



The Elect

Jim and Merry Corbett

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*“For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect
—if that were possible.” Mt 24:24 NIV*

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Prologue

The following book, The Elect, is designed to bring you to a place of deep, aggressive heart searching. It's also designed to impart the sovereignty of God and how simply and easily deception can be made to look like truth.

We have purposely attempted to modify the typical end-time scenario presentation, so that you must dig into the Word and confirm what you actually believe, reevaluate what kind of life you are to live if you call yourself a Christian; and possibly discover some areas of deception in your thinking. Each of us must believe in our Lord and His Word so deeply that His heart's desires and plans cannot be taken from us.

These pages are designed as a wake-up call and contain theorized scenarios for the sake of impact. We pray they re-establish your security in God through the blood of Jesus Christ, while challenging any areas of complacency.

Everything that is not in line with the Word of God (the Bible) is a fictional account of sensationalized events, designed for reader introspection. It's also a response to demonic activities that are being labeled as truth in the media and in books; and, in the process, are destroying the lives of many by leading them away from God and eventually into desperate eternal consequences.

If the questions that arise from reading the following pages cause you to address the areas of your life that have become complacent, confused, or far from God's intent for your life, we thank God. Our prayer is that you're moved to the point where you spend time with God for Him to reveal truth to you, and that you search the Word so you're able to prove to yourself that the way you live is God-ordained and that what you believe is biblical—and not just traditions of men that cannot stand under the scrutiny of the Word. If you can't justify your lifestyle, our prayer is that you are so convicted by the Holy Spirit you can't rest until you repent and are changed.

If you can contend for your faith, confirmed by the Word, then you can survive the soon-coming onslaught of lies and deceptions. If your beliefs, however you have arrived at them, do not stand up under the sway of masterful deception, you will not stand either. We urge you to turn to the Lord now with all your might, so you might come to truly know Him and Who He is. If you are thoroughly acquainted with Him, you will also recognize the counterfeit.

Convinced that the tribulation period is partly designed as an intense refiner's fire for the carnal Christian who would not head toward holiness before the rapture, The Elect takes the position of a pre-tribulation taking away of the overcomers—those who live in the world, but are not part of it; those who have prepared themselves as a waiting bride. This will not include religious, lukewarm Christians, because we are convinced Jesus will not be married to someone who is not completely faithful to Him, someone who has other loves that are more important.

We are not trying to make you believe we are experts on the Bible and end-time scenarios, or that we have the definitive answer. Others far more qualified than we are can do that. We are simply storytellers who have a burning desire to see the church of Jesus Christ become all it is intended to be, and to see the body of Christ seek the Lord Jesus as the only reason and purpose for living, regardless of what time frame we may be living in. We need to seek truth aggressively and know it deep enough in our hearts that we will not be swayed by lies that look and feel very much like truth for any aspect of life, when presented by authoritative people who demand to be trusted. If a cold and complacent life is the right way as God sees it, then the walk of integrity that Jesus had with Him was unnecessary. If a carnal life is correct, then those who died in the arena praising Jesus, and the apostles

and martyrs that honored Him right through their last breath were fools. More than likely, what we call holiness in these days is a mere shadow of its original, biblical definition.

Jim and Merry Corbett

So Many Ways to Reach People with God's Love

It is the heart of our ministry to provide our services and resources to individuals and other ministries to help advance their mission. This includes developing ways to give books free of charge. With that in mind, three books, [A White Stone](#), [The Elect](#), and [The Father Factor](#) are the premier books offered on our The Faith Resource Community website. Please go to www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com for more information on how you can be a part of this amazing outreach system. Enjoy!

From Our Father's Heart

I have warned My people to draw close to Me for many years.

*I have told them to prepare for a time
when they would not have anything.*

Over and over I have called them.

*I have even provided great hardships for some of them,
so that they would turn to Me and Me alone.*

Few decided to hear My strong call to holiness.

Few decided to make Me their only reason for living.

*Most looked upon the things that were happening all around them
and tried to change their circumstances,
so that they could remain comfortable.*

Soon, the world as they know it will be gone.

Soon only those who trust Me will survive.

All else will be consumed in the downward spiral of deception.

*No one will be able to trust what they see,
what they hear, or what they have known.*

Only My Word will prevail.

The following excerpt is taken from the final pages of the novel, A White Stone. It is suggested that you read A White Stone before you continue with this sequel, The Elect.

For three days and nights, several thousand troops and all the associated weaponry needed for a major battle had been positioned around the hospital, which was the known “hideout” for many of the remnant Christians who freely roamed the city doing “who knows what” to supposedly hinder the plans of the government. The Christians’ army—troops that came in unsuspected and out of nowhere—held the peacekeeping forces at bay. These troops had the most sophisticated equipment, (some pieces had never been seen before;) and were so organized, so large in number and so intimidating the Colonel dared not move against them.

These standoffs were taking place in all parts of the world. This created a great deal of worldwide interest as these events were covered by the media day and night with instant updates. Now it seemed to be over, for the morning light revealed that the heavy, protective line around Mercy General and all the other such “fortresses” had—for some inexplicable reason—silently dispersed during the night. The “army” seemed to have disappeared. In reality, heavenly hosts simply resumed their positions in another dimension and went back to observing everything, unseen by those operating in the flesh.

“Take no prisoners” was the direct order as tanks, jeeps and troops advanced toward the hospital entrances. Positioned on the roof, assault troops had eagerly awaited this moment; and in uniform efficiency, swept through every window or hatch they could find.

After several minutes of silence, Colonel Lassiter yelled into his telephone, “It’s too quiet in there. Somebody tell me what’s going on!”

After a few more seemingly interminable, quiet moments, the small hand-held telephone came to life. “You’re not going to believe this Colonel, but...but...” There was a hesitation, almost fear, in the voice on the other end. “There’s no one here, Sir. I mean, no one. It looks like they evacuated in the middle of their meal. The food is still warm and boy, were they eating good!”

Obviously stunned by his surroundings, the voice on the telephone trailed off into nothingness.

From their hiding place, Pastor Walter Fairchild, who had taken over His Holiness Christian Fellowship, Stephen MacDougal, the president of God’s People for the Restoration of Morality, and several of its other members had watched the television coverage of the sieges with great scrutiny. They knew the outcome of the local siege would give them good direction for their next confrontation as underground warriors against the state. Excited whispers turned to eerie silence, however, when it was reported that there was no one inside the hospital. Not ones to let anything stop what they believed they must do, speculation as to the Christians’ method of escape and debate on the next plan of action followed in short order.

“Wait, wait, listen. Here’s another update...quiet!” Stephen said, drawing everyone’s attention to the television reporter.

Gloria Manly—world news correspondent and vicious opponent of anything that resembled Christianity and anyone who didn’t believe as she did—had taken great delight in being selected for this special assignment. She—and so many others involved in the worldwide peace societies and their affiliates—had long been praying for the removal of those unwanted elements of society who were holding back the beginning of a pure and rational society designed for the betterment of all humankind.

“We have late-breaking reports of the disappearance of Christians all over the world. It seems...” she hesitated, “that our prayers have been answered. Could this be...” she hesitated again, almost too excited to speak, visibly struggling to contain her joy. “Could this be our quantum leap into the next phase of humankind?” Then, regaining her composure, she said, “Stay tuned. We’ll have another update, plus global news and weather at 10:00.”

From Our Father's Heart

Many of you know what deception is.

*Many of you choose to believe in small lies that allow you to justify holding on to your wounds
or remain in your comfort zones.*

*You have no idea the harm you are doing to your lives
by keeping these small cravings as part of you.*

*They are like infant creatures that will soon grow to devour you.
They will soon take over your life, demanding that you serve them
rather than the truth.*

*Turn from every lie that is part of your belief system
before it is impossible for you to do so.*

Turn now!

CHAPTER ONE

“I have declared from the beginning the former things [which happened in times past to Israel]; they went forth from My mouth and I made them known; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass [says the Lord].

4) Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew and your brow was brass,

5) Therefore I have declared things to come to you from of old; before they came to pass I announced them to you, so that you could not say, My idol has done them, and my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.

6) You have heard [these things foretold], now you see this fulfillment...” Isa. 48: 3-6 AMP

The upper heavens exploded with wondrous events as angelic forces, doing the bidding of Jesus, escorted their precious charges to Him, guiding them through corridors that increased in magnificence as they came closer to His presence, and whisking them past the tumultuous changes that were intensifying in the lower regions of heaven, nearer the earth. Without initial notice by those remaining on earth, the calling forth of the remnant believers, who were waiting for Christ as a bride, paved the way for dimensional corridors (which had been closed during the dateless past) to be reopened, and gave every horrific creature very direct access and the ability to intervene in the lower realms of the heavens—and ultimately the earth itself.

The spiritual order established at the time of the Garden of Eden—where God made room for created mankind and gave them a needed covering (invisible walls of protection from demonic onslaught) so His helpless new creation would not be overwhelmed by the dark forces—had served its purpose. Now, to initiate the final refining process necessary to purify those believers left behind and bring in those who had not yet surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus, a new harsher order was being established for a season on the earth. Mercy would now be manifested in the form of extreme trials, bowls of wrath, and vials of horror, designed to break the last strongholds of rebellion in the hearts of the remaining ones.

Freedom to travel within the dimensional realms was little by little being released to demonic forces, as angelic hosts withdrew from battlefronts and stepped aside from guarded openings, exposing access trails that led to unsuspecting earthly hosts. The impact of the new spiritual order on the earth would take only a short time to manifest and expose the unsuspecting inhabitants to a full understanding of their vulnerability and weakness now that the former mechanisms of protection were no longer available to them.

The turbulent winds of change dominated the heavens above, releasing their physical manifestations moment by moment on the earth below, as both angels and demons were given free access to take on human life forms, the latter as an element of deception and the former to help usher in the very end before Jesus walked the earth again, seven earth years hence. Soon, nothing would be the same. The familiar five senses could no longer be relied upon. What was would never be again. The now would still be available for a short season and the near future would not be a trustworthy place for anyone on earth. The road to who knows what had begun in earnest.

“That’s a wrap,” cameraman Tim Hanek said, as he took the heavy news camera from his shoulder. “What do you think, Gloria? Pretty cool stuff, huh,” he commented, hating himself for sounding like an overly enthusiastic third grader in front of her once again.

He mentally chastised himself for his ridiculous, inadequate observation in light of the astounding event that had just transpired. Checking the lens for some dirt he thought he saw during that last shot, he continued, trying to sound as professional as he could. “Do you think we’re done here, or do you want me to call in to see if they want us to stand by in case something else turns up? I don’t like the look of the clouds forming over there.”

Gloria Manly—flushed from the excitement of her last spot, and almost oblivious to anything that invaded her reverie—let her arm, still holding the microphone, fall to her side for a moment to reflect on what she had just

said in front of the camera. Her mind was reeling from the events that were unfolding right before her eyes. All of her life she had waited, planned, and positioned herself for an opportunity such as this; and now, it was here.

Her spirit guide had told her that a momentous event was about to take place in the near future, one which would change the balance of all existence forever; but she had no idea things would unfold this soon. “What incredible fortune,” Gloria said to herself quietly, momentarily ignoring—actually mentally rising above—Tim’s mundane question.

Here she was, right in the middle of probably the most significant news event in all of recorded history—the world-wide cleansing of the most politically incorrect, bigoted, selfish people she had ever encountered—and he actually had the unbelievable ignorance to minimize the gravity of this New Age advancement. Surely this was not the time to even give credence to the lowly things of this earth when such wonderfully fulfilling, mystical energies were being revealed. She could hardly contain herself. It was almost too much to bear.

For many years now, Gloria had been looking for truth. As a youth, her parents had taken her to church, attempting to brainwash her with that age-old singular God and the need for atonement for all her sins. She hated every mouthful of lies that were spewed at her by the hypocritical preacher. She knew better than anyone else who he really was. His notice of her from the time she was a small child and right through the beginning teen years still made her feel slimy all over.

In recent years, she often thought about how much time had been wasted feeling empty and useless, full of the condemnations her mother had placed upon her and the guilt she carried because of her times with the pastor. As soon as she was old enough to reason herself out of all that foolishness, including the notion of sin and all those guilt trips, she fled like a young bird freed from a cage, never to return. Since then, her search to find the real meaning of life had led her many places, from Dynamic Relaxation classes to Crystal Healing sessions to her favorite, the Self-Transformation lectures at the local library.

Her spirit guide, Ra-il, had been her premier influence into all enlightenment in recent years, and Gloria was now swooning with ecstasy to see his conveyance of events during times of guided meditation coming true. On several occasions, they had experienced her past lives together and often discussed how these lives fit in the overall plan of the Masters.

This most recent event brought all her previous experiences into clear focus and planted a new, more powerful meaning concerning her participation in them. This glowing affirmation of her purpose for living in the present time sent a chill of excitement down her spine, making her legs almost too weak to hold her up. Gloria grabbed for the railing next to her to support herself, as she began to feel faint under the magnitude of her discovery. She hadn’t been overcome with such human-like emotions for months. It was wonderful!

“What a glorious time to have reentered life,” Gloria mused to herself. “How gracious the Masters are to allow me to participate in this Grand Dispensation.”

“Gloria, did you even hear me?” Tim asked, outwardly annoyed at Gloria’s intoxication, and somewhat shaken and off balance himself because of the circumstances at hand.

Under normal conditions he had little patience with her ever since she had revealed to him that their association could no longer be anything more than a working relationship. He loved her deeply, but recently Gloria had told him they had evolved to different levels, which was hurtful enough; but even more so, to be so crass as to say it while in the throes of passion left him empty and reeling with conflicting emotions. This day, with all the added pressure, he had no time for one of her glassy-eyed trances.

“You need not be so karma disrupting,” Gloria cautioned him. “Do you realize the impact of what we’ve just witnessed?” she continued, immediately checking her thoughts, realizing he undoubtedly was too ignorant to accurately appraise anything of a true spiritual nature.

“Of course, you don’t,” she said to herself, loud enough for him to hear. She knew this was privileged truth, far beyond the reckoning of the less evolved.

Tim looked at her, rage welling up inside. “You self-consumed....,” he quieted himself, stifling all the underlying currents that had built up since she rejected him.

Gloria now gave him her condescending look and confirmed silently that her assessment of his spiritual level was accurate as usual. He, on the other hand, knew it would do no good to continue, or even defend himself in any manner.

Gloria's self-analysis of his personal growth no longer allowed her to consider anything he said to be of any consequence. Spiritually speaking, she had ascended high above him. She just could not lower herself to listen to someone of such elementary ascension. People like Tim and anyone else of lower spiritual status, especially those who called themselves Christians, would be tolerated only as long as they could be used to further the much higher goal of enlightenment.

Often she had told Tim that she was one of the vanguard bearers of New Age light, which would lead the world to its fast-approaching Golden Age of Oneness. He, of course, was not privy to her universal enlightenment. He was one of the severely uninitiated in her estimation and, therefore, disposable.

"What we've just witnessed is only the beginning," she said, impersonally casting some elementary pearl of wisdom his way, while she plowed through bad vibrations, and focused on channeling her inner peace to flow in concert with the present cosmic happenings.

"Something this big is a wonderful fulfillment of prophecy," she continued with a Cheshire cat grin. "We're in for some fabulous times, and you ain't seen nothin' yet," she added playfully, giving a "thumbs up" and a dazzling smile to everyone as she threw her microphone to Tim, closing the door to any further comment.

All that was going to be discussed had already taken place as far as she was concerned. There was no need to continue to be inhibited by the limited sophistication of those around her.

"I have my own ride back." She flung the remark in Tim's general direction, pointing to her personal armored limo. Gloria strutted purposefully toward the military officer in charge of the operations of the preceding days, casting off the annoying petty emotions—which had momentarily arisen—with a characteristic tossing of her head. This practiced movement caused her long blond hair to fall gracefully and precisely over her shoulders.

Tim subserviently continued packing all the equipment, once again painfully aware of his position with her and accepting it with seething hatred. He summoned security to help him maneuver safely back to the transport, which wound through the crowded and increasingly turbulent streets, and eventually arrived safely at the television studio. Gloria had left him confused and hurting as usual.

Strolling as if on a Saturday walk in the park in safer times, Gloria finessed her way through the activity and turmoil occurring inside the security area. Preparations had already begun to remove any evidence of troop involvement, a natural progression in the completion of any war-like action. This three-day siege against the "enemy" stronghold was no exception. To the uninitiated observer, it had to look as if nothing unusual had happened. The media then had the freedom to misinform the public at its leisure, replacing facts with perceptions, and leaving room for their own interpretations of what really happened, systematically manipulating the truth so the masses would eventually believe what they read or heard.

The present "clean-up" procedure had all the characteristics of a beehive with the "queen bee" himself, Colonel Lassiter, at the very center of all the proceedings. He barked orders, gave commands over the phone to those who were still inside the hospital/hideout, answered a myriad of questions from the tactical officers; and, in general, appeared to be a one-man power grid from his command post in the midst of seeming chaos. He was in his glory. Nothing pleased him more than being in charge. It didn't really matter what he ruled over; it only mattered to him that he was in control of everything that crossed his path.

Ever since the death of his son—that freak accident at the riding academy when his little Johnny was impaled by the pitchfork while playing in the barn loft with that brat, Crystal, and those other rich, snobby kids—he had sworn to himself he would never allow any part of his life to be under the control of anything or anyone else, no matter what it took to keep that from happening. Colonel Lassiter blamed himself for the death of his young son. After much pleading and persuasion by his wife, he had given Johnny permission to take riding lessons, thinking they might help make his frail son a little less afraid.

If only he hadn't selected the most expensive academy. He knew that Johnny would not be accepted, because he was so different from the other stronger, more aggressive kids. Maybe the only human he ever really

loved would still be alive if he had gone some other place. If only he had been given more time to work with Johnny. If only he had been able to get him in shape. It was a perpetual source of irritation to know he had been robbed of the opportunity to transform his son from a weak, sniveling, fearful little boy into the real man he knew he could be. In fact, with Johnny's death as a catalyst, Colonel John Lassiter conducted his own personal war against weakness on a daily basis by making sure that every young boy under his command became all he could be. There just was no other option.

What infuriated him most, however, was that Crystal— that whore, the one responsible for Johnny's death—was never charged for her crime. "Daddy's money kept her out of prison," he spat those words whenever he retold that awful story with renewed hatred and deep-rooted bitterness.

Many young recruits felt the weighty yoke of Colonel Lassiter's private obsession, and either became what the colonel desired, or found themselves carrying out their duties as far from him as he could possibly send them. Failure was not acceptable to him in anyone, especially because it reminded him of his missed opportunity with his son. The only way for him to deal with that and maintain a sense of order in his surroundings was to remove his perceived source of the problem. He could not bear to take on any personal responsibility for failure of any kind.

Needless to say, Colonel Lassiter functioned in his true, albeit self-appointed calling at events like this. He loved the drama of the unknown. He loved the ability to solve and overcome any and every situation. However, underlying his natural instincts of taking charge and fulfilling his obligations of command was a festering uneasiness and discontent. Outwardly his demeanor was the usual—impenetrable; but inwardly he was becoming increasingly aware that his present mission was, in fact, one more glowing failure to add to his list of recent failures.

His enemy had slipped out from under his grasp. That had never happened in all the years he'd been in the military. He was very uncomfortable. He was even more agitated by the fact that he didn't know what to do about his current situation. He really had lost control, and he loathed every minute of it. His frustration became increasingly intense as he thought about his potential disgrace in between barked orders, which were designed to regain control of the situation at hand.

His junior officers were familiar with his demeanor and none of them wanted to be the one who "took him over the top" into the realm of uncontrolled rage. They had often felt his wrath and each man had determined to avoid it at almost any cost.

The behavior of the colonel allowed him, in certain respects, to retain his current position in the military; but unfortunately, it also kept him from achieving any higher rank and was now causing his continued decline. In the past, others had covered up or "cleaned up" after his occasional lapses in comportment; but in recent months, his reactions to what was going on around him were consistently rooted in anger and unreasonableness, which impaired his decision-making capabilities even further. It was a messy business for his superiors, and no one had the patience to endure it much longer.

"Oh, Colonel," a smooth as butter greeting oozed over the din of harsh commands and helter-skelter activity, causing almost everyone to stop and take notice simply because of its startlingly different, connived tone. Colonel Lassiter found himself frozen, looking in Gloria Manly's direction as though posing for a Sears catalog picture—his finger pointing straight ahead, ready to emphasize the command he was in the process of giving to a lesser ranking officer.

"Excuse me," Gloria said to another officer, pushing him back gently with a well-rehearsed, often-used gesture. With her hand against his cheek, she looked coyly and directly into his eyes while moving past him. The officer, taken aback and moving on her "command" as if in obedience to a superior, looked in the direction of his colonel with questioning eyes, almost apologizing for responding to her as she continued to approach the steps of the mobile command post.

"Would you assist me?" Gloria knowingly requested, feigning helplessness and extending her hand demurely to the guard at the door, showing much of her leg with the other hand as she raised her dress purposefully a little higher than necessary to navigate the stairs.

Gloria reveled in being noticeably beautiful. She cunningly used her attributes and the ability that her masters had given her to control every circumstance and every person with whom she dealt. Each encounter with people was a series of little games to be won on the way to a successful conclusion at the end of each productive day. Every day was one step closer to the ultimate conclusion of completely linking with the infinite powers of the universe. Even if the overall purpose of all she'd achieved hadn't had such mystical magnitude, it still would've been fun to simply use people to fulfill her own selfish desires.

"Thank you," she cooed to everyone as she entered the command post before anyone had the presence of mind to stop her. She deftly closed the door in the faces of several wide-eyed, open mouthed officers, leaving her alone in the small accommodation with Colonel Lassiter and one very uncomfortable junior officer.

"I need to go in *there*," she announced, extending her index finger in the direction of the hospital while wrapping her other hand around his elbow, intentionally pulling herself close to him.

John Lassiter, overcome by the boldness of this intruder into his domain, momentarily didn't know whether to salute her, shake her hand, or throw her out of his office. He considered doing all three before he was taken in by her ample charms, and mesmerized by the electrically compelling personality she displayed when necessary.

"OK, I was just about to go in there myself," he blurted, surprised by his own answer. Those on the other side of the door were stunned to see Gloria's effect on the colonel as the junior officer opened the door and they strained to peek inside from a distance.

Reaching out his hand in order to grasp Gloria's, he said, "I'm Colonel John Lassiter."

"Oh, everyone knows who you are," Gloria flirted, lacing her response with a hint of innocent awe and calculated submission, purposely giving him the impression she felt as if she were in the presence of greatness.

Unbeknownst to him, as soon as the Colonel had taken her hand, Gloria transmitted to him and took from him everything she needed to cement their relationship from that time forward. In that instant of physical contact, his place in her plans was sealed. He was at her bidding. Her spirit guides, being much more powerful than the lustful, controlling spirits that possessed the colonel, brought his every future desire under their control.

Commander Darian of the United Nations assault troops strode briskly toward the command post. Upon arrival, he approached Colonel Lassiter and informed him, "The place is secure, Colonel," as he snapped to attention and saluted.

Colonel Lassiter returned the salute and went to his desk to make some notes in his documentation folder before turning back to Gloria, who was just about on the verge of annoyance for having been less than the center of attention for even an instant.

"Are we about ready, Colonel?" Gloria asked as she regained the advantage. "I'm really anxious to see the hideout." She tucked her arm under his and held it purposely close to her chest, while guiding him toward the door.

Colonel Lassiter was helpless to do much more than obey the powerful, compelling spirits that functioned through Gloria. "Let's go, men," he said authoritatively over his shoulder, as the two of them walked swiftly down the steps and breezed past the officers; and Gloria secretly took charge of the occasion with determined purpose.

From Our Father's Heart

True authority is Mine alone.

*Many of you feel that you have power
because you think that you can manipulate your life
and mold it into a life that is recognized by others.*

How foolish you are!

I alone can bring truth to any situation.

You may believe in your heart that you are in control.

However, you are in for a rude awakening

as I show you how small you really are.

Your beliefs have caused you to walk in false pride.

When I choose to reveal Myself to you,

you will know that I am God,

the only God of all power.

CHAPTER TWO

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19) For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

1 Co 1:18-19 NIV

As the small entourage moved through the animated parking lot, which was still loaded with an overabundance of equipment—barricades, jeeps, SWAT vehicles, generators, communications vans, and more—Gloria proceeded with an air of confidence and light-heartedness toward the hospital, where the Christians were last seen. Walking arm in arm with the colonel, and periodically squeezing his arm close (while at the same time making sure each of the other officers felt at least as important as he did,) she easily held all involved in rapt attention and much conversation as they neared the entrance to the hospital. All the men present were totally captivated by her charmed presence. Knowing how to use her abundant assets well, Gloria smiled, tossed her hair at the proper moments, purposefully touched those near her, and orchestrated everything that was necessary in entertaining her captives. She was a maestro of manipulation.

As they entered the lobby and made their way to the cafeteria, they passed the MPs, who looked like intermittent pillars stationed along the corridor. Their light conversation took on a more somber tone as the gravity of what had just transpired became real and up close as they walked, no longer isolated from the scene of the confrontation.

Meager personal possessions in cluttered but clean rooms and hallways became silent testimony of a unique season in the lives of many very real human beings. They were no longer just seemingly evil people who, until this very moment, had only been impersonally viewed at a distance.

At first, a few of the junior officers nervously made some futile attempts at levity without much success, but that stopped abruptly as the group entered the large room that was obviously the nursery. Scraps of pictures cut from magazines hung on the walls, small beds sported turned back covers, and repaired toys lay in various places in the room as if waiting for the children who played with them to return. The group was speechless. These seemingly insignificant items struck something deep in the hearts of the hardened military personnel as they faced the reality that small, innocent children had lived there until only a short time ago.

Every member of the group toured the room in almost reverent silence, some picking up a toy to examine it or a book to quietly page through it. Some simply stooped to examine the valued possession of an absent, diminutive owner. All tarried in body and mind for a few moments to reflect on their own families and better times. Gloria thought tenderly of her own little girl whom she had left with her best friend, Terry. She couldn't wait to be with both of them.

Only after a staff sergeant notified the officer in charge that others were waiting for the group to examine the cafeteria, before it was sealed as a crime scene, did everyone come back from their personal moments of contemplation. Everyone was touched by the simple room, many much deeper than they wanted to admit. Somehow the nursery carried with it a silent reminder of purer hearts, peaceful thoughts, and simpler times.

Those, who had long ago hardened their hearts to most honest, heartfelt emotions, shook off tender, unnecessary feelings just as they had done many times in the past. Without knowing it, a few people—Gloria included—took a little piece of that room with them.

It was a short walk from the nursery to the cafeteria; but for Gloria, the walk took on a weight that caught her off guard. For some unexplained reason, she found herself lagging behind the rest. The closer she got to the last bastion of her longtime Christian enemies, her reasons for seeing it became increasingly dim, even inadvisable. With each step she took, it seemed that her delicate, open-toed shoes became heavier and heavier.

By the time she reached the door where the others were waiting for her, it was as though she wore concrete blocks for shoes. Sweating profusely, she leaned against the wall, totally exhausted.

“Are you OK, ma’am?” Colonel Lassiter queried, standing just outside the cafeteria door.

“There must be some very bad karma around here,” she responded, resting her hands on her knees to collect as much air as she could, much like a runner would do after completing a long race. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt such low vibrations,” she panted, gasping for air, still looking at the floor. “I don’t recall ever feeling like this.”

Gloria checked her pulse. Her heart raced. “Maybe the Masters are trying to tell me something. Maybe I’m not supposed to go in there,” she sighed, standing upright again, raising her finger momentarily to point to the room. Gloria had to brace herself against the wall so she wouldn’t fall down. Her uncharacteristic weakness and lack of balance shocked her.

Gloria had been promised unfailing health, all wisdom, and unlimited prosperity many times while in communion with Ra-il, her spirit guide. It perplexed her that this unusual turn of events would happen; that he would leave her alone like this, feeling confused, sick, and extremely vulnerable to almost everything around her.

“Wait until the next time I meet you in my room,” she said to herself, actually to Ra-il, as she took a deep breath in an attempt to shake off the feeling of nausea.

“Let’s go in for just a moment,” she attempted to command Colonel Lassiter, summoning all the strength she had left to walk through the door of the cafeteria.

As she moved toward the door, the colonel and his men flowed in behind her, expecting to continue through. The guards on either side of the door had difficulty holding their composure as the pompous parade of both known and self-proclaimed celebrities unceremoniously fell into each other like dominos, when Gloria hit something invisible that wouldn’t allow her to enter the room.

“What’s the matter?” Captain Westover yowled in frustration, rubbing his nose after bumping into the back of his commanding officer, who was bending over to retrieve his cap. The captain silently berated himself for his unintended insolence and for being part of what must have looked like a Three Stooges bit. “Sorry, sir,” he mumbled sheepishly, avoiding the glare of his colonel, who was recovering from having pressed hard against Gloria and feeling a little embarrassed himself.

Gloria, who had run into a solid, invisible wall which encompassed the doorway, had no explanation for anyone. As far as she could tell, she had run into something that just wasn’t there. For a moment she stood still, almost fearful. Taking one tentative step forward with her hand in front of her, as if reaching to touch what she had felt when she tried to enter before, she proceeded cautiously. All the others stood back and watched, trying to avoid a repeat performance of what had just taken place.

Gloria’s tentatively out-stretched hand contacted nothing, which gave her noticeable relief. She had regained her composure and once again felt a need to perform for the others near the hallway entrance. Straightening her dress defiantly, she gave one of the officers a look that challenged him to even comment with so much as a smile, if he dared, on the past few moments. Lifting her head proudly and giving all present her characteristic hair flip, she again stepped toward the entrance to the cafeteria. Each officer now stood on either side of the doorway and waited for her to enter alone.

As she lifted her foot to enter the room, an invisible force—which is what it appeared to be to those watching—raised her about two feet off the ground and tossed her past the startled witnesses, depositing her with a thud on the hall floor about ten feet behind them. In their amazement, they stood there stone still, bug-eyed, and dumbfounded as they viewed her crumpled form, her long, flowing hair draped over her face in a random pattern. Gloria, now fuming with rage, tried to scramble to her feet. As she achieved a kneeling position, she beckoned for help, raising her head in the direction of the immobilized men.

Before she could say a word, the men began to scatter all around her. Those near the door bolted past her to the lobby, as if running from bullets in combat. Some were lifted straight up and disappeared in midstride right before Gloria’s eyes, only to find themselves back in the parking lot. Colonel Lassiter sustained a glancing blow to his left temple, as his landing brought him in direct contact with the right side of his mobile command post. In

spite of the pain in his head and the loud thump that introduced it, he shot up immediately and instinctively screamed commands to which no one responded, despite the fact he'd just been airborne for twelve seconds.

As the men outside were examining various bruised body parts and regaining their composure, their heads turned in unison toward the hospital entrance in time to observe Gloria running unceremoniously, shoes in hand, and screaming hysterically as she escaped the building. When she was about sixty feet from the front door, a massive explosion blew out the windows on the second floor, raining debris of concrete, glass, and other building materials in the direction of the scurrying crowd below.

As explosions continued throughout the building, out of control flames and billowing smoke quickly encapsulated the entire hospital and caused all present to retreat far beyond the barriers that had been set up for the earlier standoff. Everyone who could simply ran for their lives. In fact, Gloria maintained her stride and her hysteria from the time she left the hospital doorway until the time she felt it was safe to stop with the others.

When the atmosphere cleared somewhat, allowing wide-eyed viewers to turn and appraise the situation, the command center looked like the middle of a war zone. Bloodied bodies, smoke, fire, continued smaller explosions due to stored oxygen and igniting gas lines, and the screams of those who hadn't escaped in time filled the area.

Gloria stood in disbelief at the scene before her. She had never been so close to harm in her entire life, and she didn't like it at all. She had been frightened beyond words, something that hadn't happened for as long as she could remember. Within a few moments, she began to weep and shiver uncontrollably.

While most of the others rushed to help those in need, all Gloria could do was stand off to the side and watch. In the hours it took to bring the situation under control, she found refuge near an empty trash container and sat down. In silence, she observed all that was happening almost as if she were watching a movie. No one talked to her for several hours. Only an attempt by Colonel Lassiter to discuss with her what had taken place in the building brought her back to the reality of the situation.

His query was met with silence and her immediate departure, leaving little doubt in his mind that she considered the subject off limits. Most of the others involved were hesitant to say much to anyone. Only after a few weeks would they begin to talk to one another. Each person had to digest the events in his own mind as to what really happened – if indeed it had happened at all.

In the invisible spirit world, beyond the glow of the fire at the hospital, giant angelic beings repositioned themselves at their posts, having completed their part in protecting God's sacred territory. This was being played out on a grand scale all over the world as He saw fit.

After the angels successfully defended the holy ground against any attempted intrusions by ungodly forces, only the first few humans who came on the scene were allowed access to the cafeteria, where the last meal had taken place; and then, only for the purpose of witnessing the power of God and the fulfillment of His promises, which confirmed what He said He would do for His children. Once enough people had seen the room and there was no possibility of denying what had taken place, God simply and decisively moved. Just as He had done in the garden so many centuries ago, God's territory was sealed forever. No one was going to defile this place or any of the other places where the holy bride had met her Lord.

As news media worldwide reported the event of the disappearance of millions of people, they had the additional task of trying to explain the unexplainable—simultaneous outbreaks of fires, violent storms, earthquakes, explosions, midday darkness, increasing winds, and a host of other means that the true Master of all things used to stop anything from defiling His chosen, holy places. Father God suddenly spoke these places out of existence. It was the official stamp of God, indicating an unequivocal change in the spiritual realm.

His actions, which trumpeted boldly of His Lordship, were misinterpreted by most of those left behind. Unnoticed by many and held only with fleeting thought by others, the beginning of probably the most sorrowful time in all of history had arrived as foretold.

The world had definitely changed, even though it looked pretty much the same to the unobservant eye. The creation model, heretofore known by the inhabitants of the earth for its mostly predictable weather and life patterns, had now reached a turning point. It was altered by God. What had previously been called normal by

earth's residents no longer existed. Life could not go on as before and mankind would no longer have input in determining the future, even though they thought they did. All things were heading in a direction toward an inevitable, promised, God-determined conclusion.

No one alive knew, not even the wildest of imaginations could conjure up what lay in store for those who had not heeded the many warnings given over time by the Lord. Now it was too late. The fate of those left behind had been sealed through their own choices. Their future would now hinge on much harder choices. Extremely difficult circumstances would require life and death decisions, a far cry from the past, familiar ways that afforded comfort and clear direction.

Instead of interpreting earthly things based on the physical senses and dimensions, the spiritual world—which had been restrained until the work of salvation was completed—now came to the forefront. Spiritual laws, rules, and ranking orders had free access to the physical realm, causing those who weren't in the loop, so to speak, to reel in confusion. Life forms on earth were either angelic, demonic, or human. From God's vantage point, those who were considered good and those who were evil without question were allowed to mingle with the human race, jostling for position at every opportunity. Human senses could no longer be trusted. Conclusive reasoning was a thing of the past.

Without fanfare, a dark, parallel existence also competed to gain the hearts and minds of those who remained on earth. Attempting to deny God's established laws and His end-time plan and confuse all of mankind, this existence was built on lies designed to lead unwary participants to final destruction.

From Our Father's Heart

*If you only knew how your moment by moment choices
determine your life story with Me.*

*You throw away opportunities to act like My Son to others,
thinking that I don't notice.*

*You listen to those who counsel you with eloquent words
that have little or no wisdom from My throne room.*

You have become a blind guide

because you have listened to foolish men with cold hearts.

*Soon your life will be a pale example of the life I have ordained for you. You will have no answers when every question demands
eternal wisdom. Because you would not seek My wisdom when you could,*

you will have no ability to do so when I am desperately needed.

Your life will be crushed

because you did not seek Me and Me alone.

CHAPTER THREE

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov. 16:18

AMP

Pastor Walter Fairchild moved silently into the shadows of the building across from the run-down apartment he and his wife and children shared since they left their spacious residence at His Holiness Christian Fellowship. He groped along a brick wall in the darkness for a place to stand until he had ample opportunity to run across the street undetected.

Cities had become filthy, garbage-infested battle zones since the collapse of most city governments due to bankruptcy, corruption, and self-interest. The stench of refuse in the physical, however, was no match for the stench of sin that reached the nostrils of God as people now openly cursed Him with no fear.

Roaming gangs, helpless street people, and those crazed with fear, lust, and murderous anger were commonplace. It was not safe to venture into the streets alone during the day and almost suicidal to attempt to travel at night, unless your movements were totally unnoticed.

All brightness had left humanity. Body piercing, tattoos, and mutilations of all kinds—some once fanciful and whimsical even within the body of Christ—became testimony of the hatred Satan had for mankind. These outward signs, which symbolized increasing, inward spiritual death, deteriorated at a horrific rate. Once beautiful human beings were hidden under layers of ink and metal. The appearance of these macabre bodies was now commonplace rather than the exception. It delighted the dark enemies of God that inhabited dark spiritual places.

Hopelessness and depravity had long ago spread to the suburbs as people, who simply ignored the normal deterrent of the law, decided they could take what they desired, knowing there was no one to stop them. When it became common knowledge that the things only dreamed about or seen on television were available to the strongest or boldest, havoc broke out. The wealthy suburbs with their hidden villas, which had been designed for the safety of their inhabitants, became prime targets for those who had struggled in vain all their lives to attain material prosperity. In certain instances, whole families were found dead at the side of the road, having been killed in their sleep and carried out to rot in the open by the new tenants. No matter what methods were employed, the ones who moved in after they had displaced the owners would themselves, in time, be displaced by someone bigger, smarter, or more aggressive. The cycle repeated itself with haunting regularity.

Such irony! Now, the safest places were those no one wanted, as long as there was still something better available. The ghettos, as horrible as they had become, were somewhat safer havens for those who were not inclined to hurt others for what they owned. Any appearance of wealth—in most cases, a pair of pants with no holes, a warm sweater, or a pair of shoes—was enough for some to threaten and even take your life.

The thinking poor became adept at surviving simply by not having any appearance of wealth whatsoever. Only the government or the elite, such as the media, (who lived in special social campuses,) could live a relatively safe life behind locked gates, protected by armed security as long as they stayed on campus or traveled in specially designated vehicles. Humankind had plunged to the depths of depravity, leaving little that hadn't been touched by the gruesome finger of Satan himself.

This momentous night, the spontaneous fires set by God and the ones set by roving bands of mindless drug and power-crazed celebrants scattered throughout the city left an ominous glow on the surface of Pastor Fairchild's normally darkened hovel. Clouds formed almost instantaneously and dissipated at the same rate, switching the sky back and forth from ink-black to gray over and over, while threatening great harm. Gusts of forceful winds pushed the fires along at a formidable rate, signaling more treacherous conditions to come on the horizon.

A group of party goers, reveling in the news of the disappearance of so many Christians, hesitated in front of the building that Walter was near, causing him to retreat further into the shadows until they passed by. "Boy, it's going to be impossible to travel soon," he thought, as he cowered in the shadows.

The group he managed to avoid had stopped for a moment to share the contents of several dark-colored bottles. Each of them greedily took a long swig before passing it on to the next already groggy, yet uninhibited recipient. Having formed temporary liaisons in the merriment, several couples seized the moment—while waiting for their turn at the bottle—to embrace and “enjoy one another’s company.” As one young woman reached for a bottle, her partner reached for the next available female. The cycle continued into the wee hours. One pair detoured into the alley in Pastor Fairchild’s direction, causing him to turn and quickly run behind an overflowing dumpster, where he squatted in a foul liquid as he waited for the couple to leave.

Because of the physical position he assumed, his legs went numb from lack of circulation almost immediately, leaving him in anguish for what seemed a lifetime as the nearby couple feverishly groped one another. Under the cover of darkness that the building provided, they were about to consummate their one-night stand, when they were interrupted by someone else in the group who yelled that they had found another helpless drunk and were about to “have some fun with him.” The man who interrupted the couple pretended to tear them apart as he would two dogs, laughing uncontrollably in the process. Then, remembering his mission, he goaded them to hurry and join the others, who had already started in on the old man.

