

Fingers Stained
With Evil

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Aventine Press

Prelude

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First Edition

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This book is the third in a series of stories on the subject spoken of by Jesus as the “regeneration” when Christ shall sit in the “throne of his glory” (Matthew 19:28). The people of the twenty-first and twentieth century return in *Alive Again* where Lev Aron becomes our guide along with his former wife Rebekah. We learn that the resurrection takes place in a very orderly way. Everyone returning to life is abundantly provided for with a beautiful dwelling place and a grove of trees supplying the Eden fruit that nourishes mankind back to perfection. The last thoughts before each person died are the first thoughts on their return to life.

Government is supplied by Christ using heroes of faith from the past, now resurrected and constituting the visible ruling authority that we refer to as the Ancient Worthies. Perfect administration of earth’s affairs brings wonderful progress with no mistakes or wasted efforts. The full resources of earth are engaged in bringing men back to life in an orderly manner. However, Christ only does what man cannot do. He raises the dead in the proper order when the suitable arrangements have been provided for them.

Lev returns to life with the same qualities he had in his former life still shaping his actions. He quickly responds to the rule of righteousness prevailing at that time as he makes friends of his enemies. He goes on to become a brilliant scientist and manager and learns to excel and specialize in human relations.

His greatest challenge presenting some real drama and taxing his abilities is to be a mentor for Hitler who manages to avoid his responsibilities. In *From Ashes to Beauty*, Lev shares life with those

returning from the Hiroshima nuclear explosion. As people return, they bring their unique experiences with them. Dealing with those who performed medical experiments on human beings is also among the challenges of the realities of the regeneration.

Science in the new era finds hydro-oxygen power and antimatter being harnessed for large and small aircraft. Still, the biggest hurdle is the inherent evil that comes forth from the grave along with humanity. Reconciling man with his fellow men will tax the resources of that time. Not only men like Hitler, but also people who were held in high esteem, like a prelate of the church at Rome, require special care when reduced to common status before the world.

This book touches the return of some of the cruelest of men who learn they no longer have hiding places for their evil deeds.

Preface

The forces that molded life in the first place will be different from the process of remolding life in the regeneration. Good and evil were formerly intermixed, and frequently evil predominated. Often mankind in its original state did not serve to distinguish between virtues and vice, as they must in the regeneration. Most people intended good, but there were those not so noble for whom evil came easily. Some who practiced evil found the scaffold awaiting them; others found that power and privilege attended their evil deeds.

Those who loved life and their fellow men will be amazed at their own happiness in the time of regeneration, while those who found little love in their lives will find that love is the sweetest experience of living again. However, for those who sold themselves to evil deeds and works, the regeneration will be more difficult. They will not only have left behind a trail of pain, suffering and death, but they will be confronted by the people they had abused, who have also returned to life. No longer will evil deeds have a measure of subterfuge or justification. Rationalizations that were once acceptable in the darkness will be hollow and empty in the light of that day. All will see evil practices clearly and easily for what they are, and there will be no place to hide.

Oddly, some of the cruelest, diabolical acts of violence were done in the name of religion. How can we forget September 11, 2001, in which more than twenty-six hundred people were murdered because religious fanatics masterminded the World Trade Center disaster? Religion was to express man's devotion to God and love for his fellow man; but, failing in this, it became a tool of repression and hate.

No cruelty was more gruesome and calculated than the “Holy” Inquisition. Crusaders were sent to take the Holy Land from infidels with promises of instant heavenly glory upon their deathbeds. Muslims guaranteed paradise to martyrs who died in Jihad. These deceived missionaries of death were driven by bitter hatred on the one hand and the pursuit of personal glory on the other. It will be difficult to correct ways of thinking, because the flames of hatred were fed by many malicious sources. In the regeneration there will be no enthroned evil, no rationalization for it, and no hiding place from the truth shining from Christ’s throne.

The focal point of *Fingers Stained with Evil* is during the Dark Ages when religion attempted, and partly succeeded, in disastrous mind control on a global scale. All productive thought was brought to a halt, not only along religious lines, but also in every other area of life—civil, scientific, secular and commercial. Poverty was widespread for the masses, while the clergy and wealthy classes exploited those they had kept in serfdom. Barefoot peasants were forced to support the castles on the hills and bring money into the church coffers to sustain extravagant excesses. Men longed for human rights, dignity and freedom. Upon awakening to life, they will realize the fulfillment of their desires. Those who practiced righteousness will gain more than human rights, dignity and freedom. Along with these will come “glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good” (Romans 2:10).

The reality of all men, women and children returning to life will rewrite history. Everyone will tell the truth about what actually happened. Those who colored history to fit into molds of acceptable limits will be exposed when all learn the entire truth of every event. Recorded history will be replaced with living, firsthand testimonies from all the actors and actresses on a living stage telling the whole untarnished story.

Truth will be everywhere all the time. Spiritual forces will prevent deception or misinformation from surfacing. There will no longer be unsolved murders or unknown robbers. Persons behind every crime

will be known. Crimes against humanity will be clearly understood with those responsible held accountable.

“Softer” misdeeds will also be brought to light. Who can measure all the pain children have suffered because they came into this world unloved and unwanted, rejected by fathers who did not acknowledge them and reared by mothers who were not prepared for them? The human family carries so many levels of pain. Yet the regeneration will be carefully administered to heal every wound and dry every tear.

The biggest challenge will be to lift men up to God’s righteous standard. Civilization and religion, molded by human cunning, have endeavored to bring God down to the human level. This has been religion’s greatest apostasy. In the regeneration, men will be lifted up to live on the level God intended for them. Moses failed the children of Israel as a leader, because he could not bring them up to God. Christ, the “greater than Moses,” because he has the power and resources to bring the willing hearts back into the image of God, will succeed.

Six thousand years have passed under the reign of sin and death. Had our first parents the knowledge of how terrible the effect of evil would be on their posterity, they would have paused before partaking of the forbidden fruit. The regeneration will repair all that damage. This will be the largest endeavor ever to face the human family; but, thankfully, Christ will provide the wisdom and leadership, as well as the power, to accomplish the task. The goal that must be met for man to attain that level of development is the requirement of the greatest commandment—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).

Because man is free to say “yes” or “no” to God, in the final reading only those who say “no” to God will fail to reach everlasting life. Men will, therefore, choose by their actions whether they attain to the full resurrection of the dead. Those who fail this highest test of love for God and fellow man will face the cessation of life in the second death. Yes, character will figure into whether men will hear the words, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

Although these stories of the times of regeneration are built around imagining the realities of that day based on Scriptural principles and hints, nonetheless, they pinpoint much cruelty and evil that must come to light and be faced by the perpetrators. It will not be abstract evil, but evil that was actually carried out and etched in the human lives that bore the pain and suffering at the hands of people in power that will be held into account. Reconciling the tormentor with the tormented will require the “wisdom of Solomon.” Yes, even a greater than Solomon will be required for the task. By God’s grace and foreknowledge, Christ *will* be on the throne.

We realize our best endeavors to portray the dramas of regeneration fail to capture the scope of countless billions living again. The best we can hope to do is try to follow a few individuals in various periods of the regeneration. We are certain of one thing—the reality and grandeur will be more wonderful than any tongue or pen can describe. Our best dreams may only dimly perceive the blessedness of these coming years.

Because of the increase of knowledge, the last two centuries have found people generally more educated and less ignorant and superstitious. People have become more accustomed to technological science making their lives easier. In our modern era there is enough light and information for thinking people to understand the need for change and reform. This was much more difficult in the past.

Centuries ago, only the clergy and aristocracy were educated, while the general populace were suppressed in poverty and ignorance. Few could read or write, and even if one could read there was little to read. Information was very limited and carefully controlled. The worst evils practiced by humanity were then widespread—religious intolerance and bigotry reigned. Inquisitors were given license to torture and murder at will. Though most men could not accept such base conduct, this natural reticence was overcome by an appeal to human greed. All the properties of the accused would accrue to the Inquisitor and the church. If properties were purchased from alleged heretics, they, too, were to be turned over as proceeds to the church. If

the husband was the accused heretic, all his property was taken, and his family was left destitute and homeless. Consequently, those with possessions were most likely to stand accused of heresy. Such vile and uninhibited evil was explained as being “holy.”

The Inquisition succeeded because ghoulish and ruthless perpetrators could be engaged. One such Inquisitor was Tomas de Torquemada, who terrorized Spain from 1483 until he resumed the life of a friar in 1497. He became the sole Inquisitor General over all Spanish possessions and then turned that task over to Diego Deza, who also devoted himself to the torture and murder of alleged heretics. Perhaps Hitler, Stalin or Pol Pot might be considered more efficient killers, but Torquemada takes a prize for cruel imprisonment and torture. Torquemada was a hands-on ambassador of hideous torment and death.

We zoom in on this monstrous person at a time when righteousness, love and kindness are in effect. Some of those whom Torquemada branded heretics may well have been saints, now enthroned with Christ. The others, tortured and burned, he must face in a new era. His saintly title will be gone, and now his evil deeds will appear in their true light. Evil will always be evil, no matter how it is cloaked. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Whose disciples perpetrated the Inquisition with the audacity to call it “Holy”?

*“Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said,
Let the Lord be glorified:
But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed”
(Isaiah 66:5).*

Chapter One

Tomas de Torquemada Returns to Life

I was amazed how easily I was breathing. It felt so good—the air in my lungs, so light and refreshing. My cough and congestion were suddenly gone. I could smell the fragrance of flowers in the air. I hesitated to open my eyes for fear that I would find I was dreaming and my congestion would return. My bed was quite comfortable—not the hard mattress friars were accustomed to sleeping on. ¡Qué bueno!

Slowly, I opened my eyes to a beautiful room, such as I had never seen before. Was I in heaven? Perhaps I was being rewarded for my faithful service to the church. People had looked at me with anger and hatred, but now they would see I had been right all along. If only those heretics had kept the faith—they, too, would have shared this good fortune.

I was covered with a light blanket, and on a nearby chair I saw clothing laid out. But I did not feel like getting up—I had never felt so relaxed! I wiggled my toes and my fingers, finding them responsive and agile. I arose gradually, sitting on the bed while studying the room. There was a bouquet of flowers and a softly lit ceiling that made the room incredibly bright. Outside of my window, I saw it was a cloudy day and raining. Was there rain in heaven? I saw a delightful garden

and grove of trees. Perhaps this was earth after all. I dressed carefully; finding clothing of a style I had never seen. I looked for a robe, as I was accustomed to wearing, but I found only strange underwear, pants and a shirt that fit perfectly. The shoes were polished brightly with amazing workmanship and fit comfortably.

This was certainly confusing! Where was I? The house was so quiet and everything was different. Perhaps I was dreaming—nothing was making sense. The last thing I remembered was breathing heavily and feeling soreness in my chest. I thought I was surely dying. I had been ill for several days and couldn't find a comfortable position to relieve my congestion and pain. I heard the physician talking to my friend and shaking his head. I knew what he was saying. My end was near, and I believed that, but how wrong they were! No aches, no pain—I had never felt better!

I looked in a mirror and was shocked to find my appearance so youthful. I opened my mouth expecting to see crooked and yellow teeth, but instead I saw white teeth, gleaming and in perfect alignment. None were missing! How could this be? I knew I was missing five teeth. So this had to be heaven! And my hair! I couldn't believe it! I had a full head of black hair, with no gray mixed in it. My skin was not old and wrinkled. I had never felt so handsome. What had happened to me?

The house was very quiet, but I thought I heard small sounds outside my door. Perhaps the friars were waiting to serve me, as I was a man of extraordinary distinction. The church was definitely indebted to me for all the services I had so faithfully performed to protect its sovereignty. I decided to stride out confidently as the man of authority that I was. However, I hesitated, not really sure if I was dreaming.

No, this could not be real. I was an old man with many infirmities. I had been sick unto death. But here I was, feeling strong and healthy. I must be going mad. I was thoroughly confused and uncertain as to how I should proceed. What was I doing in this strange but beautiful house? This was definitely a dream. Soon I would awaken on my old deathbed. My thoughts were wildly racing, and I felt a sense of panic

rushing at me. I paused again at the door, fearful of opening it. What strange things would I find on the other side?

Finally, I decided to step out of the room. I turned the knob and opened the door just a crack so that I could look out. I saw to my amazement a most spacious living room with furniture such as I had never before seen. Everything was peaceful and tranquil, so I bravely stepped out. Suddenly, I noticed two men sitting at a table in what seemed to be a kitchen, but like none that I had ever known. There was no dirty fireplace, no black pots or pans.

Face to Face with a Heretic

The two men arose and came over to greet Tomas de Torquemada. One claimed to be his second cousin, Basil; and the other introduced himself as Hernando, who was among the last of the heretics he had tortured and sent to the flames. Torquemada recalled his name; and, as he looked into his face, he clearly remembered Hernando.

Torquemada yelled, "Heretic, remove yourself from me! I thought surely you were consumed in the flames. To my disgrace that I did not make sure you were dead. But I shall not fail the second time to secure your death!"

Basil tried to silence Torquemada, but he was a bully of a man, not one to take orders from anyone. Basil finally grabbed his arm with such strength that he cringed. He was a strong and powerful man, determined to bring Tomas to his senses.

"Tomas de Torquemada, you are no longer in a position of power. There are thousands of people who would gladly like to place you on a rack and torture you. So be quiet and mind your manners. You are in Spain, your own homeland, but only Christ rules now, and justice and truth are everywhere. You are guilty of such gross sins as few men on the earth have ever committed. Hernando, the very one you tortured and killed, was kind enough to assist me in making preparations for your return to life. The other family members refused to help me in any way lest people would think they sympathized with your evil deeds."

“I will not have any heretics in my presence!” Torquemada screamed.

Basil firmly said, “Tomas, in the light now shining, *you* are the heretic. You may no longer indulge in outbursts. You will lose your voice because wickedness is no longer permitted in word or in deed. The days when you could use the queen and king to serve your madness are past. It was not heretics that you were killing, but many saints and holy people. You destroyed entire families. You must face all those you tortured, killed, jailed and from whom you stole every possession. You are now a murderer and a thief in everyone’s eyes, and there is no one on this earth who believes you served God. You were a child of the devil. And it is *you* who must repent.”

Torquemada was stunned. His image as the great protector of the faith had suddenly changed to murderer and thief. He stood wide-eyed with anger flashing in his face and was about to give forth another burst of verbal abuse, when he paused. He sensed that something was different now, and perhaps he should control his anger until he could contact the royal family or representatives of the church. They would set these insolent people straight for maligning a defender of the faith. So he quietly stood there, trembling in anger. He was ready to explode at any moment, but he held his tongue.

Hernando suggested that they sit down and give Torquemada a chance to absorb the surroundings. Basil offered him some delicious juice taken from the fruit from the trees of life. Upon tasting it, his eyes opened wide. He exclaimed, “*¡Qué delicioso!* Never have I tasted anything so delicious. What kind of juice is this?”

Basil answered, “It is fruit from the trees of Paradise. We will show you those trees later.”

The juice seemed to settle his anger as quickly as it had risen. His face returned to normal, as did his civility. Torquemada then wished to know what happened to his Dominican order and where he might find representatives of the holy faith.

Basil thought he had better answer that, as Torquemada regarded Hernando an accursed heretic.

“I don’t know how to tell you this, Tomas, but the church you identified with no longer exists. It ceased to survive the twenty-first century. You have been dead for close to six hundred years and have today been returned to life. My good friend Hernando and I built this house for you. It is your dwelling and will provide you with every necessity of life. Hernando has returned good to you for the evil you visited upon him. He is a faithful servant of the true Christ and an example of love you will do well to emulate.”

Torquemada’s face turned red. He was receiving too much information at once and couldn’t handle it. He finally asked, “Do you mean I’m not in heaven?”

“That’s right, Tomas. You are back on earth in Spain, in the village that used to be known as Valladolid. You have been sleeping in the grave for many years. God, in kindness, allowed you to sleep in the dust of the earth; and Christ, in mercy, has brought you back to life today. You certainly noticed you were given a healthy and vigorous body identical in every way to your original body but without any of its defects. I know this is hard for you to grasp all at once, but it is true. You will only hear truth spoken now, for that is all that is allowed. The days when people could abuse other people are past. Should you try to strike someone, your arm will be paralyzed immediately. Any falsehood will result in immediate loss of speech. The days when evil passed for righteousness are ended, so take heed, Tomas.”

Heretic Hernando Is Ordered to Leave

“If this is my home, then I demand that this heretic Hernando leave at once! My good home has been sullied by his presence.”

“Very well, I shall leave, Torquemada. However, it is not a heretic that is leaving, but a heretic who now owns this dwelling. No one has done more to reproach the name of Christ than you. Under the new rule, you may no longer defend your indescribably evil past. I thought that because my family tree had fewer generations, and I was raised earlier than you that I would return good for the evil I endured.”

Torquemada’s face turned red with rage. He was experiencing a flood of emotions in a completely strange world. Nothing was as it

had been. He was in a world with the tables turned upside down. He was now considered the criminal and was powerless to defend his reputation.

Turning to Basil he demanded, “Why was I brought back to life? Here I am, reproached as a murderer, having lost my glorious title of Defender of the Faith. How can this be?”

“Life for you will be very difficult, Tomas. You know the Lord’s ways are equal. You have been awakened to a life of shame and disgrace. Most of your former deeds were very evil, and now you cannot dismiss all that you have done with a wave of your hand. No, Tomas, you must live down your sins with greater zeal than that with which you persecuted those you considered heretical.”

Basil decided it was time to change the conversation. “Come and sit down with me in the kitchen area. You will see some of the modern conveniences.”

As it was still a bit overcast, Basil switched on a light and the whole ceiling panel brought what seemed like sunlight into the room.

Torquemada screamed with fright, cowered, and began to run toward the door. “What kind of witchcraft is this?”

“No, Tomas, come back! Every house now has something we call electricity. It is produced in small quantities to light and heat our homes. In the hundreds of years since you lived, many new things have been invented to make life easier and cleaner. I will explain to you how it works later. Meanwhile, please sit down at the table and eat your breakfast.”

Torquemada, still very suspicious, looked at the bowl of unrecognizable fruit. “Where does this fruit come from?”

“From your own garden. I will take you on a tour after breakfast and show you some amazing things about your house and property. Would you like hot tea?”

“Yes, I would like a hot cup of tea. ;Ay! I’m so confused; I scarcely know what to think.”

“Everyone who returns to life goes through several days of adjustment. You have been sleeping for hundreds of years, Tomas, so

it is not as though you awakened from a night’s sleep. The world has changed dramatically. You will be like a fish out of water for awhile, but soon you will become accustomed to it.

“Here is your tea. I shall ask God’s blessing upon our meal. ‘Dear Father of all mercy, we come to thank you for this food and all the provisions of life. We thank you for the return of our brother to life and pray you will grant him a full opportunity to live in harmony with perfect love and your laws of righteousness. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.’”

Torquemada echoed a faint “Amen.” Love was not a word he knew much about, nor did he understand mercy either. It annoyed him a bit, but he was hopelessly confused with a mixture of emotions. As he sipped the aromatic tea, he felt a calmness coming over him. He loved the flavor instantly and he was eager to eat the fruit that not only was beautiful, but also gave off a delightful odor. Biting into the juicy and succulent fruit was a surprising experience. Not only was it absolutely delicious, but also it satisfied his cravings as nothing he had ever eaten.

Tomas Tastes the Fruit of Paradise

Basil then said, “The juice you drank earlier came from this fruit that grows in your garden. The Ancients brought the seeds of these trees back from the garden in Eden and they were initially planted in Israel. Now they are being planted all over the world. By eating this fruit you will be restored to physical perfection. We have old people, infirmed and crippled, who return to full human vigor after eating this fruit for a brief season. Consequently, Tomas, we have no sick or infirmed people today. Nor do we allow anyone to be hurt anywhere at anytime.

“Your former behavior will not be tolerated anymore. You may not hurt anyone ever again. You thought you served God in your former life, but now everyone knows you were a servant of Satan. You don’t understand this yet, but in a few days you will begin to comprehend what has happened. So, take heart, Tomas, you will have a good future

if you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and confess your crimes against those you persecuted.”

Basil spoke firmly because he knew Torquemada would need to adjust to the righteousness of the new arrangement. He had been in command and was not receptive to any correction. He still felt he was in authority, but he also realized he was in a strange predicament. There was no one who agreed with him. Torquemada was unsettled by the thought that many of his tormented and slain victims would be returning to life. How could he face them, bereft of all his power and the regal support he once enjoyed?

The newly awakened man sat eating, his mind racing to find some solution to his dilemma. He could not believe that the great name of Torquemada, which had once instilled fear in people, now instilled contempt. How could it be? Only moments before, he had been a powerful figure. This talk about regeneration was a fairy tale, although he couldn't explain his own existence and his healthy, vigorous body. Each moment became increasingly frustrating.

Most of all Torquemada did not like Basil speaking of his crimes against humanity. Was he not the Grand Inquisitor of the church? Had he not served faithfully in his office? Maybe he was dreaming and would awaken to find himself back at home with his fellow friars. It was irritating and humiliating to have his own cousin speaking down to him, as though he was some lowly peasant. On the other hand, he loved being strong, healthy, and handsome. Though his surroundings were much too gracious for a friar, he could certainly enjoy them. Torquemada found himself torn between two worlds.

He suddenly realized he was devouring the fruit ravenously. While he dismissed the thought that these fruit trees came from seeds of the trees in Eden, he could not deny that this was the most delicious food he had ever eaten. Torquemada was amazed at how satisfied he felt. Basil's explanation bore the earmark of truth, even though truth had never meant much to Torquemada before. He would reserve judgment on this later when he was not being whiplashed with such contradictory emotions. If he were not so comfortable, he would surely conclude

that he was mad. He felt a genuine desire to live and enjoy this new experience of life, but at the same time he longed for the power and prestige he had once embraced. If he could only have both worlds, then he would really be happy.

Basil interrupted Torquemada's disoriented thoughts. "As soon as you are comfortably filled and relaxed, I will show you the home that Hernando, that 'heretic' you murdered, so generously built for you. Because he has a large and loving heart and wanted to please Christ, he volunteered to build you this lovely house in spite of the diabolical suffering you brought upon him. While I helped him, it is Hernando that did most of the work. He is a brilliant man and well studied on many subjects. I almost walked out with him when you demanded that he leave. When you renounced him as a heretic, I expected the spiritual forces to punish you with some kind of paralysis; but because you were so newly returned to life, they allowed you to be mean and rude. Tomas, you have so much to unlearn before you can begin learning the truth now shining everywhere. Everyone will treat you more kindly than you deserve. Without exception, people will abhor your evil past. True virtues are now required, and you will be well advised to walk humbly. This is the time of your humiliation. The days of your power and evil are gone forever."

Torquemada Suspects Witchcraft

Having said this, Basil invited Torquemada on a tour of his very own estate. Starting in the kitchen he was shown the refrigerator. Basil pressed a button and ice cubes tumbled out.

"What is this?" he cried, almost frightened. "More witchcraft?"

"No, Cousin, we have instant cold to make cold drinks when we want them. The machine that makes ice and keeps things cold is called a refrigerator."

Turning to the stove, Basil turned a knob and a blue gas flame burst forth on the burner. "See? We don't need fireplaces anymore, except for the pleasant glow of the flames. We have another machine that

keeps the house cool in the summer that is called air conditioning. I'll show you the unit when we go outside."

Basil showed him the cabinets that stored pots and pans and various food products. "We eat mostly from the trees of Paradise." Pointing to the fruit on the table, Basil said, "This is perfect food, Tomas, which will enable you to live forever. You will never get sick or grow old eating this fruit."

About that time the phone rang. Torquemada nearly fell over, so startled was he. Terrified, he shouted, "¡Ay, Dios!"

"Be calm, Cousin." Picking up the phone Basil said, "Shalom."

It was Hernando. "*Un momento*, let me put Tomas on." He handed the phone to Torquemada and said, "This is called a 'telephone.' Put it to your ear and say, 'Shalom,'" which he did.

Torquemada heard a voice speaking to him. Shocked, he exclaimed, "Where is this person and who is he?"

"Listen, it's Hernando whom you drove out of your presence."

Hearing this, Torquemada flung the phone across the room and smashed it into the wall as he yelled, "Heretic!" His arm instantly became paralyzed.

Turning to Basil he yelled, "You told me I would never get sick or grow old. Look at my arm! It's paralyzed! What is happening to me?"

"Tomas, you are being punished for your violent behavior. You are behaving as a spoiled child. You are a man who tried to control other people's lives to the neglect of your own character. Now your arm is paralyzed and will remain so until we call the Ancient Worthies at Jerusalem. Only they can restore your arm to health again. You will not be healed until you confess your ill temper and bad behavior to them. You must tell the truth, because spiritual forces will tell them exactly what you did today. If you want to walk around with your right arm paralyzed, you do not have to apologize."

"I shall never apologize! I have defended the faith all my life, and I shall not speak to a heretic!"

Basil picked up the phone and found it had not been damaged.

"Are you still on the phone, Hernando?"

"*Si*, I am. Being renounced verbally is much easier than enduring the rack or the flames," Hernando chuckled. "I know he is only hurting himself and not me. Poor Tomas; was he punished for his violent behavior?"

"Yes, his right arm is hanging limply at his side. He can't accept responsibility for his bad conduct. However, give him a couple of hours and he'll want to use his arm again. Christ will not permit his violent behavior. He gave him a few hours of liberty to behave badly, but now he is going to teach him how he must behave. Poor Tomas is his own worst enemy. Well, I must go and tend to my ill-behaved cousin."

Instant Punishment

Torquemada was listening and beginning to realize his predicament. He had badgered and bullied people for so long that he was shocked that no one had to put up with his shouting conduct anymore. Basil decided he would leave his cousin for a while, until he came to the sober reality of consequences for wrong behavior.

"You have behaved so badly that I am leaving you. I will return at the supper hour. If you conduct yourself as a true Christian, I shall remain with you. Otherwise, I will leave again."

"Don't go, Basil. *Por favor*. You are the only one I have to help me."

"I'm sorry, Tomas, your conduct has been offensive to me. You must understand how important this is. I shall return and not leave you without some help and guidance, only on the condition that you act with kindness. *Adios*."

Basil walked out the door, leaving Torquemada alone in his self-inflicted misery. Basil could see the despair on his face as he left, but Torquemada would have to learn how to act. He was not going to be party to his abusive conduct. Power was the only language he knew,

but he was feeling the power that others had now and he did not like it.

Basil strolled over to Hernando's place, about half a mile away. Knocking on the door, he said, "Shalom, brother, may I visit with you?"

Hernando opened the door widely. "Come in, come in. I didn't expect you."

"Yes, I told my cousin that he was behaving badly, and I could not condone it. He begged me not to go, but I said I would return for supper. So now, if I may, I'll spend some time with you."

"By all means—I have just finished picking some fruit and I even baked a cake using the dried fruit of Paradise. I meant to take it to Tomas, but he wouldn't eat it if he thought it came from a 'heretic.' So you are in good time for a culinary treat, Friend."

"Excellent! My timing was perfect. Poor Tomas, I feel sorry for him. He apparently has been delusional most of his life and has looked out of only one window during his past. Everything had been black or white to him. One was either loyal to the church or he was a heretic. The church fathers must have known they were employing a total fanatic. Many inquisitors didn't have the stomach for such enduring cruelty, but Tomas didn't falter because he was incapable of reason or mercy. Such thinking served him well then, but now it's a heavy weight pulling him down."

"Have patience with him, Basil. Remember, the god of the former world was Satan. Obviously, Tomas was his servant. I knew that when I first looked into his eyes at my initial arraignment. Only hatred existed in them. Brutality repulsed most people, but not Tomas. He squeezed life out of people on the rack or by burning them with fire. Can he be converted? He tried to convert me to his idolatry. But he failed. Now it is our turn to try to convert him to the true Christ. Will we fail? Perhaps that's the wrong question. Will he fail? Each person is free to say 'yes' or 'no' to Christ. All we can do is try to encourage him to say 'yes.' I wonder if a man so lacking in love or human compassion can learn the ways of righteousness."

Two Characters In Contrast

Hernando started setting the table for their lunch while the tea was brewing. Basil could not help but realize that here was a man of great character and understanding. The rack and flames didn't make him bitter because his love was so strong. Basil prayed that he could have such a character as this. After all Hernando had endured in his past life, he took Tomas' outburst in renouncing him as a heretic so patiently and he hadn't even received a faint 'thank you' for all his labor on Tomas' behalf. Basil saw the two characters in stark contrast. One person was very near to the kingdom of God, and the other very far away.

After a delightful meal, Hernando brought out his culinary delight. The cake looked beautiful and tasted even better.

"Too bad Tomas is missing out on his resurrection cake. Perhaps I should send a piece home with you. Maybe we can take him by guile. They say you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar. I meant to take it over this morning, but I was halfway there before I remembered it. My former wife Isabelle and my daughter went to visit a friend in Portugal. She will be gone until next week. I miss them both. My little daughter, Angela, is so precious to me. When I was murdered, they were thrown out of our house. They languished in the streets begging for bread, but soon my little daughter fell ill and died. Not too long after that Isabelle also died from cold and exposure to the elements." His face was solemn. "But that's all in the past, now. Enjoy this cake with Tomas."

"Perfect! I won't tell him who baked the cake until after he eats it."

"Good idea, Basil. Maybe after he considers his plight all afternoon he will realize his days of power are gone forever. Does having a paralyzed arm hurt, like carrying a dead weight around?"

"I can't answer that, but I'll ask him when I return."

They spent the afternoon in wonderfully sweet fellowship. As Basil left to return to Tomas, he said to Hernando, "Pray for me. I

need the wisdom of Solomon. He is more than I know how to handle. I understand that starting next week, Lev Aron will be visiting. Perhaps he'll have more success in taming the monster."

The Grand Inquisitor Wallows in Self Pity

Basil returned to find Torquemada sitting gloomily, holding his arm tenderly in his lap.

"Does it hurt, Tomas?"

"Well, it's suddenly heavy, but it's not painful like a toothache. I am very depressed. I thought you were my friend, but even you walked out on me. I wish I were back in my grave."

"Oh, stop feeling sorry for yourself, Tomas. Think of the courage those heretics, so-called by you, demonstrated in enduring the rack and flames. You are having a picnic compared to them. They grew in character by their sufferings, but you are shriveling because you cannot get away with ill-tempered conduct. Wake up, Tomas! Play the role of a man! Did your father ever whip you as a boy?"

"Oh yes, I was whipped—but perhaps not enough."

"Well, you are being whipped today by Christ, and you deserve it. Are you beginning to understand that ill-tempered conduct will not be tolerated?"

Torquemada grudgingly acknowledged, "I know when I've been whipped. I'll try to be more civil. That is something that was seldom required in my past, except in the presence of royalty or of my superiors."

"Well, believe me," Basil quietly advised, "for the time being, everyone is your superior. You have a despicable past to live down, and you will need to learn some lessons very quickly."

Basil hated being so firm with his cousin, but it seemed to be the only language he knew. Torquemada respected power, and Basil possessed powers of mind that Tomas did not yet have.

They had their evening supper. Torquemada tried eating with his left hand and did quite well biting into the fruit. The vegetables posed

more of a problem. Basil finally cut up all the vegetables to make it easier. Finally, Basil brought out the special dessert.

"This is a piece of resurrection cake. It was made to celebrate your awakening. You have never eaten anything better."

Torquemada eyed it very carefully. It looked mouth-wateringly good. He didn't ask where it came from or who was so kind to provide it. He just used his fork to partake of the delicious masterpiece. Torquemada swallowed it down clumsily, washing it down with tea and enjoying every last crumb.

"That was indeed splendid. I've never eaten anything like this before. I would believe it if you told me this was made in heaven."

"Well, I will tell you now—it was made by Hernando, whom you not only murdered, but whose wife, Isabelle, you dispossessed from her home and every means of livelihood. He baked this for you but forgot to bring it this morning."

His tongue still savoring the cake's flavor and looking down at his full belly, he grudgingly admitted in a low voice, "Maybe his death could have been made a little quicker, and I was not aware that his wife died from unfortunate circumstances. I thought all these people were going to hell to burn forever; but obviously, they only slept until they were awakened to life again." For the first time, he considered the question slowly out loud, "... Was I deceived? I am still very confused and need more time to sort this out. *Por favor*, give me some time, Basil. Please remember, I spent a lifetime going in another direction."

"You know, Tomas, you are now living in an age of truth everywhere all the time. You previously lived in one of the darkest and malicious periods of history. History records our era as the Dark Ages. Your most important task today will be to accumulate and apply much knowledge. You have much to learn. People in your day were kept in darkness and superstition. You yourself were an apostle of darkness. Now you must enter into the light of knowledge. Do you want me to call Jerusalem and put you into contact with one of the Ancients to heal your arm?"

“Yes, please, if that is what I must do to be healed.”

Tomas Confesses to a Jewish Woman

“They alone will be able to heal your arm, Tomas. Spiritual forces are at work today and one of those angels struck your arm with paralysis. No one is able to hurt or destroy anywhere at any time. You were given a few hours of grace only because you were newly returned to life. You must control your conduct, or you will be controlled.

“Now you will be talking to personal representatives of Christ who rule the earth from Jerusalem. You must be kind and courteous. Above all, you must tell the whole truth. When they ask what you did to bring on your punishment, tell them exactly how you responded to Hernando being on the telephone. If you do not tell the truth, they will know it, because Christ will provide them with exact information. If you tell the truth precisely without trying to justify yourself, you will probably be healed within the hour. If you do not tell the whole truth, your arm will remain paralyzed for several days or a week, depending how badly you misrepresented the facts. Do you understand?”

“Yes. I dread this, but I dread having my arm paralyzed even more. So, please use that talking machine thing.”

Basil dialed Jerusalem and the Headquarters of the Ancients. After he explained the situation, he was told to wait for Hannah, the gentle mother of the Prophet Samuel. In a few minutes Hannah answered.

“Shalom. How may I help you?”

Basil explained that it was Tomas de Torquemada who was troubled with a paralyzed arm.

“Put him on.”

Torquemada was actually trembling while holding the phone with his left hand. He spoke loudly wishing for her to hear.

“Hello, I am Tomas de Torquemada.”

“Yes, I know who you are and all about your dreadful past. Nothing is hidden anymore. We had you returned to life this very morning, and you are in trouble already. Now listen to me very carefully, Tomas. Tell me exactly what happened. Do not try to justify anything you did

or blame anyone else for what happened. I know that telling the truth has not been one of your virtues. However, if you want to be healed within the hour you must tell me exactly what you did that brought about your punishment. Do you understand what I am telling you? If you do not tell the whole truth, I will know it and you will be punished for a longer period.”

“*Si, Señora.* I was introduced to the tool called a telephone. When I listened to it, I heard the voice of Hernando, whom I had formerly tortured and burned at the stake. He had been kind enough to help build my house for my return, but when I recognized him to be the heretic I put to death, I demanded that he leave my house. Well, then he rang a bell in my house and spoke to Basil. Basil, in turn, introduced me to the telephone; and, when I picked it up and heard Hernando’s voice and he identified himself, I hurled the telephone against the wall, renouncing him as heretic. Then my arm became paralyzed.”

“Wait one minute and don’t say another word while I confirm your story. If it is exactly as you say, you will be healed within the hour. If you did not tell the truth, you will be punished for one week. Your present punishment is not for past sins—it is because you behaved very badly today. Please wait on the telephone until I get back to you. Do not put the telephone down.”

Torquemada stood there shaking slightly. Here he was holding a telephone talking to someone in Jerusalem. This was a nightmare. He could hardly believe everything that was happening. From the very darkest period in history to the present light of today, the contrast was incredible. However, he respected power; and Hannah—a woman, no less—while being very kind, made her authority obvious. Soon she was back on the telephone.

“Yes, you told me the truth, and your arm will be healed within the hour. However, if you have another outburst and do not control yourself, your next punishment will last a week. Do you understand what I am saying, Tomas?”

“*Si, Señora.* Thank you, I shall wait for my recovery within this hour. Good-day.”

Bewildered but Healed

Torquemada placed the phone down, relieved that he would be healed. He was stunned and overwhelmed with all the events of his first day of living again. He sank into the living room sofa, bewildered.

“How is it that no one ever told me about the regeneration? I never dreamed I would live again in this world. No one ever told me that those I killed as heretics would be here in life, healthier and stronger than ever. Now I am the ugly ogre and they are the heroes. How could this ever have happened? Nothing seems consistent with all that I believed. I had power and riches and the best intelligence supporting my beliefs, and here I awaken to such an extremely different world. Surely, I am mad. Help me find my sanity, Basil. I cannot understand this new life and I’m not really sure I want to.”

Torquemada felt like a beaten man. Every door he had tried to open to the past was locked. At the same time, he wished to lock all the doors to the present but could not. He could neither open nor close any doors, and life was staring him in the face. Where were his leaders and the holy men he had trusted in the past? How could everything be so altered in just one day?

As Torquemada sat there in great distress of mind, he suddenly began to have feeling in his arm. That distracted him from his morose thoughts, and he looked up at Basil with a face full of astonished delight.

“Basil, my arm is alive again!” This brought forth the first smile of his day. Things had gone so badly for Torquemada his first day. Here was his only ray of sunshine.

“I feel better already. I guess I’m not very good at suffering. Isn’t it strange that I could watch other people endure unbelievable pain, and something like a paralyzed arm made me wither in despair?”

“I am afraid your past has not prepared you for the present, Tomas. You and your peers tried to play God. You took sacred lives into your own hands and abused, tortured and burned them at will. You showed no mercy, no compassion. Women and children suffered under your

rule. What kind of God were you serving? Certainly not the God of the Bible who is ‘merciful and gracious.’”

“My task as the Grand Inquisitor was to secure repentance. You malign my integrity. Those I dealt with were undermining the faith of our fathers and needed to be dealt with harshly. If at any time they repented, we did not send them to the flames. We mercifully exempted them from the flames.”

“Oh, how mistaken you were! That merciful exemption was almost as bad as death! You had them imprisoned for life in those uninhabitable pits. Being imprisoned for life only meant that they would soon die from cold, disease, starvation and every kind of abuse. What kind of mercy was that?”

“We couldn’t let heresy spread like wildfire. It was imperative that people respect the sovereign church and its laws.”

Basil decided to reverse directions. It was useless to talk about a church that Torquemada still held as sacred. No matter how wrong things may have been, he could not conceive that the church was in any way responsible. He was going to require additional education to lose his patriotism and dedication.

“Perhaps we have time to look over your garden, since it is still light outside.”

Basil led him out to the glass-enclosed garden that contained the trees of life and other fruit-bearing plants. It was so fragrant with the smell of blossoms and so beautiful that the effect immediately commanded quietness. Every month of the year there would be plants bearing fruit, so there would be trees at different stages of fruitage all year long. The deciduous trees were growing outside of the glass enclosure, as were the grapes, olives and other trees common to the region.

Basil showed Torquemada the watering system for the enclosed trees, how it operated automatically and that he did not need to water the plants or trees by hand. He could not believe how an unseen hand controlled everything.

“Are you sure this isn’t some kind of witchcraft?” Torquemada asked incredulously. “There are so many new devices to comprehend.”

“Tomas, you have many things to learn about this modern age. Man no longer works ‘by the sweat of his brow,’ fighting thorns and thistles. It is very much like it was in the Garden of Eden. All you have to do is to prune these trees occasionally and fertilize them when you empty the septic system. Let me show you how this works. The water is drained and the waste material is dried to powder and occasionally heated to make it clean.

“When this storage area fills up, you have to clean it out and spread the powder around the trees and plants. This way everything is kept clean and pure. There is nothing to contaminate. It is not like the world you lived in where flies and bad smells abounded everywhere.”

Televisions and Flying Machines

Torquemada was impressed, but it was more like a dream world far beyond his comprehension. As the shadows began to fall, they returned to the living area. It was time to introduce him to television. Basil told him that now they were able to do what the human eye could do. Basil taught that the human eye sees colors and images and sends what it sees to the brain in electrical sensory impulses.

“In a similar way, man has copied images and can send them through the air to your house, and you can see them on a screen. Watch this.” Basil turned on the television that soon lit up life-size images on a screen as big as a wall. Torquemada was startled and jumped back.

“¡Ay, Dios!” he shouted. “Impossible! No wonder you fault me constantly—you are possessed by demons! That is why you taunt a holy man such as me!”

“Be calm, Tomas. Every home we build has a television set similar to what you see here. Men have become much smarter, and they have learned to do many things that were not possible in our time. We can speak to anyone anywhere in the world by telephone. We can see what is happening on the other side of the world by television. Men can fly

through the air with flying machines. Anyway, there are no witches now. The demons that engaged witches have all been destroyed, and the devil is in the ‘bottomless pit.’ You will find a lot of valuable information on this television machine—almost any information you want can be brought up on the screen. Do you want to see how so many great churches came to their end?”

“How could this television know that? Surely, you are mad!”

Basil dialed in a program on the rioting after the attack on Israel ending in Armageddon. Suddenly, he saw masses of angry people shouting at religious leaders. He saw churches in flames. Torquemada could not accept what he was seeing.

“Surely,” he shouted, “this is so terrible! This cannot be so! You are trying to deceive me. You are trying to separate me from the great church of my fathers. Why would people attack without fearing those holy people? Why would they burn the churches? This cannot be true!”

Basil could see that Torquemada was very agitated. He decided to turn the television off so Tomas could try to rationally absorb what he had seen. After all, he was suffering from a long time lapse. It would not be possible for him to adjust in a few hours to such a dramatically different world.

Basil changed his approach again. “Let’s look at your house.”

Taking Torquemada to his bedroom, Basil showed him all the clothes he would need in the drawers of the dresser. He showed him the closet with special clothing for chapel meetings and social events. Then he showed him the bathroom and how the faucets worked with hot and cold water. Basil then reached into the shower and told him that water to bathe in was always available, and the water was controlled so that it would always be the right temperature.

“See, put your hand in there and feel it. Isn’t that just perfect? Now, you know we no longer go around without bathing once a day. So every morning you must shower.”

This amazed Torquemada, but at least he did not fear that witches were living in the walls. Basil then showed him the unit that turned

water into hydrogen gas and oxygen. It took pure water, turned it into gas, and then turned the gas into electricity.

“See,” Basil said, “pure water is turned into a source of heat and electricity. The electricity runs the refrigerator, and it both heats and cools your house. It also gives us light when we turn on the switch. We allow the oxygen to flow out into the house, which makes the air fresh and gives us extra oxygen for easy and clean breathing. Tomas, you have never known life to be so good!”

*“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the ungodly shall perish”
(Psalm 1:6).*

Chapter Two

Heavenly Music for a Troubled Soul

The modern amenities of Torquemada’s home were incomprehensible to him, but at least they relieved him of believing everything was being done by witchcraft. When they went back into the living room, Basil turned on some beautiful music.

“This must be heaven, for only there is such superb music heard.”

“Sit down awhile, Tomas, and enjoy music such as you have never heard. It will relax you and make it easier to deal with all the changes you are experiencing. We have so many wonderful things—we should be as happy as kings.”

They spent the rest of the evening enjoying the music, and it was good medicine for Torquemada’s agitated heart. He had had a busy day, and Basil suggested that they turn in for the night. Basil told him that in the morning he would be going to a chapel service.

“What is a chapel service?”

“Well, it’s something like a church service, but now we learn from the Bible and we sing praises to God. The singing and music are wonderful and you will learn something every day. We are learning religious truths we never knew before, just as we are learning scientific truths that were not known before. We have so much learning to do, Tomas, because we lived in one of the darkest eras of history. The world was full of ignorance, superstition and terrible cruelty.”

“I don’t want to go to this chapel meeting. I will stay home, thank you.”

“Why, don’t you wish to go? You would enjoy it. Everyone goes. Why should you be different?”

“That may be the whole trouble. I’m sure I’ve made a lot of enemies, and the holy church no longer protects me. What if someone tries to kill me? Hernando, the heretic, may be there, and I will not keep company with him. I will worship in my own way.”

“You are free to do whatever you wish. You don’t have to worry about Hernando. He is the kindest man. But it is true that not every one that died under your cruel hand will be as nice to you as Hernando has been. There are many people who would like to tie you to a stake and burn you just so you could feel the same pain you subjected them to. But the same spirit forces that paralyzed your arm will do the same to them if they attack you. You are protected from physical harm, but not from facing the anger of those you murdered. Perhaps if you pray and get a good night’s rest, you will change your mind by morning. It is very important to attend the worship service tomorrow.”

Basil arose the next morning only to find Torquemada already awake and drinking tea he had made from the leaves of the trees of Eden. The aroma filled the room.

“Good morning, Tomas. Did you sleep well?”

He was in an ugly mood and mumbled something incomprehensible.

“What do you plan to do today, Tomas?”

“What does it matter to you? I remember your insulting references to my past yesterday. You have greatly misjudged my contribution in arresting heresy. I must find my church or at least my king and queen. I cannot trust what you say. Surely, the church was too big and powerful to have disappeared as you say.”

Seeking Camaraderie in Old Church Members

Basil drank a little juice as he prepared to leave for the chapel meeting.

“Very well, Tomas. When your neighbor, Pablo, returns after the chapel service, I suggest you visit him. He had been a priest in our time, but I don’t think you knew him because he served in a different city. He has been back for a year and has gained much knowledge. However, he won’t be back from the chapel meetings for about an hour.”

“Good. At least he will respect me for my untiring efforts to cleanse heresy from the church. Your soft way of living has damaged your thinking. You lack the rigorous discipline we friars lived under. I slept on the floor last night to avoid becoming softened by such a delicate bed. We fasted and did penances frequently. We understood what discipline meant.”

“You may sleep on the floor or however you want. I’ll see you later. *Adios.*”

After breakfast, Torquemada looked for a prayer book. All he found was a Bible and a shelf of books, but alas, no prayer books anywhere. He mumbled under his breath, “People must all be heretics today. Pablo will have a prayer book and a rosary—he was a priest.”

He sat there feeling very disquieted because everything was so unfamiliar, and inwardly he felt strange that he did not know how to pray without a prayer book and beads. He decided to step outside, thinking a little walk through the neighborhood might be nice. Since everyone would be at the chapel, he would be safe—no one would see him. Music was faintly coming from the chapel, for it was not far away. It sounded beautiful, but he was not going to allow soft emotions to weaken his resolve to stay away.

Torquemada walked past Pablo’s house, disappointed to see no images on the green lawn, no cross anywhere to be seen. Maybe he had left the church. Every home was beautifully surrounded with exquisite flowering gardens and orchards of trees. Never had he seen so much beauty, and noticeably without flies or pesky insects. The peaceful atmosphere made it a real joy to be alive. He could see the birds busily attending their young and sheep roaming freely in the neighborhood. Even the dogs didn’t bark at him. Never had it been this serene in his

former life. He noticed there weren't any fenced in yards—just one rolling pasture.

A little lamb came up to him, gently and fearlessly. When he stooped to pet it, it nibbled on his pant leg. He reflected back on his childhood to when he used to have a pet lamb that he loved dearly. He smiled; this is what his little lamb used to do. How he had loved it! He stood there as feelings of love and tenderness passed through him. Strange that such feelings had been lost to him for so long. How could he have forgotten? When his dad killed his lamb for food, he remembered how heartbroken he was. For days he mourned, refusing to eat it. Memories flooded his mind.

Torquemada walked a considerable distance before turning homeward. He looked up when he heard a vehicle thundering above with wings streaking through the sky. He wondered what this might be. Was this the flying machine? He began to realize that he was definitely living in another world. He came to a pond along the road with two swans swimming on it. They were the same as he had known before, and so were the little creatures he had seen along the way. Earth's creatures looked the same, but now they were free and fearless of man.

Torquemada arrived home slightly before Basil. He decided not to tell him about his walk. Basil returned all aglow.

"Tomas, you should have been there today. The sermon was just beautiful. It would have done your heart good. Its warmth would have thawed you out a little."

"Ay, again you make me out to be a mean and despicable person. I don't think you learned to respect people there. However, I had a lovely time by myself. It has been awhile since I had such a quiet time for reflection."

"Good. Shall I put on some tea for breakfast or have you eaten already?"

"I would enjoy that wonderful tea again. I would have made some, but I was afraid to touch those little knobs that turn on the heat."

"Here, let me show you. Put your hand on the knob and turn it like this. There, you see that bright blue flame? Now you can regulate the heat by turning it up all the way or just slightly for a low flame. When the water is hot, just turn it to 'off' and the flame will disappear. It's that simple—nothing to be afraid of."

Pablo, the Former Priest

After breakfast, Torquemada was anxious to visit his neighbor, Pablo.

"Do you think he is done with breakfast yet?"

"Well, let's find out. I'll call him and ask if it is convenient for him to see you. I'll dial his number and give you the telephone to talk to him yourself."

When he answered the phone Basil said, "Pablo, your neighbor who has just returned to life wishes to speak to you. Is this a convenient time for you?"

"Certainly, Basil—put him on."

Basil handed the phone to Torquemada.

"Hello, Pablo, I am your new neighbor. I wondered if I might visit you? I am terribly confused, and I am told you were a priest of the holy faith. I need to have some matters clarified."

"Yes, by all means come right over any time this morning. I'll be working in the afternoon, so now is a perfect time. I'll look forward to seeing you shortly."

Torquemada left Basil to clean up. He was so pleased to find someone he could talk to that he hurried over immediately. Scarcely was Pablo off the phone when Tomas knocked on his door.

"Greetings, my brother," Pablo said as he opened the door. "Come in and make yourself at home. Perhaps we can sit in the garden; it is such a gorgeous day. I am still filled with joy from the morning services at the chapel. We had several people who were newly returned to life at the service. One was a man who had suffered on the rack and had been burned at the stake. He was so happy to be alive. He could not

understand how cruel and relentless his tormentor had been. However, he praised God that he had kept faith in his Savior through the whole ordeal.”

This meeting was getting off to a bad start. Torquemada already felt uncomfortable as he sat in Pablo’s lovely garden. Was there no place for him to find acceptance?

“Pablo, I have just returned to life, and I feel so out of place. I do not have a happy family to receive me back to life, and everyone treats me with such disrespect. I understand you were a priest before. What has happened to our great church, and why are you no longer referring to yourself as a priest? Have you denied our faith? Where are the churches and cathedrals in which we worshipped?”

“Please, Tomas, one question at a time. I know you are uncomfortable in these new surroundings. Search as you may throughout this whole world, you will not find any place like the world we came from.

“First, I must tell you I am no longer a priest. I have not left the faith, but have finally found it. I now serve Christ. Did you ever read of Christ burning people at the stake or torturing them on the rack? Where did we read that in the Holy Scriptures? It was Christ who was crucified for us. He never hurt a single individual. Why would I desire to associate with those who did such terrible things: killing, maiming, and torturing, while stealing all their possessions? Judas returned money when he found it was blood money, but no one ever returned a penny to those alleged heretics they had stolen from.”

Torquemada exploded. “You have become one of them, haven’t you? You, too, are a heretic! I thought I would find at last a holy priest to confirm my faith and renew my courage, but you, too, assail me as some dark and hideous monster. Can’t you, a priest, understand why we had to keep the faith pure from heretics?”

Pablo realized quickly that Tomas was still holding on to his past and seeking to cling to any straw of justification for his past deeds.

“I have a pot of wonderful tea that is now ready. Please wait here one moment while I get us some tea and something to nibble on.”

Pablo returned quickly with a teapot, two cups and some cookies.

Torquemada thanked him, although he had seriously considered escaping as soon as his host had left to get the tea. Even a former priest was badgering him about his past. Was there nowhere to find a shred of comfort and consolation? Realizing he had nowhere else to go, he decided to sit and learn what he could, though he was extremely uncomfortable.

Pablo Renounces Tomas’ Past

Pablo returned. “Tomas, I know of your past and so do millions of people. Our history is very sad, and you must soon face many you tortured. This was something I also had to do, although my experiences were not as extreme as yours were. Have you no remorse for what you did? See that little lamb that has just walked into my garden? Could you burn that little creature with fire while it was still living? Could you pour hot lead down its throat and tear its limbs on the rack?”

Torquemada turned pale. That was probably the same little lamb that nibbled on his pants. He loved that little lamb and would defend it violently against anyone who would do it harm.

Slowly, he said, “No, I couldn’t. I once had a little lamb for a pet, and it broke my heart when my father killed it for food. This, Pablo, is an innocent little lamb. But he does not challenge the faith of our fathers, does he? I only tried to bring heretics to repentance. We had to keep the faith! Doesn’t anyone understand this?”

“I fear that people understand it more clearly than you do. Those terrible atrocities were evil and never owned by Christ. You were deceived and remain deceived, Tomas. You are searching for someone to accept your evil deeds by calling them good or holy or whatever. But that will never happen.”

Torquemada was prepared to storm out, but he had the hot teacup in one hand and a cookie in the other, so he paused. He was beginning to fear that Pablo was telling him the truth. However, Pablo sensed his uneasiness and softened his conversation.

“Tomas, I know how frustrating life is for you. It was for me, too. I could not believe the church I had served so loyally was nowhere to be

found. I looked for my old brothers and when I found one, he was no longer a brother, but acted more like the heretics. I was in total despair and wished I could return to my resting place in the grave. I am sure that is your feeling now, isn't it?"

