to Paris and beyond, to deliver us from the oppressive occupation of the German armies.

Later that year, I dreamed that *"I was on the top deck of a large ship at sea; it was the middle of the night. On the horizon, I could see the bright lights of a very large city; they lit up the whole sky. I could see many very tall buildings lining up the shore; it was a fearful sight. Then I heard a voice saying, 'be not afraid, you're in New York now.'" I kept the dream to myself. I had no desire to leave Paris, and I knew nothing about New York. But in 1945 I married one of these blue eyed soldiers that I had seen in my dream. And in 1946 I found myself on a ship, coming into New York harbor in the middle of the night. It was April and it was chilly, I was shaking as I dug my hands into the pockets of my warm jacket; I felt so alone and a dread came over me. It was then that I remembered the dream and heard the voice again, "Be not afraid, you're in New York now."* I felt comforted. I still did not know who was speaking to me, and who had prepared me for all this. I thought dreams were just a normal part of life, and I left it at that. There were many more dreams to come, but it was not until years later that I realized that all along, my life had been led by this God that I did not know. Now I know that dreams are one of the Spirit's ways to communicate to our conscious mind, and to bring us into the awareness of God and of our true identity.

FINDING GOD IN MY NEW COUNTRY- As I retrace the way that I took to find God and my true identity, I remember that the first ten years in my new country were extremely challenging and unstable for me; I was very young but I grew up fast. By 1946 I had left my beloved family, my city, my country and my own language behind. As a War Bride, in 1948 I passed the necessary tests and received my American citizenship. In 1952 I found myself having to leave my new family and all that I dearly loved behind. I had a broken heart and I remember talking to the only God I knew, asking Him for help. In 1956, I was working as a waitress in the elegant dining room of a Miami Beach hotel. My life was still difficult, but it was stable. It was at work that I met Michael and felt a strong attraction to him. We dated and I found myself comfortably falling in love with that man. It was not the fiery first love of my youth; it was a secure love, laced with respect and trust. Above all, I knew I was loved and respected in return. Michael was the answer to my prayer. A year later, we were married and for 47 years, we were very close, spiritually as well as in every day life. Neither one had any church experience, and during the first three years of our marriage, we never spoke about religion or God. However, all that changed when suddenly, I began to feel something strange. It was like a dread or apprehension had taken hold of me. I saw myself as a grain of sand or of dust, floating aimlessly through this endless universe, with no place to land and no way to recover myself while the question kept hounding me, "Who am I and what am I doing here?" This was not a dream of the night, it was more like a real "day dream." It was a very scary feeling; was I losing my mind? I could not share this with anyone, not even Michael. Finally, one day, I got down on my knees to talk to the God who had helped me before. I did not know Him personally, although He had been a strong presence and support in my life, and I trusted Him fully.

Soon after this experience, I fell and cracked my knee cap. I was on crutches and was laid up from work. One day, a nice neighbor lady came over to visit me. She brought me lunch on a tray, with a flower from her garden; and she brought me a Bible. I had never met her before, but found out that she had been praying for me all along. Unknowingly, I had just taken the first step of a journey that would lead to the answer to my question, "Who am I?" I shared all this with Michael, and together, we began a whole new and exciting life with our Lord Jesus Christ; it was 1960.

A NEW KIND OF DREAMS- It was at that time that my dreams became much more abundant. Now they were not only about my personal life; they had spiritual meaning. At first, I needed help to understand them. I vividly remember the first such dream. It was about *"two professional dancers, dancing on top of a high narrow bridge, spanning a river of swift moving waters. I was below by the water, looking up at them. At one point, the woman's ring slipped from her finger and fell into the waters below. The man dove down to retrieve it, but was not able to do so. At the same time, along with a few people standing by, I made an apple pie and brought it out of the waters, ready to eat. I held it up from where I stood, and offered it to the dancers on the bridge. The man became enraged and turned away from me."* I told Michael the dream, and we decided to go tell it to the pastor of the local Community Church we had been attending at the time. The pastor had always been a pleasant, smiling man, so we were shocked when after hearing the dream, he suddenly turned red and demanded our letter of resignation! We could not understand. After we left that church, the neighbor lady who had been so kind to me, was now a close friend. One day, she told me about a home meeting she had heard of and would like to attend. I went with her, and what I heard was new to me, but I wanted to hear more. I told Michael and soon we joined ourselves to a group of people who had come out of their churches and were seeking God as we were. It was in that group that I learned more about dreams, and that I learned to interpret them by the Spirit. Now, I had many vivid dreams which revealed what God was doing among us, in us, and even in the world. Others were having dreams too. Many dreams were shared during the services; they confirmed what the Spirit was teaching from the pulpit. The Spirit of the Lord was moving among us and it was amazing. The Lord kept Michael and me there for six years.