Pastor Fairchild poked his head around the dumpster to sneak a look at the trio, thinking they had their backs to him. He let out a gasp when he saw the well-worn woman. Quickly pulling his head behind the dumpster, he wondered if he had been caught.

It couldn’t be her... but it is, Pastor Fairchild had to sadly admit to himself, holding his hand over his mouth so he would make no other sound.

“Wait! Wait! What was that? Stop!” the woman slurred, buttoning her wrinkled blouse and grabbing the arm of her lover in order to gain some leverage to push him away. Staggering slowly in the direction of the dumpster with her head tilted inquisitively, she motioned to the other men to follow her.

“I heard something,” she whispered.

Pastor Fairchild pressed himself deeper into the shadow of the dumpster. His mind raced, alternating between panic and planning. He was ready to lunge to freedom, if he should be discovered. He remained motionless as the pair came closer and closer, listening to the rapid pounding of his heart. Just about the time he expected to be discovered and was about three seconds away from recklessly bolting out of the alley, the couple stopped.

“It’s probably a rat,” the woman’s latest partner commented, making her cringe in fear and disgust. “Hey, the others found a party,” his thoughts shifted gears and he waved the woman in the direction of the main street.

Turning slowly, not wanting to encounter anything slimy and disgusting, the woman teetered down the alley. “I don’t like rats,” she mumbled, as she headed toward the sounds of the taunts and jeers of her so-called friends.

Pastor Fairchild gasped a sigh of relief and moved from the shadows just enough to reveal only a small portion of his face, trying to confirm his suspicions about the woman’s identity as she departed. “It *is* her,” he said to himself, confirming the first recognition of his former worship leader, Cara Webb.

Cara had been instrumental in the removal of Pastor Wickham from His Holiness Christian Fellowship and replacing him with Pastor Fairchild. The choice of Pastor Fairchild as his successor was unanimous because of his disdain for what had happened to the sanctity of the church after that Train character had visited the sanctuary and claimed to speak for God. Her vehement opposition against anyone who would extend the grace needed to keep Pastor Wickham and those other unseemly influences as part of the body was extremely vocal and incredibly intense. Pastor Fairchild remembered thinking that she must have been deeply offended by Wickham to be so adamant, almost violent, in the poisoned opinions she vented at the church meetings. Once Pastor Wickham’s removal was finalized, Cara bulldozed her way into the position of leading the congregation in worship each Sunday morning, overcoming objections from the choir with a relentless barrage of accusations and innuendos aimed at each dissenter until their objections faded.

One day, after several weeks of causing great contention and strife via rumor and character attacks, she simply disappeared. To the relief of everyone, she was never heard from again. No one bothered to look for her,

even when it was reported that she was seen in a local bar. Everyone felt the situation was best left alone and the choir peacefully continued on.

From his position behind the dumpster, Pastor Fairchild heard what he couldn't actually see. Both men and women from the group of partiers took great, sadistic pleasure in using whatever weapons they could find to pound on the hapless victim they had encountered, until he was no longer able to defend himself, then until he was unrecognizable, dead, and beyond.

Cara, having thoroughly embraced the desires of her flesh so often, while simultaneously casting off the call of the Holy Spirit to repent, took satanic delight in participating. Shrieking loudly, eyes ablaze, she repeatedly kicked the man and rhythmically beat his head with a pipe. Her lover, wanting to continue what had been started in the alley, tried to pull her from the motionless frame. Only when she was tempted by a swig from the bottle and swayed by his kisses did she move away, exchanging her savagery for a passionate distraction, while some of the others took over beating the corpse where she had left off.

Pastor Fairchild, having moved from behind the dumpster, could only stand in the shadows, hiding physically and emotionally from what he knew was happening. Pressing his grieving, anguished face against his hand, which rested just shy of the corner of the building, he could only wait. Weak, afraid, and helpless to muster any courage earlier to assist the man, his spiritual condition was glaringly before him. With every sound of cracking bones, the thud of the pipe, or devilish cries of glee from the murderers who relished their task, the pain of his own weakness was almost more than he could bear.

What would his Jesus do? Would He stand in the shadows as another human was being beaten beyond recognition? Would He fear those who were committing the act, or would He hurt enough for the souls of those doing harm to risk His own life to intervene? Wouldn't Jesus have power enough to stop them, and bring them to Himself with His love?

"Ohhhh," the pastor stifled a deep-seated groan that stemmed from knowing once again that he had little power to affect the people around him or his surroundings, or even overcome his own fears. Deep down he knew he didn't have even a hint of the kind of love that Jesus had for others. In reality, his life was a sham, no more than a spiritual dog and pony show, performed for the benefit of others.

As long as things were going well, he could play the part of the pastor, looking and sounding spiritual, caring, and responsible. Now that things had gotten exceedingly rough, he was being exposed for who he really was—a powerless Christian coward, full of lofty ideals and intentions, but void of the real heart of the Lord in any situation. He was living on the standards and promises of how he thought things should be, how he had taught them as truth to his people in much better, safer times when every decision seemed to have a clear answer.

Now that so much had changed, his kind of Christianity was useless. He couldn't pray his way out of trouble, because trouble was everywhere at every turn. He couldn't use his faith in faith to feel secure, as there was no security other than in Jesus; and although the opportunity was presented over and over, that relationship was never nurtured to the point of becoming a real, intense, personal relationship.

In the past, Pastor Fairchild was too entrenched in his traditions and methodology to respond to the many calls to intimacy from the Lord. Now striving toward any form of intimacy seemed impossible. He knew the Lord was there for him; but there were so many barriers and he'd embraced so many corrupted beliefs over the years, he didn't even know how to approach Him.

Each day's events and its accompanying horrors were unfolding so fast, that taking the time to deepen a relationship, even with God, seemed far less important than mere survival. Because he continually pushed aside God's ways over the years, so he could fulfill his own aspirations and please the people around him, he now personally owned a broken-down version of the Christian faith.

Turning away from what was so horrible that it seemed almost surreal and sliding down the wall into a seated position, the former pastor of so many people put his head on his knees and sobbed with abandon. Overcome by all that was happening around him, combined with his own fears, weaknesses, and pending future, he doubled over on his side and assumed the fetal position, rocking back and forth in the filth of the alley, unconscious of the humiliation incurred by his actions. In former times, he would've distanced himself from

anyone who lowered himself to his present state. He would've advised that person to pick himself up, take the bull by the horns, and find a way out of his unacceptable circumstances. He hated weakness. He would've created some kind of church program—along with a new staff position—to deal with the problem and separate himself from such spiritual immaturity.

Holding his stomach as if experiencing labor pains, he groaned in agony and continued rocking, incapable of controlling the grief that was rising up from deep within. Not even the assailants—who were no more than a hundred feet away—were a concern any longer. Rivers of pain overpowered him as he wailed. Could he even go to Jesus for help, forgiveness, and healing? He had turned the Lord aside so many times before, would he be accepted now?

Finally, he was able to catch his breath and control himself. He sat against the building, wiping the tears from his eyes, and sniffing away the residue of his time of realization. Still looking at the alley floor, his hands clasped around his knees, he quietly began to confess his lack to his Lord over and over.

“Oh, Lord, I’m so frightened. I don’t know what’s happened, how to function, what to do. How did I miss Your plans? Why was I left behind? How do I take care of my fam...”

The pastor’s head shot up as he remembered his wife, small daughter, and twenty-two-year-old son, Ben, who had recently moved back in with them for his safety. Pastor Fairchild desperately needed to know if they were still around, or had they been taken away, too? He pushed himself to his feet and ran toward the apartment, shaking off the call of the Holy Spirit once again. Without considering the consequences of being exposed to whatever might be lying in wait, he ran toward his apartment.

As he neared the entrance to the alley, his thoughts entertained—then rejected—the idea of stopping to see if he could help the unfortunate drunk. Remembering vaguely that the noise of the beating had ceased while he was dealing with his own fears, and seeing the man now lying motionless in his own blood, he passed him by without breaking his stride.

From Our Father's Heart

*When will you understand that I have given you the life of My Son
so that you can demonstrate it to others and fulfill My plans?
They will crave My truth if you walk in the character of Jesus.
They will embrace Him because they see Him in you.
You have a purpose in life.
Come to Me to find out what that purpose is,
so that I can use you.
Embrace His life without restrictions
and I will make your life significant.
Marginally accept His life
and you will condemn yourself to a life of wandering
on the sidelines of what I am doing.*

CHAPTER FOUR

“...and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

40) Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

41) Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” Mt 24: 39-41

NIV

Darting across the street and bounding up two stairs at a time to reach the entrance of the building where he and his family were staying, Pastor Fairchild grabbed the massive, worn brass handle and opened the front entry. The large, rusted hinges let out a mournful creak as the door opened into the darkened, musty hallway. Pastor Fairchild headed speedily toward his second-floor apartment, trying unsuccessfully to ignore the combined, overpowering odors—human waste, raw garbage, and decaying rodents—that hung in the air.

No semblance of order or cleanliness could be achieved any longer on a continual basis, so formerly repulsive circumstances were now the norm in every area of his daily living. It was a far cry from the immaculate grounds of His Holiness Christian Fellowship with its perfectly sculpted shrubs, meticulously kept lawn, and seasonal displays of every flower imaginable. How he wished things had not changed so drastically. How he wished things had not changed at all!

As he rounded the corner at the end of the long, dark hall, just at the door where his family lived, a repulsive odor of death, vomit, and urine almost choked him. As he slipped and almost fell because of something on the floor, which he didn't care to identify, he quickly observed then ignored the crumpled human form that lay under the nearby tall, gray-glassed hall window.

Bending close to the key lock so he could see in the inadequately lit hallway, Pastor Fairchild inserted the old skeleton key into the black plate below the knob of his apartment door and turned it. Expecting the door to open as it always did, he was surprised at the resistance he felt. The door moved from the strike plate but wouldn't open more than a small crack. No matter how hard he pushed, it wouldn't budge one centimeter further.

“Shelley,” he called quietly through the crack, his face pressed into the small opening, fearful of alerting anyone else to his presence. The form at the end of the hall rolled slightly in his drunken stupor and vomited on himself again.

“Shelley,” he called again a little more forcefully, his lips pressed into the crack as he attempted to keep his tone directed into the minute door opening. This time, he heard a rustling noise from within the apartment, as if someone had been startled out of bed, and then some hurried footsteps.

“Dad, Dad, is that you?” came the excited response from within the room.

“Yeah, Ben, it's me. Open up. Hurry!”

The combination of Ben dragging the couch he had positioned to block entry, and his father pushing hard with his shoulder against the door, allowed the crack to open wide enough to let Pastor Fairchild squeeze into the apartment. Before he was even completely in the room, Ben ran to him, embraced his neck, and knocked them both against the wall.

For several moments, the two simply welcomed and comforted one another by holding tight. Ben's sobbing was the only sound in the otherwise curiously quiet room.

“Where's your mom?” Pastor Fairchild asked, still holding his son, who sobbed even louder upon hearing the query.

“Where's your mom?” he said again, fearful of hearing what he already somehow knew.

Shelley Fairchild—a modest woman who was deeply in love with her Lord—had for months been asking her husband to go to Morgan Wickham and ask for his forgiveness, not just for the power takeover of the church (of which her husband was a part,) but for allowing all the disparaging comments that eventually destroyed the man's reputation in the eyes of many who once held their former pastor in high esteem. He knew of the character and integrity of Pastor Wickham and could've easily stopped all the rumors and innuendos, but he didn't.

Never taking the time to search his own heart, the newly seated pastor even used the turmoil to further his own agenda and bring people to accept his way of thinking. He needed to be in charge, to “own” the congregation, so everything that came his way was used to that end. To those blinded by his charisma, he appeared to be a peacemaker, because he never dealt with any of the conflict during the transition. In reality, his silence allowed satanic strongholds to have predominance. Perceptions were his ally and he did little to attempt to modify them as long as they were favorable concerning his personal ministry agenda.

He continually refused Shelley’s exhortations to make amends, stating there was no animosity between them. He further insisted that the only reason he and Morgan had gone their separate ways stemmed from the fallout encountered with a typical church split. In actuality, his own guilt and gnawing sense of what he purposefully allowed to happen hindered him from moving toward reconciliation.

Finally, when she was no longer allowed to talk to Walter about it, Shelley defied his orders and went to see their former close friend. She and her five-year-old daughter, Sara, ventured across town to Train’s church in faith, unknowingly protected on both legs of their journey by giant heavenly warriors. Curiously arriving at a time when Pastor Wickham, Train, Crystal, Mic, Steely, and a few others were having a time of prayer, Shelley Fairchild was given the opportunity to embrace the end-time Holy Spirit’s fire of adoption and subsequently submitted to bridal heart transformation.

She, like the others, cultivated the heart of Jesus in her quiet times with the Lord; and having done so, no longer held anything in the world close. Having responded to God’s call to holiness by allowing the crucified/resurrected life of Christ in her to determine everything she said and did, she no longer took part in anything that was not geared toward an earnest bridal preparation and the return of her Groom or the salvation of those who would hopefully wholeheartedly accept Him before He came back for his bride.

In time, she came to love only the things Jesus loved and embrace only what brought her nearer to Him. Her life was truly no longer her own, but joyously her Lord and Master’s, much to the dismay of her husband, at times.

Pastor Fairchild sat down on their threadbare maroon and cream-colored couch, which also served as Ben’s bed. He beckoned his son to join him and then held him near. “You must’ve been incredibly frightened by something to lock yourself in like this,” he said. His son just looked off in the distance, as if in shock.

“I thought you both left me,” Ben responded, still staring ahead.

“When Mom and Sara left, and then...” he reached for a roll of toilet paper that was sitting on a nearby end table and took the time to blow his nose, hoping it would help him to think clearly as well as allow him to breathe properly. He continued, “Then when I saw all those people on TV disappear, I began to panic. That’s when I blocked the door.”

He sat up and blew his nose even harder, gathering strength to keep talking. “Dad,” Ben stared straight into his father’s face. “Dad, they just left.”

The young man paused in awe. “Mom was walking to the couch to watch what was happening on TV with those Christians at the hospital, and all of a sudden she just disappeared. She had a glass of water in her hand and had just told me she wished I would give my life fully to Jesus, when she got this...”

Ben stopped for a moment to choke back the tears. Regaining his composure somewhat, he continued to piece together what had happened.

“She ...” he hesitated. “Dad, her face lit up with a glow like I’d never seen before, and she smiled at something or someone standing in front of her.”

Ben slowed his pace, as he tried to grasp what he was telling his father. He looked directly into his eyes. “But Dad ...” he looked pleadingly, and even though he was making a statement, he was really asking a question. “Dad, there was no one there. I tried to see what she was seeing. I couldn’t see anything. She dropped the glass and reached out to whoever or whatever and... and,” Ben stopped again.

Both he and his father turned to look at the glass which still lay on the wooden floor near the couch. The water had evaporated a little, but there was still some evidence of the spill. The frightened duo stared at the water,

which seemed unusually full of iridescent colors even in the early morning light that glimmered through the cracked, dirty window above the heat register.

“It all happened so fast. She was all bright, almost as if she was lit up, and then she was gone.” Ben became very agitated, as he replayed the terrifying moment in his mind. “At first, I didn’t know what to do. I kept staring at the spot where Mom disappeared, thinking maybe she’d come back. Then I remembered Sara and I ran to her room to tell her what happened to Mom, but...” his voice broke and he began to cry, holding his stomach, while he gave a small moan to release some of the pain. “But she was gone, too!”

Ben got up from the corner of the couch and began purposefully pacing back and forth, trying to collect his thoughts and see if he’d left anything out so far. He stopped near his father, ready to continue his narration. His need for comfort became visibly evident as he unconsciously rocked back and forth on his feet.

He took a deep breath and picked up where he’d left off. “Then a little while later, I saw on TV that a lot of other people had disappeared, too!” That was all he got out before he broke down again. After dropping to his knees in helplessness in front of his father, he quickly jumped up, positioned himself next to Pastor Fairchild, and laid his head on his father’s shoulder. “I thought I’d never see you again, either,” he said boyishly.

Finally, the fear, anxiousness, and tension that had laid hold of the young man for so many hours were released in a downpour of tears. Pastor Fairchild could only hold tight to Ben’s hand, too shaken and fearful himself to say anything.

For almost an hour, the two remaining members of the now incomplete Fairchild family held on to one another, alternating between crying and expressing thoughts, questions, fears, regrets, and remembrances of what once was. Never had a room felt so cold and empty. Despite their newfound closeness and intimacy of heart, both still bore the inhuman weight of their intense, overpowering loss, piercing loneliness, and overwhelming fear. When there were no more tears left, and the initial numbness and shock over the disappearance of Shelley and Sara began to wane, a horrible reality arose in their place. Innumerable questions about the future plagued both of them, as they sat on edge in their seemingly cold, impersonal apartment unit.

Neither of them had any immediate answers, and they were too tired to try to remedy anything. Their words spent, father and son fell into an exhausted sleep. Walter remained on the couch and Ben slept with a pillow and blanket on the floor nearby. They both could’ve found a more restful and comfortable place to sleep in the small apartment; but their actual physical closeness brought them comfort and some semblance of peace, so they stayed where they were. After a few hours’ sleep, maybe they’d awaken with a bit of hope in their hearts.

From Our Father's Heart

Following the father of lies is foolishness beyond comprehension.

When there is no basis for truth,

nothing can be relied upon.

Lies pile on top of lies until they become "paper tiger" truth

to those who are ignorant enough to listen.

Your world becomes one huge mess of deception and ignorance.

Shake off everything that does not have My Word as its foundation. Believe only My truth.

It is your only safety.

CHAPTER FIVE

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

12) For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. Eph 5:11-12 NIV

Gloria Manly was furious. She hurled one of her favorite, ornate vases against the hunter green wall, just missing the solid brass sconce to the right of where it hit. Her curses were loud enough so even those down the hall heard her ranting. Not only had she been frightened beyond her wildest imagination at the hospital, embarrassed in front of a sea of people, and reacted in an out-of-control manner during a crisis situation, (something that she had been promised would never happen,) she was now livid at the disappearance of her daughter. She spared no words in expressing her anger.

All the way home from the hospital, Gloria had run the gamut with her feelings. On one hand, her spirit was leaping because of the answered prayers that caused all those horrible Christian rebels to disappear. On the other hand, she didn't like one bit what had happened to her. She wanted to make sure someone paid for her embarrassment. After all, during the current times, being part of the elite in society and a focused media celebrity was no small thing and had come at a very high price. She had a right to make sure her reputation and status remained untarnished, and that was not presently the case when all those underlings and commoners now viewed her in a less than perfect light. As far as she was concerned, recent events were unacceptable.

Moments earlier, as her armored limousine—available to her because she held a high position in government-controlled media echelons—turned the corner and approached the wrought-iron entrance gate to her walled apartment complex, Gloria remembered who she really was and what she possessed, and began to feel somewhat better. After sailing past all the hapless people living their hopeless lives, it was a joy to again be near her beautiful home. For a moment she was able to forget her recent humiliation. She toyed with her gold identification bracelet, a little disturbed at how inconvenient it was. Then she remembered the promise of a soon-coming, imbedded identification chip. She could tolerate the bracelet until then. For now, it did the trick.

Because her bracelet was gold, she was able to go almost anywhere and do almost anything without much interference. Less favored people like Tim, her cameraman, had one made of brass. Those even lower in status wore copper bracelets, which afforded limited use, e.g., basic provision and restricted travel privileges. Her *gold* bracelet meant freedom.

“How dare you take Arielle with the rest of those weasels,” she hissed at her invisible masters, boldly fixing her eyes in the direction of the room where they usually met. “You gave her to me and promised I would be around to observe her participation in the final enlightenment. What gave you the right to take her now, when all that we’ve been waiting for is about to unfold?”

Gloria dove into the multi-colored, overstuffed pillow on the white leather couch, intermittently sobbing and screaming, at times even pounding her fists into the cushions. As she started to regain her composure, she defiantly whispered, “She was going to be part of our plans. I don’t get it, and I’m not coming to you until I feel like it.”

Her cloned daughter, Arielle, was the product of many years of waiting and frustration for Gloria. Eventually bankrupt relationships and numerous short-term encounters—which came to mind whenever she had an STD-related episode—had driven Gloria to the brink of hopelessness in regard to ever having a child. In her opinion, no mortal man was qualified to help reproduce the kind of daughter she knew the Masters wanted for her, so cloning was definitely the reasonable alternative. She often thought, how better to continue one’s goals and ambitions into the next generation of life than by reproducing oneself exactly! The eventual transfer of all learned material would complete the glorious profile of the perfect society, all guided, directed, and impregnated by the gods of all ages past.

Now, with the disappearance of Arielle, that prospect had disappeared, literally and figuratively. All her hopes and plans were disrupted. It was unbearable. To think of going to Ra-il at this time made her blind with rage, even though he was calling her. Gloria paced the entire length of the living room as she vented.

“How dare you do this to me!” she screeched in the direction of her meditation room, where she knew Ra-il was undoubtedly waiting. She didn’t know if he had taken on a bodily presence this time, or if he was waiting there in spirit; but what did that matter? She was furious with him and bent on letting him know it.

“You took the only one that I have ever been able to love. Why did you promise me we would be together? How could you take her? You promised!” By the time she finished her outburst, she was screaming at the top of her lungs. The thought of visiting her meditation room, which up until now had been a place of great joy and enlightenment, filled her with dread.

Gloria dropped heavily onto the white leather couch, her face buried in the same overstuffed pillow. She sobbed uncontrollably for quite some time, then intermittently screamed, cursed, and spit all the venom-filled words she could muster at the masters she had served so faithfully. Hatred consumed her like a second being within.

Beyond exhaustion due to the events of the day and her violent reactions over the past several hours, Gloria curled up on the couch and started drifting off to sleep. The heat from the mid-afternoon sun, which found its way through the huge, oval window next to the fireplace, felt warm on her face. Her anger and hatred subsided. Her residence was situated far from the congested urban area in a virtually unaffected protection zone, so the smoke from all the fires was less intense, which allowed her to fall into a fitful sleep.

Five hours later, she awoke. The actualities of the day had once more pierced their way through the refuge of sleep, until the devastation of what had happened intrusively resumed its place in her mind. Her anger dissipated, she knew it was time to gather her thoughts and make some quality decisions. She didn’t achieve all she had at this point by remaining a slave to her lower emotions. Past experience with her Masters, and the recollection of their acute insight into her every thought when she was with them, caused her to reflect heavily on her successful association with them. What was I thinking? came to mind, as she realized her temporary lapse of good judgment.

In time, she always returned to her masters, no matter how angry or confused she was. Even with the deep resentments and hatred she was feeling this time around, she knew it was just a matter of time before she would go to meet with them, well, at least with Ra-il. She found him to be the most trustworthy. She would have the best chance of getting a definitive answer to her questions about Arielle through him. After all, they had been more than spiritually intimate. They’d been lovers for more than a year.

Ra-il was the closest friend she’d ever had. In the times he would come to her in physical form, they would sit for hours, discussing all the wonders of the universal mind and the Masters’ plans for the enlightenment of all the races to come. After all discussions of enlightenment were over, he would overpower her completely in his gentle, magnificent way.

Unlike all the mortal men that Gloria had been with, her experiences with Ra-il were more than physical, although that alone would have been sufficient because of its completeness. In addition to that, however, he would encapsulate her entire being. Their intimacies would include mind, heart, and her complete soul. They became one with the universal consciousness, as it drew them in. There was nothing more fulfilling imaginable to her. It was light years beyond any mortal relationship.

Ra-il would often relay messages given to him by his “eternal source.” Everything that he passed on to her would come true exactly as he related it, sometimes despite overwhelming odds to the contrary. He delighted in reiterating that all things spoken about “world oneness” would come to fruition as soon as the collective consciousness reached its full potential. She would constantly marvel at how connected he was with the pulse of all life, and how his sensitivities zeroed in on what would happen in the future. He was masterful, a whirlwind of cosmic happenings and well worth knowing. Now, in this most difficult time, she knew he would be there for her. Even in her present state of mind, she knew he would help her. It was time to meet.

Gloria sat up on the couch and paused a moment to gather her thoughts before moving toward the meditation room, where she knew he would be waiting for her. After assuring herself that she had achieved inner peace, she arose and moved to meet with her Masters, Ra-il in particular.

Gloria had spent countless hours and unlimited amounts of her money in preparing the proper meditative environment in order to meet with her masters. The richness of the space added to the fullness of her experience. Carefully planned colors, aromas, art, and music were all designed to promote deep, therapeutic relaxation during her encounters. Her work was not in vain, as an array of Grand Masters and Servants of Light transmitted the blueprint of the glorious dispensation to her on a continual basis. She was told that the same enlightenment was being bestowed worldwide to a select few. Those chosen were to be the vanguard Bearers of New Age Light to lead the world to the fast-approaching Golden Age of Oneness.

To the untrained eye, the environment Gloria had been instructed to create for her times of encounter could appear quite frightening. The room was alive with the dancing lights of a myriad of candles, which occupied every conceivable place. The ritual of lighting each flame was paramount for heart preparation before she met with her masters. With each new flame, she became more engulfed in the wonder of the spiritual world. By the time each candle was lit, Gloria was in full submission to the wonderful, spiritual forces in the room, enraptured and basking in love and peace.

The light from the combined flames danced and multiplied many times over as it reflected off hundreds of various size gold pyramids, each one strategically placed throughout the room, hung from the ceiling by golden threads of varying lengths. Light bounced from the gold pyramids to the mirrored walls to the many multi-faceted crystals that lay in deliberate patterns, creating unending sources of illumination, depending on where you stood; and representing the spiritual illumination that Gloria knew was present at all times.

Even with all the massive amounts of reflected light in evidence—blinding, in fact—portions of the room somehow took on an appearance of darkness. It was as though the light never had a chance to reach its full potential in these areas, but was quenched, almost as if swallowed by miniature black holes. Six feet off the exact center of the large rectangular room and suspended on a heavy gold chain, the largest pyramid was attached to the ridge of the cathedral ceiling by a massive gold ring. The hollow object, its bottom edges each measuring three feet, hung about five feet above the floor at the very center of twelve elongated crystals, which were set in a perfect circle. Each crystal lay on the floor and pointed inward toward the thin, hand-made, five-foot square pillow, which displayed an ornately woven cover of the finest silks laced with gold threads. Gloria liked to refer to this pillow as her date with destiny.

The convergence of energy that resulted from this setup was so powerful, Gloria had to prepare properly through meditation before she could seat herself to meet her masters. On days when their presence was particularly beautiful, she would be overpowered immediately upon entering the room, and faint from breathlessness even before reaching the pillow. When she regained consciousness, she would find herself resting gently on the pillow under the giant pyramid, where one of the masters had placed her in preparation for their meeting.

This was not one of those times, however. Striding purposefully to the large pillow, Gloria was in no mood to deal with the flaunted power of the ones who had taken her darling Arielle. She was about to do some mighty strong questioning and wasn't in any kind of mood to be sidetracked by grandiose displays. She wanted answers and not spiritual agendas, not even from the ones she served.

"You know I didn't want to come to you today, didn't you?" she began, without taking the time for the normal formality of quieting herself through meditation. "Why did you have to take Arielle with all the others?" she continued. Her question came out more like a whimper than a demand, something she hadn't done for as long as she could remember; and something she certainly didn't want to do now. She wanted to express her rage, not her hurt.

"I really need her," she moaned. Gloria broke down under the hanging pyramid and bawled like a baby.

Deep, dark loneliness set up house within her soul. Its coldness surprised her. At that moment, without knowing it, a small separation occurred between her and her masters. It was a wedge of resentment. She knew

something was different, but its reality was masked by her sorrow. She could only sit there sobbing uncontrollably for quite some time, seemingly alone.

Finally, when she was quieted somewhat, Ra-il manifested himself. Gloria opened her eyes and saw him sitting across from her, looking toward her with what appeared to be a compassionate countenance. Even with all she had to spill, she was somewhat overwhelmed at his presence. He was as magnificent as ever. The sight of him made Gloria's heart skip a beat, very much like that of a bashful schoolgirl—quite uncharacteristic of someone as worldly-wise as she. He made her a little off-balance, causing her to forget for the moment how angry she was. His countenance was so serene, his presence so soothing, it made her less angry than she had been only moments ago.

"You didn't have to take her, you know," she began, speaking in a much quieter tone than she intended. "She was the only person I held dear in this world. I thought we were training her for the future, and now she's gone. I don't understand." Tears flowed freely from Gloria's swollen eyes.

She was not used to this kind of pain. It was very uncomfortable territory, and she almost succumbed to it. However, she forced herself to refocus on her anger. Her sorrow took an immediate backseat.

"You liar," she confronted Ra-il. "You filthy liar. All these years you've promised me that..."

Without warning and much to her dismay, Gloria began to choke. She felt cold, clammy hands around her neck from behind. Falling to the side and turning over in an attempt to see who was strangling her, she became paralyzed with fear when she saw no one. The computer chip that Ra-il had placed in the back of her neck several years ago began to whine at a high frequency, quietly at first, then with such volume she thought her head would explode.

The hands slowly but steadily tightened their grip until Gloria knew for certain that her life was about to end. She couldn't breathe. Soundlessly gasping and trying to pull at the unseen hands, she found herself writhing on the floor, kicking aside everything that was in her way, lit candles spewing hot wax on her legs, the pillow, a corner table, everywhere.

Gloria attempted to flee in her panic, and then realized it was useless. As she twisted grotesquely, she caught a glimpse of Ra-il, who sat serenely, cross-legged, in the same place he'd manifested.

He hasn't moved at all to help me, she managed a fleeting thought. She somehow noticed his cold, uncaring smirk, which frightened her no end. He gave the appearance that he actually enjoyed watching her fight for her life.

As she continued her death match with her invisible enemy, Ra-il raised his hand slightly as if to signal someone. But who? Instantly, the grip around her neck ceased to exist. Gloria lay motionless, unable to process what had just happened.

She tried to inhale a deep breath without choking. She was too numb to cry. Her mind raced. What just happened? What would happen if I try to leave now? Was Ra-il actually a part of this horrible experience? She didn't want to move, but she knew she must. In fact, she was compelled to sit up.

Raising herself slowly to a sitting position, she looked at Ra-il who remained in the lotus position. He had changed. His eyes were not the same as before. An icy feeling encompassed her entire being. She began to shiver with inordinate fear, unable to conceal it.

From Our Father's Heart

What if I could not be found when you needed Me?

How would you fare?

Would any of your own wisdom lead you to safety,

or would you run with the herd of blind fools

who are seeking refuge and finding none?

I have called you to a glorious life with Me,

a life with sound answers

and stable ground for you to place your feet on.

My ways are sure.

My paths are straight.

Follow them to joy and safety.

CHAPTER SIX

Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack.

2) My slanderers pursue me all day long; many are attacking me in their pride. Ps 56:1-2 NIV

It was late afternoon before either Walter or his son Ben got up from sleep. Neither had rested straight through the night. They had heard each other stir at times and had an acute awareness that sleep was not coming easily to either of them, but both chose to remain silent. What could be said that hadn't already been discussed? The disappearance of the rest of their immediate family—along with many others—overwhelmed their thoughts and dreams throughout the night and caused a desire to run from the situation to surface. Unfortunately, they didn't know where to go.

Walter lay quietly on the couch, trying to formulate a plan; but he was having trouble collecting his thoughts. Ben was now sleeping soundly, oblivious of everything. Intermittent throughout the night, fearful noises from the street seemed to be escalating. Walter had grown somewhat accustomed to the typical, worrisome sounds he heard on a daily and nightly basis in the neighborhood; but what he now heard coming from the street level was different, almost approaching riot status from his perspective.

Wow! What was that? he thought to himself, staring at the shade-covered window that faced the street. He fought between getting up to peek out the window and find out or lying perfectly still and hoping the monster under the couch would go away, just like he did when he was a little boy. How could the noise get any worse than it already was?

Walter sorely missed the quiet suburban streets he'd grown to love. The filthy, noisy city atmosphere still aggravated him after many months. As he zeroed in again on the sounds that made their way in from outside, he heard a singular, most intrusive noise, something he didn't recall ever hearing before in the area.

It was the wind. Strong wind. So much had been going on in his mind on and off all night that he hadn't noticed how forceful it had become. As he attempted to shake off the residue of sleep, he noticed an interesting light show playing off the kitchen wall, comprised of unusual orange and red hues that grew in intensity.

Then, Walter smelled smoke. Finally, the light bulb went on in his brain. As he scrambled to his feet, Ben was startled awake and he instinctively shot up off the floor and began to assess the apartment.

Smoke, barely perceptible moments before, now began to rapidly fill the living room, having gained entrance through the poorly constructed door to the apartment. It was time to act quickly. They bolted toward the door—their only sensible avenue of escape—in a state of panic, hoping for the best. It didn't even occur to them to grab a few items of importance on the way out.

Walter and Ben were momentarily relieved to discover that the heat and smoke filling the hallway was not as intense as they envisioned it would be. As the pair made their way down the darkened corridor, using the grimy, inside wall as a guide, they wondered where the source of the fire was and what they would find once they reached the street.

Ben was in the lead, connected to his father by means of a makeshift tether they'd fashioned with blinding speed. Walter never dreamed his belt would come in so handy. This seemingly insignificant article of clothing gave them a small sense of confidence to counteract the pushing and shoving of the other tenants as they all funneled toward the head of the stairs. Once they reached their point of descent, Ben was amazed to see there were just as many people entering the building as leaving.

Ignoring the danger, some people were bent on using this opportunity to loot the vacated apartments, aggressively pushing their way against the retreating residents, knocking some down and literally stepping on them in their haste to improve their lot in life. After all, how else were they supposed to have their needs met? It was every man, woman, and child for themselves. The end justified the means, as far as they were concerned.

As the duo reached the street, they looked at each other with astonishment. Even though it was horrible and shameful, the behavior of masses of ruthless, self-preserving people in a state of panic was easily eclipsed by the mind-boggling sight of rampant fires everywhere they looked. Fueled by broken gas mains and dry tinder

from the antiquated, ill-kept buildings, and swept along by the high winds that had risen during the night, the flames were engulfing everything in their path at an alarming rate.

“What are we going to do?” Ben shouted at his dad, trying to be heard above the mind-numbing noise all around them.

Pastor Fairchild looked for something to hang onto to avoid being carried away by the momentum of the twisting hoard around them. Grabbing on to a black pipe railing that was situated in front of their building, he braced himself so he could address Ben face to face. “Looks like the winds are basically coming from behind us,” he shouted back, as he quickly surveyed the area. “We’d better go that way.” He reached for Ben’s shirt and pulled him along.

The two men, along with hundreds of others, made their way in the direction that Walter pointed. Their progress was slow and difficult, for it seemed just as many people were heading toward the fires as were traveling away from them. What are people thinking? Ben wondered in disbelief. He almost stumbled over the body of a small boy who had been trampled in the confusion. He managed to jump over him, while being pushed forward by the crowd, which seemed to be on auto pilot with no allowance for course adjustment.

As the Fairchilds made their way, Ben heard what he thought might be loud gun bursts immediately above him. The possibility became a reality as the head of the person next to him exploded, splattering blood on all those who were near him.

Dazed, but recovered enough to look around and still maintain his footing, Ben spotted a crazed man with an automatic rifle in his hands on the third floor of a burning building. He was firing into the crowd at random, while flames licked the bottom of the window where he stood. The man laughed hideously each time one of his shots found its mark, reloading as quickly as he could after each volley.

“Dad!” Ben screamed, fruitlessly trying to cut through a wall of sound to warn his father of the sniper. The crowd literally pushed them out of range of the sniper; but this brought no guarantee of safety, as this was not an isolated incident in the city.

Ben’s eyes began to sting from the smoke and breathing became more difficult by the minute. Even though the crowd was heading in a direction, neither Walter nor Ben knew in which direction they were going. Panic, blinding smoke, high winds, and flying debris made any purposeful movement impossible. All they could manage was to flow with the crowd like a log in the torrents of a swollen river during a tremendous storm, hoping they wouldn’t be overcome by the current.

“If we get separated, I’ll find you,” Walter yelled as loud as he could. Right at that moment, their makeshift tether loosened and the dynamic of the crowd caused them to go off in slightly different directions. He could only watch as his son quickly disappeared from sight.

In the chaos, Ben was needlessly pushed into a brick building by a man blind with fear, who had no concern for anyone but himself. The man’s arms flailed about with inhuman strength as he propelled himself to get ahead of the crowd as if swimming full out in an Olympic fifty-meter race. He caught Ben in the back of the head, shoving his face into the rough brick with his outstretched palm.

Ben distinctly heard the sound of his face hitting the wall. It reminded him of the splat of a hard tomato against the same surface his face had just met. He moaned pitifully, the pain starting to make his knees buckle. It felt like every bone in his face was affected by the impact. Knowing full well that if he fell down it would be impossible to get up again, Ben fought against the excruciating pain and concentrated intently on remaining upright.

Everything was blurred; his thoughts were scattered, some of them bordering on incoherent. Time seemed to drift by in slow motion. He could hear sounds all around him, but they seemed muffled and distant.

Where was his father? He reached for the nearest shoulder to steady himself. The person spat in his face.

“Help me, Jesus,” he cried. “Help me make it through this.” His words surprised him. He hadn’t planned on saying them, but they sprang up spontaneously from deep inside. As Ben felt himself falling, it seemed as though massive hands grasped him from behind; then everything went dark.

From Our Father's Heart

*The people who do not know Me have made their own set of rules
and have expected Me to follow them.*

I never do that.

I created the heavens.

I created the earth.

They both conform to My rules - always.

I put them in place; I tell them what is to be.

*It is now time to show those who defy My Name
how puny they really are.*

Let them try to function when I change the rules.

Let them remain proud;

*I will change the heavens and the seasons, if necessary,
to bring the proud to their knees.*

It is My love for them in action.

*When they are brought low, some will come to Me,
so that I might be with them for eternity.*

*Those who won't submit to My way will eventually praise Me,
even from the pit of hell.*

I am worthy of praise from everyone I have created.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.”
2 Sa 14:14 NIV

Periodic sensations of warm and then damp, cool air brushed against Ben’s face. Sleep-like reverie encompassed him like a cocoon, giving him a peace he’d never before experienced.

Such astounding peace! Reluctant to open his eyes, mainly for fear of what he might see, Ben was content to remain on the hard surface, whatever it was. Thoughts of recent events began forming in his mind, and then came into proper order very much like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. As the sequence unfolded, he grimaced at the point where he recalled his disastrous encounter with the brick wall.

“But I don’t feel any pain,” he marveled to himself. He moved his hand cautiously to gingerly touch his face and wondered why there was no crusted blood. In fact, as he navigated the terrain of his face, he discovered that it appeared to be completely healed. Now he wondered if perhaps he had been dreaming the horrendous events of the recent past.

“It doesn’t hurt any more, does it?” a voice somewhere nearby inquired.

Ben suddenly opened his eyes and peered in the direction of the voice. He blinked several times, trying to focus clearly. Now what? Was the person behind the voice friend or foe?

“You don’t have to worry,” the voice reassured him. “You’re safe now. Jesus heard you, healed you, and brought you here.”

Still groggy, Ben propped himself up on his elbows to survey his surroundings. He was in some sort of cave. The thought of Jesus doing anything for him was so foreign to his thinking, that it overwhelmed him and drove every other thought out of his head for a short time.

The glow from the campfire in the center of the enormous room highlighted multiple rock formations, which created natural dividers in the cave and gave it the appearance of a very rustic home with a great room, surrounded by smaller, individual spaces. Patterns of light flickered against the irregular walls and ceiling, revealing what must have been soot and residue from hundreds of years of fires and torches. As Ben quietly tried to take everything in, he felt like he was caught in a time warp. He had only seen structures like this in old National Geographic magazines, which used to arrive in the mail when he was a young boy.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” Now the voice came from somewhere near the fire and brought Ben back to the reality of his situation. Startled back into wanting to do something to protect himself, he turned to find out who was behind the voice.

A heavily bearded man sat facing Ben on one of the four rough-hewn logs that surrounded the fire pit. Ben judged him to be about his father’s age. Looking very much like a muscular lumberjack, he wore a bright plaid shirt, worn jeans, and suspenders; and had bushy red hair too massive to hide under any kind of hat. The man smiled.

Ben was still trying to shake off some of the foggiest in his head. “Who are you? Where are we? How did I get here?”