"That is my feeling precisely! How could you know exactly how I feel? People who are supposed to be my friends continually humiliate me. My cousin Basil is the only relative who was willing to welcome me back to life. We hardly knew each other, but whatever kindness he showed in preparing for my return to life is canceled out by his treatment of me. He looks upon me as a mad dog that maimed and murdered good people. I cannot make him understand that I was only trying to bring heretics to repentance."

"I wish I could comfort you, Tomas, but you will find no one in this whole world who will approve of what you did. You are walking in the direction of your former life and looking for someone to appreciate what wonderful works you did. It will never happen, Tomas. This is the day when only truth is spoken. There is no room for lies or deception. Christ is Lord and we worship him alone. Actually, that should be a joy to you. Did you not profess to serve Christ?"

"Yes, but the church embodied Christ. I was instructed by the church to carry out the course I took and was praised as a faithful servant of the church."

Fingers of Evil

"Forget what you believed or what you were told. Your own heart should tell you that what you did was wrong. As long as you seek confirmation for the sins of your past, no one will be your friend. Think for a moment of those victims you tortured who were consumed in the flames. Was not their pain and death brought about by your fingers of evil? How can you rationalize this conduct as good or right? What possible benefit was served in all that relentless cruelty? Did you not drink yourself drunk every night on wine hoping to drown your seared conscience?"

"I had hoped to find a measure of comfort from you, Pablo, but I find myself under attack. The first victims did trouble me in the lone

hours of the night. However, my heart became deadened over time, and I truthfully had no feelings. I only knew it was necessary to eliminate heresies in the church. If that was a fault, then I'm guilty. However, if this was the great church of Christ founded by Peter, how could it have misled me? Never! Never!" he shouted.

"Please drink your tea, brother. I am your friend, but you are quite convinced that I am here to wound and hurt you. I'm not. It is only the truth that is hurting you, and you cannot bear to hear it. I know I couldn't believe I was wrong when I returned. I was convinced that everyone was in a conspiracy against me. It took about a week to realize the truth. I did the same thing you are doing. I sought my brothers in the priesthood who had returned before me. But they all told me the same thing I am telling you—basically, Tomas, that I was wrong, and you are wrong."

Having had the same experience, Pablo was truly sympathetic to the frustration his neighbor felt. "It is hard enough to return to life again, finding a time gap occurred. You flounder around between fantasy and reality, and the new realities of life are overwhelming. One moment you are living in a dying world, and suddenly you awaken to a world of life, health and strength. None of the ills of the old world exist any more. The only evil is in the minds and hearts of those coming back to life again. Some bring love back with them, and they are so blessed. Some bring wickedness back with them, and they are correspondingly troubled. They even wish they could return to the quiet grave. Is that how you feel, Tomas?"

"Exactly! May I have another cup of your wonderful tea? It calms my troubled soul. Your cookies are so good, may I have another?"

Torquemada actually relaxed a little and found the courage to listen for the first time. Pablo spoke quietly, but with conviction. He was a good man and seemed to be telling the truth. They talked intensely until Pablo looked at his wristwatch.

"I must prepare my lunch. I work a few hours a day in the factory down the road that makes computers and electronic equipment. You probably think this is all sorcery, Tomas, but it is pure science."

He took off his wristwatch. "See? This tells time accurately. What time do you think it is, Tomas?"

Torquemada looked at the hands on the watch. "I cannot tell. The lights read 11 separated by two dots from 50. What does that mean?"

"It tells us that we are fifty minutes past the hour of eleven. In ten minutes it will be noon. Time is kept accurately. Here, Tomas, put it on your wrist. It's called a wristwatch. I have another one, so you may keep it. Don't be afraid."

He was thrilled with this new wonder.

"Thank you! This is not only beautiful, but it is so useful to have the time whenever you want it."

"Yes, and at night if you push this little button, it will light up so you can read it in the dark."

Torquemada then excused himself to return home. Pablo invited him to stay for lunch, but he declined saying that Basil would be waiting for him.

Basil greeted him cheerily. "Tomas, did you have a good visit?"

"Not exactly what I expected, but Pablo did explain some things. He also gave me this machine that tells time day and night. Isn't it wonderful?"

"Aren't you afraid that a witch is in there?" Basil winked at his cousin.

"I am learning. Be patient! It takes time to get used to all these new things!"

An Excursion Through the Countryside

"If you are willing, Hernando has an automobile and has offered to drive us to see the countryside of Spain tomorrow. It is like driving in a horseless carriage. You'll enjoy it. We will drive to some of the places of your childhood, but they look different now. Are you willing to go with Hernando?"

"Why should Hernando be interested in doing another kindness for me? I am not comfortable with heretics."

"Should he be comfortable with you? He has every reason to hate you, and yet he has only shown you kindness. You must learn to be thankful that he is so loving and forgiving."

"*Bueno*, I'll go. I would enjoy seeing the countryside. Seeing my old home surroundings would be very interesting. I will try to be civil to Hernando. I am so confused! I don't know what to believe any more."

"Relax, Tomas. You are your own worst enemy. Let people get close to you. We are in the business of living now. No more heretic killing. Love, not hate, rules."

That evening Torquemada asked to see programs on television. He wanted to learn something about the world around him. Using the Spanish translation button, they tuned in the Ancients so he could see the people who were in charge of world affairs. He was amazed at their intelligent communication skills. They spoke with authority, yet kindness, with which he was unfamiliar. It was easy for him to accept that these leaders indeed were in power. Basil told him that it was Barak of the Bible who confirmed that he would be raised from the dead.

"When you make preparations for your parents, you will have to ask these leaders to bring them to life again; and they will, once you have everything ready. So as soon as you become adjusted to this new order, you must learn how to build houses and plant these beautiful gardens for others."

Torquemada sat spellbound before the screen, finding it hard to believe all that he was seeing. They then tuned in programs showing history from the Dark Ages to the modern era. This helped create a sense of reality for him, filling a great void of centuries that were lost to him.

The next day Hernando drove up at the appointed time. It was Torquemada's first look at a modern automobile. He was totally astonished. They were soon on their way with soft music playing in air-conditioned luxury. He could not believe how delightful it was to drive about. This was nothing like the old horse and buggy days.

Torquemada suddenly cleared his throat. "Hernando, please forgive my outburst against you. I am between two worlds, and I do not know what to believe. I do not know who the heretics are anymore. Yesterday it was so clear, but now everyone is telling me that I am the heretic. I am so confused and troubled. Please bear with my infirmities."

"You are forgiven, Tomas." Hernando was instant in easing Torquemada's mind. In fact, his response was so quick that Torquemada needed time to digest it.

They quietly drove through various communities, passing factories where numerous industries produced products for the rapidly expanding population.

"We will take you to see those factories later, but for now we will view the area where you lived as a boy."

Torquemada eagerly took in everything he was seeing. He was able to recognize certain landmarks like small mountains and the river with which he was familiar, but he saw nothing that reminded him of his early home. However, they did pass a little stream that flowed by his former house, and he recognized a large rock that used to be in his backyard. A beautiful home stood in the place of his old homestead. It was peaceful to be there, and childhood memories flooded his mind. He remembered being a bit of a bully at a school that only the wealthy were permitted to attend. He wondered if that might have started him on his course of persecuting others. He sat pensively, reflecting on his past and wondering where he may have gotten off to a wrong start.

When they returned that evening, Torquemada was more quiet and serene than he had been since his return to life. Everything was so beautiful. Why was he so unhappy? After supper, he was weary but mostly wanted to retire to his room to review the day and understand his new experiences. There had to be some meaning for his life. Most people seemed so happy. Why was his experience so bleak? He worried that soon people he had abused would find him and confront him. How could he justify his actions without the shield of the church he had depended upon before? As he sat trying to find some explanation to his

sad state, he knew he was not fully satisfied with his own explanations. Could everybody else be right?

Reflections on the Little Lamb

Soon sleep came to him, while he was remembering the little lamb. That awakened some feelings within that had been lost to him for a very long time. Perhaps he did have a tender side after all.

Torquemada's first week of life passed swiftly as he visited several factories. He was shocked, seeing modern machines working automatically with no one overseeing them. He could not comprehend computers that replaced human intelligence, doing jobs accurately without pausing. Being lifted from the Dark Ages into the modern era was an overwhelming experience. He felt totally lost.

When Torquemada asked if there was any work for him to do, they smiled and said, "You will need to study for many months to qualify for these tasks. If you are serious, we will give you study courses to take from the in-home televised programs. However, first you need to learn how to build houses for your parents. Then you will have time to become educated and contribute to society."

Everyone was so knowledgeable and he was so ignorant. He could read and write but all this modern equipment frightened him. He was obsolete by every standard. He remembered how he had helped destroy the great civilizations of Spain under the Moors and the Jews. All these brilliant people were driven from Spain or put to the fire. No longer did this make him feel good. Reason died while the church reigned over all thought and activities. Could he have been deceived? Doubts again began to gnaw at him.

*“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life”
(Proverbs 14:27).*

Chapter Three

New Assignment — Tomas de Torquemada

Lev Aron had died defending Jerusalem in the final battle, returning to life a few years later. Since his return to life, he had become a trusted ambassador for the Ancient Worthies. He was now responding to a call from Samuel for a meeting in Jerusalem to receive his new assignment in Spain.

“Lev, Torquemada has just returned to life. Many he tortured and burned are also returning to life, and they will soon be aware of his return. This has brought on considerable anxiety. These people recall how viciously they had been treated and the hardships Torquemada caused their loved ones. They know they cannot return evil for evil, but the human heart rises in revulsion that such a person responsible for the diabolical suffering and death of so many is now being comfortably housed and well provided for. These are valid emotions, Lev.”

“I understand, Samuel,” Lev nodded. “I know people will say, if there were a place of literal hell-fire and brimstone, Torquemada would be an excellent candidate for such a place. But, no one of sound mind today would wish never-ending suffering for anyone.”

“How true, Lev. Our task is to try to salvage those who freely sold themselves to such despicable human carnage and others who bordered on human depravity. These people will need special care and attention to tolerate a life under the laws of righteousness and love. Many of them will wish they had never been awakened from the sleep of death to face their sins. Ability to remember will be restored so that each tormented face will be remembered, and the destruction of

families will be recalled in detail. The preposterous rationalizations that supported their behaviors are gone forever.”

Samuel, the prophet who had counseled the first two kings of Israel, continued, “Lev, this will be a difficult task. You have so many talents to give the world in science, but we have forever to develop science. Some of these twisted and warped characters will only have a hundred years to turn their lives around (Isaiah 65:20). Favor will be shown to the wicked for a limited time, but if they do not learn righteousness, they will not survive during this righteous reign of Christ. There is such a thing as total depravity from which one will not fully recover, even given every opportunity to do so. Lev, are you ready for your assignment?”

“Yes, Samuel. I will never turn down an opportunity to serve the King. I can’t say that I especially enjoy dealing with such sordid characters, but I know they will need help to make any progress. I also know that a twisted and warped mind is the most difficult to reach. Truth has never been a premium for them.”

“Fine, Lev. You will fly to Spain within the week. Torquemada is spending his first week with his cousin, Basil. The rest of his relatives want nothing to do with him. He was such an odious character in the days of his power that no one could reason with him. Already some of his victims who live in his community are anxious to confront him. You will need to assuage their anger and help our newcomer adjust to righteousness. Shalom, Lev; may the Lord give you wisdom.”

Torquemada Meets His Jewish Adviser

Torquemada was told that Lev Aron would be visiting him after his first week. Basil had to return to his duties, and Lev had been invited as a replacement to help in the adjustment to this new life. When Lev drove up in a shiny new automobile, the novelty caused Torquemada to relax his guard. His first week had been peaceful, outside of his own outbursts. He was learning to become less belligerent.

Torquemada actually ran out to meet Lev as he stepped out of his car and introduced himself as Tomas de Torquemada. Lev cheerfully reached out his hand and gave him a hearty handshake.

“My name is Lev Aron. I’m from Israel and am sent by the Ancient Worthies to visit individuals who might need extra help adjusting to their new life. I’ve been back from death for many years, so I have a lot of experience with everything that is happening under the new rule of Christ.”

“I don’t know what you hope to accomplish for me, Lev, but you are welcome here. You say you are from Israel. You are not a Jew, by chance, are you?”

Lev detected an attitude of revulsion in Torquemada’s tone of voice.

“Well, yes, I am. Jesus was Jewish and so were his apostles. The early Christian church was Jewish, and I’m a survivor of all the relentless persecution against the Jews. I now obey our King, Christ, who rules through the Ancients at Jerusalem.”

Torquemada’s face fell. Of all things, he was to have a Jew living with him. He grudgingly made an outward effort at being civil and invited Lev into the house. He introduced Lev to Basil who warmly greeted him.

“I have heard so much about you, Mr. Aron. It is such a privilege and honor to meet you. I must be leaving, but I hope Tomas appreciates that he has such a man of distinction for his assistance.”

Torquemada did not know anything about Lev, and furthermore, he had no desire to get close to any Jew. But he knew that Lev was a man of authority and knowledge, and that he had been specifically sent to be with him. That distressed him. Why was he singled out? What could any Jew do for him? Jews were enemies of the cross of Christ. His mind was reeling with agitation. However, Lev was so handsome and poised that Torquemada could not help but be intrigued.

Lev sensed his apprehension and tried to smooth the situation.

“Your home is lovely, Tomas. Who volunteered to build it for you?”

“Why, Basil, my cousin. I have other relatives, but only Basil was willing to build this house for me.”

“You mean he built this all by himself?” Lev acted surprised.

“No, no, Hernando did much of the work on it.”

“Who is Hernando? Is he another relative?”

“No,” Tomas hesitated, “not really.”

“Then, how is Hernando connected to you? He must be a special person!”

Torquemada closed his eyes, wishing he could hide. “I must tell you that Hernando was a man I executed for heresy.”

“Really? You mean he would be that forgiving to make such a sacrifice for you? He must be a follower of Christ, who said, ‘Love your enemies ... do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’ (Matthew 5:44). I hope you treasure this man, because he is doing exactly what Christ taught in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew the fifth chapter. By the way, do you read our Lord’s words often, Tomas?”

Confrontation with His Past

Torquemada was totally unprepared for these simple but penetrating questions.

“I am sorry to say that I was never a good student of the Bible. I had very little knowledge but an inordinate amount of zeal.”

“Well, there is no time like the present. I love to read the Gospels and the words of our Master; he was the greatest teacher of all times. You should let the Master speak to you by reading his words. It is a tonic for all of us who have been touched by sin.”

Torquemada became conscious of how disarming Lev could be. Lev was now standing behind the Lord and letting the Master confront him. He was suddenly aware that he had left Lev standing with his baggage and had not shown him his room.

“I am so sorry, Lev. Please let me show you to your room, which I hope you will find comfortable. May I prepare some breakfast for you?”

“Thank you for your warm hospitality, Tomas. My, what a nice room! I’m sure I will be very comfortable here. Yes, I would enjoy breakfast and especially a cup of tea. I will shower quickly and join you at breakfast in a few minutes. I flew into Spain from Israel very early this morning and secured a car at the terminal.”

At breakfast, Lev showed interest in Torquemada. “How have you adjusted to finding yourself alive again?”

“It hasn’t been easy. I often wish I were back in my grave. I am under a lot of stress. It is very difficult to adjust to this world. In the world I left, I was a man of distinction and power. In this world, I’ll be treated as a leper. People that recognize my name will look on me with loathing. I was the Grand Inquisitor, a faithful defender of the faith. Royalty and church held me in high esteem. But today I am considered a vile person. Anyway, why am I telling you, a Jew, about it?”

“Why not? I have been known to help many people in similar circumstances. You aren’t the only person to return to life with blood on your hands. How can you expect people to praise you and think well of you when you tortured and burned so many of them, stealing their possessions, and leaving their wives and children homeless to beg in the streets?”

“Wait a minute! Just how do you know what I did?”

“Tomas, you were so infamous that historians wrote books about you telling all the pain and suffering you inflicted upon others. I read a chapter about your life before I came to see you. As the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, you were a terror to anyone accused of being a heretic. You treated every accused person as guilty. Even those who repented were sentenced to life imprisonment where they died in wretched cells from cold, hunger and disease. Are you proud of this, Tomas?”

“I do not have to answer that question. I am so tired of everyone hurling my past into my face—and you, a Jew, no less. What right do you have to accuse me?”

“Well, Tomas, I am only telling you what historians have recorded. Whether they exaggerated the numbers of those you burned, or whether

they underestimated the numbers, I really don't know. However, Christ has accounted for each one, and they will all return to life and will be looking for you. You no longer have anyone on your side and nowhere to hide. What will you tell these people? What is your defense?"

Tomas Refuses to Face His Past

Torquemada lowered his head, shaking it as though in pain. Lev had put a finger on all of his sore points. He got up from the table, his face twisted in anger, and stomped into his bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

Lev was used to these outbursts. He had dealt with many such people whose hands were stained not only with blood, but also, as in this case, with such sadistic torture that few people could look upon it without revulsion.

Looking out the window, Lev saw their neighbor and decided to walk over to meet him.

"Hello, I'm Lev Aron. I will be your neighbor for a time as I'm staying with Tomas. Have you met him yet?"

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Aron! My name is Pablo. Welcome! Yes, I have met Tomas. You are not the Lev Aron I have heard so much about are you?"

"Well, I have been around longer than many people today. I returned to life very early in the regeneration. So you may have heard of me."

"It is an honor to meet you, Lev. Shall we see you at the chapel tomorrow?"

"Yes, certainly! I never miss an opportunity to hear the Word of the Lord and to praise Him for His blessings. Are you by chance the chaplain there?"

"No, no, I don't qualify for that. I was formerly a priest. When I came to life my religious institution was gone and truth was shining everywhere. I am sorry to confess that with all my religious learning, I never learned the truth about the regeneration, even though it is so prominently discussed in the Bible. However, I am learning now and

rejoicing in this knowledge that I never understood before. It is so strange that I, a priest of all people, was so totally uninformed about many features of God's plan."

"Well, I was a Jew, and I did not know Christ or any of the truths that are commonly known today. However, we had an old proverb, 'When the pupil is ready, the teacher will come.' It didn't take me long to learn after I returned to life. I don't know how I lived to be a grown man without a clear knowledge of the Bible. In my studies, I have found that there were many men who did have that knowledge, but no one was interested in listening to them."

Pablo nodded in agreement. "Popular error was on the throne and unpopular truth was on the scaffold. I'm afraid that's the way it was back then. Thank God, the devil is now in the 'bottomless pit' and Christ is ruling."

As they stood talking, Torquemada ambled over to them. He seemed to have gotten control of his emotions and looked quite normal again.

"*Holá*, Pablo, I am glad you have become acquainted with my visitor, Lev. Don't let him know you were a priest."

"Too late, Tomas, I already told him! I'm the first to admit my priestly failings."

Suddenly a mother sheep and her little lamb came strolling into Pablo's yard. The little lamb fearlessly approached Torquemada and everyone smiled as he reached down to pet the darling animal.

"This is like the little lamb I had for a pet when I was a young boy. This lamb has been following me since yesterday. He must like the taste of my trousers. He is so *precioso*."

Torquemada picked the lamb up to pet him and gave him a little kiss before setting him down again to run after his mother.

"You should love people as much as you do that little lamb!" Pablo exclaimed.

"Are you going to fault me again, Pablo? Why is everyone out to accuse me?"

“Get used to it, Tomas,” Lev asserted. “We are kind critics who only wish to remind you of what you already know. What you did in your past life is very hard to explain now. No one anywhere will approve of your reign of terror. Your best option is to admit your terrible actions and show godly repentance for what you did. How are you going to explain your actions to those you burned and tortured?”

People Will Be Looking for You

Pablo added, “You know, Tomas, people are looking for you. They know you returned to life, because it has been posted. So we are only trying to prepare you for some future encounters.”

Torquemada turned pale at the contemplation.

“I think about this a lot, and I do not know how to answer them. No one accepts my former reasons today. I know I have a real problem. What can I say to them? It used to be so simple. They were heretics who needed to be brought to repentance or perish. Now, suddenly everyone is a saint and I’m the heretic. How can things turn around so quickly? I close my eyes and open them again, and the whole world has changed.”

Lev nodded sympathetically. “Don’t take it so hard, Tomas. If you stop justifying yourself and admit that you did cruel things to people, at least some of those you tormented and killed may be able to show you forgiveness. Of course, some will still hold bitterness in their heart toward you, and such that do may want to harm you. But they, too, must learn love and compassion.

“Perhaps we should go in for lunch now, Tomas. Then, I would like to take you to a factory not far from here. I know you have visited several factories, but this one I particularly selected is only a couple miles away. You need to find something to train for so you can contribute to society. While our food grows on trees, a lot of things we use need to be manufactured. There is a massive regeneration program underway, and we all have to help out, don’t we, Pablo?”

“Yes, we have to show our love for our fellow men by works. Love labors and faith works.”

After lunch, they drove toward the high tech electronics factory. Lev began explaining how factories build computers.

“These machines can add faster than humans and perform all kinds of solutions to technical problems.”

Torquemada smiled, but understood little. These modern wonders still frightened him. When they arrived, everyone greeted Lev warmly and asked if he would be helping to improve their efficiency. They knew his expertise with computers.

“Yes, I plan to spend time with you while I’m staying with Tomas.”

He introduced Torquemada as “Tomas,” not wishing to give his last name lest an outburst should occur. Lev asked if he could take his guest around to see how computers were made, spying an open computer with all the outside panels removed.

“Of course, help yourself, Mr. Aron. You may also take Tomas to the window where they make the components under dustfree conditions.”

Lev excused himself and took him on a little tour of the plant. As reluctant as Torquemada was, he couldn’t help his curiosity. What was inside of these blinking machines—little witches? After seeing all the components of the computer in a somewhat disassembled condition, he was intrigued as to how it worked. He began to realize how advanced everything was when he saw the dustfree room with people working like surgeons creating the basic components of the computer. Lev didn’t even try to explain everything to him.

Fascination with the Printer

When Lev finally showed Torquemada a computer printer producing material with intricate designs in full color while no one was touching it, he was absolutely spellbound. He remembered how tediously men had labored, hand-copying texts in the monasteries. He realized that if something like this had been found in his time, they would have rushed the operators to the torture chambers. The charge would have

been witchcraft, and the workers would have been shown no mercy. He was getting a belated education.

As they were about to leave, one of the men in authority by the name of Ernesto said, “Is your name Tomas? You are not by chance Tomas de Torquemada, are you?”

Torquemada turned pale. Quietly he answered, “Yes, that is my name. Why do you ask?”

Ernesto turned a livid red. Lev could see him trembling, struggling to control himself.

Finally he quietly spoke in a tone of steel, “You are the man responsible for torturing me and then burning me at the stake. My wife and children perished from lack of food and clothing. You stole my property. You cursed man! I have never before wanted to kill someone until seeing you. You loathsome creature! You dislocated my joints on the rack and then had physicians put the joints together so you could break them again. While on the rack, I watched you pour molten lead down my friend’s throat. I will never, never forget your cold and merciless stare. You monster! Christ should not have given you life when the only thing you gave people was death—and no easy death, but the most fiendish kind you could devise. You wretched man! How can you stand there in shameless guilt?”

Not waiting for an answer, he turned to Lev.

“Why did you bring such a despicable man here? This man deserves to die a thousand deaths, and even that would not atone for his evil.”

Lev responded, “Before you say something that you may be sorry for, please understand that I was assigned to be with Tomas by the Ancients, and therefore, it is Christ I am presently serving. This man is everything you say he is and possibly he has sinned more than can be counted. I hate everything he did with as much passion as you do, but Christ has also paid to bring him to life for a purpose.”

Ernesto quickly regained his composure, for he was a man who had made much progress in his character growth, and his emotional outburst was only momentary.

“I apologize, Lev. If the King has placed this task upon you, then you are guiltless. You are welcome here at any time, and we will look forward to any assistance you may give us. I hope you will understand my angst at seeing this person. He was a man without feelings. I would not believe that such people existed in this world had I not been his sad victim, as well as having witnessed his destruction of others.”

Lev tried to soften the situation. “Yes, Ernesto, your discomfort and anger at Tomas are fully justified. Christ has brought him to life, not with the purpose of destroying him, but of taking away his heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. Can it be done? We don’t know. Only he can determine what his end will be.”

Torquemada stood there pale and weak-kneed. What he had dreaded was happening. His former life had come back to haunt him. He once believed it was his duty to relentlessly torture people until they repented or were destroyed. Now the truth was beginning to come through. He was without excuse or reason for doing what he had done so very efficiently.

Torquemada turned to Ernesto. “I did not ask to be returned to life. With all the lives I took, oddly, I am not free to take my own. If my death would bring you peace and happiness, I would willingly die. I was led to believe that I was a hero defending the faith of the church. Now I am a vile murderer held in lowest esteem. Will I be reviled forever?”

The Moment of Truth

Lev listened to the inner struggle he could hear pouring forth from Torquemada.

“If you were to die as many deaths as those you murdered, it still would not undo the pain and suffering that so many suffered at your hands. Your death would have no merit. It was Christ’s death that paid for your sins. It takes courage and humility to admit your sins. To face those you maimed and murdered with sincere sorrow will take character. It will take love for God and love for those you injured. Even if you were to give your body to be burned, it would profit

nothing without love. We don't need any more people burned at the stake or tortured on the rack. The world has seen enough of that. What Christ desires is truth in the inward parts, a true godly repentance, and the strength of character for you to live down your evil past."

The moment of truth had come and Torquemada was unprepared to meet it. He had deep forebodings this would happen, but when it came about, it was more than he could handle. He threw up both hands in exasperation.

"No one understands me. You, Lev, should at least be kind to me. I trusted you to stand by my side, but the wounds you mete out are worse than Ernesto's. At least he speaks from pain that he and his family bore, but you have suffered nothing at my hands. Why are you assailing me?"

Lev realized he was scoring no points. As long as Torquemada was playing the victim, it would be hard for him to acknowledge his sins. While he now believed that his actions were wrong, he justified what happened because he had been assured, in some mysterious way, that it had been right in that former time frame. Others were supposed to understand his mind warp and overlook his heinous past.

Lev had experienced this problem with others. He turned to Ernesto.

"I'm sorry that this visit has brought back painful memories for you. I wouldn't have come had I known what passions it would awaken in your heart. You suffered needlessly without just cause. Your family also suffered and died in poverty and misery, because those responsible for your death were also inheritors of all your possessions. Your death brought them riches. How different from our Master, who 'though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus became so poor that he could say, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Luke 9:58). Yet, those who professed to follow him stole from those they murdered and increased their riches."

Torquemada listened while looking downward. He felt totally humiliated once again. It was apparent to Lev that they should leave quickly, allowing the lessons of the hour to sink in with time.

Ernesto Invites Tomas to Return

Ernesto looked at Torquemada and said, "You are welcome to come again with Lev if you want to, Tomas. I have said everything I can say. I will lay my burdens at the foot of the cross. You have never suffered the indignities and agony of such a painful death, so you cannot know the feelings that welled up within me when I realized that it was you who destroyed my family and me. But now I am alive and so is my family. Christ has made up to me all that was lost. You do not yet see the need to seek forgiveness for what you have done to me and to so many thousands of others. Yet, I trust and pray that day will come for you. When it does, I will be prepared to extend forgiveness to you."

Torquemada grunted, still looking downward. They had a quiet ride home.

The following day, Lev rose early to visit the chapel. He invited Torquemada.

"*Gracias*, no. I've had enough verbal abuse. Maybe someday I will get the courage to go, but right now, I cannot."

*“And whoso shall receive one such little child
in my name receiveth me”
(Matthew 18:5).*

Chapter Four

The Sweetness of Innocence

Lev arrived early at the chapel to meet new faces. Many who had just returned to life were bubbling with enthusiasm. He met a darling little girl, probably no more than seven years of age, who was all smiles. She had bright, blue eyes and a face that lit up radiantly when she smiled. She was dressed beautifully with a lovely white lacy bonnet that framed the ringlets around her face.

“Hi! What’s your name?”

“My name is Heidi and my father and mother are over there.” She pointed to a couple talking to the chaplain.

“You seem so happy, Heidi! Can you tell me why?”

“Yes! We are all together again! My daddy was killed because he was a Christian. The same people that killed him took our home and everything we had. It was in the winter, and we were very cold and had no place to live.”

“That must have been very hard for your family. What did you do?”

“A man let us sleep in his barn. We had to be real quiet so that no one would find us and get him into trouble. He was a very nice man. He gave us milk from his cow and some bread to eat. He was very poor. We were cold and hungry most of the time.

“I became very sick and I died. My mommy was so upset when I died that she said it made her sick, and she died, too. Then one by one

we were made alive again. We now have a really pretty house! And we have lots of good food, too! We are so happy now! Even my daddy is back with us! I am so happy now that I always smile!”

Heidi’s story brought tears to Lev’s eyes and he hugged her. Her joy and exuberance were infectious. The fingers of evil had not destroyed this little girl’s happiness. All her family’s suffering seemed to have enriched and ennobled their hearts. He must meet her parents.

The services caused Lev’s heart to soar. He felt the happiness of the hour that had risen above pain and death and now filled the courts of heaven with praise. He wished he could take Heidi home to cheer up Tomas, who was growing gloomier with each passing day.

After the services Lev hurried over to meet Heidi’s parents.

“I am Lev Aron, and I met your sweet daughter this morning. She brought a ray of sunshine into my heart. What a precious little girl you have. She told me of your sad past, but now she is so happy because she is with you both again.”

“Praise the Lord! My name is Cortez and my wife is Mira. Yes, Heidi is the happiest little girl—it makes up for all the sadness we have known. I guess we need little children to make our hearts glad. Maybe that is why Jesus said, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me.’ You know, Lev, as painfully as I died, my greatest burden was knowing that my wife and little girl would languish with cold and hunger. I feared my death would result in their death. However, Christ is making up for all that was lost. We have never been so rich and happy before. We have a lovely house, trees of paradise to live on, peace and security, and most of all, we have each other. I hope we did not sing too loudly this morning, but we were bursting with happiness.”

“After talking to Heidi, I was singing louder than usual, too. I can see the joy that she brings to you, Cortez. All the anguish and pain you suffered in the past makes the present blessings all the more appreciated, which is how it should be. God has promised ‘to wipe away all tears,’ and He is fulfilling that promise now in the most remarkable way.”

Lev was afraid to ask who might have been the Inquisitor who brought such pain and sorrow to their family. For the moment he wanted to forget all the suffering caused by misguided zeal.

As his new friends left, Lev watched Heidi running and skipping along the path. She was a joy to behold!

Lev arrived home in time to see Torquemada cleaning up his breakfast dishes. He was determined not to let Torquemada drag down his spirit.

Lev said cheerily, “What a wonderful morning it has been, Tomas. The services were uplifting, and the people I met gave me new enthusiasm about life.”

A Wonderful Morning Not Shared by Tomas

“I am glad to see you happy. Perhaps you will allow me to be happy, too. I’m weary of being subjected to never-ending criticism. You never fail to join in when others assault me. I am a man of noble birth and was considered by many as a defender of the faith. I refuse to accept the barrage of condemnation heaped upon me.”

“I’m sorry to hear of your pain, Tomas. You are a man to be pitied, for you have no one that loves you yet, because you are not being lovable.”

“See! Again you criticize me!” Torquemada cried. “I, too, have feelings, and no one ever thinks of them. Life could be very beautiful now if people would just stop confronting me about my past. I thought I was saving people from ‘burning hell-fire’ and I did succeed in bringing tens of thousands back to the faith. Why am I not praised for all the people I saved?”

“Tomas, you saved them from fire to let them rot in jail until they died. Why should anyone praise you for this? When you arrived on anyone’s doorstep they were doomed! You dragged your victims to the torture chambers. No one could be delivered out of your fingers of evil. When did you make the orphans glad or cause the widows to sing? When did you give of yourself to help anyone? When did you lift the slightest burden from anyone’s shoulders? The people you

killed numbered in the thousands. The people you doomed to cold, vermin-infested prisons were in the tens of thousands. So, you are unhappy and suffering because your evil deeds are remembered and will not go away. Get with reality!"

Torquemada showed his anger, but he held his tongue. He retreated into his bedroom again and slammed the door.

This was an unpleasant start for the day. After a quick breakfast, Lev decided to visit the factory he had been to yesterday. Before leaving, he spoke loud enough for Torquemada to hear through the closed door that he would return in the afternoon.

Torquemada shouted back, "Don't bother to hurry."

Lev said, "If you would like to do something useful, prune the trees. Be sure to collect all the leaves from the pruned branches from the trees of life. They can be used to make the wonderful tea you like. Leave the bare branches, and I will take care of them later."

After Lev left, Torquemada was restless for something to do. He found the shears and started pruning. His father had taught him how to do this when he was a boy, and Torquemada was happy to realize he had not forgotten. Working with these trees was wonderful. He carefully put all the leaves in a box and later spread them out in the sun to dry. In a few days they could be used to make the delicious, healing tea.

As Torquemada was setting out the leaves to dry, he walked the little lamb that frequented the neighborhood with his mother. He was glad to see this cuddly creature and reached down to pick him up and pet him. He stepped over to see if the lamb would eat some fruit that was on the ground. Though the lamb was still on a diet of milk, he enjoyed nibbling on the fruit and seemed to like it. Torquemada went over to sit on the bench with the lamb in his lap when a lovely little girl walked by. Spying the little lamb in his lap, she waved to him and asked if she could pet it.

"Come over, my child. This lamb loves the attention, so why don't you sit down next to me and let me place this lovely creature in your lap?"

Tomas Meets Heidi

"Thank you. He is so beautiful. He was at our house, too. I was looking for him while I was walking. We have lots of little animals. They are so cute. I love them all, but this lamb is my favorite one. I think he really likes me. I think he likes you, too. Isn't it wonderful to have such a little lamb love you?"

"Yes, my little friend. I had a small lamb when I was your age. He would follow me around and nibble on my pant leg just as this lamb does. Yes, I love him as you do. We shall share him together, *bueno*?"

"Oh, yes, he wants all the love he can get. We can never have too much love, my mother always says."

Torquemada looked down, not knowing what to say. The child was beautiful and innocent; he thought she would run from him screaming if she knew what kind of man he had been. He wanted her to love him as she loved the little lamb.

Torquemada asked, "May I get you a cold drink of orange juice?"

"Oh, yes, thank you! That would be really nice! I am thirsty."

"Wait here until I return and hold on to the lamb. I have a treat for it as well."

He soon returned with a cold glass of orange juice and some cookies. Sitting alongside the young girl, he gave her the juice and a cookie. He said, "Now here is an extra cookie for the lamb. Let's see if he will eat it."

The lamb eagerly ate the cookie and was soon nudging her for another. "We shouldn't give him too many, but perhaps another cookie won't hurt."

Soon the little girl said, "I have to go home now. My mother knows that I am safe and that no one will hurt me. She still does not like me to be away very long." She laid her soft little hand on his.

"Thank you for sharing the little lamb with me and thank you for the juice and cookies. You are a very nice man."

Her touch was like that of an angel to Torquemada. “Good-bye, my friend. I did enjoy your visit. Please visit me again.”

As the little girl walked down the street, the lamb followed her. The beautiful child and the precious lamb following her were branded in his mind’s eye. For the first time, warmth glowed in his heart, something he had not felt since his childhood. What a precious little girl! She endeared herself to him as quickly as that little lamb had.

The morning had passed with more meaning than anything else had since his return to life. As Torquemada prepared for lunch, Lev returned as exuberant as ever.

“Hi, Tomas, I am glad you are preparing lunch; I’m famished. We are so blessed with God’s goodness in providing everything we need. Was your dad a farmer who worked from dawn until dark, trying to make a living?”

“Yes, he worked very hard. His hands had big calluses from his never-ending toil. The only time he took off was to go to Sunday morning services. We were more fortunate than most people because we had land and animals, but it took hard work to care for everything. Only the rich nobles did not have to work.”

“I see you trimmed the trees and left the leaves out to dry. Thank you, Tomas, that was a labor of love.”

Tomas Tells of Meeting the Little Girl

As they ate lunch, Torquemada told Lev of his wonderful experience that morning. “The most delightful little girl came walking by looking for the little lamb that frequents the neighborhood. The lamb had wandered into our yard, so I picked him up and was petting him when she spotted us. She asked if she could pet the lamb and sat down beside me. She was like an angel from heaven. She thanked me for sharing the lamb with her and also for the juice and cookies I had given her. How precious she was. I can still see her walking away with the little lamb following.”

Lev smiled. “I would love to have seen it, Tomas. However, they want me to visit them at the factory as often as I can. They are doing a

wonderful job, but there is always room for improvement. I suggested several things that could help. They are eager to make the changes but will need some hands-on guidance. I’m planning to be there everyday but the Sabbath. By the way, Ernesto sends his greetings to you and says you are welcome to visit. So, if you wish to see how things get done, it might be good for you to come along.”

“I would not be welcome there.”

“No, that’s not true. Ernesto thought a lot about yesterday and feels you need to spend more time with people, especially those who love the Lord and have His spirit. Also, you should be studying every spare hour to catch up with the world.”

“Well, I suppose I must do some studying. I notice my mind is much brighter than it used to be. I can remember details more easily than ever before. What should I be studying?”

“That depends on what you like. You didn’t have science in your day, so you don’t know whether you would like it or not. You should get knowledge of basic science, such as electricity, how it’s made and how it works. For instance,” Lev took a comb out of his pocket and rubbed it on his wool pants, then touched Torquemada with the comb. A little spark jolted him.

“See? That’s electricity. It’s static in the air but can be activated by a little friction. You see it all the time in lightning, but we have learned to harness it, and it is a wonderful servant of man.”

Torquemada was fascinated. “Tell me where to start, Lev, and I’ll begin this afternoon.”

“Good, I’ll turn on a program for beginners. While you’re watching it, you will learn without much effort. Meanwhile, I need to make some drawings that I’ll need at the plant tomorrow, so we’ll both be busy.”

They spent a productive afternoon with Torquemada learning and Lev drawing schematics. By supertime Torquemada came out flushed.

“I think I have learned more in four hours than in a lifetime. I am amazed how much I could absorb. The teacher was Sarah, the wife

of Abraham, and she made everything so plain that I can remember every illustration she used. I am going to busy myself getting an education.”

“Good for you, Tomas, you’re finally getting motivated. Now you can enlarge your mind and heart. Don’t forget to study the Word of God, also. You might be surprised how much more knowledge there is available now than at any time in the past. We have so many intense studies of God’s Word that are topically arranged so that you can get everything the Bible has to say on any subject. I was a Jew who never read the Bible much, and I never read the New Testament. When I finally read Paul’s sermon on love, I couldn’t believe how cheated I had been not having learned from this great teacher. That’s what life is all about now, Tomas, love that labors for others and learning that serves others.

“You can’t imagine the changes that have been made in the earth in less than thirty years. Our world was ravished with war and violence until God said, ‘Peace, be still.’ Since the nations have gone to Jerusalem to seek the Lord, we are building and planting, healing and restoring, loving and laboring. Everybody is building and planting and nobody is hurting or destroying. What a difference!”

Tomas Learns a New Perspective

“I am getting a different perspective on life than I ever had before. I am only dimly starting to understand the pain, suffering and death that I had caused—it was to no purpose. Nobody ever eliminated all of the Jews and now salvation is of the Jews.”

“There is only one way to go, Tomas, and that is forward. You cannot recreate the past. It’s gone forever. The only things that have survived are the evil and the good that comes back as each returns from the grave. We all bring this baggage back with us when we are brought to life.”

Torquemada listened and actually grasped what was said for the first time. He had been so busy defending himself that his thought

processes had been blocked. He looked at Lev, “That little girl and that lamb tripped my heart into being alive and feeling the first impulse of love that I have felt in many years. All the preaching never touched me, but this little girl grabbed my heart. Maybe there is hope for me.”

“Of course, there is, Tomas! Christ didn’t bring you back to life to destroy you again. He has no pleasure in anyone’s death. His invitation is, ‘Choose life that you may live.’ The way to life with all your handicaps won’t be easy, but it’s possible if you want to do it.”

“So much of my life was concentrated in hurting and killing people. You know, now that my memory is improved I can see faces of desperation before me. I can remember the things I did to them as they looked into my eyes searching for some pity, some mercy, but they found none. I was a man with a cruel heart of stone.”

“What you were is sad, but that isn’t going to determine your destiny. It’s what you will to be and how sincerely you strive to reach the goal you desire to attain that shall determine whether or not your name will be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. For my part, Tomas, I want to live life to its fullest now and forever. In the grave there is no knowledge, there is no love, there is no warmth, no tenderness, nothing. Life is God’s gift, but we must choose life, if we wish to live.”

“I can see that you are being fulfilled, Lev. You love people and they love you. It is easy for you, but for me, I must face the tens of thousands that I maimed, killed and imprisoned and beg for mercy. Somehow I derived pleasure in squeezing life out of them in the torture chambers or watching them expire in the flames.

“When I was appointed Inquisitor General over all Spanish possessions from 1483 to 1497, I thought my zeal had been rewarded. I became an even greater zealot in my reign of power, and then when I retired, I turned my duties over to Diego Deza, a man certainly as relentless as I was in pursuing heretics, if not more so. I must look him up if he has returned to life. He would certainly have sympathy for me.”

“That’s the last thing you need is sympathy, Tomas. It’s your victims that need sympathy.”

The Misunderstood Inquisitor

“You still don’t understand, do you? How else could we bring heretics back to the faith? Our entreaties were ineffective. What amazed me were those who would not repent, no matter what we did. They seemed to endure the pain in ways that I could not fathom. No torture could dissuade them. I tried every imaginable device to bring about repentance, but some would not be dissuaded.”

“What if you were wrong about your faith, Tomas? What if what you called the ‘faith’ was really a machination from Satan? Did Christ ever torture anyone to convert them? Of course not! Why, then, would Christ engage you with your cruel devices to serve him in diabolical madness?”

Torquemada threw up his hands and rolled his eyes upward. “Lev, you always ask the wrong questions. If I was deceived, it was Christ’s representatives that deceived me. Therefore, I am guiltless. I was a servant of Christ; at least that’s what I was made to believe. What’s so wrong with that?”

“Your own heart should have told you that what you were doing was wrong. Most people’s innate kindness and compassion would have prevented them from abusing others. You yourself knew that some inquisitors you engaged to assist you couldn’t find it in their hearts to torture people as you did. They had hearts of flesh and soon became ineffective inquisitors and you needed to replace them. People like Diego Deza were hard for you to find. However, Diego was worse than you, if that’s possible. He was a relentless murderer who never flagged in meting out pain, suffering and death. He carried on with a fanatic zeal that pleased the devil. Surely, he was your brother.”

“He was a true believer in the faith. That’s why he carried out his assignments so effectively. I knew he was steadfast. That is why I engaged him.”

The conversation was going nowhere fast, so Lev excused himself to get back to his work. It was gratifying to see Torquemada learning from the courses Lev had assigned him. He seemed to enjoy getting out of his weird world into something intellectual and practical. He was learning very rapidly, and he was beginning to understand the mysteries surrounding him.

The next morning Lev started out for the chapel, deciding to walk for the exercise. As he stepped out onto the pathway, he saw Heidi, Cortez and Mira striding along the way. He paused so they could catch up with him. “Good morning and God be praised,” Cortez exclaimed as they met Lev.

Heidi said, “This is where that nice man lives. He gave me some juice and cookies and let me pet the little lamb.”

If she only knew this same man had killed her father, she would be devastated, Lev thought.

After arriving, the chaplain asked Lev, “Why doesn’t the gentleman who lives with you come to the chapel meetings? You must encourage him to come.”

“I have tried to, but he isn’t ready yet. Perhaps he will later, but so far all my attempts to have him attend have been fruitless.”

“Perhaps I should try. Do you think I could help?” asked the chaplain.

“No, no, I wouldn’t encourage you to do that. He isn’t ready for the chapel services yet. Give him time; perhaps in a little while he will think better about coming. He has only recently returned to life and needs to sort out a lot of things. He’s starting to study and that will help him climb out of the hole he’s been living in. Please, give him time.”

Heidi Volunteers to Ask Him

Heidi had been listening and finally said, “I’ll ask him to come with us.”

Lev was startled by her remarks. She would be shocked if she learned that Torquemada was responsible for taking away their home,

leaving them in the street in the middle of winter. She would learn this soon enough, he feared, but he wanted to put off that moment as long as possible. She was too sweet and innocent to face such ugliness. Heidi lived in a world of light, and Torquemada came from a world of darkness.

Lev said, “Perhaps this man needs a little time to get his life together, Heidi. He’s not quite ready to come. He comes from a different faith and will need to grow in his understanding. Just be nice to him, because he does like you. He enjoyed your visit so much. He thought you were a little angel from heaven.”

“He was so kind to that little lamb. If he loved that lamb, he will love Jesus, the ‘Lamb of God,’ too.”

“Yes, in time, Heidi. It will take time to adjust to a world in which love and righteousness are everywhere.”

The music started and everyone was taking their seats. Lev sat next to Hernando and his wife and daughter. Everyone was eager to praise the Lord.

After the service, Hernando asked about Torquemada. “Is he still out of place in this righteous world?”

“I’m afraid he still believes that he was Christ’s ambassador in bringing heretics to the faith. He has made a little progress, however; but he still has a long road to travel.”

“A lot of people probably wish that he would sleep in the grave forever. He was among the meanest of men. I helped build his house thinking he would appreciate the sacrifices made for him in return for his cruelty to me. However, it never happened. He still thinks of me as a heretic.”

As they talked, Heidi came to greet Angela, Hernando’s daughter. Angela said to Heidi, “My daddy is sad that Tomas is not happy in this world. Señor Aron tells us that Tomas wishes he was sleeping in the grave.”

“Who is Tomas?” Heidi asked.

“He’s the man who lives with *Señor* Aron. He is the man who killed my father and your father. He is a very mean man.”

Heidi’s blue eyes grew wide. How could this be the same man who gave her juice and cookies and who loved the little lamb?

She asked, “*Señor* Lev, is it true that the man who lives with you is the man who killed my father and Angela’s father?”

Lev was speechless.

Hernando said, “I’m afraid that is true, Heidi.”

“Are you sure, *Señor* Hernando?”

“Yes, I am sure, Heidi.”

Heidi looked terribly upset upon hearing this. Lev had tried to spare her this sad information, but the truth came out. “*Señor* Lev, how could that nice man be so mean? How could he kill my daddy?”

“I’m sorry to have to tell you the truth, Heidi. He was a man deceived into thinking he was saving people from a burning hell, so he felt free to do almost anything to people who would not join his church. Now you know, Heidi, what the grave is like, don’t you? Did you feel any pain while you were in the grave, which is also called ‘hell’ in the Bible?”

“No, *Señor* Lev, I did not know anything. All I remember was being sick and my chest hurt, and I couldn’t breathe. Then, I remember nothing until I woke up in our beautiful house with mommy and daddy there. I felt so good and now we are very happy.”

“Yes, we all slept in the grave. Whether it was a few years or hundreds of years, we knew nothing. It was just like it was before we were born. We felt nothing and knew nothing,” Lev replied.

Heidi Asks About a Burning Hell

“Why did they think people went to a burning fire when they died?” Heidi inquired.

“They wanted to scare people into serving their man-made religions. That is why they killed Hernando and your father as well, Heidi. They were deceived into thinking they were saving people from hell. So

we have to think of them kindly, even though they caused much harm to many people. You know, Jesus died for those who killed him. He loved his enemies and was kind to the unthankful. That is what we have to do also.”

“Oh, it hurts me to think of what that man did to my daddy. Why was he so bad?”

“You have to remember that back in those days, the devil had deceived many people. When someone is deceived, they sometimes think they are doing the right thing even when it is very wrong. Hernando helped build Tomas’ house, even though he was badly treated by Tomas. So there were and are many good people who lived the way Christ wants us to live. You see how happy you and your mother and father are now. Tomas is not so happy. In his former life, he hurt a lot of people and now everyone he killed or put in prison is either back or coming back, and he has no explanation for what he did to them. Not everyone is as kind as Hernando. Many are very angry with Tomas. Heidi, he dreads meeting all the people he harmed. Would you feel good meeting people you hurt?”

“Oh no, *Señor* Lev, I do not want to hurt anyone. I know how sad my mommy and I were when my daddy was killed and our house was taken away from us. Even when that nice man let us live in his barn, I got so sick. All I remember was hurting so much from being sick. Why did Tomas have to take away our house? Tomas had his own house. Why did he want ours?”

“You will have to ask him those questions sometime, Heidi. Maybe he’ll be able to tell you why.”

As they left the chapel, Heidi had a heavy heart. These were things that adults could not understand, much less children. The hearts of children were so pure that they could not imagine the cruelty in the hearts of men.

Lev was very sorry that Heidi had to be told the truth. Her purity and innocence were somewhat undone this morning. As they left, she didn’t skip down the pathway, but walked slowly with a sad face.

Lev arrived home more sober than usual. Torquemada had already eaten and was busy learning. Lev quickly ate and collected his schematics, preparing to leave. He simply said, “I’ll be back this afternoon. Do you need anything?”

“Yes, I would like to speak with Diego Deza on the telephone.”

“Why would you want to contact him, of all people?”

“You asked if you could get me anything. Don’t accuse me of an evil motive. I simply wish to speak to the man.” Torquemada was crisp in his response.

“All right, I can get that for you. Let me check the Internet, and I will show you how it works. Everybody who has returned to life is recorded on the Internet. You are given the address and phone number and a little information about them in their former life. Here is what you are looking for. Diego Deza—there is his address and phone number and a history of all the evil that he inflicted upon others. You don’t want to look up your name do you, and see what is recorded about your past?”

“No, no, I do not need that. Thank you anyway. I did not know it was that easy to obtain information. Have a good day at the factory.”

*“Be not deceived: evil communications
corrupt good manners”
(1 Corinthians 15:33).*

Chapter Five

Torquemada continued with his studies through the morning. He was learning so quickly, he amazed himself. He had lived his life in almost total ignorance as an apostle of darkness. It was exhilarating to have so much information instantly available. He knew he didn't want to go back to the time when ignorance ruled. When one starts learning, the mind is stimulated and craves more information. He was finding himself enjoying the new experience.

He thought he would go to the orchard to pick fresh fruit for lunch for a break from his mental exercises. He was returning when the little lamb happened by, and seeing him, the lamb fearlessly approached. He placed his fruit on a table and picked up the lamb to pet him. He was about to go get a cookie for him when his little friend, whose name he still did not know, came by looking for the lamb.

This time she froze in the doorway and turned around to leave suddenly. He called to her, “Hello, my friend, come in and pet this little lamb while I go to get some juice and cookies.”

“Oh no, I have to go home.”

“Why are you in such a hurry? Here is the lamb you have been looking for. He is so glad to see you. Apparently, he loves you very much. You do not wish to make this poor little lamb's heart sad, do you?”

She paused, being drawn by the lamb, and said, “Oh well, I guess I can stay a minute. He is such a precious creature, isn't he, *Señor* Tomas.”

“How do you know my name, child?”

“I heard it was Tomas. Isn’t that your name?”

“Yes, that is my name. Please hold the lamb while I get something for you both.”

He began to worry. Now that the child knew his name, she might also know of his past. This troubled him because he was afraid of losing the affection of this angelic child. He quickly appeared with some juice and cookies.

“Thank you, *Señor* Tomas. May I ask you a question?”

“*Si*, my child.”

“Why did you kill my daddy and *Señor* Hernando?”

Torquemada blanched. There was a long pause while he sought for an answer. Finally, he said, “Dear child, I cannot explain to you how such terrible things happened before. We lived in a world that was very different from today. Now what I did appears to be very wrong and evil, but then it was made to appear right.”

“How could killing my daddy be right?”

“It was not right, my child. I had been taught that it was right, but I was wrong. Many people in places of power said it was the right thing to do. I cannot explain this to you, but I want to tell you I am very, very sorry.” His eyes misted with unshed tears.

“My child, I did not mean to hurt you as I know that I did. What I did to you was very horrid. I cannot undo the past. I know I cannot make you understand how we were taught to do what we did.”

A Bridge of Tears

Little Heidi started to cry.

“Oh, please, please don’t cry, my child. Can you forgive me? I am so unhappy now about what I did to you and your father and mother. None of you deserved to be treated as badly as you were treated.”

Even the little lamb seemed to sense Heidi’s sadness as he cuddled up to her.

“Could you kill this little lamb, too?”

“No, my child. I had a little lamb when I was your age. My father killed him for food. I cried for days.”

“My daddy was more important to me than this little lamb.”

“Oh, my child, how can I explain what I did to you? It was terrible, but then I did not know what I know now.”

Heidi accepted a tissue to dry her eyes. Today she did not drink the juice or eat any cookies. She was too sad to eat anything. However, she did feed the lamb a few cookies before she got up to leave.

Torquemada asked her, “Please visit me again. You are the sweetest little girl in the world to me, and I do enjoy your company. I know I do not deserve your kindness in visiting me, but you are closer to me than any person in this whole world. Promise me you will return, please,” he added, humbly.

“All right. I will come back. I don’t know why, but you seem to be a nice man now, even though you were mean to my family.”

“I cannot understand so many things either now, my child. You are so happy and I am so sad most of the time. You have been a ray of sunshine in my dark world. I really want to see you again.”

Heidi placed her soft and gentle hand upon his. A tear overflowed as she left. She was an angel from heaven to him, and he couldn’t forgive himself for what he had done to her parents.