At the end of 1969, we left the group. I knew then, that dreams were the way that the Spirit communicated with my understanding or consciousness. God works in many ways to reach different people, but there is no doubt, that a line of communication between the Spirit and our conscious mind must be opened so that our faith may be built upon the Rock. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Rom.10:17) Hearing means understanding what the word means to us. We need a line of communication between the Spirit and our conscious mind in order to build faith. Dreams are not the only means of communication. The Spirit speaks through reading the teachings of Jesus, and of the apostles in the Bible. He speaks to us through the types and shadows of the Old Testament, and so we begin to grow spiritually. Prayer can be a means of communication, but is often only a one-sided conversation, with us doing all the talking. It was after much hearing, learning, submitting myself unto His will and the fiery trials of my faith, that I began to understand His ways and to know the answer to the question, "Who am I?"

EXCEPT A MAN IS BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT- These are the words of Jesus. To enter the kingdom of God, that is to know and abide by the things that are of God's Spirit, one must become a new creature. Jesus said we must be born of water and of the Spirit; this is a gradual process. We must first be born of water. It was recently, through a dream that I had several years ago, that I understood the meaning of "being born of water." The dream was about my recently deceased cousin Eugene. *"In the dream, I received a letter from Eugene. It was a few lines on one page but the ink was smeared because it had gone through water. it was still wet, and not legible."* This dream came five years ago, and since then I have prayed many times for understanding; I needed to know what my cousin had told me in this wet letter. Recently, the answer came to me. Water in this dream speaks of the baptism of John; the baptism unto repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In the dream, Eugene was telling me that, at the time of his death, he went through the waters of repentance. This was not a literal water baptism; it had been done in the Spirit. Jesus is our pattern. When He came to John by the Jordan river, He insisted that He must be baptized, and when He rose out of the waters the Holy Spirit came upon Him as a dove, and remained. Then the voice of God proclaimed Him to be His beloved Son. These are the three necessary steps we also go through. First our soul, which is our consciousness, our emotions, our mind, is stirred to repentance and receives the forgiveness of sins. Thus by God's grace, our soul is saved from death. Then the Spirit of God quickens or gives new life to our dead spirits. After this, we are able to *"...work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."* (Phil.2:12). This complete work of grace is done individually, as we feed daily on the Bread of life, the living Word of God. Thus our soul and spirit are made alive by the power of His resurrection, and begin to grow into the likeness and image of the Son of God and become new, born again creatures.

Paul reminds us, *"By him, (Christ), all things were created..."* (Co.1:16-17). All "things" are all "beings," in all realms, and at all levels of growth. Then, he explains that in the fulness of time, when these things are complete, they will all be gathered in Christ again. But this is done in God's order and in God's time. *"For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* (I Cor.15:22) All things are being gathered now, and throughout the ages to come. It is in Christ that we receive our complete salvation, "spirit, soul and body." It is in Christ that we receive our full inheritance, *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."* (Matt.5:5) Indeed, the heavens and the earth and the nations all belong to Christ. *"Arise O God, and judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations."* (Ps.82:8) As born-again sons, we become heirs of God. *"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."* (Rom.8:17) Now we can see why we go through the sufferings and the trials of this life. We can see clearly that all these things happen to us so that we might know Him, and find ourselves in Him. When we know who we really are, we put away childish thoughts and deeds, and we stand in the victory of the ages! *"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"* (II Cor.9:15)

Because He is love, *Jackie Caporaso*