“Whoa,” the burly man responded as he rose, stepped around the fire, and started walking over to Ben. “One question at a time.”

Ben drew back slightly as the man approached him.

“I’ll be giving you more answers than you have questions before we’re through. I’m Rusty,” the man said, extending his hand.

Ben took it and allowed the man to pull him to his feet. It seemed that it required very little effort on his part. Ben experienced an astounding peace as Rusty’s over-sized hand enveloped his hand.

“Feels good, doesn’t it?” Rusty said, with a smile bright enough to light up the room. “Here, have some more.”

This time Ben felt a wave of peace travel from his hand all the way down to his toes. The look on his face was priceless. Rusty let out a hardy laugh. “Fun, isn’t it?” he added, as he turned his attention back to the fire. He crouched down to stir the logs and continued to chuckle to himself at Ben’s reactions.

Ben stepped back warily and tried to nonchalantly place his hand behind his back, out of reach. Rusty noticed, threw his head back, and let out a roar of laughter that reverberated off the walls of the cave. This unabashed display of joy startled Ben.

“Get ready, kid. I’ve got a whole bunch of stuff to show you from the Lord. You’re never gonna be the same. You’re even gonna take care of business with Him,” he hinted. Rusty couldn’t help but grin from ear to ear.

As Rusty spoke over his shoulder, he kept walking toward one of the natural coves off the main room, swinging a lantern front and back, and signaling Ben to follow him as he disappeared behind one of the rock formations. It took awhile for Ben to catch up with him. He grabbed a lantern from a small table and cautiously explored the entrances to several other “rooms” along the way. “Just how far does this cave extend?” he wondered.

Smiling once again, Rusty exclaimed, “Pretty cool, huh,” as Ben approached. His hands rested on his hips, swashbuckler style, as he anticipated Ben’s response to what he saw before him. “I’ve been waiting to show this to you for a long time. Makes me pretty excited to see one more time how everything has a purpose, even when we don’t understand what it is at the outset. Why...”

Rusty’s continued monologue escaped Ben’s ears as he stood open-mouthed and bug-eyed in astonishment at the view in front of him. The room (although smaller than the main room and some of the other areas Ben had briefly examined) was packed floor to ceiling with row after row of shelves, all lined with daily provision. It looked like a miniature Walmart.

Food, clothing, blankets, toiletries, bibles—every conceivable kind of resource in packaged form—filled every shelf. In one area, there were about a hundred 50-gallon barrels marked “WATER” in bold print. A cave was the last place he would’ve expected to see such abundance!

The recent years of the Lord’s judgment on the land—which was also a time of bridal heart preparation for those who could see it—forced Ben’s family into an abased lifestyle, to say the least. They subsisted on bare minimums. The family went one day at a time and sometimes went without. There were instances when Ben was sent to uncaring neighbors who turned him away, or food pantries that usually had nothing available when he arrived.

A last resort for the family was a trip to a restaurant dumpster, in hopes of intercepting the kitchen help before they disposed of the evening’s leftover food. He’d felt hunger pains many times and wondered why the God to whom his mother always prayed had forgotten about them. He moved almost reverently toward the stack of shelves closest to him.

“Where did all this come from?” he said to himself, gently picking up a package of dried figs with both hands, as if it was something holy. This close encounter with something edible quickly reminded him of how hungry he was. In fact, he couldn’t put a time frame on when he’d last eaten.

“Help yourself,” Rusty called from about three rows away. “This stuff is here for people like you. Many more will be coming.”

Ben’s eyes lit up. He replaced the package of dried figs and began to peruse the shelves in earnest for something he hadn’t tasted in a long time. Most of the items he saw needed water to reconstitute them. He decided he was too hungry to wait, so he settled on a jar of vacuum-packed peanuts as a start. He made short work of unscrewing the lid and stuffed a giant handful in his mouth, then concentrated on chewing carefully to avoid choking on the overly generous portion he’d taken. He continued up and down the aisles, stopping here and there to pick out whatever appealed to him—beef jerky, dried apple slices, snack cakes, lemonade... Rusty followed him, encouraging him to take everything he needed.

When Ben had eaten a sufficient amount—at least for the first course—he took the remainder of his personal food bank over to the fire and sat on one of the logs. Then he downed one of the two small bottles of water he’d picked up on his recent shopping trip. He let his meal settle a bit, then dove into the rest with renewed

vigor, giving the impression he was eating as though there would be no tomorrow. Food was definitely the only thing on his mind for now.

When he'd gone a tad beyond "my eyes were bigger than my stomach" mode, he had room for more thoughts. How did this place come into being? How did I get here from the street? Where's my dad? Who's this smiley guy named Rusty? and last, but most important, Just what was going on???

After glancing at his last packaged snack cake and deciding he'd better pass on it, Ben looked up and noticed that Rusty had disappeared. Getting up from the log near the fire, he walked toward the supply room one more time. He stopped abruptly before he reached it. He didn't understand the unusual chill he felt down his back. Somehow gaining a bit of courage, he began to move around the corner very cautiously.

The room had taken on a presence that made Ben curious and uncomfortable at the same time. In the far corner, near the shelves that held the books, tracts, and bibles, he noticed a light that hadn't been there when he was rummaging for food. It emanated from the floor and created a glow about halfway up the wall.

As Ben drew closer, he began to shiver as if experiencing a cold breeze on the inside. When he was a short distance from the light, it subsided. By the time Ben turned the corner at the end of the row he'd traveled and reached the light's point of origin, it was gone completely. All he saw was Rusty, sitting on the floor against the wall with his head down, holding a closed bible in his hands.

"You guys have no idea how fortunate you are, and what's been provided for you," Rusty began. "Man, if I were you, I'd take care of business with the Lord before I'd do anything else." He handed the bible to Ben from his seated position against the wall. His comment was more a command than a suggestion. "God deals in commitments, good, bad, or indifferent. You've wasted enough time in not making proper commitments. It's the reason you don't have any answers and you're still here. Your relationship with God is why you've been born, ya know." Rusty paused for his words to settle in Ben's spirit.

"I need to tell you there's a whole lot to be done, but the Lord will not be able to trust you as you are. You need to become His and His alone, before you and I can go any further."

He got up from his place against the wall and started walking to the doorway. Then he stopped, and slowly turned toward Ben.

"If you only knew how important that book in your hand is, and how desperately you need it. It's going to be the only way you'll be able to know what truth is in the next few months. You'd better do what it takes to find out what it really says."

With that, he turned toward the hallway that led to the main room. As he walked through the doorway, he called over his shoulder, "When you're ready, we'll talk."

From Our Father's Heart

I call you to serve Me with all your heart.

I call you to be exclusively Mine throughout your life.

I will never leave you.

I will be calling you even in your last moments.

As long as you have breath,

I call you to a complete surrender to My will

and My ways through Jesus.

CHAPTER EIGHT

But I obtained mercy for the reason that in me, as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might show forth and display all His perfect long-suffering and patience for an example to [encourage] those who would thereafter believe on Him for [the gaining of] eternal life. 1 Tim. 1:16 AMP

Pastor Fairchild was mortally wounded, having been struck by the third sniper to fire off a number of rounds into the fleeing crowd. The bullet entered his back and punctured his lung. Drifting in and out of consciousness and surrounded by his own blood, he lay in a smelly, garbage-filled stairwell after being pushed there by someone else trying to escape the same fate. He began to clearly see his life for what it was. Just how important were all the now nameless and inconsequential issues that seemed like the will of God at the time? What good did all the millions of dollars and countless hours spent trying to change society do?

Ever since he had given his life to the Lord over twenty years ago, he had seen the life in Christ as one of being useful to society. He spent his life making sure there was no fanaticism in his walk. Even when he'd taken over His Holiness Christian Fellowship, after Morgan Wickham and his friends had gone overboard with the idea that intimacy with God, a crucified life, and pursuing a bridal heart were true Christianity; he felt that he was protecting his flock by bringing balance back to the church.

Many times he'd affirm his position in his own mind. "We have to live in society and make it better, don't we? I mean, if everyone thought the way Wickham and that Train character think, no one would do anything to make things better in this world. That kind of life is no testimony to those who hate God. We have to show them how wrong they are."

Walter writhed in bodily pain and mental anguish, his nose and mouth now full of his own blood. He knew that his very life was seeping from him one drop at a time. A semi-conscious plea rose up in him. "Jesus, help me. I know you're there. I'm sorry for the way I've misused the privileges You've given me."

Throughout his life, Walter had heard people bring up the experience of seeing their lives flash before their eyes as they faced death. He was surprised to see the truth of it in the waning moments of his own life before he met his Lord. It was all so clear now. Even though he was well-respected and considered an honorable man, even though everything he did was well-received by those around him, he knew now, in the light of eternity, that he had missed the heart of God. Two words kept recurring as he felt his life ebb away.

"Intimacy and souls, that's what I missed, isn't it, Lord? All I did was really for my own comfort, wasn't it? Even the issues, I got involved to make me feel worthwhile and look good, to maintain my lifestyle.

"I hung out with the wealthy whenever I could, never addressing what they did with their money in fear of losing what they could do for my church. Oh, God! There were so many in the church who needed their help. What have I done?"

In light of recent events, he recalled with grief how the topic of bridal heart preparation had been replaced by "you can change the world" in the pulpit, and how that focus never nurtured him or anyone else into a deeper relationship with the Lord, something he now realized too late. He continually ignored the wooing of the Holy Spirit to join in restoring his flock to biblical intimacy with God, all for the sake of placating those who were keeping his church and his lifestyle alive. He didn't really care about souls or even offending God with his cold religion. He was too busy building a church and increasing its numbers. No wonder he was left behind!

Pastor Fairchild finally recognized himself as one of the foolish virgins in Matthew. He was not waiting earnestly for Jesus, his Bridegroom. What he needed to enter into the wedding chamber, a passionate longing to be with his Lord as his priority in life, had been replaced by other things.

"Oh, my God, how could I have been so blind?" he muttered and wept, fading fast. "How could I have missed your heart when all I ever thought I wanted was to serve you? Your whole message was intimacy. I... I missed the signs. You wanted me to focus wholeheartedly on you and I was trying to change the things that you allowed to happen. I'm..." He needed to get it out. "I'm sorry, Lord. Please forgive me."

Walter Fairchild released one last hollow, wrenching breath as his final act. Anyone passing by would probably see the cold, lifeless form covered in blood and twisted grotesquely against the door at the bottom of the stairs, and assume it suffered a violent entrance into the next world; when, in fact, the transition was smooth, peaceful, and very much in order. Mercy, grace, and love were his companions on the last leg of his journey.

From Our Father's Heart

Nothing is too hard for Me.

I will do anything and everything to reach your heart.

Do not limit Me with your small carnal thinking.

I created the heavens.

I hold time and eternity in My hands.

When you are ready,

I will come to you in a way that will teach your heart.

Do not limit Me.

I am your God, the One True God.

CHAPTER NINE

“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--was caught up to the third heaven.

3) And I know that this man--whether in the body or away from the body I do not know, God knows--

4) Was caught up into paradise, and he heard utterances beyond the power of man to put into words, which man is not permitted to utter.” **II Cor. 12:2-4 AMP**

Ben watched Rusty leave the supply room and head toward the main room of the cave. He wanted to follow him to unload all the questions that occupied his thoughts. Something, however, stopped him and he remained where he was. Rusty’s exhortation to get alone with God produced a quiet obedience in Ben. Finding a place in the corner farthest from the door, he sat down on a soft, woolen blanket on the floor—alone with the Word of God.

Ben began to pray. “God, I have no clue how to come to You. I’ve tuned out almost everything my dad and mom ever taught me about You. I don’t even know why You’d want me, but here I am. Please help me to learn what You want me to know, OK? I really need answers and I don’t know where else to go. I’m sorry for taking so long to come to You.”

Ben stared at the ceiling, hoping it would help, as he took the bible in his hands, softly stroking the cover. He opened it at random and began to read. At first, he found it hard to concentrate; but as he continued, something began to stir inside. What he was reading started to make sense.

That certainly was not the case in the past. His dad had tried many times over the years, to no avail, to interest his son in reading the Bible. His mom patiently tried to explain countless passages, which seemingly bore no fruit. To Ben, it was just a lot of boring reading that he felt he could do without. Now, however, something was changing in his heart. He began to feel hopeful.

For hours, life and love came off the pages and pierced his heart. It was as if the words had been written just for him. How did he miss this before? How could he be so blind? Ben was reading about his own heart through the lives of people from long ago. Not only that, parts of the Bible looked like a current events class that accurately described what was happening outside the cave. He even saw passages that could easily line up with things that were looming on the horizon. Most of all, he saw his own life and his rebellion toward God.

It made his heart sink when he realized how willingly he’d rebelled against God. In fact, it sickened him. Ben read voraciously until he couldn’t focus on the words on the page any longer. Thoughts mingled with dozing off, his humanness overriding his intense desire to feed his soul to the brim.

A quiet, dream-like state enveloped him as a morning fog would roll over a pond. It was the most peaceful place he’d ever been. He could’ve easily stayed there indefinitely.

Whether he was in the body or out of the body, he did not know; but God did. Whether caught up into paradise or simply dreaming, he did not know; but God did. Whatever the case, Ben found himself in a most unfamiliar place, to say the least. He could instinctively describe it as some sort of paradise or heavenly place. Indeed, it was; a place where truth, real answers, love, hope, and everything else necessary for abundant life existed from the God of the Bible’s perspective.

Ben felt an acute sensitivity to his surroundings. There was excitement in his heart. His mind was keenly alert. There was no need to be anywhere other than where he was. An overwhelming sense of safety and completeness filled every fiber of his being. He wanted to bask forever in whatever he was now experiencing. It felt like warm, inviting sunlight in his heart and soul.

In the distance, Ben could see a lone figure sitting quietly on the bank of a serene, narrow river. The instant he thought of approaching him, he found himself sitting in the plush, warm grass next to the man. He found it odd that he wasn’t surprised at his method of travel. It seemed as natural as anything else that was part of his daily routine. As he watched the man fish in the golden waters, questions arose in his mind. As soon as they did, the

answers arrived with crystal clarity, as if they'd been waiting patiently to partner with a particular question and fulfill their destiny.

Questions and corresponding answers continued to flow as Ben and the fisherman simply sat and periodically smiled at each other, neither saying a word. The answers Ben received were not coming from the fisherman; they were simply there. It seemed as if the entire atmosphere in this place held every answer and only needed the appropriate question to bring them forth. This was holy, heavenly truth in action, alive and well. After a while, Ben stopped asking questions. However, answers to life's questions still reached him, rather like observing oneself in a dream.

Somehow Ben experienced the Creator of the universe placing the planets on nothing. The Magnificent One, who created everything, simply spoke His will and things systematically existed precisely where destined. Galaxies appeared because the Master desired their presence. The vastness of the universe rolled, boiled, and blasted itself a supernaturally designed plan with innumerable explosions and powerful manifestations.

The immensity of what God accomplished was far beyond the capability of any human being to conceive, yet Ben was given the ability to really understand, not just believe, what he observed. He was amazed at how everything moved seamlessly yet violently as it made room for itself at the will of the Master, ending up exactly where He intended. Nothing happened unless He orchestrated it. Nothing, not the winds of heaven, not a single explosion of gasses on the face of the sun or anywhere else occurred outside the perfect plan. Ben was experiencing supernatural wisdom light years beyond his own ability to reason.

For days, hours, or seconds, (Ben had no concept of time as he sat near the fisherman) every nuance of what he was allowed to learn about the creation process unfolded in his mind and heart. He was full to bursting and quite hungry for more at the same time. Once he absorbed the portion of information he'd just experienced, Ben was given ample time to enjoy a catnap. A tranquil peace fell over him. There was no need for more questions, at least not at the moment, so he laid his head on the cool green carpet of grass. Everything was in order.

When it pleased the Father to awaken Ben, more questions immediately sprang up. Where is the earth? Is it even there? he wondered.

He tried to recall if the planet that loomed so large in his mortal life even existed in the creations he'd just seen. He didn't have to wait long for an answer as he saw the earth and then, as if a zoom lens carried him away, viewed it as an infinitesimal speck of dust in comparison to the immensity of the rest of the universe. As the "lens" zoomed in to give him a closer look, Ben was shown the earth's relationship to other planets and stars within its own galaxy. It still seemed incredibly tiny. How miniscule in size; yet according to his memories of what his mother had told him, it was still very much on the heart of God.

How could that be? In comparison to the entire universe, why would God even notice the planet, much less the people He supposedly cherished? What Ben had read in the Bible as he sat on the floor of the cave's supply room now came into play. It conveyed that all the innumerable galaxies were fashioned by God's hand. Even though He undertook something that monumental, He was also aware of the number of hairs on each human being's head and when each sparrow fell. He knew and cared about every detail—large and small. What seemed impossible before made sense now. It was unquestioned truth.

In the course of his thoughts, Ben noticed with interest that he had not been shown any form of life on any other planet in all the other galaxies. He felt he was to have this specific point at his fingertips. The only creation other than the angels that God brought forth was mankind.

"Ben, there is no one else anywhere," he heard in his heart, indelibly put there by someone with the utmost authority. "You will need to know this without question, if you are to accomplish what I have for you to do. Own this truth in your heart."

Up until now, Ben's earthly life had provided constant assurances that such life existed in other places. How could it not? He recounted the various reasons given for the existence of aliens from other planets over the years, which was backed up with mounting evidence that could no longer be ignored. With the vastness of the universe, how could life forms possibly be confined to just one planet?

What about the various sightings in diverse places throughout the world? What about the similarities found in these events? Even though most of them were quickly swept under the carpet or rightfully explained away, there were some events that called for open, honest investigation for the sake of the betterment of mankind and his environment.

The most compelling evidence to support the existence of aliens, to Ben at least, was the reports given by some very credible people, who described in great detail their encounters with alien life forms. There was such consistency in what they shared—and it would've been impossible for all of them to have gathered together to convincingly purport an incredible hoax—so the existence of aliens became a fact of life in Ben's mind. Besides, there were so many planets in so many galaxies, it just made sense that there had to be life forces on some of them. Why else would they be there?

"Because you are living in the very beginning stages of God's limitless future," someone answered. "The angels were created first, then mankind; and when the salvation process with mankind is complete, all future creations throughout eternity will populate them in new heavens and new earths. You will participate with the Lord as priests and kings, overseeing and facilitating His will in the vastness of His creation and the wonder of His never-ending wisdom. It is why you as mankind have been created. It is the unequivocal truth of God."

The simplicity and, at the same time, the overwhelming complexity of that pronouncement brought clarity to Ben's query. All the confusing statements that proceeded out of the mouths of people, who would not acknowledge God or placed their own wisdom equal to His, no longer had any bearing. They simply fell away, never to be trusted in again.

Ben sat in astonishment, reiterating what he'd just learned. "God created the universe and everything in it. God had a plan. God showed us His complete plan. It will be accomplished. Mankind and the salvation process are to be completed before anything else can go forward. Once that occurs, God will devise other creations through His limitless power to accomplish whatever suits His purposes in the future. He even chose to use mankind, who occupied one of the smallest planets He created, as priests and kings to reign with Him, revealing His wisdom, power, and glory through them. Wow! Whoa!!"

The plan was actually wonderfully simple if nothing was added to it. In fact, in its simplicity, the plan of God was alive with all the purest characteristics of what mankind called its Arts and Sciences. It was music in its pristine state, surrounded by unending depths of mathematics far beyond man's ability to comprehend, working in unity with all the other arts and sciences as they flowed together to complete the plan initially created and still being implemented by the real Master and Lord over all—Jesus Christ.

Ben's mind was so overloaded, humanly speaking, that he needed warp speed to continue to absorb any more of the wonder he beheld. He wanted more than anything to continue at a breakneck pace, but was instantly stilled by a loving force that knew when it had become too much for him to take in.

Once Ben had a chance to rest and reboot, more would be imparted. It was almost like force feeding an eternity of information with an eyedropper. It didn't really matter, however; because time, as Ben knew it, was not a major factor in the place he now found himself.

There was no beginning and no end to the vastness of what he was experiencing and learning. What mattered most was that he was receiving vital information, which he sensed would be of great use for what was to come. He had an urgency to absorb as much as he could, but a sense of peace and patience to allow it to come to him in the proper timing.

From Our Father's Heart

Do you see how magnificent My creation model is?

Do you see how it rhymes with eternal wonder?

It is all part of My plan for you.

*We will live in its splendor together,
because you have embraced Jesus as your Lord.*

Nothing can separate Us from each other.

Come to Me now!

Be part of My plan.

I have all truth.

I am all truth.

You would do well to embrace what I have for you.

CHAPTER TEN

By faith we understand that the worlds [during the successive ages] were framed (fashioned, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose) by the word of God, so that what we see was not made out of things which are visible. Heb. 11:3 AMP

Ben observed the creation process: one angel, one galaxy, one planet, one mountain, one person, one grain of sand, one molecule, one atom at a time. It was important for him to see everything for reasons that were not his own. He was correct in thinking that he would need it for what lay in store for him. What made the biggest impression on him was the presence of overwhelming love that accompanied every orchestrated move. In fact, all that was being revealed could not exist without the glue of endless love holding it together. Love so impregnated every created thing that it took on a nature far above anything Ben had ever experienced as the binding agent that held everything together. Love was not a feeling, but a tangible, life-giving force that flowed from the Lord, as if He released part of His very nature into everything He created.

Love existed because God existed. Love could not exist without having the very heart of God as its central core, its very nature. Without love, nothing would've been spoken into existence. Without love, nothing would remain. Ben was shown how death begins the instant that love is absent. It is part of life itself, so no real life can continue to exist without love.

Ben witnessed a portion of the magnificent angels and their beautiful leader as they formed a rebellion against the Lord God. He saw a large segment of these defiant ones initially cast to the outer regions of the remote planet called Earth. They became darkened spirit beings, hovering over everything there, while awaiting their final place of doom. They would be eternally banished as soon as the Lord finished using them to refine and test the hearts of mankind.

Ben toured the pure and resplendent Garden of Eden, a haven for mankind that shielded created man and woman from their relentlessly evil foes—Satan and the demons that assisted him—until the humans made the choice to interact with them. Then he saw the unbelievable insanity of this act, the rebellion of mankind against their glorious Lord and eternal Friend—a true heart break to the true Master. This ill-fated choice gave the demons rightful access to the fledgling creation until God presented a way of escape through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The honor of Lordship is lost when bondage occurs.

Of course, God used mankind's rebellion to continually show this human creation their need and helplessness. Through all the refinements, challenges, and hardships his fallen humans experienced, they clearly came to know their desperate need of a Savior. God's original intent was to interact with a trustworthy creation who made the choice to be in relationship with Him, rather than becoming puppet followers of lies, false beliefs, and disobedience. God desired true obedience that stemmed from love, not compliance that derived from fear of the consequences. So unlike the rules governing the angelic creation, choice had to be part of God's dealings with mankind.

Instead of destroying those who chose to rebel against Him as He did in Noah's time and promised to never do again, Father God—in His wisdom—initiated a brand-new creation. In actuality, it was a third creation, a spiritual one that would be capable of serving and obeying Him out of love, rather than complying with His laws to avoid punishment.

Though he never physically moved from the bank of golden waters, Ben visited many places and situations that, at times, were almost too beautiful for him to take in. Other times they were so horrendous, that a supernatural protection—a heavenly ointment, so to speak—was applied to keep him unaffected by the appalling deeds committed throughout history as men rebelled and ran from God.

Having been shown the wondrous love that accompanied everything the Lord did, it made no sense at all to Ben that man would choose to be independent from God, especially when he witnessed all the horrors and sorrows that resulted from those self-centered choices. In fact, it was ludicrous and idiotic in his estimation. Rebellion was just plain filth and garbage in comparison to the clear gold of union with God.

The Holy Spirit imparted to Ben the intimacies of the greatest story ever told. The first time he saw Jesus, he was so overwhelmed that an invisible source had to hold him upright. Nothing he had ever witnessed compared to the matchless grandeur and beauty of the Lord. He knew, for the space of an instant, why the Lord would be praised forever by all creation—even from the pit of hell. Those who would not submit to His Lordship, when the opportunity was available, could now do nothing else. They may only have seen Him in judgment, which resulted in separation; but once they did, they could only praise the worthy One in their torment.

Ben saw how Jesus, as God and man, restructured the fractured relationship between the Master and His creation with covenant authority and finality. He harbored only one burning desire. It was to drop to the ground and adore Him forever—the slain Lamb, King of Kings, and wondrous Lord. From the instant He appeared, there was no other reason to exist other than to be caught up in the wonder of the Lord of All. Everything Ben had seen so far was embodied in Jesus, yet pale in comparison to the magnificence of His actual person and presence. Everything else was just a container to hold His all-encompassing glory and radiance. Ben knew that all future creations would be needed to express His boundless majesty.

As “time” continued, Ben found himself standing in a dark, damp, smelly room of stone. He questioned how he could actually be there and yet seemed to be participating as an unnoticed observer in his surroundings. He knew he had regressed many years prior to the current time frame.

A clatter to his left drew his eyes to a hallway entrance. Two ancient Roman soldiers entered, armed with long spears. One went over to the far wall and loosened a rope that was wound around two iron brackets and tied to a hook. The other went to the center of the room, and as the rope loosened, he reached up to pull down an iron ring that was attached to a large black chain of the same material. The chain fed through a larger ring that was imbedded in the arched ceiling, then continued toward the far wall, where it was connected to the rope held by the first soldier. It was very clear these men had done this procedure many times before, as evidenced by the practiced rhythm of their wordless movements.

Ben forced himself to take his eyes off the soldier in the center of the room, who held the large black iron ring. He looked at the cold stone floor where the soldier stood. It was covered with blood. In fact, the whole floor was crusted with blood and wet and slippery in some spots, where recent activity had occurred. The room was pungent with the odor of death. Ben felt a cold shiver travel through his body. It was the same unshakable, fearful feeling he’d experienced after his mother disappeared and he was left alone.

Why am I here, Lor ... Steps performed in military cadence interrupted his thoughts and silenced his question.

Four powerfully built soldiers, who preceded an already bloodied and swollen Jesus, marched toward the center of the room. One additional soldier was in charge of pulling and prodding Him to His next stop. He thoroughly enjoyed applying unnecessarily rough treatment to Jesus, taunting and laughing as he carried out his assignment. The group halted near the center of the room, purposefully placing Jesus directly under the ring in the ceiling. He stood before the soldier who held the iron ring on the end of the chain. Ben wanted to run, but where?

Methodically, mechanically, and void of emotion, the soldier tied Jesus’ hands to the ring with the leather cords. Then the soldier at the wall pulled on the rope, lifting Jesus’ heels off the ground and stretching Him upward as high as possible, still leaving His toes in contact with the floor. Everything was executed with precision and silence. Everyone present remained at attention as Jesus hung in the middle of the room for what seemed like forever to Ben.

“I’ve been waiting for this,” a massive, burly man announced as he entered the room. He wore the lower portion of some sort of cloak and a leather apron— “Stand down,” he growled to the others in the room.

The soldiers immediately broke rank and began to move about as if statues given life through his words. Several took off their helmets and stepped back; the others moved to the walls and propped their spears where convenient. Ben felt intense pains in his stomach and began to panic as he stared at Jesus and His helplessness. If he hadn’t been shown the risen Christ before he saw the scene in front of him, he would’ve fainted. At that moment, Jesus looked up, directly into Ben’s eyes. Ben was flooded with love as he was given the sense that

Jesus was silently letting him know He was submitting to every indignity on Ben's behalf, as well as for the sake of others.

Ben was then transported to the cross and the grave with swiftness beyond his understanding. Blackness came over everything in existence because of the occupied tomb. In the kingdom of darkness, the demons zealously intensified their efforts to reinforce strongholds and fortifications against any form of obedience to God's plan. Initially, rebellion had given the dark realm access to the heart of God's human creation, leaving him helpless against its formidable evil power. Now, because they thought they'd won, unsuspecting demonic hoards rejoiced at the prospect of total control over everyone and the use of unlimited satanic power to thwart the plans of God.

A stirring in the heavenly realms, high above the demonic regions, drew Ben's attention past the darkness and beyond all creation to the very throne of God. A brilliance that emanated straight from the heart of God exploded through the blackness, interrupting the revelry of the now panicking, cowering demons as they scattered in an attempt to escape its undeniable power. It overcame every rebellion, every false and perverted law established by ungodly forces, and every distortion of His Word. With a path that destroyed everything not founded on the truth of God, this brilliance widened its scope to cover every square inch of heavenly space and moved with great purpose toward the tomb of the Savior of the world.

Within the composition of this incomprehensibly dazzling light, all of life itself flowed directly from the heart of God into the heart of His sacrificed Son. Shocks of light exploded like a heavenly fireworks display throughout the universe, obliterating the darkness. Perfectly pure violence, initiated from the heart of God, reestablished the rightful place of His kingdom over all other false kingdoms and took authority over everything in its path, changing the character of the heavenlies forever. Now established in the Savior's heart, brilliance responded back to brilliance. Father God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—a perfect union in a perfect God.

On earth, a carnally tolerable shaft of the brilliance appeared around the stone placed at the entrance to the tomb of Jesus, moving it aside to show those present an infinitesimal portion of the God-infused, death-overcoming, heaven-changing manifestation that had taken place in the spiritual realm prior to its appearance on earth. God's original intent for mankind had been resoundingly reestablished forever and made available to those who choose to accept it.

Ben's feet touched the grassy carpet of the riverbank once more, and he felt himself becoming full, as this new life fashioned by God Himself entered his dry and thirsty soul. In a small way, he now understood the reality of a magnificent Creator God, Who initiated and controlled all events—past, present, and future. This recent unfolding of God's timeline allowed Ben to gain some insight into the times in which he lived and he now knew that mankind was heading toward a final battle in a place called Armageddon, where the “god of this earth”—in his delusion—would dare to face the God of the universe.

Ben was overcome with unsurpassed joy as he continued to experience the love the Lord had not only for him, but also in context with all that was about to occur, no matter how gruesome things might appear. Even the most powerful bowl of wrath placed on the earth by this loving Lord was—in the light of eternity—wonderful; because it would be initiated in godly compassion to break man's hardened rebellious nature in those who had not yet accepted what was accomplished for them through Jesus.

In their rebellion, men and women, in general, would not respond to God's call of love, which was issued so they might willingly bend their knee to Him. It became necessary to purposely deprive the rebellious of the ability to see true spiritual concepts until the adversities in their lives caused them to cry out to God in desperation. Concerning those who remained on earth, their depravation would increase and their trials would intensify until the stony heart of the final person on earth—who would turn to God—could be broken of its independence and willingly submit to Him.

The love of Father God gladly destroyed the flesh to embrace the spirit. Once everyone on earth had the opportunity to say “yes” or “no” to God (even after the harshest chiseling,) all things would culminate in the absolute destruction of the old order of things, bringing with it a new heavenly dispensation and a new, revitalized

earth. It would be the end of the current “time of the Gentiles,” where God dealt with man’s rebellion, and the beginning of new creations.

Questioning why a loving God would use such severe means in orchestrating a final peace between the Creator and His creation, Ben was immediately shown the remarkable wisdom in the rebellion–repentance–forgiveness scenario. He was able to grasp that the freedom to rebel against the Creator was vital in establishing people with honest hearts toward God, who could then be counted on for trusted service in future creations. To ensure this, once a rebellious heart genuinely chooses to willingly know and serve the One True God by accepting the atonement provided in Jesus, it is sealed forever in every new spiritual creature, now fit to live in the heavenlies with God for all eternity through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through this process, rebellion is eliminated once and for all and replaced with eternal trustworthiness, so that God’s desires and His work will go forth unhindered.

From Our Father's Heart

*If you would ever allow Me to show you Who I really am,
you would want no other god before you.*

*Everything else is an immeasurable distance
from the wonder I have provided for you.*

There is no close second.

Join Me for all eternity.

Choose Jesus as your only Lord.

All heaven rejoices when one of My creation turns his or her heart toward Me through Jesus.

It is your only way!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.
John 3:16 AMP

Once he'd been presented with all the wonders of the creation model from beginning to end, including the glory of the living God and His love for all His creation, Ben realized he needed to make the decision to embrace Christ without delay. Having just seen the plan of God revealed in absolute truth and perfect clarity, the only life he wanted to live was one in full and unquestioned submission to the will and ways of the Lord. Anything less was unthinkable and inadequate. He couldn't bear the thought of being separated from Father God one more minute.

When seen from God's perspective, submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ was Ben's purpose for living and breathing. Actually, it was more than that. It was life and breath itself! How could he not appropriate what Jesus had done for him—for everyone—on the cross at Calvary? How could he not give up his miserable, independent existence for the privilege of having Christ live His perfect life through him? It really was a no-brainer when he considered his option was to remain in league with the rebellious—whose final defeat would come on a bloody battlefield where God Himself would step in to defend His chosen ones for the last time, whose eternal future would be total separation from God and eternal torment.

Then it dawned on Ben. Anything he had considered important in his life up until this moment suddenly meant nothing in light of what he now knew to be true. His own thoughts, ideas, plans, and needs were inconsequential, puny. How could he settle for his literally dead-end life, when God had so much more in store and available to His creation? How could he choose death over life now that everything was so apparent? How could he throw his life away when the God of the universe was inviting him to participate in His plans for eternity?

In God's vast arena, Ben could see that He viewed everything from an eternal perspective, including human life. What set man apart from the rest of creation was the ability to choose whether or not he would participate and flow in the plan of God during his lifetime and beyond. The choice was always the same no matter who made it. Flow in unison with God through Jesus or remain the captain of your own ship and eventually sail off into eternal separation.

Now it was Ben's turn. He saw full surrender as his only option and gladly stepped over the line without looking back. His prayer was simple and genuine.

"Jesus, I now know that You are Lord of all. I choose to submit to You completely and ask You to be the Lord of my life. I consider myself Yours to do with as You please. Thank You, Father, for providing the way back to You."

As if swimming under water with every droplet representing the rejoicing angels and past saints, Ben was instantly consumed and embraced by the eternal love he'd been shown. There was no beginning or end to time, no purpose other than God's purposes, no wealth other than God Himself; and finally, no separation in any way from the true Godhead and all He touched. Ben wanted only to remain in the moment but knew His Father wanted to show him something.

He saw the heavens unfold in the distance. Lavish worship and unbridled praise to the Lamb that was slain came forth quietly at first, then grew exponentially in volume as it traveled through the vast reaches of the universe—even into the darkest corners of hell—as innumerable angelic creatures paid homage to the work of salvation. All heaven rejoiced, and all hell cowered in shame, its inhabitants' separation once more evident as God's eternal truth was again manifest in the inner being of each new creation.

Without warning, a holy hush fell over the entire heavenly assembly as Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, appeared in splendor. He was holding a white robe. With all eyes fixed on Him, He moved toward Ben, who stood with eyes wide open and jaw dropped. Although a supernatural power held him upright, Ben wanted to fall prostrate in praise; but he could only stand in amazement before His Savior and Lord.

A delighted Jesus reached out to exchange Ben's earthly garments for the shimmering white robe. He had the kindest eyes and most captivating smile Ben had ever encountered. In a manner that went from glory to glory, Ben was allowed to observe segments of the future and the countless joys that awaited him. Had it not been for the Lord's sustaining power, he felt as if he would melt like hot wax in His presence.

Then Jesus told Ben to look down at his chest. With eternal onlookers as witnesses, the black spirit-murdering inner being that could not testify of the wonders of God was replaced by a glowing, life-giving, eternal inner being that would be strengthened with power and might by the power of the Holy Spirit for all eternities to come.

Originally formed in the Garden of Eden and destined to live only in the presence of God before the rebellion intruded, Ben's eternal inner being was restored because of his acceptance of what Jesus accomplished at the cross. Ben was new. Old things had passed away in him just as they had in countless others who received the love of God through Jesus since the time of His resurrection. Dark became light; dead became alive.

Jesus lovingly embraced Ben and whispered in his ear, "I'll see you again, soon. Now it's time for you to do some things for Me and with Me. Because you know the truth, I want you to explain what's happening back on earth to those who can still be delivered from spiritual blindness. I will bring others to work alongside you. Always remember I am with you no matter what happens."

Ben was mesmerized as the Lord imparted more of His heart to him in the form of peace, comfort, and encouragement. Before He turned to leave, He placed His hand on Ben's head and commissioned him to go forth with His and His Father's blessing. As He walked away, encompassed in radiant light, Jesus looked back over His shoulder and smiled at Ben in covenant friendship. From that very instant, Ben knew that what would unfold in the very near future was in the universe-holding hands of his Creator. Nothing else mattered, except staying connected to the Lord and fulfilling the desires of His heart, come what may.

"I have one more thing to show you." These words were transmitted to Ben as he looked up and once again saw the fisherman on the riverbank.

Instantly, the two of them were taken to a dusty, lifeless spot overgrown with briars and thistles, located just outside the entrance to a magnificent garden. Two gigantic figures stood guard.

In the colorless, parched, lifeless area was a man wearing a blindfold and filthy, wrinkled clothing. As Ben watched, the stupefied man slowly, meticulously, and with much effort—due to sickness and weariness—attempted to rearrange the briars near him. Periodically the man would straighten up from his time-consuming labor and look past the glowing guards and the garden gate as if he could actually see the distant garden; and then attempt to duplicate its beauty by working with the thistles. As he continued his work, little sprouts of flowers would often grow up around his feet. Some of them would wither and die; others would be harmed as the man stepped on them while continuing the process of building his thistle garden without the use of his sight.

Ben felt embarrassed for the man, not only for the futility of his attempts to duplicate something way beyond his capabilities; but also, because he was doing it blindfolded and still acting as if he were accomplishing his task. No matter how much the man worked or how hard he tried, he couldn't reproduce one plant, not even one beautiful leaf of the matchless garden beyond the gates.

"Who is that?" Ben asked the fisherman, as his eyes stayed glued to the pathetic scene before him.

"That's the church of our Lord in the times before the calling of the overcoming bride," he replied. "Watch him as he goes about doing what he really believes he's supposed to do. Even though he's working very hard, notice how some of the little flowers that spring up all around him are trampled on or left to die.

"The flowers represent those who desire to be completely restored to Jesus and to live like Him in their world, but they're cut off from this pursuit through the apathy and coldness that masquerades as "balance." Those little buds are the people and ministers who step out to tell others of the need to become like Jesus in every way; but are left hanging out to dry, almost seen as competitors by the blind gardener as he goes about building what he believes is the church. Sometimes he even steps on them unknowingly in his attempts to accomplish his fruitless endeavors.

“Instead of nurturing these little flowers to sell out completely and then supporting them and sending them forth as his children, he is unaware of his apathy toward them, even though they are supposedly unified with him and are doing what he encouraged them to do. Reflect on the gardener’s efforts in trying to duplicate the garden, something that already exists and is beautifully designed and built. The wisest thing he could do would be to enter the garden, where he could function freely and productively. However, that would require giving up ownership, something which those who need to be in control must have; so, he continues to build his way, ignoring the call to intimacy with the Lord in the perfect garden.

“The thistles represent all the issues of the world. Isn’t it a shame that the gardener is trying to remove them, when he was never told to do so? The world was heading for this time of great upheaval as foretold. Those thistles were the signs of its impending arrival. Instead of caring for people as Jesus did and going after their souls and spiritual condition, he tried to make the world a better place, when it was stated long ago that it would only get worse as time went on. If he had desired and pursued intimacy, he would’ve understood this.”

Ben was grieved beyond imagination. It was the first time he’d felt any form of sorrow since he’d arrived. The fisherman wasn’t finished.

“Dirty garments are the result of having a form of godliness but denying or refusing the power to be changed into the likeness of Jesus for His good and glory. The dirt comes from being involved in all sorts of activities, rather than cultivating a heart that loves like Jesus does, so the world can see who He is. The wrinkles come from not continually looking for the return of the Lord, anticipating the arrival of the Bridegroom. The gardener is a woeful creature. Even though he is greatly loved by the Lord, there is a season he must go through to have the opportunity to wash his robe and gain his sight. It is the season in which you presently live.”

Just when Ben thought he could bear no more sorrow, he and the fisherman observed something both wonderful and unusual. Out of the side of the gardener, there appeared a radiantly beautiful woman dressed in spotless bridal apparel. Except for Jesus Himself, she was the most dazzling person Ben had ever seen. She stood for a moment in silence, looking only to her Lord Who had again appeared nearby, this time in the enclosure of the garden, near enough the front gate for her to see Him. Their eyes locked and remained adoringly fixed on one another. They were aware of nothing else. Jesus’ smile was resplendent.