He had planned to call Diego Deza that morning but put it off. He found himself hovering between seeking comfort among those who shared a similar life to his and little Heidi who seemed to pull him in another direction. She was the first person toward whom he felt any warmth. Oddly, looking into his heart he realized that he did not love anybody, and no one seemed to love him. Yet, love was so sweet. The touch of her little hand on his was like a bridge into another world.

When Lev returned in late afternoon, Torquemada interrupted his studies to greet him. He didn’t mention Heidi’s visit, even though that was the outstanding event of his day. Her sweetness and innocence were almost a mystery to him. With all the pain he had caused her family, she was still so gentle and sweet. For the first time, he hated the

pain he had caused others. Although he knew that when he killed or imprisoned people, their wives and children would be divested of all earthly possessions, and they would be reduced to beggars if they could survive at all, somehow he had locked it out of his consciousness. He had been more like a machine than a human.

But now he had reached a turning point where he could either start up the long road toward repentance and painful confession of his wrong, or take his original path of denial while playing the victim. A little touch of love had broken the stranglehold of hatred over his heart. Was it enough to change his direction, or was it merely a fleeting feeling that would pass, with all the old meanness again finding refuge within him?

Breaking into his train of thought, Lev asked, "How did your day go?"

"Very well. I am learning so much that I am astounded. I am finally convinced that I am alive again in the regeneration. So that is progress, *verdad*, Lev?"

A Different Work Ethic

"Yes, that certainly is progress, Tomas! Now you must reconcile your former life with your present life under the full light of Christ shining in the world."

At suppertime Lev asked if he was interested in learning about building homes for his parents.

"You know they will be ready to return to life in less than three months. We are able to restore four generations each year now. That means almost everyone who lived during one century can be returned within a year. This is a phenomenal pace, but we have more and more people, with children, relatives and grandchildren, all eager to build for their returning forebears. We have more than half of the entire world's population back already. So the work is going grandly on. Do you wish to learn how our modern homes are erected?"

"Yes, I shall be glad to learn how to build their homes. However, you know, I am not used to common labor. I only labored as a child,

but when I became attached to the church, I never had to work for a thing. My food and shelter were provided with maid service and a host of other benefits. I guess a little work would be a nice break from study."

"The plots of your mother and father are within walking distance. Some of your relatives have already planted the trees of life on them. I will show you the home building program. You should learn it in less than a week. If you have any questions, I will help you—I have built dozens of homes already."

"Why would you build dozens of homes?"

"Because I love people. I guess that is the easiest answer I can give."

"Why wouldn't their family members do such work instead of you?"

"Because not everyone has family members, and sometimes not every family member desires to help out. Many people find their generation has been cut off, so volunteers are needed to help provide for them."

"Well, I am prepared to bring my parents back. I shall make that sacrifice for my parents. But I certainly hope I will not be coerced to help build other people's homes."

"No, you will not be forced. Everything is voluntary today, as you can see. No one works for money, but for the common good. If you do not work from the heart out of love, then you need not work at all."

"I am relieved to hear that. Some of us are not made for hard physical labor. So it is a good thing that it is not demanded of us," he remarked.

"Isn't that interesting? You killed and tortured people who had a different viewpoint, but now you appreciate the freedom to choose. Wouldn't it have been nice of you to grant others the right to believe what they thought was the truth? Didn't Jesus say, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you' (Matthew 5:44)?"

“Well, it is easy for you to lecture me now. But back then it was a different world. There was no freedom of thought—there was barely any thought. We just accepted authority. I did what I was told to do.”

Torquemada sensed he was dodging responsibility again, but he was not prepared to admit his guilt. He finally said, “Well, I better get back to my studies. At least there I am accepted.”

“Very well, Tomas, but you can avoid your responsibility for only so long.”

Torquemada showed his displeasure by once again retreating into his room and slamming the door behind him.

Face-to-Face Encounter

Torquemada thought he would spend time walking around the area, perhaps finding the lot where his parents’ houses were to be built. He had hardly begun when a tall, handsome man stepped out in front of him.

“Do you not recognize me, Tomas de Torquemada?” the man demanded with hostility.

“Should I?” Torquemada asked, afraid of what was coming.

“My name is Alvarez, and you murdered me!” Alvarez continued with an intense and angry account of gruesome torture and agonizing death. Torquemada, not knowing how to defend himself, turned on his heel and went immediately back home.

Partners in Crime, Brothers in Consolation

With Lev gone and his mind churning, Torquemada thought he would call Diego. Soon a voice answered, “This is a private residence. Please state the purpose of your call.”

He didn’t know how to deal with an answering machine, but he gave his name and then asked if he might speak to Diego Deza. There was silence for a moment and then Diego spoke, “Brother Tomas, it is your old friend speaking. May I inquire the purpose of your call?”

“Yes, brother, I am calling to find out how you are managing in this new life. Are you being approached by angry people who remember the past?”

“Ay, it is good to hear a friendly voice. I seldom go out and remain in my home. It is my fortress. I have had people walking in front of my house with signs that say, ‘Here lives the murderer Diego.’ A few people have accosted me. One tried to strike me, but his arm became paralyzed. We are blessed, my brother, in being protected.”

Torquemada replied, “No one seems to understand that we were faithful servants of the church and did what was required of us to keep the faith. Why doesn’t anybody understand this? We were not drunkards, nor men of low estate that robbed and gambled. We were the blessed people of the church.”

“How true, brother, but this is the cross that we must bear for defense of the faith in our time. I am so glad you called. No one understands me, and everyone speaks with disdain of my past. Give me your telephone number—I would like to keep in contact with you. You are the only friendly voice I have heard since I returned to life. I get so angry and impatient; I fear that I may raise my hand to strike some of my accusers. These heretic Jews now are in power and there is nothing we can do. We must put up with the powers that be; perhaps in time people will accept us when the memories of the past fade a little.”

“*Sí, sí*, dear brother. I am so glad I called you, as I have been so discouraged. One I put to death earlier confronted me this very morning when I went out for a quiet walk, and he would have strangled me if he were allowed to do so. I could see the anger and hatred in his face. He seems to have forgotten how patiently I pleaded with him to repent and accept the faith. Even at the stake where he was burned, I pleaded with him to recant, but he preferred death. Never did I speak to him in anger, but always I entreated him to return to the holy faith. Yet, now I am regarded as a cruel monster. It is so good to hear your words of encouragement, Diego.”

“Your sentiments are mine exactly, Tomas. Finally, I am hearing someone who understands and supports me. I, too, languish at times for the ill treatment I constantly receive. Everyone expects me to be a penitent sinner, whereas I served those who were Christ’s ambassadors

in my time and place. If anyone is to blame, it is those who sought repentance from those whom they alleged had left the faith. It was not our place to judge such matters. We were soldiers fighting for the faith. Why should we be scorned and reproved on a daily basis for following orders?”

“Ah, you are being abused even as I, my dear brother Diego. Never has anyone tried to understand my dedication and faithfulness. While it is true I dealt severely with people, I did so out of principle.”

“Ah, my brother Tomas—perhaps, in time, we shall be free to visit. It would be refreshing to spend time together with someone who appreciates me instead of being scorned all the time. Thank you for calling, and now that I have your number, I shall keep in contact with you. Keep the faith, dear brother. I was languishing until I received your call today. You have lifted me up, indeed. *Adios.*”

That afternoon Lev returned as cheerful as ever. He said, “How did it go today Tomas? You look a little happier than usual. Did you call your friend Diego?”

Tomas Evades the Question

Torquemada didn’t want to admit that he had, so he dodged the question by saying, “Why would such a call make me happy? I am so accustomed to being reviled now that perhaps I could not bear any consolation.”

“Still feeling sorry for yourself, Tomas? You must come to realize clearly the difference between right and wrong. As long as you cannot distinguish between the two, you may continue on your path toward the blackness of darkness forever.”

Torquemada listened with contempt. At the same time, he knew from his experience with little Heidi that he had erred in killing her father and was responsible for the death of Heidi and her mother. In this one case, he felt true remorse at what he had done, but the thousands of others brought no sorrow. He was aware of this inconsistency but was more eager to find approval from his partner Diego than to accept the scorn of all others.

This contradiction disturbed him. Why were all his other victims mere shadows, and why was Heidi so precious to him? He couldn’t answer, but it did gnaw on his conscience. Should he listen to its faint voice, or ignore it?

Today he had been through two contrasting experiences. He was reviled and cursed. Then he was comforted, approved and understood. He much preferred the latter. As he thought about himself, he concluded he was not the monster he had been made out to be. He was looking for a world of acceptance and approval without having to grovel for forgiveness and acquittal. If Heidi could accept him, perhaps soon others would. He returned to his studies without slamming the door, but Lev’s remarks were repelled by his mind.

The following day, Lev returned from the chapel meeting, buoyant and happy. He could see that Lev’s friendships and scientific accomplishments were constantly expanding. But his own world was full of gloom and apprehension. He hated leaving the house for fear of being recognized and reviled. Lev was not such a bad fellow, although he irritated Tomas repeatedly. But Lev was likable and certainly very outgoing and giving.

Lev invited Torquemada to go with him to the factory, but he remembered how savagely he was confronted there and chose to stay at home and continue studying. Perhaps Diego would call, and he would find fellowship to revive his spirits.

The Family Builds for Torquemada’s Father

A month had passed, and soon it was time to start building a home for Torquemada’s father. Someone had already volunteered to plant the trees and garden. Lev took him to the site and called in some heavy equipment to excavate for the foundation. The equipment was there when they arrived, and after Lev spoke to the excavator the work began. He watched in amazement as the backhoe moved the dirt so easily to lay the bed for the foundation. Another machine then began to dig a wide footing. It had sensors so that the footing was precisely level. After the foundation was hardened, they could proceed with

the building. Soon a truck dropped off the foundation materials so the initial construction could begin. Torquemada's brother and sister soon showed up to help. They greeted him with considerable reserve, with none of the warmth one might expect from family members. Torquemada introduced Lev to Claudia first, and then Raoul.

His sister Claudia faced him, "I am here because I loved my father and am eager to prepare for his return. But, I am afraid Papa will have a heavy heart when he learns of your past. He was a good man, Tomas."

Torquemada flushed, but didn't respond. He greeted Raoul cordially, but it was apparent there was no affection between them either. As the work got under way, both Raoul and Claudia proved to be hard workers and had no trouble getting things done. Torquemada, on the other hand, stood around observing. He would do one little thing and stop, waiting for someone else to complete it. He would put one foundation block into place and then stand aside watching everyone else continue the process without slackening. If he had had to build the house alone, it would never happen. Lev kept everything squared and leveled, which was most important when starting out. Once everything was squared and true, the rest of the house would follow with little effort.

Lev found it strange that these three family members did not inquire about each other. Most families showed a loving interest in each other, but such was not the case here. Raoul and Claudia seemed more interested in Lev and wanted to know why he was helping them and what he was doing in the area. When they learned he was a Jew, they were increasingly curious. He was so handsome and they could see he was brilliant. His eyes flashed with love and understanding, and his words were weighty and meaningful. Lev was always full of smiles and encouragement, and occasionally he would sing a tune while working. His happiness seemed to rub off on everyone except Torquemada.

By noon they had accomplished a great deal. Lev would have stayed on, but he needed to supervise his project at the factory. Before

leaving, he laid out the work for the afternoon reminding them of the need to keep everything level and square.

Torquemada was actually relieved to see Lev go. Physical labor was very difficult for him, as he lacked any experience in what he was doing. Each block laid was so heavy that he dreaded getting the next one. Lev wondered as he left how they were going to get along. It was apparent that there was little affection between them. Apparently Claudia and Raoul had suffered under the stigma of their brother's notorious past and did not wish to make it appear that they were a party to his crimes. Torquemada was displeased with them for not helping build his home, making it necessary for a heretic to make up for their failure.

When he returned that afternoon, Lev found Torquemada in his usual unhappy state. He surmised from this that the siblings had found no praise for him. However, Lev brightly asked how the project had gone after he left.

"Well, I left very early after we had our lunch. I had planned to work another hour or two, but I decided that I did not need my own flesh and blood to be passing judgment on me. You would think that they at least would be more understanding. They were almost as bad as you are in their barrage of criticism."

"How could anyone be that bad?" Lev joked. "Tomas, you will never learn, it is not you that they dislike, but your evil deeds clinging to you in never-ending disgrace."

"The Law of the Lord is Perfect"

Torquemada groaned, "Oh, not again, Lev. I don't know who is worse, you or my brother and sister. Perhaps some day you will find that I am not as bad as you think. If you could at least give me credit for being loyal to the faith I dearly cherished, I would appreciate it."

Nothing had changed, so Lev decided to study the Scriptures that evening. He turned to Psalm 19:7-9 and read: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing

the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.” How good and refreshed his heart felt as he read these words! There was no perversion in the Word—it was always pure and fresh, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Lev reflected on his discussion back at the factory with Ernesto, who had died at Torquemada’s hands. Ernesto had been especially helpful in making the changes Lev was implementing. However, today he had confided how evilly Torquemada had treated him. He went into the gory details of the tortures used on him. Even as he was speaking, Lev could feel Ernesto’s pain and anguish in recalling the seemingly endless torture while Torquemada looked on, absolutely detached. There was no pity, no mercy, not the slightest emotion.

Lev was troubled; he realized that Torquemada was still largely detached from his past. He continued to hold someone else responsible for his actions. He must have had a terribly seared conscience to do what he did to countless thousands; healing it would not come easily.

The following day, Torquemada returned early from working on his father’s house, just in time to receive a phone call from Diego. Lev had not yet returned from the factory. The two inquisitors found solace and consolation in each other. Both had exercised their persecuting power relentlessly and they were now bereft of friends or sympathizers.

“Tomas, *mi amigo*, I have a new lease on life since I spoke with you. At last I have found someone who understands and appreciates me. Everyone else seems to look upon me as a flame-breathing monster. Even my family members do not wish to be seen in my company.”

“Yes, my brother, this is the price we pay for having protected the faith. No one seems to understand that, but you and I share a common bond in suffering for the cause we so faithfully defended. Take heart, in time people will think better of us. After all, they all have abundant life now. Any suffering they endured is over and done with. What can we do to change the past now? Nothing. If we pleaded on our knees for forgiveness, how would that change the past?”

“The only thing that troubles me, Tomas, is that a few of those I put to death are now listed among those ‘born in Zion’ (Psalm 87:5). All the religious leaders that encouraged us to burn our victims at the stake are here; none of them seem to have found a place to ‘live and reign’ with Christ in Zion. We must have erred in our treatment of those with Christ, but even so, if they are ruling with Christ, did we not help them to glory?”

Explaining the Missing Martyrs

Torquemada swallowed hard not knowing what to say. This was an aspect of the whole situation he had not yet encountered. Finally, he said, “How could we know who was a true follower of Christ? If they had known that Christ was the very Son of God, they would not have crucified him, would they? In full view of their glory and honor, I am sure they do not concern themselves with who may have added to their burdens for a season. It is like a woman in childbirth. Yes, there is pain, but it is quickly forgotten when the child is in the mother’s arms. The joys these saints are experiencing will not make them vengeful, will it?”

“True, true, dear brother Tomas. You have good understanding. I find great comfort in your words. There must be others like us. Would it not be good if we could convene a conference of faithful defenders of the faith, where we could find consolation and encouragement? Perhaps, when this building frenzy is over, we will be able to visit each other and find support for the wounds inflicted upon us today.”

“I, for one, would certainly welcome that! Only one thing troubles me. How is it that some who had rejected the ‘faith’ are now found reigning with Christ?”

Another long silence followed, while his friend tried to find some plausible answer. “Well, possibly we may have erred in persecuting a few people. No one is perfect. There were a few people that I sensed knew God and Christ, but how could we know for sure who they were? I would surely apologize to any that are with Christ in glory, wouldn’t you, brother?”

“*Sí, sí.* Again you are so correct. Just as they would not have crucified Christ if they knew who he was, neither would we have condemned such to the flames. We did this in ignorance, didn’t we, Tomas?”

“Well, I had better go for now, Diego. My mentor will be home soon and he will not be pleased to hear that I am so comforted with your telephone calls. It is strange to have a Jew looking over your shoulder. Does anyone look in on you?”

“Oh, yes, I have a man whom I burned at the stake who has volunteered to be my companion while I get adjusted to this new life. Although he is not a Jew, it is still annoying to have such a lowly person watching over and correcting me all the time. I have told him his services are no longer needed, but he thinks I have an attitude problem. I have to humor him, but soon he will be leaving and I shall be free. He has been nice to me, but I can’t figure out why, seeing that I was responsible for his death. I think he is doing all this for me because he wants to tell others that he saved me from the way of second death. I’m not sure that I would not rather be sleeping in death. I would not be forced to face all these fierce people, wishing that they might have the privilege of killing me.”

“Be patient, brother, perhaps the passing of time will soften the hearts of our assailants. Meanwhile, be at peace.”

Diego had introduced some troubling thoughts. What about those now with Christ that they had treated as heretics? How could that be? Torquemada did not like knowing this fact. Obviously, if they were with Christ, they must have served Christ in a distinguished manner. This would mean he had made some serious mistakes. How could he continue claiming to have been a great defender of the faith? If they were now with Christ in glory, surely *they* must have kept the true faith.

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful,
And sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing even to the
Dividing asunder of soul and spirit,
and of the joints and marrow,
And is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”
(Hebrews 4:12).*

Chapter Six

Questions for the Archbishop

Torquemada felt a twinge of discomfort. Perhaps Gonzalez de Mendoza, the archbishop of Toledo, would be able to answer his dilemma. Oddly, he had heard that the archbishop was not with Christ in glory either. There had to be an explanation.

Lev arrived home with his usual cheerfulness. “How did it go today at the building site, Tomas? Did you make much progress with the foundation?”

“It went slowly after you left. We aren’t as efficient as you. We did make progress, but I tired early in the afternoon and thought it best to return home. Lev, I am not very good at physical labor.”

“You’d be better at it if you put your heart into it. I have never seen anyone who was so disengaged while supposedly working than you, Tomas. Do you have an inbuilt aversion to work?”

“When will you give me credit for anything, Lev? You are so quick to point out my frailties. I have told you I have not worked since my childhood. Maybe in time I’ll improve—meanwhile, be patient with my inadequacies.”

“Perhaps I am being a little hard on you, Tomas. Please, accept my apology. I don’t want to discourage you from doing good work.”

After supper, Torquemada returned to his studies. Lev could see his mind was expanding at a significant rate and the experience was very stimulating. The learning opportunities were so effective that nearly everyone was soon pulled into the learning process, and he was no exception. All the superstitions of the Dark Ages were quickly dissipating. He had entered into the thinking process.

Now only truth was taught—there was no misinformation or politicking, only truth. Human dignity, which had suffered terribly in the previous lifetime of people, was being restored quickly. Not only dignity, but also glory and honor were bringing mankind back into God’s image. The world was now a sane and a safe place; but it still needed to become a place of love for God and fellow man.

Suddenly, Torquemada appeared in Lev’s study; it was most unusual.

“Lev,” he said apologetically, “excuse me for interrupting. Could you please show me how to use the Internet to find telephone numbers for people? There are people I would like to talk to from time to time. I would like to find some answers to my questions from my peers, people I had once known and trusted. I know you have all the answers, but you are from a different era. Your mind does not work like mine. You must remember that thinking was almost forbidden in my time, and now the doors are wide open to thinking. It is an invigorating experience, but I need to close in the long gap between the past and present. Perhaps my own kind of people can help me.”

“Certainly, Tomas, I can show you how to find anyone’s name. If they are living today, they are only a telephone call away. Needless to say, I am very pleased that you are starting to think. However, remember Tomas, thinking must be along the lines of truth.”

He made no defensive reply and simply asked to be shown again how to find the phone number of a man named Mendoza. Lev did not ask if he had contacted Deza, his former inquisitor friend. Lev

showed him how to find the information and took a little extra time to explain other features that he might find useful. He was starting up the learning curve, almost from caveman to scholar.

The next morning Lev did not ask Torquemada if he might like to go to the local chapel. He had steadfastly refused all former invitations. But unexpectedly, he inquired what the services were like. So Lev invited him, “Come and see. You might find it enjoyable. You can’t keep living like a hermit.”

A Hermit Better Than Chaos

“You forget, Lev, that my presence almost anywhere will create an uproar. I don’t have the friends you do. Perhaps it would be better to remain a hermit and not be the instrument of chaos.”

“Well, at the chapel most people behave civilly. It is inexcusable to create an uproar at our place of worship. Nothing will probably happen there, but when people see you they will remember you and your deeds and may find occasion to confront you afterwards.”

“Perhaps you are not aware of it, but I have been accosted while simply walking through the neighborhood. It was most unpleasant.”

“You didn’t tell me about that, Tomas.”

“I am a private person. Remember, I was once a friar. Anyway, what good would it do if I told you? People are out there with deep resentment and anger against me, and as long as I am not with them, they will not be disturbed by my presence.”

“I guess you’re counting on the passing of time to make the unpleasant past go away. Don’t be misled—it won’t disappear. No one can forget the trauma of such cruelty.”

“You certainly don’t give me much comfort, Lev. Please remember, nothing I do will remove those memories. Saying ‘I’m sorry’ won’t change their resentment.”

“Yes, you’re right, Tomas, you cannot change the past. But you can change your course in the present and future. Your days as Grand Inquisitor have ended forever. Do you understand that?”

A Frank Appraisal

“That’s putting it bluntly! I cannot say that I am proud of my past, as strange as it may sound to you. I realize I was misinformed. That is not a happy thought to me—it makes my position very awkward.”

“Well, Tomas, I see you are starting to think it through, and that is exactly what you need to do. You’re beginning to realize that you were not pure-hearted in your actions. Somewhere within you is the voice of truth.”

Torquemada turned a little pale, but he didn’t show his usual anger or resentment.

After Lev left for the chapel, Torquemada had his breakfast and then set out for his father’s house. The foundation was nearly finished, and the modules of the house were ready to be placed on the foundation. His brother and sister were already at work when he arrived. Raoul seemed more at peace with him and no longer mentioned his past. However, Claudia still voiced her revulsion of his former activities. Yet even her statements were tempering. Today he planned to work harder.

He had been studying home-building and already had learned quite a bit. However, they all agreed to wait for Lev before placing the building modules on the foundation. In about a half-hour, Lev arrived with his usual enthusiasm and winning smile. Both Raoul and Claudia had become very friendly with him. They could not imagine why, with all his scientific abilities, he would spend his time building homes.

Claudia finally asked, “Lev, what is a man of your accomplishments doing here? Why are you spending your time with Tomas? Does he deserve all your attention?”

“My, you’re full of a lot of questions today! First off, I am working with science in the afternoon while in the morning I am helping you build. I love to build. Somebody built my house for me, and it’s something I can now do for others. Second, I am spending time with Tomas because the Ancients sent me here. As for your last question, does he deserve my attention? Yes—he does, because Christ’s ransom

payment guarantees all a full opportunity to learn righteousness. The real question is, will he learn? And that remains to be seen. Tomas comes with a very stained past. Obviously, the King wants to give him a fair opportunity to enter the world of light. But only Tomas can determine his own destiny.”

Torquemada was listening in on the conversation and said, “We did indeed come from a very dark time. My mind has been more stimulated in the last few weeks than in my entire former lifetime. Because I was a true believer in what I was told, without reason or thought, I performed intensely. Yes, I tortured and burned without pity or mercy, but only because I was led to believe this course of action would bring me God’s approval. I find now, quite to my dismay, that it has brought me the anger of my victims and the resentment of men everywhere, even from my own family.”

Lev was surprised at how his mind had been enlarged; his grasp of things had definitely changed. While he still felt he had been a victim, he was finally admitting to being deceived. Even Claudia brightened hearing his remarks. Lev knew there was some truth in Torquemada’s statement about being deceived, for there was no doubt that he surely had been. However, there was a law written in the human heart against murdering and torturing anyone, even enemies. When anything more than a humane death occurred, it became sadistic and demonic—certainly not accepted by anyone striving to retain the image of God in his heart.

The morning passed while heavy equipment positioned the modules into place. Lev carefully connected the wiring in the components, and soon the main structure of the house was under roof. Now all that remained to be done were the details. Lev was amazed at how quickly houses were completed since he first started building. After a hurried lunch, Lev left for his second job at the factory.

Torquemada worked a little longer in the afternoon but kept most of his thoughts to himself. He planned to call Mendoza when he returned home, wanting to see what some of his great leaders had to say about the light that was now shining.

The Archbishop Confronted with Truth

Torquemada hurried home, intent on conferring with his former spiritual leader. He anxiously dialed the phone eager to make contact. A voice responded, “Mendoza speaking.”

“I am so pleased to hear you, Archbishop. This is Tomas de Torquemada calling. I hope you have not forgotten your humble, faithful servant of the church. If you are wondering why I am calling you, it is because I am trying to understand the past in a world that shows no toleration for it.”

“Ah, Tomas, yes, I remember you and your assistants. We called you ‘the Dogs of the Lord.’ Your savagery has been well documented and known. How may I help you?”

This sounded like something less than faint praise. “Do I hear a note of derision in your greeting?”

“You certainly did not call me for a commendation, did you? If you wish to confess your sins, I no longer can be engaged in that service. And I am no longer an Archbishop. Our church no longer exists, I hope you know.”

This was not how the conversation was supposed to be going. Even Mendoza seemed to hold the former inquisitor in disdain. Suddenly, Torquemada realized that no one was willing to own him or his deeds.

“I expected at least some understanding from your eminence. Was I not engaged by the church to end sedition and heresy? Why am I now a ‘Dog’ in your eyes?”

“Dear brother, I do not mean that you are a ‘Dog’ now, but your savagery had been questioned by those in authority. You never needed encouragement in your mission of torture and death, did you?”

“This is shocking. I am hearing you insinuate that not only was I a ‘Dog of the Lord,’ but you are implying that I was a ‘mad Dog of the Lord.’ The King and the Queen, as well as the church, all held me in honest esteem and honor. At least that was my impression. Now no one approves of me and even less, no one believes that I served

to protect the true faith as decreed by the church. It was the church and nobles that pointed out the heretics—my job was to convert them or destroy them. How is it that now I am discredited by those who engaged me?”

“Please, my dear Tomas, you cannot put the blame on the church for your bloody reign of terror! Oh, I cannot deny that we were behind your actions, but you obviously did not believe in gentle persuasion, did you?”

Torquemada realized he was being treated as the “mad Dog” of the church who could not be reined in or controlled. This was a strange turn of events—one that he never expected. He thought that they would all be in this together. Now he found himself disowned by even those with whom he had been associated. This was more than he could endure. He decided to change his posture with Mendoza.

“By the way, my dear brother Mendoza, I was looking at the list of those who are with Christ, who are said to be ‘born in Zion,’ and I noticed some that I tortured and put to death at the behest of the church were on that list. I also noticed that none of our spiritual leaders were on that list. How do you explain this?”

There was a long and troubled silence on behalf of the former archbishop. He finally said, “Many are called but few are chosen.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, there were many disciples of Jesus, but only a few apparently heard his ‘Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord.’ I must confess I was not found worthy of that honor.”

“You seem to be missing my point. I know that you and I are not among them, without being told. How do you explain that some of the Waldenses, whom the church declared heretics, were among the honored saints of Christ? Why was the persecution against them relentless? Now it appears they were not heretics, but the Lord’s very own footstep followers. Yet the church tried to obliterate them. Were we misinformed? Who is responsible for this dreadful state of affairs?”

The former archbishop was somewhat irritated by the implications of the questions. He finally said, “Are you now turning into the Grand Inquisitor of the bishops and archbishops? Certainly, we must concede that we erred in some cases. If some are with Christ in glory they obviously were not heretics but instead the Lord’s very own dear sheep. That should be obvious to you, Tomas.”

“It is obvious to me now. However, it was not I that made the judgments. Those higher than I did. I was just the ‘mad Dog’ you sent against them. You need to explain this to me. I do not understand your explanation so far.”

He was churning with emotion. “You have not answered my question. You know that no one is permitted to hurt anyone now under Christ’s rule. Whose rule were we under when we were torturing and burning people at the stake?”

Acknowledging Serious Errors

Another long pause followed during which the archbishop gasped for air. With a sense of frustration in his voice he admitted, “Look, it is obvious that our church leaders made mistakes. If that is what you wanted to hear, you have heard it.”

But Torquemada wasn’t finished. “I know the past cannot be undone. It stands as a monument against me, but it also stands as a monument against you. You, brother, were in the seat of command; I was only the obedient ‘mad Dog’ carrying out orders. Now I am expected to take the blame. Obviously, neither of us served Christ, and that is what is troubling me. I was never a man who did much thinking in the past. Only recently have I started to study and think, and now I am finding out that I have been a misguided fool.”

“You could have resigned at any time,” Mendoza countered, “but you loved the power you had over people. Should the bishops have ended your occupation? Surely, they should have. The church leaders wanted to keep the sheep in the fold even though they employed forceful means to accomplish it. We lived in a dark era, and I am afraid some of that darkness overtook the church as well. Would they have crucified

the Lord if they had known he would rise from the dead, invested with all power in heaven and earth? Surely not! Had we known then what we know now, would we have done things differently? I certainly hope so. There, you have my confession.”

Coming out of the darkness into the light was a painful process for Torquemada. He had hoped for some comfort and consolation from his leaders in the faith but received only censure. He decided he had pursued matters as far as he wished to go and said, “Well, I have received an education much too late. I wish I had known then what I have finally learned after all the damage has been done. Ay, now I can see that I was considered ‘the ignorant mad Dog of the Lord.’ I also see that the church held my leash and unleashed me when it served their purpose. I am devastated to learn this so late. However, I will be no one’s ‘mad Dog’ anymore.”

“Yes, that is good, Tomas. We both are learning a lot of things—too late to change the past. However, the future is ours. Let us take the blinders off and serve Christ in the light that is now shining. We both have been rejected once, shall we be rejected a second time?”

“Ah brother, at last you are speaking the truth. Thank you and God bless you. Farewell.”

Torquemada now knew what he had refused to accept before. Truly he was a man detached from his former life as well as his present life.

When Lev returned late that afternoon, he found the former inquisitor still sitting by the phone, seemingly distraught and discouraged.

“What is the matter, Tomas? You look like you lost your last friend. Remember, I am still with you; take heart.”

Torquemada looked up suddenly, shaking his head with a wry smile.

“Lev, I am coming to believe you are about the only one in this world that can endure me. I just finished talking with the former archbishop Gonzalez de Mendoza.”

“Obviously, the conversation was not to your liking.”

“The Mad Dogs of the Lord”

“Do you know how he described my service to the church? He said my fellows and I were ‘the mad Dogs of the Lord.’ I expected kind words of approval or at least a measure of understanding, but he held me at arm’s length with great disdain. No one supports me or sympathizes with me—I am totally rejected. The very ones who engaged my services disavow me. I belong nowhere. My former bishops disown me, enemies hate me, and the world has no place for me. And you, Lev, are only here because you have been assigned the task. So to whom do I turn now?”

Lev’s heart reached out to him. “Tomas, this is your finest hour, believe me. You are finally turning toward the light. What you once were will not be your undoing. It is what you will to be that counts from this hour.

“The first step to making things right is to admit sincerely that you were wrong and greatly deceived. People will accept that, not necessarily the instant you say it, but if they see true ‘godly sorrow,’ they will forgive you. You cannot take away their pain and horrible memories, but you can show them you are no longer the hated Inquisitor Torquemada, but rather you are a loving human being full of good works. Show them you are eager to love them now and eager to have their forgiveness. I have seen people who did terrible things who are now given to serving their fellow man, willing to serve any hour of the day or night. They are now accepted and approved by their fellows.”

“Perhaps it was good that I learned firsthand from Mendoza that I was on their list of troublemakers. If I am a loathsome creature in the bishops’ eyes, how can I expect those I mistreated to accept me? *¡Ay, Dios!* Like Cain, my punishment is greater than I can bear.”

“You are wrong there,” Lev put a reassuring hand on the distraught man’s shoulder. “Christ did not bring you back to life to cause you needless suffering. I was sent to be with you, so that when the moment of truth dawned in your heart, I could point you to the way of reconciliation with your fellow men and finally with God.”

“Lev, this is the best thing you have ever told me. I wish I could believe it was true. But, I’m afraid I have gone too far from God—I don’t have the strength to regain all the ground I have lost. Don’t waste your time with me. For a few short years of power over people, I sold myself to the devil. Even if I live to the end of the Millennium, he will be waiting for me when he is loosed.”

“No, Tomas!” Lev was adamant. “*You* alone must choose whom you will serve. You can become a servant of Christ, or you can return to your former master, the devil. Make up your mind here and now. It is that easy. If you resolve to serve Christ, you must start today. ‘Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts’ (Hebrews 4:7). You have had a heart of stone, but the Great Physician can take away that heart and give you a heart of flesh, and he will do it if you seek his face.”

Lev saw tears running down Torquemada’s cheeks. He finally looked up at Lev, “Why have you, a Jew, helped me accept my sins, and are now introducing me to Christ? Thank you, Lev. I have treated you—and everyone else—so shamefully. I do not have the strength or resolve to arise from the ashes. Dear God, please, help me.”

Lev hugged his friend. “Your God has helped you already. He provided you a Savior. Now he will help you live down your sins in greatness if you only humble yourself under his mighty hand.”

Deza Hears an Alarming Confession

The next afternoon, Torquemada worked longer than usual. He had confided in Claudia and Raoul all that happened to him in his conversation with Mendoza and then with Lev. The siblings joyfully embraced him for the first time. It felt good to be loved. He told them of his weaknesses and inability to live down his sins in greatness, but that he finally realized the serious mistakes made in his former life.

When Torquemada returned home, the phone was ringing. He picked it up to hear Deza speaking. “I have been trying to get you this afternoon. I am glad to finally reach you. I need to talk to someone who understands a fellow inquisitor.”

“I am afraid I am not the man I was the last time I talked to you, Deza. You know I talked to our former archbishop Mendoza. I called him thinking he would speak comfortably to me. However he referred to us as ‘the Dogs of the Lord.’ All he wanted was for me to disappear and to brush my footprints off the steps of the church. I realized at last that the church leaders want nothing to do with us. Those we treated so badly also renounce us. I thought there might still be a world we belonged to, but now I realize it was only the devil’s world. Dear brother Deza, our only hope is in Christ. If he can forgive us, then, in time, perhaps those we ill-treated will also forgive us. That is our only hope. It turns out the only one who proved to be my friend was a Jew named Lev Aron. From the first moment that we met, he spoke the truth, but I refused to believe him. Now, after looking in every direction, I find he was the only one who pointed me in the right way.”

“Poor Tomas, you must be mad. How could you fall into the arms of a Jew, believing him to be your friend? *I* am your friend, Tomas. You have become discouraged needlessly. Have courage brother; there is surely a place for stalwarts such as we were.”

Torquemada quietly responded, “I shall give you the telephone number of Gonzalez de Mendoza, our former archbishop. Please call him and see what he thinks of you. Ask him how a number of those we put to death as heretics are now listed as being with Christ in Zion. Ask him how it is that none of *our* spiritual leaders are with Christ. We were deceived, dear brother. We tortured and murdered many of those who truly served Christ. Check the list yourself and see if you recognize any of those whom you destroyed who are now living and reigning with Christ. Whose servants were we while killing the saints?”

Deza was stunned at his analogy. He finally replied, “Yes, I do remember several on that list of those from our time that are now with Christ. How could that be? They were heretics. Does this mean we killed some who are now with Christ? Oh, no, brother Tomas.”

“That is precisely what I asked the former archbishop. His answer was, ‘Well, we made some mistakes.’ That is an obvious truth—except

it is far understated. That it was a tragic mistake of great magnitude is a more accurate assessment.”

Deza regained his former composure as he realized there was an indictment of his own conduct because he was a party to this human tragedy. He again tried to defend the past, “However, brother, we must not be hasty. Mistakes have been made, but that does not mean that everyone that made mistakes was not sincere. ‘To err is human,’ my brother. Why condemn ourselves? We were not ‘the Dogs of the Lord.’ Did we not live lives of self-denial and place ourselves under religious discipline? It takes men of character to do that.”

“That is what I have been trying to explain since I returned to life. But I have been living in denial of any responsibility for what I did. I thought I could find some explanation that would vindicate my past. Failing to find any explanation by myself, I finally sought the archbishop, hoping he would throw a mantle of understanding over my past. It seems no one wants my bloody footprints on their doorstep. Those who used our services now wish that we would go away—the farther the better.”

“Perhaps you have been bewitched by your Jewish friend. He is working on you to feel guilt and shame, when in fact you were a decent fellow. The King and Queen both found you a noble servant of the state and of the church. Soon people will accept you as a ‘servant of the Lord’ instead of one of the ‘Dogs of the Lord.’ Time is needed to heal the past.”

No Mantle to Cover Past Sins

“Brother, I have been attempting to do what you suggest ever since I have returned to life. I have finally realized that it is not going to happen. There is nothing that can change our past. We tortured and killed some who are now with Christ. How can that be right?”

“You lived comfortably in the past with a vivid awareness of what you were doing. Never did you feel shame, guilt or remorse. Why are you suddenly being made to feel it? This Jew who is your mentor is

looking for honor for converting you to his thinking. Brother, do not be hasty. You are no match for that crafty fellow.”

Deza heard his doorbell, so he quickly ended with an apology for having to close the conversation. He said in closing, “Take heart, brother, we shall prevail. Farewell.”

Those words were somehow comforting to Torquemada. He realized he was in a time of crisis. He must decide whether to follow Deza’s advice and wait for some balm to heal his troubled mind. This pathway did not require that he grovel before the world seeking forgiveness.

If he followed Lev’s advice, it would require a heroic effort to change his lifestyle and thinking. How could he grovel before those he had tortured and killed seeking forgiveness? Even if he should succeed, would not Satan be waiting for him once he was released from prison at the end of the thousand years? If he had been the devil’s servant once, surely the devil would seek him again. If deceived once, wouldn’t he be easy prey?

About this time Lev came home, enthusiastic as ever. Torquemada wished he could be as carefree and happy. Lev was not responsible for so many deeds of cruelty and death. Most people only had small vices to repair. Why must he carry these chains of guilt? Why couldn’t he be free?

“Hello, Tomas. Did you get the roof started on the house? Perhaps we can finish it tomorrow.”

“Yes, we did get a good start on it and worked rather late to speed it along. It is shaping up into a lovely house. Of course, there are a lot of details that need doing, and we are grateful for your expertise in these matters. Even though I have studied and retained an enormous amount of information, I still feel inadequate to make many decisions. It is more complex than we new people can comprehend.”

“Oh, you are doing splendidly. I am amazed at all the improvements they have made to the building process. It used to take us longer to get a house together, and now within a month we will have it done. We are easily bringing back four generations a year now. Already your

mother’s house is underway. All the trees have been growing and those needing enclosure are encased in glass for protection. Now large bodies of people no longer work in factories but are busy planting orchards and gardens as their contribution to society. We will have four more volunteers to help build your mother’s house, so that should get it done in less than three weeks.

“When we first started this regeneration process, the world was in a mess. It was ravaged by war and rioting. No one was prepared for the iron rule of Christ. It took several years to get the nations to accept Zion’s Hill as the headquarters. However, once all the resources of the world were turned toward building and planting and healing, it was amazing to see the progress. What do you think, Tomas, is it a different and a better world than the one you once lived in?”

A World of Ignorance and Oppression

“Of course, it is, Lev. We lived in ignorance and oppression everywhere. Most people were in extreme poverty, except for those who had large land holdings. I lived well in my adult life, but certainly not as comfortably and healthy as now. The biggest difference is the wide open doors to knowledge. These were all shut, but of course we did not have the tools to convey knowledge as easily. In the old world, our minds were in a vise and knowledge was feared. Now we have pleasures of beauty; comfort, security and every desire of the mind can be satisfied. Knowledge is what characterizes our time. It is absolutely wonderful.”

“Have you thought about the fact that your father will be back in a week? Can you believe that?”

“Yes, and I cannot help but wonder what he will think of me. He was a good man who died before I rose to prominence, so he did not know of my activities. His joy in returning to life may be diminished when he learns of his son’s sins. He was so kind that he hated killing animals for food, but he did it because it was necessary.”

Lev said, “You probably would find it more difficult to kill an animal than you did people. Am I right?”

“Why, yes, now that you mention it, it is true. I could not bear it when he killed my pet lamb. I was very upset and so was my mother. He felt very sorry, too, but he had to do it. He will certainly enjoy life now with all our food so plentiful, and especially that we don’t eat meat anymore.”

For the first time Torquemada inquired, “How is the work you are doing at the factory coming along?”

“Thank you, it is falling into place nicely. We have increased efficiency by about ten percent. By the time everything is set in order, it will easily be improved by twice that amount. This information is being shared with similar operations, so it will be a substantial improvement. Would you like to come along some day?”

“No, thank you. I must keep busy with my father’s house and we will be starting on my mother’s place next week. I must admit I am enjoying building. There is a sense of accomplishment in seeing a house standing where there was none before. My father will not believe how beautiful it is. He will be sure there are witches in the woodwork, even as I did when I first awakened.” This last was said with a bit of a chuckle.

“I guess it is a shock to see all these modern wonderful things. I am used to these things, so that is the least of my problems. However, your father, like most people then, did not know how to read or write. It was sad that they kept people ignorant. The leaders wanted common people’s minds locked in ignorance and made sure all information was kept from them. The ruling elite wanted to control society through ignorance.”

Would His Fingers of Evil Implicate His Parents?

Torquemada mused over this, realizing that it was true. He recalled that most of the heretics were able to read and write and were better informed than others. He quickly dismissed this, though it added to his uneasiness. However, he was happy to think of his father’s return. He would have a lot to learn, but he would not have the same burden of evil to bring with him as his son did. How wonderful it would be if

his fingers had not been soaked in blood. How nice it would be to meet people and to share their happiness and joy and not their anger. He carried all the weight of those he had put to the rack and the flames.

That evening and far into his sleepless night, Torquemada thought about Deza’s words. Could he be right after all? Was it possible that things would eventually adjust and that people would just forget the past with all the joys of the present? On the other hand should he bow and grovel before the world admitting his past was wrong? The longer he thought about it, the less he liked the idea of humiliating himself.

The following morning as he picked his fruit for the day’s meals, the lamb wandered into the yard. That brought his first smile of the day. This little creature was so pure and gentle. He paused to pick him up and pet him, hoping Heidi would be looking for the beautiful animal. He was disappointed that she did not appear. Perhaps she had been warned to stay away from this ugly man. He watched Lev go off to the chapel and thought how nice it would be to be free to travel about without fear of recognition—without fear of being renounced and verbally abused.

After breakfast, he joined his brother and sister who were already eagerly working. Everything was looking good. Furniture and cabinets were to be delivered today. Some plumbing needed to be connected and electrical connectors needed to be installed. They would be done easily within the week. He began to think of his father’s return. How happy his father would be with Raoul and Claudia, but when he learned of his second son’s history how different it would be. Torquemada would have loved to spare his parents such pain.

Claudia noticed his deepening depression. She was so happy at having Papa back that she was counting the days and hours. Raoul, though more reserved, was also eager with expectation. Torquemada only wished a shadow didn’t hang over his own anticipation.

Choosing Life or Death

Claudia said, “I liked you better yesterday, Tomas. What happened to make you so somber today? Have you been talking to that Deza creature again?”

Torquemada was taken back by Claudia's perception. "Well, yes, I have. Please don't refer to my brother as a creature. He has been a trusted friend. He knows my pain and what troubles me, for he is my brother in affliction. We both find little acceptance in this new way of life."

"They say 'misery likes company.' I'm afraid he is trying to pull you down with him. Tomas, get your backbone up. You can turn everything around. Listen to Lev, he knows so much, and he only speaks the truth. You know that."

He found himself wavering between two worlds. The right way was hard and painful, and he doubted he could be successful. Was it worth it? Deza spoke comfortingly, pleasantly to the ear, but he knew that course would bring him back to the silent grave.

Conversation was interrupted now because each person was working on some special feature. They were doing the small things necessary before the job was completed. When Lev arrived he brightened up the atmosphere with his happy demeanor. He had no airs; he was in love with life and with people. Buoyant and bright, he was acting always as an ambassador of Zion.

When Claudia pointed out her brother's sadness, Lev said, "I would be sad, too, if I found myself choosing death over life. The only thing that will bring happiness to him is the thing he does not wish to do, apparently."

Lev spoke loudly enough for Torquemada to hear. Still he said nothing, pretending not to hear.

"He just does not appreciate the gift of life. If he did, he would be singing Christ's praise and endeavoring to love his fellow humans. Life is too beautiful to be exchanged for death."

Torquemada heard but pretended he was preoccupied with something else. Life was sweet enough, but he carried too much evil from his former life to try to undo the damage. He would have been glad to offer his own life to atone for what he had done. However, that would not alter the past.

Lev told them as he left early that afternoon that he would be leaving by the end of the week. His project was nearly complete. He would be sorry to miss their father's return, but he was glad that the house would be ready for his arrival.

This brought a sense of sadness to everyone. Torquemada realized that as much as he had resisted Lev's advice, there would be no one so powerful in giving him the courage to change. He knew that Lev had brought him to the point where he wished to choose life over death, but somehow he lacked the strength to deal courageously with the past.

*“In the wilderness shall waters break out,
and streams in the desert.
And the parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water”
(Isaiah 35:6, 7).*

Chapter Seven

Having returned to Israel at the request of the Ancients, Lev arrived in the late afternoon to find most of his family out of the country on assignments. Rebekah had returned a few days earlier and was there to greet him at the airport. Both had an appointment to meet with the Ancients during the week, but they would have a couple of days together.

They drove to Lev’s house where she had made a cake to celebrate his return. This was the first time that no one was living there when he arrived home. She had not notified any of their local friends, because she wanted to share a little time alone with him. Rebekah had set out candles for their evening meal. Lev lit them and soon they were seated face to face to share an evening of relaxation and renewal.

Rebekah had just returned from South America. She told Lev how she had been flying about in the small aircraft powered by antimatter whose production he had overseen. They were now being used extensively throughout the areas that had been vast jungles without roads. Now instead of building roads, they only built landing pads. It saved much land and didn’t affect the natural environment.

“My job was to visit all the communities and teach them how to use their new aircraft. Each community was provided with dozens of them, and I trained the people to fly and service them. This has ended

the isolation of communities and unified the people into one large neighborhood. They even use huge helicopters powered by antimatter to bring in housing components. All the building that is going on needs very little in the way of trucks and cars. They still use the waterways, but air transport and travel have revolutionized the Brazilian jungles. Man and animals seem to be at peace.”

“Have you learned to like snakes yet?” Lev asked.

“Oh, Lev, you know how I shudder at the thought of touching one! However, for your information, a snake has bitten no one in years over there. Even the natives who lived there years ago who have returned can’t get over how peaceful the jungle is today. My father developed a grass that is rich in protein. They have spread this seed over former soybean fields and jungle areas from aircraft, and it is growing prolifically. Carnivorous animals eat it in preference to meat. No mosquitoes or bugs bite you, and animals seem to be eating the new protein grass, as strange as that may seem. However, crocodiles still eat fish. They can’t eat the grass efficiently, but they like it whenever they find it overhanging where they can bite it off.”

Sharing a Moment in Time

“That’s amazing, Rebekah! I often wondered how that prophecy in the Bible would come to pass. Obviously, in the Garden of Eden animals were not carnivores. They must have had a nutritious food other than flesh to live on. The grass your father developed must be very soft and easy to chew if animals with flesh-tearing teeth can eat and digest it.”

“Yes, that is precisely the case. It doesn’t need to be chewed much, for carnivorous animals have strong acids that easily digest this new type of grass. My father believes that this grass was very common back in the days of Eden. It grows prolifically and solves the problems of taming the eating habits of carnivores. What about *your* last assignment?”

Lev responded, “I’ve been working with a man who had a past history that would curdle your blood. It’s one thing to read about it

in history, another to hear people who suffered from these atrocities testify about them. Unfortunately, there have been sadistic people who seemed to take pleasure in human pain and suffering. Most people would turn away sick from witnessing such cruelty. However, some took pleasure in such diabolical acts.

“People who suffered unbelievable agony are coming back, and there is nowhere for those responsible to hide from acknowledging their evil past. They say that the idea of hell-fire was supposed to deter sin. However, if people had known that everyone was coming back in the regeneration, it would have really been a strong deterrent to doing evil. If you knew you would have to face your victims and ask their forgiveness, it is quite another matter. My friend saw the glorious prospects of life, but he could not live down all the pain and death he had caused. It was a weight he could not carry nor remove.”

“I’m glad I wasn’t in on it. How can such a person live with himself?”

“Well, that’s the problem. If they admit to their atrocities, they face a sea of brutalized and murdered people. They have to face the families they destroyed and those whom they placed in rat-infested prisons to die. It takes tremendous character to live down such evils, and they didn’t have much character to start with.

“I wonder what the Ancients want to see us about this time. Do you have any inkling, Rebekah?”

“Well, yes, I have a hint about what is next on the list. I happened to speak with Samuel last week, and he mentioned that northern Africa, particularly the vast Sahara Desert, is blossoming as the rose. They’re calling it the “Sahara Paradise.” There are literally streams flowing in what used to be the largest desert in the world. This vast area has not had any significant population, so there isn’t anybody to fill it up. Our visit has something to do with getting things ready for millions of people to live there.”

“That sounds exciting! My kind of thing! You can only do so much with wicked, recalcitrant people. This sounds like a dream assignment.

It'll be great just to be with my best friend again. We haven't served the Lord together in a long time, Rebekah."

They talked into the late night. When it came time to leave, Lev said he would accompany her home in the car and then walk back to his home.

When they arrived at Rebekah's, it looked as warm and inviting as ever. She invited him in for a late night snack he couldn't pass up. As they sat around her table, Rebekah said, "You know, Lev, I really never knew how difficult the people in those backward lands had it. Cruelty was not limited to any race of people. Tribes were constantly warring with each other. They would take prisoners, maiming and killing them in awful ways.

"Women worked from dawn until dark to feed and clothe their families, and they were often beaten and treated harshly. They had terrible voodoo witches as medical doctors. Having suffered so long, most of them are dancing for joy at their own happiness. Pain and suffering are now unknown. They have security, and for the first time they know God and His truth. They are eager and ready for all the blessings. The regeneration is the greatest magic they've ever seen. They had earlier resisted the white man out of fear. At first they thought that they were being given these wonderful things only to be exploited later. When they learned that all these blessings were theirs forever, they were overjoyed."

With a warm hug, Lev finally turned toward his home. The moon was shining brightly, and he began praying as he looked up at the starlight. He passed some sheep sleeping with lambs cuddled in the moonlight. It was beautiful and tranquil.

A Joyous Homecoming

The following morning was like a coming home party at the chapel meeting for Lev and Rebekah. Their old friends were overjoyed to see them, and ones newly returned to life were eager to meet them as well. Lev and Rebekah spent the next two days visiting their friends

at the factories. They had to excuse themselves from the outpouring of invitations.

When the time for their visit with the Ancients arrived, they looked forward to going to Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. There was a certain majesty about this city like none other in the world. One felt a person was standing on holy ground.

Lev and Rebekah were warmly welcomed by a group of Ancients, most of whom they had never met in person. These had taken time out to welcome the ambassadors of the King. Samuel seemed to be the man in charge of the meeting. He introduced Lev and Rebekah to each one. After the festivities of cake and tea, Samuel, along with Moses and Abraham, took them into a private room.

Samuel began, "The time has come for you both to step up in your assignments and devote your skills to creating a form of government that will accept day-to-day responsibility for the new nation emerging in the former Sahara Desert. Of course, Jerusalem will be your headquarters, as it is with all other nations, but we need governors to manage the daily affairs of business in overseeing the general operations of surveying, road building, factories, airports, and implementing the ongoing regeneration programs. There are very small populations in the Sahara, mostly little clusters of people living around the many oases in the formerly burning desert. They were all isolated, and there was no structured government in the entire area."

Moses added, "We are going to use the antimatter small aircraft that you helped to build. Now there are many factories building them, and you will need to set up several factories in the Sahara as well. We have enough technical people to do this, but we need you to form the governing organization. You will both be provided with flying machines. Your first duty will be to visit all the oases people. We have delayed the regeneration here until the land was returned from a desert into a vibrant land of streams, flowers and grasses."

Lev inquired, "Who's going to inhabit this land? It's been so barren, fertilized mostly by bleached bones of those who tried to cross

it without the necessary knowledge to survive. Where are the people to build this budding new nation?"

Abraham interjected, "There have been people like me, who have been nomads, traveling with their flocks and herds, pilgrims and strangers on earth, who need a homeland. In the Western World we've had Gypsies that were never privileged to have their own nation. In the Middle East we've had nomads like the Palestinians who followed sheep. Sometimes they rented lands, but because of the excessive amount they had to pay, they could never make a successful living there and would ride off into other territories to escape debtors' prison. They never had a nation, but now they will. There are people who were slaves for generations who need a land to call their own. Yes, have no doubt; we will fill this territory comfortably. However, now we need two wise and gentle people to begin laying the groundwork for this burgeoning nation." And with a smile he added, "For some strange reason the names of Lev and Rebekah Aron have come to the fore."

Rebekah said humbly, "This is an honor of which we are most unworthy."

Samuel replied, "Neither do we feel worthy of the responsibilities Christ has placed upon us. However, when chosen, we joyfully bow to the King's request."