“Who is that?” Ben inquired in hushed tones.

“That is the overcoming bride who was recently joined with Christ for all eternity,” the fisherman explained. “She long ago separated herself from the activities of the man wearing the blindfold and grew in maturity and beauty out of his reach. She was given godly wisdom in times of true intimacy with the Father. He imparted His character to her in some way each time They shared the wonders of His heart and she was prepared for Jesus to receive her. She has overcome the world, just as Jesus did.”

The glorious, goose bump-producing sound of celestial trumpets filled the air. Jesus held His hands out and started moving toward His bride, who ran with abandon in His direction. He traveled swiftly past the gates and the guards to claim her and whisked her into the garden oasis. They embraced with an eternal purity and she exhaled a long-held, heartfelt sigh from the deep recesses of her inner being. Even though time did not exist in his present surroundings, Ben somehow knew that he should remember the embrace of Jesus and His bride as an eternal interval.

The man toiling with the thistles had stopped—his blindfold now supernaturally removed—and stood silently with a look of horror and confusion on his face, which denied the joy of what he saw transpiring in the garden. After he witnessed the bride and Groom’s long-awaited entrance into the garden, the sickly man and many others like him were taken to a spring, where they were washed and healed, and their garments were made clean.

Ben noticed the washing process was painful to the man at first, but he soon embraced it with vigor and determination. It evoked in Ben the feelings he’d experienced with his father a short time ago, just before he woke up in the cave. At this point, it was made clear to him that the remainder of the time left on earth centered on the completion of God’s plan. Not only that, it was one more opportunity for those who would hear and see to embrace Jesus as Lord, one more opportunity for believers who were left behind to have their robes washed through repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit to change them. Then the vision faded and disappeared.

Even though Ben may not have been quite ready to return to the reality of his life on earth, he knew it was time to greet the present and whatever it had to offer. He was convinced there was great purpose for what he'd just had the privilege of experiencing. A peaceful sleep in the cool corner of the supply room overcame him.

Rough, burly hands gently covered Ben with a blanket taken from one of the supply room shelves as he rested soundly. Rusty strolled back to the fire and sat down on one of the logs, trying to keep a lid on the joy he felt inside. Once it was no longer containable, he let out a roar of laughter that traveled quite a distance, threatening to wake his sleeping charge.

Imagining the exuberant rejoicing of his companions that was no doubt taking place around the Lamb's Book of Life at that very moment was almost more than Rusty could handle. He tried once again to stifle his outward joy and calm himself somewhat. Throughout the rest of the night, while staring into the fire and prodding the wood and kindling with a stick he had found in the corner, he was given to periodic fits of soundless giggling and tears streaming down his face as he thought of the parade of souls who were minute by minute finally giving the Lord the honor due Him.

Oh, how Rusty loved to see honor given to the Lord! How he loved to see the plan of God implemented permanently in His human creation. Many times, he reeled in wonder that mere humans were allowed intimacy with the Creator, the kind of relationship no one else could access. Having observed both the first and second rebellions, and then the new trustworthy creation process for those who believed, Rusty could only marvel at the work that was accomplished on a dusty hill called Calvary.

From Our Father's Heart

*Too often my children will not believe My Word
because the circumstances around them deny its truth.
Too often they would rather believe lies that are mere foolishness
than what I have proven to be true over and over again.*

*When I remove the ordinary
and allow the supernatural to be predominant,
My truth will be the only source of comfort and logic.*

*Lies will be so prevalent that only those
grounded in the unmovable and eternal truth,
as I see it, will not be taken in.*

*When everything that is familiar falls away,
only one thing will remain - My truth.*

CHAPTER TWELVE

And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth.
Col. 3:2 AMP

“Once you get to the gate at the complex, just pull inside and turn to the right. It’s the third door after the staircase,” Tim Hanek informed the driver. He was lost in thought. The unusual events of the last three days were captured on film, so he knew they had transpired. Still, it was too much to process at the moment.

Getting up from the third row of seats, he walked to the front of the armored vehicle and waited impatiently for it to come to a stop. His mind flashed through many scenes of the past that dealt with childhood lessons and church on Sunday, as he attempted to measure it against all he, as an adult, considered factual. He had the urge to verbalize his thoughts but resisted the impulse. Anyone listening would conclude he had lost his mind.

Facts and reality were those things that could be touched and reasoned and proven, weren’t they? If something was established as a fact, didn’t that mean it could be relied upon, that it could be an anchor point, something to count on in everyday life? That just had to be true.

How could the world function properly without order, without consistency day after day? The sun followed a predictable pattern. The moon made its appearance at night. Even if they were both obscured by heavy cloud cover, you knew where they were. If he continued along these lines, he would end up with a never-ending list of assurances. What he desperately needed, bottom line, were some rock-solid facts to hold onto in light of what he’d seen the past few days.

Why did he feel like a character in a B movie? Why was there no compartment in his mind to file the events he’d recently seen with his own eyes? People don’t just disappear. There must have been some sort of escape route in that hospital. What about all those troops vanishing in the night? Where did they go? Why did they leave?

Tim remembered how impressed he’d been with the indescribable presence of the troops that guarded the hospital as they stood in formation, seemingly with no need to blink their eyes or even breathe. Wait a minute! They must’ve been breathing. Maybe he hadn’t looked hard enough. What he really wanted to know was whether or not the troops took the people in the hospital with them when they left. And where did they come from? They were huge! Every single one of them!

Tim contemplated their appearance as he tried to mentally recreate several details of the past few days. He managed to block out his surroundings and was soon struck by something rather odd. The soldiers who protected the Christians at Mercy General had no leader that he could recall, yet they knew what to do. Was that possible? Don’t troops need someone to issue orders?

Tim was jolted out of his thoughts as the transport came to an abrupt halt in front of his apartment. He resolved to review the chip in his camera.

After the massive transport door opened and the guard checked to see if it was safe to let their passenger off, Tim moved down the stairs. Security had informed him there had been some recent compromise to the integrity of the complex security system, so the guard escorted Tim to his apartment. It was not unusual for commoners to try to steal food from “safety zones” such as this, but usually they were shot before they could actually break in.

As far as Tim was concerned, there really was nothing to worry about, so he dismissed any thoughts regarding his safety. In fact, the smoke from the fires was so intense he gave no thought to anything except giving his lungs a break as he hurried inside and closed the door.

Looking out the window as the transport pulled up to the next stop within the complex, he did have a fleeting notion to work his way up to a private limo like the one Gloria had at her disposal. Of course, it wasn’t likely to happen. She had Class B status because of her position with the media. The band of brass on Tim’s wrist in comparison to her gold band continually reminded him exactly where he fit in the strata of society. Only a change in the law could move him up or down. Hopefully up, because down was not an option he would entertain.

That route would take him closer to the commoners and eventual death, not to mention the embarrassment of having to live as they did.

Tim needed to put himself and his thoughts to bed. By the time he'd checked over and accounted for his equipment and the transport had made its way through the crowds to the complex, the sun was getting ready to make an entrance, right on time as usual.

Tim was dreaming when heavy pounding on the front door startled him awake. Once more Gloria had consumed his night. She was his virtual reality in the truest sense of the word, his twenty-four-hour-a-day obsession, whether he liked it or not.

Heading with uncertainty in the direction of the pounding, Tim looked at his watch. "Who in the world would be calling at 6:00 AM?" He had gone to sleep less than an hour ago, or so he thought. The glaring sun shot through a momentary breach in the ever-increasing smoke, momentarily blinding him as he opened the door.

"You've been sleepin' all day, you turkey," Tony Delano, his neighbor, teased as he pushed Tim aside and jumped over the back of the couch for no good reason. "I thought you finally scored, so I left you alone."

Tim, his brain as hazy as the outdoor atmosphere, struggled to wake up as he watched Tony head for the refrigerator. Tony found some noodles coated with green fur and reconsidered his need to eat. He closed the refrigerator door with a flourish and headed back to the couch.

"I don't eat no food with hair on it. Saw your whore all over the tube last night and this mornin'. Knew you must have been behind the camera droolin'. What was that all about anyway?" he babbled.

Tim walked over to the kitchen sink and ran some water for the coffee pot. As he poured the water into the machine, old grounds still in it, he said nothing. It just wasn't worth it. Tony rambled on in the background and then said something that struck Tim like a lightning bolt.

"What did you say?" he asked, as he spun in Tony's direction. "What did you just say?"

"I *said* that she sure made a fool of herself talkin' about all those troops surrounding the hospital when there wasn't anyone there. I'm surprised you guys let her ramble on like that. We were laughin' like crazy. It was so awesome to see that snooty know-it-all finally look like a real idiot in front of everybody."

"What do you mean, no troops?" Tim pressed, his apple cart close to tipping.

"I mean, that broad was goin' on and on about these well-armed troops that were ten feet tall or somethin', and when you would aim where she was pointing, there was nuthin'. It was really cool, ya know. Me and Betty were on some pretty good stuff and couldn't stop laughin' fer nuthin'. Then we got hungry and turned the tube off." As an afterthought, he added, "Maybe Gloria was on somethin' too."

Tim hurried to his camera bag, rifling the contents to find the video clip used on the air, ignoring Tony as he continued to drone on about the fires and warnings of possible evacuations. Although Tony sounded brash, it was evident he was acting the part and extremely nervous about what was happening.

With Tim's sole focus on finding the footage in question, he failed to respond to anything Tony said. Tired of being ignored and finding no comfort or fulfillment in watching Tim dig through his camera bag, Tony went back to his apartment.

Only after he placed the chip in his camera and pressed play did Tim look up to see where Tony was. Oh, well. He'd try to remember to apologize next time he ran into him.

"It can't be!" Tim exclaimed in astonishment as he played and replayed what he'd filmed at the hospital. He hit the pause button and stared at the frozen frame. Everything was just as Tony had said. Every time the camera panned to show the troops that protected the Christians holed up at Mercy General, there was nothing to see.

"But I saw them with my own eyes," Tim tried to reassure himself. "I *saw* them."

He inspected frame by frame every spot he could remember that might reveal the elusive army. "OK, there's Gloria. She's pointing to the troops. I pan over to where they're standing at attention and... nothing.

Colonel Lassiter kept referring to the troops as the reason they had not entered the hospital, but according to what I filmed, there were no troops. I don't get it! I *saw* them!" he practically screamed.

Tim closed his eyes and tried to calm down. He needed to reason his way through this mess. "Wait a second," he said in a slow, low-key voice. "Gloria wanted an interview with one of the soldiers and she never got it. Why not?"

Trying to pinpoint the sequence of events that transpired around the time of the potential interview, Tim started the recording from the top and watched it from the comfort of the couch. He had purposely let his camera run well beyond the on-camera time frames since he was always obsessed with getting candid footage of Gloria for his own files.

There were times when he found a shot of her particularly beautiful, so he would simply develop a photo of the moment to add to his gallery walls. Actually, it went way beyond that. His office in the apartment looked like a shrine in her honor. His obsession with Gloria had motivated him to not only develop and display photos of her, but to also collect memorabilia from things she'd discarded and places they had been together on assignment.

Tim now concentrated on the footage that was not used for broadcast. He ran those segments slowly, trying to catch every movement to see if there was something out of order.

He paused what he was doing and remarked, "We went over to see if we could get a comment from those troops. When *was* that?" He reflected briefly on the idiocy of Gloria's plan, but she was one of those people who was always bent on going where she shouldn't or others wouldn't go.

From Our Father's Heart

Evil is evil no matter how cleverly it is disguised.

*When evil is exposed for what it really is,
you have no recourse but to turn to Me,
or die with those things that are dying.*

My power is greater than any evil.

I will expose every lie.

*To choose to perish with those who are perishing
is the ultimate form of ignorance.*

Shake off the tentacles that hold you.

Embrace My love and walk in My truth.

It is the path to life!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“So kill (deadens, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God.” Col. 3:5 AMP

Tim leaned back into the leather couch, trying to reconstruct the sequence of events in the three-day standoff and determine when they had first tried to contact the troops guarding the hospital. Colonel Lassiter had arrived about the same time as the opposing forces. As he and his men were attempting to quickly set up operations, the other troops were already in position. In fact, Tim didn't recall any of them ever moving from their positions. They never ate or drank. No other troops came to relieve them. They just stood there. They didn't even talk to one another.

Now that he was removed from the event, the oddities of it struck Tim full force. “They didn't even blink!” he exclaimed.

These characteristics of the troops, who defended the Christians inside the hospital, hadn't registered with him until now. Everyone had been so focused on the UN forces and all their activity, that no one took special note of these silent protectors.

Tim's mind ticked off instance after instance involved in the hospital drama, but none of them had anything to do with the reason why Gloria was denied an interview with the “big guys,” as she liked to refer to them. He was about to abandon his quest when a wisp of a thought came his way.

One of them *had* moved. It happened while Gloria was heading toward them and one of the troops raised his arm. Yes! He raised his arm and Gloria stopped in midstride and... what happened?

He sat and waited, hoping his thoughts would gel. It didn't take long.

“That's when I fell down!” He couldn't believe he'd forgotten that until now. Falling down with camera in hand was something he had attempted to avoid his entire career, mainly because of the damage it could inflict on his very valuable equipment, not to mention his ego.

Big deal, so he fell down..., but why? Tim tapped his index finger on the arm of the couch.

“I was following Gloria as she was on her way to talk to the troops.” His mind shifted to following Gloria, something he enjoyed immeasurably. When she walked...

“Clear the mechanism, Hanek. OK. I was following Gloria, hoping for the best, camera running, as she approached the troops. When she got about twenty feet from the left end of their line, one of the nearby troops calmly raised his arm and just pointed at her.”

Tim stopped to recapture the incident. “He raised his arm, pointed at Gloria. She turned around in midstride and...”

He slammed his hand down at the same spot he'd been tapping his finger. “She whirled around a split second later, pointed her finger directly at me, and I fell down.” His last sentence rapidly escaped his lips.

It took a moment for Tim to grasp what he had just described. How could he have forgotten the details of one of his most embarrassing experiences in front of the one person in the world he never wanted to see him looking foolish. He groaned as he recalled getting entangled in the strap of his camera bag.

Why didn't Gloria mention it? It wasn't like her to let that kind of occasion pass without uttering some demeaning comment.

Tim catapulted off the couch and dove for the chip in his camera bag that had captured this infamous moment in history. At first, he had no success and feared he might've left it at the studio. On his fifth attempt in picking out the correct chip, he hit pay dirt.

“There it is,” he said with satisfaction, as he brought his valued possession up from the bottom of the bag. “This is the one.”

On his way back to the news camera on the couch, his right shin made solid contact with the low-lying coffee table that occupied the space directly in front of the couch. Tim grimaced in pain as he put the chip in the slot. As he rubbed his shin, he fast forwarded to the approximate spot of his less than graceful landing and realized he was visibly shaking.

Stop. Play. Stop. Rewind. Stop. Play.

“There, I’m following Gloria. She’s getting closer to the one who raised his arm.”

Tim had gotten somewhat used to not being able to view the troops during the replays, although he could see in his mind’s eye where they were standing. When Gloria reached the spot about twenty feet from where they had been positioned, she came to an abrupt stop, like the guy who runs into the patio plate glass window because it’s so spotless. Then she did an immediate about face, almost as if she were trying to run away from something that scared her, and she pointed at the camera with an angry expression on her face. Then he was taking footage of the sky, like a Funniest Home Videos segment.

Something had caught his eye. He rewound the footage a bit, then hit “play.” Turn... point... sky.

“Wait a minute. What was *that*?”

He rewound the segment again. This time he ran it in slow motion. He couldn’t believe his eyes. As Gloria pointed at him after she’d hurriedly turned away from the troops, Tim zeroed in on something that made him feel nauseated. That just wasn’t possible! He had to steel himself and summon up the nerve to run the segment one more time.

“Oh, God, no.” If only he hadn’t seen it.

For a split second during the segment where Gloria swung around and pointed at him, her beautiful face went from Gloria to grotesque gargoyle back to Gloria. It was the scariest thing Tim had ever seen. It was almost as though her face had been superimposed over the hideous gargoyle’s, as though he wore her like a mask. In that brief instant, they both appeared at the same time.

“That’s when I fell down!” he cried in horror. “No, that’s when I was pushed down! I didn’t fall; I was pushed down when she pointed at me!”

Mounting fear overcame Tim as he ran the sequence over and over again. Turn... point... gargoyle... sky. He was literally ill.

Tim ran to the bathroom and made it in time to throw up in the toilet bowl. If only he were drunk! At least that wasn’t fearful, and he understood it. It made sense. Gloria! Who was she? What was she? Whoever she was, it scared the life out of him. That other face was all he could think about.

That night, Tim lay in bed feeling very dirty, as if covered with slime. He couldn’t sleep. He stayed as motionless as he could, his heart pumping adrenaline, his body startled by every creak, thump, and groan of the apartment and the rolling thunder that had long ago become part of the earth’s nightly routine. Tim was consumed with fear, anguish, and nausea.

Over and over again he saw those beautiful eyes—eyes that at one time he longed to look into lovingly for the rest of his life—turn into violent green and orange cesspools of unfathomable hate from the very pit of hell. Whatever it was, it was powerful enough in that split second to knock him off his feet and then have him forget about it.

In a matter of minutes, all the painstakingly crafted emotions he’d harbored toward Gloria left without a trace. He didn’t even mourn the fact that Gloria was gone from his heart forever. He was relieved, almost glad. She scared him to death.

Tim finally got up enough courage to take a long, hot shower, hoping he could somehow wash away the filthy, grimy feeling that came over him earlier. He kept the light on all night, longing for the comfort of his family for the first time in a long time.

From Our Father's Heart

Be careful!

What seems big and powerful is not always truth.

Always trust My Word.

*What appears as its fulfillment, however,
may need time to play out until My truth is brought forth.*

Wait on Me.

I will always unfold truth.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“And there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth [there will be] distress (trouble and anguish) of nations in bewilderment and perplexity [without resources, left wanting, embarrassed, in doubt, not knowing which way to turn] at the roaring (the echo) of the tossing of the sea.”

Luke 21:25 AMP

The winds were unpredictable. When only a small breeze graced the air, it was almost tolerable to be without some sort of cover, since the smoke from the fires that consumed the cities blew upward, leaving room to breathe. When the winds were at their peak, however, all anyone could do was find temporary shelter in whatever hovel was at hand. The scramble for relief was truly life or death. Those who had somewhere to hide from the smoky environment—a cave, a recess in the land, a blanket, or even a coat of some kind—lasted a little longer. People were assured of their doom if there wasn’t any room wherever they sought refuge.

When the wind wasn’t a factor, the smoke and fire during the day, and the firestorms, peals of lightning, unbelievably heavy thunder, and extremely unusual, eerie movements in the increasingly unfriendly sky at night more than made up for a lack of gale force winds in the unwanted excitement department. Then throw in the massive, untimely earthquakes that instantly opened up whole sections of earth—sometimes miles in length—consuming the hapless and hopeless as they plummeted and were never heard from again. The earth was reeling in torment.

In a matter of days, rural hillsides and valleys became randomly scattered hobo towns inhabited by all the displaced persons who fled the fires that were consuming the cities. These makeshift towns were populated mainly with roving gangs of maniacal people of every age. They were crazed with fright, feverishly seeking to take whatever they could from anyone weaker than they were, risking whatever harm might come in the process.

Visibly altered due to sleeplessness, hunger and fear, most people scoured every square inch of their surroundings in a vain attempt to find safety or comfort of any kind. For the most part, food was unavailable. Known water sources were contaminated, although that didn’t stop people from drinking whatever they found. There was no place to escape from the moment by moment horrors that resulted from natural and man-made disasters.

One particularly windy night, when those outside who would survive the night were hidden in whatever holes they could find, the sky took on a peculiar pattern of movement that danced between the firestorms and lightning that had become commonplace fare in the night. Deep within the recesses of outer space, stars began to move as if guided by the baton of an unseen conductor.

Starting within the furthest reaches of space, countless numbers—possibly a third of the star population—left their long-held positions and began their descent. What seemed like simple shooting stars, at first, became a brilliant mosaic of finely tuned movement. Small patterns of light united as a tapestry of such gigantic proportions that it appeared as if whole sections of the night sky were shifting.

These sections joined one another and became myriads of swirling whirlpools as they boogied to unheard rhythms, becoming still larger as they hovered in space for a short time. Then in unison, as though a celestial starting gate had been lifted, they began their speedy journey toward earth like dates falling from a tree shaken by the wind.

As they entered the earth’s atmosphere, the friction made them glow white hot. There were so many of these star-like objects moving in unison, that the visible sky was a canopy of fire, which made the moon appear as red as blood. Most people in hiding missed what was undoubtedly one of the most horrifyingly spectacular sights in recorded history. Those who had no shelter couldn’t avoid the display overhead, for although it evoked even more fear in the already fearful, they could not resist its mesmerizing presentation.

Unfortunately, many died of fright that night, convinced in their hearts it was the end of the world for sure as the unidentified burning objects hurtled toward them. Others, who had a penchant for survival and the tenacity

to see it through, sought to invade nearby shelters—even if it meant death to the current temporary “owner”—as they attempted to acquire some semblance of safety.

As the soundless canopy of fiery projectiles began to cool and invade the outer reaches of the earth’s atmosphere, something extraordinary began to take place. Each individual object distanced itself from the others and hovered, creating what seemed like a second, somewhat less resplendent, grouping of stars that encircled the earth.

No matter where a human being stood, hundreds of these motionless objects were visible overhead, darkening the light of the moon and blackening the earth. They remained fixed for several hours, and every observer wondered what their next move would be. The view was ominous. Those who hadn’t died of fright continued to be mesmerized as they looked up; however, their hearts were not at peace.

Finally, the unseen conductor gave the downbeat, and each gigantic cooled off, darkened object began its individual course and continued its descent toward earth. An inestimable number of these objects silently and purposefully headed for pre-planned locations in every corner of the planet. They moved in unison, giant puzzle pieces that could only fit properly in one specific place of the overall picture.

Their descent occurred without any evidence of propulsion. No noise, no lights, not one telltale sign to indicate their presence. In the darkness, highlighted only by periodic flashes of the resumed fire storms, these enormous blackened objects—ten miles in diameter—came to rest three inches above the ground. The earth now hosted a vast network of hovering modular “cities.”

The scorched global landscape was dotted with what appeared to be a random pattern of mountainous metallic objects. Some landed in groups just outside major cities. Others singularly touched down in rural or desolate areas. Each object had consecutive solid flat surfaces separated by giant, vertical ribs. The panels connected by the ribs formed a gigantic circle of flat walls. There were no doors, no windows, and no sign of life whatsoever. Imposing, multi-storied metallic monuments stood as evidence of changing times and future events. An eerie silence covered the earth for about half an hour.

From Our Father's Heart

*If lies are repeated often enough,
they may eventually appear as truth to those
who choose not to believe My truth.*

You guard your heart.

*Allow Me to examine your motives
while your heart is soft enough to respond.*

*Allow Me to expose any stronghold
in the darkest corners of your secret places.*

As I expose your real motives,

I will hold you while you heal.

Come to Me for your cleansing.

*I will make you whole,
so that you will be safe from all deception.*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*“Take heed to yourselves, lest your [minds and] hearts be deceived and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them”,
Deut. 11:16 AMP*

The moments after Gloria regained her breath became an eternity of anticipation and fear. Her lover and best friend had betrayed her, literally turned on her. He seemed to enjoy seeing her writhe in agony and she hated him for it.

Now sitting across from Ra-il, she could only wait for his next move. She was physically unable—more succinctly, powerless—to do anything but sit and stare into his eyes. Her heart and soul seethed with anger. Her mind plotted revenge. As soon as she was released from this session with him, she was determined to destroy this meeting place and never entertain his presence again.

Those eyes. Moments earlier, they had been vessels of uninhibited rage and evil. Now, with each passing second that she was compelled to stare into them, they became increasingly friendly and soothing, erasing any memory of the ugliness of their violent encounter. Gloria was entranced.

I must have been mistaken, she thought to herself. He would never hurt me. Maybe it was a bad dream or my imagination. It had to be. Ra-il loves me. Look at those eyes, how caring and compassionate they are. I love those eyes. When we sit and stare into each other’s eyes like this, the world means nothing to me. All I want to do is stay here and be with him. There is no one like him anywhere. The love we share knows no bounds. How fortunate I am to have found someone like him.

The time frame of the choking, and even the anger that she harbored concerning the loss of her daughter, no longer existed. In their place was an understanding that everything is done for the common good, which brings all things closer and closer to the new age enlightenment that the earth lacked.

Her daughter’s life—and her own for that matter—was inconsequential when compared to the Masters’ plan, as far as she was concerned. She would give them up gladly. Her heart swelled with false humility as she remembered she was one of the chosen ones. Nothing meant more than to serve Ra-il and the perfect will of the Masters.

Arielle was with the Masters now; and after Gloria fulfilled her destiny in this life, she knew they would be together again somehow, somewhere. She would not make it her concern. She knew she could trust the love the Masters had for both of them; that they would do everything in their considerable power to make the reunion recognizable to her.

Gloria loved Ra-il more than ever and was thrilled he would trust her in taking Arielle for the good of the plan. What an honor! His kindness was overshadowed in her mind only by the privilege of serving his every desire. She moved toward him, aflame with love, ready to surrender herself completely to him as she had done so many times before; but this time it was much more spiritually enlightening. Ra-il and Gloria embraced the universe and its Masters as they consumed one another in their passion.

“We have wonderful plans for you,” Ra-il told her later that day. “As you know, great dispensations are unfolding as we speak, and all we have been planning to bring about universal oneness will soon occur and come to completion in the next seven earth years.” Gloria was giddy with excitement as she listened to Ra-il, knowing that the final solution to all of mankind’s problems was at hand with the universal heart and mind at the center of it all.

“Now that we have produced the initial cleansing of those who would not live for the good of the universe, all is set to go forward. We will continue eliminating the rebellious and start rebuilding soon. Already plans are in motion to reestablish order out of the chaos of recent months. Once our rebuilding is well on its way, the Universal Master will be brought down to rule in peace.”

Gloria felt chills all over at the thought of actually meeting the Universal Master. She'd been anticipating this moment since she first became an initiate. She reflected a bit on the time frame when she had first devoted herself to him. It seemed like such a long time ago. Everything was just starting to evolve back then. Few people even believed in the Masters from another world during those crucial years.

She kept her thoughts to herself in the early days for the most part. The uninitiated tended to dismiss the more highly evolved as crack pots and fools when she first began her journey. She chuckled when she recalled the days when she and her "circle of light" friends met in secret to avoid harassment. That certainly was not the case now, but it had been necessary for survival years ago.

How foolish and uninitiated the world was then, she thought to herself, as she massaged the area at the base of her neck where the small chip was implanted. Ra-il flashed a covenant smile as she did.

"Since the initial cleansing of this planet a little while ago," he continued, "we have more freedom to work openly and at greater speed. As I told you before, we have selected you for a very special mission."

Gloria's heart began to race as she contemplated the honor that was about to come her way. She would do anything to further the mission of the Masters. Even dying for the furtherance of the plan was not too much to ask.

"In the very near future, the mother ship will carry the Universal Master, the architect of all that exists, to earth. We want to use your gift as a commentator to showcase the plans he will initiate on a daily basis."

Gloria began to shake uncontrollably with delight and excitement. "How, why me... why would I receive such a privileged position?"

Ra-il looked into her devoted eyes. "We've been grooming you for many years. Your position at the network was reserved, so we could train you for this exact time frame. All you've accomplished was planned and executed on your behalf to get you to this point."

"I know," Gloria said lovingly. "I have felt the guidance and the power to do many things. Can you tell me how we are going to communicate with so many people? All systems seem to be shutting down because of the weather patterns, fires, and riots; and it's not safe to travel anymore."

"We've planned for all of that," Ra-il assured her. "Soon you will be given a place to live that is safe and self-contained. In fact, it's being prepared at this very moment. You won't have to travel anywhere. All your needs will be met. Anyone else that agrees with our plans will eventually be welcome; but for now, there are provisions only for the highly initiated."

Ra-il embraced Gloria, reaffirming that these next few days would be some of the most exciting and wondrous days of her entire life. He gave her a reminder of the privilege she was being given, along with others who had been groomed for this time in history. Then he told her to be ready at a moment's notice to move from her place to her new living quarters.

After one final hug, Ra-il assumed his usual lotus position. While in communion with the Masters, he disappeared as Gloria proudly watched. My goodness! Whatever had she done to deserve all this?

From Our Father's Heart

My Gospel is simple.

It is seen with a renewed spirit,

not with your carnal mind.

The mind of man will never be able to discern the workings

of My Spirit. Only the foolish attempt to discern

spiritual events

with logic and human reasoning.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

“A [self-confident] fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to himself.”
18:7 AMP

Prov.

“Yes, sir. I’ll look into that. Yes, sir.....Yes, sir, very good, sir.” Colonel Lassiter tucked his cell phone back into its holster, adding an inappropriate hand gesture to finish off the call. “That moron must think I’m some sort of miracle worker or something. How am *I* supposed to know what’s going on around here? Like I’d even have enough troops to guard those things. Like I can do anything about the weather. What am I supposed to do when the winds blow my troops away, or the ground opens up, or troops go AWOL because their families have no food or place to live? Somebody tell me that, will ya?”

The colonel had been given the order to supervise the modules that had dropped to earth overnight, except for one or two that were now quarantined for study purposes. Still recovering from the embarrassment of all the Christians slipping out from under his authority, this was not a task he relished taking on, especially considering all the weird occurrences in recent days.

“This supernatural stuff scares the snot outta me,” he said to the pilot seated across from him on the other side of his desk.

Reefer McGee was one of those “hot shot” pilots, who just wouldn’t die, no matter how dire the circumstances. Shot down at least six times, wounded three times, and cut up too many places to count, he was looked upon as somewhat of a god by most of the other troops. He was declared missing in action each time his chopper crashed. Then several days later, out of the blue, he would just show up at some outpost camp. Shot up, cut up, or beat up, he would arrive at camp and simply report he was back, much to everyone’s surprise even though this was a fairly regular pattern.

In the time it took to clean up—or so it seemed as the legend grew—he was back in action, heading up another chopper mission. Many men reported they owed their lives to his fearless tactics. He would risk everything to save a man who was stranded. They called him the “multi-million-dollar Reefer,” partly because he lost so many choppers to enemy fire; but also, because he had so many patched up body parts.

If bionics had been a reality, he probably would’ve considered having most of his movable parts replaced. There were few areas on his body free of scars. Even though on the verge of retirement, the commanding officer called him in to do what he did best—fly where no one wanted to fly or shouldn’t even attempt to fly, for that matter.

Only the bravest would fly with him, even though no one could deny he was one of the best pilots in all the armed services of any nation. The kind of daring it took to get a downed pilot out of unmapped desert or jungle areas—under a storm of bullets and heavy artillery fire—was the kind of controlled recklessness that made even the most seasoned warrior nervous about flying with him. On the other hand, everyone wanted him to be the one sent to the rescue if they should ever be in trouble.

Nobody doubted his prowess. It’s just that everyone knew unexpected things happened when he was called upon to do a job. He didn’t stop until the job was done or he was done in. Life for Reefer was that simple, that straightforward. Most people felt very uncomfortable around him for those reasons, especially if their own lives were full of compromise or false bravado.

“We gonna get a look at them things?” he asked the colonel, as he reached for his cowboy hat. The hat drove Colonel Lassiter crazy; it was so far from regulation, something the colonel demanded from everyone who associated with him. Long ago, however, he knew that if he wanted Reefer to do anything for him, the hat had to be part of the equation or it didn’t get done. Nobody even dared make a remark about the stark contrast between the uniform and the crumpled hat. It seemed there was so much respect for the man and the dues he’d paid, that he simply was left alone.

“I’ll drive,” he stated, putting on his signature hat and heading for the door.

That statement made the colonel quite nervous. He knew that “the Reef” meant they were going by chopper, in spite of the high winds that had been reported since he was last outside. It was quite thrilling, though, to see the man enthusiastic enough to be so talkative.

Boy, two sentences in one day, the colonel marveled to himself. This guy must really be excited to see these still unidentified modules.

Reefer McGee, a man of few words, was in stark contrast to Colonel John T. Lassiter. In fact, they were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Lassiter was always commanding, prodding, yelling, cussing, or communicating loudly in some way, and Reefer was referred to as the only man alive who says about a hundred words in a year. Lassiter was short and stocky with a continually expanding middle; Reefer was rather tall and all bone and muscle. People would jokingly spread the story that he must have been eaten several times by animals in the jungle considering all the times he was lost on various missions around the world, and whatever he is now is what they spit out when he fought them from the inside.

“We’re not going to be able to use these caves much longer if those earthquakes get any stronger,” the colonel remarked, referring to the underground command and communications stations that were being used by the military because of all the havoc being played out above the earth’s surface.

Reefer said nothing, as he strode several steps in front of Colonel Lassiter, who was beginning to suck wind trying to keep up with him.

“Do you...” Several minutes later, he had to gulp air to complete his question. “Do you think you can fly in this wind?”

“Don’t know,” was the reply.

“Are you sure that we should go?” The colonel was having second thoughts about this whole venture. He knew it was his responsibility to scout out the area before he could send in whatever troops he had left; but, boy, this felt wrong, and frankly quite stupid.

“Are you sure we should go *now*?” he asked again.

“Yep.”

“Thanks for all the confidence-building conversation,” Colonel Lassiter said under the little breath he had left. Maybe someday I can help you, he thought sarcastically, knowing deep inside that he had little or nothing to offer this man should the occasion arise.

About the time the two men arrived in the hangar area, Colonel Lassiter felt like he was going to pass out. He needed to rest. Looking for the proper place, he found a folding chair along the wall where they’d entered the hangar. As he dropped heavily onto the seat, he didn’t even notice the sly grin on the face of his marathon companion. He was busy resting his elbows on his knees, with hands clasped and a blank stare focused on the cement floor.

“Oh, Colonel.” The profusely sweating officer thought he heard a wispy, honey-coated voice calling his name. As he looked up, Gloria Manly cooed, “Remember me?” as she extended her hand from twenty feet away and walked briskly toward him.

Colonel Lassiter jumped to his feet. He also simultaneously sucked in his stomach, pulled his belt up, and tucked in his shirt in three seconds flat.

From Our Father's Heart

Do you know that you have work to do?

You have been designed to serve Me as I fulfill My plans in you.

You are part of My great army.

Go and prosper, no matter what the circumstances around you

may be saying to your carnal mind.

Walk with Me as I lead you where you are called to be.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

*"If I take the wings of the morning or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea
10) Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me."*

Ps. 139:9-10

AMP

Ben stirred a bit, as Rusty entered the supply room to check on him. "You doin' OK, buddy?" Rusty asked his groggy friend. Ben stretched and yawned and performed the usual "gymnastics" that helped him wake up, which was good for a belly laugh from Rusty.

"That sleeping thing must be pretty nice, huh? Never get to experience it myself," he mused.

Suddenly Ben was wide awake, as Rusty's comments registered in his brain. He quickly exclaimed, "Are you an angel?!!"

The look on Ben's face caused Rusty to produce a giggle, which mushroomed into an uncontrollable horselaugh. Humans were priceless! He was beginning to understand why they brought the Lord such joy.

Even though he continued laughing, Rusty managed to nod his head "yes." Ben smiled from ear to ear like a Cheshire cat. "This is great! My own special angel. This is cool! This is ridiculous! Are you serious?"

He jumped up from the floor and walked over to Rusty. Extending his hand, he said to his new friend, "Now that I know who and what you are, it's good to meet you all over again!"

Rusty pumped Ben's hand with such enthusiasm that he looked somewhat like a bobble head doll. He would've thrown his head back for another round of guffaws but noticed Ben's hand was very cold.

"Let's get you over by the fire. You need to get ready. The Lord has big plans for you, and they start now. This is gonna be the ride of your life, but I'll be with you every step of the way. That's why I'm here."

"Wow!" was all Ben could manage in response. "Would it be OK if I grab breakfast before we do anything else?"

Rusty nodded and made a mental note that humans needed to eat on a regular basis, something with which he never concerned himself. "Gotta remember the stuff you guys need," he said. "You sure are fearfully and wonderfully made. Only the Lord could've invented things like food and sleep. They sure appear enjoyable."

"They are," Ben affirmed and sensing they needed to get moving, he opened a can of baked beans and ate them on the way to the entrance of the cave.

Ben could hardly believe his eyes as he stood with Rusty at the mouth of the cave, looking out over the desolate landscape. He had no idea how long they had been in the cave or what had transpired since he got there, but the shock of what he observed made him cringe.

Although it was relatively calm where he stood, Ben could see pockets of hurricane force winds destroying everything in their paths and fueling uncontrolled fires off in the distance, which were consuming the cities. From his position on the hillside just outside the cave, he saw a valley below that resembled Grants Park, where he and his dad had spent overnight camping trips many years ago. Now it looked like a scorched, barren battlefield riddled with wild animals, which were in the process of devouring dead bodies. The live people tried their best to avoid the wild animals and survive.

"I cannot understand why your kind continues to reject the love of God, so that it has to come down to this"—Rusty pointed to the scene below—"to purge the last hard heart." He took a seat on a large boulder next to the opening of the cave.

"I saw Lucifer and the others turn. I saw your Adam and Eve do it, too; but it's so hard to believe your kind can keep right on doing it now that the glorious Son has restored everything. Even some of those down there who can no longer swallow, who wander around in a stupor, will not give in. They would sooner curse the Lord God rather than turn to Him. Look at them!"

Ben noticed a small group of people near the edge of the "park" on the western boundary. They were straining against the wind and dodging flying debris to no avail. They would've been better off linking arms and

facing one another in a circle. As individuals, however, all they could do was stumble and fall in whatever direction the wind sent them.

Ben had a gentle leading inside to reach out to the one group that seemed the most helpless and this group was a prime candidate. He would have to brave the elements, the animals, and bypass many others to assist them; but it didn't matter.

These feelings were new to him. Ben looked at Rusty for confirmation. "Am I right? I feel like I'm supposed to bring that group in the left-hand corner of the park back to the cave. Do I have that right? This is new territory for me."

Rusty smiled and gave an affirming nod. "I'll be with you all the way," he said, and Ben knew in his heart he would.

Before he ventured down the hill, Ben ran back to one of the storage room shelves where he remembered seeing survival gear. Once properly attired, he left the cave and proceeded toward the group he felt he should help. The shock of the wind and burning heat was almost too much for him, but nothing could deter him. He passed many zombie-like individuals who could no longer think or act, as he supernaturally honed in on the location of the group.

En route, he looked up once from behind the safety shield of his helmet and caught a glimpse of Rusty, who came across as someone on a pleasant stroll in the park. His hair hardly moved.

Feeling Ben needed an answer to an unvoiced question, he said in a tone that pierced the commotion all around them, "I could enter into all of this with you. I just don't feel I'm supposed to at this time."

Ben felt a tug of jealousy in still needing to work out his time on earth. A supernatural body would sure come in handy right now.

After much struggle, Ben grabbed the arm of the man in the front of the group and screamed, "Follow me!" at the top of his lungs. He noticed that the five semi-catatonic figures had tethered themselves to one another, so that they would not be separated in the journey, wherever the wind might take them.

Linking the group together hand-to-hand as well as waist-to-waist, Ben grabbed the lead man's arm and pulled him in the direction of the cave. As he did, he noticed that the man seemed to snap out of his unthinking state and started to exhibit some determination to do something about his situation. There were signs of life again in his eyes. Rusty moved to the back of the pack and gently picked up and carried one of the women.

Somehow Ben and his buffeted crew made it to the top of the hill and the hidden entrance to the cave. They collapsed as soon as they were out of reach of the wind. They could do nothing but lie where they fell. Rusty went over to Ben and strengthened him to the point where he could get up and move to the storage area to draw a container full of water. Ben stared at Rusty and gave him that "you could have helped more, ya know" look and Rusty responded with a shrug of his shoulders and a smile.

The two rescuers wordlessly removed the rope that connected all their guests, then dabbed their parched lips with enough water to reduce their swollen tongues and the dust in their throats. After this, they were given small, slow sips. Outside of quenching their thirst, the quintet of people lay motionless. They all very quickly fell into a sound sleep. Rusty and Ben found some ointment to soothe the damage done to their skin by the wind and the rope burns and applied it to the exposed areas of their sleeping charges.

"I'll make some broth for later," Ben said, as he walked toward the supply room.

Rusty moved to the fire and began stirring it. "Humans sure do a lot of sleeping," he mumbled under his breath. "I wonder what that's like. In fact, I've wondered that for centuries!"

His monologue made him laugh, which caused Ben to poke his head around the corner, trying to silently shush him before he awoke their guests. Then he disappeared and reappeared a moment later with a puzzled look on his face.

"Wait a minute," he said to Rusty, who looked up from the fire. "What was that big black thing out there?"

With performing a rescue attempt in the forefront of his thoughts, he had seen the dark "star" that had arrived several days before; but was so preoccupied and focused on reaching the group and bringing them back, that the object didn't register until now.

Rusty smiled and seemed fascinated with the fire. “A lot of people are going to be surprised when they fire those things up,” he said with a grin. “I don’t believe anyone has ever seen anything like them. I call them stumbling blocks; big ones but stumbling blocks nonetheless.”

Ben paused for a moment, trying to make sense of Rusty’s cryptic response. When that didn’t happen, he finally made his way to the supply room. Since Rusty offered no more information, Ben didn’t try to push things any further.

From Our Father's Heart

Is it not time for you to flee from the torrent waters of deception

and begin to bask in the sunshine of My love?

Search for truth and I will never disappoint you.

My truth never changes or grows old.

It is My way to give everyone who pursues Me

solid footing for their lives.

Truth is always truth.

In a world of lies, truth is a place to call home.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

“Let him turn away from wickedness and shun it, and let him do right. Let him search for peace (harmony; undisturbedness from fears, agitating passions, and moral conflicts) and seek it eagerly. [Do not merely desire peaceful relations with God, with your fellowmen, and with yourself, but pursue, go after them!]”

I Pet. 3:11 AMP

Morning finally arrived for Tim Hanek. He must have fallen asleep sometime in the night, as he was ringing wet and his pillow was soaked with sweat. His first morning thoughts were that he had experienced a horrible nightmare. He hoped that was the case. Otherwise, his entire world was turned upside down.

Tim slowly raised himself to a sitting position on the edge of his bed, attempting to organize the myriad of uncontrollable thoughts that were colliding inside his head.

“How could I have been so blind?” he said out loud. “How could I have been so deceived?”

Deceived! There was a word he hadn’t entertained in a long time, especially in regard to himself. Stupid. That he could handle. Foolish. He’d been told that numerous times by most of his friends after they’d met Gloria. But deceived! That is one very powerful word. He hadn’t heard that word since his mother used it in reference to people who hadn’t given their lives to the God she served. Jesus.

Wow, Jesus. Tim tried to remember the last time he thought about him. He couldn’t remember anything other than some vague recollection of his mom’s church from many years ago. He recalled the musty smell of that old church to which his mother would drag him each Sunday until he was strong enough to resist. That smell transported him back for a brief moment to childhood sermons and Sunday school stories. He remembered the boring old pastor, who always warned the congregation about the... What was it called? Oh yeah, the rapture. A small chuckle escaped as he recalled how crazy he thought the old guy was.

Why would he be thinking about that now? Then he began to reflect on the last few days. The smile faded from his lips and the blood drained from his face. This couldn’t be! He had a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

The shock of realization hit him like a slap in the face. Tim sprang from his bed and dove toward the hall closet across from his bedroom. He kept a small portion of his deceased mother’s possessions there. Most of what he kept to remember her by was of little consequence. However, he knew her bible was somewhere in the closet and he had to read it. He rooted around as though his life depended on it and found it in the bottom of an old cardboard box after wading through a bunch of sentimental greeting cards and old family photos.

“There it is!” he said with relief, treating his mother’s bible like a priceless, ancient manuscript. Tim sat on the floor in the hall, his back against the wall, and began to inhale what he read. He didn’t read from one end to the other, as he would’ve done with any other book. He didn’t start at the beginning either. He simply picked a spot where it seemed right for him to start. The more he took in, the more his heart became full. He traveled randomly from one section to another. What a fabulous meal!

So many questions he’d had over the years were quietly, wonderfully being answered as he feasted on the words before him. It seemed as if the authors could see into his very soul, past his high walls of resistance and anger and straight to the depths of his very being.

Tim concentrated mainly on the highlighted and underlined areas. It was apparent that his mother delighted in annotating sections that captured her heart. The margins were filled with notes and prayers. This was a beyond wonderful experience for someone who had never opened a bible before. He teared up several times as he found his mother’s prayers on his behalf. Warm and tender feelings encompassed him as he saw his mother’s private expression of her great love for her God. Combined with the Word itself, life began to ooze into him for the first time. Traveling from reference to note to highlight to underline and back again, Tim saw the very essence of the Word of God in summary form. It was a significant legacy, an indescribably priceless gift from a devoted mother to her dearly loved son.

One of the threads that ran through all of his mother's notes was her desire to be as a prepared and waiting bride for Jesus. At first, Tim had trouble grasping the concept, but as the Holy Spirit began to reveal the truth of it to him, he became more and more comfortable.

"As... as a waiting bride," he pondered. "Not as a woman, but with the heart that an honorable bride would have in anticipation of her wedding. I think I get that!"

Tim began to recall how antiquated and out of touch he considered his mother when she would talk about how she had kept herself pure as she waited to marry his dad. They didn't even touch or kiss before they were married. He remembered her telling him that doing so would bring dishonor upon what God was putting together.

That kind of thinking utterly convinced him that he wanted no part of her beliefs. Every one of his friends would know for sure he was crazy if he ever dared to share those thoughts with them, especially the girls he dated. Both he and they wanted only one thing. Sure, they would pair up for a while to present some semblance of morality, but everyone knew it was only until either of them found someone more exciting. He could think of no one in his circle of influence who would even consider a committed relationship—much less marriage—to one person for life. His mind went back to his mom's notes.

Purity—what a concept! The idea of waiting for Jesus, as a pure bride would wait for the love of her life, made sense if Jesus really was God. How could God take an unfaithful heart with Him to share heavenly intimacy?

"Wow, to even think of the idea of having an intimate relationship with God. I can hardly believe he'd really want anything to do with me!"

Tim stopped for a while to consider the concept of being close to God. Something big has to change in people for them to be able to grasp that. He thought about it a lot longer and could only say one word.

"Jesus."

His Name flowed out of the depths of Tim's inner being as if it had a life of its own. He began to reread his mother's notes, looking for the pivotal thought in each of them. As he did, it confirmed what he was beginning to understand. Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose again. Jesus is God. Jesus said He would come for those who were waiting for Him. Jesus... Jesus.

"Jesus. He must be the key. He set us right according to what's written in the Bible and Mom's notes." Tim paused. "Why does that seem so foolish?"

Tim stopped to think about all the other belief systems he had followed in his lifetime. "Let's see. I followed men who were dead, and men who said they would come back from the dead, but never did. I followed Mother Nature, believing everything was god. I embraced the belief that I would someday come back to this earth as a better human being if I did things right this time around. I even believed that someday a spaceship would come for me!" Tim had to smile at his last statement. Now *that* was foolish!

"In better times, I spent more time deciding what kind of car I would drive than I took to consider what really happens after I close my eyes for the last time. Isn't *that* the height of stupidity?" Tim looked around sheepishly as if someone might've heard him.

"Why wouldn't there be a benevolent God who made everything and who really cares about those He created? Why wouldn't that God establish a way to reunite with those who walked away from Him if they chose to accept His offer and only if *they* made the choice? Why wouldn't He allow those who didn't want the connection to stay away forever? It would be their choice, not His."

What popped into Tim's mind next was what his mom used to say when he tried to explain that his latest belief was as good as hers. What stood out most were her quiet voice and her certainty of her statement. "If what you say is really true, then you had better be ready to live and die with your decision for eternity. You really have only one lifetime to get it right."

That really ticked him off! "But she was right. That's what everything we believe and everything we do is really all about. It's either truth or it's not. It's pretty simple. I'd better figure out if what I choose to believe is actually true. I've been wrong before. Quite often! If I'm wrong in my final decision, there's no do over."

He said those words with conviction. His flirtation with reincarnation was a dim memory; and more important, the Holy Spirit was in the process of wooing another prodigal son back home.

Tim wondered if his mother had written some of her notes with him in mind; that she had some hope he would open her bible one day after she was gone. She would've loved knowing she was teaching him about her Jesus. While he fought her at every turn, he knew that his coming to know Jesus was one of the greatest desires of her heart.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon before Tim looked up from the worn, tattered pages of his mom's bible. "So," he said, looking up in agreement with what he had been shown. "So, it's all true."

A chill ran down his back. For most of his life, he had viewed Christians as a bunch of ignorant people who practiced a fanatical, antiquated religion—an opinion he'd picked up in college. Now to find out they were right? That made him the fool. Astounding!

Gloria would often ridicule those who made the slightest reference to Jesus and vehemently attack them if they would attempt to make some kind of spiritual point. In his zeal to impress her, Tim would agree and join her in pointing out the absurdity of their beliefs. How often he had felt twinges of sorrow for the simple-mindedness of these people, as Gloria seemingly buried them with her logic and knowledge. How impressed he was with her wisdom. How often he wished he were even half as enlightened as she was. Wow, was he ever wrong!

He realized he'd been sitting on the hall floor a little too long, so he stood up with a great deal of effort and achiness and headed toward the living room, where he decided to keep moving by pacing the floor. His heart was pumping a mile a minute. He wasn't sure what to do next.

"I think Mom was right. That old preacher was right. . . . This is right, too," he said, brushing his fingertips across the cover of the bible as he walked in front of the couch.

"That means. . . . that means that Jesus Christ is really who they said He is. It means that Jesus Christ is Lord, not some highly evolved being, but Lord—the One who rules over everything!"

These words were liberating for Tim. They gave him hope and comfort. They were truth with a capital "T" as far as he was concerned. He had the sense he was finally home. He also knew deep down that what he was discovering was far beyond his human capabilities to uncover.

He sat on the couch and read the highlighted scripture verses aloud. They flooded the eyes of his heart with truth and took the place of the lies that had established such a stronghold in him for most of his life. Although he didn't know yet what to call it, he was experiencing a cleansing miracle. All the filth of the previous night disappeared, as if it had never existed. He was dumbfounded by what had just happened.

On the border of being numb, Tim had no emotions to exhibit just yet. He sat quietly, gently rubbing the worn cover of his mother's bible for quite some time. What the Holy Spirit was accomplishing settled in little by little. It gave Tim the opportunity to reflect on the foolishness of the life choices he'd made so far and the inconsequential goals he'd set for the future. Tears welled up in his eyes and found an outlet as they continued a path down his cheeks.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I'm so sorry, Jesus," he said out loud. "I didn't understand Your Lordship."

He knelt in front of the couch, leaned his elbows on the cushion, and buried his head in his hands. From this position, he dealt with those things from his past that stood in the way of peace with God and the Lordship of Jesus over his life.

Remembering and letting go of the hurts, rejections, and misunderstandings of his life accomplished wonders. As they passed by one by one, Tim was able to sidestep his feelings and focus on the truth of the matter. It allowed him to gain a new perspective and began the process of putting his life back in order as God would have it. It felt painfully good.

After about an hour, his thoughts were clear, and he began to think about the present and its various possibilities and challenges. "Boy, what does this do to my life?" he asked himself, beginning to realize the impact one day's revelation could have.

"Nothing's the same!" he marveled. "Talk about the need for a couple of new strategies in my life. Man alive! I'm living in the times no one in their right mind should want to live in. The Bible foretold them and every

Christian who ever read about them no doubt hoped to be gone before they occurred. The world wasn't recently cleansed of Christians, as I believed only a short time ago. Those with a bridal heart, who overcame the world, were mercifully removed so they wouldn't have to be involved in the horrendous events that are on the way. Now I'm left behind! I don't know whether to walk to school or carry my lunch."

He hadn't heard that phrase in decades. His father used to say it when he was confused or challenged and had no immediate answers. He smiled. Now it made sense. "Well, it still doesn't really make sense, but it fits the occasion." He got up off the floor and headed in the direction of the refrigerator.

On his way there, he remembered the Gloria room. He felt a distinct pull in the wrong direction, as the longings and lusts that accompanied the pictures and footage in that room attempted to gain access to his mind once again. He started to feel unclean. He was desperate not to go there.

"Please, God, help me! I need You!" The thoughts quickly dissipated. "Thank You, Lord! I'm sorry." Inside he knew what he had to do. Actually doing it was another story. It was a continued fight as he made his way to that room. He had immense difficulty in keeping his resolve intact, but the Lord was with him.

Tim walked to the middle of the room. As he looked in every direction, all he could see was Gloria's beauty. Loving feelings began to well up inside. He wanted to reminisce about all the good times they had shared.

"Wait a minute!" Tim caught himself. "What good times?"

Slowly, as if peeling the skin off an onion, he was able to see the truth of their horrendous, unfulfilling relationship. She had never been anything but abusive, condescending, and aloof. She didn't love him! What a fool he'd been! She wasn't even a friend. In fact, she wouldn't have anything to do with him unless it was for her benefit.

With a vengeance, Tim began pulling the pictures off the wall. As he did, he began to feel free. Every time he removed a photo or poster, he felt more and more released from Gloria's grasp. By the time he had removed every object from the room, Tim felt as if about a thousand pounds came off his shoulders. He was surprised he wasn't weightless. He loved how he felt. Their next encounter might be very interesting! Probably one of anticipation and dread, but he knew Jesus would be there with him.

Now to the kitchen. He was starving!

From Our Father's Heart

*How easily I can confound the wicked.
They do not know that in their foolishness,
they are being used by Me to further My plans.
In their deception,
they do not know that I always control outcomes.
You are called to move in My truth.
Seek Me for that truth!*

CHAPTER NINETEEN

“The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”
Prov. 4:19 AMP

Gloria closed in on Colonel Lassiter with a friendly handshake and a slow, deliberate peck on the left side of his face. She knew how to get her request granted, and tolerated the colonel’s sweaty, deliberate, one-armed hug. “Colonel, how are you? You’re looking fit. I need to get on that helicopter,” she said demurely, pointing to the chopper and continuing to invade his space as she did.

As Gloria turned toward the chopper, her eyes scrutinized Reefer. Pausing just long enough to allow him to see she had noticed him and appreciated what she saw, she continued. “You see, even though my station has been shut down at present because of all that’s been happening, they want me to observe the particulars of what’s going on, so when we’re back on the air, we’ll be able to bring everyone up to date.”

Gloria looked coyly in Reefer’s direction several times as she spoke to the colonel. “I surely hope it won’t be too incon...” she stopped in midsentence, unable to wait any longer for an introduction. “Who *is* that magnificent man?”

Gloria left the arm of Colonel Lassiter and moved toward Reefer. She stood directly in front of him, looking straight up into his eyes, a knowing smile on her face.

“Who are you, big guy, and where have you been keeping yourself?”

Gloria took Reefer’s hand in hers while she spoke, feathering the back of it with her other hand.

“Reefer Ma’am,” he said, pulling his hand away.

“Well, Reefer, I am delighted to meet you.” Gloria moved in for the kill as she spoke, reaching out to toy with his shirt collar. Reefer reacted by stepping back and walking over to the helicopter without saying a word.

Never having been ignored so blatantly before, Gloria was somewhat taken aback. “Strong, silent type, huh?” she said to Colonel Lassiter with a wink.

From Gloria’s perspective, Reefer had thrown down the gauntlet when he walked away. She loved a challenge, especially when she assumed she would be the winner. When they made hand to hand contact, she truly believed she had gained the upper hand and was in charge of their relationship. After all, she felt sure he had responded positively to their meeting, even though he chose to appear unattainable.

What she didn’t know was the fact that Reefer’s love for Jesus had been concealed from her. He had recently wholeheartedly accepted the Lordship of Jesus in his life after a lot of soul searching over the years. One day it dawned on him that something other than luck was at play in his many escapes from the grim reaper. At present, the most prominent thought in his mind was to figure out why he had been saved so often from certain death. He considered himself on borrowed time and wanted to find and fulfill the purpose for his life from his Lord’s perspective. Gloria should have sensed something, but the Spirit of the Lord hid Reefer’s true identity for now.

“Master, how I love being a woman. How I love being dedicated to you. You are worthy of my service,” Gloria prayed, thinking that she had been given insight into Reefer’s life.

Gloria shifted gears and returned to the business at hand. She performed her flirtatious hair toss movement for the colonel’s benefit and glided over to his side.

“Colonel, could you talk to him?” She turned on the charm as her arm encircled his. “I need to come along with you. My network would be awfully miffed if I didn’t get this story. Please....”

“He’s putty,” Gloria snickered to herself, as the colonel headed toward Reefer and the chopper. He made another attempt at straightening his shirt and raising his gun belt over his paunch along the way. “I may not have the big guy yet, but he’s mine. He just doesn’t know it.”

Gloria strolled nonchalantly within earshot of the two men. “You have to take her. This is important to all the people who will watch her report when they’re broadcasting again.”

Colonel Lassiter anxiously followed the taciturn pilot around like a puppy as Reefer did his pre-flight check of the chopper. The colonel pulled out all the stops in an attempt to convince Reefer to do something he didn't want to do. Gloria stood silently near the rear of the chopper as the colonel continued to do her bidding.

Reefer, more attentive to the pre-flight check than Colonel Lassiter's badgering, walked to the rear of the craft. Gloria, unfamiliar with the procedure, had unwittingly placed herself in his path. As he proceeded, he stopped right in front of her, and without saying a word, let her know in no uncertain terms that she was in his way.

Taken by surprise at the authority the man who stood in front of her displayed, Gloria reluctantly stepped aside. "I'm sorry," she found herself saying to Reefer, as he checked the underside of the gunship. Now there's a phrase that rarely came out of her mouth. The honestly repentant tone of her voice threw her for a loop.

Reefer finished checking over the craft—as he had done hundreds of times before—to make sure everything was in order. He had flown this particular type of chopper so often that he knew every bolt, nut, and seam and every nuance and sensitivity in flight.

In his opinion, these choppers were more reliable, friendly, and trustworthy than people, if you took care of them. They did what was required of them in every situation, every time, if everything was working right. His many experiences taught him that he had failed the machine many more times than it had failed him. More often than not, any trouble he encountered was due to either pilot error or some outside force that did not allow the chopper to function properly—something simple, like bullets in the engine. The thought made him smile.

Upon completing his task, Reefer walked over to the colonel, who was apologetically trying to explain Reefer's uncooperative posture to an obviously irritated Gloria. How did you tell a woman who didn't take "no" for an answer that the man had a mind of his own and wasn't listening?

Reefer again stood directly in front of Gloria and looked her straight in the eyes, never once shifting his gaze. His voice held no anger or frustration, just simple truth and honesty, something with which Gloria wasn't too familiar.

"Ma'am, I really don't know or care who you are, but I've experienced yer kind before, and I just don't have any time for you. If anythin' goes wrong on this flight, you will prob'ly be at least partly responsible for it through some sort of foolishness."

Gloria was mesmerized as he continued.

"We're headin' out into prob'ly the worst weather I ever flew in. We may crash. If we do, I already have Fluffy over here..." He nodded his head at the fidgeting colonel, who was aghast at the insolence of the man. "...who will most likely get me killed tryin' to take care of him. If you come along, you had better understand right now that you are on yer own if we go down."

Gloria stood mute, desperately wanting to address him, but at a complete loss as to what to say.

"Frankly, I would rather transport a load of flyin' chickens than take you along, but somethin' tells me you're supposed to come with us."

Gloria was still without words and definitely offended. However, he had agreed to take her along.

Reefer directed his final comments to Colonel Lassiter.

"Get her out of those clothes and into some flyin' gear. Then let's make sure we add the survival gear to the chopper before we take off."

Reefer shook his head slowly, signifying he'd resigned himself to doing something he didn't consider a good idea. Denying his instincts was something he rarely did. His gut feelings went a long way in keeping him alive, so he tended to heed them.

"If this is not of You, Lord, we're all dead," he said quietly, walking toward the cockpit of the chopper.

"Rocky Two, you're cleared for take-off."

"Whoa!" Reefer exclaimed, checking his gauges as soon as they were airborne. The wind currents began to toss the craft around. Reefer found himself fighting to stay in some semblance of a flight pattern. Turbulence and horizontal rain made the ride for the two uninitiated passengers quite exciting to say the least.

“How’re we doing?” Colonel Lassiter screamed over the noise.

“OK” was much less than the response he needed.

The colonel wished he hadn’t been ordered to go, since weather conditions were so bad; but there hadn’t been a good weather day for several weeks. This was it, as bad as it was with intermittent horizontal rain, hail, and lightning. The “open” spots were few and far between.

Reefer was focused. It took the sum total of all his years of experience to keep the chopper in the air. Several times he thought of turning back; but that was something he had never done before, and he didn’t want to start a precedent today.

“There she is,” he said, causing his passengers to strain to see their target through the storm. From this distance, the object looked very much like a black cake plate cover minus the handle. It had a round opening on top and a series of ribs spaced evenly around the circumference. Each rib ran the length of the wall from the top opening down to the ground. The chopper was being tossed around so hard, that it was futile to attempt to take pictures from any angle or distance.

The sheer size of the object was mind-boggling. From several miles away, it covered more territory than a small town. The trio stared in disbelief as they flew beyond the outer edge toward the center. The weather instantly cleared up.

Inside the perimeter of the unit, the atmosphere was calm, tranquil, nothing at all like what they’d been experiencing for weeks on end. The chopper occupants had gone from extremely violent weather to perfect flying conditions in a fraction of a second.

Reefer quickly turned the chopper around and hovered about fifty feet inside the perimeter, facing the wall of darkness they’d just escaped. Making a slow complete circle, he observed a definite line of weather separation all around them. Outside the limits of the structure it was dark and threatening; inside it was peaceful and untroubled. His passengers remained wide-eyed and uncomprehending.

Turning to fly closer to the center of the structure, the chopper was a breeze to navigate. Even with the absence of sunlight, it was a delight, especially in comparison to what conditions had been when they started their flight.

As the initial shock of their new discovery began to wear off, Reefer, Gloria, and Colonel Lassiter began to take note of the appearance of the structure below them. The surface was not at all perfectly smooth as everyone first thought. Mounds and ridges connected by trails were in evidence everywhere. Seemingly random in pattern, they most resembled letters or words or an insignia of some sort. Reefer took the chopper as high as he could, hoping to make sense out of the pattern; but it was of no use.

From that height, however, he could see the size of the opening in the center. There was an uncovered area on the roof that stretched for about three hundred yards in all directions from the center point. At a specific point at the edge of the roof stood a cylindrical tower approximately two thousand feet tall. It had a diameter of about one thousand yards.

“That tower looks like a landing strip of some sort,” Reefer said, glancing back at the colonel.

“Maybe it’s a hatch?” the colonel suggested tentatively.

“Pretty big for a hatch,” Reefer retorted, while mentally noting the raised lip at the edge and the large circular recesses that formed a triangular pattern in the center of the roof of the tower.

“What do you say we head over to the hole?” Reefer said through the headset, as he pointed to the opening at the center of the structure.

His passengers nodded cautiously and smiled at one another, trying to deny the fear they were both battling. Before Reefer headed toward the very center, he hovered at the rim of the opening in an attempt to glance over the edge before making a full commitment.

“What do you think we should do?” Colonel Lassiter queried, hoping they might still be able to back away gracefully.

“I’m going in,” Reefer stated matter-of-factly, and took off before anyone could voice any objections.

About thirty seconds in, the chopper stopped dead in its tracks.

“Why are you stopping?” the colonel asked in exasperation.

“It wasn’t me!” came the response from an obviously distraught pilot.

The colonel had never seen Reefer even the least bit off balance. His present condition did not instill peace in the colonel’s heart, which began to race wildly.

Gloria, who had been uncharacteristically silent throughout the flight with a combination of fear, awe, and great curiosity, let out a low moan and became unconscious.

“I think she’s fainted,” the colonel surmised, trying to decide what he should do.

“Great, just what I need now,” Reefer exploded, while attempting to get the chopper to move.

Nothing happened for several anxious moments. Then, as if things weren’t bad enough, the engine stopped running. Reefer looked up and watched helplessly as the rotor turned slower and slower, and then came to a complete stop. It was so unbelievable that he felt more like an observer than a participant. All he knew now was that choppers don’t stay in the air long once they stop running.

“We’re hanging in midair,” Colonel Lassiter shrieked at Reefer, who was actually more amazed than frightened. “How can this be happening? Do something!” he continued, eyes ablaze and body frozen with sheer terror.

For some reason, Reefer was able to look at things from a more detached perspective. Having been in many life-threatening situations where he had counted himself already dead, the uniqueness of this present dilemma almost outweighed the peril. Besides, if he didn’t make it, he’d be with the Lord. Now he waited to see what the Lord had in mind.

“Helicopters just don’t hang in midair without their motors runnin’,” he gave voice to his recent thoughts. “Hmmm...” was his comment as he looked through the windshield and then out the side window at the object about fifteen hundred feet below them. “This is mighty interes...” Everything went dark.

The sound of the engine running and the rotors circling brought Reefer back. Startled into action, he immediately grabbed the stick and began to fly the responsive chopper.

“What happened?” Colonel Lassiter asked from the back seat. “What...” The colonel looked to his left to see if Gloria was OK. He was greeted by an empty seat.

“You’re not going to believe this,” he bellowed at Reefer, who was silently praying and only interested in getting the chopper out of the area.

“Hey, McGee, you’re not going to believe this!” he repeated. “Gloria’s gone!”

From Our Father's Heart

*Make sure that you accept everyone I send you.
You may never know how important they are to Me.
If you throw them away because they may be raw
or not suited to your tastes,
I will need to bring someone to them who can show them Jesus.
When I call a person to Me, I will do everything within My power
to have him or her accept Jesus.
If I cannot use you,
I will find someone else in another place at another time.*

CHAPTER TWENTY

“No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me, and [then] I will raise him up [from the dead] at the last day.”

John 6:44 AMP

Ben looked up from the fire and the pot of boiling broth to see one of their guests beginning to stir from sleep. The rest followed suit in short order as the smell of the soup and the increased activity around them brought them to life.

No one seemed in a hurry to move about. Their sleep had been so deep that it even took the light sleepers longer than usual to reach the point of being fully awake. They required sleep now for far more than physical rest. After functioning in survival mode from one horrendous week to the next for longer than they could remember, it was hard for the group to fathom they'd been brought to a place of safety and rest.

Two of the men and one of the women periodically broke down in sobs—a combination of emotional overload and enormous relief. The other two team members silently observed their surroundings without dropping any clues as to their present condition.

When the time seemed right, Ben walked from the fire over to where the group sat. “Welcome,” he said, kneeling near the quiet woman who was leaning her back against the cave wall. She stared blankly at some unknown point on the opposite side of the room.

Ben extended a welcome again and this time she slowly turned her head in his direction. After several failed attempts to speak, she swallowed some water to moisten her parched throat. Finally, she was able to croak out a response. “Thank you, sir,” was all she could muster before breaking down as the others had. Ben handed her a jar of Vaseline to cover her chapped lips and areas of her wind-burned face.

Now able to see his guests more clearly, he was somewhat shocked at the condition of their skin. Some places were burned and blistering with gaping open sores, while other parts were dry, cracked, and crusted with blood. The effects of both fire and wind were evident. Ben knew that wasn't all they'd been fighting out in the open. His heart was moved with compassion.

After Rusty indicated he was not supposed to do anything supernatural yet, Ben went around to bandage everyone's exposed cuts and bruises as best he could. Having found a first-aid kit in the storage room, he administered burn ointment where it was needed and antiseptic to the deeper cuts, talking and comforting his guests in the process. When he finished, he went back to the fire to tend to the broth.

Rusty had already poured the soup into cups so it could be ingested with the least amount of effort. It also allowed the soup to cool off for a bit, especially important considering the sensitive condition of the group's wind-ravaged lips. All five took their portion gratefully, sipping it carefully so it wouldn't become a painful experience. No one seemed ready to talk, so Ben and Rusty retired to the fire.

A short time later, Rusty looked over his shoulder, then nudged Ben with his elbow and motioned for him to look in the direction of the group. Everyone had finished their soup and had gone back to sleep. Ben decided that was a good idea and asked Rusty to wake him in an hour.

“You guys sure sleep a lot,” Rusty remarked. This time it was a caring observation, not a source of laughter, as Rusty took time to marvel at his Creator's ingenuity.

Time passed quickly as Ben examined the other rooms of the cave to see how he might provide for the new members of his “household.” He knew in his heart that these people would be part of the plans God had for him.

Exploring the rooms was a little like a treasure hunt. Whoever planned these rooms must've had supernatural inspiration. They were set up for survival purposes and equipped to function in that capacity for a

long period of time. In fact, as Ben began to tally the provisions, he calculated that there was enough stock to take care of about fifty people for nine months to a year, if everyone was frugal and the group adopted an attitude of responsible management.

"Someone sure took the time to think things through and plan so we'd be able to make it now," he said to himself, as he was refolding a blanket he'd just inspected.

"Thank you for helping us." The woman's voice startled Ben, who quickly spun around to face the entrance to the room.

"You're welcome," he responded to the frail looking woman, who leaned against the wall near the opening.

"I didn't think we were going to make it," the woman spoke slowly, her voice weak and very quiet. "I wanted to die."

Without warning, she began to cry. She covered her face with her hands, and dropped to the ground, still using the wall for support. "Why would God do this to me?" she said through her tears. "Why would God make me go through this? How could He be so unkind? I thought He was a God of mercy."

Ben went over to the woman and put his hand on her shoulder. He said nothing. Normally he would've jumped at the opportunity to comfort someone so grieved; but for some reason, he could not find any words. He just let her cry.

After a while, the woman was able to compose herself. She wiped her tears and tried to stand, faltering a bit on the way up. Ben put her arm over his shoulder, and they made their way back to the main room in silence.

By the time they arrived, the others were awake. They were sitting on the logs around the fire, enjoying its warmth and brightness. It was the first friendly fire they'd seen in weeks. Rusty stood and greeted Ben as they entered.

"Ben, this is Susan, Mike, Tom, Harry and..." Rusty extended his hand toward the woman next to Ben.

"I'm Katie," she said, looking at the ground.

For the next several days, the members of the fractured family devoted their time to getting healthy and helping one another in the process. Many trips to the storage shelves for food became the order of most days, as renewed life began to replace hopelessness.

"All we seem to do is sleep and eat," Mike told Ben.

"See?" Rusty commented to Ben from a log near the fire, a little boy grin on his face.

One day, as Rusty was sweeping a corner of one of the rooms used for sleeping, Katie quietly came in and sat down on a bunk in the far corner of the room. She toyed with a small thread of the blanket on the bed as she waited. Rusty knew she wanted to talk, but he kept on sweeping so she would initiate the conversation.

"I hear what you and Ben talk about late at night when you think I'm sleeping," she began with hesitation.

Rusty put down the broom and sat on the bed across from her. Katie was slow in choosing her words, as though she needed to ponder each phrase before she shared it. Then she took a deep breath.

"I used to run this shop that carried items for adult fun," she stated, eyes on the floor. "Many years ago, I tried to bring my shop to this area and a bunch of people, who called themselves Christians, ran me out of town. Since then, I've wanted nothing to do with their God because of the way they hurt me."

Katie kept her head down, now nervously playing with the seam at the edge of the blanket.

"But..." she confessed, "I think I'm the one who was wrong. They may not have shown any love, but I think maybe what they believed was right, even though they shouldn't have treated me the way they did."

Katie looked up pleadingly into Rusty's eyes. "Can you please help me? Can you help me learn what's going on and what I'm supposed to do now? I mean..."

Lost for a way to express her heart any further, Katie hung her head again. Ben and the others filed into the room almost like bees drawn to honey. Without a word, they chose a spot on one of the available beds, waiting to have their questions answered just like Katie. It was a moment pregnant with God-ordained purposes.

Susan, Mike, Tom, Harry, and Katie sat captivated as Rusty and Ben began to share the cycle of creation, the fall, the redemption through the blood of Jesus, and many more of the wonders of God's plan. They spoke of

the foolishness of the redeemed and how, at times, the wonderful plan of God was used for their own selfish gain, very much like an insurance policy was used in times past. Rusty's expression became one of wonder again as Ben explained the true purpose of a life on earth in conjunction with God's plan.

"Let me get this straight. You're saying the most important purpose for living is to accept God's plan to reunite with Him?" Tom interjected, causing all eyes to shift in his direction. Everyone else was so enthralled with what Ben and Rusty were sharing, it seemed almost out of order for Tom to break in.

"That's right," Ben answered. "It's the most important choice a person can make."

The thought that life was that simple—that everything was set up so every human being could decide whether or not they wanted to be with God—drove everyone to try to process that concept. It just seemed far too easy.

Finally, Katie broke the silence. "Then what is all of this for? Why would a loving God allow us to go through all of this horror?"

"It's because He *is* so loving that you're going through this," Ben said to the amazement of his listeners. Rusty beamed, knowing that God was at work in the hearts of those in front of him.

"You see, the Lord doesn't want anyone to miss out on being with Him. For the most part, the world had reached the point where people only cared about themselves. They didn't want to hear the truth any longer; so, before God completes everything, you're all being given one last chance to agree to His plan. It's His mercy. He removed everything that had your attention, so you'd eventually be free to think clearly. Your peril is designed to give you one last opportunity to establish a relationship with Him."

As he surveyed their faces, it was obvious to Ben that the group had little comprehension of what he'd just shared. "See, your life, as you knew it, was simply the vehicle God used to give you the chance to make a decision—hopefully the one in line with His plan. That's the bottom line.

"Everyone who's ever lived has had the opportunity to weigh the information they've been given and make a choice of God's way through Jesus or some other way. It all comes down to what you choose to believe. Some chose deception. Some didn't even make the effort to seek the truth. Some found the truth but allowed foolishness and distractions to get in the way of complete submission to God's plan. Others flatly rejected the plan. It all boils down to whether or not you'll spend eternity with God.

"Let's simplify it even more. Do you want to do it His way or your way? Will you love and serve Him or yourself? If you don't pick what He's provided, you'll be separated from Him forever. Personalities, doctrines, and people's ignorance or foolishness or need for control just cloud that truth."

Tom spoke up again. "Let me ask this one more time. You're saying that our most important mission in life is to decide whether or not we want to spend eternity with God and if we want to, we can do that through Jesus. Is that correct?"

"Yep," Ben replied. "Now is God's time to 'pull the pin,' so to speak. His plan has been in progress for about six thousand years and He's just completing the final stages. Those who responded 'yes' through the ages have gone to be with Him. This time you're living in is simply His way of giving everyone a last chance to devote themselves to Him completely or be separated from Him forever. He even made it easier to make the decision by allowing the world to become a place of such difficulties. Why would anyone want to continue being a part of the world's ways? Look where it's gotten us!

"Of course, the enemy will try to make it harder at the same time. He's been given more freedom to promote his ways now that the sold out, bridal heart Christians are gone, and the choice to serve God will now more than likely mean losing your life. Love Him or curse Him. Everything is winding down and you have a choice to make."

Ben's words were anointed. The Holy Spirit breathed life into them and made them available to the group. The truth of the Word was staring them in the face, and they had to decide what to do with it.

Rusty had to leave the room. He was so overjoyed that everyone had said "yes," he had to whoop, holler, and dance a bit to celebrate out in the main room. Ben led them in a prayer of commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

“Now things are going to get real interesting, aren’t they, Lord?” Rusty sent his question heavenward. He knew what was taking place in the heavenlies. He knew how that would translate on earth. He also knew his mission and how some of it would play out. The word “fun” came to mind.

From Our Father's Heart

*Because things appear wonderful,
it does not necessarily make them right.*

*For so long My church has honored those
who seem to have all the trappings of the world.*

*They place those in power above My power.
You need to be very careful with your allegiances.*

Set yourself apart.

*When you come to Me for your heart attitude
and the wisdom to make proper choices,
you will see who My heroes are.*

You will find that they are not the ones whom the world honors. Darkness never honors light.

It is revolted by it, fears it, and runs from it.

Light should never honor darkness!

*Why, then, are those who seem powerful to you
so big in your eyes?*

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“And He said, Be on your guard and be careful that you are not led astray; for many will come in My name appropriating to themselves the name Messiah which belongs to Me], saying, I am He! and, The time is at hand! Do not go out after them.”
Luke 21:8 AMP

Gloria awoke to find herself standing with thousands of others in one of the most beautiful rooms she had ever seen. Her senses were intact, but she found it impossible to move anything except her eyes. She could look straight ahead, up and down, and side to side; but couldn't move her head to save her life. From her vantage point, it seemed everyone else was in the same statuesque condition. They all faced the front of the room, where there seemed to be a stage of some sort.

I know these people, she thought. She had already met some of them at some point in her past, but even those she hadn't met before seemed like old friends. She felt an intimacy with everyone in the room that could only come from the Masters. It was as if she and they were one. In fact, she felt like she was a part of each and every one of them, and that each one of them were her as much as she was. How glorious!

“This is wonderful,” she mused, as she basked in universal love. “It's just like I feel when Ra-il and I are intimate. We are not two people; we are one. There is no separation.”

Now to continually have that feeling with thousands of others; it was ecstasy beyond anything she had ever experienced! If she weren't being held up by some universal force, her knees would have buckled by now. She wanted this to last forever.

“Ra-il!” she squealed inwardly with incomparable delight as he walked on stage. Ra-il. She knew he had to be part of this somehow. This feeling was so extraordinary she just had to be able to share it with the only one who would understand.

“I knew he was here. I knew it; he had to be here. He must know what I'm feeling. If I could only catch his eye to tell him how wonderful I feel.”

Ra-il stood completely still for several minutes at the very center of the stage, then slowly raised both his arms in front of him, palms down, stopping about shoulder height. Gloria's heart was leaping with anticipation.

As he slowly began to turn his palms upward, she felt a tingling sensation that started at the top of her head. By the time he had his palms facing upward, she was again completely mobile and mesmerized.

As Gloria looked around, she could see everyone else had the ability to move as well. Everyone present acknowledged Ra-il in some way. Acknowledgment turned into praise and applause, which migrated to various levels of adoration.

Ra-il appeared to be increasingly energized by the adoration as each person became more vocal. Gloria found herself paying homage to him also, tearfully screaming his name with outstretched arms, lost in his presence. Her praises, joined with those of all the others in the room, crescendoed into a wall of sound, which seemed to take on a life of its own! The experience was heightened as she felt his admiration in return, so strong it became impossible to stand. She joined many others as she dropped to her knees. Some could only weep his name quietly; others stood in silent worship.

Ra-il, his white garment now glowing, slowly rose about ten feet in the air, arms still outstretched and slightly to the side, palms up. People began to faint, overcome by the experience. Most could not stand in his presence. Some lay prostrate before his perceived magnificence. Gloria herself, now prostrate before her lord, hoped this time would never end. She was not only overwhelmed by praises that took her to such heights of love, but thrilled that one so deserving was being given the honor due him. How could it get any better than this?

Praises lasted for several hours. Ra-il remained high above the platform, receiving honor from all present. Every so often he would extend his hand in someone's direction and touch him or her to the point of unconsciousness. There was a natural ebb and flow in people's participation in this most spectacular event. The room would, at times, become increasingly silent as people stopped to reflect on their incomparable Master. This same period of reflection would then set off a new wave of adulation. And so it went.

Finally, Ra-il slowly lowered himself to the stage floor and stood motionless while people regained their composure. Some had to stay seated for several minutes until they could gain the strength to stand up. Others remained in a kneeling position, weeping with hands raised. Still others simply stood with their heads bowed in full surrender.

At the proper time, Ra-il slowly and regally left the stage and began to walk among the people. His intense gaze and loving smile captivated his audience, and he greeted them with hugs, kisses, and private words of encouragement and loving kindness. The fainting continued.