The Sahara Paradise

"If the King has extended this privilege to us, 'Here we are, send us,'" Lev replied. "We haven't had any experience in government before. I have managed factories but never built a government for an entire nation. There will be people of different cultures, many of whom have never experienced a government of any kind."

Abraham smiled, "Look at me; I was a man who dwelt in tents all my life. I never lived in a city, except Ur of the Chaldees in my youth. I lived in a land where marauders could come sweeping into our camp so we had to be vigilant. We had no walls to protect us, but the Lord God was my shield and exceeding great reward. So it will be with you.

Have courage and Christ will bless your efforts. You have been chosen for this task by Christ, not by us."

Samuel then said, "You will have two days to prepare for your departure. Each of you will have your own small antimatter aircraft. You will fly from Israel to the new Sahara Paradise then to all the oases families and start networking with the people. I am giving you badges to show your official status as representatives of Zion's government. I will be your contact.

"You will start with engaging surveyors to prepare home sites and begin massive plantings of orchards with the trees of life and all other trees, vines and gardens. Considerable work has already been done in surveying and planting but the Sahara is a large country. Some community roads need to be laid out, but we will not build massive highways. Airports and landing pads will take care of inter-community travel. We have engaged people to show you the master plan and how you are to proceed. Nothing is left to your wisdom alone. Zion's Hill will be directing you, and you will both begin by pulling together teams to form a network of government that is totally subordinate to the King.

"You will bring together a rotating staff to carry out the workload. All factories will build and distribute as you direct. All heavy equipment and housing deliveries will be under your control. In other words, you two will pull together two separate staffs to handle everyday operations. For instance, when all preparations have been made, people will ask for their beloved dead to be returned to life. You will then call us, and we shall assign the day of return. This will relieve the workload upon us and bring more local control. Everyone that you engage to work must be beyond reproach, with a record of virtue and loyalty to the King."

"This seems a very large project for people with no background in government," Lev commented.

"It is no different than supervising a factory," Abraham explained. "You are nearly perfect in mind, so there is no situation that you will

not be equal to. Virtue is the primary requirement, and we are certain of your character. Anyone seeking favors or special privileges must be corrected. You must report them immediately and leave their discipline to us.

“If someone seeks to have his or her plot of ground and home somewhere else, only Christ can change what has been assigned. You will be thoroughly briefed while here and will be granted the authority to supervise all operations. If anyone feels they have not been properly treated, they can appeal to us. But you may give them our number only if they are dissatisfied. This has rarely happened, but everyone must be given fair treatment. Remember, you are only expeditors and not the final arbiters.”

Embarking on “Mission Sahara”

Lev and Rebekah continued gathering information during the next two days. They learned that the nations of northern Africa had not been compliant with the Ancients and, therefore, the whole Sahara and northern Africa were to be placed under a new functioning government. Both Lev and Rebekah were overwhelmed with their new assignments. This was an area that would expand massively as the wide spaces gradually became the home to tens of millions of people.

When their training ended, they left buoyed up by the Ancients. They were overjoyed with their goals, knowing that people who never had permanent homes would now have beautiful ones in the all-green and blossoming former desert. All the homeless sojourners and pilgrims would now find a resting place. No longer would they be forced to move from place to place, facing rejection, exploitation, famine or drought. If life had been bitter for them, now it would be totally glorious. Their “not welcome” mat would be removed forever. This land was turning into a coveted living garden on earth. Only the homeless, wanderers, pilgrims and sojourners of earth would have this choice piece of paradise.

Rebekah learned she would be stationed in the Tripoli area of former Libya, and Lev would be stationed in Khartoum, the area of

former Sudan. Arrangements had been made for offices in both places with complete communication systems. Each would fly in private antimatter small aircraft so they would have the ability to visit many communities, especially those living in the oases of the desert. The purpose of their visits was to seek staff members wherever they found qualified volunteers. Because these people had been largely isolated from all the wars and chaos of the civilized world, they were reluctant to open their doors to the new era. They were intrigued by the idea of people returning to life, but couldn't quite grasp it. Native instincts made them hesitant to welcome strangers, especially any from the Western World with all their magical devices.

Lev followed Rebekah as they flew their individual aircraft to Tripoli. They landed together at the landing pad of her office toward evening. Rebekah found a few of the personnel who maintained the office waiting to greet her. They were most gracious and had been expecting her with anticipation. They knew this would mean an acceleration of the regeneration process and were excited about it. The areas along the northern coast had already seen extensive returns of people to life again. However, the oasis people had been isolated because of lack of roads and the long distances that were required to start building homes in such remote places. Now with private small antimatter aircraft and giant antimatter helicopters, isolation was no longer a problem. They were also building two large airports at Tripoli and Khartoum for the larger aircraft.

Rebekah was shown her private living quarters in the office complex, and Lev was given a room for the night as well. After a splendid meal of paradise fruit along with an assortment of vegetables, fresh figs and dates, they acquainted themselves with all the personnel and tried to find prospects for enlarging their staff with volunteer workers. They knew there would be many, but following the advice of the Ancients, they wished to be fully satisfied as to their integrity and dedication.

That evening after prayer, Rebekah and Lev divided the oases communities and made a tentative schedule for their calls. Lev would take those east of Tripoli, and Rebekah would take the west. They

planned to visit each community and see how the Lord would lead them to find people of integrity for their staff. These people had been given the trees of life for several years, but were not yet provided with homes for themselves and their returning loved ones.

Sahara Paradise—A Garden of Eden

The following morning, they separated after breakfast. Lev intended to make as many visits as possible each day, selecting one or two people from each oasis community. Because of the rains, no one was confined to the oasis environment anymore, yet they retained the same communal background. Stopping at the nearest oasis, he landed his aircraft in an open area near some homes. Curious villagers gathered around. They all looked healthy and vigorous and were very friendly, curious to know the purpose of his visit.

A smiling Lev announced, “I’m here to begin the process of regenerating your loved ones to life again. It’s time for building your homes, now that we have plenty of the trees of paradise planted. How do you like the fruit?”

With eyes sparkling they cried, “Oh, *Señor*, it is the gift of God!”

“All illness has ceased and we are returning to our youth.”

“We thank you and the Ancients for such magnificent blessings.”

“What can we do to help you?”

Gratified at their eagerness, Lev continued, “We will be sending in new homes for you to build, first for yourselves and then for your loved ones who shall return to life. We have twenty new homes coming into this area in two weeks. We will have people teach you how to build these homes. Once these are built, you will have all the latest advances in teaching and learning; you will learn everything you need to know in this new era.”

The people followed Lev to all the sites where the new buildings would be built. “In a few days heavy equipment will be brought here to dig the foundations.”

“*Señor*, there are no roads; how will these buildings and equipment be brought here?”

“We have huge helicopters that will bring everything in. Everyone will be enlisted to build who is able to do so. We will have people carefully show you how everything is done, step by step. These are all state-of-the-art dwellings, complete with every modern necessity. From now on you will be very busy. As soon as everyone has homes, you will then start building for your loved ones to return. Soon not only will this once desert territory be blooming, but it will be inhabited with people.”

The main spokesperson, Alvarez, said, “We are too few to fill this vast area, even if all our dead come back to life.”

“Well, this will not only be the homes for your loved ones, but eventually, this whole desert area will be the home for all the homeless people from all over the world. Nomads, Gypsies, slaves, and all people who were never really accepted in the world will now share this beautiful land with you. For the great benefits you are receiving, the Ancients request that you, in turn, help build homes for others needing them. There is no need for you to worry. Everyone will have his own plot of ground, trees of life and a beautiful home. You will be self sufficient with plenty of food for everyone all the time. Can we count on your full assistance?”

Everyone excitedly answered, “*¡Si, Señor!*”

Alvarez said, “We are honest and good people, *Señor*. We have lived with great hardship, but we have lived as good people should. We have cared for our own. Because we have always been small in number, we have mostly honorable people. We pledge our full cooperation to you, because we know the Ancients serve Christ. We have received only blessings from them, and we shall serve as they direct.”

“Good,” Lev said. “Alvarez, will you come with me to Khartoum to help in forming a skeletal government for the new Sahara Paradise?”

“Yes, I will be honored to serve whatever you request, as long as I am sure you represent the Ancients.”

“Here is a letter from Samuel in Jerusalem signed by Moses, Abraham and Samuel. I am commissioned to represent them here. Everything we do will be under their control. Are you satisfied?”

“*Si, Señor*, ‘Here am I—send me.’ May I bring my family?”

Lev heard the familiar words and smiled. “Yes, by all means, bring your family. You have a home there that is already prepared. Later you may return to your own land and home when the work is accomplished. I shall have someone pick you up in aircraft similar to mine in one week.”

“I shall be ready. Thank you, *Señor Lev*.”

A Staff with Integrity

Everyone waved as Lev lifted off to his next location. It would take a week for him to visit all the sites. His plan was to collect one or two persons from each community. He realized the Ancients had given him a clue by collecting people of integrity to serve in the new government staff. These were people who lived in strong family arrangements with strong family values. They were not learned in the modern technologies, but by eating from the trees of life they could learn anything very quickly. Integrity was the important key, more than being advanced in technology.

Lev found his trip prospered, and he thanked the Lord each day. He found seventy people committed to serving in his new government. He arranged to have them flown in at the time appointed. It was a thrilling day when everyone arrived with their families. He had arranged for classes to instruct them on the master plan and they were excited to see that such extravagant blessings were to come to all their people. Some had seen heavy equipment flown in as well as housing modules. What joy there was at the prospects of such extravagant living quarters with all modern equipment! They were getting a hundredfold increase in their standard of living and even more wonderful, the promise of the return of their beloved dead.

Lev called the Ancients to give them a progress report and to thank them for directing him to the right place to find staff members. Samuel was pleased and asked, “Have any dark clouds appeared on the horizon yet?”

“Why no, it has been very serene and tranquil so far.”

“Good. You have picked a very noble staff, as has Rebekah. That should help later. If people have hidden ambitions and designs of their own, that’s when trouble will arise. Prepare yourself! God be with your work, Shalom.”

Lev was grateful for the insight, but he foresaw no conflicts. While his staff was ignorant of modern technology, he knew that in a few weeks they would learn everything they needed to know. The important thing was they had integrity.

Lev looked for a chapel the next morning and was told that there was only one about a mile away. Not wishing to use his aircraft, he asked if there might be a bicycle he might use. There were several so he pedaled off, eager to meet new friends who loved the Lord. He found a very small group and was disappointed that few were endeavoring to praise the Lord for all His mercies.

The gentle chaplain was a good man, making a genuine effort, but not especially well informed about the Bible. He had been of another faith having mostly studied the Koran, so he was not quite at home with his Bible yet. Lev endeavored to encourage him before the services began. When the chaplain learned that Lev would be working in the area, he was very pleased and sought his support and help. He thought perhaps that Lev might assist in serving from time to time, to which Lev responded, “Yes, Abdullah, I would be happy to serve when you need some time off.”

A Seed of Friction

The services started with only about twenty people. This disappointed Lev, because the city of Khartoum had been blessed by the wonderful regeneration work. Many had returned to life and all were now eating from the trees of life. The lack of appreciation on the part of the populace was a menacing cloud to him.

After the services one of the men sought him out introducing himself as Emanuel Assad, “Are you Lev Aron?”

“Yes, very pleased to meet you, Emanuel. Have you been meeting here for very long?”

“Well, no, I have been a little remiss at times, but I have been meaning to come to praise the Lord. However, I thought you might be here so I made a special effort to meet you. I hear such good things about you. I manage some of the government operations in Khartoum and I just wanted you to know that we are eager to work with you in whatever you might require of us. We have many experienced workers who donate their time, who know the problems and needs of the community, so if you need assistance, please feel free to call us.”

“Well, I am very pleased to meet you and will want to meet with you or your staff members to insure a smooth transition.”

When Lev mentioned the word, “transition” he noticed Emanuel’s look of surprise. However, Emanuel did not ask about it, but smiled graciously, “You will find us very helpful and knowledgeable, and we will be eager to join in any programs you have underway.”

As Lev left on his bicycle, he waved to Emanuel sitting in his beautiful vehicle that ran on hydrogen—the car Lev had helped produce. He played Emanuel’s words over in his mind while pedaling home. Could this be a seed of friction? He knew that people loved power and prominence—besetting weaknesses that snared so many. People would make extravagant sacrifices just to distinguish themselves above their fellows.

The idol of self-love turned many, who had started out serving God, to serving themselves first instead. Lev knew this danger, for many times he himself had been tempted, but he always managed to keep God first, and self last.

*“Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth
with all your heart:
For consider how great things he hath done for you”
(1 Samuel 12:24).*

Chapter Eight

Back at the office, much of Lev’s time was spent bringing his staff into the technological age. However, they learned rapidly. Within a month they would be ready for the work. Lev chose Alvarez as his assistant in management, and every day they received instructions from the Ancients.

Because most of those scheduled to return to life were from generations that had been cut off from each other, there were few family members available to help build homes. Therefore, volunteers were needed to get the regeneration program underway. Lev learned that several planeloads of former Gypsies would be landing at Khartoum to start working on housing projects, so he and his staff were scrambling to make preparations for the workers. Heavy equipment was sent to the right locations to begin the construction process. All the surveying was completed, and many orchards of the trees of paradise had already been planted. They were on a tight schedule, but since everyone had a will to learn and get the job done, the work was pleasant.

Lev moved from desk to desk trying to help staff members, clarifying what must be done and how to do it. He was used to working with a skilled staff, but for the first time he had a group of neophytes.

A Possible Antagonist

One afternoon, who should come in but Emanuel Assad. Even though Lev was extremely busy, he took a few precious minutes to meet him in case Emanuel might have information that would be helpful down the road.

Lev greeted him graciously in his office, but said, “Emanuel, we are glad to see you, but this is not the most opportune time for a visit. We have just received a lot of directives from Mt. Zion and are hard pressed to get everything accomplished in a very short space of time. Could you come back in about two weeks? Then, I am sure, we will have more time for a meeting to share information.”

“Perhaps, if you would let me see your operations, Lev, I could provide you with experienced volunteers to help you meet your deadlines. We have workers who are eager to help you. I know it is difficult to get a new staff with new equipment up and running smoothly. I won’t take your time, but if you let me observe quietly, I may be able to bring some workers tomorrow to remedy your situation.”

Lev could see that Emanuel was very insistent. While he really needed extra help, Lev suspected that these workers might be the ones the Ancients had warned him about. Many of these people had a long history in Middle Eastern methods of doing services for money or other benefits. Lev didn’t want anyone to grant benefits for recognition or prominence—that would mean that selfishness was at work and would eventually bear bitter fruit.

Lev tried to dissuade Emanuel tactfully. He repeated, “This is a most awkward time for us. We will manage to get everything completed in good order, but I cannot afford to spend time with you right now. Two weeks from today will be the first open date on my calendar to see you. Please come back then.”

Reluctantly, Emanuel shook Lev’s proffered hand, feeling that he had lost the first round of getting his foot into the door. However, he merely smiled and said, “Very well, we shall meet in two weeks, *Señor*.”

About an hour after Emanuel left, the electricity suddenly went out. This crashed the computers and information that had been recently entered was lost, which would delay operations. Lev contacted the maintenance people, inquiring if they were still using a central generating station with hydrogen fuel cell arrangement. Their response was slow in coming. He finally learned that even though they received and stored the hydrogen fuel cell equipment in the basement area, no one had hooked it up yet; it was still sitting in crates.

Lev asked the maintenance staff if interruptions of electricity were common in the area. They said, “No, we seldom have such problems, but perhaps the equipment is old and it might be starting to happen.”

“Strange,” Lev thought. He wondered whether Emanuel could have orchestrated such a thing to get his attention. He ordered all the maintenance people and a dozen other staff members down to the basement, where they took away the crating. There was the magnificent fuel cell designed for the building. Lev needed tools to tap into the water supply that had been provided, but had been capped until it was to be connected. Soon they had the water line hooked up. However, they needed electricity to turn the water to hydrogen. Once the fuel cell went into operation, it would provide its own electricity, once jump-started initially. Without a generator, the staff needed a creative solution.

One of the maintenance people came up with an ingenious idea. He disconnected all the old wiring from the control panel and hooked up the fuel cell electrical wires to it. It took about a half hour to finish the hook-up. He then put an extra cord through an open window and attached it to Lev’s aircraft. In no time at all, they produced enough hydrogen to start up the fuel cells. To everyone’s amazement...presto! There was electricity. Now no one could turn off the switch. Their possible antagonist had lost the first round.

Lev asked all the staff to work overtime to make up for lost time and everyone volunteered except a woman who had to take care of her child. Lev had no way of really knowing whether this electrical failure was a deliberate act or just happenstance. He observed that it

took three hours before other buildings got electricity, which was an unusually long interruption.

The next morning Lev met Emanuel at the chapel, and he seemed very warm and friendly. Emanuel said he was sorry they were unable to get electric current up and running as quickly as they would have liked and suggested that the generating equipment was old and obsolete.

“I knew you needed the current, and I tried to get it up as quickly as possible.”

An Apology with a Motive

Lev smiled, “Thank you, Emanuel, for your efforts on our behalf. However, we had the new fuel cell equipment in the basement, so we hooked it up and had it going before very long.”

“I am curious to know how you got the fuel cells working without electricity to create the hydrogen.”

“It took a little creativity to figure it out, but we managed to do it. You know, where there’s a will, there’s a way.” Lev refused to give him details.

Emanuel was unable to hide his disappointment, even though he praised Lev’s staff for their resourcefulness.

“By the way, Emanuel, we won’t need any power from the city’s generators. You may take down the wires and transformers. We will be self-sufficient from now on.”

“Why, that is wonderful! We will have men come out and take down the wires, and we will use the transformers elsewhere. Remember my offer; we do have very skilled workers ready to help you at a moment’s notice. They have heard of your abilities and many would love to work under your direction. You are a man who is very well respected.”

“Thank you, Emanuel, but we actually managed quite well yesterday.”

“I hope you are not driving these good people beyond their limits, especially when it is not necessary. Why not let them attend to their studies in leisure while we lend a hand?”

“That is certainly a kind and generous offer on your part, but our staff loves the challenge. You know we do need a lot of volunteers to help build homes for those returning to life. Do you think you might be able to free some workers for that? We can use every hand available for building, because many of those returning to life have no family to work for them. Everyone needs to help get one generation back, and then those who are alive will carry on the process. How many people can you manage to commit to our building program?”

There followed a long and restless silence. Emanuel was speechless. This was not the work that his staff desired; they were interested in the prestigious jobs. He said haltingly, “Oh, I wish my staff were capable builders, but they are not. Like me, they would be more of a hindrance in such situations. Not everyone is like you, Lev, who can do everything. Anyway, why not use people with the necessary talents to the fullest capacity? My offer stills stands; we are eager to help you.”

“Well, we’ll meet in two weeks, Emanuel. We must get the new programs operational throughout the whole community and keep expanding until the Sahara is filled with homes, gardens, orchards, factories, and becomes a veritable Eden.”

Emanuel was obviously displeased with Lev’s refusal to let his people into a new governing body. Apparently, they realized the old arrangements would soon end, and they had planned to continue enjoying power and privileges in a new government.

The unwillingness to help those who needed help revealed a serious flaw. Vanity could be so easily cloaked in garments that appeared exactly like the garments of faithful servants of the Lord. The more pretentious and visible a service representing God was, the more likely it would attract a host whose prime motivation was love of self more than love for God or of fellow man. The love of power, position, and prominence was the leaven that corrupted most religions. Love of God and of His truth were lost as men reduced religion to the mundane.

As Lev meditated on these matters, he became apprehensive that other things might go wrong accidentally “on purpose.” The following

day, he requested that the maintenance people secure barrels and fill them with water—just in case the water supply should somehow fail. It didn't happen that day, but the following day, sure enough, the supply was interrupted. He called Emanuel's office, finding him very apologetic and explaining that an unfortunate break had occurred in the water lines. It would be fixed as soon as possible.

An Operation under Siege

Quickly the maintenance people opened their stored water supply to the converter that turned water into hydrogen and oxygen, which in turn supplied the electricity. They were able to insure their electricity supply this day without further interruption. Lev began surmising that their operation was under siege unless he engaged Emanuel and his staff members. He called Emanuel again, asking how long before the water main would be fixed.

"Probably not until tomorrow," Emanuel opined. "Perhaps you would like to move your staff to our offices temporarily? We could help you meet your operation deadlines."

"Oh, that is very kind of you, Emanuel, but we managed to store enough water in barrels to keep us supplied. We've had no interruption in our power supply here. However, wasn't this building supposed to have its own well and advanced septic system? All new buildings were to be built to the new standards. Decentralization is the new word in our time. Can you explain why this was not done? You are in violation of three building codes for new homes. Can you explain this?"

Emanuel cleared his throat, "You must understand, Lev, that we have a relatively new electric generating station that is no more than twenty years old. We still have old homes that need this electricity until they are replaced. We felt that as long as we had to operate the system for the old homes, we might as well temporarily use it with the new homes. That is reasonable, isn't it? We know we are in a transition, and until everything is as it should be, a certain amount of flexibility is, of course, reasonable and acceptable."

"Is that what your instructions were?" Lev inquired.

"Well, we were told that we could keep the old system going until the new systems were in operation."

"I have your instructions clearly before me. Shall I read them to you?"

"No, no, that is not necessary. Perhaps we have not followed our instructions to the letter. You must understand that we have been complying as best we could within the time constraints we had."

"Emanuel, I had this fuel cell operational within ninety minutes, and that was without a small electric generator to start the water converter to hydrogen and oxygen. I am sure it took several days for your crew to install the electric posts, the transformer and all the wiring to get this building supplied with electricity."

"Yes, Lev, this is true; but we are used to the old way and are frightened by some of this new equipment. Our generating station is relatively new, so we made a judgment call. Please be kind to us less advanced people."

"I am being kind, Emanuel, but I cannot commend you for not following your instructions. It is one thing to try and fail because you do not understand; it is another matter to arbitrarily change the rules as you go along. The Ancients demand strict compliance with all who serve. No rationalization, no short cuts, no playing games are tolerated. The day is past for bending and twisting the rules. We have suffered one breakdown two days ago and barely avoided another today. Is this normal? Please, get your people to fix the water main immediately and then install our independent water supply and advanced septic system. This should have been done when this building was built. You are not helping us by having to do twice what should have been done once."

Despite being rebuked for not following instructions, Emanuel was still determined to interject himself into the new operations.

"We'll attend to it immediately, Lev, but why are you keeping us at arm's length? Can't you see we only want to help you? We can bring all our skills and resources to assist you. Why not use our help?"

Failure to Follow Instructions

“Emanuel, you are living in a new era. If you and your staff had followed your instructions carefully, you might have been the first choice for this operation. You answered your own question by explaining why you failed to follow your instructions. That worked in the days of politics, but the Ancients demand and will have absolute compliance with their instructions. They are very kind and patient when people fail because of lack of ability or knowledge; as long as they tried honestly to do what they were instructed to do.”

“Very well, we shall comply as speedily as we can with the original instructions. Perhaps if we do, you will consider adding some or all of us to your staff?”

“I can’t make any promises, Emanuel. Right now, my staff is adequate. They are brilliant and learning the new methods very well. However, the most important thing about them is that they can be trusted to follow orders that we all must comply with. If any of us function with pride, we will be replaced. I hope you understand that the privileges we have are tied to responsibility. We have a phenomenal task in opening up vast areas to the regeneration process. We need to build, to plant and get everything under way as quickly as possible.”

“We understand that now completely. We will try to redeem ourselves.”

“Don’t forget we have an appointment. Shalom.”

No sooner had one situation come under control than the phone rang with someone frantically saying that he and his parents had no wish to move off their property. It had been in the family for generations, and now someone had said that they must move to a new site. Lev asked who had said they must move. The man did not know, but the letter came from the city of Khartoum, and the signature looked like Emanuel’s. He couldn’t be sure because of the illegible writing. Lev secured the address and phone number and said he would be there within the hour.

Traveling in his shiny new blue aircraft made this easy. Lev just registered the phone number; the craft rose vertically and then went in the direction of the phone signal. He landed on a plot of ground next to the caller’s house.

The people were shocked to see this strange machine. As Lev stepped out, some children came running to see the craft. Lev asked, “Is this the home of Petra?”

“Yes, that is my father, *Señor*. Here he is now coming to greet you.”

“Hello, *Señor* Aron. I never thought my call would bring such a rapid response. I thank you for showing such great interest.”

“Why did they say you had to move off your property?”

“Because they said a road must go through here.”

“May I see that letter you spoke of?”

“I have it here, *Señor*, in this envelope.” Unfolding it, he gave it to Lev.

“This Order is Void”

Sure enough, as Lev suspected, it was Emanuel’s signature. Taking out his pen, Lev wrote over it, “This order is void.” Then he signed his signature and gave it back to Petra. “If anyone tries to move you, call me immediately or my office. If I am not there, Alvarez will take the call. Don’t be afraid; you will not be moved. I see that surveyors have laid out the land for those returning to life. When the new homes are built, your old home will be torn down and replaced with a new one, but it will be on your same property, and it will be yours forever. By the way, does Emanuel live anywhere near here?”

“*Si, Señor*, his property is down the road a couple of miles. He wants to widen this road so he will have good access to his property.”

“Thank you for that information, Petra. Remember, if anyone bothers you about moving, show them this paper first and then call me immediately. Okay?”

“*¡Si, Señor* Lev!”

With that, Lev hurried back to the office, lifting off vertically to the amazement of everyone, waving until he disappeared on the horizon.

Returning to the office he found Alvarez all excited. Lev asked, “What’s wrong, Alvarez?”

“When Emanuel’s people were taking out the electric pole, it fell and broke the back wall. We have a gaping hole in the wall now, and I do not know if there is any structural damage.”

“Did they say anything about fixing it?”

“No, they just took the pole and drove away.”

“We had to move two of our offices, which interrupted our schedule for the day.”

“I’ll check into this, Alvarez.”

Lev called Emanuel but only got his answering service. Not satisfied, he called the office again and demanded to speak with someone personally. Soon a distressed secretary answered, “This is Emanuel’s secretary. May I help you?”

“Yes, you certainly may. This is Lev Aron. Have Emanuel call me from wherever he is. His workers dropped an electric pole and broke our back wall. I want a crew out here with an engineer to assess the damage and begin fixing it within the hour. Tell him I must speak to him immediately.” Lev was indignant.

“Yes, yes, I will try to reach him, *Señor Aron*.”

Within twenty minutes Emanuel was on the phone. He said, “I am sorry for the accident, *Señor Aron*. I assure you that it *was* an accident.”

“I can accept that; I doubt that anyone would be so foolish as to deliberately make mischief. However, if it was deliberate, I am afraid the Ancients will order punishment very soon. When will you have an engineer and a crew here to fix the damage?”

“We are trying to secure personnel as we speak. An engineer will be out there within the hour. After he assesses the damage, we will have repairs made as soon as possible.”

Lev then queried, “By the way, Emanuel, what is this about a road being planned out to your property?”

There followed a long silence; finally, Emanuel said, “Well, *Señor Aron*, that road was on the books before the surveyors came to lay out the land for building homes and gardens.”

“Don’t you know that the surveyors laid out the territories exactly as they were instructed to do? Do you understand that any changes, if even only considered, must be approved by the Ancients?”

“Well, I didn’t think they would mind a few minor changes.”

“I am afraid they do mind, Emanuel. I wrote ‘VOID’ on the notice you had sent to Petra telling him to move his house and that the new road would affect his property. You must immediately stop planning without authorization. Is that clear?”

“Yes, I understand. We only wished to improve our roads. However, we shall stop all such plans. I am afraid we are slow learners. Be patient with us, *Señor Lev*.”

“Do you now understand why the Ancients are not willing to promote you because of your half-hearted compliance with their instructions? You are very fortunate that you have not been punished severely. This is not politics as usual anymore. There is a great work underway, and it must be done precisely as submitted. Mt. Zion does not make mistakes. There is a reason for everything that is done.”

Small Aircraft Replacing Extensive Road Building

“Let me explain, Emanuel,” Lev continued. “Small aircraft, such as I have been using, will become as common as automobiles in the Sahara. Consequently, large highways will not be built. Air travel will be used for all but very local needs. All homes will have landing pads. Highways use too much land space and those highways in the older countries will be removed once aircraft replace automobiles. There is a wise master plan, and the Ancients do not necessarily explain everything to everyone. They expect people to obey instructions. You are free to question them, but it is unlikely that you will change anything. They are perfect, and they don’t make mistakes.”

“I did not know that, *Señor Lev*. I thought we would always use good highways.”

“Emanuel, you are your own worst enemy. If you make any more mistakes you will be removed from your office; is that clear?”

“Yes, *Señor Lev*. I will have repairs made as soon as I can.”

“Emanuel, do you fear the Lord?”

“Yes, but I am afraid I have taken liberties that I should not have.”

Lev then said, “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you” (1 Samuel 12:24).

This seemed to have taken care of Emanuel’s ambitions. He had the repairs made on the back wall that evening and came out the following morning to see if Lev was satisfied. He may have been a slow learner, but he was starting to shape up.

When Lev called Samuel to give his progress report, Lev told him of some of the things that had happened. Samuel only laughed; “We did not punish him, because this type of conduct had been ingrained into his lifestyle and that of his ancestors for centuries. As long as he attempts to mend his ways, he will not be a further obstacle to you. People can learn and will learn, but it takes time. Shalom.”

Two weeks later, when the meeting with Emanuel took place, he arrived knowing that truth would prevail and make it impossible to deal in half-truths and political games. He had a great deal of valuable information respecting the community that Lev wanted. Lev needed to know all the facts about the area, its streets and roads, the municipal layout, what was functioning and what needed to be retired. Lev especially needed to know all the available information about the airport in Khartoum. They were to build an airport for the new antimatter large aircraft capable of vertical ascent and descent, and they needed the old airport landing facilities for those planes that still flew with conventional takeoff and landing modes.

Emanuel now was forthright about everything and prepared to provide what Lev requested. He was still hoping for some reward for

doing his duty, but Lev made no offers, only giving sincere thanks for providing what he needed to keep everything in smooth and logical development.

Factories were to be built for making houses in many locations in the Sahara, but until they were completed, homes were being transported by ship where heavy-lift helicopters would take them to the building sites.

As operations were shaping up, Samuel called to say that provisions needed to be underway for receiving Gypsies, slaves, and other nomadic peoples. Lev downloaded the first lists of people to be received back to life. Each name and family was assigned its own territory so that groups and races could be kept together for their comfortable adjustment in the regeneration. Thousands of volunteers would be flown in to get building preparations underway. Many of the Gypsies had their generation cut off in the Holocaust of Europe, so it would require volunteers, appropriately from Europe, to bring back those generations. God’s ways were equal. People lost to the world were not lost to God. Everyone was accounted for and would be returned to life without a single exception.

Exploited Children Return

Lev noticed a list of children who had either been sold or shanghaied into slavery. These were children forced to labor in carpet factories or were young women forced into unspeakable working conditions; children exploited to get every cent of profit from them and then discarded when sick or crippled.

Lev read the history of one poor boy six years of age who had been orphaned by tragedy, then pirated away into forced labor at a carpet factory. He worked until he was 16 when he fell ill. Left without medical treatment or decent living conditions, he died. The boy was to be situated outside of Khartoum. Moved with great compassion, Lev decided he wanted to personally help prepare for this boy’s return. The boy’s name was Lazarus Sazar.

So many people had existed without love, without pity, without kindness, without being touched by a hand of tenderness. How would they adjust to a world of love and righteousness? Affliction would not be permitted a second time to anyone at any time. How happy Lev felt to be on a team dedicated to loving kindness and justice. If nothing more, he determined that Lazarus Sazar would have someone who loved him to depend on and to defend him.

Lev handed out work assignments for the preparations. He kept Lazarus' assignment on his own desk. He was anxious to be a father figure to this boy and his heart yearned for his return. He didn't know why he felt so emotionally involved, but he knew his heart was touched by such tragedy and that it would be a special privilege to make up to Lazarus for the misery of his former life.

That evening Lev called Rebekah and told her of his determination to be a father to Lazarus. She was excited. She too had found a girl returning to life near Tripoli that she had determined to nurture as a mother. They both ached to give them something these children never had—love.

As Lev turned to his spiritual studies that evening, there was a warm glow in his heart. When he turned in for the night, he wondered about Lazarus and his return to life. He thought about God who was capable of loving millions and billions and personally caring for them, whereas mere mortals were made to function one on one. People can talk of thousands and millions, but immediately they become faceless and detached. Not so with God and Christ. They are multifunctional without human limitations. No one is a faceless entity; all are known and loved with *agape* love.

*"I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son."
(Hebrews 1:5).*

Chapter Nine

Lev called Samuel and asked if he could personally help build Lazarus' house and be there to receive him as a father.

"Of course, Lev, every boy needs a father; who could deny you that privilege? You do not have to build his house because we have enough volunteers, but if you want a hand in it, please do so. There will never be a law against love."

"I just wanted to be sure no one would feel I was treating others unequally while I try to make up to Lazarus for the loss of his family's affection. I know Jesus loved all the apostles, but especially Peter, James and John. Even of these, John was the one closest to Jesus. I just don't want to seem unfair."

"Lev, as long as you do not forget your obligations to others, you are free to do all that is in your heart for Lazarus. God speed, Shalom."

Lev felt reassured and happy with Samuel's encouragement. He didn't have much information about Lazarus, but knew he had been a child bereft of his parents and sold into slavery. Lev learned that he had become a skilled craftsman in weaving rugs but was forced to work long hours each day under intolerable conditions. Mistakes were punished severely, and he suffered at first because as a child, he could not learn weaving fast enough to satisfy his masters.

Lev watched Lazarus' house being built each day and tried to help in small ways. He was always happy to send in reports of finished homes waiting for the occupant to be raised to life—but it was a special joy to include Lazarus Sazar's house.

Lev finally received the dates of those to be returned to life and was happy to see Lazarus on the list in just one week. He personally secured the clothing, shoes, and all the personal belongings that Lazarus would need. By the time the week rolled around everything was ready.

Lazarus Lives Again

I lay quietly, breathing easily. All the pain was gone. My lungs no longer felt like they were flooded with fluid. My body no longer ached. I suddenly felt better than I ever remembered.

Slowly I opened my eyes, expecting to find myself in the dingy storage room where I slept. To my amazement, I was in a bright sunlit room with bouquets of flowers. Never in my life had I seen such beauty. All the furniture was new and the room was so light and airy. Was I in heaven?

I jumped out of bed and looked in a mirror. My teeth were beautiful and white, not how I remembered my crooked, rotting teeth that always throbbed from neglect. My body was nothing like the thin and emaciated one I knew for so long.

Then I spotted beautiful clothing on a chair and a pair of shiny shoes, of finer material than I had ever owned. I quickly dressed, hoping I wouldn't be beaten for touching someone else's things. I decided to look around at this unusual room but quietly to get the overview in case I should need to escape. I paused before a beautiful mirror to see a stronger boy than I remembered. I was actually quite handsome.

I hesitated a moment, deciding whether to make my escape through the window or to sneak out the door. I was afraid that my master might be behind that door—the window might be a better idea. As I quietly opened the window, I heard beautiful music. There must be people outside, so I decided to try the door.

“No One Will Hurt You Ever Again”

Slowly Lazarus opened the door, looking carefully about. He had no idea where he was, but this was no place that he had ever been

before. Just as he was about to make a dash for the door, Lev appeared smiling and called to him.

“Don't run away, Lazarus. I have been waiting for you. Don't be frightened. You are free, now and forever. No one will ever hurt you again.”

Lazarus had learned not to trust anyone. People lied; they were mean and hateful. However, Lev was so handsome, he found himself staring at him. The terrified boy was extremely wary and suspicious. He had no idea where he was, but he knew his master would track him down. Lazarus had a horrific thought. Surely, this man would demand to know what he was doing in his house. How could he explain how he got here?

He finally blurted out, “Please, sir, I am lost. I do not know where I am or how I got here. Please do not be angry with me. I will leave. I have taken these clothes for I needed something to wear. Give me my own clothing back, and I shall leave these.”

Lev smiled even more, “Son, this is your home. Those are your clothes you are wearing. Come, let us eat some breakfast together.”

Lazarus did not believe Lev, but since he could see no other choice, he obediently followed Lev into the kitchen area. He looked at a table laden with fruit and the gleaming clean kitchen. Lev asked him to be seated.

Lev said, “Lazarus, my name is Lev. We have a lot of talking to do. However, let's do it over breakfast. Today is a very happy day for you and for me. I have been waiting for you, Lazarus, even though you do not know me. You must trust me, for I am your friend. You will never have to make another rug unless you want to. No one will ever beat you again. You are free and you are rich, for you have everything you need to live right here in your own house and land. This is all yours, son.”

Lazarus knew better than to believe what people told him. His master claimed he was his friend while he squeezed his lifeblood out of him. He had learned not to believe anything except that he was

a victim that would be abused and exploited. Yet, this man seemed different from anyone he had ever seen. He had heard about kind people, but never had the good fortune to meet any. Still he kept his guard up. Perhaps after breakfast he could slip out the door and run away.

Lev said, “I always pray before I eat, so if you wish, you may join me in prayer.”

Praying with Wide Open Eyes

Lev bowed his head; Lazarus bowed his head slightly, but kept his eyes open to be sure no one would reach out and grab him.

“Our loving Heavenly Father, I thank you for bringing Lazarus to life again and for the privilege of being with him. Bless this food to life again and our fellowship together, in Jesus’ name I pray.”

The prayer sounded genuine and warm, nothing like Lazarus had heard before. The words “bringing Lazarus to life again” aroused his interest, because he knew there was something different somewhere. Lazarus couldn’t reconcile his heavy chest and choking sensation with his sudden burst of health. He knew he had been so very sick that he wished to die. What did he have to live for anyway? Just to make money for his master.

Lev poured Lazarus a cup of tea. “See how you like this tea, Lazarus; it is very good for you, and it is the best tea I think you have ever tasted.”

Lazarus loved the smell, so he thanked Lev and took a sip. His eyes brightened. “Ooo! This is very delicious.”

Then Lev offered strange fruit to him. “Lazarus, try this fruit. This is what we live on now. It is fruit from trees that God planted in the Garden of Eden. It is perfect food. Sick people who eat this fruit get well. Healthy people who eat this become stronger, smarter, and healthier. If you eat it for many years, it will make you perfect in mind and body.”

Lazarus knew better than to believe that, but he thought the fruit looked good, certainly better than the dry bread he was used to getting

for breakfast. Biting into the fruit, he couldn’t believe its wonderful flavor. He found himself taking bite after bite, devouring it like a starved man. He wished he could have another, but was too frightened to ask. He said, “This fruit must be very costly—I could never afford to eat like this.”

“Well, I have good news for you, Lazarus. This fruit is from trees in your own orchard and will be your main food forever. Have some more. After breakfast, I’ll show you your new home.”

Lazarus wanted to tell this man to stop lying to him. However, everything he said thus far was different from all the other men he had known.

After Lazarus had eaten several pieces of fruit, Lev brought out the resurrection cake he had made. The boy had never eaten like this before, and now he was going to have cake! No one had ever made him a cake of any kind. Lev cut him a big piece, waiting to see his face as he tasted it. Lazarus was not one to be very expressive, but he couldn’t contain himself when he tasted this delicacy.

“I have never had cake before! If I had, it could not be as good as this cake. Sir, it is so, so good!”

“Enjoy it, Lazarus! Life is going to be full of pleasure for you now.”

“I would like to believe that, Mr. Lev, Sir. Why are you being so good to me? Everybody that pretended to be good to me turned out to be mean and made a slave of me. Did my master sell me? Am I going to be your slave now?”

Lev smiled and put his hand on Lazarus’ shoulder. He involuntarily flinched, expecting to be struck. “No, Lazarus, I am going to be the father you never had. No one will ever treat you meanly again, never. One day soon, you will have your very own father and mother back again. I know that is hard for you to believe, but remember what I tell you. We only speak the truth now.”

Lazarus wanted to believe this so very much, but he had never known any kindness, nor for that matter truth. He had worked ten

or twelve hours a day, seven days a week. As a very young boy, he became exhausted working such long hours and would be beaten. Because he was intelligent, Lazarus soon learned to weave carpets that were beautiful and brought top prices to his master. Sometimes he was allowed an extra portion of mutton, but he was never thanked for his work. He could be beaten or deprived of meals if he displeased his master for any reason. Lazarus often dreamed of freedom, of having a home and a family, but he was locked in a living death of child slavery with no hope of change.

At times, Lazarus would cry himself to sleep at night. Why was he born to this never-ending toil, this uncomforted mourning? The dog sleeping comfortably at his master's feet was petted and fed better than he was. He had to work with aching hands and a bent back. How he longed to run and play, and most of all to be free. Sitting with Lev, Lazarus feared this was a dream, and soon he would rudely be awakened to go back to weaving carpets. He didn't want this moment to ever end.

Lazarus found himself being treated as a human being for the moment, and there was someone who professed to care for him—someone who spoke to him as his father once had. His eyes filled with tears. He tried to hide them, but Lev, too, had tears in his eyes. He came around the table and put his arms around Lazarus.

“Son, you are free from your old master. You are free to dream and love and be happy again. This is my promise to you. No one will ever beat you again. You will only have one master, and that is Christ. He is the one who died for you to set you free.”

Lazarus began to sob uncontrollably. He had lived without love for so long that the first evidence of love and affection broke a flood of pain and sorrow that had been repressed. He needed to empty his heart of it, for he had held it within him since his childhood. As Lazarus sat there, Lev realized he was still a little boy looking for his mother and father—longing for someone to love him.

Lev gave him a hug and said, “Come on, let us go for a run. Then I will come back and show you your house.”

Lazarus smiled, “I'll beat you to that house down the road.”

“Well, we'll see; you know, I am a good runner.”

They both ran out the door and Lazarus took the lead. Lev purposely kept a step or two behind. He enjoyed seeing Lazarus running and laughing. It brought joy to his heart. They reached the goal with Lazarus one step ahead of Lev, so happy to have won. They were both giddy with happiness. How wonderful to share a boy's experience of living again without slavery!

Lev said, “Well, you beat me, son, you are a good runner. Now let's go back to your house and I'll show you how rich you are.”

As they returned, Lazarus saw Lev's aircraft parked on the pad and felt bold enough to ask what it was. When Lev explained, Lazarus asked if he might have a ride in it. “Sure, do you want to go up now?”

“Yes, can we?”

Lev opened the door and showed Lazarus how to strap in for flight. Closing the doors, he turned on the antimatter engine. “Ready?”

“Yes! Ready!” Lazarus shouted.

With that, Lev opened the throttle and the aircraft lifted up vertically for about a thousand feet and then started forward. Lev zoomed up over the clouds and then came down lower and asked if Lazarus could find his home. Suddenly Lazarus realized he was lost and asked how they would ever find their way back. Lev realized that Lazarus didn't know how to read or write, so he simply said, “This little machine will find your telephone beam in the center of your pad. Now you watch, when I press this button; it will fly back like a homing pigeon.”

Lazarus was delighted to see his home again as the aircraft seemed to stop in midair with a gradual descent straight down on the landing pad. Lazarus was like a bird let out of a cage. He was so excited for the moment that he forgot his shackled past.

Then Lev showed him the various features of his house, explaining carefully all the equipment and technology to the astonished lad. Taking him out to the orchard, he showed how the trees provided food

twelve months of the year. Pulling off a few leaves, Lev said, “Smell these. Do they remind you of anything?”

“Yes, Lev, they smell like the wonderful tea you gave me.”

Where Tea Comes From

“Well, this is where we get our tea leaves. Usually when we prune the trees, which I will show you how to do, we take the leaves and dry them and use them for tea. So you see, these trees of life will provide you with food to eat forever. You also have fig trees, orange trees, a banana tree, olive trees, mango trees and others. Notice, Lazarus, that the trees of Eden all bear fruit in twelve different months. The fruit is from the tree of life that bears fruit continuously to keep you alive forever. You will always have fresh fruit, every day. People who eat this fruit will not grow old or sick. God planted a garden in Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned they were driven out so they could not return again. However, angels harvested the seeds and saved them. The Ancients brought these wonderful seeds back with them when they returned to life, and now these trees are growing all over the earth.”

Lazarus couldn't take it all in; how could it be true? Was Lev some kind of magician? If there was only someplace to run where Lazarus could be secure and safe.

Lev showed him the bedrooms, bathrooms, and the solarium where tomatoes and other vegetables grew so beautifully. He then showed him how his home was energy efficient. “You will never need wood or oil for heat.”

“See this unit, Lazarus? This is a water line. It runs into this little device that separates water into hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen runs the fuel cells that make electricity. I know you don't understand it yet, but don't touch it and it will be a faithful servant to you. Now finally, sit down in that big easy chair. You spent your life working with your hands from dawn till dark. Now you will spend your time learning to read and write. Learn everything you can. All information is at your fingertips. Watch this.”

As Lev flipped the switch, the wall lit into a huge screen. Samuel was speaking, so Lev said, “That is the man who sent me here to have you returned to life with a long list of others. He and others like him live in Jerusalem. They are Christ's representatives on the earth. Everything you need to know you can learn right in this room. You will first need to learn reading, writing and math. Other children went to school to learn these things, but a slave boy did not have such privileges. But you have them now. Let me show you your first class in learning to read.”

He showed Lazarus what buttons to push, and there was an instructor teaching the alphabet and how little characters represented sounds and words. The instructor soon had Lazarus repeating after him. The boy continued with great enthusiasm taking his first lesson.

Lev stepped out to make some calls to the office. He found that Alvarez was on top of things, and they were now training several people to manage operations as assistants. The plan was to gradually develop everyone's management skills so they could take turns in keeping operations going. They were no longer bosses and workers, but a skilled team of men and women capable of handling all functions. Most of these people had never learned some of the common vices of the area, so they had nothing to unlearn; nor were they tempted to manipulate affairs for personal gain. They were learning rapidly, not only at work but also during the evening hours. They were so hungry for information that they spent hours learning.

The first day went very well for Lazarus. Like all people returned to life, he feared constantly that it was a dream and he would awaken in his old master's quarters, expected to finish the carpet he had been working on. He didn't realize that none of the carpet factories existed any more. Child and slave labor had ended forever with only the odious memory remaining.

The next morning Lazarus was up early, even though he had stayed up late into the night learning the alphabet. Lev asked him if he remembered it, and he repeated it perfectly. He had even started to learn word recognition. It was amazing how his hungry mind grasped

knowledge. After some freshly squeezed juice, Lev asked Lazarus to come with him to the chapel. He had been born a Muslim, but he never went to a mosque or prayed in the traditional way. He often prayed to God at night, but he felt that he was never heard. His prayers for deliverance never came until death.

Angry with God

Lazarus was angry that God had never answered his prayers. Lev realized by the long silence that Lazarus really did not want to go.

Intuitively, Lev said, “Lazarus, if you are angry with God, you are making a mistake. God heard your prayers. He did not answer them when you wanted them answered, but he answered them yesterday and today. You are living, you are free, you are rich, and you have a wonderful future ahead of you. Who do you think made this all possible? Was it your slave master? Did you have any friends who could do this for you? No, it was God who broke the bondage of sin and death that you were in. Now you are free. Do you think maybe you should thank God for answering your prayers now?”

“You mean that everything I have has come from God?”

“Yes. We live and move and have our being in God. He sent his Son to die in our place, and now at last we are free from the judgment of death we were all under. You are free to refuse to thank God. However, if I were in your place, I would be eager to thank Him for doing so much for me. So what do you say?”

“Yes, I will go. I do not wish to be ungrateful. However, I do not know this God. I was told that Allah was my god. I just thought I was too insignificant for Him to care for me or do anything for me. If you go, Lev, then I will go with you. I want to learn more about Him. Why does God make Himself known now? Where was He when I needed Him?”

Lev could see Lazarus was still a child in this thinking, wanting to be led and instructed in the right way. Even the mistreatment of the past had not hardened his heart. He was mostly fearful, afraid that his bubble of happiness would burst, that Lev would betray him and sell

him back into slavery again. He was too happy all at once for someone that had known little happiness in his life. Fortunately, he was not bitter and was open to his new surroundings.

Lev flew them to the chapel about two miles away. Lazarus was thrilled to land in such a prestigious manner. Lev had laid out proper clothing for going to the chapel, and he was delighted to be dressed up for the first time in his life. He had dressed mostly in dirty rags. Now he was clad in beautiful garments. Lev showed him his shower and how he had to shower every day to be clean. Being a father to Lazarus made his heart swell with joy.

Lev introduced the handsome and well-dressed lad to the other worshippers. He made it known that Lazarus had just returned to life having been a carpet weaver. This attracted attention because many people still cherished those fabulous carpets. However, none dared ask how they might get a carpet from him.

The music of praise was exceptionally beautiful, and Lev could see how Lazarus was enjoying it. He didn’t know how to read the words and the music seemed strange to him, but Lev whispered, “Soon you will be able to read the words and understand this music.”

The chaplain gave a discourse on the life of Christ. When he got to the close of Jesus’ life and how they nailed him on a cross to die, Lazarus was deeply moved. After the service he asked Lev, “Why did they kill Jesus? Why did they hate him so?”

“Because they were jealous of him, and they hated him without a cause. However, even though they killed Jesus, God raised him from the dead, and now he is King over this world.”

“What will he do with those who killed him?”

“He will bless them and give them life, just as he does to all who have died. You see, Jesus loved us and died for us that we might live.”

Love—A New Word in His Vocabulary

The service touched Lazarus’ heart. Having suffered, he was sensitive to the suffering of others. Love, however, was a new word

that he was having trouble understanding, though he was listening and eager to learn.

After the service, people came up to Lazarus to greet him and showered him with attention he had never known before. Suddenly, Lazarus found he was a human being with a place in society, not a slave hiding in a hot stuffy room, working without ceasing day after day. No one had ever greeted him; no one had ever complimented him; no one had ever cared that he existed. He had been a non-entity. People were only interested in the carpets he was weaving. They would tell the master which carpet they wanted when he completed them.

Everyone stood in amazement as their craft took off effortlessly rising and then disappearing into the horizon. This type of aircraft would soon be common, but it was still a novelty for now.

They returned for breakfast, and as they sat down to a luscious table of fruit, Lev asked Lazarus how he liked the service. He said the music was beautiful, but he felt embarrassed that he could not read the words.

“This is the first time I have heard about Jesus and how they crucified him. I was very sad to hear this, but I know how cruel people can be.”

“What did you think of the people at the chapel?”

“Oh, I have never been noticed before. At times I didn’t think anyone knew I existed, not even Allah. I couldn’t believe how friendly all of the people were, but I think it was only because I was with you that they noticed me. If I had come by myself, they probably would not have even let me in. I’m a nobody and they would’ve treated me as a nobody, like people always did.”

Lev smiled, “I don’t think you are a nobody. Why should they be different from me?”

“Mr. Aron, you don’t know what it is to be taken into slavery as a little boy. The only reason they fed me was so that I could work. They would beat me when I had difficulty tying the threads into knots correctly. I did not have the ability to do what they wanted. Until I

learned how to do it, I thought I was going to die. They kept yelling at me and striking me as though I was supposed to know how to do everything. When I cried they would hit me. I knew I had to learn, so I finally learned to make simple carpets. Later, when I developed a talent for weaving beautiful carpets, they did not yell at me and hit me so much. They wanted me to finish everything so they could collect money. They wanted me to work longer and longer hours. I was so tired I would cry. No one cared about me.”

“Well, God heard your prayers and they are being answered now. Jesus knew of your suffering, and he cared enough for you to die to lift the judgment of death from you. Now you are living because he died for you. Yes, he cared for you more than you ever knew. And you know what, my son? I care for you. I am going to be a father to you until your own father comes back from the dead—and you shall be a son to me. You needn’t say nobody cares for you ever again.”

After breakfast, Lev showed Lazarus how to prune trees, allowing him to do it while he instructed him. When they were finished, Lev showed him that he must take off all the pruned leaves and dry them in the sun. Lev showed him how to spot branches that were suckers that did not produce fruit from those that did. He learned quickly and did a very good job of it. These trees had not been pruned in awhile, so it took a couple of hours to do the job. Then Lev showed him how to do the same with other plants.

Lev said, “If you trim them properly, they will bear more fruit. That is what God does with us, Lazarus. He wants us to bear much fruit—the fruit of the Spirit.”

Lazarus enjoyed working in his garden. He could not believe that this was his house and that everything was provided for him free—housing, food, clothing and all the necessities of life. It seemed too good to be true, and he wondered when it would end.

After lunch, Lev asked Lazarus if he wanted to go to the place where he was working to arrange for people to return to life.

“Is that the place you were told of my return to life?”

“Yes, I read the information from the Ancients, and then I called Samuel who was in charge of this project and asked if I could be a father to you. I will show you the paper I had about you. You can’t read yet, but in a few weeks you will be able to read what it says about you. I want you to meet the people I work with. They know about you and are waiting to meet you. I told them you would be coming today. They are good people; none of them are like your master. You must remember, all the evil is past and done with. Christ now rules in love and justice.”

Lazarus’ Father to Come Back

“By the way, did you know that you will start working on your father’s house in another month? You have a lot to learn, but I will help you build your parents’ homes. They will be very much like yours. Can you believe you will have your very own father in your arms again, Lazarus? You will! He loved you so, but he became very ill and soon died. Then your mother died in an accident. So the two people who loved you were gone. Now it is going to be your turn to love them and to receive them back from the dead. They will not recognize you, because when they died you were a child, and now you are almost a man. You will recognize them, though. Oh, you have many happy days ahead of you!”