Gloria marveled that this man, whom she knew so intimately, could be just as intimate with everyone else. No one felt the least bit slighted if he or she did not personally have the opportunity to have direct contact with Ra-il. In fact, all present were delighted for anyone who was singled out to receive the gift of the Master's touch. Love seemed to manifest unashamedly. A true oneness in spirit prevailed. Exceeding joy and unity—the kind of unity that Gloria knew would happen when a gathering of this kind occurred—was omnipresent, just as Ra-il had promised her it would be. For many years, he had told her of this event. How could she know it would be he who would be the one to herald and introduce the Universal Master?

After about an hour of interaction with his followers, Ra-il moved back to the stage and requested that everyone sit down on the floor. Having fully recovered from their reverie at this point, they obeyed enthusiastically, hungry for him to speak to them.

“My deeply loved ones,” he began. “How I have longed for this moment in time. How I have longed to have each of you not only see the beginning of the fulfillment of the plans of the Universal Master but participate in them as well. You have all been personally selected and groomed for such a time as this.”

If it weren't for the solemnity of the moment, the place no doubt would've erupted with spontaneous celebration. Most, however, remained transfixed by Ra-il's presence and voice, although a few were overcome again by their surroundings and quietly praised or wept while they continued to listen.

Ra-il paused for effect, then stated in a grand fashion, “The Universal Master is on his way.” A sense of awe permeated the room. Gasps could be heard everywhere. Many hugs were exchanged. Some put their heads down in extreme gratefulness, remembering the times they wondered if this time would ever come. To think it was actually coming to pass! And none too soon!

“The mother ship will arrive here in a little while, and there is much to do. For many years you have been obedient to fulfill what you were asked to do. Your reward is to be a vital part of this Great Dispensation. The cleansing of the earth has begun, but more will come. Because of your loyalty, you will be spared from experiencing any more of the earth's downward spiral. This,” he waved his arms to indicate the structure they were in, “will now be your home for the final teaching. Civilians will again be allowed to interact with you once their cleansing is complete, and they are given safety. For now, this is your family unit. Enjoy each other.”

The room filled with applause. The thought of living in an environment with single-minded friends—all engaged in a common goal—was ideal. Then add to that freedom of expression and the privilege of taking part in the final preparation for universal oneness and you had something almost too good to be true!

Preparation for a utopian universe—the earth being the final hold out to stand in the way of this achievement—was in its final stages. How surreal it was to be one of those chosen to help bring together centuries of galactic separation. The mind could hardly contain it, and even the imagination was hard pressed to grasp it. This was certainly a room filled with the favored few.

Ra-il continued for several hours to explain the details of the next few weeks of work. Recognition was given to those who completed operations and tasks on earth in preparation for this eventful time in history. The rewards for obedience and reliability would be honored positions in the future government. Great ceremony accompanied each recognition and appointment, which made the recipients all the more dedicated to fulfilling the purposes of the Masters. Time seemed to stand still and speed up at the same time. Too soon, the event concluded, and it was time to go.

“Your new home is this way, Gloria,” a bright-eyed young man in a smartly tailored uniform said, as he pointed the way to one of the many corridors off the main room. Gloria followed him, no questions asked. Until

that very moment, she hadn't noticed she was wearing the same uniform as her guide. In fact, everyone in the room wore the same uniform.

As she passed the mirrored surfaces on the side of the corridor, she noticed that even though in uniform, she still looked rather sexy. Someone had made quite a nice effort to ensure that she would be comfortable. Her guide also filled out his uniform rather well Gloria noted, as she took time to check him out while he preceded her down the hall.

Hmmm... What could she say to get to know him a little better? "Wasn't Ra-il wonderful tonight?"

"Yes, she was," he responded.

He obviously made a slip of the tongue, she thought to herself; but the man continued in the same vein. "I have known her for many years. She has been my guide throughout most of my adult life. We have spent many delightful times together in anticipation of this moment in time."

Gloria unknowingly slowed down a bit as she pondered what had just been spoken. She was a little confused and knew that confusion was not of her Master.

"I need to ask you a question," she said. "I've been with Ra-il most of my life, too." Gloria didn't exactly know how to phrase her question.

Her guide stopped and turned around, a huge smile on his face. "And you know her as a man."

"Yes!!!!!!" Gloria was relieved that he understood.

"Ra-il is everything to everyone. She is all things to all people. That is why she's so magnificent. I will serve her forever."

Gloria was dumbfounded. She knew that Ra-il was amazing. Just how amazing continued to unfold before her eyes.

"That's all going to change now that we're entering into the fulfillment phase," her escort continued. "Ra-il will not need to take on the likeness of a human to teach us. Now we will all know him as multi-gendered and godlike. Intimacy will take the form that it did tonight. We will all worship the spirit in truth in the spirit of oneness. As you know, each of us is heading for Ra-il's kind of perfection. Soon we all will progress to a higher plane, so we can participate fully with the Masters."

The guide's face took on a glow of excitement as he spoke. Gloria could see the same kind of love in his eyes that she had when she talked about Ra-il.

"How wonderful it is that his time has finally come," she told the young man.

"Think of how many people she will be able to touch throughout eternity!" he responded. They almost swooned at the thought of the coming times and the number of people that will be helped by such a wonderful being like Ra-il.

The duo turned the corner and stopped at the first door on the right. Gloria thanked her guide and opened the door to her new home. As she walked into the room, she could scarcely believe what she saw.

"How did they do this?" she said in astonishment.

Everything in the residence was exactly like the apartment she had lived in for the last four years, right down to the personal collection of glasses in the china cabinet.

"This is incredible. I wonder..."

She hurried in the direction of the room that meant so much to her. Sure enough, it was identical to the one in which she had met Ra-il many times. All the crystals, pyramids, and even the candles were the same. It fascinated her that the candles seemed to be used to the same degree as the ones in her old apartment. Even her special candle—the one her father gave her—was in its proper place.

"Thank you, Master. You are incredible."

Gloria went to her bedroom and dressed for the night. Perusing all the drawers and her closet, she noticed all her personal belongings were in place except for exterior clothing. In their place were tailored uniforms just like the one she was wearing when she woke up in the large room.

When was that anyway? How long was she unconscious before that? Better yet, how did she get here?

Oh, well. What did it matter? She was safe and probably on the most astounding journey of her lifetime. She tucked herself in bed, snuggled into her favorite pillow, and quickly fell sound asleep.

From Our Father's Heart

*If you are deceived,
you will be able to be guided anywhere
by anyone who chooses to control you.
You really are the property of whoever has your allegiance.
Those who are deceived are really pawns
in the hands of foolish people who claim to be wise.
What is so masterful about deception is that,
when under its spell, you will be guided straight toward hell;
and you will have a smile on your face.
You will even assist others to get there, thinking
that you are of value to them.
If you are really Mine, you will see through any deception,
no matter how wonderful it may appear.
You will have the discernment to say "no,"
and be able to run from it.
My desire is that you run to Me.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

“Though you mount on high as the eagle and though you set your nest among the stars, I will bring you down from there, says the Lord.”
Obad. 1:4 AMP

Gloria awoke to the most beautiful music she had ever heard coming from the speakers in her room. She lay in sleepy reverie as she listened to the soothing sounds and contemplated the previous day's events.

Was it morning? She didn't know.

What difference did it make? She trusted her guardians to know what was important and what simply got in the way of service. How freeing it was to make fewer choices. She could rest, serve, and enjoy her home. The safety provided from all the havoc on the outside was a definite change for the better.

“This is going to be great!” she said out loud, while she dressed after enjoying a wonderfully hot shower.

Taking her eggs to the couch, she absent-mindedly flipped on the TV, thinking she'd catch up on recent events since she calculated she had at least three hours before she was called to serve. Scrolling the channels and marveling at how many were still broadcasting in spite of the conditions outside, she settled on a science fiction show from many years ago instead.

“I remember when we aired this. This kind of show paved the way for what's happening now.”

She laughed to herself at the gullibility of the viewing audience over the years. Ra-il used to share with her how people he had trained for generations were placed in prominent positions in the television, movie, and game industry to desensitize the masses to astral beings and occult practices. He would boast how simple it was to bring whole generations to a single open mindset, ready to receive whatever he desired to give them. She remembered him saying he would even experiment with the school systems to exhibit his power to his superiors.

He would involve the students in role playing games as a beginning. Many workshops used the theme of children dressing up as their favorite book, movie, or TV character, which was widely accepted as part of a child's education in elementary schools. It was quite common to see little witches and warlocks stirring cauldrons full of orange-colored gelatin, casting supposedly harmless spells on their classmates. Everyone thought it was so cute!

As years went by and Ra-il systematically gained control over their thoughts and ways, especially through music, they were easily led into casting real spells or carrying out video game scenarios in real time. When it first started showing up as a shooting rampage at a school or a bombing of some sort, people were at such a loss in explaining how these young people could possibly commit such heinous acts. The participants would conveniently die in the event or be brought to a speedy trial and executed to eliminate the possibility of exposure. She knew that everything was for the universal good, so tragedies were necessary.

“Gloria, please report to Suite 6132 in twenty minutes.”

The announcement, piped in through the speaker system in her apartment, momentarily startled her. That might take a while to get used to, but it made sense.

The time piece on the wall read 10:20. Whether that meant morning or evening she couldn't tell, but at least she had a few minutes to speedily apply her make-up. Good thing she had a lot of practice over the years.

Suite 6132 was thirteen minutes from her place according to the computer map on her phone. Because she had the use of a mobile transport unit, fully charged and waiting at her door, she arrived at her destination with several minutes to spare. Since this time frame was not originally on her schedule, she stopped at the table in the hall outside Suite 6132 to pick up the day's agenda. Once inside the reception area, she was greeted warmly by two men, one of whom was the guide who escorted her to her new apartment the previous evening.

“Nice to see you again,” he said in a very friendly tone. “I'm Peter.”

“I'm Gloria, and it's very nice to see you again, too.”

Peter's all mine, she thought to herself. He'll come in handy while I'm here.

Peter had the same thoughts about Gloria long before she was brought in. He'd been anticipating her arrival for months.

Gloria was taken to a room off to the right of the entrance to the suite. As soon as she entered, it felt like home. Every portion of the room housed the most modern broadcast equipment she'd ever seen. It had to be the latest technology. Gloria didn't even recognize the function of some of the machines. Enamored as a small child would be in a toy store, Gloria reverently walked the perimeter of the room, softly touching the broadcast boards, computers, and delivery systems. For a short time, she sat at the one hundred twenty channel console, moving several of the volume slides a tad, then returning them to their original positions. Fond memories of her broadcast years surfaced in her mind.

"I think you're supposed to be on the other end of that thing with a microphone in your hand." Gloria was startled out of reminiscing by the words that came from the imposing figure at the door.

"You surprised me," was the best she could offer him.

Gloria had been so deep in thought that she was totally unprepared for the interruption. Normally she spent the moments before a meeting—especially a first meeting—seeking the Masters for insights on the one she was to meet. She then had the edge and could use it for her benefit. She was taken aback and visibly flustered with the results of her lapse in following her own protocol.

"I'm sorry I startled you."

"No... please, I should have been more alert. I just got caught up in the moment." Gloria could feel her face flush with embarrassment.

"I'm Nick Barkow."

A large, muscular man in his early forties with graying temples on a full head of hair, Nick presented himself as a formidable figure as he walked over to shake Gloria's hand. His kind expression and warm handshake made Gloria feel somewhat vulnerable and, at the same time, intrigued.

"We're going to be working together," he said with a broad smile, still gently holding her hand. "I've seen you often on the news but didn't realize how beautiful you really are until this moment."

Gloria whispered a quiet, almost bashful "thank you" and pulled her hand from his before she became visibly enraptured.

That was the first time I've ever done that, she thought, referring to the removal of her hand from the hand of the person she was meeting for the first time. The opportunity to read someone for her benefit had never slipped past her before. What was wrong?

"I'm sorry," she said, extending her hand again.

Nick looked directly into her eyes and smiled kindly, almost knowingly, but did not grasp her hand. "I notice you still have the old gold bracelet," he said, as he turned to readjust one of the slides on the control board. "Why don't we take care of that matter before we get started on your portion of this project?"

Gently turning her toward the door with a touch on her shoulder, Nick steered Gloria toward their next stop. Gloria responded with ease, which surprised her. Normally she would be uncomfortable allowing anyone to have that much authority and forcefulness. Her mind was flooded with all sorts of thoughts.

Gloria heard little of the polite conversation Nick presented as they walked down the corridor to the Acceptance Room, where Gloria would exchange her bracelet. She couldn't read her new acquaintance, and it made her uncomfortable.

"Here we are." Nick filled out the paperwork and pressed his thumb on the electronic form as a signature. Gloria stood quietly off to one side, feeling a need to gain the kind of control that gave her the upper hand. She had little desire to remain as the "new kid on the block." At that moment she determined in her heart to learn as much as she could, as fast as she could, so no one would be able to make her feel this way again.

"Please, step over here," the uniformed woman instructed Gloria.

Gloria was taken to a small cubicle near an interior window, which looked into a much larger room. As Gloria sat down in the chair in front of the desk, she noticed what seemed like hundreds of similar empty cubicles in the adjacent room.

"Must be expecting a lot of people," Gloria remarked, trying to be friendly.

"Please, just hold out your hand," the woman stated flatly.

Well, it looks like my first day here leaves something to be desired, she thought, while obediently resting her right elbow on the table and elevating her wrist slightly as instructed.

The woman waved an electronic tool over the gold bracelet. It appeared to melt open in one spot and fell off her wrist. Gloria was surprised at the almost lifelike response of the inanimate object. As the bracelet dropped, it again closed into a perfect circle. The lady then slipped the circle over a stationary cylinder which was attached to a computer by a cable. Once the information was transferred, she took another small tube with a flattened end and rested the end on the back of Gloria's hand for a few seconds.

"Thank you, that will be all," the woman said as she got up and left.

"Personable, isn't she?" Gloria said, rubbing her bare wrist as she walked toward Nick. He was leaning on the counter at the entrance, smiling broadly.

"You'll get used to it," Nick assured her. "She's a Level Two," he continued, as the pair walked back to the first room.

"Never had what it takes to evolve higher and carries a big chip on her shoulder. Sorry about the pun," he chuckled, pointing to the back of Gloria's hand.

"The chip's on her shoulder because of her lack of love toward anyone who has evolved past her. You must really boil her potatoes."

Nick looked down at Gloria and smiled again. "I think you should prepare yourself for that kind of attitude when things get rolling around here. There will be a lot of jealousy over your position. Better protect your backside."

Now this is more like it, Gloria thought. I love a little cat fighting. I also plan to win.

From Our Father's Heart

*In the midst of powerful deceptions,
I still bring forth truth to those who choose to hear it.*

Keep your heart close to My Word.

Align your thinking with the mind of Christ.

Do not always believe what you see or what you hear.

Listen to My words from My Word.

Strong delusions are far more powerful than your flesh.

Place your flesh under the Lordship of Jesus so that it –

and the foolishness that it entertains –

can be destroyed by My Holy Spirit.

Deceiving spirits will then have no hold on you.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the [false] prophets who prophesy to you. They teach you vanity (emptiness, falsity, and futility) and fill you with vain hopes; they speak a vision of their own minds and not from the mouth of the Lord.”
Jer. 23:16 AMP

Endless days became weeks, which turned into months in the lives of countless hurting and dying people. Ben and his constantly expanding family of “helpful vagrants,” as they called themselves, took turns venturing out from the base camp cave to rescue others from the earth’s increasing horrors. Rusty would direct them to specific people, who would receive Jesus just before they died or heal and become part of the fledgling outreach.

“Don’t bother with that one; Yes, bring her; I’m sorry, not those two,” were the kinds of phrases heard through the high winds and tremendous thunder. Rusty would not allow any of the workers to spend time or energy on those who cursed the Lord for their circumstances, when there were so many in need whose hearts were now open to Him. Often Ben was deeply grieved when he had to ignore a hopeless individual lying on the ground and pick up one approved by Rusty, knowing the eternal fate of the one left behind. Walking away from people was intense for Ben, especially when their wailing followed him as he approached the next person. That could have been me, he often thought as he walked away, knowing those he by-passed were sure to experience a horribly painful death and then face the judgment they deserved for their rebellion.

Most of the thousands of corpses the rescuers had to step over or around testified of gruesome last moments, as evidenced by missing arms and legs or entrails, obviously the result of roving packs of animals, which came in to feed and took only the tender and exposed flesh. So much prey was available to the animals, that they had no reason to finish off a carcass.

The attacks on the living were successful in large part because most people no longer had the strength or will to defend themselves. Surrender meant certain death; but, in most cases, fighting off the animal attacker simply delayed the inevitable, which was carried out by other animals or other deadly conditions. The world had taken on the appearance of a battlefield, its landscapes strewn with rotting corpses. Mindless wandering and fear encompassed people, most of whom would still not bend their knee to the one true God.

When the rescuers rested from their daily tasks, Rusty gave insight concerning what was happening, comparing the physical conditions all around them with their corresponding spiritual counterparts. When he finished explaining certain events, Ben would share the Word of God with newly converted, wide-eyed listeners, so they could see things from His perspective.

Events like the bowls of God’s wrath, the four horsemen, and the great seals of judgment—all future occurrences to the now departed, but very evident now to those still alive—were being graphically realized right outside the cave walls moment by moment. The little group of participants witnessed things daily that convinced them they were actually living out what had been promised many years ago in the Bible.

“We have some pretty spectacular events about to come upon us,” Rusty explained to those who were sharing different portions of the main room of the cave. “Mankind, in his futility to still control others and his own destiny, has now entered into the arena of terror. Soon we are going to enter into a world-wide nuclear winter brought on by the unconscionable actions of some nations—which have spewed their wrath upon others whom they’ve hated for centuries—just before their own demise. We will go from scorching heat to frigid temperatures because of the fallout that will inhibit the sun’s ability to reach us, and then go back to heat again in the same amount of time. It will appear to everyone that all the nations of the world have annihilated one another.”

After some initial tidal waves, hurricanes, and torrential storms occurred, a silent, eerie calm hovered like a temporary blanket over the earth. Nothing moved. Only the foolish or the mission-minded dared emerge from their hiding places. Most everyone had a fear of being exposed to more horrific events than the ones that had already taken place. Multitudes of those who remained alive continued to curse God from their fragile coverings, hoping to die and escape from their misery. Those who died found out their real misery had just begun.

Rusty cautioned every member of the little family in the cave. “Now is the time you need to be strong and sure of what you believe. You must not be swayed by what appears to be real.”

With that, Rusty called the tiny family to the entrance of the cave. Each stood looking out over the barren wasteland, absent of buildings except for the pods that had dropped from the sky.

“Get ready,” Rusty said, aware of what was transpiring in the spiritual realm. “Watch the pods.”

As the words left his mouth, giant tubes of light burst forth simultaneously from the opening in the roof of each pod, reaching a height of five hundred feet. From the vantage point of the cave, the group could see six towers of light dotting the landscape in front of the horizon, one for each pod within sight. Ben climbed to the crest of the hill to get a three hundred-sixty-degree view of their surroundings.

“I can see a bunch more from here,” he yelled before he returned to the others at the opening of the cave. He saved the rest of his observations, realizing the wind was swallowing what he had to say.

“There must be pods all over the countryside. It looks like some of them are replacing cities that were burned or destroyed,” Ben said, once he was in earshot of the group.

“Praise God!” Katie cried with joy. “How wonderful of the Lord to save us from...” Rusty interrupted her before she could say any more.

“That’s exactly what I’m talking about. How do you know that it’s God who has moved to help? What does the Word say? If you didn’t have a bible handy and were fighting for your very life, would you know what to do now—especially if you were hungry, cold, and so weary that you’d believe almost anything if someone offered you help?”

Katie opened her mouth to defend herself but thought better of it. No one would have heard her anyway. Everyone’s attention was diverted to the tubes of light, which now housed the presence of a man dressed in a brilliant white robe.

“That has to be a hologram,” Ben commented to the rest, who simply nodded their heads. “You can probably see him from almost anywhere. He’s gargantuan!” Ben found it odd to see him suspended in various points in the sky.

“My name is Ra-il,” the figure in the hologram commenced. “I am part of the benevolent who have been observing you for many centuries. We have had your best interests in our hearts for a long time.”

Ben looked at Rusty, who stuck his index finger toward the back of his throat and executed a fake gag. “Now it begins,” he said to Ben.

“Who is he?” Ben whispered to Rusty.

“Shhhh,” Rusty said, as he put his index finger to better use in front of his mouth in the “shush” position.

Ben looked at his angelic friend and wondered how Rusty knew how to use those finger gestures. Did he have to learn them at some point in the past, or was it just imparted to him when he got this assignment? Momentarily, Ben’s face lit up with a goofy grin in spite of the gravity of the situation. Rusty gave him a playful slap on the back of the head and couldn’t resist a slight upturn at the corners of his mouth. They turned their attention back to the hologram as Ra-il began to speak again.

“For thousands of years, my people have been observing and protecting you. It has been both a joy and a sorrow for us. We have helped you through many of your hard times and created some good times for you, too. Now we see that your planet is in trouble, so we came to help you again.

“Most of you have lost everything, including your families. I am so very sorry about that. We would like to do what we know we are capable of to help you rebuild your lives. The very first need, of course, is for you to be able to find safety, food, and rest while your planet continues to adjust to its new position in the galaxy.

“We have been preparing for this time for quite a while and are ready to do whatever is necessary to restore the peace and safety all of you desire. Please accept our invitation to come and be safe. We will eventually show you all the wonderful restoring processes that we will implement for your benefit; but for now, simply take the first step and receive our help.

“Go to one of our enclosed cities nearest you and you will be welcomed and cared for. You will be given food, new clothes, and a warm place to sleep. Everything you need will be available to you until you can get back on your feet. Please, let us help you.”

While the announcement was in progress, each ribbed metal section of the exterior walls of each pod city retracted near the ground to reveal bright, warm-looking entrances, windows, and covered porches. The observer no longer saw the dark metal exterior of the pods, but cozy, inviting condominiums. The warm, glowing light from the draped windows was a stark contrast to the blue cold of the darkened sky. What a welcome, longed for sight!

“See?” Ra-il continued, “We have new homes for you. Please, come and rest. There is more than enough room for everyone who chooses the better way. You will be given a temporary residence upon your arrival, so that we can take good care of you and help you heal. If you are too ill to come here on your own, we will send ambulances to pick you up.”

As he spoke, hover vehicles flew out from several points of each pod to traverse the landscape slowly, poised to be of assistance to a needy individual or group. “Our desire is to help and serve you while your planet is going through this adjustment.”

The hologram darkened for a split second and then fired up once again as news correspondent Gloria Manly, in all her radiance, appeared to confirm Ra-il’s promises and words of encouragement. The lighted hologram and her presence would become the constant companions of weary travelers as she wooed them to the cities, encouraged them to trust their benefactors; and introduced them to the idea of a Universal Master, who was to visit soon to render a complete assistance plan to the planet. Some gladly went in, others—out of fear—remained in their hovels or mountain caves; still others turned and walked away as if they hadn’t even heard her. In reality, some saw and responded, others waited, and some were protected from accepting the invitation.

Rusty looked at Ben and then strolled back to the fire, which was crackling and sparkling in the main room of the cave. Sitting down on one of the logs, Rusty picked up his now favorite stick and began to stir the fire. It was obvious to Ben that he was deep in thought, or intently listening for instructions, or doing whatever angels do. Whatever the case, Ben sat one log to the right. Everyone else remained at the cave opening, listening to Gloria via hologram.

Rusty turned to Ben. “By now, I’m sure you realize you’ve been called for a special assignment; that it’s bigger than rescuing people and bringing them to this cave.”

“Well,” Ben said, trying to lighten the atmosphere a bit, “It did seem a little like overkill for the Lord to send someone like you to me during this time, if my only purpose was to live in this cave for the duration. I thought maybe I was supposed to be in a book about the end times or something.”

Rusty smiled broadly, looking back into the dancing fire after acknowledging Ben’s comments. He was glad to see Ben still able to find humor in the midst of trying circumstances.

“The Lord is soon going to bring you some companions, who have also been raised up for such a time as this. When they get here, you will receive your assignment. For now, we’ll all just keep on doing what we have been doing. You spend time with your Lord,” Rusty pointed the burning stick at Ben to emphasize his last words. Even with the stern tone of his voice, Rusty allowed Ben to see that all was well. He smiled.

Outside, mindless, numb, hurting people walked, crawled, were carried, and even driven to the shelter cities in droves. Casting all questions and cautions aside, their need for help far out-weighed reason and prudence. Nothing mattered other than safety, food, warmth, and a roof over their heads.

Upon entering a city, each person was initially taken to a relief center for analysis. Immediate needs such as food, water, and medical attention were lovingly administered. People were cared for as family.

In these cities, money or payment of any kind was not an issue. Everyone received assistance, no matter what the circumstance. Wounds were dressed and bandaged. Sicknesses were treated. Sometimes healing occurred instantaneously as the smiling attendant prayed to the Universal Master on behalf of the patient. Grateful recipients were given a warm bed, either in the infirmary or their new home.

When a person was healthy enough to work, he would do so to earn his keep. Initially, however, nothing was required for acceptance and provision. The emphasis was on rest and healing.

The entrance hallways and infirmaries were beehives of activity. Even though there were an astounding number of people—both servants and those being served—there was never even a hint of chaos. Order and organization reigned no matter what time of day, no matter how many people. No one felt the least bit neglected, and everyone received assistance from those who were friendly and appeared to be genuinely concerned.

With the anticipation of receiving multitudes of people in need of help, a mandatory identification system had been installed at each of the entrances in any given pod city to ensure safety and provide a way to keep track of medications and addresses. People were given an invisible, imbedded number on the back side of their right hand. If they did not have a right hand for some reason, the number was painlessly placed in the forehead. Everyone accepted their number with thanksgiving.

During the rest phase of residency, everyone was treated to a tour of the city and made aware of the facilities that were available. Residents could take transport carts to the cities' park-like centers, where every form of recreation and entertainment was addressed and available free of charge until work credits could be accumulated. Most of the overjoyed residents found that their new accommodations were not just as good as, but even better than they'd had in the best of times, and certainly lavish in comparison to their habitats of the last months, even years.

From Our Father's Heart

When you need them,

I will bring holy alliances to you for the completion of My plans.

Guard these special people with your life if necessary.

They will do the same for you, because I have ordained the relationship. It is not of this world,

but has been orchestrated in My presence.

I am the bond that will hold you together.

I am the purpose for your fellowship.

My plan is to be fulfilled in you,

and each of those I place with you is part of it.

Watch how perfectly you fit one with another.

CHAPTER-TWENTY-FOUR

“GOD IS [already] beginning to arise, and His enemies to scatter; let them also who hate Him flee before Him!

2) As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before the presence of God.

3) But let the [uncompromisingly] righteous be glad; let them be in high spirits and glory before God, yes, let them [jubilantly] rejoice!” ***Ps. 68:1-3 AMP***

Several days later, just as Rusty had indicated, two additional teammates were brought to the cave in a miraculous fashion. Reefer McGee was on his way to one of the entrances of the pod city near the cave when his chopper stopped running in midair for no good reason, very much like it had done on his initial flight over the city. This time the results were quite different.

The phrase, “We’re going down like a rock,” that Reefer yelled had quite an impact on his passenger, Colonel Lassiter, who was already past any form of reason since he’d developed an incredible fear of choppers on their first mission together. Reefer’s undeniable statement combined with the rapidly approaching terrain caused his heart to stop. The man was dead before they hit the ground. Too bad, because Reefer “flew” the dead craft all the way to the ground, glancing off some still standing trees, which were in perfect position to deflect some of the impact of the landing.

Because his hands and skills were still at their optimum performance, the craft did things that the designers never dreamed possible. It danced, careened, bounced and stayed intact, then kissed the earth with a noisy, bone-crushing crash. After its valued passenger cleared the area, it exploded in spades. Even though the chopper was inanimate, the blast seemed like a long overdue burst of relief, which was delayed so that Reefer could escape one more time.

As always, Reefer walked away from the crash site and found his way to the only shelter he could see—other than the pod city—courtesy of the glow from the burning chopper. This time he praised his Lord for the deliverance. Ben looked at Reefer and then at Rusty, amazed at God’s fulfillment of Rusty’s words and the words he had heard from the Lord Himself in the heavenlylies, as Reefer walked into the main room of the cave, somewhat dazed, and cautiously asked for a drink of water.

Two days after Reefer made his way to the cave, Ben carried yet another parched, almost dead body to safety. (Their rescue missions were now routine, and they had the added burden of avoiding the pod city transport vehicles.) Normally, none of the rescuers would try to save someone as far gone as the man who had just been placed in one of the beds in the cave because there was so little time to tend to the wounds. However, Rusty specifically pointed to this one, so Ben brought him back before the rescue vehicles from the pod could find him. He had ventured from his residence in an attempt to reach the television station after seeing the holograms and Gloria. His transport crashed and the occupants were strewn all over the road.

Days later, a grateful Tim Hanek thanked his new friends profusely, while sitting up in bed with a mug of warm tea in his hands. He had no recollection of what happened after the wreck. All he knew was the transport ran into something unexpected and now he was living an adventure he could never have imagined in a million years. He and Ben compared their stories and realized their accounts had much in common. Now, they both wondered what was in store.

For the next several days, the others still attempted rescues even though hampered by the transport vehicles. Ben, Reefer, and Tim—unlikely friends, thrown together during a very unusual time frame—spent most of their waking hours together, drawn by the Holy Spirit. The topic of their conversations rarely wavered from what looked like the biblical scenario being played out in their midst. Their sometimes-heated discussions served as “entertainment” for the rest of the cave’s occupants. When a stalemate of ideas and interpretation became evident, Rusty would bust the dam of ideas loose with simple questions like, “Why does it have to be any one of

those ways?” He would then walk away grinning from ear to ear, knowing that the Holy Spirit was leading three of His end-time players to *His* conclusions and giving supernatural direction for the coming days.

“Look, they gotta be nothin’ but demons,” Reefer said loudly, confirming what was on the hearts of several of the people within earshot.

Standing up in exasperation and pounding his hand against the wall of the cave, he looked into the eyes of both Tim and Ben, who remained silent. You would’ve thought he was E.F. Hutton, the way every small group ceased talking and looked over at the slender man, waiting for more. “My bible says that God created only two kinds of beings. He made them angels first, and then He made us. Well, He actually made us twice—first time, we ended up full of rebellion, separated from God; then He made us brand new all over again when we surrendered to Jesus as our Savior and Lord.”

No one in the room dared interrupt. People from the other rooms migrated to hear what came next. “Now we don’t know exactly what happened to them angels, maybe he could tell us.” Reefer pointed to Rusty, who nodded and motioned for Reefer to continue. Rusty knew that another time would come when he could explain all the details. For now, it was important to the Lord that the three men discover the truth of His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s the only truth that’s immovable, not fragmented or dissolvable in hard times. Rusty knew the kind of times that were in store for these men and only God’s immovable truth would carry them through.

“Well, he ain’t gonna tell us now so...” Reefer looked squarely at Rusty to confirm that and continued. “We know some of them angels fell away from God and became demons. We been fightin’ with those guys a long time. Now you and I know for sure that God told us anything we’d ever need to know right here in the Bible. He don’t keep us in the dark, and He don’t give us no surprises.”

Reefer picked up one of the bibles from the stack perched on the small log next to the kerosene lamp and held it up for everyone to see. “If He’d created any other people or beings, He would’ve told us.”

Reefer looked down at the ground for a moment and then back at the people. The man of few words and a quiet spirit looked directly into Ben’s eyes and then Tim’s and said with resolve, “My God don’t keep me in the dark if I ask Him somethin’. Those guys out there ain’t angels, they ain’t humans, and they for sure ain’t born again with God’s Holy Spirit, so they *gotta be* demons. I don’t care what they look like, or how they talk, where they say they came from, or what they do, they’re only *defeated* demons. Jesus got ‘em all at the cross. All they can do is lie to us and try to scare us. Jesus beat ‘em all and we have Jesus in us, period. The sooner we set our minds on that truth, the sooner we’ll know what to do with ‘em.”

Reefer sat down, almost embarrassed by how forceful he’d been and how much he’d talked. Somehow everyone in the room was refreshed by the naked truth that was so simply stated. In their spirits, they knew the words he spoke were truth, absolute truth.

“So *that’s* why I was told about the creation in my dream,” Ben exclaimed, as he started to piece things together.

“What are you talking about?” Katie queried.

“Before you all got here, the Lord took me with Him and explained what I needed to know so I could love and serve Him. When I was there, wherever that was...” Ben’s voice trailed off as he ran a few more things through his head. “I remember the Lord made special note about His creations— angels and us, and then about making us new again so we could live in the spirit world in heaven as a spirit with a new body. Twice He told me I needed to remember that.

“I told ya,” Reefer rejoiced, as he smacked his open palm with the fist of his other hand. “I knew it. I knew it!” he said quietly to himself as he walked a short distance away to regroup.

The group stayed quiet, either praying or thinking. A few minutes later, Reefer came back. “Look. They don’t own us, you guys. They’re the same as the little turkeys that used to bug us before all of this happened; just bigger, with bigger toys and more lies.

“This isn’t as big as it all looks, you guys. It just looks pretty scary because we ain’t used to it and it’s up close and personal right now. They’re just demons. Jesus beat ‘em once and for all. That means we can get past

‘em, or around ‘em, or through ‘em, or over ‘em. Whatever we need to do, through Him, we got the power to do it.”

A big smile came across his rugged face. He pulled his big cowboy hat down tight on his head.

“Now that we know who they are, all we gotta do is figure out what Father God wants us to do about ‘em.”

Rusty moved toward the entrance of the cave. “It’s time to tell ‘em, isn’t it, Lord?” he said, communing with the Lord of All. “Good deal! I can’t wait!”

Rusty crouched down and picked up a small white stone. He threw it through the cave opening and watched it ricochet off one of the big boulders near the entrance. “I sure am gonna enjoy what it’s gonna take to set things right, and I do love the ending,” he said with pleasure.

“Are you willing to share your thoughts?” Tim Hanek asked quietly, as he passed Rusty, who was sitting on a rock just outside the cave.

The night had grown especially cold, a huge contrast with the warmth of the cave interior, especially near the main heat source. Tim had planned to be alone for a while to try to absorb all that had happened around him in the last few weeks. Disappearing inside his heavy survival jacket like a turtle, he pulled the hood up to cover his head, crossed his arms in front of him and leaned back against the outside wall of the cave.

Several moments passed before he said anything. His thoughts migrated from the joy of his salvation to why Rusty wasn’t cold, as he came over to stand next to him in the same clothes he had worn every day since Tim had met him. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason for any of these thoughts; it just felt good to think quietly.

“All of this is pretty new to me,” Tim finally spoke. Both beings kept looking off in the distance, gazing at the barren landscape in front of them at the bottom of the hill.

“It’s pretty hard to fathom that I’m standing in a cave, talking about demons, who look like humans posing as aliens; or that I’m standing next to an angel, who looks like a lumberjack with the end of all recorded time about to come to pass before my very eyes. If I wasn’t here living it out, I would call me a liar, even as I was telling someone about it.”

Tim stopped to mull over what he’d said. Unbelievable! He leaned forward and picked up a small, multi-colored stone to examine it.

“I do know that this stone is real. I can feel it. It’s cold and hard to the touch. I know that I’m living; at least, I think so. I feel hunger. I get tired. That makes me real, doesn’t it?”

Rusty said nothing, allowing Tim to complete his thoughts.

“What is reality? Could there be spirits that manifest themselves so we can see them? I think I see you. We’ve had physical contact with each other. Your handshake is a bear. You somehow feel like everyone else when I touch you, but you don’t eat. I mean, you’ve tasted food; but you don’t need it like I do. You don’t sleep. Right now, you’re not cold, when a real person would be freezing if they were dressed the way you are. Can this all be real? Can there actually be a realm of the spirit that becomes reality when it enters our dimension?” There’s also a bunch of stuff I need to tell you about the lady in the hologram, but I think it can wait.”

Rusty smiled sympathetically at Tim. Moving to the other side of the opening, he sat down on a sizable rock and looked briefly at the landscape. “Tim, the spiritual realm is much more real than the limited, dimensional world you know. Creator God has chosen to work in your dimension to test, prove, and purify a people that He’ll be able to trust for all eternity. Those of us who’ve been in His presence understand His magnificence. It takes no faith at all to believe He exists. We’ve observed His power, His wealth of character, to the point where those who haven’t been uniquely formed to do a specific task can only lie prostrate before Him in praise. He really is that magnificent. It’s only by His power that we all don’t just lie there praising Him all the time.”

Rusty stopped and looked at Tim. “You humans, however, have been given the astounding privilege of a deep intimacy with Him now and for all eternity. We angels marvel that Father God would provide opportunity after opportunity for you to be forgiven. We had no second chance. Separation was instant and eternal for those like me who chose their own way.”

Rusty showed honest emotion. “I’m grateful to Father God for continually reminding me of the horrors that are in store for them. It always cautions me to turn only to God.” He paused to let that sink into Tim’s thought process and spirit.

“Tim, you are living in a transitioning world. After this chaotic period in time is over, dimensions will continually interact. Dimensions beyond your wildest imagination will be part of your *real* world. None of us knows what they’ll be; but I can assure you, Father God is more than capable of controlling all of it.

“This...” Rusty swept his arm to include the landscape below. “This is just a small part of what an incredibly creative God is in the process of continually unfolding. Father God is just winding down this dispensation as He said He would. It’s not the end of things by any means.

Rusty stood up. “Soon we’ll talk about your part in all of this and why we’re in this cave together. Some pretty incredible circumstances are about to happen from your perspective. Go and get some rest now. I notice you guys really need a lot of sleep.”

Tim turned to reenter the cave and smiled at Rusty, who was enjoying his own private joke. The two walked side by side toward the main room of the cave as Rusty remarked, “You’re not the only ones, you know. Many of us are here in many forms, waiting to do your Father’s bidding, whenever He chooses to move to the next stage. We’re everywhere! We’re everywhere!”

Rusty once again took deep pleasure in his own humor. Tim made believe he hadn’t gotten the joke.

“It still blows my mind that I’m walking next to an angel. I mean, it’s pretty cool when you think about it; but I thought all you guys were beautiful. Were you late for the meeting when they were handing out ‘pretty’?”

Tim playfully poked Rusty in the side. He feigned being ticklish in return.

“We get tickled on the inside,” Rusty said, making believe he was adjusting his hair and beard. After wetting his little finger and futilely attempting to smooth his bushy eyebrows, he jested with a twinkle in his eye. “Just wait,” he grinned. “One day I’ll show you carbendunking.”

That was too much for Rusty to contain. Holding his stomach, he let out an uproarious laugh that reverberated throughout the cave, waking those who had already fallen asleep.

From Our Father's Heart

Do not go where they tell you to go.

Do not do what they tell you to do.

You must not listen to anything that does not line up with My Word,

no matter how real it may appear

or how truthful it may sound.

My Word is an eternal word.

It is not subject to the whims of any being,

no matter how hard they attempt to manipulate it.

Stand on its truths.

Remember its absolutes and function in My Spirit,

so that you are not deceived.

I am with you to protect you and show you truth,

if you are truly with Me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

“And then if anyone says to you, See, here is the Christ (the Messiah)! or, Look, there He is! do not believe it.

22) False Christs (Messiahs) and false prophets will arise and show signs and [work] miracles to deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect (those God has chosen out for Himself).

23) But look to yourselves and be on your guard; I have told you everything beforehand.” Mark 13:21-23 AMP

“Reefer, wake up! You have to see this!”

Ben took Reefer’s boots from the end of his bed and threw them his way, while Reefer was still shaking the cobwebs out of his head. One of the boots smacked Reefer in the chest, causing him to give Ben one of those intense “Ow! What was that for?” looks.

“Hurry up! You gotta see this! You won’t believe it!” Ben stood in the entrance to the room, waving the still groggy pilot onward.

“This better be good,” Reefer mumbled as he pressed past him.

The two men picked up steam as they headed toward the entrance to the cave, where about forty people had gathered. Reefer thought it was awfully quiet considering the amount of people they saw. Usually, there would be a whole lot of interacting. He wondered why everyone stood in silence, almost frozen as they looked out.

Ben and Reefer made their way through the crowd. As they did, Reefer could feel heat instead of the bone-chilling cold that he’d experienced in the last few weeks. When they reached the opening, he had a difficult time processing what he beheld.

Sometime in the night, the mother ship had arrived. Silently, without fanfare, a ship larger than anyone would’ve believed possible (aside from the fact that they were standing there looking at it) had landed with one of its corners seated atop the large raised tower on the edge of the pod city below. Recalling the tower from his trip with Colonel Lassiter and Gloria, Reefer needed to see more. Stepping past the opening of the cave, as many others had done in an effort to catch a glimpse of the other end of the gigantic structure, the pilot squinted and strained, but could not see the far end of the gigantic craft. Ben made use of a pair of binoculars. He couldn’t tell where it ended either.

“That thing has to be fifty stories tall and longer than anything I’ve ever seen,” Ben whispered in awe to Reefer, who hadn’t said a word.

“It looks like it goes all the way to the next pod,” Tim yelled down from the top of the hill. Everyone turned in unison to look at him, then turned back to the structure.

“Look!” Katie’s voice startled everyone. Several people jumped back, their nerves on edge.

Zeroing in on where she pointed, all were dumbfounded. Under the ship—and only under the ship—green grass had grown, stopping at the outer edge of the massive vehicle. Not only that, but fully-grown trees, bushes, flowers, and whatever else was needed to create a park-like atmosphere flourished.

Everyone had been so amazed at the ship itself, that no one had noticed anything else until now. Several of the observers started running down the hill, so they could go below the ship and feel the grass. Only a stern warning from Rusty stopped them in their tracks and caused them to return to the crowd.

“You’re going to need a whole lot more wisdom than that to make it through this time,” Ben said to the embarrassed people. “Remember what we’ve been talking about. Remember the deception. Remember the Word which warned us of this time. Nothing is as it appears. It’s all designed to deceive as many as possible before it’s all over.”

“Let’s let it play out for a while,” Reefer offered, moving over to lean on a large boulder. “That’s one big hunk of stuff,” he told Ben, peeking around the edge of the cave to see one more time if he could pinpoint the other end of the ship.

“Man! I’d sure like to fly that thing!” He pictured himself at the controls.

For the next several weeks, there was no activity from the mother ship. Three of the cave dwellers decided to take a chance with the weather and navigate parallel with the front of the ship to determine how large it really was, concealing themselves as they went. They reported back after several days that one of the other corners of the structure was resting on the next pod city.

“That would make it almost fifty miles long!” commented one astonished listener.

One of the three adventurers added, “We think it’s triangular and resting on a third city. We couldn’t get close enough, because there are too many vehicles traveling around it.”

Ben and Reefer looked at one another. It dawned on both of them at the same time. Why all the vehicles?

Since the mother ship had landed, the small group from the cave observed from their lofty perch that people were relaxing and enjoying themselves in the park under the ship, delighting in the perfect weather provided within its confines. It appeared to be similar to the tranquility that Reefer experienced as soon as he entered the upper perimeter of the pod with the Colonel and Gloria. The atmosphere was quite a contrast to the wildly fluctuating weather everywhere else.

The group also noticed that there hadn’t been any ambulance activity for days. Why would they need to continue using all those vehicles unless they were scouting the area for those who would not enter the cities?

“We’d better start using our heads,” Reefer stated flatly. “If this is what I think it is, we’d better start thinking about finding places to hide other than this place. I’m sure we’ve been seen many times.”

“Maybe they’ve been blinded by the Lord. Maybe they’re not allowed to see us,” Ben countered. Rusty knew. That’s one for Ben!

Soon after the words were out of Ben’s mouth, the holograms appeared, signaling that it was time to receive more messages and propaganda about the coming Universal Master. Reefer started back into the cave in disgust.

“I don’t wanna hear any more of this garbage. It’s always the sa...”

He was interrupted by the figure in the hologram. The voice made him stop and turn to listen. It was Ra-il.

“Friends and fellow citizens of the universal society. Many of you have heard that the Universal Master, Balaur, will visit your planet during the rebuilding process. His benevolent heart brings him on a mission of love.

“The ship you see in this area is one of three such ships that he will be visiting from time to time to bring about the peace and safety that all of you have desired. These vessels are located in the new Centers for World Government. One has been placed here near your former United Nations building to supervise and revise its power structure. The other hovers over your former city of Rome. We will be working closely with your world religions to bring things in order. The third has been placed near the former city of Jerusalem. Since that city has been the hotbed of contention for so many years, we will now supervise all activities there to assure universal peace.”

Rusty moved to where Ben and Reefer were standing. Ra-il took a deep breath. It was evident he was about to do something that made him tremble with excitement.

“For what you call centuries, we have known this moment would come to pass for the good of all creation. It has taken your race this long to develop an understanding of the universal consciousness and its benefits to races from every part of the universe, whether planets, galaxies, star systems or beyond. I am overcome with extreme elation that you are now ready to see and receive god himself.”

Ra-il stepped away. For several moments, the hologram was lifeless. Then it happened. A figure appeared, at first quite formless but beyond intense to the point of being hurtful to the eyes, like the sun. All who saw the angelic light became weak with its power.

“Don’t fall for it!” Rusty told the other observers. “Remember the Word. Remember what you know to be true. Don’t open your mind to the deception of Satan. It’s all a lie.”

The figure in the hologram increased in brilliance. All who watched, except those who knew what the Word said and held it in their hearts, were poised to accept “the fullness of god himself.”

As the figure continued to gain clarity, his magnificence manifested almost beyond human perception. He personified faces, icons, glorified deities, one-in-all and all-in-one. Every god of man, every idol of every century which had been slain by the sword of the Word of God and put to death, every blasphemy ever conceived was embodied in the features of the figure being revealed in front of all onlookers.

Pure evil in its basest form—the antithesis of the presence of God—was once again rearing its ugly head. The evil that had been triumphed over at the cross of Jesus Christ was allowed to blatantly surface once again for this particular time frame in places all over the world. The gods of all the ages, all the hallowed rulers of mankind from the beginning of time, every spirit guide of those who received them were perceived one at a time and at the same time—all together in the Universal Master. Those watching became weak with reverent wonder and fear as all the combined spirits of the ages united in one form, the form of the most glorious man anyone had ever seen.

A small portion of those living in the pod cities were overcome with the realization that they had been honored to have already received him personally as their spirit guide. Everyone saw him as they needed to see him, so that they might be totally and completely powerless to resist his magnificence.

His ability to become all things to all people and his ability to appear to each person as the god they desired worked like a charm. To the religious people, who knew about Jesus but had no personal relationship with Him, he appeared as they perceived He would look. To others, he appeared as Allah or Krishna or whoever else personified their beliefs. Without question, he was the god answer to those who had no ability to discern differently and had opened themselves up one way or another to the new age consciousness.

Resounding applause and cheers loud enough to be heard all over the land exploded from inside the cities. The people from the cave looked at each other in total disbelief at the magnitude of the deception. To them, the figure was indeed magnificent, and each person could feel tugs of wooing to receive him; but everyone was supernaturally protected from the counterfeit light because of their commitment to Jesus.

“Those who have now turned their back on Father God will seal their destiny forever,” Rusty cautioned. “No one will be able to discern the truth from a lie from this point on unless he or she already knows or desires real truth. Seal your hearts from what he is about to say.”

“Loyal friends,...” Balaur had to wait as the decibel level of the people’s enthusiasm and praise drowned out his voice. After holding up his hands to request silence, he began again.

“Loyal friends and members of the universal mindset. I have longed for this time for many centuries. I have longed for your race to join us in this marvelous dispensation.

“As many of you know, the time has come for you to join us in the wonder of all wisdom. The universal mind is speaking throughout your planet that it is now ready to join with all the cosmic forces to advance to perfection. Your planet has cleansed itself of the uninitiated and unwilling, those too immature to evolve to becoming god. It has also cleansed itself of the stagnant and wasteful, the rotting and dead.

“As you can see under our command center, we have already started rebuilding your planet with vibrant life, untouched by the pollutions that have been inflicted by the unwise over the centuries. That is only the beginning. Everything on your planet, Mother Earth, has been brought back to the beginning so that all things can become new and in line with universal perfection. You, your planet, and the universe will all be one in the truest sense, growing together for the good of all. There are no more nations, so there will be no more wars, as we are now all one.

“We have seen that you have progressed to the point of seeking infinite wisdom and we are ready to do whatever it takes to allow you to start fresh and acquire that wisdom in its fullness.”

People in the pod cities went wild with excitement. Balaur allowed them the opportunity to express their unbridled joy before he continued.

“Some of you are acquainted with personal progression toward perfection. Some of you already understand your godhood and are well on your way to infinite oneness. Most of you know that I am the first to have reached that exalted position. I am worthy of your allegiance and honor, and I am the first of many for I choose to share my godhood with all who desire it. Each of you can achieve godhood yourselves and rule with

me over all the vastness of the universe. This is truly an all-important day—the beginning of throwing off all outdated systems of thinking and collectively working toward universal oneness!!”

The cities rang with applause and exuberance once more. Balaaur allowed it to continue for quite some time. He smiled broadly while he waited. Finally, he gestured for silence, his audience primed to hear more.

“In the beginning, as you know it, we had to initiate many belief systems on Mother Earth (because of the elementary thinking of your race) so you could learn the wondrous love of the universe. Some of you have understood this recently through your higher progression. You have held our banner high, witnessing to anyone who desired to be a candidate for a higher level of belief.”

For the next hour, Balaaur went through all the different religions that he said had been given to different nations and cultures over time to allow that culture system to see portions of the universal love, all the time adding dimension to the universe as the culture could receive it as truth. According to what he said, each part, when added to the whole, transformed simple belief into oneness with the universe.

Then he stated, “The only people who did not benefit from our efforts to raise them to a higher level were those who believed firmly in the God of the Christians and His Word alone. This was something that was not anticipated, but they were purposely kept on your planet long enough so that you could reject their claims and solidify what you believe in the process. We had to remove them to another place for further refinement.”

The observers on the hill emitted a quiet gasp of surprise as Balaaur held up his well-worn bible. “To those of you who believe in this book, you need to know that I believe in this book also. I should ... because I wrote it.” Now a louder collective gasp could be heard on the hill.

Rusty looked around carefully to discern who, if anyone, was being taken in. He had concern because many in the group were new and fragile believers. He didn’t like what he saw.

He turned from Balaaur and said, “If any of you are having second thoughts or tending toward thinking or believing that what is being said may have some truth to it, you need to close your ears and go someplace to protect yourself. Your eternity depends on it.”

Understanding that Balaaur’s presentation exemplified deception in its highest form, no one from the group seemed willing to leave. They were interested in hearing the remainder of what would be said, so they could war against it when they encountered wavering in those who had embraced the truth, but needed their faith built up. They also felt it would be crucial to helping them fulfill the Lord’s purpose for bringing all of them together.

“To those who have not yet accepted our hospitality by coming to the new places of safety and choose to remain steadfast in your avoidance, let me assure you that our motives are honorable and we respect you for your dedication. However, I would like to present some evidence to show you that we have truly done what I’ve stated.

“For its time, the Bible was very important in maintaining order. Its truthful guidelines have been a faithful standard bearer in establishing a moral compass to spare your infant society from total destruction. You could not control your passions in your base state, so we initiated its ideas to inhibit decay until you progressed far enough to receive *universal* truth. Now you, as a race, are ready for advancement. Christianity, therefore, must be proven to be the antiquated system that it actually is, so we can all progress in one accord and no longer be limited by its elementary influence.”

With that statement, Balaaur proceeded to explain some of the seemingly unexplainable verses in the Bible. Using present technologies, such as electric current, holograms, and light rays—while adding spiritual concepts such as healing and levitation—he showed the listeners viable explanations for biblical supernatural events.

“In Moses’ day, one of our simple light sources inside the bush would make it appear to be on fire yet not consumed. Holograms explain the conversation that took place amongst Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, which was observed by Peter and the others. Simple levitation explains the ascension of Jesus. We have proven even in these last few days that sickness and disease have been overcome. Many in your midst have performed the same miracles that the Jesus of our Bible did, the same way in which he did them. With today’s standards and knowledge, everything is explainable. Let us show you truth, so you can be free to participate in the coming wonderful new age.”

To cap off his argument, Balaur presented a man, whom he proclaimed to be Jesus himself, to the appreciative crowd. “A day is like a thousand years in space and time, just as the Bible says. Jesus walked on your planet and worked for us a little over two days ago, as far as we are concerned. Let him show you his hands and feet. Come and talk to him. You will know why he was selected from our midst as one of the great forefathers of our movement. He has evolved to near perfection and will teach you many new truths. He is in this command center at present; but we will transport him to the land where we arranged for him to be born, so that you can meet him in his own desert country. As we restore transportation and communication systems, go to the desert to visit him. We know he will answer many of your lingering questions and help you to see truth as we know it to be.”

The small group retired to the sanctuary of the cave to pray, once the steady stream of blasphemous statements came to an end. Hearts were broken over the dishonor shown to the Lord Jesus, and weeping and repenting lasted well into the night. The absolute truth of the Word of God, as they read it, brought comfort, a river of life, and a hedge of protection against the foul lies that were brazenly presented earlier. Many refreshed themselves in the Word and peacefully fell asleep with their bibles open on their chests like a receiving blanket. Just being near the truth again dispelled the grungy feeling everyone experienced while Balaur was expounding.

“I knew Satan would have to present something so cunningly deceiving that those who are not firmly grounded in their beliefs would be swayed,” Ben said to Rusty just before he fell asleep, “but I never imagined that the kinds of things presented would hurt my heart so much. For the first time, I really hated Satan for what he’s doing. He’s so good at it! I’m not angry exactly; I’m just seeing blatant, raw evil for the first time and it makes me want to proclaim the absolute truth all the more.”

Ben stopped for a moment to gather his final thoughts. Rolling over and pulling the blanket to his chin, he said, “Ya know, it’s really sort of funny. I hurt more for Jesus than I fear being deceived. I love Him more now than I ever thought possible.”

Rusty sat next to Ben throughout the night, marveling at the work of the cross at Calvary. He was glad things were flowing to a conclusion, so that Jesus would soon receive all the honor due Him. Honor and glory were still being stolen from Him, but that would soon end. He was so glad that truth was always truth no matter how many times it was skillfully distorted. His association with Father God made everything of the world pale and insufficient.

Rusty watched Ben sleep for many hours, reflecting on the unsurpassable love with which Father God embraced His children. Several times, he touched Ben on the shoulder as a point of contact while he ministered to him.

“Soon the Holy Spirit will teach you why you were born in this generation,” he whispered to his sleeping charge. Knowing the rewards for obedience to God’s call on one’s life, he added, “I’m happy for you.”

From Our Father's Heart

*There always comes a time when I silence the fools.
When I decide that truth must go forth, nothing can stop it.
In the past, I spoke and galaxies were formed
against the emptiness of space.
I presented and formed My creation to honor My truths.
I will now redeem absolute truth
from the distorted foolishness that prevails in your world.
Enough!
I am disgusted with the distortions of My Word.
I am finished with those who become high things
that exalt themselves against the knowledge of My Word.
Now I will take charge of everything
to bring My personal conclusions to light.
Watch as I move.
Watch established kingdoms fall.
Watch My Word be performed.
Now is the time.
Everything is in order to fulfill My plan.
Watch and be amazed!*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

“Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and nothing shall in any way harm you.”

Luke 10:19 AMP

Ben stretched and yawned and figured he'd better get up. Having slept for nearly twelve hours, he was one of the last to awaken. Taking an appraisal of the room he occupied, he could see Reefer seated in a corner by himself, resting his elbows on his knees, head down, probably deep in thought or prayer. On the far side of the room, Tim Hanek was in animated conversation with a man named Gary, while Katie, two men, and another woman sat nearby listening to what was being said.

Reefer got up and went over to Ben. “Do you see how many left in the middle of the night?” he asked quietly, wanting no one to hear his comment.

“What happened, man?” Ben queried. “I thought they were all in the main room with Rusty.”

“This is it,” Reefer said, referring to the remaining eight people, including himself.

“You mean that the rest bought the lies from yesterday?” Ben stood up in astonishment, looking hopefully around the corner for others who weren't there. He voiced his confusion to Reefer. “How could this happen? How could they be so stupid after all they went through and learned?”

The man talking to Tim turned to those who were sitting on the floor and spoke very pointedly to them, waving one hand in the air and holding a bible in the other. Then he threw the bible to the ground in animated disgust. As he started toward the entrance of the cave, he turned to see if anyone was following him.

It was obvious to Ben and Reefer that he'd made a decision to go to the pod city and was hoping to take others along. The two men and one of the women got up from their positions on the floor, gathered their meager belongings, and followed Gary past Rusty, who watched them without expression. Without even a good-bye or thank you or one look back, they proceeded down the hill toward the pod on which the mother ship rested.

Those who remained joined Rusty in the main room. After a while, Tim broke the silence. “You mean, after all we've gone through, the rescues and everything, it's only the four of us?” The impact of his question hung in the room with the heaviness of wet blankets hung out to dry. Together they stood in silence for weighty moments. Then Katie sank to the floor and wept for hours as she prayed for those who left.

No one talked for the rest of the morning. There was just nothing to say. Each found a place within the cave to grieve, pray, and wonder what would happen next. Intermittently, someone would get up to do some unnecessary task, like picking up a piece of paper, moving a box from one corner to another, or rearranging a shelf in the supply room. They stared at the walls, the floor, and each other as they thought and prayed. At times, they lay on their cots in silence, mourning the loss of those who had succumbed to the lies and placed themselves in harm's way.

Each of them had lost friends and companions and it hurt with an inconsolable gnawing deep inside. As the day wore on, however, their hurt for the people who chose to walk away from the truth in Christ and His Word transferred to the hurt that Jesus must have felt because of mass rejection and unbelief on the part of those who left. Grieving for His loss drove them deeper into prayer.

Around mid-afternoon, Reefer spoke up with his typical, no-nonsense approach to the situation, breaking their trains of thought and bringing focus to the issues at hand. “Looks like the Lord showed us who we can trust for whatever's comin' our way.” The others looked at him without replying.

“Well, He has.” Reefer kept going. “Look, we all know we've been called together for somethin' a little different than the rest.” He was referring to those who chose the pod over God.

“We also know that whatever we do, we're gonna need to do it together. I just think it's a real good thing to be able to count on each other when the goin' gets rough.” Reefer could hardly believe he'd said those words, thinking of the many times he'd desired to be a loner on his missions, rather than have to trust anyone else.

“What do you think the Lord has for us?” Ben asked, moving with the others toward the logs near the fire.

Rusty, who had been silent throughout the morning, spoke from his place near the entrance to the cave. “Why don’t each of you tell the others what the Lord has been showing you these last hours? Maybe you’ll get a better picture of your purpose and how it should unfold.”

For several moments no one spoke. Then Katie picked up her bible and opened it to the book of Esther.

“You know, a little lady named Esther was called to deliver a nation by the power of God. I keep thinking I’m being raised up for a specific time in history to accomplish something pretty powerful for the Lord, something far beyond anything I’ve ever done.

“Or like Mary. I mean, to be the one chosen over every other woman to be the mother of Jesus. She was no different than each of us; but she said “yes” to the Lord and look how He used *her*.”

“I keep thinking of all the stuff the Lord showed me when I was with Him,” Ben quietly said as he looked at the ground. “He showed me how nation would rise against nation and that everything would come to an end when He intervenes on behalf of Israel. What we’re seeing out there,” Ben motioned toward the cave entrance, “just doesn’t line up with what He told me and what I know from reading the Word. Last night when that big jerk said that there were no more nations so there would be no more wars, I felt sick to my stomach. I didn’t know why then, but now I think it was because his words called the Bible a lie and Jesus a liar.”

“Yeah, it makes me mad,” Reefer spoke up. “It makes me mad that what we’re seeing is not what I’ve read all my spiritual life in the Word. It isn’t supposed to happen this way.”

“Ya know, at first it was all pretty interestin’, all those big cake covers and the giant flashlight beams and everything; but then, when he started talkin’ smack about goin’ to see Jesus in the desert, when my bible warns me against that, it hurt my heart. What *really* burned me,” Reefer became more agitated, “was when that guy said *he* wrote the Bible. I wanted to hit him, but I knew *that* wasn’t gonna happen.”

“I got angry about how powerless I feel,” Tim said, taking his turn. “Actually, I was angry at how powerless they made Jesus out to be. He was just one of their pawns, not Lord of All. Nothing that was said matched up with what my mom taught me a little while ago.” Tim remembered his mom’s notes in her bible and the wonder her written words imparted to him as he read them and the accompanying verses. His growing love for the Word, and the relentless studying he had done since he arrived at the cave, solidified in his heart that what was going on was not of God.

Hearing Tim, Ben also remembered something very important that he’d been shown. “When I was seeing all that stuff from the Lord, it seemed very important that I remember the creation model. The Lord showed me that the earth is a young creation, and that He’s going to have many more after the salvation of mankind is completed. He told me there were the two rebellious creations, the angelic one and then mankind. He also showed me His solution for mankind’s rebellion—the opportunity for humans to become spiritually alive and back in relationship with God for eternity through submitting to the Lordship of Jesus. God would’ve told us if there were others besides angels and humans. His Word doesn’t lie, and it doesn’t make sense that He would leave out something as important as additional creations. What we’re seeing now has to be a lie. This has to be a demonic lie, because it doesn’t line up in any way with the Word.”

Rusty smiled, delighting in what everyone had shared and how they were getting closer to the answer the Lord had for them. You could almost see the light bulb going on over each of their heads.

Finally, Reefer spoke. “Do you think we’ve been called to do somethin’ to stop the lies?”

The magnitude of his words sent the others to different parts of the room to meet privately with the Lord. Rusty simply remained where he had been throughout the day. He sat and looked at the final four occupants of the cave and gave them each an encouraging smile when he caught their eye.

Tim couldn’t hold it in anymore. “What in the *world* could we possibly do against *them*?”

“How big is Jesus?” Rusty countered immediately, almost as if he anticipated the question and the urgent need for an answer.

Reefer walked over to where Rusty was sitting and squatted in front of him, looking him directly in the eye. “You mean to tell me that we, the four of us, have been called to come against all those guys and all that equipment all over the world?”

“What if they’re only demons, like Ben said?” Rusty answered, looking back. “You’re the one who said it, too, when you first saw the pod cities and the holograms, remember? You understood the lie then, even before the latest bunch of lies surfaced. What’s changed your mind?”

“Big demons,” Tim responded as he walked toward Rusty, “and a whole bunch of them with a ton of powerful equipment.”

“How big is Jesus?” Rusty said once more to make his point. Katie and Ben, their interest piqued, joined the other two in front of Rusty.

“Look,” Rusty said. “Don’t you think your Father God would do something about the fact that there’s such an onslaught against His Word at such a crucial time as this?” Rusty got up and walked toward the entrance.

“Don’t you think He would call upon someone He could trust to use the authority He gave them to put things back in order?” Rusty kept right on going before anyone could interject. “And don’t tell Him about how big the giants are in the land, as some others did a long time ago. You don’t even want to go there!” The dumbfounded quad stood with their mouths open before the animated, grinning angel, who ran his thumbs up and down the suspenders of his signature lumberjack outfit.

“You mean to tell me, us,” Reefer motioned his hand to include the others, “you mean to tell us that we, the four of us, out of all the people in the world that He could’ve chosen, He picked us to tear down all that scary stuff goin’ on out there, so everything will be back in line with what the Bible says about how it’s all going to end?”

“First of all, He could get it done Himself, but you’ve been given the privilege of joining Him in the process. He really would need only one of you who knew how to pray and fully understood the authority you’ve been given in Jesus, but what if He thought you might have more fun if you worked together?” Rusty said with a smile that quickly escalated to a series of snorts and guffaws.

“This humor stuff is groovy. Oops! Wrong decade,” Rusty said, wiping a tear from his eye. “You should see the looks on your faces.” Nobody else laughed. They were all dealing with the magnitude of what could be happening in the very near future.

“Are you asking us to go into one of those gigantic pods out there and take it for the Lord?” Katie didn’t even want to ask that question. Rusty responded with a chuckle. The group was relieved it didn’t progress any further. This was serious business!

“First of all, I’m not asking anything of you. I’m just here to help you understand your place in this project the Lord has for you, and to remind you of Who *He* is and who you are *in* Him; and second, the answer to your question is ‘no,’ you’re going to get them *all*!”

The unexpectedness of his statement produced an even more drastic change in the atmosphere of the room. They stared at Rusty like a deer in headlights, not understanding one bit why Rusty was still smiling.

“We’re going to get them all?” Tim repeated Rusty’s words, making sure he’d heard them right. Rusty nodded.

Reefer slowly made his way over to the cave entrance and looked out at the gigantic pod city. This is one of who knows how many like it all over the world, he thought. Add to that the enormous hologram images, the giant landing pads, and an endless list of other details and all he could see was the enormity of the enemy. Not to mention the mother ship!

“That sucker is way bigger than any moving thing I’ve ever seen!” Reefer remarked out loud, as he stepped outside one more time to see if maybe this time he might catch sight of the far end of the ship. Maybe it wasn’t really that big. At the moment, it was partly obscured by a low cloud formation.

“That’s just one of three of them big mammas,” he remarked, not knowing that Rusty and the others had moved in behind him. A little startled when he realized they were there, Reefer smiled apologetically for his less than enthusiastic attitude regarding what it appeared they were being called upon to do.

“This is just a little bigger than anything I’ve ever done before,” he said, somewhere between “You’ve got to be kidding!” and “Let’s get this thing done!”

Ben looked at Rusty, whose demeanor told him that he didn’t consider this any big deal. Well, of course not. He might not even be involved! He saw that the rest were in about the same state he was. Ben moved up a few feet. With only his head peeking beyond the cave opening, he began to laugh nervously at the sheer impossibility of their situation.

Rusty kept his laughter on the inside, understanding their thoughts and helplessness. Ignoring the fact that other people were there, Ben simply said, “God’s bigger than this, right?” and retreated to a corner of the main room. One by one, Reefer, Tim, and Katie also returned to the main room to pray.

As he sat quietly before the Lord, the Holy Spirit reminded Ben about his journey, the incident with the fisherman, his observance of the creation model, the scene in the dark cave with the Roman soldiers, the man with the thistles, and most of all, the wonder and power of God. Ben recalled the truth that everything God did was out of love.

As he mentally thumbed through the pages of probably the most important time in his life—other than when he gave his life to Jesus—he remembered. He remembered God. Oh, how extraordinary, how wonderful He is! How powerful! How, how, there were no words to explain. God! Oh yeah! God.

Faith and confirmation rose up from somewhere inside, somewhere deep down in his inner being. Not his faith, but faith in the faithfulness of God. “I think I’m going to enjoy seeing how my Father’s going to do this,” he said aloud, possibly too loud. But then again, he had just been given spiritual steel in his spine.

Katie, taking up the banner, said with calm excitement, “This could get really interesting!” Her words expressed the hearts of the rest of the group. Each had made the determination to accept the task before them, so they committed themselves to one another and the Lord to accomplish whatever it was, knowing that He was in charge and it just doesn’t get any better than that. Now that they’d stepped over the line in the sand, they all started to laugh, a combination of excited and nervous.

Hearing their laughter, Rusty came back into the cave and offhandedly asked, “What’s so funny?” Just a little Rusty interaction. He already knew.

From Our Father's Heart

Come away with Me just as Jesus did when He walked in your land. Find My heart in the quiet of My presence.

Is there anything too big for Me?

As I reveal Myself to you,

you will understand and remember that with just My Word,

I formed all that ever was and I will continue

to do so with all that ever will be.

I Am way too small in your eyes.

It is now time for Me to direct you past your carnal perspective.

I fit in no box that you can conjure.

I never have.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven.”
Matt. 16:19 AMP

In situations of this magnitude, quiet time is essential. The group spent time individually and collectively in the presence of their Lord to honor Him and be built up in Him in their spirits. They met again at the fire pit, each seated on one of the logs and ready for whatever was next.

“I’m sure we all agree this is a whole lot bigger than any of us could ever imagine, right?” Tim spoke first, as he stirred the fire with Rusty’s stick. Rusty had positioned himself off to the side of the group. He knew that intervention in the planning was not allowed. It was of paramount importance for the group to seek the Lord for answers and direction. The planning process, the heart searching, the steps of commitment, the prayer, and their interaction with God and each other all paved the way for the kind of faith and understanding they needed to move in the power of God when the time was right.

“I suppose you’re going to let us work this out by ourselves,” Tim shot a look at Rusty, as he moved aside some of the smaller pieces of wood sitting in the fire. All Rusty gave him in return was a bobble head nod.

“Ya know,” Reefer said, “when we all got alone with God after all the others left, each of us saw scriptures in the Word where God used specific people to do specific tasks for Him. Katie, you were shown the lives of them ladies Esther and Mary. We were sent to places where the impossible was done by single individuals or small groups, who were empowered by the Holy Spirit.” Reefer could sense a new resolve forming in his spirit.

“In the book of Acts, when the young believers were facin’ some threats by the big guys of that time, they gathered together and prayed.”

Ben interrupted. “That’s right,” he said, his eyes bright with enthusiasm. “They didn’t pray to be safe, they prayed for the boldness to do what they were being called to do. When they did that, the room even shook.”

Tim spoke with a slight hesitation. “I’m pretty new at this, but isn’t God the God who brings people to the very edge of something impossible; and then, when they see how impossible the situation is, and how powerless they are, doesn’t He bring them to the end of themselves and their own abilities?”

“You’re right,” Katie responded, jumping into the conversation again as she caught the winds of resolve that blew courtesy of the Holy Spirit. “All through His Word, He leads people into situations either by their obedience or simply by leading them in a direction. Then, when they aren’t able to do what He asks them to do, He does it either in them or through them. In fact...” Katie thought through a few Bible scenarios before she continued. The rest waited.

“If I’m seeing things right, those times when people have no answers or ability to fix a situation are crucial moments for whoever He’s about to use. I think sometimes it turns out to be the reason they were probably born, like Mary or Esther.” Now that was something to think about!

“I’ve been at this a little longer than the rest of you,” Reefer said matter-of-factly. “I’ve learned that there really are times in life, very specific times, when we’re asked to be obedient about something, no matter what it might mean to us. I know I’m not the best example of followin’ the Lord; in fact, if I would’ve followed Him with my whole heart, I wouldn’t be here now. Anyway, it seems to me that God wants all of us, in these moments, not just agreein’ to do it; but He wants every part of us, lock, stock, and barrel. Like Esther. She said ‘yes’ to God, knowin’ her very life was on the line. She was gonna die if God didn’t save her.”

The Holy Spirit drew them to be quiet and wait. They continued to pray and allow Him to minister and orchestrate.

Tim felt he should speak. “I was just thinking, isn’t it true that sometimes the only thing we have to give God is our helplessness? Sometimes the only thing we can do is give everything to Him and trust He’ll give us the power to do whatever He asks? I’m thinking of the verse that goes something like, when I’m weak, He is strong. Sorry, I can’t remember where that is at the moment.”

Katie voiced the conclusion to which everyone was coming. “So are we saying that this very moment is our specific moment in time? It’s the moment we’ve all been born for?”

Reefer?”

“Well, if Father God won’t let me fly that thing before He gets rid of it, I’m ready to go. Count me in.”

“Tim?”

“I’m in,” Tim managed to get out, as he doubled over in laughter in response to Reefer’s remark.

“Ben?”

“Absolutely!”

“Me, too!” Katie beamed, as she clapped her hands.

“Wow!” Ben said quietly. “That was quick! And awesome!”

“So let’s get on with it,” Reefer admonished, “before we talk ourselves out of it. If we’re gonna do this thing, let’s do it.”

The challenge of the impossible always intrigued this man of action. Some familiar juices, similar to how he felt heading into a combat zone for a rescue, began to stir within him. He tried to establish the level of the playing field, just as he would in assessing the parameters and pitfalls of any operation he took on when he was flying into hostile fire.

“I think the first step is we need to get squared away in our hearts that Father God wouldn’t have called us to do this thing if He wasn’t gonna see it through. Agreed?” Everyone agreed and they took some time to let the truth of that settle in.

“I hope you don’t mind,” Katie said, when everyone was ready to continue, “but I want to make sure that I know what God is calling us to do.” They gave her the green light to proceed. “As I understand this whole situation, what we see out there isn’t really happening. Is that right?”

“Oh, it’s happenin’ all right, but it’s only demons lyin’ to us and God wants to bring everythin’ back in line with His Word and His timetable,” Reefer enthused. “I don’t know how they do it, but spiritual beings can appear real in the physical realm. Rusty here is a good example. Who would’ve thought that an angel could look so scruffy?” Reefer looked at Rusty with a grin. Rusty scowled, but he couldn’t hold the pose and a smile emerged. “One more thing. Satan’s deception out there also showed up as pod cities and mother ships.

“All I know is there ain’t no aliens, because God never told us about ‘em. There ain’t no flyin’ saucer things, even though we see some pretty convincin’ evidence sittin’ out there and some pretty real lookin’ people talkin’ to us and tickin’ us off.”

Reefer’s words were less than eloquent, but they pretty much summed up Tim’s and Ben’s take on what was outside the cave.

“OK, so whatever we’re looking at out there *is* actually there, but underneath it’s not what it looks like. I think I get that. The Holy Spirit can clear that up for me. Then, what we need to do is look at God’s Word and see what He says about the time frame we’re in and what’s supposed to be happening from now to the end, because what’s out there now is not part of His plan.”

Ben said, “That’s good, Katie.”

She continued, “I’ve been trying to read the sections in the Bible that can help me understand the times that are coming and I read that there will be many wars and that all nations will eventually come against Israel, that God planned it that way. He said in Ezekiel that everyone would know that *He* is God.

“So none of that stuff outside the cave makes any Bible sense and Balaur’s speeches are hogwash. I wish he’d just shut up. It’s like being in Back to the Future. Satan’s messing with the timeline and for some reason Father God seems to want to use us while He’s getting it back on track.”

“Hey! I just thought of something,” Ben looked like a little boy who needed to share an idea right away. “What we’re going to do isn’t going to bring peace or happiness, or even give us safety. Once this is accomplished, our world will still be marching headlong into the horrors of biblical end-time prophecy with all the wars and fighting and terrorism.”

Ben wanted to make sure he was getting his thoughts across. “I mean, this isn’t like we’re the good guys flying in on white choppers”—Ben tried not to look at Reefer as he said it—“to save the day and bring peace and safety. The only comfort we’ll be able to find in all of this is that we’ve been obedient to the Lord. Nobody will even know what we did, and nobody’s going to thank us.”

Ben gave his words time to sink in. “I know that it’s enough that we’re obedient and all that. In fact, you can’t do any better with God and I’m excited about that. It just struck me how different this is than how I thought my life would be used by God. You know, no medals, nothing.”

The others got it. Rusty just put his head down and thanked His Lord. He loved to watch Him reveal His truth.

Tim took his turn, almost with light-heartedness. “As I was reading the Word with our task in mind, the power of God and His faithfulness to His Word really stood out for me. All He asks when He calls us into service is that we trust Him and don’t try to accomplish anything by ourselves. He takes little guys, just like us, and does big things in our midst.” He paused.

“I think that’s probably our next step. We gotta know that if we get our hands on this, trying to do it in our own strength, all we’re going to do is screw it up. I don’t think that would be very good, considering the magnitude of what we’re being called to do.” Things became more obvious by the minute.

“So far, we’ve concluded that if God has called us to do something, we can be sure that it’s going to get done, no matter how impossible it looks to us; and that we’ll never be able to do anything in our own strength. In fact, if we try, we’re gonna blow it.” Reefer liked the way Katie got right to the point. She was right.

“I was reading in Matthew last night about how the Lord wants us to move with Him in everything.” Ben opened his bible to read to the group. “This is Matthew 16:19 Amplified version. *‘I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth, must be whatever is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven.’* The whole concept of waiting on God to get things done in the area where He gets things done, and only then calling them into existence down here with the authority He has given us, seems pretty clear, doesn’t it?

“I’ve looked through other versions of the Bible, and although they may not say it as directly, the message is still very clear. God does it in heaven, and then we get to see it happen here on earth. From what I’ve seen of the church since I was little, people have been doing it backwards for a long time. They have been calling on God to do things that they want done.”

Ben handed his bible to Tim and they all took turns reading the passage. While they read, he continued. “The words, ‘improper and unlawful’ really hit me hard. What’s outside the cave would qualify hands down as improper and unlawful based on God’s Word, His laws, and what the kingdom of heaven is all about.

“I have begun to believe God’s Word with all my heart. I have to because there is no other place for me to go any more, when I need truth. He’s proven Himself over and over since I committed my life to Jesus, and He always backs it up with His Word. The prophecies alone that have already come to pass are an overwhelming track record of its accuracy, as far as I’m concerned.

“What I’m getting at is that according to the Word, which I believe to be the truth, what we see with our eyes out there and can probably touch with our hands is unlawful; and if it’s unlawful and God has bound it in heaven, then, if this is our mission, we need to bind it here on earth when He gives us the green light. I’m almost thinking this verse is the basis of what God has called us to do; and if He’s binding and declaring unlawful in the kingdom of heaven and tells us to do likewise here, then it’s bye-bye mother ship and everything else that goes with it.

“Selah. Pause and calmly think of that!” he added. “Just a little Amplified humor.” With that, Ben looked at Rusty, who still seemed to be enjoying immensely the direction that the conversation was taking.

“You know the spiritual realm,” Ben addressed his grinning friend. “That’s where you normally live, isn’t it? *Is* that the way it really works?”

“I’ve never seen anything God intends to do not get done. If you guys wait for Him to accomplish in heaven what He has asked you to do before you attempt to do it here, it’s going to be like a hot knife through butter.” Rusty liked to use words and phrases that he picked up while hanging around with humans.

“I think he said ‘yes’,” Reefer commented with a smile.

“I just have one question.” Everyone turned to face Tim, who seemed almost afraid to speak. “Tell me once more why God needs us to do this thing.

“I mean, He’s God. He spoke everything into existence, including the heavens, the earth, and all the other planets without our help, didn’t He?

“Why does He want to use us to readjust this little glitch, and I assume it really is only a small glitch as far as He’s concerned, when you compare it to the things He’s already accomplished? He could just say the Word and those things out there would be gone, wouldn’t they?” No one had a ready answer.

“Come on guys, I need your help to give me some assurance that this is His idea, not ours. The last thing I want to do is go after those guys out there, thinking His presence is with us to accomplish this, and then find ourselves alone and powerless in a futile venture.”

He continued to vent his frustration. “It would be as foolish as peeing on a forest fire, thinking that somehow we could put it out, if we attempt to do this on our own. We’d really be setting ourselves up for a royal wipeout, not to mention the possibility of some pretty intense chastisement from the Lord, if we survived our own foolishness.”

Tim stopped to consider again the seriousness of what they were contemplating. “This is one big intense forest fire. I don’t know about you; but I haven’t had enough water today, or any other day for that matter, to walk up to the fire thinking there’s enough in me to do any good.” Everyone smiled and agreed wholeheartedly.

Tim’s query and his animated perspective sent everyone back to the Lord and His Word. None of them wanted to be anywhere other than where the Lord had called them for very obvious reasons, so aptly brought to life by Tim’s forest fire example.

Without saying much of anything, everyone found a place to seek for answers. Rusty wandered toward the supply room to shut himself down while the others read, prayed, and slept through the night. A very eventful day was fast approaching.

From Our Father's Heart

I love how We can just talk, You call it prayer;

I call it intimate fellowship.

Because you are Mine,

I listen to your needs.

Because you come to Me as Jesus did,

I place all My power at your disposal.

Walk with Me in every situation that you face.

As We walk, side by side,

I will accomplish much through you.

You are Mine and I love you.

Since We have agreed to walk together,

let's do so with joy.

It is why Jesus went to the cross for you.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

“But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out].”
Heb. 11:6 AMP

Skies even darker than usual and high turbulent winds greeted Ben, as he looked once more through the opening of the cave at the pod city and the mother ship. The more acclimated residents of the city were gathering in the bright, calm grassy area under the mother ship for morning strolls, conversation, and general leisure. This bright, restful area brought home the inconsistencies so evident to his heart.

As the pod city area defied the weather, the actions of those who enjoyed its comfort and pleasures defied the gravity of the situation the Lord was planning. It was one more time a testimony of truth denied. The lies looked bigger and, at this time, more real than anything the small group was uncovering; but as Ben was discovering, that meant little to an all-powerful God. They were only lies and could not stand up to His power and truth.