Lev could see the emotion burning in his heart when Lazarus learned his parents were going to be in his arms again.

“Oh, this is too good to be true. Are you sure of this?”

“Yes, I have the preliminary report on my desk. I have a tentative schedule for their return. The trees of life are planted on their property and in about six weeks to two months we will schedule your mother’s house to be built. You will have many volunteers to help you, including me, son.”

“I can’t understand why so many good things are happening to me, when I was just a slave boy that nobody loved or cared about. I can’t understand all the changes. One moment I’m working twelve hours a

day in a hot room and now I live in a mansion with you serving me. How can this be?”

“Lazarus, this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

When they arrived at the office, everyone shouted, “Welcome, Lazarus!” They had tea and resurrection cake with everybody gathering around to welcome him to life. Lazarus was receiving honor for the first time in his life. After tea and cake, everybody went back to work. He could see printers printing and all types of strange office equipment. He couldn’t believe machines were running by themselves. Everywhere people were busy studying computer screens.

“Lazarus, when you learn to read and write and all the things you need to know, you may be working here. You have a lot of studying to do.”

“I’m so glad to be able to learn. I would watch children going to school, and I envied them. I was denied the joys of learning. Now that I have my own instructor on the Internet screen, I’m going to be a good student. Everything is so strange—I know so little. My first thought was to run away, because I thought you were playing some cruel game with me. I thought you were giving me a few moments of happiness and then would lock me in a ‘work’ factory, and I’d be lost again. I thought you were lying to me. No one was ever good to me.”

“Lazarus, I’m glad you didn’t run away,” Lev said with sympathetic tears in the corners of his eyes. “You are living in a different time now. You died and were brought to life again. Many years have passed while you slept in the grave. Look at yourself in the mirror. You know you have perfect teeth and you’re three inches taller than before. You are a handsome young man. These are all Christ’s gifts to you. You have abundant life. You are your own man now, and no one will lock you in a room again. You once had other people rule and make your decisions for you. Now you must make your own decisions, so be careful to make wise ones. If in doubt, call me.”

*“Childhood and youth are vanity”
(Ecclesiastes 11:10).*

Chapter Ten

Fatherly Counsel

“Do not make the mistake of trying to rob or steal—you have everything you need so you have no reason to try to take anything from anyone else. You are free to do what you want—but you are never free from the consequences of what you do. You must learn this—you will be severely punished if you try to do something wrong. You are free to do good and help other people—you are not free to hurt anyone, not even those who hurt you.”

Lev knew that anyone who had been confined and for whom all decisions had been made by others would be very inexperienced in making judgments with their new freedom of choice. People were returning but bringing their evil ways with them. Lev wanted to be a father to Lazarus, to guide him in the days to come. Still there were perils for the inexperienced, for those who did not understand right from wrong, good from evil. The undeveloped mind could be led to attempt what might seem right, but become painfully wrong in the end. It was not as bad as when evil was the way of life, when the devil and his cohorts ruled. Yet, young people still needed wisdom to learn the principles of righteousness.

Lev spent as much time as he could with Lazarus. He secured a bicycle for him for healthy transportation and called him daily to check on his activities. He was satisfied that he was spending most of his time learning. Within several months, Lazarus could not only read and write, but he was starting to understand many things.

Lazarus visited Lev's house over the weekends to learn proper manners. He had no training in social graces, and it was awkward for him to blend in with society's standards. He was not a bad boy, but he hadn't been taught nor did he have the opportunity to observe proper decorum and conduct. Consequently, he would let doors slam or push his way ahead of others without thinking of others.

Lazarus could be disagreeable and inconsiderate without realizing it. Lev was trying to compensate for his lack of development, but many years holed up in a room weaving all day did not make him a gentleman.

Lazarus had recently become friends with a Gypsy boy whose experiences were similar in some ways to his own. However, Marino had lost his parents while a child and survived only by being street-smart and deft with his fingers. He had no scruples about stealing or lying. Since his return to life, he had no need to practice his former ways, but it became a challenge for him to practice his old crafts. He had been punished once for stealing by having his hand paralyzed, but he was healed quickly because everyone understood that he was a boy who needed more love than punishment.

Keeping company with Marino, Lazarus learned the artful ways of taking things so smoothly that no one would know something had been removed. He was fascinated with Marino's ability to practice magic. His hands were so deft that they were quicker than the eye. Try as Lazarus would, he could not imitate the cunning of his friend. His own hands were deft and he had an artist's eye for design and proportions. Yet, his were a craftsman's hands that did not know trickery. The boys did not spend a lot of time together because both were studiously trying to get the education they never had. They knew this world was intensely expanding with information, and one needed not only to catch up, but also to keep up with learning. Learning had never been easier or more comprehensive, and fortunately they were eager for knowledge. Unfortunately, their learning was more secular than in the ways of righteousness.

Marino and Lazarus decided to ride their bicycles to a supply area where one could find needed articles. The articles were free, but one had to request them and would be given them if one voiced a reasonable need for their possession. Marino spotted several wristwatches and asked what Lazarus thought of them.

"Oh, they are beautiful! Lev has a beautiful watch that he wears all the time."

As they left to bicycle their way home, Marino reached into his pocket and gave a wristwatch to Lazarus. They both stopped to put on their new watches. As they were preparing to pedal their way home, both boys suddenly lost the use of their left arms. They were able to keep pedaling, but their left arms hung down by their side uselessly.

Marino had been punished once before, but this was Lazarus' first. He remembered what Lev had told him about doing things that were wrong. It had sounded like a fable, and he had never taken it seriously. Now his dead arm felt like it was made of lead. He knew what had happened and why, but thought perhaps it would get better by itself. Marino knew at once that he was being punished, and he knew what he must do to be healed.

When Lazarus returned home, he thought that with rest his arm would get better. But the hours passed and his arm remained like lead. When Lev called that evening to see how his day went, Lazarus did not tell him what had happened. He was too embarrassed, and he knew Lev would be very displeased. He didn't know what to do. He had heard that an offender had to call the Ancients, and he wanted to be relieved, but he couldn't bring himself to call. Lev must have sensed something was wrong; he asked, "Are you sure everything is all right?"

The Paralyzed Arm Report

Finally Lazarus confessed, "I have a paralyzed arm, Lev. It's so heavy. Can you help me? I thought it would heal by itself, but it just gets heavier every hour."

“What have you done, son? Nobody gets stricken unless he has done something wrong. You can be made better, but you must confess to the Ancients. What did you do?”

“My friend, Marino...he did it, Lev. He stole two wristwatches. I didn't take them; Marino did. He gave me one of them and as soon as we put them on our wrists, our left arms became paralyzed. At first it did not feel so bad, but it gets worse every hour. I don't know what to do.”

“First, you must return the watch. If you want I will fly out in the morning and take you and Marino to the store, and you must apologize for what you did.”

“But I didn't take them, Lev; honest, I didn't do it.”

“Yes, but you were a partner in this crime and gladly accepted what you knew had been stolen. All unrighteousness will be punished. I told you this, but now that this has happened, perhaps your memory will serve you well in the future.”

Lev then gave Lazarus a number to call.

“You must tell the truth and explain exactly what happened. If you do not tell the whole truth, it will prolong your punishment. Do not justify your actions. You were wrong and must admit it. If you tell the truth, you may be healed within the hour. You will still be required to return the watch, confess your part in the crime, and ask forgiveness from the store manager. The Ancients will check with Christ, and they will know everything that happened. They will know if you told the whole truth or tried to color it to your advantage. I will be there early in the morning. Call Marino to be there as well.”

Lazarus called and spoke to Samuel, who knew of Lazarus' relationship to Lev. “Shalom, this is Samuel. What may I do for you, young man?”

“My name is Lazarus and my arm has been paralyzed, Mr. Samuel, and I wish to have it healed.”

“Very well, Lazarus, what have you done? You must tell me exactly what happened. Don't leave anything out. If you tell the truth, you will be healed within the hour.”

Lazarus repeated, with great embarrassment, what had happened. Samuel listened carefully and said, “I will review your report, Lazarus. If you told me the whole truth I will know it. You then may be healed within the hour, but only on the condition that you return the watches tomorrow without fail. You probably would have been given those wristwatches if you had asked for them; but because you stole them, you may not have them now. Is that clear?”

“Yes,” Lazarus meekly said. He then told the circumstances as accurately as he remembered and promised to return the stolen property in the morning. He also said, “Lev Aron will take me there personally to return the stolen property and to apologize.”

After a pause, Samuel came on again, “You told me the truth and you will be healed within the hour. You must, however, return the stolen goods tomorrow without fail, or your punishment will then be much worse. You know that you have dishonored Lev. You must start studying the Word of God. It will make you more conscious of right and wrong, Lazarus. Shalom.”

“Thank you, Mr. Samuel.”

Lazarus then called Marino and found that he had not been healed yet because this was his second offense. He would be healed very early the next day, however, because they were aware of his former life.

“Marino, come with Lev and me tomorrow in his aircraft. Be here early in the morning and don't forget to bring the wristwatch with you.”

“I'll be there, Lazarus. I'm sorry to have gotten you involved, but I always used to do things like this; I forget I can't do this anymore. I was never caught before.”

That evening as Lazarus started reading the Gospel of Matthew, his arm began to tingle and soon it was normal again. For the first time he found himself able to read and understand what he was reading in the Bible. He was drawn into his study and seemed to have forgotten time until he finished the entire book of Matthew. He was drawn to Jesus in a personal way and realized what a great man he had been. He promised himself that he would keep on reading from his Bible every

day. He felt warmth in his heart that he had never felt before. Yes, he liked Lev because he had been very good to him; but the story of Jesus had drawn him as a magnet, and he could not explain why.

Honest Confessions Rewarded

The next morning Lev arrived as promised, and in a quick flight he had the two boys before the store manager. Marino sheepishly apologized for taking the watches, and Lazarus also apologized and admitted he accepted one of them from Marino. The manager, a very kind man, said, “If you had requested these watches, you might have been given them. Why would you take them without requesting?”

Marino was candid. “In my former life, I lived in the street and survived by taking things and selling them. When I applied for work no one would hire me, so I lived the only way I knew how. It is a very bad habit that I must overcome. This is my second punishment, and I am ashamed of what I did. Please forgive me.”

Lazarus joined in, “I, too, am sorry that I accepted the watch. Nothing is worth dishonoring those I love, especially the King Jesus. I knew better than to accept the watch, and I am sorry for what I did. I learned that righteousness is enforced. I thought that sounded like a fable, but now I know what it means.”

Lev was pleased because he believed these two young men were humbled by this embarrassing turn of events. Lev reached into his pocket and pulled out two watches that had been given to him by companies because of his work for them. He gave each boy one and said, “You may not take anything without permission. It was not the store manager that noticed the two watches had disappeared. The angel of the Lord saw your actions, and he administered your punishment.”

Marino said, thoughtfully, “My hand is not quicker than the angel’s eye. I have never been caught before in my former life, but now in this life I have been caught twice. I have learned a valuable lesson from this. I am really sorry.”

Lev asked if they would join him at the chapel that morning. Lazarus had gone several times before, but Marino held religion in disdain. He

remembered how the Christians persecuted the Gypsies, so he never liked them. He said, “Why should I go among those who killed my father and mother and chased me from one city to another?”

“Those weren’t the true Christians who persecuted you, Marino. Many people liked to say they were Christians who were not. True Christians themselves were persecuted and murdered. At the chapel you will find people who love Christ now, and you will find them very caring and loving people.”

To Lev’s surprise, Lazarus joined in to say, “I read the Gospel of Matthew last night. I can read now, and what I read made me feel love in my heart for the first time. You should read that Gospel, Marino. Can you read yet?”

“No, not that well. I am learning. I wasted a full month before I started learning. Now I am learning as fast as I can. Where do you find the Gospel of Matthew?”

“Every house has a Bible in it. It is the black book on our desks. It is divided into two parts—the Old and New Testaments. Matthew is the first book of the New Testament,” Lazarus said. “After I was healed by the Ancient Worthy Samuel, he told me to read my Bible, so I did. That was good advice. I learned more last night than in any other night of my life.”

Lev couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “You know, boys, I was a Jew who never read the New Testament in my former life. When I started reading it, I found it the most astonishing book I ever read. I have been reading the Bible ever since. I take time to read it every day, and it lifts me up every time.”

They arrived at the chapel in time for the service. Lev noticed Lazarus reading from the hymnbook and singing. He loved the music and the hymns. Marino sat very still for his first service and seemed to enjoy it. After the service, Marino was surprised how warm and friendly people were. No one had bothered to speak to him in his former life. Now he was pleased that people took an interest in him.

The chaplain spoke on the Beatitudes in the fifth chapter of Matthew. Lazarus smiled and poked Lev. It was beautiful for both of

them to see the effects of the Word of God in the human heart. It only proved that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Orphans Providing for their Parents

After the service, Lev took both boys to his home in his aircraft. While there, he told Marino that next week he could start work on his mother’s house. He would have the help of several volunteers and he would even pop in occasionally to check on how things were going.

“By the way, Marino, you should be studying how to build your mother’s house. You could study together with Lazarus, so if there is something you can’t read or understand he can help you. Fortunately, the volunteers are knowledgeable so you will have hands-on instruction as well.

“And, Lazarus, you will start on your father’s house next week also. Try to learn everything you can. If you have any questions, call me personally and I will help you, because I have built many houses. You will soon have the privilege of having your parents back again. When they died, their greatest sorrow was to leave you as orphans. How happy they will be to see you strong and handsome. I can never forget the joy and happiness my brother and I had in receiving our father and mother back to life. That will be like real magic, Marino. But it won’t be a trick; it will be the power of Christ returning your parents. Remember this, Christ does nothing to hurt anyone but always makes us reach higher than ourselves. We come from sinful and tainted backgrounds, so we need all the help we can get to wash away all the sin and ugliness that clings to us.”

This sounded like a wonderful dream to both boys. They had lived with all the pain that orphans felt. Most children had fathers and mothers or at least one parent or maybe even grandparents, but they had no one to love them, no one to care, to dry their tears or comfort them. They were alone and unloved. Learning that their parents would be coming back was like an electric shock, making their hearts glad. They tingled all over trying to grasp what they were hearing.

“You mean my mother will really return to life. Will I be able to hug her and care for her? Will she know me? Will she love me?”

“Yes, Marino, everything you hear from me is the truth. As soon as you finish the house and all the preparations for your mother, you will report to me. I will call the Ancients, and they will appoint a day for your mother’s return to life. You will be there, my son. Yes, your mother will know you and she will love you. You must remember, however, that when people return to life they find themselves in two different worlds, and because things are so wonderful they think that they may be dreaming. It takes several days for them to accept the reality of life again. How proud your mother will be of you, to think that you built her such a marvelous house and provided her with everything she will ever need! Remember, she lived in a terrible world of hatred and persecution. She will awaken with fear and all the horrors that surrounded her when she died. You must be strong and comfort her and assure her that no one will ever hurt her again.”

“Oh, I’ll be glad to do that! There isn’t a day of my life that I haven’t thought of my mother and father. I hated the men that killed them. I hated the cruelty of the world. Why did they have to kill *my* parents? Why didn’t anyone care?”

“You must remember, Marino, that God left the world alone to experience evil in their hearts. Satan was then free, and he encouraged sin and evil. Satan led the world in the final battle of Armageddon. He led the world through his instrumentalities to try to destroy the Jewish people and to take Jerusalem. That’s where I died, Marino, fighting Satan’s hordes. But God fought for us, and He has brought about Satan’s defeat and put him in a pit of enforced inactivity. God through his son Christ is making all things new.”

Marino was wide-eyed, taking everything in. He said, “I will begin immediately to learn to build my mother’s house, Lev. Can I study with you, Lazarus? I can’t read very well yet, so I need help.”

“Yes, I will study with you! I’m so excited, too, to build a house for my father! Let’s have breakfast now; you too, Lev. When you leave for work, Marino and I will begin our studies.”

Lev Shares the Excitement

“Great idea! I’m excited, too! I look forward to meeting your parents as soon as they return to life. Now that you have been healed and have both arms working well, be sure to put them to good use in building homes. I will have the heavy equipment lay the foundations for both buildings this week. Each of you has an extra bedroom. You will entertain two volunteers who will help you build. Be sure to go out of your way to make them feel at home and to have food, tea and juice for them to eat and drink.”

“We will do as you say, Lev. There is nothing we will not do to make all the preparations for our parents. This is the happiest news in all my life!” Lazarus said. “I thank you and Christ who will give life to my parents!”

“It doesn’t stop here. After your parents are returned to life, within a few more months, you will be building for your grandparents, and then your great-grandparents. You won’t be orphans anymore. Just as important as it is to build a house for their physical needs, you need to help them live by the righteous standards of Christ. No one will live beyond a hundred years if they do not progress toward the holiness that God requires. God is good, but he is also severe with those who do not love righteousness.”

When Lev left, the boys immediately started their house-building studies. They were so excited they didn’t even go to watch Lev’s aircraft leave. They needed to prepare themselves for interacting with others. Lev had picked mature, loving, and generous adults to be a good influence on the boys as they worked together. This was a red-letter day for the boys and for Lev.

*“Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart,
And put away evil from thy flesh”
(Ecclesiastes 11:10).*

Chapter Eleven

The name of a young lady scheduled to return caught Lev’s attention. Tamar Solnaz could have been just another name among thousands scheduled to return to life, but after Lev read a short statement of her life’s experiences, he was moved to look into her return to life. She was scheduled to return in one week and all the arrangements were in order. Lev needed an exceptional and kind woman to be with Tamar and to be a mother to her for a season—the mother she never had. Tamar would need strong arms around her until she could adjust to her new life. He asked around his staff members and heard that one young lady had a mother who was not engaged in any project at the moment. She was a noble woman, and his associate recommended her for the assignment.

Lev thought he would give her a call. She answered, “Shalom, this is Naomi.”

He told Naomi of his conversation with her daughter. “We have a young lady returning to life who was abducted when her mother died. Tamar Solnaz was sold and forced into a humiliating life of pain and shame. She was a beautiful young girl and brought in rich revenues. However, her life was empty and hollow with no one to love her or protect her. She became bitter and angry and often thought of committing suicide, but she was locked in with no way of escape.

“Tamar contracted a disease and died without medical care. She made enough money for the master of the house so that he could buy another slave girl. Now Tamar is coming back to life, Naomi, and I

am asking you to be a mother to her until she adjusts to her new and happier life.”

“Oh, yes, I am available. But I don’t know if I will be capable of healing her wounds.” Naomi’s heart already went out to the girl. “Yet, if you want me to, I’ll try.”

All the preparations were made for Naomi to be there on the appointed day. Receiving someone to life again was an invigorating experience. They all knew how it felt to lose a loved one in death and the tragedy associated with it. This was the great reversal. Death and the grave were steadily giving up the dead in them. Those returning created not only an instant presence, but instant needs for which to provide. Everyone required food, clothing, and shelter, but they also needed more. They needed to break the shackles from their past life and learn to handle their new freedoms with responsibility. Those who were miserably exploited needed to find the grace to overcome their hurt and anger.

Naomi had the table loaded with fruit and made a resurrection cake. She had personally chosen Tamar’s new wardrobe and was waiting to embrace this bruised young girl. Could she heal from her pain and the abuses heaped upon her? Could she learn to love people after such mistreatment?

Tamar Awakens

I awakened with a flood of emotions. I remembered my last experiences. Not only the pain, but also the loneliness as I felt my life waning. No one cared for me except my master. However, I knew his only concern was his loss of moneymaking property. He was absolutely inhuman and I hated him. I felt numb from abuse and welcomed the shortness of breath that would soon end my misery.

So I could not understand my easy breathing and feeling of wellness. I opened my eyes expecting to find myself in my stinking cramped quarters that I shared with my hapless sisters in affliction. When I saw the beautiful spacious room I was in, I was wide-eyed with amazement. I looked around and noticed the beautiful flowers on the

table and all the lovely furniture. I felt so good that I jumped out of bed but suddenly realized I needed clothing. I had to find something to wear so I could escape. I saw clothing on a chair, and it fit me perfectly and gave me a sense of dignity I had not been accustomed to. I found the lavish bathroom uncertain of what I was looking at. In the mirror I noticed how beautiful and healthy I looked!

I felt this was some dream. Nothing would ever happen to change my miserable existence. This was only a fantasy. The next blink of my eyes would find me back at the house of horrors. My mind was racing. It was as though I was suspended between life and death, beauty and ugliness, wellness and pain.

I looked out the window to see a beautiful garden and a grand orchard. This was like nothing I had ever seen. I became frantic. Something bad must be going on. ¡Que Dios! I must make my escape. However, where was I and where could I go? Someone would grab me and take me back. I had no friends, no family. I knew no skills to qualify for any work. As I stood there, my anxiety reached a high pitch. I almost felt like screaming.

I decided to open the door and face whatever my fate might be.

Naomi Reaches Out

Just then Naomi called to her, “Tamar, my child, come here.”

Tamar looked down the hall and hesitated, not knowing whether to run for the door or to pause to talk to this gentle woman. She looked kind, and her smile indicated that she was not going to hurt her. She slowly walked over to the woman, carefully watching to see if she would make some move to grab her.

“Welcome, my child, welcome. I have been waiting for you.” Naomi’s voice was tender, like a mother cooing to her infant. “Lay aside all your fears and anxiety. You are home at last. No one will ever hurt you again. You are free and you have need of nothing. You will now have a happy life from now on!”

What nonsense! Tamar looked about in fear for the master she so hated. She had been promised a nice home before when she was

abducted. Yet, this woman was not like anyone in her past. She had a gentle and kind face, and as Tamar approached her she opened her arms to hug her. For reasons Tamar couldn't fathom, she instinctively trusted this woman and she fell into Naomi's warm embrace as if she were her long lost mother.

They stood there for a moment, her eyes flooding with tears. As she sobbed, Naomi held her more tightly. "My child, be at peace. My name is Naomi, and I am here to love you and help you. You may weep for joy now and not for sorrow. Your nighttime of pain and humiliation is ended. You have a beautiful pathway before you. No one will ever harm you again, I promise. Now, dry your tears, my dear." Then she gave her a tissue.

"Come sit down at this beautiful table that has been waiting for you, Tamar. You will never eat the food you ate before again. You will be eating the fruit of paradise and drinking the tea that comes from heaven itself."

Tamar sat down as an obedient child, her eyes widening as she looked at a table laden with beautiful fruit and fragrant tea. She wasn't especially hungry, but everything was inviting, she was eager to enjoy this moment.

Naomi said, "We always thank our Lord for his blessings before we eat. So if you will bow your head, I shall pray. 'Dear Lord, thank you for returning Tamar to life again. Thank you for your gracious provisions and most of all for our beloved Savior who has made these things possible, and in whose name we pray.'

"Now," Naomi beamed at the young woman, her face full of love. "You have never eaten anything like this before. This is fruit that has been restored to us from the Garden of Eden. It is the fruit Adam and Eve enjoyed before they sinned. It is not only the most delicious food you have ever tasted, but also it will satisfy you and make you feel good all over. Go ahead, Tamar, take any one you like."

As Tamar tasted the fruit, her eyes widened. "Is this magic? It tastes like the nectar of the gods."

"There is only one God, and it is He that planted the trees of life in the Garden of Eden. Yes, it is God's special fruit made for us. You will grow to perfection, both in mind and body eating it. See the orchard out that window? It belongs to you, as does this house. These trees bloom in stages twelve months of the year, so you will never lack food. You will never be hungry."

Tamar delicately cut her fruit into pieces to eat it.

"*¡Que delicioso!* I have never eaten anything so delicious in all my life. And after eating two pieces of fruit, I am no longer hungry."

"Well, I hope, my dear, that you have saved room for your resurrection cake!"

"No one ever made a cake for me, Ms. Naomi. Is this heaven or am I dreaming?"

Naomi smiled, "My dear child, you are not in heaven, but heaven has come down to earth, and God who hid himself from mankind is now busily smiling upon us. He has sent his dear Son to heal our wounds, to give us life and happiness instead of sorrow and death."

She then filled Tamar's cup with the magnificent tea and gave her a large piece of cake. "This cake will make you want to sing. Enjoy it, Tamar. You deserve all the love and attention you lived without. It will be different now. Until your very own mother returns to life to be with you, may I be your mother?"

"*¡Sí, oh sí, Ms. Naomi!* If you promise to stay near me—I fear so much. I need someone who loves me to take my hand and guide me. I cannot explain anything about myself. I remember being so sick and being unable to breathe. Then I awakened and feel wonderful! All the pain is gone. I cannot explain all this. Please, help me understand what has happened."

"I don't know how to tell you this, Tamar, and when I do you won't believe it anyway. But you died and have been sleeping in the grave for many years until this day. Christ brought you to life this very morning. He gave you a new body, healthy and pure. Your mind has trouble bridging the two worlds of the past and present. That is why you keep

thinking that this is a dream, and that when you awaken you will be back in that awful place. It will take several days to become adjusted to your new life. I know how you feel, because I felt the same way when I returned to life. It is an experience that you cannot explain in any rational way. But enjoy it. It is too profound an experience for us to understand. Christ said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

"You mean that I truly died, and was brought back to life again today? If I were not sitting here, I would never believe it. However, I cannot explain why I am here or how I got here. I must accept your explanation; although in my heart I cannot understand it. But I have no other explanation."

Questions and Suspicions

With a start, Tamar added, "You said this is *my* house? What is to become of me? I don't know you and you don't know me. Why should you bother with a worthless girl like me? Why are you so kind to me?"

"Well, you have a lot of questions, Tamar. You have been very badly treated. I feel your pain, and I want to show you that you are living in a different world now. No one will ever hurt you again. You are not only free, but you are secure. You will not only have this beautiful home to live in with abundant provisions, but you will be restored to the dignity and honor that you deserve, my child. Those that abused you will be coming back to life again. You will lift your head high and they will be ashamed. They will come seeking forgiveness and confessing their crimes against you."

"I will never forgive them, those beasts. I hate them! I hate them!" she shouted as horrid memories of the past came to mind. "Ay, *no!* They destroyed me! They humiliated me! I am sick to my stomach recalling the past. I used to cry to God, but it was in vain. Nothing changed."

"Please be at peace, my child. Nothing like that will ever happen to you again. You said that God did not answer your prayer. It took a long time for him to answer it, but he has answered it today. You are

alive, you are well, you are free, you are rich, and you are blessed. God heard your cries and collected your tears. You have no idea what great things He has done for you. Everyday that you live you will see the glory of God and Christ unfold. This is no time to be angry. This is a day to rejoice."

To lighten the moment, Naomi then said, "Come, my child, let me show you your home and your garden. No one will take it away from you or take you away from here. The world is now ruled by Christ."

Naomi first showed Tamar the kitchen with all the modern conveniences, bright, shiny, and new. She showed her the stove that could be turned on automatically by turning a knob. Tamar was curiously amazed.

"When you heat something, then you can turn it off like so. This is the refrigerator that keeps all our food fresh and cool."

Naomi showed Tamar all the various features, and then took her into the living room with a beautiful sofa and chairs, all in colors and patterns that were especially pleasing to Tamar.

"This switch will turn on the television."

The poor girl was startled with fright to see the wall light up with people speaking.

"Who are these people and how did they get in here?"

"They are not here. These people are in Jerusalem, but we are able to send pictures of them through the air. These are the Ancient Worthies. You will be learning from them everyday. They are the best teachers we have ever had."

"I never went to school. I can't read or write."

"You will be going to school right here in this room. You will not only soon know how to read and write, but you will soon know more than you ever imagined. You will be able to show all who abused you how wise and dignified you are. You will be transformed into a princess of beauty."

"You make it sound so wonderful, Ms. Naomi! I wish that everything you say is true."

“My dear, we are not allowed to speak anything that is not true anymore. There are no more lies because Christ will not tolerate them. He demands truth, not only in word, but also in the inward parts. It is truth everywhere, all the time.”

Naomi then showed her the bedrooms, each with a private bath.

“Why do I need all these rooms?”

“You need room for your guests. I am your guest, you know, and I hope you will allow me to stay with you for at least a week. I have been asked to be with you by a wonderful man named Lev Aron. He will be coming here tomorrow to visit you for a few short hours.”

“I don’t want to see any men!” Tamar cried. She began to shudder. “No! Don’t let him come! I hate men!”

“Oh, my dear child, you have only seen the worst side of men. You don’t have to be afraid. Lev is wonderful and kind. He has made all the arrangements for your return to life, and it was he who made sure I would be here with you when you returned to life. You have never met anyone so nice. He will not hurt you. No one will ever hurt you again. Please remember that.”

“Will you stay with me? Possibly I will feel safe if you are here with me.”

The Wonders of Her New Home

They passed through a peaceful garden into the orchard of the trees of life. The fragrance was heavenly.

“These are the same kind of trees that Adam and Eve ate from. You do not have to cook unless you want to, because you could live on this fruit. This is our main diet now. Occasionally, we fix vegetables and salads. We don’t eat meat anymore. Life is very simple. We have food, water, electricity, and our energy needs are provided right here. We also have trees that you are familiar with such as olives, figs, dates, nuts, oranges, bananas, and others. You have enough to eat and enough to share with your guests.”

Naomi then showed Tamar the box that turned water into hydrogen and oxygen gas and then the unit that turned hydrogen into electricity.

“This is a modern miracle, Tamar.” Naomi showed her how the septic system worked and how everything was recycled into a perfect balance of nature. All of this was incomprehensible to Tamar.

When they came back inside Naomi showed her the computer. Tamar felt overwhelmed. She said, “I can’t believe what I’m seeing.”

“I know it seems so strange, Tamar, but in a few days you will get used to it. Do you know as soon as you learn to read and write and how to build a house that you will be building houses for your father and mother?”

“I have dreamed every day of my life about my mama and my papa. When I lost them, my heart was broken. I was left alone without anyone to protect or care for me. One of my relatives decided to sell me to a wicked man. He promised my life would be good, and that I would not have to work as a slave making carpets or some other product. It sounded like I was going to have an easy life without work. But I became hysterical when I found what was going to happen to me. I was forced into a life that was crueler than death. I wanted to die, but I could not escape.”

“You can put that all behind you now, my child. You need to tell of your pain to someone who cares, so you may unburden your heart to me at any time. I will listen gladly because I feel your pain. The secret to healing is to seize the moment. You are absolutely free from all those evil people. They cannot hurt you anymore. They will come one by one to secure your forgiveness. Can you forgive them? That will be hard, but you must because you cannot hold anger in your heart. You now must learn to love. You must be kind to those who hurt you and who treated you evilly. That sounds like the last thing you want to do, I know. Yet, soon your heart will heal and your pain will be replaced with joy. Then it will be easier to forgive and to bless those who used you so evilly.”

“I am afraid I can never forgive all these people.” Tamar lowered her lashes sadly for a moment. But then fire flashed from her dark eyes as she asked defiantly, “Why will God ask me to? They do not deserve to be forgiven. I was not a person to them. If I died, there would be another girl to take my place. There was no end of girls who were promised a better life waiting to replace me. I knew I would not live long with all the diseases I was subject to. I was glad when I fell ill, because I would at last be free from my tormentors.”

“Oh, my child. This should never have happened to you. However, no matter what direction your life took, you would have suffered pain and loss. People found they could make money and live comfortably themselves by using young people as slaves. If your parents had lived, they might have found some fine young man to be your husband, and you would have had a home and children. You lost that happy life, but your life will be happy now.”

“I cannot help feeling bitterness and anger. I do not know what love is. How could they have the power to destroy my life? Why me, *Dios querido*, why me?”

Tamar’s eyes flooded with tears, and again Naomi sat next to her and embraced her allowing her to empty herself of sorrow.

Forgiveness Necessary, but Not Always Easy

“Oh, precious child, you have been so hurt and wounded. You have every reason to feel pain and resentment. However, you cannot hold these in your heart forever. The past will not occur again. Before you can fill your heart with love, you must empty it of hatred and bitterness. If you keep anger in your heart, it will destroy you. God will not forgive us our sins until we forgive those who sinned against us. Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ Soon you will meet those who hurt you. When you find it in your heart to forgive them, you will glow with happiness, because you overcame anger and hatred. Then you will be free to be happy again.”

The following day, Naomi reminded Tamar that Lev Aron would be visiting.

“Now you must not think of him like those men you knew. Lev is kind and gentle, and he has not left anything undone in making preparations for you to return to life. He asked me personally if I would be a mother to you until your real mother returns. I promised him I would, and that I would watch over you with tender love and care. You will love him.”

“No, I won’t! I hate all men! Why is he any different?”

“Not all men are alike. Jesus was a perfect man, and he died so that you could live again. He loved you as a person as he loved all mankind. You have not lived to see how many good and noble men there are. Most of them are nobler than those you knew.”

Naomi wanted to heal Tamar’s hurt with love and tenderness. It was effective, because the girl had lived most of her short life without it. Love is always sweet and Tamar was soaking it up.

Lev arrived with happiness written all over his face. After greeting Naomi, he saw Tamar standing behind her and extended his hand with a kind smile. “Tamar, how are you? I’m so glad to see you. I’m sure Naomi has taken good care of you. Did she make you a resurrection cake by chance?”

“Yes, and it was delicious.” Tamar stood back, unable to react with more than basic good manners.

“Oh good! Maybe you will share a piece of that cake with me after breakfast. Do you think, Tamar, you could do that?”

“Yes,” she replied, not knowing how to get out of it.

“Good, good. I like that kind of cake. My former wife Rebekah used to make a cake like that. It’s one of my favorite things to eat.” Aware of Tamar’s obvious discomfort, Lev kept things light.

“Now that you’re all dressed up, how about if you both fly with me to the chapel? Then after the service we will come back, if you invite me, for breakfast. Do I hear a ‘yes’?”

Tamar slowly said, “Yes,” wondering what he meant by “fly with me”.

“Thank you! Come aboard. It’s very safe so don’t be afraid. Is this your first aircraft ride, Tamar?”

“Yes, I was hardly ever out of the house. This thing flies?” Her astonishment made her momentarily forget her suspicions.

“Well, young lady, I hope this ride will be the first of many for you.”

Lev started the power source, and the craft rose steadily and easily from the ground and then moved effortlessly toward the chapel. Because they were early, Lev asked, “We have a little extra time. Do you want to see the countryside for a few minutes?”

“Oh, it is so beautiful from up here.” Tamar was dazzled by the glorious view and the experience of soaring above it all.

“See that house over there? That belongs to Lazarus who has recently returned to life. He was a slave boy who worked weaving carpets. I adopted him as my son. He’s a good boy.” Tamar peered out the window watching the house below them.

“Then there is the house of Marino; he’s good friends with Lazarus. By the way, they are both building homes for their parents to return to life. Soon you will be, too. Will you be glad to have your father and mother back again?”

“Oh, that would be so wonderful. You are not lying to me, are you?”

“I would never, never do so. Ask Naomi if I ever broke a promise to her!”

“If you can believe anyone, Tamar, you can believe Lev. He is as good as his word.”

“Why would you care about me? I am a slave girl. Nobody ever did anything but hurt me.”

“Well I do, my child. I saw a brief history of your life and it’s my job to see to it that arrangements are made for people returning to

life. In your case, I knew you had been hurt very badly, so I wanted to be sure you would have the love of a mother until your own mother returns to life. You have been provided with every worldly comfort, but I knew that was not enough. I wanted you to be with someone who truly loves you. Naomi, I am sure, has been the right person for you.”

“She could not have been more kind or loving, *Señor Lev*.”

“Well, here we are,” Lev said as he landed on a pad outside the chapel.

“You know, Tamar, there is only one religion in the world today. There used to be many. Now is the time when only truth can be preached. There is no room for any teaching that is not true. So please listen carefully. We worship God because he is kind and good. All the blessings we have come from His generous hand. We must not fail to thank Him for his love and kindness.”

Lev introduced Tamar to Lazarus and Marino. She was beginning to feel that perhaps she could trust Lev, but she wasn’t sure she was ready to meet more men.

The Perfect Hostess

“Tamar has recently returned to life. After the service today, can we all get in my aircraft and go to your house for breakfast, Tamar?”

Her innate graciousness took over. “Of course! There is plenty of resurrection cake, too!”

Everyone enjoyed the services. Tamar had not heard such beautiful music and singing. After the service she said, “The music and singing were so beautiful I thought I was in heaven.”

“No, we didn’t make it to heaven, but God heard us singing His praise in heaven. I’m sure of that,” Naomi assured her, with an arm around the girl’s shoulders.

After introducing Tamar to many of the people, they got into the aircraft and returned to Tamar’s house.

Somehow, Tamar had forgotten her hurt and anger and turned into a gracious hostess. Suddenly, she felt like a princess at the ball.

Everything was aglow and now she was hosting some very charming company and enjoying every minute. Lev was never short of sincere compliments and a wealth of knowledge could be easily gleaned from his conversation. Despite his many achievements and successes, he never turned the conversation to himself, managing always to build up Tamar's self esteem and worth. His every thought was to glorify the Lord and to help those who crossed his path to glorify Him as well. Even Lazarus and Marino turned out to be very kind. They complimented Tamar on the lovely home she had and thanked her especially for sharing her resurrection cake.

The morning had been like a tonic for Tamar. She felt the warmth emanating from Lev and realized he sincerely cared for her as a person. Lev had offered to take the boys home so they could get back to their work more readily. He turned to Tamar and said, "Young lady, thank you for being such a charming hostess. If you need me for anything or any reason, call me or have Naomi call me. Here is my number," and he handed her his card. "I am here to serve. My happiness is in making you happy, Tamar."

Tamar did not see any reason why she would need Lev's help for anything, but she thanked him, not knowing that soon she would.

Tamar said with delight, "I did not know people like Lev existed in the world. He is so nice and kind. I felt safe in his presence. He was like a father to me just as you have been a mother, Ms. Naomi."

People You Can Trust—And Those You Can't

"You didn't believe me yesterday when I spoke to you about Lev, did you, Tamar? You thought he was going to be like those awful men you knew before. Now you know, my child, there are people you can trust completely and will never disappoint you, just as there are people who speak softly and sweetly to you, but they do not love you. You must be careful, Tamar. Although no one is permitted to cause harm, promise me you will tell me about the people who come into your life. You are too young and innocent to know the difference between the really good people and those who have not yet made much progress

in character growth. That is why I want to know everyone you keep company with, my child. That is what a mother does."

"Oh, don't worry about me. It's wonderful to have someone who cares for me. Thank you for being a mother to me, Ms. Naomi!"

Naomi spent the rest of the day helping Tamar to continue learning to read and write. She was hungry for knowledge, and Naomi had to pull her away to have meals. Naomi wanted her to study the Bible, but she could not read it easily yet. However, she needed to learn about the Lord and his ways. She had no religious training to speak of, and the people in her former business were not welcomed in any house of worship.

Before they went to bed that evening, Naomi called to her to come into her room. "I have something I want you to hear from the Word of God. Someday you will be able to read it easily yourself, but tonight I shall read it to you. 'Love suffers long, and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up. Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.'"

"*¡Que bonito!* I have never heard such beautiful words before. I must learn to read better. I want to believe in the world of love. It is beautiful! I still think I am dreaming. I will never forget this day. I flew like the angels and I heard music like the angels must sing in heaven. I was the hostess in my own home. Everybody was sweet and nice."

"My dear, this is the beginning of many happy days to come. But, remember, not everyone is like Lev. Many people are returning to life who bring evil with them. They have not all learned righteousness yet, so, Tamar, you must be careful about the company you keep. I know it all sounds unnecessary, but we love you too much to see you lose your way."

*“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof are the ways of death”
(Proverbs 16:25)*

Chapter Twelve

Tamar went to bed that night happier than she ever remembered. Finally, she was a person in her own right and had friends she could trust who were not seeking to harm her in any way. She wanted to forget all her tears, anguish, and pain from the past. As Tamar closed her eyes, she remembered Naomi reading about love. That was a whole new world to her, and she wanted to be part of it.

Tamar could not believe how suddenly she was secure. Still the darkness of the past would momentarily roll in over her, and she would become terrified that everything would be swept away, and she would be back in the gloom of the past. But these feelings were less frequent as time went by, although the past kept returning to haunt her.

The days passed while she steadily learned reading, writing and many other things. She knew she could learn easily now, and for the first time Tamar was stimulated mentally. She enjoyed the chapel meetings and was learning to interact with others. Everyone was kind to her and she got invitations to come to lunch from her friends.

One day, she met one of the young girls who had lived and been exploited in the same situation she had been. Silvia had recently returned to life. She was a beautiful girl but bitter and resentful because of her painful past. Tamar wanted to be a friend to Silvia and encourage her. She remembered how many nights she had cried herself to sleep and desired to help Silvia through the painful process.

They had both shared a sad past, but Silvia’s father who had sold her into slavery for money recently worked on building her home to

bring her back to life. He was no father to Silvia in the past and still was no father. She could not forgive him for what he had done, and he really didn't care. He was only passively interested in Silvia. He was more or less shamed into making preparations to bring her back, but he justified his past actions saying that Silvia had a better life than he could have provided for her. Devastated, Silvia could not accept his way of thinking.

Tamar invited Silvia to breakfast that morning, and she accepted because Tamar was the only person she recognized. She soon learned how bitter Silvia was. Nothing she could say seemed to lessen her hurt and anger. Naomi recognized this girl needed some strong arms around her. Silvia was angry and wanted to do something to make her anger felt.

As they had breakfast, Silvia seemed to have no interest in anything. All she wanted to talk about was the past. Naomi tried to reach her, but Silvia was locked in chambers of anger and resentment, unwilling to come out. Tamar offered to walk her home as a gesture of friendship, but she adamantly refused.

As she left, Naomi tried to put her arms around her to give her a gentle hug. She wanted to let Silvia know someone cared about her, but she turned away resisting Naomi's affection.

When she was gone, Naomi expressed her concern, "That young lady is not responding to love. She is full of hatred and anger. Little does she know how hurtful that is to her. You can call to her to show her the right way, Tamar, but do not share her anger in hopes of helping her. You must be very careful, Tamar, not to descend into her anger hoping that you can help her."

"Do not worry, Naomi. I felt the same the first few days. I am sure I can help her."

"Don't be too sure, my child. She seems consumed with anger, and that is dangerous. This is a whole new world with wonderful opportunities to learn and grow, to love and be loved, to build and to plant, to heal and be renewed, to reach out and to reach up. Anger is not interested in any of these things. It simply wants to brood and to

destroy, to hurt and reject healing. It will often seek pleasures for the moment built on risk and abandon, rather than an effort to repair and improve."

"I think you are making more of her anger than you need to, Naomi. Silvia will be better in a few days. I understand her and can help her; I've been there. She knows I shared a common experience with her, so I might reach her where others may not be able to."

"Silvia should be studying and learning and filling her mind with all the tools she will need to prosper in this time of regeneration."

"I am going to spend several days with her, so don't worry so much."

When Tamar arrived at Silvia's home, she found her sunbathing in her garden. Silvia didn't even rise to greet her.

Tamar said, "My, Sylvia, you are a lady of leisure."

Making Up for a Lost Life

"Well, I have decided I am going to live life to the fullest. None of this mad rush to learn and build for other people for me! I want something better after all that I've been through. I see all these people going to the chapel and then hurrying home to build or work in some factory. That's not what I want. I'm going to enjoy life. I'm glad you took a few days off. What will all that study get for you, Tamar? My guess is, more work. Why are you such a fool? You do not owe anybody anything."

"But, Silvia, I have always wanted to learn to read and write. I'm glad for this privilege. I used to look longingly at the children going to school. What's wrong with learning?"

"Well, I *did* know how to read and write; what good did it do? I was a slave just as you were. Tamar, when you learn to read and write, then they will start controlling your mind. They will have you programmed to do everything they want you to do. Instead of being a slave, you will be a robot. You suffered all of your past life, so now is the time to live and enjoy. Let them have their schedules, their never-ending tasks of building and planting. The dead are unconscious; they feel no pain, so

why be in a hurry to build for their return? They have slept in the grave until now, so why not leave them there a little longer? They won't know the difference, a year or ten years is all the same to them."

"I certainly didn't think of it that way. The dead know nothing and are not conscious of time. Whether they sleep in the grave for a year or a thousand is all the same. Perhaps you have a point, Silvia. Still, I am anxious to see my mother and father. I have longed to see them all my life."

"Not me. My mother died, I don't know how or why, and I don't care to know. My father sold me into slavery for some money, telling me I would be happier. He didn't love me—why should I love him? He doesn't deserve a thing from me. I hate him. All I can say about my mother is that she brought me into this unhappy world. I didn't ask her to do so, so why should I care about her?"

"Don't you want to meet your mother? She must have loved you and wanted to care for you—can she help it if she died? She did not want to leave you an orphan, Silvia."

"Maybe she did, and maybe she didn't; I have no idea and I don't care. All I know is that I'm not going to slave building homes for anyone. No one did a thing for me."

"That sounds heartless, Sylvia. I am sure your mother loved you. I can't wait to have both of my parents back. How can you be so uncaring?"

"Oh, I care a little for my mother, but as I said, she isn't hurting where she is, so why should I be in a hurry to get her back to remind her of all her pain and hardship? She's at peace where she is. Nobody is prodding her to do anything or be anything. Why not let her continue her rest, Tamar. As soon as she returns, they'll be trying to make her a saint or one of these do-good people. If I am anything like her, she isn't going to be interested in being a too-good person."

"Silvia! That is exactly the thinking that made the world we lived in so mean and evil—everyone thinking only of themselves. People loved ease and comfort and used other people to secure them. And we

were the slaves at the bottom, carrying everybody on our shoulders. You have to admit the present conditions have changed all that. Everyone is free and independent. Everyone is secure and provided for. Everyone shares the world and all of its assets equally. Has there ever been any government that is so just and fair?"

Taking it Easy...Just for a Time!

"Oh, Tamar, you're brainwashed already. Sure things are better. I know that. I don't want to return to the old ways we lived under. But my philosophy is, let those who were on top riding on everyone's shoulders do the work. Let them build the houses and plant the orchards. Let them be *our* slaves for a season, while we live graciously like they used to. Why not? They owe us something because they had pleasure at our expense."

"Well, perhaps for a little time."

"Now you are starting to think straight. We will not sin, Tamar. We will just take our ease for a time. What's the matter with that? For all that we have suffered, we deserve a brief vacation. There's such abundance for everyone now, it won't matter one bit. After we've had our rest and relaxation, then we can become workers like the rest."

"What you say makes sense, Silvia, but what are you going to do? Sit around and sunbathe? I enjoy learning. I used to feel like a small caged animal. Now my mind has started to soar, and I see a whole world of light and enchantment I never dreamed was there. I have learned much in a short time, and knowledge begins to accumulate and expand as you go. It is *very* exciting, and I would *not* like to stop learning. It has become a way of life for me and I *love* it."

"That's true, Tamar. But why be in a hurry about it? Don't we have forever? Little children needed play time and leisure to think and dream. We lost all of that when we were children."

"But won't we soon get tired of playing? You must have something planned that is more exciting than that."

“I certainly do. I have an aunt in Italy. She was never much of an aunt to me. She wouldn’t lift a finger when I needed her. But now she says she would like to see me and show me around what is left of the old Venice. We can use this as a reason to seek passage to Italy on one of those super jet planes. After a day or two with her, we can then excuse ourselves and explore on our own. The trees of life are abundant there, so even in the parks you can get everything you need to eat and people welcome strangers for the night. We’ll be safe because no one is allowed to harm anyone anymore. What do you think of that?”

“It sounds exciting, Silvia. However, I am sure that Naomi will not hear of it. She has cared for me as a mother. I really cannot take off and leave her. She is helping me to adjust in so many ways. She has helped me realize that all that I knew and concluded about people in my past is not true today, particularly regarding men. She introduced me to her friend Lev even when I told her I didn’t want to meet him and hated all men. I have even ridden in Lev’s aircraft and it was wonderful.”

“Who’s Lev?”

“He is the man in charge of developing what used to be the Sahara Desert. He arranges for people to have their homes built and then checks with the Ancients when it is time to have them return to life. I am supposed to start building for my mother’s return shortly, maybe in a month or so.”

“He’s not your father, is he?”

“No, of course not. He is such a wonderful person though. I really like him. He is nothing like the men I knew before.”

Making Up for a Lost Childhood

“Well, if he’s not your father, why should he care if you take a few weeks off to make up for your lost childhood? Even if our trip took longer, if he is so important he can find plenty of people to build that house for your mother.”

“How will I explain this to Naomi? She is so worried that I keep out of bad company. She will not let me go, I know that.”

“Well, don’t tell her. I have enough clothes for you. We can walk several miles to a small landing pad that brings in merchandise and takes people that need a lift to an airport where we can catch a larger plane to Venice, Italy. People have told me that they have gotten around this way. We’ll be telling the truth, because we will go see my aunt for a few days and then go on afterward. What do you say?”

“Oh, I have to tell Naomi. I can’t just leave her after all she has done for me.”

“You can call her from Italy and let this be a big surprise. Why should she mind? She can relax while you are gone. You can call her from Italy every few days so she’ll know you are all right. The pad is only about three miles from here. We can collect some fruit for our trip and pack a few things and be off to Venice by this afternoon.” Gradually, Silvia was eroding Tamar’s resolve.

“It sounds exciting, Silvia, and I *know* I would enjoy it. Isn’t this a little sudden? Why not do this a year from now, when we are both a little wiser and more educated? Remember, we lived very confined and controlled lives. We are ignorant in so many ways.”

“What’s the problem, Tamar? We are just going to look around at the big world that we never saw before. In Venice they have beautiful symphony music halls and art centers. They have museums and cultural centers that provide an education of the past. It’s a seaport city and has ships from all over the world. They have gondolas on the waterways. There’s a lot to see and there is no evil going on anywhere anymore. It’ll be fun—you deserve a good time. You know that.”

“*Bueno*,” Tamar relented. “I guess I can’t see any harm it will do. I will call Naomi from Venice and surprise her. Perhaps we should only stay for one week.”

“Look, if we are going to go, let’s have a few weeks out on the town. At last, we don’t belong to anybody. When we return you can go back to your studies.”

While Tamar picked some fresh fruit for their journey, Silvia packed the clothes they would need. Tamar felt a twinge of guilt, but

she reasoned that this would be an educational thing for her, and she needed to be out of a controlled environment. What could go wrong, anyway?

They checked and double-checked what they would need and then started walking toward the pad. They arrived in good time and talked to the people that came to unload and reload the aircraft.

“Do you think there will be room to catch a ride to the big airport this afternoon, so we can get a flight to Italy?”

Looking at the bill of lading, the pilot found the load was light and there would be room.

“Why would you want to leave this paradise to go to Italy? It is so beautiful here, and it’s getting more beautiful every day. I’ve been to Italy before. I lived there in my former life. I’ll take this blooming Sahara Paradise any day over Italy.”

“I have an aunt that wants to see me. I’m taking my friend with me so we can enjoy the trip together.”

“How long have you been returned to life, young lady?”

“Why do you ask?” Silvia responded.

“The Glory of Rome” – Written with Blood

“No offense, young lady. If you were my daughters, I wouldn’t let you go there. I don’t mean that it’s evil there now, but it has a long history of evil in the past. You just might be enchanted with the way they used to live in Rome. They’ll show you the ‘glory of Rome that was,’ but you’ll see the Coliseum where gladiators fought to the death to entertain people. That’s where men and women were also thrown to the lions and wild animals while the crowds watched them get torn to pieces. They have beautiful cathedrals, but they don’t tell you about the poor peasants that gave their lifeblood providing the money and means to build such palatial places. Italy has a lot of evil history. I hate many of the things that went on there. Rome once lived off of slaves and trafficked in slaves. I prefer this Sahara Paradise that doesn’t have such a mean and bloody history.”

Tamar’s eyes grew large. She realized that she was going to be enchanted by a place that was even crueler than her own past. She wished in her heart that she were back home with Naomi. She finally said, “Silvia, do you think we should go?”

“Ah, come on, Tamar. You’re a grown woman now. We won’t be thrown to the lions. That’s not permitted now. The whole world has a lot of evil history. We can’t leave this world to escape it.”

“I know that. But maybe we are leaving a place more beautiful than we can find in Italy.”

“Go ahead if you want to go home. I’m going to Venice. You’re being childish. This is your first chance to spread your wings and fly out of your cage, and you’re too frightened to do it.”

“I am not afraid. It is just that I have some misgivings. I should have called Naomi because I know when she finds out that I am gone, she will be greatly concerned. You know I never had anyone to be concerned about me before, and it is good to have someone who cares. It is the sweetest thing I have known since I have returned to life. Naomi is such a dear person.”

“Well, if she is so dear, why worry? She’ll want you to have a good time.”

The aircraft soon landed effortlessly on the pad. It was quickly unloaded and loaded.

The pilot required the girls to sign a register with their full names and purpose for their trip, the length of time for their visit, and probable date of return. “Otherwise I am not authorized to take anyone who is just going for a ride. Every aircraft will have the same requirements. This enables us to have a record of people so that no one is unaccounted for. You know the saying, ‘I am my brother’s keeper.’”

“Well, thanks for your concern.”

Looking over her statement, he said, “You must include the name of your aunt and her address and phone number as well.”

Silvia remembered the address of her aunt, but only vaguely remembered the phone number. She thought the number she gave was right, but was unsure on the last digit, so she guessed.