At the campfire in the middle of the main room, Katie, Tim, and Reefer were already engrossed in conversation, as Rusty and Ben approached from different ends of the cave. Greetings and light conversation ensued before they joined together in prayer, dedicating their day and what it held for them completely to the Lord.

“I couldn’t find anything in the Bible that specifically says that God needs us to help Him with anything,” Katie shared with hesitation. Her words dropped like a smoldering bomb in the middle of the group. Rusty took his position off to the side once again, knowing that his companions must find God’s truth for themselves or they would be ill-equipped to go any further.

“I couldn’t either,” Reefer immediately chimed in, sensing the importance of finding the truth. “What I did find, though, was His constant desire to use those He created to make a difference in their world for Him, bringin’ Him glory— especially after the work of the cross.”

Reefer picked up his bible, which looked more like an explosion of paper loosely held together by a binding that had long ago lost its ability to do any binding at all. As he did, some of the pages fell near the fire, almost close enough to become enflamed. Without missing a beat in his conversation, Reefer snatched up the pages and reinstalled them in their proper place, then began turning to the pages he had pored over late into the night and early morning.

Everyone in the cave ardently followed Reefer as he went from passage to passage. Periodically, Tim, Ben, or Katie would remove their own bookmarks to show that the Lord had earmarked the same verse for them that Reefer had just shared. When they were done, they had quite a collection of the same verses, given individually, as the Lord confirmed His Word and the intent of His heart for them as a group.

In the time they met together to share their findings, the Holy Spirit had the opportunity to confirm in their hearts collectively that although He doesn’t need anyone to help Him, He chooses to show His power through the powerless. Only then can those who have done mighty works in His Name be free from having a seed of rebellion placed in their hearts by the enemy, whereby pride would enter in, causing them to think they deserved some of the glory that resulted. The impossible remains impossible unless the Lord accomplishes the task. When the impossible is accomplished, then the Lord receives all the glory for what He chooses to do.

“So, it’s a go!” Tim commented with brightness in his voice after several moments, in which he received absolute confirmation in his own heart. Those four little words brought much relief to the others. It was the period at the end of a paragraph that included an intense search for the Lord’s direction and their ability to commit to all it entailed.

“I better start drinking a lot of water,” Ben said with a straight face. “We have a forest fire to put out.” The intensity of the moment was broken and provided a catalyst for the release of all their pent-up emotions and stress.

Rusty was the first to break into uproarious laughter. How could it be any different? He was the epitome of “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.” He abandoned himself to everything from giggles to continuous roars and belly laughs. It proved contagious and it caught on fast.

Katie, sensing absolute freedom and an assurance of being in the Lord’s perfect will for the first time in her life, migrated from childlike giggling to outright laughter to deep sobs of joy as she ran the gamut of the many emotions she’d held below the surface for so long.

Being solidified in her commitment to serve the Lord was only the beginning of her total healing and legacy as a child of God. The answers she had found during her days in the cave were a culmination of a long, hard search for the answers to life that had eluded her at every turn.

She finally belonged. More than that, she finally belonged with others who held her as an equal. Better yet, she belonged and was about to participate in a specific task of eternal consequence ordained by the Lord Himself. Her joy was almost too much to bear.

True to his character, Reefer jumped and howled like a cowboy around a campfire, which caused the others—especially Rusty—to laugh even more. Looking much like a puppet that had lost its strings and had no control of its legs, arms, and neck, his movements—a combination of jolts, gyrations, and humanly unattainable spasms—were the embodiment of any dance choreographer’s worst nightmare.

The man so untouched by the many close calls in his life, so intense in all that he did, so emotionless even in the most life-threatening peril, finally gave in to the hidden waterfall of feelings he kept so tightly wrapped up in macho toughness. The one so much in control was given the freedom in Christ to be totally and utterly out of control for this glorious moment. Reefer looked and acted like a fool in front of those he had begun to love as no one else in his entire life, and it didn’t matter. It just didn’t matter.

Ben and Tim linked arms and spun around in a circle like schoolboys on a playground, laughing out of control and dizzy. Neither knew how to do an Irish jig, but that didn’t stop them. Dance they did until it was all too much for Rusty to resist. Jumping from his place, he joined the two, who became three, then four, then five, as they ended their Fred Astaire session looking like a crack-the-whip segment at a Holiday on Ice presentation.

“That was fun!” Ben stated breathlessly, wiping tears of joy from his eyes. Katie could only sit, quietly exhausted. Reefer, not finished yet, danced solo as only he could off to the side. Tim and Rusty calmed down, but one would start giggling and set the other one off. This went on for quite some time. Then the Lord brought them all back from His healing and power impartation session and on to their next step.

“So, what do we do now?” Ben asked, after everyone had settled down—even Rusty. “I mean, we’ve been told what we’re supposed to do. We know we have the Lord’s power to do it, so it doesn’t matter how big it really is. And...” Ben paused for emphasis, “*and*, we are sure that he’s called us specifically to do it, yes?”

Everyone agreed.

“I think it’s time to pray,” Katie voiced what everyone held in their hearts.

No one in the group had ever attempted to pray about something so gargantuan before, so heated conversation ensued as to how and what and how long to pray. For about an hour, opinions flew and options were discussed until Reefer, who several minutes prior had walked away from the group to think by himself, quieted the group with his typical no nonsense input.

“Hold it,” he said loudly, breaking up several localized discussions.

“Hold it,” he repeated in a normal volume.

“This ain’t no big deal to God, and our long-winded, pompous prayers ain’t gonna do much more than make *us* feel more important than we really are in all this.”

“He’s right,” Ben agreed. The others, made aware of their foolish opinions, knew he was right, too.

“Let’s just go to God,” Reefer quietly explained, “and ask him to do whatever He wants to do. Then let’s wait for Him to tell us when it’s done up there, so that we can speak it and He gets it done down here.” The unabashed, simple truth of Reefer’s words rang with the clarity of a small-town church bell on a frosty morning, carrying its sound to all in range of its beckoning call.

Immediately they postured themselves for prayer. Reefer remained where he was, and simply dropped his head.

“Father,” he began. “Father, you know all about what’s been goin’ on down here and what You’ve called us to do. In fact, we believe You had this planned from the beginnin’ of time. We wanna honor You by admittin’ that we can’t even begin to do what You want done. So, right now we come to You to ask You to begin whatever You hafta do and then tell us when we’re supposed to jump in here. We thank You for hearin’ us, because we come to You in Jesus’ Name.”

Everyone added an “Amen” because all that was needed had been said. No one in the room had even an inkling that anything was different. In the heavenlies, however, it was another story.

Poised and waiting, brilliant forces commanded by God Himself, standing ready, sprang into action at the sound of His voice. Violence, unparalleled since the original creation, disrupted the darkness and began to restore truth into the demonic realm.

Many corridors—which had previously been opened and gave the demons access to unsuspecting and helpless mankind—were closed. Others remained open, so the demonic influence could still affect those who rejected God’s truth. These hoards, however, remained limited and could only accomplish what the Lord desired to use to accomplish His plans.

Event after event, war after war, skirmish after skirmish ensued as everything was placed back in God’s order. Light replaced darkness, truth replaced lies; and the Word of God, step by powerful, unstoppable step, regained its rightful place wherever a distortion of its integrity had taken place.

The truth overcame and would never again even appear to have been overcome as the Lord’s presence accompanied His Word to accomplish His will one more time and forever. Talk about change!

“Well, that was pretty simple,” Katie marveled, somewhat off balance at the simplicity of Reefer’s prayer.

Ben, feeling nothing different than before the prayer was offered up, stated the obvious. “It’s just time to believe that Father God heard us and go about our business until He calls on us.”

“What business is that?” Tim spoke for everyone. Not having any answers, nor really knowing what his comment meant himself, he looked at Rusty.

“Oh, boy! Here comes the fun!” Rusty stated and flashed his now familiar Cheshire cat grin, which made everyone a little uncomfortable.

From Our Father's Heart

My mercies are new every morning.

Never give up on someone because they live in deep sin.

I have plans that you may not understand.

You draw close to Me.

You become all that you can be in My Son.

Love others more deeply.

Care more for those I care about.

I will do the rest.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

“Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

22) Be merciful to those who doubt;

23) snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupt flesh.” Jude 21-23 NIV

Everyone, in their own way, dealt with the simplicity of the prayer that Reefer prayed in contrast to everything that led up to it. What about all the preparations the Lord made for the cave, all the provisions it had, even Rusty? What about all the circumstances that occurred in each of their lives that led up to the moment of that prayer? It all defied logic but considering who God was and what He had chosen to do, it made perfect sense.

It was over and done in such a short time without even a hint of fanfare. Just a simple, God-ordained prayer of helplessness. It reminded the group of an event on a hill called Calvary many years ago, when the words, “It is finished,” echoed throughout all eternity—past, present, and future—with its raw, unstoppable truth. Each became free in their own hearts to simply wait on the Lord for the next step—when and only when He gave it to them.

A short time after they prayed, Rusty surprised them with a much smaller task for them to accomplish while they waited. “I don’t know if you’ve thought about this, but when the Lord removes everything out there and replaces it with truth, all the people and demons and everything else go with it. In fact, even this cave may not be as it is now when He puts things back in order.”

The group hadn’t really thought about it before, but their minds certainly began to entertain it now. What exactly was real around here? Rusty watched with amusement as his group eyed their surroundings.

Then he spoke. “The Lord wants someone to remain here, for some reason, after everything is returned to the truth of His Word.

“Gloria!” Tim gasped.

“You mean that snotty broad?” Reefer apologized with his face to Katie at his gender reference and corrected himself.

“You mean that lady who was ripped from my chopper and was talkin’ to us in them holograms all the time?” he said, pointing toward the cave entrance, his voice louder than usual, giving away his frustration. “*That* Gloria?”

Everyone looked at Rusty. “The Lord wants you to go get her before everything changes.” The room was nine months pregnant with an onslaught of questions waiting to see daylight.

Rusty headed everyone off with a question of his own. “Why would you even question to whom the Lord chooses to give His mercy?”

This quieted their hearts, for they knew they had no right to judge anyone, especially in light of their own sin and rebellion.

“Before the Lord calls on you guys to do your part here after He’s done His in heaven, you are to remove this Gloria from the pod city below us,” Rusty told them. “It should be sorta fun and exciting.”

“Why don’t you come with us?” Ben said playfully. The others jumped on the band wagon, egging Rusty on until he had to get serious; quite a different posture than the jovial lumberjack persona.

“I can’t; I’m at war!” Rusty said.

That shut the group down for about ten seconds; then Reefer could wait no longer to get to the bottom of things as usual. “You need to tell us straight, ol’ buddy. What do you mean you can’t, when you just told us that we’re gonna.” He got nods of assurance from the others to go ahead. “Somehow that’s not instillin’ a whole lotta confidence in us to do what you just told us to do.”

“Do you guys realize what you started with that little prayer of yours a while ago?” Rusty began before anyone else had time to question his motives.

“There’s a whole lot of unseen stuff happening right now where I usually hang out. You guys have requested that some mighty powerful strongholds be torn down and some pretty heavy-duty demonic warriors don’t want to relinquish their hold on those territories. They don’t like to give things up.

“This is not only going on in isolated places, but throughout all the realms and all the positions they occupy. The powers that be in the dark realm are putting up some pretty intense resistance, even while we speak. We all know who’s going to win; but until we do, there are some mighty battles going on and I’m part of that, even though I’m here with you.”

Rusty paused before he continued to allow his words to sink in.

“When you go down there, you’re going in the Name and the covenant authority of Jesus. All the defeated minions have to deal with you as they would deal with Him. They fully understand their defeat on the cross and know they have no power over you. That battle has been decidedly won. You can walk through their ranks like a hot knife through butter, but I can’t.” The group smiled at one another, feeling pretty bullet-proof at the moment.

Rusty continued, “I and all those like me, on the other hand, have been called to another war, the immediate war to bring the truth of the Word back and I can function only on my level in those realms. The one you guys just called us to win, remember?”

“Each of us in the angelic order has been given specific commands and tasks. My job is here with you until it’s completed. Anyway, some of those guys down there are a whole lot bigger and more powerful than I am. I’d be foolish to jump into an arena that I’m not supposed to be in, so I can’t go with you.”

Rusty stopped again before he made a heart to heart comment.

“By the way, what’s going on in places you can’t see is a whole lot more involved and intense than I’ve seen in a long time. Big changes are taking place and an incredible shifting of authorities and powers is happening.

“I continue to learn more and more about the cross, what it accomplished, and what authority your creation has been given in times like these. I heard what you guys asked, and how you asked it; and boy, did you ever start something! It’s really cool!” Rusty loved picking up new words. Cool.

“So while that’s happenin’, we’re goin’ in that pod thing with God’s power all over us and over everything in our way?” Reefer’s question was welcomed by the rest of the group.

“Well, you’re partially right,” Rusty corrected. “You have absolute power over all of the dark realm, and most of the upper echelons are so busy with the tumult that’s going on in the heavenlies that they won’t even notice you.

“The problem you have is the humans who have been possessed over the years and led to this place by the spirits that control them. Right now, there is an astounding amount of confusion because of the warfare. These human hosts are reeling, some in varying degrees of insanity, all because of the destruction that is taking place right now in the established order they’ve submitted to for so long. All they believed in and based their lives on is slipping away from them and they don’t know what to do about it. They’re now so dead inside that they’re totally out of control and very dangerous. That’s who you’ll have to worry about.”

Now Rusty turned his attention to Tim. He looked him square in the face with a glint in his eyes. “By the way, Tim, this is an answer to your prayers. Father God just wants to bless you.”

Tim stood in shock at Rusty’s words. Reefer had to go by himself for a while to deal with the idea that they were all placing themselves in harm’s way in the name of love, for Pete’s sake.

From Our Father's Heart

*Do you understand that it is My job to give you wisdom,
power, and strength when you need it?
If you know that you are in My will
and desire My plans to be fulfilled,
you only need to walk
and I will meet you in your need.
Be confident in Me and My Word,
not in what you see with your eyes.
I am all truth.*

CHAPTER THIRTY

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

11) Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.

12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Eph 6:10-12 NIV

“How can we tell the difference between the demon bodies and the humans?” Katie asked the others at the entrance to the pod city. “They all look like humans and, if we’re going in there, it might be a good thing to know.”

“I guess it’s a good time to pray,” Ben said, making the others grimace, remembering that they hadn’t prayed.

“Sorry, Lord, we should’ve thought of that back in the cave,” Tim remedied that immediately. “We really need your wisdom, Lord. Help us know where to go and what to do. Thank you!”

The prayer was once again short, but very sweet to the ears of the Lord. In the spiritual realm, some warring, protective angels—those much more powerful than Rusty—were dispatched instantly from their posts to be guardians for the small group.

“I’m feeling this has got to happen pretty fast, if it’s gonna get done at all,” Ben said, as he moved into the pod entrance. “Follow me.”

“You’re crazy,” Tim whispered into his ear, as they walked deeper into the pod. “We don’t even have a game plan.”

“Have you ever heard of flying by the seat of your pants?” Reefer was on high alert with excitement.

This was good for him. This he could see and touch and get his hands on. Adrenaline was flowing through his veins again, something he hadn’t felt for quite some time. It felt good. He could sense his combat skills and the instincts the Lord had given him long ago back in play.

Once through the door to a large complex, God’s beloved warriors entered a large, well-lit, immaculately beautiful corridor about thirty feet wide, thirty feet high, and longer than the eye could see. Full length, the corridor could very well have reached the very center of the pod. It was hard to tell, however, because there were expansive arboretums placed at precise intervals, which created traffic circles that led to other hallways with meeting and gathering rooms on both sides.

Each arboretum exposed circular balconies, many layers high, which led to multiple stories, like a high-rise apartment building. The number of stories above the arboretums increased toward the center of the pod. At intervals on either side of the hallways were garages that housed two and four passenger transport vehicles, which were available for use to certain residents. These vehicles hovered at running-board height above the polished floor. Smaller, wheelless individual scooters were parked near the entrances to several of the doors in front of residential homes.

Awestruck and somewhat intimidated by the sheer immensity and ingeniousness of the pod city, Reefer moved next to Tim in a moment of weakness and said with a quizzical look on his face, “We’re gonna do *what* to this thing with our little prayers? Just think, this is only one of thousands and thousands that are going to be gone after God is done.”

Katie joined the conversation. “We are sure that we heard from God, aren’t we?”

The group found themselves gawking like little school children at the structure. They kept looking back and forth at one another with wide eyes and open mouths. It was hard not to laugh with amazement.

“I sure am glad it’s not *my* faith that’s going to get the job done.” Taking a good look around the massive complex one more time, Tim continued. “Right now, I have none. In fact, I know my faith is under attack. We need to remember that it’s God’s faithfulness that’s going to accomplish anything that needs to be accomplished, not our puny faith or abilities. This looks way too big and way too real to think that what we’ve been told is going

to happen is actually going to happen. I know I have to get on God's wavelength on this. My thoughts are worthless." The looks on the faces of the other three told him they could relate. Thank God for His faithfulness!

Ben, moving in the Spirit, went over to a uniformed guard seated behind a desk, who seemed unaware of their presence until Ben spoke.

"Where's Gloria Manly?" he asked in an unassuming manner.

"Who are.."

"In the Name of Jesus, where is she?"

"Level C, Room 6," was his obedient reply to Ben's quietly asked question.

As the squad of warriors observed the uniformed guard, they saw the answer to their prayer concerning being able to tell the difference between humans and demons. Because of the warfare that was taking place in the heavenlies and the growing success of the heavenly warriors, the guard—obvious now to the onlookers that he was a demon spirit—intermittently faded in and out of visibility.

Complete parts or small portions of his being became translucent and even transparent, depending on how much ground his kind was losing on the battlefield. Although initially defeated at the cross, and now suffering progressive defeat in their newest assignment, these life elements were still relentless, bent on striking just one more blow for the cause of their masters.

"You will have no memory of us, is that clear?" Ben said, so no alarms would sound their presence. The demon dropped his head and cowered against the wall as if hiding in fear, unable to look the beloved child of God in the face.

Reefer brought the group together for a quick conference before they went any further. "I have an idea," he said to Ben. "Why don't you and Tim be point men for us by walking in front and taking authority over all the demon forms that might get in our way. Pray that we become invisible to them. If any slip through, take authority over them. We've been shown how powerless they are against God and the Name of Jesus. Let's let prayer and the power of the cross lead the way." Everyone else was more than happy to follow that course.

Katie spoke up, believing that the Holy Spirit was guiding her. "I think I know where Level C, Room 6 is."

"Great!" Reefer responded. "I'll cover our backs and watch for whatever needs watchin'."

Now they had a plan. Proceeding at a rapid pace, yet not quite running, the group headed toward Gloria. Only after they had gotten past the main lobby area and down the hall did they realize the amount of chaos that was taking place in other parts of the structure.

The major areas of the pod, occupied mostly by the heavy hitters of the demonic realm, were war zones of spiritual combat being evidenced in the fourth dimension. Smaller, less prominent authorities, however, were already losing their last vestige of power and access to physical bodies.

Some crawled on hands and knees, blindly bumping into other lesser demons and even walls. Others—some with limbs and partial limbs missing—faded in and out of dimension, groaning and drooling as the power of God overtook their strongholds piece by piece, leaving them grotesque and in torment. Still others turned on each other, their true character coming forth, as invincible power cracked the dimensions they had occupied to deceive the unaware and ignorant.

Humans, who had accepted the invisible number and the lies that accompanied its bondages, encountered the same torment, very much like the demons that had taken on human form. Some clawed at the area that contained the number, attempting to somehow remove it and the intense pain it was now causing. Those, who attempted to escape to some unknown destination, were thrown against a wall or to the floor by the hosts they had accepted that were still capable of controlling them. The hapless humans screamed and drooled in agony as their bodies turned on them.

Others sat like coiled animals against the walls in the hallways or in their rooms, growling and hissing at unseen tormentors. Then there were those who cowered in heart stopping fear, as they were now able to see into the dark, horrible world they had embraced by not choosing Jesus.

Becoming very evident was the turmoil going on behind closed doors as the four earthly warriors approached the next section of hallways. It sounded like a ward in an insane asylum. Horrible persistent screaming escaped some rooms. The occupants of other rooms produced deep, macabre moans. Behind some closed doors, they heard weeping, wailing, and sobbing noises from the occupants as the demon forces were being forced to leave them and they attempted to maintain their strongholds in a futile last-ditch effort.

"I'm glad most of them are in their rooms," Katie expressed her relief, as the group hurried down the hallway, which was mostly occupied by spirits totally oblivious to their presence because of the prayers and commands going forth through Tim and Ben. The humans in the area were in too much pain to be any threat.

After directing the small party around corners, up escalators, past openings, and through arches, Katie announced their arrival at Room 6. When the door simply sprang open, they were both horrified and surprised at what greeted them.

"That can't be her!" Tim exclaimed.

In the farthest corner of the room, Gloria sat on the floor, a whimpering, slobbering mess. Possessed by higher echelons that still had some power over her, she screamed, clawed, and squirmed in agonizing fits of insanity. Her eyes were ablaze with fear. Her face was contorted and dripping with sweat, as the hosts that had occupied her for so long tormented her for whatever time they had left before their eviction.

From her unceremonious position, Gloria frothed foul blasphemies from hell itself just before pouncing on Katie and knocking her to the floor almost unconscious. Tim and Ben instinctively grabbed the violent prey to hold her down but were thrown clear across the room like two small toys in the hands of a vicious child. Both of them had to shake off the results of their forced flight and subsequent landing before they had any ability to respond in any way.

Gloria turned toward Reefer, who was just entering the room, and tried to charge him. Dealing in the spiritual realm, the experienced war veteran simply held up his hand in front of her, as though he were a traffic cop directing lanes of cars.

"Stop," he calmly commanded.

Gloria slumped to the floor in midstride, unconscious, about two feet from his outstretched hand. The others looked on in amazement. The struggle was over in an instant.

"Sorta like the time this lion came at me when ol' Tiny, my favorite chopper, went down in some jungle. 'Course, then I had a knife," Reefer said nonchalantly, as the others could only stare at the silent mass on the floor next to them and the grinning cowboy leaning on the wall just inside the door, while they rubbed aching body parts.

"Yeah, we know, now let's get out of here," Ben finally replied, as he picked himself up off the floor.

"I'll carry her over my shoulder," he said to Tim. "You be point on the way back."

Tim led the way, and Katie retraced their steps, telling him where to go and when to turn. Ben, who carried Gloria, came next, followed by Reefer.

The group twisted and turned their way past the oblivious spirit entities, covered and blinded by the power of the cross in Tim. They navigated through hallways, down escalators, and out the front entrance, making their way up the hill to the cave. Stopping for nothing and exhausted from the journey, they all let out a sigh of relief once they entered the cave.

"That *was* fun!" Reefer remarked, a look of accomplishment on his face, as he slumped against the wall along with the others. "What are we doin' tomorrow?" he joked, which resulted in a combination of weak laughter and groans.

Then a loud, boisterous laugh erupted on the other side of the main room. It broke any remaining tension and for several wonderful moments, the group laughed, rested a bit, spoke of the wonder of God, thanked Him for His goodness, remembered specific instances of the rescue, and just plain delighted in the joy of the Lord. Then it dawned on them that Gloria still lay unconscious in a silent heap on the floor where Ben had deposited her.

From Our Father's Heart

*Learn to call into being what I have ordained in the heavens
and you will never fail.*

Never attempt to do My work in your own strength.

That is absolute foolishness.

Rely on Me.

Trust in Me.

I will fulfill what I have determined must be done.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace [Who imparts all blessing and favor], Who has called you to His [own] eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you.” I Pet. 5:10 AMP

“Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” Jn 5:19 NIV

Because the tentacles of every demon Gloria had ever embraced had been severed by the command of a simple believing Christian using the power that was given him because of the cross, Gloria was set free in the same way that Jesus released the two demon-possessed men in the region of the Gadarenes so long ago. For three days Gloria lay on a cot, tucked away in a warm corner of the main room. The Lord had placed her in what could best be described as a semi-conscious state as He ministered to her heart. Most of the time, she lay quietly as if in a deep sleep. Intermittently, however, she would toss and moan as if in torment, occasionally emitting a scream as deep-seated demons released their hold. Katie took charge of her care, wiping her forehead, talking to her, and changing her clothing when it became soaked with sweat.

In general, the weather outside the cave performed as if the seasons themselves were confused. Torrential rains, followed by snow and blowing cold, often gave way to sunny, almost tropical heat, followed by more snow, all within hours of each other.

It became increasingly obvious that the pod city and the mother ship were in gross turmoil, as the time grew nearer for the ministry team to call into existence what was at present being done in the heavenly realms. The units, once brightly lit and inviting, were now dull and foreboding, belying the hope and prosperity they once appeared to have. There were no more holograms with lectures of promised safety and provision, no more search vehicles, and no more lights coming from either the mother ship or the pod. Everything had taken on a persona of old abandoned vehicles, tarnishing and decaying moment by moment as godly law was being restored outside the realm of the senses.

“Notice the grassy area,” Ben commented to the other men and Rusty. They had migrated to the entrance of the cave while Katie was changing Gloria’s clothes and bedding one more time.

The area under the mother ship was changing rapidly as time elapsed. Formerly green and healthy with trees, shrubs, and vibrantly colored flowers, all had wilted and died almost overnight. A form of decay like mold had even begun to grow around the edge of the area, visibly progressing inward as the group watched, causing a dank stench as it infected the area.

Time sped by as the observant and alert group prayed, talked, and simply had fellowship with one another. Rusty, knowing that the time of his interaction with his charges was drawing to a close, became more vocal than usual, as he discussed trivial matters about the individual men and their lives before they were brought to the cave.

When Reefer asked Rusty what he was going to be doing after things came back in line with God’s Word, he simply grinned and said, “Oh! I’ll be around doing different stuff in different places. I never know until the Lord tells me. I’ve got eternity to explore the different facets of God’s character and His relationship with you guys.”

“Look!” Tim interrupted the conversation, pointing at the mother ship and the pod city.

“What just happened?” Ben exclaimed in wonderment as everyone turned toward the ship.

Katie, who had recently joined the men, said it quite simply. “I think they just died.”

The last trace of life seemed to ooze out from the now inanimate forms. An all-encompassing darkness encapsulated the objects and everything else outside the cave. A deadly silence hung in the air as the actual death of the deception took place in the kingdom of heaven.

“It’s time,” Katie whispered, bright eyed, yet quiet, as if the moment called for a unique reverence.

Rusty was not invited nor even capable of participating in what would happen next, so he stayed at the cave entrance as the others moved inside toward the fire. Focused on their assignment, the group hadn't noticed that he didn't join them.

"She's getting pretty agitated again," Tim noticed, as Gloria stirred uncomfortably as if arguing with some invisible foe.

"Let's focus over here," Reefer stated, bringing everyone back to the spiritual task at hand. "As I see it, all we're supposed to do is call into existence what has already been done by God, is that right?"

"I agree," Katie responded. "I think we just saw those things out there with all the life taken out of them. Maybe it's basically saying out loud, just like Jesus did, 'It is finished.'"

"It's cool to think those were the last words of Jesus on the cross, when He had completed what His Father asked Him to do," Ben commented, which brought them to reflect on the finality of His statement.

"Father," Reefer knew it was time to pray; the others did, too.

"Father, we joyfully come to You in the mighty Name of Jesus and the power of His blood. In obedience to what You have told us to do, we bind everything that has unlawfully taken place down here, those things that You have already bound in heaven. We loose down here what You have called lawful in Your Word and have loosed in the heavens. Thank You for using us. Amen."

It was finished. Those timeless words spoken on a cross at Calvary still echo whenever the plans of God are fulfilled. So simple, yet so profound. Such quiet words coming from honest hearts endued with power from the cross, amplified through the corridors of heaven by the Holy Spirit, vanquishing principalities and powers and restoring all that's lawful according to God's Word. The simplicity of Reefer's prayer was such a stark contrast to the power of what was being accomplished. Absolute silence ensued, except for a brief moaning gasp from Gloria, signifying that everything was indeed finished. A door-like spiritual force closed on one chapter in eternal history and opened to another, revealing truth as God intended it to be according to His Word.

From Our Father's Heart

Bask in the joy of My promises even in the darkest times.

Learn to live outside your comfort zone.

Move into the life that I have planned for you.

Ask forgiveness for your sins,

and then walk in that forgiveness.

I delight in providing it for you.

There is a life beyond your sin,

beyond your weakness.

Delight in Me and I will give you the desires of your heart.

I love you!

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

“And I will restore or replace for you the years that the locust has eaten--the hopping locust, the stripping locust, and the crawling locust, My great army which I sent among you.” Joel 2:25 AMP

The small team opened their eyes after they prayed with no hint or anticipation of what they saw, and found themselves in Walter Fairchild’s church, sitting on the altar steps near the podium—a very familiar place to Ben although he hadn’t spent much time there in the past. The morning sun pierced through several of the open windows on the east side, shedding its warmth on Gloria, who was peacefully sleeping on the front pew. Rusty was conspicuously absent. After checking Gloria, who remained calm, the group opened the front door of the church.

The noticeable sound of birds chirping, a sound they hadn’t heard during their stay in the cave, cheerfully greeted them. Cars and armored transport vehicles, serving their very busy and impatient occupants, pushed and beeped through traffic. International peacekeeping troops, who had restored order after the disappearance of those horrible Christian troublemakers, directed traffic and maintained their watches on almost every street corner to keep the residences and office spaces free from outbreaks of looting and violence.

Thinking it would be better not to move too fast into the world outside, the group retreated behind the church doors to acclimate themselves and plan their next moves within the restored society, which was on its way to a biblical culmination of events planned by God before the beginning of time.

Over the next few weeks, the Lord gave clear direction as His plan unfolded for everyone. Gloria, Ben, Katie, and Tim decided they would remain within the church building, counseling, teaching, comforting, and addressing the needs of individuals during the very hard times that were on the horizon as God’s plan continued to unfold. They were available to all, especially those who had not yet chosen to accept God’s invitation to establish a relationship with Him. They also encouraged and ministered to those who were determined to wash their robes in obedience to God’s Word.

As time passed, Tim and Gloria fell deeply in love with each other once she had fully accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, and all rebellious spirits no longer had any hold over her. Reefer even began to love her as a sister in the Lord.

Once hard, crass, and openly offensive, this radiant woman of God loved everyone she came in contact with in the same manner that Jesus loved them; especially Tim, the man she once belittled and scorned. Their wedding was a quiet, personal ceremony of dedication and commitment to the Lord and to each other. All present were very aware of the wonder and power of the cross.

Tim could only thank his Lord for answering a prayer he had forgotten he’d prayed. When he took time to think about it, he was pretty sure he hadn’t prayed that prayer at all, which just reminded him one more time of God’s incomparable love for him and His special notice of the things Tim didn’t even know he needed. The idea of God fulfilling a desire of his heart that he didn’t even know he had, just to bless him, made Tim drop to his knees in thankfulness many, many times over the remainder of his time on earth.

Reefer spent several months helping his friends secure the church premises physically and spiritually against attacks from the angry and dangerous segments of society. As soon as the perimeter was in place, he took to spending a majority of his time in prayer for personal direction, knowing that his flying skills were being wasted in a metropolitan environment.

“Pretty restless, *aren’t* you,” Tim commented out of the blue during one of their early-morning prayer sessions, which helped prepare everyone for the day ahead. Reefer looked over at Tim, a little surprised that someone had noticed his unrest. The group waited somewhat uneasily as he gathered his thoughts.

“I really love you guys. You know I’d do anything I can for all y’all.” Reefer felt his emotions starting to rise to the surface. He took a few breaths to choke back any sentiment and then abruptly tested the waters with his next statement.

“I hafta leave you guys in a couple days,” he blurted out just as Tim was about to speak. Everyone sat silently for a moment, even though each of them had known—to one degree or another—that something was definitely brewing under Reefer’s cowboy hat. They, too, fully understood that his skills and talents could be put to better use somewhere else in the pilot seat of a chopper. The atmosphere was bittersweet; they wholeheartedly supported his decision to move where the Lord was leading, but each one present was saddened to see him go after all they’d been through together had established such a cast-iron bond among them.

“Do you know where you’re going?” Ben finally inquired, the sigh that escaped him expressing the heart of everyone there. Reefer smiled as he stared into his shirt, keenly aware of the ridiculousness of his thoughts and the impossibility of his survival—at least in the natural—once he moved in obedience to what he believed the Lord desired.

“There’s this little hangar...” He stopped, wanting to make sure he presented his words properly. “There’s this little hangar in a small corner o’ nowhere that takes on only the rescues and flights nobody in their right mind would try. It has a bunch o’ beat up ol’ choppers, probably held together with balin’ wire and prayer.” His smile broadened and his eyes lit up. Reefer was back where he belonged, and they all knew it.

“They go places no one else will and do things no one but God can take credit for.” Talk about animated! Reefer stood up and began pacing the room, first mumbling to himself with his thumbs hooked inside the pockets of his jeans, then communicating aloud with his God, and finally gesturing emphatically as he rejoined the group and continued sharing with a wonder in his voice.

“They’ll even send one or two choppers to rescue a single downed flyer in another country. What’s so amazin’ is they’ll do the same for a missionary family whether they’re under attack or just waitin’ for a food drop. They fly when it’s downright stupid to fly and go where they don’t expect to come back from. Sometimes they fly on no gas at all with important pieces of the chopper not workin’ real well.”

His excitement drove him to pace the floor again. “I mean, if God wasn’t with ‘em, if He wasn’t actually holdin’ ‘em up, they wouldn’t make it in my opinion.” Having completed what he needed to say, Reefer landed in his chair once again, slightly winded, and waited for his friends to make a comment.

Gloria went first. “I only know how you fly from my days when I was another Gloria,” she began, referring to their first flight over the pod a seeming lifetime ago, “but I saw you do things with a helicopter that were uncanny.

“Since I’ve come to know you on the other side of the cross, you’ve become an out-of-place servant to all of us. Now you’re like a misfit toy.” She stopped for a moment and smiled before she continued. “There are others who really need you and who you are. I’m excited for them.”

Ben and the others took up the conversation, also encouraging Reefer and confirming his direction. Although their hearts held sorrow for their loss, there was an incredible hope for those who would be significantly affected by Reefer’s presence in their lives. In the next days, they helped him pack, reminisced over their adventures together, and took an extended time to say good-bye, reluctant to see their friend walk out the door.

Reefer hopped a ride with a missionary plane that dropped him off at one of their locations in the heart of a nondescript jungle about twenty miles from where he had been told he’d find the chopper hangar. One local agreed to guide him as far as he felt safe. After that Reefer was on his own.

Sent off with water and provisions from the mission, the two men traveled together for about two days through one of the most intricate jungles Reefer had ever navigated. Early on the third day, the guide left Reefer alone, but not before passionately requesting one more time that the pilot go no further because of the dangers that awaited him. Reefer smiled.

After praying with the guide and saying good-bye, he turned deeper into the jungle and remained continually in prayer. Two days later, knowing for sure he had walked in circles most of the time, Reefer emerged near a clearing where his view included three useable helicopters, an adequate hangar, and another building he assumed housed everything else this operation required.

Standing in the safety of the trees at the perimeter of the “airfield” so he could scout the area for a few minutes, Reefer decided to move with caution toward the hangar, a standard Quonset hut design. After taking off the sweatband he had worn for the last few days, he retrieved his wrinkled cowboy hat from his duffel bag and placed it in its usual position atop his head. He carefully made his way to the tree line closest to the hangar opening. From his vantage point, he could hear muffled voices, sometimes talking in singular fashion and other times in unison.

“That’s a prayer meetin’!” His heart rejoiced. When the singing began, he left his cover and silently made his way to the front of the hangar. Peering around the corner of the opening, he saw seven people raising their hands to heaven in praise. It gave him the boldness to step out of the darkness into the dim light of the fire that burned in the old fuel barrel located in the center of the group. He stood in quiet praise with them. When they finished, Reefer decided to make his presence known.

“Howdy!” was the only thing that came out of his mouth. The group displayed various levels of surprise and Reefer could hardly contain the laughter he felt welling up inside when he saw their reactions to his unexpected greeting. The surprise wore off quickly enough and one of the men exclaimed, “They’re here!”

“You guys are an answer to prayer!” another man shouted as he and the others made a beeline to welcome the unassuming, laid-back cowboy and the person who stood a short distance away from him. The sizeable, muscular man behind Reefer was also dressed in jeans, and carried a cowboy hat identical to his. As he stepped forward, his face broke into a remarkable smile and he approached Reefer with great purpose.

As Reefer extended his hand to the man who seemed to come out of nowhere, he was somewhat confused because he knew he had walked into the hanger alone. While their handshake was in progress, Reefer’s heart began to race with anticipation. “I’m Reefer McGee,” he said with a questioning yet knowing look on his face. “Pleasure to know ya.”

The man with the closely cropped auburn hair and very familiar blue eyes responded, “It’s going to be a real pleasure covering your back, Reefer. My name is Kirk Wilson, but everyone calls me Rusty.”

Epilogue

Merry and I are convinced our Father is calling His church back to honest biblical holiness—to be wholly the Lord's. One of the reasons He's doing so is to protect the ones He loves from the deception that's already rampant within and without.

Jesus is coming back for an honest-to-goodness holy bride without any spot or wrinkle. He's coming back for a bride that's patiently waiting for His return as her only source of satisfaction. He doesn't want anyone left out.

The idea of the waiting bride is a concept that seems to have worn thin for many Christians. We've heard about His soon return so often and there've been so many foolish interpretations in regard to this topic, that it no longer rings in our hearts as essential, uncompromising truth. We must get back to the awesome wonder of Jesus' soon return, which only comes from spending time with Him. If we don't do that through the power of the Holy Spirit, His return will not be our main focus even though we will desire it. If we focus our attention on the Lord from this day forward and seek to know Him, we will be prepared no matter when He returns for His bride!

If we, as His church, continue to find satisfaction for our lives in anything else but Jesus, are we not like a whorish fiancée who seeks every avenue of fulfillment right up until the wedding day? Some of us even want the wedding to be delayed, so that we can consume one more moment of fun in this world. Are we not trying to maintain an appearance of commitment, while willingly attempting to fulfill the real desires of our hearts at every opportunity, then returning to Him to help us through heavy challenges? Are we not expecting to be invited to the wedding feast when Jesus comes for His own, as the five foolish virgins did, totally unprepared but somehow hoping that God doesn't mean what He says about holiness and purity? If we are, maybe we are already deceived!

Free Resources to Help You in Your Journey toward a Wholly Devoted Life

The Bible is the most important physical resource available. We encourage you to always make it the first place you turn and your source of truth in all things.

With a desire to use every form of communication we can to share what the Lord has put on our hearts, we offer the following to help you on your spiritual journey in becoming wholly devoted to God and gaining a bridal heart towards Jesus!

From Our Father's Heart and Mash United Blog

Both are available 6 days a week for you to be built up, challenged, exhorted, and encouraged in the Lord.

Praydio.com

A 24/7 Online Praying Radio Community, designed to keep you growing in the Lord through prayer, interviews, exhortations, and music. Our programming will build up, strengthen, and reinforce your inner being, and always point you to God's point of view.

MASH United (Men After the Savior's Hearth)

A men's heart revival support system. The whole family will benefit as husbands and fathers dig into resources that will help guide them in understanding their offices as husbands and fathers, so they can nurture their families into wholeness in Christ.

Books and Life Application Studies – They're free

Our novel, A White Stone is today's headlines with answers. Its sequel, The Elect, presents an exciting story about the faithfulness of God. The Father Factor provides a guide to addressing whatever challenges your family may be facing. The Overcoming Life guidebook can be used on a continual basis to help you learn how to wholly devote your life to Christ. Manna Moments is the perfect nightstand companion to draw you to meaningful moments with your Father in heaven. Check out our books page to see all books available in printed copy or pdf!

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Community Resource Directory

This points you to others in the body of Christ who offer resources that may be of help in your current area of need.

The above resources are designed to be used continually; please do so! They're powerful assists you can use on your amazing adventure Father God is calling you to experience as you seek to be one with God's heart in these closing times and seasons. Share them with anyone who is seeking wholeness in the Lord with you.

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