With that, the pilot checked his aircraft for the return flight. He loaded the last few items that needed to be taken and soon they were lifted vertically and headed for the Khartoum airport. Tamar felt a pang of regret, but it was too late to turn around. Maybe it would work out after all. She thought, if Lev knew she was trying to go to Italy, he would probably jump in his aircraft and meet her at the airport before she could board.

At the airport they learned there was a late afternoon flight. After filling out the log with all the pertinent information, they boarded with no one especially concerned. It seemed logical for a niece to visit her aunt.

Arriving in Rome

The flight was majestic as they arose high above the earth and traveled at great speed toward Rome. Within a short time they were in Rome. However, they learned there was no flight to Venice. The airport was open to anyone who wished to sleep there, and there was a list of people who lived near the airport that would open their homes to a passenger or two. They decided to call a lady to see if she could accommodate them for the night. She said, “Yes, give me your names. I have to record this as required and I will also need the entrance number of your airline.” After she did this she said, “I will drive up in a white car, so stand outside the entrance number you gave me. I will be looking for you.”

Things were going very well and already Tamar felt better about the trip. People were so nice and friendly, that she really could not believe a perfect stranger would leave her home to come and pick them up.

Soon the lady drove up in a hydrogen electric car. It was quiet and luxurious. Silvia poked her and whispered as they got in, “Now we’re living. See, I told you it would be great.”

The lady was a former nun, they learned, and she was a gracious and caring person.

“I am so glad you called. I would feel bad if you had to sleep in the airport. I know no one would hurt you, but still there are people who do not know the ways of the Lord, and they might encourage you into some revelry that would not become such lovely ladies as yourselves.”

They smiled at each other, thinking if this dear woman only knew the sordid life they had lived, she probably would not ask them into her house. However, they were tired and needed a place to sleep and be refreshed.

As they entered her home she said, “I apologize for not introducing myself. My name is Olivia. May I make some tea and share some cookies with you?”

Tamar said, “Thank you. My name is Tamar and this is Silvia, my friend. *Sí*, we would love some of that delicious tea. I do not know how we lived without it before.”

“Well, actually, we didn’t live. I am afraid we died back then didn’t we?” Olivia chuckled.

“True.”

“It is so wonderful that Christ died for us, giving us this abundant life. If you wish, before you catch your flight tomorrow, we have a lovely chapel where we praise our Savior. You are welcome to join us.”

Tamar was ready to say yes, but before she could get the words out, Silvia said, “Thank you that would be very nice, but we want to be at the airport early. If we have any extra time we will visit Rome for a few hours and then take off for Venice. We do, however, appreciate your kindness and generosity in providing for our comfort.”

As the tea’s aroma filled the room, Olivia soon announced the tea was ready. The table was well provided with fruit and cookies. After a short prayer, she invited them to partake. Tamar felt comfortable because Olivia reminded her of Naomi. She was so kind and gracious. In her former life she couldn’t remember anyone being like that.

They spent the evening learning of Olivia's interesting past. She soon asked them to tell about their experiences. They were both horrified. They dared not tell this fine lady their background. Silvia said, "I died of illness while very young as did my friend Tamar. We were both poor. Maybe we were spared a lot of sorrow by an early death."

"Oh, you poor dears. Yes, the world we lived in was full of sorrow. Perhaps you are very tired and would like to retire early. You will each have your own room and bath. I provide this little service as an extra way I can show my appreciation to the Lord for all his wonderful kindness and mercy to me. In the process I have entertained the great and the small, but I can't say I have yet entertained two young ladies such as you."

"Thank you. It is lovely to have a comfortable home to stay in. We shall be up early, and if you are busy we could walk back to the airport. It is only a short distance. We cannot lose our way, because we can see the aircraft rising from their pads. So if you wish to go to the chapel, feel free to do so. We will leave your home in good order."

"Oh, I shall take you back. I have time to do so, and that way you can save your energy for walking about Rome until your flight leaves."

The following morning they both were ready bright and early and after a lovely breakfast were taken to the airport. Olivia kissed them both as she said good-bye, and said, "If you need a room when you return, be sure to call me."

Tamar then said to Silvia, "You see how kind and caring people are. That is the way we should be. We cannot continue to be seeking constant pleasure. Naomi keeps telling me that when you give yourself to others, Christ will be pleased with you."

"Oh, please, Tamar, we have plenty of time to give ourselves to others. You're suffering from a swollen conscience. Remember, we have a right to some good times for a few days. Stop feeling guilty about it."

Checking on their flight they found it would be at two in the afternoon. Silvia said, "That's great. We have time to see Rome."

Things had gone so well that they strode around confidently seeing various sites. At the Coliseum, they viewed the aged structure with little shivers going up their spines thinking of the gladiators fighting to the death and of Christians being thrown in to be eaten by wild animals. It was sobering to realize that they were not the only ones to have suffered.

Free Passage to Trouble

Suddenly, a man and a woman seemed to appear out of nowhere. They asked if the girls needed a ride after they finished viewing the Coliseum.

Silvia, wanting to save time, immediately said, "Yes, could you take us to a museum? We can walk for it is not far from here."

"We would be glad to take you there. What are you doing in Rome?"

"I'm going to visit my aunt in Venice, and we are sight-seeing until our aircraft is ready."

"We happen to be driving to Venice; would you like to ride with us?"

Before Tamar could say, "no," Silvia accepted. "That would be perfect."

Tamar gave her a poke. She whispered, "We don't know these people, let's take the plane—that's safer and wiser."

"Oh, don't be silly. These people are going there anyway; why not catch a ride?"

"My name is Antonio Cardelichio, and this is my former wife, Rosie. This is a long drive, but it is beautiful and is well worth seeing."

"I am Silvia and this is Tamar. We will enjoy the ride, I am sure."

They started driving north from Rome, and Antonio kept looking in the rear view mirror. He turned off the main road and went through

some city streets still looking in the mirror. He began to speed up, turning corners faster and faster, and as Tamar looked out the back window, a car behind them kept following him. It seemed to have several men in it.

Tamar finally said, "I think that car behind you is following you, Antonio."

"Shut up kid. I know it's following us." Antonio was very brusque.

Silvia turned pale and became shaky. Tamar whispered, "We should have taken the aircraft."

"I didn't know this was going to happen."

"*¡Ay, Dios!* This man must have done some wrong; he may have some angry men following him. I only wish I had taken my phone along. I could call Lev and he would know what to do."

The car they were in raced down the road dodging other cars and driving dangerously, hoping to lose the car that pursued them. Finally, Antonio passed a car into a line of on-coming traffic. The car pursuing him was stuck behind a slow moving vehicle. Rounding a curve Antonio turned off on a little side road, hid the car behind some bushes, and ordered the girls out. He watched the traffic on the main highway and saw the car that pursued him finally get around the slow moving vehicle and race ahead.

Antonio ordered them all into the car again. Tamar said, "I think we would rather walk for a while."

"Don't be fresh, kid. We only picked you up hoping they would not recognize us with two girls in the back. We aren't going to Venice. We are heading back toward Rome and we'll unload you there. Just get in and don't make any waves. That isn't the only car looking for us. We still need you for a diversion."

Worried About Their Safety

"No one is permitted to hurt anyone, Sylvia. Why are you afraid?" Tamar whispered.

"These people just returned to life; they don't know that."

"Well, they'll find out very quickly if they try."

"Kid, I have a lot of people who hate me. I knocked off a lot of people in my former life. My men dropped a lot of people into the Tyrrhenian Sea, well anchored with stones. That is why those returning to life are now looking for me. I am really going to Fermo on the East coast of Italy. When I get on the highway going east, I'll drop you off. You can walk to the airport. There are several groups looking for me, so now they've got the word out that I have two young ladies with me and I won't. They will learn that my car was heading back toward Rome with two young ladies in the back seat. However, I'll fork off about five kilometers down the road. Tamar, you said you wanted to walk. Well, you will have your wish."

True to his word, Antonio took the first road going east and stopped the car yelling, "Get out, kids!" Rosie just stared ahead without saying a word.

The car sped off without anyone looking back. The two girls were pale and shaken but unharmed as they walked on wobbly feet toward the road to Rome. They had walked about two kilometers when a speeding car whizzed by and then stopped. They tried to run toward a house not far from the road, but two men jumped out of the car and confronted them.

"Which way did he go, that's all we want to know."

Both of them were speechless and frightened. Silvia stuttered, "They said they were going to Fermo on the east coast, but I don't believe anything they said. They did go east on that road a couple kilometers back. However, if they wanted to keep secret where they were going, they wouldn't have told us anything."

One of the men then said, "I'll have a car pick you up to take you wherever you want to go. You can wait here or walk toward Rome. They'll find you. We're not looking for you. So don't worry."

As they walked back toward Rome, a black car with two men inside coming from Rome slowed down and made a u-turn pulling up along side the girls.

“Can we give you a ride to Rome? We guarantee safe passage.”

The girls knew it was too late to catch their aircraft, but they were foot weary already and hesitatingly accepted the ride asking to be taken to the airport.

Although shaken and frightened, they were grateful to have gotten away from those deranged people. Things were not going so well and their plans were interrupted. They knew that no physical harm would come to them, but being caught between angry and frustrated former mobsters was very disturbing—especially when their desire for revenge was so out of control. But what would you expect from people who had been dropped into the sea, tied down with weights? There was seething anger, to be sure, that would risk death again just to even the score.

They didn’t want to call Olivia, because she had been kind enough to drop them off at the airport to make sure they had gotten on the plane. They would have to tell her of their foolish mistake, and they were too embarrassed. At the terminal, they checked to see if any flights could get them to Venice. They found one that would make one stop before Venice, but it would still get them in by early evening. Fortunately, they secured passage and breathed a sigh of relief to be back on track with their plans.

Arriving in Venice, they saw a good portion of the old city torn away because it was old and sinking into the canals. However, they found most people had been decentralized, living on small areas of land just like they had been. There were beautiful new houses and orchards, but still a few of the old structures that were in better repair stood with canals as their streets—charming to look at but most impractical to live in. No one lived there, but the city was kept as a touch of nostalgia from the past.

Silvia Remembers All but Last Digit

Silvia almost had the complete telephone number to her relative, but she lacked the last number. She figured that by dialing from 0 to 9 with a maximum of ten calls that she would reach her aunt. The plan

worked; after five calls she was connected to her aunt, who was quite shocked to hear from Silvia and learn she was in Venice. However, she told them to wait at the airport and she would pick them up.

Meanwhile, Naomi had been trying to contact Tamar without success. Tamar had been reasonably responsible about keeping her advised on her plans and whereabouts, but now she thought Tamar was being inconsiderate. She was surprised to get a call from Tamar late that evening.

“Where are you, Tamar? I have been trying to contact you all day.” Naomi’s voice expressed her worry and disappointment. “You were supposed to come home today. I was just ready to call Lev to tell him you had disappeared.”

“Oh, do not do that. I am fine. Silvia invited me to go to Venice to visit her aunt, and I decided to go along. We hope to be back in two weeks.”

“Venice! How could you go there without telling me? You were supposed to be studying to learn to build a home for your mother.”

“What if she sleeps in the grave an extra week or two, it won’t matter will it?”

Naomi was astounded. “What kind of talk is this, Tamar? You could hardly wait to see your mother and now a week or two delay in her return matters nothing to you? No, your mother won’t mind, that is true. But, you should be ashamed of your indifference to her return. What happened to make you block your mother out of your heart?”

“Oh, I just had a chance to spread my wings and fly away, so I did. What’s wrong with that? They do have music and art centers here and also a lot of charming historical sites. I will be exposed to the culture that I never had.”

“I have taken time from my schedule to be with you, Tamar. I’m going to leave. I am forced to call Lev and tell him what you have done.”

“Oh, please, do not leave. Please do not tell Lev. You are the only person I have. You have been like a mother to me. I will be back in two weeks.”

“Tamar, you cannot live on childish whims. This is a time when you need to learn discipline, responsibility and commitment. Getting your mother back a few weeks late is not an option. Someone else will build her house. That will mean a delay all along the line—your grandparents and great-grandparents. Don’t you understand? We have to learn to live for others. All the blessings that have come to you and countless millions are because people are working and sacrificing to make them possible. I am truly disappointed that you neglected your responsibilities for selfishness and good times. How could you be so inconsiderate?”

“Oh, you make it sound like I am irresponsible and ungrateful.” Tamar began to parrot Silvia’s words. “I was deprived and enslaved before, why shouldn’t I have some good times?” But after hearing herself, she reconsidered this attitude. “Please don’t leave, I did not reason things clearly when I agreed to this trip.”

“I do not have time to help you while you are seeking to have a good time over there. You were having the best time of your life right here and didn’t even know it. You were starting to be responsible and constructive; but now you are wasting opportunities to be a builder and planter for the Lord when you are needed. What is worse, you did not confer with me about anything. I was only a phone call away, yet you left without saying a word.”

“I know what I did was wrong and I apologize. I didn’t think I would lose you as a consequence. I really need you so I can become the sane and helpful person that I want to be. Will you tell Lev what I did?”

Knowing Your Friends

“Yes, of course! He will be calling and I will have to tell him what has happened. He will be very disappointed in you, even as I am. The secret to your success or failure is going to be for you to know how to choose your companions properly and make your own decisions correctly.”

“I am beginning to realize that right now. I haven’t had such a great time of it so far. I wish I were home.”

“Well, Tamar, what is keeping you from getting the first aircraft home? Just tell Silvia there is nothing in Venice that is not to be found back home. They are starting an orchestra that will practice and play in the chapel in the evenings. If you want to learn an instrument, you can. We learn very fast these days. Instead of sitting in the back, you will be on stage playing. Isn’t that better?”

“If you promise not to leave, I will come home, Naomi. Silvia will be angry with me, but I have had nothing but second thoughts since I agreed to go with her. I must be my own person. I miss my studies, and I like the idea of learning to play an instrument. It is beautiful here, but no more so than home. I am so sorry I disappointed you—please forgive me, Naomi. I will catch a flight home tomorrow if I can. Please don’t leave me.”

“You have my word. Are we agreed, my child?”

“Oh, *sí*. I will make the arrangements this evening. I do not know how to read well, so I am at a loss in the real world. People will help me find my way, I hope.”

“I will call Lev, and he will call the airport at Venice and at Rome to arrange for your flight home. When you get to Khartoum, call the number Lev gave to you, and he will pick you up personally at the airport. Shalom, Tamar.”

Silvia overheard some of the conversation, and she was furious. “You big baby! Why are you making arrangements to go home? You agreed to two weeks of vacation, and you are quitting in two days. Some friend you are! Go ahead and go home! I will have a good time by myself!”

“Well, I hope it is a better time than we had this morning. I told you we should have taken the aircraft instead of going with those dreadful people.”

Silvia’s aunt heard their conversation and became excited. “What is this? Who were you with this morning, Silvia?”

“We met a couple while at Rome who offered to befriend us. When we told them we were going to Venice by plane, they invited us to go with them by car. They said we would enjoy the scenery.”

“And you foolishly accepted? Going with perfect strangers? Thankfully, Christ does not permit harm to come to anyone today. Tell me, what happened?”

So Silvia detailed the events of the morning, while her aunt stared at her in shock.

“I don’t blame Tamar for wanting to go home. Some of these historic places have a lot of people who were formerly involved in evil coming back to life. It takes awhile to get these gangsters calmed down to be trustworthy citizens, especially after finding those who killed them. You should have known better, Sylvia.”

“How would we know? They seemed like very nice people. Then all of a sudden, they turned mean and nasty.”

“Well, I think Tamar is doing the right thing to go home, especially if she left without telling anyone. You didn’t even tell me you were coming. Luckily I was home. Silvia, you have to learn to be more responsible.”

“Well, where were you when I needed you?”

“Please don’t say that, my dear. I would gladly have taken you in if your father had told me what he was going to do with you. I was devastated when I learned what he had done. I tried to find you but couldn’t. I was furious with my brother when I could have provided you with a nice home, but you had disappeared. I didn’t even know when you died, and I only learned of this when I read your name on the list of those to be regenerated.”

Silvia’s eyes flooded with tears. “I didn’t know you cared about me. I thought everyone had forgotten me. I can never forgive my dad for what he did, but I am happy to know you did care for me. You can’t imagine how it feels to be betrayed by your father.”

“Well, my dear, I can’t undo the past, but let me make it up to you as best I can. Heaven knows how I searched to find you. I had

asked my brother to let you live with me, because I knew he was a totally irresponsible person. I even got him to agree to do that, but he must have sold you for money. I was horrified when I learned you were gone. Even then, he didn’t know where you would end up. It was a terrible thing he did. He disgraced our whole family by his conduct. We were a strong family. I don’t know why your dad got into gambling and drinking; and when your mother died, he just sold himself to the devil. You see, your father destroyed his own life and in the process condemned you to a life of degradation. It isn’t that you didn’t have anyone who cared for you and would gladly have provided you a home.”

*“He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and not despise their prayer”
(Psalms 102:17).*

Chapter Thirteen

Lev examined a list of those to be returned to life for whom provisions still needed to be made. The list mentioned those who had been nomads, mostly Arabs, who had lived as Bedouins following their flocks to pasturage wherever they could find it. Many of these later claimed to be Palestinians, but without sustenance for they had no real home, roving from one feeding place to another. They lived with their flocks and herds, and their dwellings were in tents that could be moved as the need arose.

These people lived simple lives without much structure or government. The wealthier sheiks and land barons had exploited them. Between the hardships of the wilderness and excessive interest extracted from them for feeding their flocks on the open territories, they existed in poverty with daily hardship.

Lev noted the especially tragic life of Alqar Taziz. He had a small family and tried to make a living in the harsh wilderness. An Arab land baron allowed him to live on his properties without telling him what he wanted in return. The poor man was later apprehended for not having paid the excessive interest levied against him. He was given one day to pay or be thrown into debtor's prison.

That night he tried to ride off and disappear into the desert, as most Bedouins were inclined to do, but he was apprehended and beaten so severely, that he died of his wounds. His family was taken into servitude and his flocks stolen. His wife had never been very healthy, and under the rigors of her servitude she soon fell seriously ill and died.

The children also perished under the harsh treatment they experienced. Life was cheap, and the land baron simply waited for the next Bedouin to happen along who wanted to graze a flock on his properties. If he did not escape before he was apprehended, he would share the same fate as Alqar and his family.

With great pleasure, Lev arranged for a home to be built. They would be awakened at the same time so that the whole family could experience life again under much happier conditions. They would be located not far from Khartoum in what was once a desert region. However, now it had become a paradise of trees with streams of water, all surveyed and planted with the trees of life. Lev was thrilled with the great number of volunteers who agreed to build homes for such families, even agreeing to live in tents while construction was under way. Actually, there were billions whose generations had been cut off when whole families perished. This would require the sacrifice of many people motivated solely by love for God and fellow man.

Alqar Taziz Returns

I stirred to life, screaming and thrashing, waiting for the rod to beat me again and again. I had begged for mercy and writhed where I lay, wondering if at last the beating was over.

I suddenly realized I was breathing easily and without pain. How strange! I clearly remembered the agony on my bloodied back and legs.

I dared not open my eyes for then they would know I was alive and would continue beating me. It was silent—I heard no angry voices and felt no more blows. It was so quiet I feared I may have expired and was in an afterlife of some sort. As I lay there, my back felt no pain and was not sticky with blood and welts. Strangely, I felt very good now, yet my memory registered pain.

I slowly opened my eyes, finding myself alone in a very beautiful room. Instead of the musty smell of the tent, there was the fragrance of flowers and sweet fresh air. This was getting more mysterious by the

minute. I looked out of large windows at the living green trees, grass, and bushes. Where was the dry and arid wilderness of Palestine?

I lay there afraid to move for fear that the wounds on my bloodied back would be disturbed. However, I felt a clean sheet under me and felt no welts or wounds. This was way too quiet to be an Arab residence. I easily slid out from between the sheets without even a sore muscle. I looked in a mirror and was amazed to see how beautiful and vigorous I looked. When I opened my mouth I saw gleaming white teeth, all straight and beautiful. How could this be? I had crooked teeth, at least those that remained. My face was without the moles and scars. I saw clothing nicely arranged—clean underwear, blue pants, and a crisp, plaid shirt—not my normal garb of a long, tattered, and dirty robe. I dressed as quietly as possible and then found a pair of shoes and socks that fit perfectly. These were more substantial than my threadbare sandals.

Perhaps I had been transferred to the palatial residence of some sheik. I might make my escape unseen. I looked out several of the windows, trying to decide which might be the back of the house. Perhaps no one would notice if I left quietly. If they caught me again, they would beat me even worse the second time. I stealthily opened the window. It made a little noise. I stopped. A guard might hear and rush in to prevent my escape. I held my breath and waited. No one seemed to notice, so I opened it a little more. One more movement and the window would be open enough for me to make my escape. I trembled thinking about what they might do to me if they caught me.

I got up the courage to push the window to its full width, but alas, this time it made a loud squeak. My heart sunk. I heard someone outside the door. I was about to lift my left foot out the window when I heard a woman's voice. It sounded just like my wife Tula. I froze. Was she being kept a prisoner here? How could I leave her? I pulled my leg back in and slipped to the door, slightly opening it a crack not wishing to arouse the guards. There was Tula, only more beautiful than I had ever remembered her.

A Cherished Reunion

“Oh my dear Alqar!” she cried loudly.

He held his hand over her lips trying to quiet her. He kissed her and whispered, “Thank Allah, you are alive and look so beautiful. Where are we, where are the children?”

“Come out of your room, husband. There is nothing to fear. This is our home. We are rich now and have abundant life. Come, let us eat breakfast together and I will tell you everything you want to know.”

“How can this beautiful house be ours? I could not pay even a small debt I owed and now suddenly you tell me we live in this beautiful palace? We were living in a tent. Am I mad, Tula? I feel so strange. Are you sure there are no guards waiting to beat me again?”

“You must not ask all these questions. Come and sit down. I have some freshly made tea for you, and you will eat a breakfast that even kings on their thrones have never eaten in their time.”

As they sat down, Alqar looked at the magnificent and bright kitchen area. Instead of sitting on rugs on the ground, there was a beautiful table and comfortable chairs. The aroma of tea filled the air, and the basket of fruit gave off a wonderful appetizing fragrance. As Arabs did not pray before meals, he quickly sipped the hot tea with obvious delight. Never had he tasted tea like this. Tula then gave him a choice fruit from the basket and invited him to eat. Never having seen anything like it, he stopped to look at it carefully trying to guess what it was, but he could not think of anything.

“What is this? It looks very good. How can we be swept from our wretched existence to this condition of wealth and health? Tell me, Tula, what does all this mean? I fear I am in a dream—if I close my eyes it will disappear.”

“My dear Alqar, I do not know how to tell you this, but you died from the beating. Our two children and I were taken as servants and were made slaves. If we did not please our owners, they beat us. The children were not used to such treatment and languished from their

frequent beatings. Life was cruel. First our son Abib fell ill. They wanted him to work when he was too ill to work, so they beat him. He soon died. It broke my heart. I lost you and then our son. I only lived for our daughter, Elitha. We were both heartbroken and sad. Our masters did not allow us rest. They would call us day or night to minister to their comforts. Soon Elitha fell ill. She was still a child and could not endure the hardships. I begged the mistress of the house to show mercy to the child, but she was without compassion. She did not want to lose her services, so she did let her off from her duties hoping she would recover, but Elitha lost the will to live and died.”

Poor Alqar. As he listened, tears ran down his cheeks. “I am afraid we were born to know suffering and shame. Tell me, then, how did you fare?”

“Not well. The mistress thought that her husband might have designs of adding me to his wives. I was determined to die rather than accept such a thing. I hated this man for killing you and our two children. I could never be his wife. I decided to run away. But where would I go and how would I get there? I was never good at finding my way and was afraid of getting lost in the desert.”

“Oh, my dear Tula, I hope you did not try to travel through the wilderness alone. You would surely perish. It is a very unforgiving area. If you do not know the places where water is found, you cannot survive.”

“I decided to get to a road that would take me to Jerusalem. I knew the general direction, so one night I took a water bag and stole away. God was gracious, and I finally came to a road that was frequented with camel caravans and donkeys and sometimes people just walking. I was a lone woman and was very frightened. However, in one of the caravans that passed by there was a kindly woman. Seeing my plight, she asked her husband to let me ride on a camel. He asked if I would care to join his caravan going to Jerusalem. I was so weary that I thanked him and was soon seated on this noble beast of the wilderness.”

“Did they treat you kindly?”

“Yes, there is such a difference in people. Why is it that some are so kind and good while others are so ruthless and mean? They fed me and gave me water. They had a place where I could stay if I needed one. They suspected that I was a runaway servant, but they understood that I must have been running from some intolerable situation. When I explained how I lost you and our children they were terribly sorry for my misfortune. They even helped me find employment at a rich merchant’s home. He needed someone to wash, sew and clean and do some cooking. I got a place to stay and my meals plus a small amount of money. I was so happy that God had been merciful to me.”

“May Allah be praised!”

“Soon, however, I became very ill. It must have been some kind of plague. Everyone was afraid to be around me, and I was taken with fever. I remember how hard it was to breathe and soon I began to lose consciousness. I roused once or twice and that is all I remember. In God’s mercy, I followed you and our children into the sleep of death.

“I remember returning to life in this very building a month ago. I experienced the same feelings you are now having. I found myself in a different world. Here there are no masters and no slaves. There are no rich or poor, no great or small. Every man, woman and child are now treated as Christ desires they should be treated—with dignity and respect. Also, there is no poverty. This beautiful house is ours, my dear Alqar. Soon we shall have our two children with us again.”

Has Tula Left the Faith?

Alqar was pleased with most of what he was hearing, but he felt that Tula was talking like a Christian, speaking of Christ and God. This distressed him. He gently chided her for speaking of God instead of Allah. He said, “This is a happy moment for both of us, but do not spoil it by speaking of God and Christ. We must worship Allah and no other God.”

“My dear Alqar, there is only one religion now. It is Christ that rules this world, and it is he who has given both of us life. Make no

mistake, Christ is in charge of this world now, and soon every knee will bow and confess that he is earth’s ruler. No longer is any religion acceptable. Only the truth is taught and only the truth must be believed. The Ancients who represent Christ told us that you would come to life today, and here you are. We have been promised our two children as soon as we learn enough about this world to be good parents to them.”

Alqar was too happy to be angry about what he was hearing. He was so bent on learning about what happened to his little family that he had not tasted the fruit or the tea. Tula replaced his cool cup of tea with a hot cup and invited him to drink it. It smelled so good—when he sipped it, his eyes lit up. “This is the best tea I have ever tasted.”

She gave him a strange but delicious piece of fruit, one he had never seen before. It did look appetizing, but he hesitated to try it. Finally at her urging, Alqar tasted the fruit that delighted every taste bud in his mouth. He feared that it was too good to not be expensive.

“Did you spend all your savings to buy fruit such as this? We cannot afford to eat this well. I must say it is delicious beyond my ability to describe, but you know we are poor people, Tula.”

“Husband, you are now rich. This is our home. See that orchard? That is where this fruit is grown. It is our property. This fruit will feed you forever. You will never die as long as you obey our new King Jesus. See that sheep that has wandered onto our land? He is free to roam. We do not eat meat anymore. We only eat fruit and vegetables like our first parents did in the Garden of Eden. That is where these fruit trees are from. I know it all sounds like a fable, but it is true. You are poor no longer. No one has more than you, because you have everything you need. Our children will have as much as we do. All people are equal in their possessions.”

“Then this must be heaven, but I did not know sheep were there, nor that we would need houses such as this. I am so confused. This must all be a dream. I was so poor that my life was beaten out of me for lack of money. That is all I remember. How could I then awaken rich? If they beat me for what I did not have, will they not surely kill

me for what I do have? Who will protect us from Sultan Jamal this time? He will surely be here to possess our home and orchard. He is a mean and greedy man.”

“I thought the same thing when I awakened. However, Christ rules this world in righteousness. No one can steal, no one can take what has not been given to him and no one may hurt another. Should Sultan Jamal lift his hand to beat you, he would be stopped before he could do you harm. You must believe that you are under the rule of Christ, and absolute righteousness reigns now. Have some more fruit. Would you like another cup of this tea?”

“Yes, please. Never have I eaten like this before.”

“You are eating from the table Christ has given you, just be thankful.”

Why This Strange Clothing?

“Why have you given me these strange clothes? Why have you forsaken the Moslem way of dress?”

“We dress this way now, because we no longer live in a dry arid land. Everything outside of this window looks green. When did you see this before? It no longer gets so hot and dry. We have lovely breezes blowing and it rains regularly, mostly at night. There is a stream running through our property. It forms a little pool with many fish swimming there. We do not eat them because our food is so satisfying we have little appetite for anything else. Come with me and I will show you our house and all your beautiful property.”

Tula then took Alqar through the house showing him all its rooms. He was stunned by its beauty and amazed and frightened by the electricity that seemed like magic as ceiling panel lights lit up each room. The bathrooms especially astonished him.

“You know, now you have to bathe every day. There is plenty of water so everyone must be clean.”

She showed him the washing machine that had other clothes ready to wash, and she showed him how everything worked automatically—just by pushing buttons.

“This machine washes the clothes and then dries them, so you wash your clothes every day now. Never has life been so easy. I do not have to carry water anymore. Just open the faucet and out comes cold water or, if you want, out comes hot water. When I told you that you were rich, you did not know how rich. You still do not know how rich until I show you everything.”

Tula gradually showed Alqar the many features of both the house and orchard, while he followed wide-eyed in unbelief. Having lived in arid lands, depending on sheep and goats to find enough food so that they could then eat the flocks and their milk and cheese, they were barely sustained. Everywhere Alqar looked was abundance, yes, super abundance. Repeatedly, he feared this was a dream from which he would awaken and find himself back in some tent that Sultan Jamal had thrown him in to die.

Alqar felt so good, so full of life, and yet dark fears surged through his mind. Somewhere there was a time lapse for which he could not account; a great unknown that he tried to grasp, but it was just beyond him.

He turned to Tula, “This is all so wonderful, but still I am deeply troubled. I should be happy, but there is something missing. How am I alive? How am I healed without any scars, and with all my teeth and hair? I am taller and stronger and look ten years younger. Nothing makes sense. I must be mad or this is a dream. Do not leave me, Tula. I fear to close my eyes believing that when I open them you will be gone and so will everything you have shown me. I have a feeling of frustration—there is a big blank place that I cannot piece together in my mind.”

“Everyone has the same trouble when they are raised from the dead, husband. That blank place is the time you lay asleep in death. I had the same feelings, and it distressed me just as it does you. Your mind senses the time-lapse brought about by death. The new conditions, even though they are wonderful, are still more than you can comprehend. It will get better each day. You must accept the fact that you died, and that now Christ has raised you to life again. It seems

so impossible that one has trouble accepting it, but the reality is that you are here, my dear Alqar, and I will not be leaving you.”

She felt it would be wiser not to show him the television and Internet yet. Being brought from darkness and poverty into light and plenty was too much for one day. Alqar wanted to know when and how their children would return. As impossible as it was, Tula tried to explain how the regeneration was ongoing. She showed him a house in the distance that was going up and said, “Normally, every adult must have a home built and an orchard bearing fruit in order for anyone to return. However, with children, they will live with us in this home until they are raised. Then we will help them build their own homes and will also build homes for ourselves. The process goes on continually until every person is returned to life.”

“How will the world hold all the people?”

The Deserts Are Blossoming

“I do not know that but remember the wilderness places? These were known as the Sinai Peninsula and the Sahara. All of these places are blooming with grass and trees, running streams and rivers. We are living on the edge of what used to be the Sahara Desert. You can see what a paradise it is now. If we had land like this before, we would have lived much better. We could have built a house and lived from the good earth. We would have even had enough grass for our sheep. But the way we had to live, we had to keep moving from place to place to find forage for our flocks. Because we were poor, it was easy for the rich to steal from us by demanding outrageous interest. We had no protection. The marauders of the wilderness and the cruelty of the rich left us clinging desperately to life.”

“Well, if the Sahara and the Sinai are as green as here, there will be ample room for everyone. I guess the biggest problem will be that the murderers, thieves, malicious and cruel people will also be back. What would we do if Sultan Jamal came back? How would we be protected from his cruelty? Are there enough soldiers in the world to make the wicked righteous?”

“Yes, Christ reigns with infinite power. He will not make the wicked righteous by force, but he will work to take away the ‘hearts of stone’ and give people a ‘heart of flesh.’ Under his rule the people will learn righteousness. Let us not concern ourselves with how Christ will accomplish all of this. If he can raise us from the grave, he can do exceedingly more than we will ever imagine.”

“Yes, Tula, you speak wisely. What must we do to have our children returned? I shall be willing to work day and night to have them back again. How little our lives counted. Whether we lived or died meant nothing to others. There were no laws to protect us; no one dared lift a hand in our defense. Apparently this Christ has been aware, and now he was moved to save us. I do not know what happened to our religion, but if Christ has done this for us, I will gladly worship him.”

“I hesitated to tell you, Alqar, but Sultan Jamal is to return to life shortly. I have met some of his children in this area, and he is scheduled to return next month. His children are building him a home several miles from here. Do not fret about this, because he will not be richer or stronger than we. He was murdered when he tried to do the same thing to another man as he did to you. The man was very strong, and he knocked down Sultan Jamal’s guards and then strangled him and fled. Sultan Jamal died in his own evil deeds. He paid for his evil deeds with his own life.”

Tula could see her husband’s eyes flash with anger upon learning that Sultan Jamal was returning back to life. Even worse that he would be in their vicinity. Alqar asked, “Why must we share these rich blessings with a murderer? I hate him mostly for what pain he caused you and our children. If I had lived to protect you, I am sure you would have had a better life. When he destroyed my life, he also destroyed the life of my family.”

“You must remember that while your life was taken from you, it was given back to you with riches and honor added. Christ will take care of all the vengeance, because vengeance belongs to him. Sultan Jamal will return with reminders of his cruelty. All those that he hurt will be back to face him. There will be nowhere for him to hide, no

way to justify his brutality and oppression. He must face the fact that he was a murderer and admit his sins publicly before the world. This will not be easy, for he was a proud and arrogant man. Yet, Christ died for the just and the unjust so all will come back to life, but only those who learn righteousness will live beyond the time of Christ's reign. Those who do not learn righteousness will be destroyed from among the people."

Was Christ Responsible for the Christian Crusades?

Alqar's head was spinning from all he had been exposed to in a few short hours. He felt he could only focus on the immediate.

"We must concentrate on getting our children back. That will make me happy again. This is hard to believe, but I heard a Christian say once that Jesus did raise the dead while he was here on earth. That was difficult enough to believe then, but now you tell me he is going to raise all the dead. How great must be his power!

"However, I did not believe the Christians then, because I was told of the terrible Christian Crusades when they killed and ravaged our people. I am told that the streets of Jerusalem ran red with blood. I cannot understand this. How could Christ be so ruthless then and so kind now? Has he changed his heart? Religion has been so confusing. I was a Muslim only because it was all I knew. I saw what our supposedly holy men did and I did not like them. Those religious leaders wanted money and more money. We were so poor, yet they always wanted more from us. They promised us a wonderful afterlife, but they took our money and lived very well. Now I know they lied. When we died, we went nowhere but into the grave."

Tula's almond eyes were gentle as she looked upon the face of her loved one. "Money is not used anymore, Alqar. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. What makes wealth is the resources of the earth itself and work—both mental and physical work. In the old world, oddly enough, those who did not work usually were the richest. Now you cannot buy another person's services. People work out of love for others and expect no other reward than a sincere expression

of gratitude. None of the world's wealth goes into war and destruction anymore. Everyone is building, planting, and creating the necessities of life. Consequently, the world is becoming richer, better, and happier each day."

Alqar's mind kept returning to the same subject. "Have you any knowledge as to when our children shall return, Tula?"

"Well, tomorrow a man by the name of Lev Aron is coming to visit us. He is one of the people who learns from the Ancients ruling in Jerusalem when people are scheduled to return, and then he makes sure that everything is ready. When all provisions have been properly made, they set a date for their return."

"What kind of a man is he?"

"I have never met him, but those who have say he is the kindest and gentlest of men. He loves people and has been working to serve the King since he returned to life. He hates all evil and will not tolerate even the slightest wrongdoing.

"By telephone he told me he was coming personally because he read of our tragic experiences as a family, and he wanted to assure us that nothing like this would ever happen again. He told me that if we obey the rules of love that glory and honor and blessing would be ours every day of our lives."

Learning in a New World

"What is a telephone?" Alqar was distracted by her reference.

"Oh, my dear, I have not shown you all the wonderful things we have in this home. See this little thing I am holding in my hand? I can talk to anyone in this whole wide world on it. You do not even have to know how to read or write. You use the numbers on this telephone. It will ring when someone wants to speak to you. You just pick it up and say, 'Shalom.'"

"I cannot believe this. How can this be?"

"I will show you how to use it. I will call the neighbor in the house you see down the road. They are a family just like we, who suffered

in life before but are now rejoicing. They just had their small son brought to life a few days ago. I will dial these numbers for that is their identification, just as this is our phone number. There, hear it ringing?" Soon a voice was heard, "Shalom, what a glorious day. Who is calling?"

"This is Tula, your neighbor, and I want you to greet my dear husband who has returned to life."

Handing the phone to Alqar, he said, "Shalom, this is Alqar, and I cannot believe that I can speak to you from this talking thing. Do you hear me?" he said loudly.

"Oh, dear neighbor, you do not have to speak loudly. Just speak in your normal voice, and I will hear you better."

"I am not used to speaking like this, so please forgive me. I have just returned to life and am in a dream world. I am not dreaming, am I?"

"We all felt that way when we returned, but you will soon find it is not a dream but something wonderful Christ has done for us. When you get settled into your new life come over to my home and we will get acquainted. I understand we will be neighbors for a long time."

"Thank you, we will do that shortly. Shalom."

Lev arrived the following morning. Alqar could see the aircraft land gently on the pad. Lev quickly greeted Alqar and Tula with his genuine smile and warm affection.

"Welcome back to life, Alqar. Have you found everything to your liking?"

"Oh, sir, I cannot believe the difference between life now and as it was before. I am now rich and independent. I seem to be secure and that evil Sultan Jamal no longer has power to beat me and make me work as a slave."

Tula offered Lev a mix of many juices that was absolutely delicious, and Lev thanked her.

Lev said, "I came early enough so that we could all go to the chapel. You know there are no more mosques or churches or temples of any

kind any more. The Lord God is our temple now, and the Lamb is our light. Chapels are just simply buildings, not built as monuments to God, but rather just a place where we go to sing praises to God and to hear his Word. I am going, and if it pleases you, why don't you come with me. It is a new chapel, but its membership is growing rapidly. You used to praise Allah when you had such a poor existence, now you may praise him as God and also praise God's dear Son, Christ. Will you come?"

"Yes, we will. Let us put on clothes that are proper for worship. It will only take a minute. How far is it to walk?"

"Less than two miles, but we will take my aircraft because of the time."

Tula and Alqar Take Wings

Soon they were climbing into the strange craft, and Lev closed the doors. With everyone secured, Lev started the power source, and the aircraft rose quietly into the air. Tula and Alqar were both wide-eyed and nervous as they rose higher and higher and moved in the direction of the chapel. They easily descended directly onto one of many pads.

"Did you enjoy the ride?" Lev inquired.

"It is like magic. We were nervous but knew you would not hurt us."

"One day you will have a flying machine like this. Gradually, we will make fewer cars and more aircraft for private use. That way we do not need to build so many roads."

The music began as the worshipers started to take their seats. Many worshipers noticed Lev, and they smiled and waved to him. He was becoming something of a celebrity, because he notified many people when their loved ones would return.

Alqar and Tula could not read the hymnbook, but they seemed to enjoy the singing immensely. They listened very carefully to the chaplain's message. The message that day was from Mark's Gospel, and the lessons being taught were clear and impressive. As the pastor spoke, Lev noticed that Alqar and Tula both smiled at each other and

nodded as points were made. They had never heard such clear teaching being presented with such love.

After the service, many came up to Lev and he introduced his two guests. Because he had been alive for a number of years and was so close to perfection, he had total recall and knew the names of each person. He made Alqar and Tula feel like royalty while he introduced them and told of their sad background.

Lev then said, “Now, no one will feel the whip on their backs or have mean masters squeezing labor and life from them. It will be glory and honor and blessing for everyone who works for righteousness from now on. This is a new day and a new beginning for us. Christ is the King of righteousness now and forever.”

That drew applause from the circle gathered round. The chaplain came up in time to hear his words and said loudly, “Amen.”

*“Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
death shall feed on them;
And the upright shall have dominion over them
in the morning”
(Psalms 49:14).*

Chapter Fourteen

Sultan Jamal had died being strangled by the very one he wished to humiliate and beat without mercy. None of his large family really cared for him or truly loved him. He had been vicious and vindictive toward all his children and his wives, so his return to life was without the attendant joy of his family.

His first thoughts were anger and revenge at the wretched creature that had overpowered his guards and managed to strangle him and escape. He ranted and raved uncontrollably. If his guards had been present, he surely would have tried to beat them. His language was vitriolic. He had hired guards to protect him and both failed miserably. He was almost uncontrollable as he fussed and fumed at the turn of events that let him fall before that evil tyrant.

One by one his children left the room to sit in the garden and not have to listen to his incessant raving. The Sultan did not know that he was being given time to get adjusted to this new life, and that if he did not come to grips with his own sins and wickedness, he would be taking a pathway that would bring harsh personal punishment.

One of his former wives, his favorite, Ansa, tried to soothe his anger by inviting him to have breakfast. “*Sabah al kair*,” she greeted him. The aroma of the tea was new to him and awakened his desire for the fragrant drink. As Muslims never offered thanks to Allah before meals, he quickly gulped the tea with enormous satisfaction.

“This is good.”

Never one to be kind or gracious, he angrily demanded to know where his normal breakfast was. With his short temper, he was about to throw the basket of fruit on the floor, but his curiosity exceeded his anger.

“Where did this come from? I have never seen such fruit before. Why am I not being cared for as I am accustomed to?”

Ansa said patiently, “We do not eat as we once did.”

“Well, that is all going to change. I am the Sultan Jamal. I do not like change.”

“Did you like this new tea?”

“Yes, it’s very good. But that was just tea, not food. Now make my breakfast.”

“We do not have anything to make such meals. We no longer eat meat or make bread as we used to.”

The Sultan became agitated and was about to rail at Ansa, when the delicious smell of the fragrant fruit awakened his senses.

“You make breakfast while I eat some fruit.”

Ansa stood quietly behind him.

He bit into the luscious fruit and his eyes widened. He almost forgot his anger, as he ravenously took bite after bite with juice running down his chin. Soon he had eaten his second and third piece of fruit without saying a word.

In a somewhat subdued voice he said, “Never mind about my breakfast. This fruit is the best I have ever eaten, so I am done. Where did this fruit come from?”

Explaining the New Diet

Ansa quietly explained that it was the fruit of paradise. Not wishing to go into detail, she said, “We had the seeds from the trees of paradise returned to us, and we now eat from these trees. Not only is it delicious and satisfying, but also this fruit restores the body to vigorous health. It grows in your own orchard, as I shall soon show you.”

After another cup of tea he asked, “Where does this come from?”

“It comes from the leaves of the trees of life that are in your orchard. It is a healing tea as well. Given to sick patients, they are quickly healed.”

The Sultan looked around the room and snarled, “What happened to my palace? Why am I here? This house is too small for me and my family.”

“Your family is all grown and each has a home of their own. You will be living here by yourself. Your old home has been torn down, and you are now living on the outskirts of the Sahara Desert. The rains have transformed this land into a Sahara Paradise.”

Again he noticed something that displeased him. “Why have you given me this ridiculous clothing and why are you dressed like a Western woman?”

“We dress as we do because we are not living in hot dry conditions. There is sufficient moisture in the air and all the plants give off oxygen. We are living in a new environment for which our clothing is suitable. You will appreciate that when you go outside.” Ansa spoke slowly as if to a small child.

“What is this about me living by myself? You are my wife, my favorite wife. I have four wives, and I demand that they live here with me.”

“Do not be troubled. Marriage was until death.” Ansa’s voice was smooth as a balm. “We both have died, and therefore, we are no longer man and wife. You will have to serve yourself from now on. I am only here out of courtesy so that someone you know is with you. Your other former wives are so glad to be free of you that they chose not to be here. Even your sons and daughters are out on the lawn, not wishing to hear your terrible outbursts.”

He either ignored the fact that marriage had ended or had not digested it. “What is this about being dead? I am quite alive! Are you altogether mad?”

“You were strangled to death. We buried you in the family burial grounds. Ask all your children, and they will tell you the same thing.”

“Then how do you explain my being here? Did I not eat and drink in your presence? Except for these foolish clothes, I am the same Sultan Jamal.”

Some Regeneration Changes Are Noticed

“Not exactly. Did you notice that you have a full mouth of straight beautiful teeth? Your former teeth were dark and rotted with many missing. Can you explain that?”

“Ah, that is true; I have a handsome smile now.”

“And your scar?”

He put his hand to his face and opened his eyes in amazement when he felt the smoothness of his cheek. “The scar I had on my face is gone and so is the mole on my left cheek! How do you explain this?”

“As I said, you have died and have been brought to life again through the power of Christ. Though you were not a Christian, he has kindly overlooked all this and given you life again.”

Carefully choosing her words, the exotic woman added, “We were told to caution you on your return to life to change your manner of dealing with people, for you now have absolutely no power or control over anyone. Your biggest problem will be to control your fits of rage and your conduct. You will not be permitted to hurt people as you once did. All those you injured, if they are not already returned to life, will soon be back and you must seek forgiveness from them. I know this all sounds outrageous to you, for you are a proud man, but only pain and punishment await you if you continue as you were.”

“I am the Sultan Jamal,” he said, rage infusing deep color into his face, “and I will not be spoken to as you have done. If everything were not so strange to me, I might have punished you for your insolence. Take care, woman, that you do not incur my wrath.”

“I caution you that any attempt to use violence will be immediately punished. Your arm will become paralyzed if you lift it to strike

someone. The day of your temper fits is past. I know you are not accustomed to this new rule of righteousness, but if you do not let reason control you, the power of Christ will take over and severely deal with insubordination to his rule.” Ansa demonstrated enormous patience with his unreasonableness.

“Enough of this foolish talk, Wife. Where are my children? Why are they not seated with me? I am their father, and they owe me their full attention.”

“Let us go out to them, and if you control your temper, they may stay to listen to you. They are all now grown, and they will not stand for your tirades anymore.”

“Have they no respect for their father?” Nothing was as it should be.

“They have come to honor your return to life. However, they remember your anger and outbursts of cruelty and have chosen not to strengthen your weakness by allowing you to demean them any longer.”

Sultan Jamal seethed. He was not accustomed to being reprovved, and he did not like it. His own children were not respectful of him and his wife was insolent. He managed to avoid physical rage, but inwardly he was boiling. His children were grown and sat out on the lawn laughing and talking to one another. They seemed happy and looked strong and beautiful. The last he remembered he was a powerful figure. Men feared him and children obeyed him. His wives all submitted to his authority without question. How could all this change? Was he not still the powerful Sultan Jamal? He felt an odd sense of isolation. How much better it was when men feared him and people cowered before him. He wanted to strike someone, but if his power was gone he might come out weaker in appearance. He brooded over his misfortune.

At least this house and property was his. It was, indeed, beautiful but not as large and pretentious as his former palace. “What has become of my estate? I must go and reclaim it.”

“You must be thankful for what Christ has given you. You have done nothing to earn it. It was given to you by grace.”

Who Has Taken My Palace?

“Dear Allah!” He screamed in exasperation. “Who has taken my palace and only given me this small house? Woman! I owned large flocks and herds and huge holdings of land. My house was the pride of the whole area. Who has taken all this? I demand it back.”

“Your house has been removed. It was old and falling apart. The lands you had gotten by robbery have all been taken and distributed to new owners, and new homes such as yours have been built upon them. Now righteousness rules and no one has ill-gotten gain; say nothing of your former estate, because you then might be forced to explain how you came to possess it.” Ansa warned.

“Shut your mouth, Woman. You have become insolent. This is a very sad day for me. I have lost my property; my children speak to one another, but not to me. When I lament my loss, you tell me I should be quiet.” His voice rose in pitch and in volume. “My last thoughts were of an unhappy realization that a miserable worm of a nomad was strangling me. If I find that wretch, I shall have him skinned alive. How can this all be? Yesterday I was rich and powerful; today I have neither riches nor power. I cannot allow this.”

“Yesterday, you enjoyed ill-gotten gain. You abused your wives and your children, as well as your servants. If that was the source of your happiness then you shall indeed be miserable today. You may not harm another person ever again.” Her tone became softer. “You have never known the joy of loving other people. That is the greatest joy there is. If you do not learn to love God and all your brothers and sisters, you will have a miserable existence until you are removed from this earth again, only then it would be forever.”

The pathetic man rose angrily from the table to strike his insolent wife. She needed to learn to hold her tongue. As he lifted his hand, a sudden pain was felt in his right arm and it hung limply by his side.

He was unable to move it. He turned pale and cried out, “My arm is paralyzed. See what you have done to me?”

Ansa shook her head sadly. “I told you your power over others is gone forever. You will never strike another person again. You are being punished for trying to strike me. I only told you the truth. Truth is the only language allowed. If you speak a lie, your voice will be taken. This should have been a happy day for you to find yourself alive and healed of your many infirmities. You should be happy to have a lovely family. Your meanness has driven them from you and you are driving me from you as well. I do not need to abide your insults and abuse either.”

Their eldest son, Ali, came rushing in. He had seen his father rise from the table to strike his mother and said, “Father, see what you have done to yourself. You try to hurt my mother and now it is you who have a lifeless arm by your side. Why are you so consumed with anger? Father, we are living in a righteous and loving world now.”

“Is this love? See my arm hanging by my side? You sound like your mother, lecturing me. Go ahead and leave me, you unworthy children.”

Ali was a handsome young man whose olive skin glowed and whose dark, curly hair caught glints of light. “Stop feeling sorry for yourself, Father. You have your children, you have this beautiful house, and food that would delight the angels, yet you manage to be miserable and want to make everyone else miserable. We have never been so happy before. Even mother sings and rejoices in her lovely home. I have never known her to be so happy.”

Has My Wife Her Own Home?

“What! You mean your mother has her own home? She does not live here with me?”

Turning to Ansa he said, “You mean you have left me? Is this the thanks I get for showing you special favor?”

Everything was going wrong for him today. His old habits and ways did not prepare him for this hour. He fell back into his chair,

exclaiming, “Dear Allah, why have I been brought back to life? It was better being dead.”

Ansa sighed. “You will have your arm restored to health, but you must call the Ancients. You must be careful to explain exactly what happened. You must tell the truth, explain that you were angry with me and wished to strike me. If you do not tell the truth they will know it, for Christ knows all things and they will check with him. You will be healed within the hour if you tell the whole truth. However, if you try to justify your actions, you will have that sad arm hanging by your side for a week or two. I will call them on the telephone, and when I reach them, you will speak to whomever you are connected. Be brief, be respectful, and above all be truthful.”

She handed him a telephone. He did not know whom these Ancients were, nor what this device was that she put to his ear, but she held it so he could listen and speak. He soon heard a voice say, “Shalom, this is Barak, and what is the nature of your request?”

“My name is Sultan Jamal, and I need the use of my arm.”

“What did you try to do, Jamal?”

“I tried to strike my insolent wife.”

“You no longer have a wife, and if you did, you have no right to strike her or anyone else. Do you understand that?”

“I do not understand very much. Yesterday, I was a man of power and influence, and today I seem to be detested. This woman showed me no respect, so I tried to discipline her and this happened to me.”

“It seems to me that you are feeling sorry that you cannot abuse other people. Is that your complaint?”

By the tone used, he realized he was speaking to someone in great power.

“Hmm.” The Sultan Jamal was intimidated. “I suddenly am aware that I am in a different world. Please be patient with me. I awakened this morning glad to know that the hands of the man who strangled me were not on my throat. I was only trying to regain my position, so in

anger I tried to strike my wife. I realize now that she was speaking the truth to me, but I do not know the new ways.”

“Well, Jamal, within the hour your arm will be restored. However, next time you will be punished for at least one week. You are going to learn the ways of righteousness now. Truth is the only language that is tolerated. We are sorry for your discomfort, but no one is permitted to hurt another. Is that clear to you?”

“I was told that, but it all seemed strange to me. It still seems unreal. I have awakened with a whole and handsome body, yet I seem to be most miserable. Why is this so?”

“Yes, that is very easy Jamal. You have been a cruel man in your former life. You will chafe and be miserable as long as you remain hateful. Try to love your family and your friends, and you will be surprised at your own happiness. Shalom.” With that, Barak hung up.

The Sultan was shaken by the phone conversation. The man speaking to him had a powerful presence and commanded great authority. Sultan Jamal was used to disregarding his wife and children, but the Ancient made it clear that that was no longer the order of things.

“This man, Barak, must be like an angel of Allah. He speaks with authority. How does he know me so well?”

“Christ knows everything about you, and he tells Barak or any of the other Ancients the truth they need to know in order to help people.”

Am I Cruel?

“He told me I have been cruel. Is this how you think of me?”

“You aren’t guilty of being kind and loving, that is certain,” Ali said with a wry smile. “Because you are my father, I longed for you to love me and to be kind to me. But, if you ever loved me, you never let me know it.”

Sultan Jamal moved to the living room and sank into a comfortable seat, hanging his head with a flood of confused emotions. As he sat there in silence, he began to feel blood tingling in his arm and the

feeling returning. Soon he was able to move it again. This made him feel a little comforted and not so sorry for himself.

Ansa gave him a cup of the delicious tea, which steadied his nerves. Everything seemed like a confused dream and yet there was no doubt that it was all very real.

When he had finished the tea, Ansa said, “Come, Jamal, and let me show you your wonderful house and orchard. This is ten times better than that old musty palace you lived in. Everything is new and beautiful. You are rich and as comfortable as any man in the whole world today. Rejoice, and be glad.”

She took him by the hand and led him through the whole house. Every room was brightly lit and decorated with tasteful furnishings. He had three bedrooms with private baths, the use of which he had yet to learn. There was an exquisite study, which didn’t mean much to him, for he was a man of little learning and even less of a desire for it. She took him into the kitchen and showed him the stove that gave flames of heat that could be put out instantly. He was shown the refrigerator that kept his food cool and made ice upon request. Every room held mysteries and wonders, making it easier for him to believe he was in another world of some sort.

Next she led him into the fragrant orchard where he saw the tantalizing fruit that tasted, as Ansa had said, “as food for angels.” He was also shown trees with which he was familiar, such as olive, fig, date and orange trees. He marveled at the little garden of vegetables growing prolifically without weeds.

“I want some of those delicious vegetables for supper.”

“Pick what you would like, and I will fix it for you along with the fruit from the trees of life. Our bodies crave this fruit, and if we miss one meal without it, we are made aware of it.” Without his realizing it, Ansa encouraged him to provide for his own need and not order someone else to do it.

He picked spinach, cucumbers, lettuce, and beets.

His spirit seemed to improve. The good earth was so bountiful that it made him rejoice. He placed his harvest into a basket to be included for dinner.

When they returned to the garden, Sultan Jamal began to inquire about his children. For the first time he asked how they were and found a sense of pleasure upon learning how well they had fared after his passing. They told him that he was now a grandfather and that tomorrow they would bring his grandchildren to see him. Suddenly his world seemed a little brighter.

“Oh, this is wonderful. While I slept my family just kept growing. I shall be happy to see each one tomorrow. I am sorry that I have no gifts for them. I guess everybody has everything they need. Now everyone is as rich as I am.”

Something in his conversation with Barak had brought a focus into his life. He realized his preoccupation with himself was preventing him from enjoying the many blessings he now possessed. He knew he was living with emotions that were detrimental to him, and that he had never been happy even though he had acquired more wealth than most men of his time. The words of Barak echoed in his mind, “Try to love your family members and your friends, and you will be surprised at your own happiness. Shalom.”

Learning about His Children

Sultan Jamal spent the day talking with his children and learning about them in considerable detail. Suddenly he realized he was living outside of himself for a change and a strange feeling of warmth crept into his heart. They sat down to a bountiful meal of fruit and vegetables. He noticed no one reached for any food. He said, “Let us all eat and be happy.”

Ali, his eldest son, said, “Father, we now all pray before we eat to thank our Heavenly Father for his goodness and kindness. Would you mind if I offered a prayer of thanks?”

“Well, if you choose to do that.” Sultan Jamal agreed awkwardly.

Ansa said, “We delight in it now. We accept the authority and power of Christ. He gave us life and he gave you life.”

After Ali offered a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving, even Sultan Jamal felt a surge of thankfulness in his heart. His firstborn son was strong and handsome. He felt a sense of happiness in having such a fine son as well as his other attractive sons and daughters.

In the early evening, Ansa showed her husband some of the wonders of television and the computer, which at first frightened him. She showed him how to tune in programs to learn anything he wanted to know. He could not believe this miracle of people appearing in his room and speaking and teaching so many things so clearly. The evening seemed to go so quickly, and soon everyone began to leave for home, promising to come tomorrow with the grandchildren. Even Ansa prepared to leave.

He said, “Are you going to leave me now? I cannot believe this! You are my wife.”

Patiently Ansa repeated what she had tried to tell him before. “I was your wife, but I am so no longer. I will return in the morning and then your other former wives will visit you each day separately. Be kind to them and make them happy to see you. And enjoy your grandchildren tomorrow. They are looking forward to seeing Grandfather Jamal.”

She then gave him a little kiss before departing. As she left, he realized how beautiful she was and what a good woman she had been. It was her love that had kept his family together.

The first week passed quickly as Sultan Jamal acquainted himself with his grandchildren and met with his family members. As the days passed, the fear that he was living a dream also passed, and he gradually realized that his return to life was a part of a great regeneration process.

Lev Visits the Sultan Jamal

Because he knew he had beaten Alqar to death, Lev wanted to pay a visit to Sultan Jamal. His concern was that Sultan Jamal could quickly learn to enjoy the comforts and pleasures that far exceeded his former

life, but that it would take an enormous amount of growth for him to learn generosity, kindness, compassion, and sacrifice for others, and finally love for God and fellow men. Just behaving himself and keeping out of trouble was not sufficient for anyone in the regeneration.

Lev arranged for a visit with Sultan Jamal after his first week of family gatherings and adjustment. It was a sunny day when he landed his craft on Sultan Jamal’s pad. The poor Sultan was terrified at seeing the aircraft land, yet half curious as well. He knew that Lev was coming and had been told to be on his best behavior. If there was one thing Sultan Jamal did respect, it was power, and he knew Lev must be a powerful figure in this new arrangement of things. Because of his past life, he worried about meeting an authority figure.

When Lev stepped out of the aircraft, Sultan Jamal went to meet him. This modern world was full of surprises, but there was a certain majesty in seeing this shining craft land on his pad and having a man of such noble carriage descend.

Lev stretched out his hand, wasting no time in getting to his point. “Shalom, Jamal. I have little time to spare, so my visit will be brief. I hope you had a happy reunion with your family. I know of your past history, and that is why I have come to talk with you.”

Sultan Jamal found himself staring at this man, who comported himself with grace and dignity, but who weighed his words carefully with a commanding presence. Never had he seen anyone more handsome and yet so focused on his purpose.

They strolled across the patch of lawn and sat down at an iron and glass table under the trees. Sultan Jamal offered Lev some refreshment before inviting him to explain his visit.

“I am here, Jamal,” Lev continued, “because I know of your past and how poorly equipped you are to live in the present world of righteousness. From what I read, you were a rather selfish person who abused power. Do you remember Alqar, the man you beat so mercilessly that he died?”

“Well, your honor, that was an accident, and I had not intended his death.”

“You can try to explain his murder however you want, but you will need to look inward at your heart condition. Much to my regret, I, too, killed people in my former life. It was in a desperate war and very impersonal on my part.

“The enemy came to kill and destroy Israel, my homeland. I died fighting the enemy. Warfare has gone on in never-ending procession in the history of man. Only Christ could put an end to all war and violence. You, yourself, learned this lesson the first day you returned. Violence is no longer tolerated. Christ employs spiritual powers that enforce righteousness. The task before you and me and all mankind is to change the human heart from meanness and savagery to a heart that reflects God’s image.”

I, Too, Was Murdered

“I was murdered; that is how I died. So I shall be glad to have violence ended.”

“I know how your end came, and it was not something that should have happened. That poor man might have shared the fate of Alqar except that he was as powerful as an ox and able to overpower your guards and strangle you. Those who practiced violence often died in violence.” Lev put his elbows on the table and leaned forward “May I ask you one question? Did you treat those poor nomads who rented your property justly?”

“They all agreed to the terms I offered them.”

“That is not what I asked. Could anyone meet the exorbitant payments you extracted from these poor wanderers of the wilderness?”

“I do not know what they were able to pay. All I know is that they readily accepted my terms. They were free to move on.”

“You see, Jamal, you are not willing to admit that the terms you demanded were outrageous. You knew these people were desperate for pasturage for their flocks. You were extorting exorbitant rates that no one could pay. These poor people were only trying to make a living on a very harsh land. You destroyed Alqar and his family by trying to

extract money from him that he could never pay. What do you say to that?”

“I did not think it was my responsibility to end their poverty by giving them free pasturage for their flocks on my land.”

Lev was leading Sultan Jamal to think logically about his past actions. “Do you think that you took advantage of these poor people?”

“Well, many times those who rented my land would fatten their flocks and then would leave during the night so that I could not find them, and I received nothing. I managed to catch Alqar before he got away. It was a difficult business.”

“Did it occur to you that if you allowed these nomads to pay you with some sheep from their fold that they would be able to prosper themselves and allow you to prosper? No one could possibly pay the rates you demanded.”

“Well, perhaps what I did was a hardship on those who rented land from me, but then, everybody who owned land did likewise. I was not doing anything but what was commonly done. My terms were better than many others at the time.”

“You are justifying yourself, Jamal. Jesus taught, ‘Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it’ (Luke 17:33). I will leave you with this thought. Jamal, don’t spend your days trying to indulge yourself with all the pleasures of this world. This is a time for great sacrifices to help make provisions for the billions returning needing homes and orchards such as you have. And they need more than this. They need to learn the ways of love and righteousness. It is important for you to forget yourself and give yourself to others. You will then find favor with Christ.”

“Well, thank you, your honor. I understand I am to build homes for my parents. I certainly owe them this. Let it not be said that I do not honor my parents. I will deem it a privilege to labor and sacrifice on their behalf.”

“I am glad to hear that. Will you be glad to work for all the families that died and who left no living heirs?”

“We shall see. I know that I will need help from my children in even building for my parents. Whatever is required of me I shall do, you may be sure.”

“That is not my question, Jamal. How much time will you be willing to *volunteer* for helping in this great regeneration project?”

“Just a moment, sir. In my former life I was spared from most labor. I was blessed to have servants who did everything, so my skills are very limited when it comes to work of any kind. It is always better to have people with the necessary skills do the work.”

All Skills May Be Developed

“Jamal, you are living in a time when anyone can learn anything they put their mind to. No one has physical or mental handicaps anymore. By eating the fruit of paradise, your growth in mind and skills will soar to great heights. Your skills and mastery will grow every day. What I am wishing to hear from you is the *desire* to serve Christ and his brethren.”

“I do not wish to be disrespectful, sir, but I only know of Christ according to what I have heard of him in this past week. I understand he gave me life, and therefore, I am thankful to him. I do not know very much about this new arrangement of things, but I am determined to keep out of trouble.”

“Well, Jamal. You still have much to learn. You must learn to sacrifice for others, not only seeking your own pleasure. Shalom.”

Lev turned toward his aircraft and with a wave he lifted off the landing pad.

*“Come over . . . and help us”
(Acts 16:9).*

Chapter Fifteen

When Lev returned to the office, he found an urgent message from Rebekah asking him to contact her at his earliest convenience.

“Shalom, Rebekah. I called as soon as I got here. What’s going on?”

“Oh, Lev, it’s good to hear from you. Yes, I do have some problems here that I can’t seem to resolve. They aren’t extreme; otherwise I would call the Ancients for help. However, I know they are so busy that I hate to bother them.”

“What can I do to help, Rebekah?”

“Well, I really want to see you anyway. Can you come down for a day? That way you can assess the problem firsthand.”

“That’s a great idea! It gives me a perfect excuse to break away for a day. How will this Tuesday be?”

“Yes, that will be great!”

“Good, Tuesday it is, if the Lord wills. Meet me at the airport. If my memory serves me correctly, my plane will land at 8 AM. You don’t want to brief me on the problem ahead of time, do you?”

“No, because you’ll have a quick answer and then you won’t come. Anyway, it will be better for you to get the whole picture. We can do it over a cup of tea.”

Lev Arrives in Tripoli

Lev eagerly left the plane after it landed in Tripoli. He was excited to see Rebekah, and if he could be of any help as a problem solver, he

welcomed that, too. After greeting him with a big hug, Rebekah led him to a little landing pad where her small aircraft was parked ready to whisk them away.

Rebekah was given permanent residence in a townhouse near her office that was well furnished and comfortable.

Lev sighed, “I look forward to the time when all problems will be behind us, and the whole human race will be filled with God’s Spirit. Then we’ll take a vacation somewhere. Until then, we’ll continue to help the Ancients complete the task of human repair, working with Christ in taking away the hearts of stone and replacing them with hearts of flesh. Sometimes, it seems an almost impossible task that will never be accomplished.”

“Yes, sometimes it does,” Rebekah agreed. “One generation is on the road to recovery and then another comes back and you have to start all over again. I never realized how old habits cling to people. Because they lived successfully with certain vices, they know how to repeat past performances in such a manner that it almost seems like virtue. What a blessing to know Christ will ultimately prevail!

“Lev, it’s so good to see you. Let me make some tea and breakfast.”

“That sounds great to me, Rebekah.”

As they enjoyed their meal, Rebekah began explaining her situation. She found it difficult to put her finger on the problem, because the person involved was as charming as anyone could be.

“Lev, this man is a smooth operator; he’s as gentle a person you could find. He is full of praise and compliments. But he manages to turn my ‘no’ into a ‘yes’ whenever he wants to do it his way. His name is Ian Jones, a British high tech wonder who volunteered to build and operate an electronics factory for computers and their component parts. I only have contact with him because the Ancients send their instructions through me. Maybe this is what is creating the problem.”

“Well, if he is delivering the bottom line and following the instructions you relay to him, what could be the problem?”

“That’s just it. I don’t think he is carrying out instructions as he should. I receive clear instructions, but when I deliver them to him to program operations as required, he waltzes me around so that it appears that I am saying okay to what he wants to do instead of following the clear instructions given to me. I don’t want to be short with him, Lev, yet I’m frustrated. He’s charming but seems to be bent on doing what he wants his own way. He certainly knows how to work with people and everyone thinks he is marvelous, but my intuition says he’s not sincere.”

“Hmm.” Lev mused. “It is not life and death and will not affect or hurt anyone personally, but we lose momentum if we are not properly using the latest technology. Besides our friend Ian needs to work on his character as much as we need to get the work done.”

“I agree, Lev, and I believe that is what the Ancients are indicating. But I seem to be just a messenger who is not successfully delivering the message.”

A Penchant for Doing It Differently

“I doubt that, Rebekah. Ian understands perfectly, but it sounds as if he has a penchant for doing things differently. He must have his reasons for reinterpreting the instructions. As a matter of fact, if I remember correctly, Ian Jones came up with some rather advanced designs. My brother Jake told me about his work and said that it was a brilliant concept to enhance a computer system. However, it does not work effectively in our most advanced computer designs.

“Perhaps Ian still thinks that he can make his designs work flawlessly in the advanced computer parameters; but I’m not sure that he can. Jake said it would have serious shortcomings if we tried to use it in our most updated technology. I didn’t press him for the details at the time, but I may have to if Ian wants to stick to his position. On the other hand, it might just be that he is on to something and is stalling implementing original instructions until he can make his original program work by another level of brilliant insight. I do respect the man. He is something of a genius in his field.”

“He may be a genius as you say, but he is more of a genius in converting everything I have conveyed to him into doing what he wants to,” Rebekah opined.

Lev frowned and shook his head. “Well, maybe he does have some brilliant innovation, but he needs to go through proper channels, as well as to demonstrate meekness and acquiescence to the Ancients.”

Rebekah was relieved to share her burden with her dear friend. “Then you must plan to stay over another day or two and see what you can learn about Ian’s plans.”

“Well, I’m very busy, but I do have excellent people who will manage without me for a few days. Okay, I’ll stay on and have a look around. This is an area with which I feel very comfortable, and I’ll actually enjoy getting some hands-on work. If it were not someone of Ian Jones’ genius, I’d just insist that he do what he was told. He should not really be disregarding your instructions.”

“Fantastic! I’m sure he’ll listen more closely to you, because he knows that you and your brother Jake are in the forefront of technology. I know he thinks I am just a messenger, and he can run things his way at least for a season. Anyway, that will keep you here for a few days so I can enjoy your company.” She flashed him a joyful smile.

Lev phoned his office to tell of his change of plans and was assured that if any problems came up that they couldn’t handle, they would contact him. With that out of the way, Lev asked if Ian would be at the plant today.

“Yes, he will. I only go there occasionally to deliver messages from the Ancients. One thing is certain—Ian is not slack about personally being on the job.”

“Did you tell him I was coming?”

“Most certainly not! I don’t want to become enmeshed in that operation. I’ve done my job in passing on instructions, but I know he isn’t always following them, even though he is the sweetest fellow while sidestepping everything I tell him.”

“Perhaps he has his reasons. I really don’t have any authority to meddle in this case. However, I know you are representing matters correctly to me, and a casual visit and talk with him may clear things up. I’ll leave you out of the situation, so he won’t feel you are a part of his problem.”

“Good, that’s sweet of you, Lev. He’s the nicest person to disagree with that I have ever known,” she laughed.

Too Late for the Chapel Meeting

Lev checked his watch. “What time is the chapel meeting?”

“Oh, we’re too late today, but it’s a shame we missed it. We have a real student of the Bible as our chaplain. Both his father and mother were “born in Zion” (Psalms 87:5, 6). He is from the former United States and apparently had saintly parents who carefully taught him correct biblical insights. He tells how his parents were persecuted for telling the truth when it was very unpopular. Looking back, it’s hard to believe such things, but when people develop wrong ideas, they usually don’t like to have them contradicted. I guess that’s why all the reformers in the church soon found themselves outside. Popular errors usually provided a comfortable livelihood for many religious clerics.”

“Well, I’ll certainly look forward to hearing him before I leave. Meanwhile, can you drop me off at the plant to see Ian on your way to your office? Pick me up at the end of the day, and we’ll have supper and spend an evening catching up. I’m sure you have many exciting cases that have returned to life and more coming.”

“Yes, Lev, this is the most thrilling work I’ve ever done. It’s almost unbelievable to be allowed to tell people that on a certain day their loved ones will return and then find Christ has done this so effectively. Never has an appointment been broken or delayed. It’s more exciting than the birth of a child. It takes infinitely more power to recreate a human being long dead, with an identical genetic body and all the former sensory impulses of the individual being restored. And it

happens without any effort on our part. All we have to do is make sure the preparations have all been made to accommodate them.”

“Isn’t it though? What joy to convey such good news! However, people who have been cruel and hurtful to those returning to life are less than happy about it. Those murdered or abused become a witness against the abusers, and they chafe to have to face such evidence...as we’ve seen firsthand!”

“Fortunately, Lev, most people intended good; that’s what makes this regeneration process so sweet. When people tried to be good in their dealings with friends and loved ones, the little failures they made in the past life seem so small they are easily overlooked. It is only when evil was practiced without compassion that some people are chafing now.” Rebekah flipped a stray curl off her forehead.

Lev said, “I know. I had a case of a father who molested his daughter and got away with it without being censored. Here he was, a respected cleric, a supposed pillar in the community, returning with his daughter and friends all aware of his evil conduct. There’s nowhere to hide and no way to deny what was done. If he had gone to jail for it in his former life, at least he could feel that he had paid for his sin. But now he is trying to face up to something he had cleverly hidden. He is paying the price of being a hypocrite and is most uncomfortable.”

“I guess we could spend the whole day comparing notes on this, Lev. It’s a blessing the bad cases are a minority. Most people were good and intended good. If everyone returned with evil, it would be too much to unravel even in this reign of righteousness.”

“Well, I guess we better get on with the day’s activities. Just drop me off at the plant, and I’ll make an unannounced call on Ian.”

“Oh, Lev—you’re as sweet and smart as they come; you’ll get to the bottom of it!”

Rebekah landed the craft on one of many pads at the plant and promised to pick him up by four in the afternoon.

Lev entered quietly and asked if he might possibly see Ian Jones.

Lev Meets Ian

Marcos, the receptionist answered, “Well, he is the busiest man around here. All I can do is make your request known. Who might I say is calling?”

“Lev Aron. Tell him I happened to be visiting in the area and I wanted to see this wonderful operation. I’m not here for any official reason, and if he is too busy to see me, I will understand.”

“Lev Aron, that name sounds familiar. Oh yes, now I remember. You are one of the right-hand men for the Ancients.”

“Well, that’s a very kind way of putting it, although I am sure I fall far short of that. Really, I am only trying to pay some of the debt I owe Christ for his unspeakable kindness to me.”

“We are honored to have you, Mr. Aron. I shall contact Ian if I can. Please have a seat while I try to track him down. He might be anywhere.”

Soon Lev was told that in about fifteen minutes Ian would be here. “He was in the middle of a research project and normally would not be available, but when he heard you were calling he immediately recognized you as one of the two Aron brothers and said he would be honored to see either one of you at any time.”

Ian appeared in the time allotted. He was a handsome dynamic man, up to his eyebrows in science but always the gentleman, as Rebekah said. He wore a comfortable looking light green shirt—the color set off his bright red hair.

Ian walked over smiling with extended hand and greeted Lev as a long lost friend, even though this was their first meeting. He’d had scientific conversations with Jake and knew of Lev’s reputation along these lines as well.

“Lev, this is such an extraordinary pleasure to have you visit. If you had made your plans known, we might have had a warmer greeting for you. I’m so sorry for this rather shabby reception. If you could tell me where your interests lie, I shall try to accommodate you.”

“Marcos said you were in research when I so rudely interrupted you, so I can join you there. I am a little rusty in this field, but my brother Jake gives me a call every once in awhile and keeps me posted on what the latest developments are. I heard of your ingenious work. Have you had any success in the newer computer applications?”

“Well, you know we are always struggling to keep abreast of things. With all the great minds today, it is hard to keep up new developments and our research is not worthy to be compared with that of others.”

“Jake has said your work was incredibly successful on the older computers, and he admired the brilliant thought that went into it, but he couldn’t make it work effectively on the newer ones. Is it possible that you have had some breakthroughs? That would be an ingenious leap forward. If you have, we should let the whole community be aware of it so it can be incorporated into our expanding field of knowledge.”

“The good Lord has not given us the ability to perform all we would hope to, so we spend our time trying to find our way.”

Lev tucked this comment away in his mind for further consideration. “Anyway, Ian, I would be glad to see your operation. Electronics is my second love, but people are my first love. Nothing beats working with people, especially helping them find their way back to God. That is my greatest joy. Rebekah and I have had that privilege for many years, and especially now that we are both engaged in filling the Sahara with people who are returning to life. It’s exhilarating to see that once burning pile of sand blooming with orchards and flowers and flowing with streams. Soon it will house billions of people beginning their second pilgrimage in life.”

Ian nodded his coppery head. “Hopefully, we’ll be able to provide some computers and other electronics for this grand project. It will be several months before we’ll be operational, but we are working tirelessly toward that goal.”

“If you wish to get on with your research project, I’ll be glad to just drift around looking. I don’t even need a guide, because I know about all the procedures in this business, so I can see this splendid project without hindering production.”

“That’s so kind of you, Lev, but we have someone who can give you a tour. Shall we have lunch together?”

“Yes, that would be a pleasure.”

Lev Still in the Dark

Ian excused himself, and after asking the receptionist to take him around the plant, hurried back to the research department. So far, Lev saw nothing amiss. Ian hadn’t revealed what the present state of affairs was. Lev thought that if he could see the operations and the computers they were starting to assemble, he might find out what was going on.

The receptionist was a gracious, charming young man, whom he learned had been returned to life within the last year. Ian’s willingness to have him look over the plant was a good sign that nothing was out of order. If he had anything to hide, he would not have been so easily persuaded to let him wander about freely.

As Lev went from stage to stage, he found the components for the computers were the latest designed. After awhile of moving about, he found a room full of older computers that were essentially obsolete, so he wondered why they were being kept here. He knew that Ian’s programs would make these old computers hum, but they still wouldn’t meet the new requirements of the future.

He asked the receptionist if he knew why these computers were being kept.

“I cannot honestly answer that, Mr. Aron. All I know is that occasionally they take one of these up to the research and design department. They’re still excellent machines and I understand that they serve in some departments until we receive the newer ones.”

At least Lev had a clue that they were using them in research and development for some purpose. This wasn’t unusual; except that Ian’s first love was in enhancing these old computers to perform outstandingly, well beyond their designed limits. The morning did not reveal anything but a well-run operation.

Lev met with Ian at lunch and found him to be as gracious as ever. He still had no clues as to what might be going on, even though he was

persuaded that nothing sinister was under foot. He thought he would probe a little more.

“I’d like to see your research department in the afternoon. Rebekah will not be here until four o’clock to pick me up, so I have quite a bit of time on my hands. I must say you have a very impressive operation lined up. When do you expect to be in full production?”

“You’re quite welcome to stay as long as you find it convenient. You will see our research department. I finished the project that needed to be done this morning, so I’ll have the time to show you around myself. We should be in full production in two to three months if all goes well.”

“I noticed you have a lot of old computers in storage. Do you have any use for them?”

While it didn’t ruffle Ian, Lev sensed this question interrupted the smoothness of his answers. His brow wrinkled a bit, but then he regained his composure. “We still use these excellent machines around here, and they aren’t obsolete by any means. As long as they do the job, we don’t change simply for the sake of change.”

“Yes, I agree. I have a few of those old computers in our operation, and they perform very well. However, as soon as an ample supply of the new computers is available, we’ll upgrade to them because it’s always better to synchronize all operations with uniform equipment when possible.”

They spent a pleasant lunch together, and then Ian invited him to his research department. Oddly enough, Lev didn’t see any of the older computers here, even though the receptionist had told him they used them in that department. This was a bit of a mystery, but perhaps there was a logical explanation. They did have enough time to remove the old computers if they had wanted to. He asked if they possibly used any of their old computers in their research department.

Ian did confirm that they had used some of the old equipment on occasion.

Lev probed a little further. “My brother Jake felt in his assessment that your ingenious program would not work effectively on our new computers. Do you think he was correct?”

“Well, Jacob Aron is a foremost scientist, and I respect his opinion. I am sure that was his genuine conclusion.”

“But you think you can adjust your program to make it work on the new computer designs?”

“That is a hard question to answer. Perhaps the program can be revised to make it more effective.”

“If you’ve made a breakthrough, why don’t you contact Jake and some of the other computer scientists so they can double check it?”

“If it failed in their judgment once, most likely it would not succeed the second time around.”

Driven by Competition

“Ian, I have a confession to make to you. I was once a compulsively competitive person. As a matter of fact, competition was drummed into me the moment I started school. I learned we were labeled as smart or dull and the accolades all went to those who were achievers. In school the incentive was to get good grades that would be rewarded in later life with good jobs. At first it didn’t work. I wanted to have fun and learning wasn’t a fun thing. Then later I became challenged and learning took place rather naturally, but it was also accompanied with a desire to beat my competition. I was this way in sports also and later in higher education.

“Then in the military I started out with inhibitions against killing, as most men do. In boot camp we had those inhibitions stifled, and soon I learned to be a professional killer. Here, too, I wanted to not only beat the enemy, but to be better than my comrades in arms. The competitive spirit possessed me, and it also drove me until I found myself dying on the battlefield. The competition should have ended there, but it didn’t. I returned to life with the same driving forces.

“When I finally learned of Christ, one of the unique things about him was the fact that he was not in competition with anyone. He was

the greatest man that ever lived and affected the world more than any other human being. But nothing he did was motivated by competition. I realized that love in its purest form must replace competition if the human race is to return to the Father's house. Christ showed by teaching and example that unless our deeds are motivated by love, we are nothing. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing' (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)."

Ian stood there lost in thought for a moment. This was not like him, for not only was he a brilliant scientist, but he was basically the kind of person who was always glib of tongue. But Lev's confession put up a mirror into which he could look at himself. Suddenly, Ian saw some shadows that hung over him. He was very motivated, but could it be for the wrong reason, competition?

Ian remembered Lev's quotation from his Sunday school days, but then it was merely a beautiful platitude. Now a living force was unleashed within him. Ian knew he was a very competitive person and was increasingly driven by the desire to be the foremost achiever. Never had he realized that competition had no place in a heart filled with love. Suddenly, he realized that Christ did not come to prove that we were all sinners. He came to save sinners with a heart filled with love for God and for man.

This was a moment of truth. Ian's eyes were filling with tears. He at first tried to turn away to hide his tears from Lev, but he realized it was too late for that.

Lev's Arrows Reached Their Mark

"Your arrows have reached their mark, Lev. I have never looked upon competition as a substitute for love. Yes, competition does motivate, but it has a selfish ulterior motive—a feeling of superiority without meekness.

"Lev, I confess that when I submitted my advanced programs in computer science to some of the foremost scientists in the field, including your brother Jake, I thought I had arrived ahead of all competition. They all were so impressed that I easily believed my work would be used in the forefront of computer science. However, when they found my programs would not work successfully with the newest generation of computers, I just could not accept this. I felt I could prove them wrong. I have tried day and night to make them work, and I have improved them. But my latest research has revealed to me the truth. Jake and the other scientists were right.

"They work ninety-nine percent of the time flawlessly, but it is the one percent failure rate that is the problem I cannot overcome. Probably this flaw would not affect most operations, but it could be fatal if it failed just once in a critical area. I could not allow myself to fail here. I am a competitor through and through, and I could not accept such an end to all my work. Love would have no problem with failure. However, as a competitor I was devastated. Here I was at the dawn of victory, and yet I was in the shadow of defeat."

Ian's gentle heart prodded him to pour out its contents. "I have been trying to be kind and gracious, while inside I have been churning. I, too, have been schooled with competition. I learned I could excel above others very early, and I have been doing just that. From school to sports, the world sought the top competitors, the winners. The pulpits also taught people to pray for victory in play and in war. Bands never played for those who tried and failed or who fought and lost. But true love triumphs over competition. I should have known this, but I guess I must still be a product of the old world. I am a child of the darkness who at last has seen the light."

Lev patted Ian's shoulder as if to congratulate him. "You're right, Ian. A competitive spirit will make you a loser in the end, no matter how much you have excelled. Only those who learn to love as God loves will hear, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matthew 25:34)."

“I’m so very glad you came, Lev. I was struggling within myself while overriding clear instructions given to me by the Ancients through Rebekah. I would not violate their instructions in the end, this I knew, but I was determined that by delaying things a little, I could make my program overcome its one flaw.”

“I tell you what, Ian, I’ll come tomorrow and see if two heads can solve that one flaw, because I agree that your program was superior except for this one defect. Maybe it can be fixed.”

Ian paused for a moment. “I can’t believe what you are saying, Lev. I thought you’d be berating me for being a stubborn man who couldn’t admit defeat. Here you are, out of love, encouraging me to give it another try.”

“Why not, Ian? Love frees you from vanity and envy. Competition lives in fear of being set aside by a better competitor. If we can overcome a weakness in your program, the glory will go to God and a blessing to those who use a better system. If you give me your written program, I’ll study it tonight. I love this kind of challenge. Let me try it, Ian.”

Defeat Turned into Victory

“Marvelous! I’ll give you all my work, and you can review it tonight. In the morning maybe we can both have a go at it one more time.”

Lev took an armload of program printouts and got ready to meet Rebekah.

Ian stood in disbelief. He had supposed that Lev had come to accuse him of insubordination, and in fact, he had been insubordinate to a degree but always motivated by a desperate desire to succeed. Now suddenly that tension was gone. What started out as potentially his worst day was turning into his best—not only because his program was going to get another chance, but more importantly, because he saw a flaw in his own character that needed fixing more than his program.

As Lev walked toward the aircraft with his arms full of printouts, Rebekah laughingly called out, “Here comes Mr. Fix It! I knew you’d

get inside of the problem! You’ll be lost in those programs, and I won’t see much of you.”

“Oh well, let’s have dinner together anyway, and then I’ll go to my apartment. I have a hunch that this program can be fixed.”

Soon she landed on her pad and asked, “So how did you avoid confrontation?”

“Ian is a prince of a fellow. He really wants to do right. I guessed that his problem was that he was still trying to be competitive like we all were taught in the old world. You had it figured out, Rebekah. He was stalling while trying feverishly to make his own system work. However, today he’d been ready to admit failure. I had to encourage him to try again with my help. By the way, if you have a free evening, how about joining me and we can get inside of this problem together.”

“It isn’t what I had planned, but then we have an eternity before us, so what is one evening of work? Let’s give it a go!”

“That’s the spirit. You know, Ian was the happiest man in the world when I left. He’s put so much work and brilliant design into his research that it was killing him to have to dump it. I know how he feels. I made a program once that worked beautifully except for one detail. I almost went mad trying to find it, and one day out of the blue I spotted it. After that, it was a simple fix and the program was successful.”

Rebekah chuckled. “Oh, Lev, you are so persistent! It would help if I knew what I was looking for.”

“After we eat, I’ll show it to you.”

With their supper over, they started the tedious task of wading through endless programming commands. Lev figured it had to be some simple problem of parallel commands that differed slightly. He suggested Rebekah start on one stack of printouts while he looked through another. The hours passed with nothing turning up. After some tea and cake, they continued into the night. Finally, Rebekah said, “Here look at this—two almost identical commands that differ only slightly. Could this be the problem?”

Lev studied it a minute and then said, “Eureka, you have it! I’ll show this to Ian in the morning. Better yet, I’ll call him right now. I’m sure he’s not sleeping yet.”

“Hello, Ian? Rebekah has found something that may solve your problem. Look on the second batch of printouts on page seventy-seven. You’ll see almost identical commands with the possibility that if one is called first, then the second command will get hung up.”

Hope Returns

“You might be on to something. Thank you, both. You have turned my night into day! Shalom.”

Rebekah and Lev continued to talk past midnight, comparing experiences and catching up on each other’s lives, but finally Lev said, “You made my day. I’ll see you in time for the morning chapel service, and then we’ll have breakfast and you can drop me off at the plant again. I started out not knowing how I would get through this day, and it has ended so beautifully.”

“Good night, Lev. What a load is off my shoulders. I’m sure I’ll sleep like a baby tonight. Ian is so good-hearted; I prayed that I could resolve this problem without hurting him. My prayers were answered with your help.”

The next morning, Lev and Rebekah walked to the chapel for the exercise. It was a beautiful day, and they met many enthusiastic worshippers on the way. Ian was there, too, and when the singing started, his beautiful, resonant voice could be heard above the others. There was genuine joy in every heart, and the praise could not have been more beautiful or the worship more sincere. The chaplain was a gifted and brilliant student, not a preacher of platitudes and general niceties, but one who made the Scriptures come alive. Lev went up to express his appreciation of such in-depth presentations.

Ian never seemed happier. He came to thank Rebekah and Lev for preaching a sermon by their actions. He said, “I learned about love yesterday, and I hope that I will be the person Christ wants me to be. Thank you for yesterday’s sermon on love that cleared my thinking.

Then you punctuated it with a genuine demonstration of love in action. Love is contagious and I hope to spread it around as easily as you do some day, Lev.”

After breakfast, Rebekah dropped Lev off at the plant to spend another day with Ian. Yesterday there was apprehension; today, they were like old friends eager to test the slightly revised program to see if it would pass the test. After they had zipped right through all the tests, Lev suggested that they call his brother Jake and break the news to him that the program now was fixed.

Ian enthusiastically picked up the phone to reach Jake Aron. After a few minutes Jake said, “Shalom, this is Jacob.”

The Problem Is Solved

“This is Ian Jones, and Lev is also on the other phone. Lev and Rebekah found the problem in my program last night, and we have tested it this morning. It seems the problem is fixed. May we send it to you for final testing and approval?”

“Oh, that’s great news. I was sorry when we could not approve it before, because it ran brilliantly until that little bug appeared. We were thinking that perhaps we should go over the program ourselves to see if we could make it work. We really needed this upgrade! So thanks, Ian! Send it over!”

“Oh, don’t thank me; thank your brother and Rebekah. They are tremendous! I am happier today than I have ever been, not only because the program works, but because I stepped up to a higher plane of love. I had two sermons on love yesterday. One from the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, and the other from love in action by Lev and Rebekah.”

“Oh, don’t praise Lev too much!” Jake joked like a typical brother. “I have to live with him, you know. As soon as the program passes our testing procedures, we will okay it for application in all our new computers. This should not take more than two days, and then the Ancients will authorize it. Thank you, Ian. Shalom.”

Ian pulled several bottles of juice from the refrigerator and called other workers into the office to share in the joys of this day. Ian toasted the drinks, "Love never fails."

As the office personnel settled back into their work, Lev received a call from Alvarez, his office manager. "Hello, Alvarez, is everything okay?"

"Señor Lev, when will you be coming home? If it's tomorrow, I will not try to explain our problem. It can wait until you get here."

"Yes, I hope to be home tomorrow. I plan to catch a plane this evening. Shalom. I'll call Rebekah to pick me up early."

Ian said, "I'm available to take you anywhere you wish to go, Lev."

"Thanks, but Rebekah and I want to share a little time together before I catch my plane home. She won't forgive me if I don't call her."

Rebekah picked him up for an early supper together, and she was delighted to learn how everything had worked together not only at this plant, but that Ian's program would now probably be used worldwide in certain applications. The two close friends spent the last moments together, looking forward to the time when the regeneration program would be accomplished, and they could spend more time together. Meanwhile, they would work tirelessly to accomplish God's purposes.

*"When the Most High divided to the nations
their inheritance,
When he separated the sons of Adam,
He set the bounds of the people
According to the number of the children of Israel"
(Deuteronomy 32:8).*

Chapter Sixteen

When Lev arrived back at the office in Khartoum the next day, he found Alvarez had been handling complaints from some who had lived in what they referred to as Palestine, really Israel. Since communications were instant and easy, a little storm had arisen. After the Lord had miraculously fought for Israel and defeated the overwhelming forces that had come against the tiny nation, the Lord had clearly settled the question as to which nation the land belonged.

However, after the passing of time, some of the old arguments began to surface claiming that the land given to Israel following the lineage of Jacob was not fair to others who had inhabited it in past ages. The Palestinian Arabs had laid passionate claims to the land, whether real or fancied, and some were claiming they had been unfairly shunted off to other locations.

One making this claim was Sultan Jamal, who wanted to be returned to the place where his palace once stood. He had gotten together a few others who shared his ideas, and with the Sultan as their spokesman, they vocally assailed Lev's office while he was absent. Alvarez hadn't called the Ancients, thinking that the issue might be settled when Lev returned.

Sultan Jamal had been given a lovely modern home with which he should have been more than satisfied. Most people were overjoyed with

what had been provided for them. But Sultan Jamal and a few of his discontented friends felt their rights had been violated. Some people who had lived in Palestine through many generations were allowed to live there still. Such was not the case with Sultan Jamal and his band of discontents. They had been Arab nomads who by ruthless methods had laid claim to barren land in Palestine and amassed enough wealth to live comfortably there.

Alvarez had told them that when Lev returned, he would speak to them. Lev, quite surprised to learn of this turn of events, debated whether he should call the Ancients first or wait until he understood fully what these people wanted when he met with them that afternoon.

A contingent led by Sultan Jamal arrived expressing outrage that they had not been returned to “Palestine.” Apparently friends or relatives had reawakened old animosities. Lev addressed them very thoughtfully, hoping to extinguish the flames with patience and gentleness. However, they were passionate and felt they had legitimate claims to the land.

With a soft sigh, Lev said, “I’m surprised to find you so unthankful for the kindness Christ has shown you. Billions of people have returned to life and have joyfully accepted what Christ has provided for them, so your discontent is rather strange.”

“We are not ungrateful for being returned to life, but we did live in Palestine, which is now Israel. Some of our people live there now. Why should we be sent here when we have friends and relatives there?”

“Well, that decision was made by Christ, so you should be very careful lest you be found complaining against him.”

“We are not complaining against his Majesty. We have a reasonable request. Most people return to their homeland, so why can’t we return to our homeland?”

“Because you were nomads until through political deals you laid claim to some land. You have no historic claim to that land. The Sahara Paradise has been set aside for you. It’s now a choice and beautiful

land, so I’m amazed at your discontent. When you lived in Palestine, you and your friends were ruthless in your dealings with your fellow nomads. You, Jamal, were a murderer, so I would walk lightly if I were you.”

“You are putting things in their most unfortunate light. The man I beat tried to escape a debt he had agreed to pay. It was unfortunate, indeed, that we did not understand his frail nature and he died. We merely wished to make him realize his responsibility. I, too, died at the hand of one of my debtors, so have I not paid my debt with my own life?”

“You will have to live down your evil, but that is not our concern at the moment. What just claim do you make to be an inhabitant of the Holy Land?”

The Seed of Abraham

“I am of the seed of Abraham through Ishmael. Does not this make me a rightful heir of Abraham’s land?”

“I’m afraid not. Scripture is very clear on this matter. ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son [Ishmael]: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac’ (Genesis 21:10). There is no promise that Ishmael would ever be Abraham’s heir. God promised he would make of Ishmael a ‘great nation’ because he was Abraham’s seed, but it is clear that Isaac was his heir. Then through Isaac the blessing went to Jacob and to Israel. Even after the Israelites went into slavery in Egypt, when they were delivered from bondage they were to possess the Promised Land.”

“Ah, you are a Jew, are you not, your Honor? I can see that you might have your own view of the matter. Did not God promise Abraham this land and then that it would be to ‘his seed’ after him? So we, too, are the seed of Abraham. That is very plain.”

“Well, Jamal, I’m not here to argue with you. Ishmael was the father of the Arabians who were largely nomadic. I will contact Abraham and you may speak to him directly. I am sure you will accept the word of your own great-grandfather.”

Sultan Jamal and his friends were taken aback by this easy solution to his quest. There was some shuffling of chairs and whispers around the conference table as they digested Lev's words.

"Oh, no," Sultan Jamal responded nervously. "We do not wish to trouble him. Perhaps someone would like to trade his or her home and land in Israel for our estates here on the outskirts of the Sahara. It would be an even trade. If we can find someone willing to exchange homes, would that be all right?"

"No, that can only be authorized by Christ. Christ has assigned the homes you have. If you wish to refer your request to Abraham, he may be willing to refer this matter to Christ, but not even Abraham would make such a decision by himself."

The group was disgruntled. "You make it sound as though we are rebellious and unthankful for what we have received," a tall man with a curly beard grumbled. "We have been provided for generously and are happy with our lot. But is there anything wrong with wanting to live in the Holy Land?"

"The Holy Land is the land promised to Abraham and that is where he is now. That whole land belongs to him by God's promise and by God's oath." Lev explained. "If given a choice, countless millions might request this land as their home, because Jerusalem is the 'city of the Great King.'"

Lev continued, "People did live in that land before Abraham. However, they were squatters on that land. It was not the land assigned to them. In the days of Peleg ["division"], Eber's son, the earth was 'divided' (Genesis 10:25). God decided which land to make the inheritance of which nations. 'When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel' (Deuteronomy 32:8). Even before the children of Israel were born, the Lord had set 'the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.' So when God asked Abraham to go to a land that he would show him, He was inviting him to a land that was a part of his land inheritance."

Questioning God's Sovereign Will

"I still don't understand," Sultan Jamal countered. "He did not give Abraham the land even though He promised it to him. Other people lived in the land God promised Abraham and continued to live there. So my logic tells me God was not overly concerned as to who lived there, was He?"

"God's longsuffering should not be misconstrued. God showed Abraham the land he promised him, but because there were people living as squatters on this land, God didn't drive them out until they had thoroughly corrupted themselves. God allowed Abraham's descendants to go into slavery in Egypt until during the 'Fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full' (Genesis 15:16). Only then did the Lord allow Israel to go in and take the land that belonged to them by divine grant.

"The Israelites were instructed to drive out the inhabitants of the land, but because they did not completely obey the Lord's instructions some enemies remained in the land to become a source of temptation and trouble for them. They were commissioned to clear out the wicked inhabitants, but they only partially fulfilled God's instructions. Later, because of Israel's unfaithfulness, the Lord allowed them to be removed from the Land of Promise—but only for a fixed time." Lev laid emphasis on these words, hoping to clarify the issue for these people. "Then God fulfilled his promise to regather His scattered people from all over the world, back to the Holy Land."

But the contingent wasn't convinced and continued to argue their point. Jamal argued, "We are not trying to fight against God. We know we would fare no better than those armies who descended against Israel during Armageddon. Your Honor, we are only asking why an exchange of land would be considered insubordination to Christ's will? I know a party living in Israel that is willing to make an even exchange."

"As I already told you, I do *not* have the power to make such a decision. I was instructed to make preparations for your return to life

in the home in which you live, Jamal, and similar arrangements were made for each of you. We followed our instructions in regard to your return in every detail. If you insist on this change, I shall call Abraham. After all, it is his land. Even here, he may be reticent to make such a decision, because it is Christ who gave you your life and place to live. You are being extremely bold to make this request. However, if you insist, I will place the call here and now.” Lev reached for his telephone.

“No, no, no—don’t call him.” Plainly Sultan Jamal didn’t wish Lev to make this call. He wanted to badger Lev into taking responsibility for the change, so he would have an excuse later if he were censored. However, Lev was not even tempted to grant his request. Lev had no clue as to why Sultan Jamal was so intent on leaving the Sahara to go to Israel, nor did he understand why someone would be willing to exchange land in Israel for a place in the Sahara.

“Jamal, why are you so eager to live in Israel? No one has pleasant memories of you there. You were a scoundrel when you lived there, to put it mildly.”

Why the Urgency?

“Your Honor, I do not think of myself quite as badly as you do. I had a family to take care of and I did. Conditions were harsh in those times, and one had to be on guard to protect his interests. Yes, I acted in anger and murdered a man, but then I in turn was murdered, so it cancels out my transgression.”

“But why do you want to make this exchange. You must have some covert reason.”

Lev could see his probing was making Jamal uncomfortable.

“Your Honor, why must you think that one must have some secret ulterior motive? That was the land I lived in. What is strange about returning there?”

“Most people would want to live in the area where their family lives. You have not asked that your family members be transferred

with you, and that is odd. Don’t you love your family and desire to be with them?”

“When a man had several wives, it does not make for the happiest of family ties. There was always rivalry between my wives and also between our children.”

“Usually love begets love. If you truly loved your children, they would feel it and would certainly have the same feelings toward you.”

“Well, I wasn’t the most lovable man, I admit. Whatever my failings, my children had enough to eat and were given an education better than most people.”

“Jamal, you are a cold and calculating person. I have not found you attached to anyone but yourself, so that leaves me in a quandary. I’m going to have to consult Abraham with this.”

“I will withdraw my request if you must burden my great ancestor.” Sultan Jamal scowled.

“Well, I cannot grant your request without calling him. You can reason with me endlessly, but it’s not in my power to grant your request. If you think you can talk me into overstepping my authority, you are mistaken. So far I have done only what I have been authorized to do, and by God’s grace I intend to continue.”

Sultan Jamal tried one more time. “But if the exchange was not acceptable, I would gladly return to my present estate.”

“We could argue all day, but I don’t have time for that, and I’m not changing my mind. If you wish to resolve this matter, I will put a call through right now, and you can pick up that other phone and listen to Abraham resolve your request. If you do not wish me to make the call, then there is nothing more that I can do for you. Shalom.”

“You think this over, your Honor. I shall call you in a few days if perchance you think better of this matter. Shalom.” The group stood up as one and left the room in silence.

Lev had many pressing matters with which to contend that day, but he was determined to look into the files on Sultan Jamal again to see if there was something he had overlooked. These reports were generally

sketchy and only given for a quick background on those returning to life. Their purpose was to provide enough general information to understand the problems faced by those returning without unduly prejudicing those whose job it was to mentor them.

Lev's Intuition Is on the Mark

For some reason, Sultan Jamal obviously did not want to contact the holy men at Jerusalem no matter how greatly he desired to change his address.

When Lev found time to recheck Sultan Jamal's files, he found they were very brief and did not attempt to catalog events in his life. Just as Lev thought he could find no reason for this urgent request, he came across something. On his new list of those returning to life within a month or two was the daughter of Sultan Jamal and his favorite wife, Ansa. This daughter died at eleven years old in childbirth after being a victim of incest, several months after her father had been killed. The record indicated that Sultan Jamal was guilty of this incestuous act renounced by all religions.

Suddenly, it was all too clear. What Sultan Jamal had done to his daughter had outraged the whole family. He had managed to hide his sins from the general public, but now he would have to face the child and the anger of others for his loathsome conduct.

Finding the reason for Sultan Jamal's wish to move out of the area made Lev realize that this man had not only behaved badly toward those to whom he leased property, but even worse to his own family members. Equally obvious was the fact that Sultan Jamal had no intention of owning up to his sin, but simply wanted to move out so he could escape the anger directed toward him.

Lev waited for Sultan Jamal's call, and it came predictably a few days later.

"May I come down to see you again, your Honor?"

Lev set the time and Sultan Jamal appeared at the precise hour, looking hopeful that perhaps Lev had changed his mind. Lev invited him to take a seat on the comfortable chair opposite his desk.

"Shalom, your Honor. From your bright countenance, do I perceive that you have allowed me this small favor? Please remember, this change of address is mutual to both parties and will not cause concern to anyone."

"You are wrong, Jamal. I am very concerned. Your cowardly act will not be tolerated." Lev's dark eyes were stern.

"What are you saying, your Honor? I am no coward! It is a change by mutual consent."

"I have not changed my mind. As I told you, I can't change your address without first contacting Abraham."

"So you contacted him when I expressly asked you not to do so. Why have you troubled such a great man on such a trivial matter?"

"No, I did not contact him. I was at a loss to know why you were so urgent to leave this community. I knew that Alqar, whom you killed, was not a big concern to you, and also the man who strangled you was no further problem either. So I wondered why you would be eager to leave your family...? Perhaps you should tell me why, Jamal. An honest confession is good, you know."

"I have no confession, your Honor. I took care of my family. No one was hungry in my house, and no one lacked for clothing and shelter. I was a good provider."

"That is not what I wanted to hear from you. Why not be honest with both me and yourself?"

"I have told you everything you need to know. I did not know that you were going to put me on trial and expect me to answer for my every failing in my previous life. I thought Christ was my judge."

"I was hoping you would play the role of a man and say, 'I have sinned against God and man in a most grievous manner.'"

"So you persist to be my judge. That is not what I asked of you. I merely wanted you to grant a humble wish to allow me to live in Israel. You immediately surmise some dark and sinister cause for a simple request. Your Honor, I heard you were a fair man. I am not

finding such to be the case.” The man was plainly angry and having difficulty containing himself.

“I am a fair man, and kind when people are dealing with me in good faith. You do not know what good faith is, apparently.”

Seeking an Honest Confession

“Now you insult me. If my request displeases you, I shall withdraw it. There is no need for further discussion, because it only seems to anger you.” He was about to walk out the door.

“It is not the discussion that is angering me. It is your unwillingness to be a righteous man. You must start by confessing your sin to God and to your family and friends. It will not do to move to Israel so you can evade your need of godly repentance and reform. It takes courage to confess such an unspeakable evil as you committed. It will hang relentlessly about your neck until you confess it and seek forgiveness from God and men.”

Suddenly Sultan Jamal turned pale and began to tremble. “How could you have known any sin of mine?”

“I didn’t contact Abraham, if that’s what you’re worried about. Here is the information I received about making preparations for your daughter Reva, who is to be returned to life. She is the eleven-year-old victim of your incestuous act. You gave this poor child life and then destroyed it. This is despicable conduct in the eyes of God and of man. It is so evil that you yourself do not wish to acknowledge it. You want to flee to Israel hoping that somehow this evil will go away. This is why you want to go to Israel.”

Sultan Jamal was stunned and silent. Somehow his secret was known and now there was nowhere to hide. His family now hated him for what he had done to his own little daughter, and now everyone would look with disdain upon him. How could he face her return to life?

He buried his head in his two hands, afraid to look up.

Finally he said, “Your Honor, you have found out my horrible secret. I am undone—better that I should not have come back to life than to live with the contempt of all men now. You are right. I hoped

to leave for another country and to leave also this dark secret behind me. Now it will cling to me, and I shall be a cursed man in everyone’s eyes. I knew it was loathsome when I did it, but I often abused my power, so I thought this indiscretion would get buried with me in the grave and only the family would know what I did. Now she is to come to life again, and I must face her. How can I do that? Oh, what shall I do? The grave was better than life with shame and humiliation.”

“Jamal, you are still thinking only of yourself. It takes courage to live down what you have done, but this is what you must do. You aren’t the only man who has done such evil. There are many more like you. There is forgiveness with God. To receive forgiveness you must confess before God and before men what you have done. In the place of living by base passions, you must live by a higher standard of love for God, for your fellow man, and a special love for your daughter.” Lev’s emotions were very near the surface as he ached both for the man before him and for the little girl who had so much yet to face.

“You can make up to her for the life that she lost. She will be alive again and ultimately whole and happy. The child you fathered died because you committed this sacrilege. But now, Reva will have eternity to live and love and be happy. The vile sin you committed will be remembered, but if you now live on a higher plane and be a real father to her, she will love you for what you are now and not what you were. You can do it, Jamal. You can step up higher and be the human being you might have been had you been ruled by virtue and not by your passions.”

A Loveless Life

“You make it sound possible, your Honor. You forget that my whole life was consumed in passion and vice. Only one of my wives ever loved me, but when I destroyed our daughter even she hated me. My children lost all respect for me. I am a man despised. I wish I could be like you, but I am cut of a different cloth. There is no hope for me.”

“Once again, you are focusing on yourself. Christ didn’t die for you to give you a chance to learn righteousness and then see you so ungrateful that you wouldn’t even try to repent and reform.”

Sultan Jamal slumped in the chair as if he held the burden of the entire world on his back. “You make it sound possible. I didn’t have a conscience. If there were one thing I wish I could undo, it would be to erase that moment with little Reva. The other thing I wish I had not done was to strangle Alqar. I know he was a poor man and could not pay the outrageous interest I demanded. I had never taken a human life before, and when I did, I knew I had done something very wrong. However, I got away with it so it didn’t matter. After awhile I felt that nothing I did mattered.”

“You alone can choose what you want to be. If you want to continue to be the old wicked Jamal, you may, for a time. Or, you can change and learn to love and be loved. You can learn true happiness in giving yourself to others and sacrificing for others. That is how it works. One thing for certain now is that I am not going to allow you to run off to Israel to escape facing your past. Whether you want her back or not, your daughter is returning and you are going to have to face her. You are going to make up for all the pain and unhappiness you brought her. You are going to have to show your family and friends that you are no longer the old Jamal, but a new man who has, at last, learned to love and live in virtue. I know you can do it, and all the Lord wants from you is to make your best effort.”

Sultan Jamal’s whole body exuded weariness. Yet, somewhere deep inside there was the tiniest flicker of hope. “I was trying to run away. I now know that running away is not the answer. I would only take my guilt with me. You are right. I have to live down my sin. I must feel godly sorrow and perhaps the Lord will help me in this matter.”

Lev got up from his desk, walked around it, and clasped Sultan Jamal’s hand.

“You make it sound easy, your Honor, but for me that seems impossible. I have made too many mistakes, done too many selfish acts, and never have I endeavored to be virtuous, even for a moment. I can’t do it.”

“You sound like it’s painful to do anything right or kind. It is quite the opposite.” Lev’s voice was reassuring. “When you do evil, you

know it causes pain. When someone reacts, you have to justify it by claiming you are entitled in some way. You’ve spent your life causing misery, and now it’s all coming back to haunt you. You have run out of your privileges, Jamal. Don’t tell me you want to keep hurting yourself and your opportunities to gain life and true happiness. You can’t be serious.”

The Pain of Facing Past Deeds

“You just don’t understand. How can I face my daughter? How can I face my family and friends? I am vile—and what hurts is that I am vile in my own eyes.”

“Jamal, God’s ways are equal. You will not suffer for anyone’s sins but your own. What’s wrong with that? Christ paid for the sins you inherited from Adam. The only thing you must answer for is your own willful wrongdoing. Isn’t that fair?”

Jamal closed his eyes, “Of course, it’s fair. However, my sin is greater than I can bear. How can little Reva ever forgive me? Will my family ever cease from loathing me?”

“All I can say is that it will be easier for your daughter if you seek her forgiveness, than if you ran away and refused to look into her eyes ever again. You can do it. You have to renounce your ugly past and then begin tasting the beauty of holiness. It is not a question about your ability to do it; the only question is your willingness to really try.”

Emotion filled the very air. Tearfully, Jamal cried, “Thank you Lev, your Honor. You have given me a little ray of hope. I am thankful you did not grant my request. Oh, but how can I ever face my daughter?”

“You will find strength to do the right thing. Christ wants you to try to change, and the same spiritual forces that immediately chasten are there to support us. This is your chance to remake your character.”

“I do not know how to answer, your Honor. At least my head is clear and the path I must take is clearly marked out. I know it will be possible for me to fail in trying to live down my sins, but I have

some chance of making good. If I don't try, there is nothing but the blackness of darkness forever."

"There is plenty of help out there for you. You must start attending chapel meetings. You will fail only if you stop reaching upward, and if you try to close God and His Word out of your mind. In the Lord's Word you will hear that voice saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' I confess that I misjudged your reason for wanting to be transferred to Israel. I thought you might have felt you had some legitimate reason. Perhaps some of your colleagues still have that thought, but I see that your real reason was that you wanted to run away from your past. Don't run away, Jamal. Rise to meet the occasion and turn it into an opportunity. Shalom."

*"A time to heal"
(Ecclesiastes 3:5).*

Chapter Seventeen

When I woke up screaming, I was terrified with horrible memories. I couldn't believe my own father had hurt me so terribly.

I lay there breathing easily, but I was afraid to open my eyes. I pulled the sheet over my head. Everything was so bad, and frightening, and wicked. I felt myself shaking and wanted to cry out, but who would help me?

After some time, I realized that not only did nothing hurt any more, but also my body felt very good. I remembered the terrible pain of the birthing process, and I remembered the baby was dead. And then I couldn't move or hear anything and everything turned black. But now, somehow, that pain was gone. It was so quiet I could hear birds singing somewhere.

I finally got courage to pull the sheet from my face and open my eyes, carefully squinting so anyone looking wouldn't see me doing it. I saw a pretty room with sunlight streaming in and no one else was there. I opened my eyes wide. Everything was so peaceful. I saw beautiful flowers on the table and clothing at the foot of my bed.

I quickly dressed and went to the window. I saw a lovely garden and orchard, so brightly colorful and beautiful. The sun was shining and the bright blue sky was laced with puffy white clouds. This wasn't the dingy desert home I remembered. I had never seen such beauty as this before.

Suddenly, I felt alone. Where was I? Why wasn't anyone else here?

I walked around the room carefully touching the furniture and then looked into another small room with hard shiny furnishings that I didn't understand. There was a strange chair with a hole in it, like a bowl, and there was water in the bowl. There was something like a bed, but it was so hard that no one would want to sleep in it. And there was a hole in it and pipes that were in the wall at one end of it. There was also another strange basin with a hole in it and more pipes and handles. I looked into the mirror. I was so pretty! My hair was clean and shiny. That big bruise on my knee was gone.

As I was exploring the room, I heard the voice of my mother calling.

“Reva, are you alive?”

Reva quickly opened the door. There was her mother who embraced her with a cry of joy.

“Oh, Mama,” she cried, burying her head on her mother’s shoulder. “I thought everybody had left me. I was so afraid. Where am I? What has happened to me? I am so glad you are with me. Don’t let anyone take me away from you.”

Her mother held her tightly stroking her beautiful hair, while she sobbed uncontrollably.

“My poor child, you have been through so much. Have no fear, my precious darling, you are secure in our home and no one will take you away or ever hurt you again. I promise you.”

Soon Reva felt the love she needed to quell her fears. She lifted her head and looked at her mother.

“Mama, you have changed, too. You are so beautiful and you look so young. Where are we? Are we in heaven? Everything is so beautiful, not like at home.”

“Oh, my child. You have so many questions, and I do not know how to answer them all at once. Come, I have the most delicious breakfast for you. We will have some tea like you have never tasted before and food that comes from paradise.”

Reva looked at the large living room and stared in amazement as they passed through it and entered the kitchen. Everything was new and light and smelled so good.

“Mama, am I dreaming? Shall I awaken and find myself back in that awful place? I feel so strange—something is very different; even you look so beautiful and different. I am afraid that if I blink my eyes you will disappear and I will be all alone again.”

“Do not fear, my darling daughter.”

“No, no, my precious one—do not fear, my darling daughter. You and I will never be separated. No one will ever hurt you again. I promise you,” she comforted, as her eyes again filled with tears.

“Why are you crying, Mama?”

“I am crying because you are back in my arms. What happened to you, my daughter, should never have happened. Papa hurt you. He is alive again and he knows what he did was very wrong. He hates himself for what he did to you.”

The mother sat down beside her child. “Listen, my little Reva, while I tell you things that will be hard for you to understand. When you were hurting so badly, you began to bleed. You bled so much that you died. Oh, how my heart broke that day! This is what happened to you.

“But time passed, and many things happened. Later, I also died. Then many years later, the earth got a new King, a king with so much love and power, he made us both alive again. You have only begun to live, and before you are many, many days of happiness. You are living at a time when no one is able to hurt another person. This means that no one can ever hurt you again, Reva.”

Little Reva certainly couldn’t comprehend all her mother was saying, but one thing got through. “If Papa comes back, what will I do?”

“Try to understand you are living in a different time now, in a kingdom of righteousness and peace. No one can harm another person. If they try to, the angels stop them instantly and paralyze their arms or

legs. The only pain we have now is the pain we carry in our memories, and every day it gradually gets smaller and smaller. You will be happy again. You will be so happy that you will not be able to believe how sad you were. But now, my child, I have some wonderful food for you to eat and the most delicious tea. Soon you will want to dance and sing for joy.”

Ansa poured the tea and showed Reva all the fruit, much of which she'd never seen before.

“What kind of fruit is this, Mama?”

“It is fruit that Adam and Eve, our first parents, used to eat before they were driven out from the Garden of Eden. Eat it, and now you shall have the best breakfast you have ever had.”

Reva took some fruit, biting into it hesitatingly, and her eyes opened wide with pleasure.

“Oh, Mama, this tastes so good! Where did you ever find it?”

“I will tell you a wonderful story that is true! We are living in a very different time now, Reva. All the old evil governments are gone. Christ rules this world now and he has a righteous and just kingdom. He has resurrected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and many other faithful men and women to life, and they now live in Jerusalem and rule the world under Christ. When these Ancients, like Abraham, returned to life, they brought seeds from the Garden of Eden. The seeds were planted, and then these trees began to grow and now they fill the whole world. See out that window? There are the trees of life! If you eat their fruit, you will live forever and never grow old or get sick or die. Does that sound like a make-believe story to you?”

“Yes, but it is a wonderful story.”

“Well, it is all true, Reva. We don't tell fables anymore. We don't need them because everything is so wonderful now, and laughter has replaced our tears. Singing is now heard instead of crying.”

Reva tasted the tea made from the leaves of the trees of life. It was better than any drink she ever tasted.

“Everything is so delicious. Are you sure this is not heaven, Mama?”

Heaven Has Come Down to Earth

“This is not heaven, but maybe we can say heaven has come down to earth because God is making all things new and better. The old days of suffering and dying are gone. Everyone is rich and safe. There are no wars, no jails, no one to hurt you and certainly no one to make you unhappy.

“My little daughter, now that you have eaten from the trees of life, I have made a cake for you that is made from the same dried fruit flour. This cake will make you want to sing and dance.”

“Oh, Mama, you must be an angel. Yet, you are so real to me and everything is so beautiful. Will this go away as suddenly as it came?”

“No, it will last forever, Reva. Christ raised you to life this morning. Christ wants you to be very happy, and he has provided everything for you. You will share this beautiful home with me until you become an adult, and then you will have a new home of your own, just like mine. You will never be hungry, cold, sick, tired and weak or suffer pain of any kind. Even princesses did not have it so good before.”

“Where is Papa?”

“Papa lives near here, and you will see him again. Papa has told me he will only come to see you when you feel you can forgive him for what he did. He is so sorry for what he did to you that he is ashamed to see you. He wants to love you and for you to love him again, but he knows how hard that will be for you. He does not want to hurt you again, never, never again. He is so sorry that he cried when I told him you were returning to life today. He wants to see you and beg you to forgive him, but it is too soon for that, my child. I asked him to stay away until your heart heals a little and your fears go away.”

Reva sat expressionless as she heard of Papa. She did not hate him. She was too innocent to have hatred in her heart. However, every mention of his name brought fear and made her very nervous.

Make Papa Stay Away Forever!

“Mama, can’t you make Papa stay away forever? Do I have to see him again? Thinking of him makes me feel so bad. I want to love him, but I can’t. I am afraid of him.”

Tears began to flow down her cheeks and she began to tremble.

“There, there my child. Let us not think about Papa for a while. Let me show you this lovely house and garden as soon as you eat your piece of cake.”

As Reva tasted her cake, her eyes brightened again.

“Oh, Mama, this is so delicious; it is better than candy. Why do I feel so confused?”

“You are having the same feelings we all had when we returned to life after being dead. Everything is so different, but Christ has preserved our identity. We have the same thoughts and memories that we had before we died. Nothing is lost. Only now we have new resurrection bodies that are free from defects and are no longer dying as the days and years pass. We sense a passage of time, and that is why this strange feeling keeps creeping over us. It will eventually go away.”

“I never tasted anything as good as this cake and tea before. Even though I ate so much, I do not feel stuffed. This food is so wonderful, how happy our first parents must have been in Eden.” Like all children, Reva could leave the subject of sorrow as quickly as it could come over her.

After breakfast, they walked into the garden first and saw flowers in vibrant colors and green vegetation. When they walked through the orchard of the trees of life, there were always some trees in full bloom while others were heavy with fruit. Reva had never seen such plants and trees before and felt like a princess in a paradise.

They talked throughout the day. Then Reva was shown the modern visual communications and the various programs available for learning reading and writing so she could start her belated education. As she watched the first program designed for beginners, she found herself

drawn into the study and was soon learning the magic of the alphabet and words. Reading and writing would give her confidence and power. She was so engrossed in this study that her mother couldn’t draw her away from it. Ansa rejoiced to see her little daughter learning so eagerly and with such delight. How the simple ability to read and write had opened up worlds of knowledge and delight, and Reva suddenly found this power was within her grasp. She even momentarily forgot her experiences of the past as her mind opened to the wonderful things she was learning.

Her thirst for knowledge was insatiable. From the moment she had the door of learning opened to her, Reva entered in with almost tireless energy. The days and weeks passed as she learned in weeks what would have taken months or years in the old schools. Soon she was an avid reader and taking courses in math and science. This once wounded and frightened little girl was becoming educated with phenomenal speed, and her confidence grew with each passing day. She had left the world of horror behind her and had entered a world of light and nobility.

Lev Comes Calling

After a month, Lev called Reva’s mother to see if he might pay them a visit. He had worried about how things would go with this unfortunate child. She had suffered the vilest experience at the hands of the one who should have been her protector. Ansa was delighted to hear from Lev. He was the one who had arranged all the details for Reva’s return to life, and she also knew that he forced Jamal, the child’s father and abuser, to stay in the area and face up to his sins.

The following day, Lev arrived early in the morning. He set his aircraft down on their pad and invited them to go with him to the local chapel. They were both reticent to go, for they did not wish to impose on Lev. But anyone could see Reva’s eyes dancing with excitement when he invited her to ride in his shiny aircraft. He gave them a few minutes to change, and soon they were lifting off the pad into the air as if on eagle’s wings. As they flew higher, everything below seemed so beautiful that Reva felt like she was flying on a magic carpet. Since

they had extra time, Lev flew them over the countryside to show them different housing developments and orchards springing up all over.

“Soon the whole Sahara Paradise will be filled with people,” he explained to them. “Many who died homeless and poor will come to life again with homes, gardens and orchards—as rich as kings on their thrones. In fact, they will be richer, because kings got old and sick and died. But those who obey our King will live forever.”

Soon Lev landed the aircraft at the chapel. It was almost like stepping out of Elijah’s heavenly chariot. Everyone recognized Lev’s craft, and they soon found themselves surrounded with excited people eager to greet Lev. Lev introduced his passengers to everyone.

“I am asking everyone here to give my two guests a warm welcome. Those who have wounds always heal better with abundant love. So please welcome our two visitors with open arms of love—this is Ansa and her daughter, Reva. This is their first visit to the chapel and we want to make this so happy an occasion that they will be daily visitors and worshippers.”

Never did anyone receive a warmer welcome. Soon the music started. Lev made sure his two guests sat with him. To his delight, Reva not only found the hymns but had learned to read the words and the music, as well. She sang beautifully while Lev joined in a reverberating bass. Reva sat wide-eyed as the chaplain gave a very warm and loving sermon on the Prodigal Son. She had never heard anything like this before, but the message was so meaningful that tears welled up in her eyes.

After the service, the chaplain came up to them and asked them to come as often as they could.

Reva replied, “Oh, I shall be here every day. This was the most beautiful day I have ever had. The ride here was like flying on a magic carpet, and all the people have been so kind and friendly. And your words were so beautiful. Now that I have learned to read, I am going to read through the Bible.”

“Thank you, Reva. You will be welcome here at all times. I want you to meet my two daughters, and perhaps you can visit our home sometime.”

Everything had gone so well that perhaps it was too good to last. Just as they turned to leave, Reva saw her father Jamal standing in the back of the chapel. She froze instantly and turned as pale as a sheet and started shaking.

When Lev saw her like that, he knew instantly that Jamal must be there. Quickly he swept her up in his arms and taking Ansa’s hand they rushed out. He had not anticipated Jamal being there, and it seemed to have undone all the progress of the past month. Reva stopped her shaking shortly after takeoff, but now the flight was nothing more than an escape from her dungeon of the past. All of her exuberance disappeared.

Lev was angry that he had failed to anticipate this possibility. He knew this moment would come sooner or later, but he had hoped that she might have developed more emotional strength to handle it. He knew he had to do something to repair the damage, but he could think of nothing that would heal her pain.

Despondency and Despair Drowns Reva’s Happiness

Lev tried talking to Reva to break the despondency of her unhappy memories. She seemed unable to respond and retreated into silence. All the old wounds were reopened, and she could not rise above the dark feelings. Her mother tried to get her to eat her the breakfast that she usually enjoyed, but she didn’t want to eat or talk. She wanted to return to her room, and finally her mother agreed. Lev apologized for having failed to prevent this contact with her father, but it was something that was going to happen sooner or later. No matter when such a meeting took place, it would still be traumatic and painful.

Lev asked Ansa if she would consider getting a dog for Reva, something she could love without fear of being hurt.

“If it might help, certainly she could have a dog for a pet to help get over the horrid memories she carries. As a matter of fact, the neighbor

asked if we wanted a puppy the other day, but we had so many things happening that I didn't give it serious thought. The puppies are weaned and ready to find new homes. Shall I call her and see if the offer still stands?"

"Great! I'll take Reva and let her pick the one she wants."

Ansa called the neighbor who still had two puppies left and was pleased to give one to Reva.

Lev then called to Reva, who was huddled in her room if she would come with him to pick up her puppy. She appeared in the doorway with a little sparkle in her eyes.

"Can I really have a puppy, Mama?"

"Yes, little one, the neighbor offered one, and Lev will go with you to pick it up. You must promise to take good care of it, though."

"Oh, I will, Mama, I will."

"All right then. There are two puppies and you must choose which one you want."

Suddenly Reva came out of her despair and seemed to have a purpose in living again.

"Do you know what kind of dogs your neighbor has?" Lev asked her.

"Oh, yes, I have seen them. They are such adorable puppies. They are brown Labradors and all so beautiful. I used to have a dog and a pet goat as well. Those were happy days."

"Well, you will have lots of happy days again, my dear. There are many sheep and goats that wander about the neighborhood. You may want to make friends of them also. Make sure you have water for them to drink conveniently and put out a little salt block. You will find they like to lick salt every once in a while."

Soon they were at the neighbor's, and there on the lawn was the mother dog with her two pups. Reva went straight to the little puppies, and they lovingly crawled over her demanding full attention. They were so cute and cuddly that soon Reva was having a little love fest

with the creatures. After she played with them for about a half hour, Lev asked if she knew which one she wanted to take home.

"They are both so cute, but I think the little girl loves me the most. I think I will call her Queenie because she looks like a little queen."

The lady of the house gave her a little leash. It fit Queenie perfectly.

"There you go. She's all yours, but you must take good care of her. You must think of her needs and learn to understand her language. I can see Queenie loves you already, and you will have a good and steadfast friend in her as long as she lives. Dogs live for your love. You must always have fresh water for her and she loves the new protein grass that grows everywhere now, so food will be no problem. It is a perfect diet for her, but you know dogs like people food, too. God bless you, my child. You will have the most loyal and loving friend that anyone can have from the animal kingdom."

Reva was smiling and happy again.

"Thank you for giving me my dog. She is the most beautiful dog in the world. I promise I will care for her and love her always."

Soon they were walking home with the little puppy running around Reva tangling her leash around her legs, and Reva laughing out loud. Her thoughts were suddenly lifted from the haunting memories of the past into a joyous experience of a little girl falling in love with her own puppy friend. Here was a friend that would be true and that would never hurt her or desert her.

Lev Is Perplexed

Still Lev was perplexed as to how the child was going to heal. This was only a diversion. In some way Jamal and his daughter Reva were going to have to be reconciled and the pain alleviated. Jamal also was miserably aware of his betrayal of his daughter and the terrible loss of human dignity he had caused. It remained dark as a festering wound for them both. Shame and revulsion hovered over a crime such as this. While it might someday be forgiven and the wounds healed, still every memory of it would be like an odious smoke ascending from a deep

abyss. Because sin would be remembered forever—even after the sinner had attained righteousness—it was important that a complete separation be made between sin and the sinner. Such an incestuous relationship was the result of a sick mind and perhaps partly due to original sin.

Lev decided he would pick up Reva and her mother everyday and take them to another chapel several miles further away. That way they would avoid contact with Jamal, at least until Reva developed her inner strength to deal with the situation.

Fortunately, Lev observed, Reva still enjoyed her studies and was getting a belated primary education. The day would come when reconciliation must take place, and Lev prayed for wisdom to help facilitate that moment.

Queenie became an inseparable friend to Reva, who was learning of love that would not fail or ever betray her. This would help her to understand that her father's betrayal was due to human weakness and frailty, not a thought-out desire to hurt her.

As the months passed, Reva matured and became stronger in knowledge as well as understanding. Lev was waiting for such a time when he could speak to her about her father. Reva enjoyed meeting with people as well as singing hymns of praise and participating in the daily Bible studies. Everything kept her unfortunate past in the background, but it did not make it go away. It only insulated her a little. If she could be healed, she could be an enormous help to others who shared similar experiences as she did. Gradually, she seemed stronger and better adjusted to her new life.

The day finally came when Lev decided he would talk to Reva. After the usual morning services, Lev walked both her mother and Reva to their garden and invited Reva to sit down so he could talk to her, and he invited Ansa to stay also.

“I know what happened to you in your former life, Reva. I know that you carry this as a heavy weight, and I am hoping that we can help you drop it so you don't have to carry it anymore.”

She froze.

“Please don't run away now, we must talk together about this so that you can put this matter behind you. Do you know that your father is sorry for what he did?”

“That's what Mama said.”

“He really loves you and wants to be in your life again, but he knows that what he did to you was so bad that he cannot forgive himself for what he did, and he feels that you can never forgive him either. Do you understand what I am saying?”

She just sat there without moving. She did not start to shake, and Lev thought that was a good sign. During the long silence that followed, Lev began to think that he had made a mistake bringing this up. Her mother caressed her hair gently and gave her a hug while Queenie sat looking at her. At last she spoke.

“I cannot bear to see Papa because it makes me feel so afraid. I just want to forget, but I keep having nightmares. Can God make this all go away?”

“Yes, in time the nightmares will go away and God will dry your tears and heal your sad heart. You have to forgive your Papa first. Can you do that?”

Happier Times Remembered

“Well, I don't hate Papa. I remember some happier times with him when he used to bring me little gifts and would hug me and tell me I was his little girl. But, I wish that was all I remembered.”

“Well, you know Reva that your father is very sad. If there was one thing he could change in his former life it is what he did to you. He suffers every day and hates himself. He has nightmares about it, too. He wants to see you and to hug you and tell you again that you are his little girl. He doesn't think you can forgive him and that you hate him.”

“I don't hate him. I wish it could be as it once was with him. I know what he did to me was evil. I shudder with every memory of that awful day.”

“Well, you know he drank too much wine that day, and what he did then he would not have done if he was not drunk. When the wine wore off, he felt only shame and guilt. He has called me many times telling me how much he wants to try to be a good father to you. He has a broken heart and so do you. His heart can heal only if he knows that your heart is healed. Can you bear to look at him again?”

“I would like to, but I am afraid.”

“You must know, Reva, that no one can ever hurt you again. Christ will not permit it. I think you and your father should have a little walk together. He has never met Queenie, and I am sure she will love your father. He wants to tell you how sorry he is. No one can undo the harm that he did to you, but Christ has given you a new life with a legion of angels to protect you. He is your Papa and every day that you will not see him makes him very sad. He has told me he wishes that he was still in the grave because he is unfit to live.”

“Mama, should I see him?”

“Yes, I think your Papa loves you. Somehow you must get beyond that evil he did to you. The only way is to forgive, and then you will begin to have peace.”

“It will be very hard for me, but if he wants to see me, I will see him. Make it tomorrow or even better today if you can. If I think about it too long I will become sick.”

Lev picked up his phone to call Jamal. He answered on the second ring. “Hello, this is Jamal.”

“This is Lev and I have good news for you. Reva has consented to see you and she wants to do so today or tomorrow—better today, if possible.”

Is There Balm for Healing?

There was a long pause.

“I can hardly face her. But, yes! I will come right now if she will see me.” His voice quavered as he choked on the lump in his throat.

“Good, I will pick you up in ten minutes.”

“I will be ready, Lev.”

This was the moment that everyone dreaded and yet it was the moment where healing could begin. One little girl trying to overcome her painful memories and one broken-hearted father who so much wanted to repair the damage that he inflicted—was there any balm for their healing?

Lev started his aircraft with mixed emotions. If this did not go well, it could have devastating effects on Reva. Yet, if healing was to come at all, it had to start with forgiveness touching a broken and contrite heart. Could this be such a moment?

When Lev landed on Jamal’s pad, he was waiting. He entered the aircraft, thanking Lev for making this possible.

Jamal’s face was tense with nerves and streaked with tears. “Lev, this is the hardest moment of my life. I must live down my sin, whatever it takes. I cannot undo the past, but I can show my child that I love her in spite of what I did. If she can only forgive me just a little bit, then maybe I will want to live again. Look at me, Lev. You are looking at a broken and wretched man. My sin is greater than I can bear. I saw her that day at the chapel. When she looked at me, she froze and began to tremble. She must loathe me and I cannot blame the poor child. I destroyed her life and mine, too.”

“Remember, Jamal, God did not bring you and Reva back to life to torment you. There is forgiveness with God, and if He can forgive you then surely your daughter can. There is enough pain already and it is time for a new beginning. Thank God for starting places. You and your daughter will have a starting place today.”

Lev’s smile was encouraging. “It won’t be easy to face your daughter, nor will it be easy for her to face you. But remember, she wants to have her old Papa back as he once was. Only you can give her back the Papa she once knew.”

Jamal sat pensively while the aircraft lifted off.

“You know, Lev, I would rather be dead than to have to cause my daughter pain again.”

“If you were dead, it would not give Reva her real father again. All she would have is an awful memory of you. She would never know how much you regretted what you did. She would never know that you did what you did because of sin that had overtaken you, and not because you did not love her. She would not know how much your heart yearned to have her back again in all purity and love. She would never feel your love for her in trying to undo the damage you precipitated.”

Healing the Hurt of My Daughter

“You are right, Lev; and if I can heal the hurt of my daughter, even a little bit, it will be worth whatever pain it causes me. You know, Lev, I have never told anyone, but when I was being strangled, my conscience said to me, ‘You deserve to die.’ I felt this was punishment from God for my horrible sin. At least I felt that this was some small payment for my sin.”

“Your daughter died because of your sin, Jamel. However, your death could not undo what was done. Only Christ’s death can and will. Both you and your daughter are alive again, and, more importantly, the past can be repaired if you sincerely desire to do so with all your heart. Christ wants everyone to learn to love and return to harmony with God and righteousness.”

The aircraft was now hovering over Ansa’s pad. Jamal gathered considerable comfort and strength from Lev’s encouraging words.

“Pray for me, Lev. I must somehow succeed in making Reva know that I truly love her and would gladly give my life to heal and repair the suffering I have caused her. I have not slept one night in peace since that fateful day. I awaken with self-loathing. If Christ can start the process of healing this day, I will serve him day and night forever in gratitude.”

As the aircraft landed and they exited to meet Ansa, Jamal looked pale and nervous. He kissed her gently and asked if Reva was still willing to see him.

“Yes, she is. I do not know for whom it will be harder—her or you. She is waiting inside to see you. Whatever you do Jamal, go slowly. Be kind and gentle. She needs love for the healing process to begin. Lev and I will be in the room, but we will sit apart. ‘Dear Lord, may the healing begin.’”

Jamal had never been a man of prayer, but he bowed his head earnestly in prayer, praying audibly.

“Dear Lord, this is the moment my daughter and I must face to find forgiveness and healing. My sin is greater than I can bear and it has devastated my daughter. I do not deserve this chance to be forgiven, but forgiveness is the only thing that can start a healing process. If you can forgive this sin, perhaps my daughter will find it in her heart to forgive me. Dear Lord, I am not sure that my prayer makes any sense, but look down from above on my wretchedness and deal in mercy with me, I ask in Jesus’ name.”

Jamal turned toward the house walking slowly with heavy steps and a heavier heart. Everything he had done to his daughter now seemed so evil to him, and in this present moment he could not even imagine how he could have done such a loathsome thing. God knew he was sorry. However, Reva could not know that she was not the only one who suffered from his act. He also suffered endless torment of mind and heart. If only Reva could forgive him, at least that would bring a ray of light into his troubled mind.

Upon entering the house, he saw her sitting there so young and beautiful, yet so pale. Lev and Ansa were right behind him, and she looked past him for their reassurance. She could not look into his eyes, but lowered her eyes to his feet. She was overwhelmed with memories and began to cry and withdraw into a place in her mind where she could hide from him.

Jamal stood there, wishing only that he could embrace her as a pure father might do with his daughter. He dared not touch her, for he knew in her eyes he was unclean and evil. Yet they both wanted desperately to somehow repair the past and alleviate the pain.

Tears That Speak

He wanted to speak, but he could find no words for the moment. He just stood there with tears welling up in his eyes and running down his cheeks. As the silence lengthened, Reva looked up and saw tears running down her father's face. Tears have their own language that sometimes speak better than words. For the first time, Reva saw her father as a broken man who needed to be healed and forgiven.

"Oh, Papa," she sobbed. "Why do we both hurt so badly?"

"My child, I have not passed a single day of my life wishing that I had not done this. I am so sorry, if I could I would die to undo that sad moment, but it cannot be done. We are now both miserable, but I am the one who bears the guilt, and I am the only one who deserves this pain. You are pure and innocent. I did what no honorable father should have done. I deserve whatever pain and shame may come to me. The only reason I have had the courage to come to you my child, is because I understand God and Christ will forgive me if you will, and that your happiness depends on it as well. I know I cannot undo the evil that I did, but I am here to tell you how very sorry I am. I don't deserve your forgiveness, but I must ask for it. If you can find it in your heart to forgive me, maybe your heart and mine can somehow begin to be healed. This is the only way that both of us will ever rise above the terrible darkness of our past. We cannot change it, but we can rise above it and find some peace and healing. Can you forgive me, my child?"

Reva's sobbing stopped. For the first time she looked up at him and saw her father as a broken man, needing what only she could give him—forgiveness. She was only a child, but she felt his pain for the first time, and she knew that this was no longer the same man who hurt her. She reached up with her handkerchief and dried the tears running down his cheeks.

"Oh, Papa, I think I can forgive you. Do you really love me as your daughter?"

"Oh, Reva, I did not love as a father in the past. If I had, I would never have done this. I do really love you now, and that is why I will do anything to have your forgiveness and love. I am not worthy of it, child. As I was being choked to death, I felt this was just punishment for me. I deserved to die. However, when I came to life again, even as you did, I found my first thoughts were about you and what I did to you. Sin is so awful that the memory of it is like a dark cloud that hangs so heavy over my heart."

"I want to forgive you, Papa. I know you are truly sorry, and I wish to put this all behind me. I have been able to do it when you were not around. But seeing you makes it all come back. I do not know how to change this."

"Perhaps we have to live together and create new happy experiences that will crowd out the past. If it was a stranger or an enemy that hurt you, you could get over it much easier. When it is your own father who hurts you and destroys your life, it is much harder to accept. I know this. I cannot change the past, but what can I do to heal your broken heart?"

A Gateway to Healing

"Knowing that you also hurt helps me even more to want to close the past and replace it with happy experiences. Please be patient with me, Papa. I feel best when I am studying and learning in this beautiful world. This has helped me keep my mind on other things. However, I am not afraid of you anymore, and perhaps that will allow me to see you and learn to love you again."

"Oh, precious Reva, you are wise for your years. I have lost the right to be a father to you, but if you will one day be able to forgive me, then I will try to be the father that I should have been. I have brought you a little present and here is my phone number. I will not come again until you call for me and feel comfortable seeing me again. I will give you time to get comfortable with me and hope I can earn your love again, my child. Please remember, I am not the same man I was then."

“Papa, I do want to love you. Let me open your gift for me before you leave.”

She opened the gift to find a cuddly bear that she loved instantly.

“I will keep this bear close to my heart, Papa. Thank you for coming and for this soft, cuddly bear. I will call you before too long so we can meet again. I didn’t sleep knowing you were coming, but I wanted to see you. Maybe next time it will be easier, because I know you do love me.”

Jamal turned and waved to Reva as he left.

“Good-bye, my child. Please try to remember me as you saw me this day and not how I was before.”

He left without looking back. His wife, Ansa, watched the whole exchange tearfully.

“It went better than I could have hoped for. Thank you, Lev, for making this meeting possible. I hope it will be followed by many more.”

Lev felt better about this tense meeting than he had expected. The first step in the healing process was always the hardest. Jamal seemed relieved after this visit. This most dreaded moment turned out to be a gateway that could lead to healing.

*“For God shall bring every work into judgment,
with every secret thing,
Whether it be good, or whether it be evil”
(Ecclesiastes 12:14).*

Chapter Eighteen

Lev found every day filled with excitement as the lists of those returning to life grew longer and longer. More and more people were returning at an accelerated rate. It was a good thing that the Sahara was so large and could provide for the countless millions. The countryside was gradually filling with beautiful homes and orchards for the steady stream of those returning to life.

There was an excitement in the air every day as families were reunited and as death and the grave gave up the dead in the great reversal of the dying process. Most reunions were happy as loved ones embraced. The small mistakes and pettiness of the past were almost all forgotten or dismissed from the joy of being reunited with loved ones.

Yet, there were always those who seemed very nervous about receiving loved ones back to life. Some of the ugliness of the past would return with those who lived again.

Lev wondered why Mabel Sasher seemed dismayed upon learning that her former husband would be returning to life. She had been so slow in building a home that Lev needed to get volunteers to speed up the process. When the preparations were complete, Mabel never called to make arrangements for his return to life.

Lev finally had to contact her and inquire when everything would be ready for Otto. Mabel always seemed to have some reason why

everything was not quite done. Lev could understand it if they had an unhappy marriage, because many married people lived together in a matrimonial furnace of affliction. Nothing in the record indicated that this was the case here.

Lev couldn't possibly read all the details of everyone returning, but because of all the seeming delays, he felt it was necessary to read Otto Sasher's record in detail.

"Aha," he thought. As Lev read, it was apparent that Otto had murdered his wife and made it look like an accident. Neither friends nor family ever suspected. It was the perfect crime except that Mabel, whom he had murdered, was alive again, and Christ reveals all the hidden things of darkness. Otto was also a successful hypocrite who was able to hide his crime before the world and feign great sorrow at her death. When Mabel returned to life, *she* remembered that day.

They'd seemed a happily married couple, and there was no reason to suspect murder. They lived in a small community where such things seldom occurred. Mabel had been a faithful wife and an excellent housekeeper. She was a very gifted woman with many talents, who had learned to read and write by herself. She was also a very beautiful woman who had many suitors. She apparently settled on Otto because he seemed like a serious man and a good worker. He was quiet, never free with sharing his thoughts. Because they never had any serious quarrels, all the neighbors thought they were a delightful and happy couple, so there wasn't the faintest suspicion of murder upon learning of Mabel's death.

A Charging Bull

After the wedding, Mabel found Otto tended to brood, keeping his thoughts to himself. But even she could not have guessed he entertained thoughts of murder. She had made an elaborate supper and had it ready to serve, when Otto said that he had to go to the barn for a minute, but that he would be right back. When the one minute turned into twenty, she began to worry. The sun was setting when she quickly walked into the barn, calling for him and telling him that supper was

getting cold. He answered her from the section of the barn where the bull was housed, so she started towards the sound of his voice when the bull came toward her in full fury. Mabel tried to jump aside, but the bull was more agile than she. Otto's face appeared in the setting sun, and he was smiling as the bull thundered toward her.

The animal charged toward her, pinning her against the wall before she could reach safety. Her screams fell on deaf ears as she fell to the floor, her rib cage crushed.

Otto had told everyone how he heroically came to her rescue with a pitchfork when he heard her screams, but that he was too late. No one suspected that he was the one who freed the bull. It had just been an unfortunate accident. He insisted on killing the bull, even though this creature was his killing weapon. Family and friends lavished sympathy upon him in his loss, and he played the role of a disconsolate husband who had lost his beloved wife.

To the community this was nothing but a terrible tragedy. Otto became a sad widower who had everyone's sympathy. He seemed to bear his loss with heavy heart and many neighbors tried to minister to his needs. There were always pies and cakes and meals sent to him. He didn't seem interested in other women. Even Mabel's cousins thought highly of Otto. They would never have guessed what really happened.

Every murder has a motive, at least among relatively sane people. What could Otto have gained by murder? Mabel now tried to replay the past to find out what may have been in Otto's mind when he planned her death. Mabel's father and mother met Otto before they both died. They never got to know him because they came down with a dreadful plague that was spreading through the community. The doctor was not able to save them, and within a week's time both had died, leaving Mabel to farm the land her parents had rented for many years. Her parents had never been rich enough to own the land but had hoped someday to buy land of their own. Trying to make a living renting land was very difficult and never returned enough money for her parents to attain their goal.

Otto had been a farmhand and was known to be a hard worker. He had actually volunteered to help her after her parents' death. When she tried to pay him from the little money her parents had left, he refused to take it. He seemed a gentleman in every way. Although after she married him, he had said many times one can never get ahead working for a living, it never raised concern because she felt the same way.

The couple from which her parents rented this lovely farm was getting old and wanted to sell the property to them, but Otto and Mabel didn't have the means to buy it. When her parents died, she had to convince the owners that she could farm this land, and when Otto started helping out and then eventually married her, the problem was solved. They could continue to rent this good farm property.

The old couple had a spinster daughter. No one had asked her hand in marriage. Otto would go to the owners' home to make rent payments from time to time. Could this have started the seeds of thought that would find it convenient to be rid of Mabel, so he could in due time be free to marry this old couple's daughter? She was not a beautiful woman, but she was a good person.

The human mind is deceitful, and sometimes it is desperately wicked. Life was hard for most people who struggled to make a living. Few people entertained murder because of inner nobility, but others were not so blessed. It seemed that for Otto this was an opportunity to marry into money. He could have two fine farms, rent one out and farm the other for the full income. Could this have been his wicked plan?

A Plan Not Consummated

However, not all plans are achieved. Not long after Mabel's death, the daughter contracted the plague and died. Otto must have been beside himself. He had masterminded a murder to no avail. Now he would have to farm the land without Mabel's assistance, and life would be much harder for him. Those without the discipline of righteousness do not always fare as well as they may have hoped.

Lev decided to talk to Mabel personally, now that he understood her problem. She had been under no obligation to provide for Otto's return to life under the circumstances. Had he understood the complications in Otto's return, he would have hesitated in asking Mabel to cooperate in making preparations for his awakening to life again. He called her to ask if he could meet with her the following day. She was willing but not eager.

The next day, Lev landed his aircraft on the pad of the house being prepared for Otto's return. Mabel was a small woman of delicate stature and graceful carriage, and she was also a very intelligent person.

"Shalom. I am pleased to meet you, Mabel, and must apologize for involving you in Otto's return to life. We have an enormous number of people we must arrange to bring back, and sometimes my staff does not read all the details of every case. All his relatives dismissed themselves from assisting in his return, so we asked you as a last resort. It was very noble of you not to refuse immediately. You could have said, 'He murdered me, so please exempt me in this matter.'"

"That is kind of you, Mr. Aron. I am honored by your visit, and I thank you for your kind apology. I do not mind working to make provisions for his return to life. It's just difficult to face him again, and it will be even more difficult for him to face me when the truth is known. All his evil plans did not bring him what he sought, and so I imagine that he will awaken to shame and contempt as the Scripture foretold. I understand that his life after my death was filled with sorrow and disappointment. Now his life will not be filled with joy like so many others who return to life. Poor Otto will have the wealth and security he so desperately wanted to have, but he will have shame and pain to endure. My death was sudden and gruesome, but it is all past and I have no guilt. If he had at least attained his goal through my death, then murdering me might have brought him some reward. As it is, he gained nothing but a swollen conscience of evil. He died a very poor and wretched man from what I have learned."

"You are very wise, Mabel; and a kind and forgiving person. I appreciate your nobility in not refusing to have anything to do with

this murderer. I will release you entirely from having anything more to do with his return if you so wish.”

“Well, I have helped so far, so I might as well be there to greet him when he returns to life. I loved him right up to that last minute, and he doesn’t have anyone else who cares. We never had any children, nor did he marry again. He is going to have to meet me sooner or later, and perhaps if sooner the easier it will be for him to own up to his ‘perfect’ murder.”

Two Weeks until Otto’s Return

“Very well, Mabel. He will be returned to life in two weeks—Monday at six o’clock in the morning. I understand everything will be ready by then. I wanted to be certain that you wished to be at his return, because if you decide you cannot go through with it, I will personally be there. While there is an enormous difference in the moral stature of people, there is a thin line that actually makes the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Some seemingly decent people started down the wrong road through a small series of events. If Hitler had succeeded at being a painter, perhaps he would not have turned into one of the greatest monsters of history. Once evil is entertained and then acted upon, it becomes very difficult for people to change their course. If you want me to be there with you the morning of his return, I shall be glad to spend the day with you and Otto together.”

“Yes, I would like that. I need someone strong like you to deal with Otto. He didn’t have a violent disposition, but it is hard to meet someone again who professed to love you and then murdered you. I am not a person that would take pleasure in seeing him squirm in his discomfort. I know what it is to be betrayed by one who professed to love you; but, then, so did our Master. Poor Otto did not profit from his ill-advised plan. ‘There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.’”

“Very well, I’ll be there with you when he returns. With your permission, I would rather meet him first and then have you arrive, say, at eight in the morning. This will give me a little time to deal with the general confusion he’ll have when he awakens.”

“Oh, Mr. Aron, that would be wonderful. Yes, please be there to smooth the way. If anyone can help, I am sure you can.”

“Well, that’s not really true. Unless people wish to change and help themselves, no one will bring them kicking and screaming to holiness. It has to come from within. People who willed to do evil must will to do righteousness. God has given every person free moral liberty. We can encourage them to will to change, but only they can do it.”

Mabel’s general relief showed in her bright eyes. “I will meet you Monday at eight o’clock two weeks from today, Mr. Aron. If I had not seen him smile as the bull charged toward me, I would never have suspected he intended to murder me. This makes meeting him rather painful.”

“Obviously, Otto didn’t know of the resurrection. Who could conceive of the fact that every man, woman and child would return to life? I receive these lists of names of people who are scheduled to return by the thousands. Each one returning is a miracle of God’s grace. Perhaps Otto learned from his poor judgment of the past. Let’s hope so.”

Otto Returns to a New Home

Lev arrived early that morning to be there for Otto at his assigned time of return. It was a glorious morning with birds singing while they busily started feeding their hatchlings. Lev made tea from the leaves of the trees of paradise. He thought he would make some for himself while he awaited Otto’s return.

When the hour appointed for his return came, Lev listened intently to hear the first signs of movement. Otto remained very quiet, so that Lev was beginning to wonder if he had awakened. At last there was the sound of his bedroom door opening very quietly. Lev rose to meet him. He saw a muscular man with a thick shock of hair who looked a little dazed and strange.

“I am sorry sir; I cannot explain why I am in your home or how I arrived here. I am very confused. I do not know where I am or why I am here. Could you perhaps help me find my home?”

“Otto, I am pleased to meet you. My name is Lev. I have good news for you. This is your new home. You won’t be living on that old farm again. You are newly returned to life this very morning, and I am here to welcome you and help you get adjusted to life again under the righteous rule of Christ. There is a new government in the world. You are a very wealthy man. This home is yours, and everything you need for an abundant life is at your fingertips. Come and sit down to the best breakfast you ever tasted.”

As Otto sat down, he questioned Lev, “How could this beautiful home be mine? I am a poor farmer. The last I remember was being very ill. There was no one to help me, and I was burning with a fever. Now my fever is gone, and I have never felt better, although I have this strange sensation that I am in some kind of trance.”

“Well, have a cup of tea, Otto, and you will realize this is very real. Before you have breakfast, may I thank the Lord before we partake?”

Otto hesitated, but he dared not refuse, so he meekly said, “Yes, please do.”

Lev offered a very short and sincere prayer of thanks for the breakfast meal and also expressed appreciation to the Lord for returning Otto back to life again.

“Sir, I’m very confused, but you seem to be saying that I have died and am returned to life. I am a poor farmer, but I know who I am. My sickness must have passed while I was unconscious. How did you move me from my farm here and why?”

“Well, drink some tea, and have some of this new and delicious fruit. You have never tasted anything like this before. When you taste the tea and the fruit you may think you are in heaven, but no, you are here on earth living in what once was the Sahara Desert. It is now a Sahara Paradise! As you look out the window you see how green and beautiful everything is, but this was once just a barren desert. There is now rain, rivers, pools of water and trees that were brought back from the Garden of Eden. This house is yours, and all the fruit of paradise is right outside your window. You may eat this fruit and live forever.

You are in a righteous world. No evil is allowed, and no one is able to hurt another.”

Lev could tell that his last comment made Otto wince a little while he tried to hide his feelings by reaching for his cup of tea. Tasting the tea, his eyes widened.

“My this is so good.”

“Taste some fruit, Otto, then you will surely think you are in heaven.”

He reached for the bowl taking some of the strange and appealing fruit.

“I must be in a strange land, because I never saw fruit like this before.”

He smelled it as he bit into the luscious fruit. Otto said nothing for a few minutes while he consumed the fruit.

“I must be in heaven; even though that is the last place I ever thought I’d be.”

“Why do you say that?”

Not a Religious Man

“Oh, you know, I was not a religious man. I decided early on that I would leave God alone if He would leave me alone. That is the way I lived.”

“Did you have a happy life without the Lord?”

“No, I can’t say that I did. I worked from dawn until dark most of my poor life and I just managed to scrape together a living. If I thought the Lord could give me a better life, perhaps I would have been more inclined to worship him. However, my neighbors went to church and some of them were poorer than I because they had to support the minister.” Otto shook his head at the memory.

“I know what you mean. I wasn’t religious any more than I had to be. I was a Jew who didn’t care for the rabbis, and I certainly had no special affection for Jesus. However, when I learned that Christ

brought me to life again, I became a true believer. That has been my happiest choice since I returned to life.”

“What’s this about a return to life? You can’t be serious. I don’t believe that. How could dead people return to life? That is utterly impossible.”

“It may seem so to you, but in fact, you have just returned to life within the last half hour. Your former wife Mabel has returned to life recently. She is going to be here at eight.”

Otto turned pale. He was in absolute panic.

“Why would she come to see me? She’s been dead for many years. You cannot possibly be telling me the truth. I buried her myself; I can show you her tombstone.”

“I should think you would be happy to see her. She was a beautiful woman then and she is even more beautiful now. The records show that she was a good and faithful wife to you. You never married after losing her, so why would you be so distressed to see her?”

“Well, why doesn’t Christ let everyone rest in the grave? This is so strange. I don’t want to see a dead woman. I was told that she went to heaven. Why should she be returned to earth? You can’t be serious. This idea of people coming back to life is preposterous. Worms ate her body. There is no way she could come back.”

A Tense Meeting

“Just wait a few more minutes and you’ll see that I only speak the truth. God does not raise the body that went into the earth, but He gives everyone a body in the resurrection. A few have received spiritual bodies, but most receive earthly bodies. Mabel didn’t go to heaven, but she slept in the grave until Jesus awakened her in a new body—which is better than her old one. I don’t suppose you noticed that you are stronger than you were in your former life. You’re no longer bald and have no scars on your body. How do you account for that?”

Without being aware of it, Otto ran his fingers through his hair. “I think I am feeling rather faint. Perhaps I should go for a walk to get

some fresh air. I don’t want to meet Mabel. I am in no shape to meet anyone. I must be completely out of my mind. I am hallucinating. What happened to me? Why are you here? I don’t know you. Are you some kind of police officer?”

“Slow down, Otto. I volunteered to be with you when you returned to life. I am in charge of making sure preparations are in order before we arrange for people to return to life in this region. No one seemed interested in being here with you, except your former wife Mabel. You had a natural sister whom you never knew, but she showed no interest in your return to life. The children of your adoptive parents had their own relatives coming back to life at the same time and excused themselves. So going down the list, no one was willing to make preparations for you to return. Mabel built this house for you. A few volunteers helped her build, but she was the only one interested in being with you. She wanted me here before she arrived.”

“Don’t I have anything to say about who is to visit me? I do not wish to see Mabel. For that matter I did not ask you to be present either. I don’t mean to be rude, but I am a private person. I like being alone.”

At the moment the doorbell rang. Otto was in a panic.

“I don’t want to see her. If this is my house, don’t open the door.”

“Mabel did much of the work in building this house. You could at least thank her for her sacrifice on your behalf.”

“I am half crazy and in no condition to meet anyone. You don’t understand. I can’t take everything that’s happening to me. I have to leave.”

Otto started toward the back door to open it when Lev opened the door for Mabel.

He turned to see her standing there in full vigor of life. Her blond hair was naturally wavy and beautiful. Her beautiful blue eyes penetrated his soul. He stood frozen and speechless.

Finally he managed to say, “That can’t be you, Mabel.”

“Hello, Otto, I am back, more alive than ever. Aren’t you glad to see me, Otto?”

“You can’t be Mabel. This is some trick. Both of you are trying to torment me. Oh, dear God, I must be mad. My worst nightmare has come true.”

“Otto?” Mabel asked, taking a step toward him.

“Since I awakened this morning everything is upside down and inside out.”

Otto started toward the front door, hoping to push Mabel aside and run out, but Lev reached it first.

“You are not going to run away. You’re going to face Mabel, whether you like it or not.”

Otto Confesses His Act of Murder

Realizing the moment had come to deal with the great sin of his past, Otto fell on his knees before Mabel, with tears streaming down his cheeks.

“Please forgive me, Mabel. I released that bull that killed you. You know that. That was unforgivable on my part. I did love you, but I was so sick of a life of backbreaking labor that I thought I could have a better life by getting rid of you and marrying for money. It was a hideous impulse and a terrible mistake! Life became worse for me; the woman I had hoped to marry died, so all my plans fell apart. I killed you to my own misery and hurt, but I lived haunted by what I did. I didn’t have a peaceful moment the rest of my life. Will you forgive me, Mabel? That is asking too much of you, I know.”

Finally he stopped his entreaties, sobbing quietly at her feet.

Mabel stood there with tears running down her cheeks. She didn’t hate him, she pitied him. The wages of sin were dreadful indeed. He had been a desperately confused man, betraying every mark of nobility and decency in orchestrating her death. He violated the law of God and of men, and now he was groveling before her, a broken man. Yet, she felt neither love nor hatred toward him. She realized that he had

done more harm to himself than to her. She was right—she just slept peacefully in the grave, but he had to live with his sin everyday.

This moment of reconciliation had been a long time coming, but it was a blessing for it to be now rather than later. Here he was, face to face with the very woman whom he had promised to love and cherish, only to end her life without gaining a single advantage. He lost his own heart in a tangled web of his own devising. The wages of his sin were bitter.

He finally raised his head, drying his tears on his shirt.

“Look at me, Mabel, if you can. It would have been better if I confessed my crime and been hanged. I relived that moment over and over and over again. What did it matter if no one knew I was guilty? I knew it day and night, and I was haunted by the vision of that bull crushing you. Once I saw your broken body lying there, I couldn’t bear to think that I was responsible for what happened. It was gruesome and awful. I had an alibi to cover my sin to everyone but myself.” Otto’s tears began to flow again. It was heart-rending to look at his agony.

“How many days and nights I dreamed of holding you in my arms again. I dreamed that somehow this terrible thing had never happened. I dreamed you were alive and we were together again. But when Lev told me you were alive, I couldn’t bear to meet you.”

She bent and tenderly dried his face of its tears. “Otto, I neither love you nor hate you. I feel sorry that you counted my life as nothing, but I don’t hate you. You’re right; I slept in peace. It was terrible dying by being crushed by that raging bull, but seeing you smile as the bull charged toward me hurt even more. How could you betray me? I would have divorced you if you asked for a divorce. Did you have to kill me? What kind of a man was I married to?”

“I’m not that same man anymore. The years of misery after you died have changed me dramatically. I don’t expect you to believe me, because I’m not worthy of your trust anymore. I failed you, I failed God, and I failed myself. I have no defense. Christ should have left me dead.”

There Is a Higher Purpose for Your Return

Lev interjected, “Just a minute, Otto. Before you say more than you should, be careful about saying what Christ should or should not do. He is an Infinite Sovereign and he knows what he is doing. You haven’t been brought to life again to be condemned and hung. Everyone who returns to life is given a full and fair opportunity the second time around to become a good and beautiful person.

“What you were and what you did is not nearly as important as what you will be. You can become a kind and loving human being bearing the image of God, or you can crawl back into the ugly skin of that wild bull again. This is the time to lift your chin and your heart and to tell the world you are not the person you once were, but you are now eager to become a man after God’s own heart. You can do it, but you must be determined. It will do no good to weep and cry for failures of the past if they do not cause a complete reformation of heart.”

Mabel got up and sat in a chair, gesturing for Otto to do the same. “Lev is right, Otto. Christ has raised us both to life again with the glorious opportunity to live the second time. If I saw such a holy resolve in your heart now, I could forgive you easily. I have a fuller and richer life than I ever had before, and it is beautiful in every way. I have no cause to be bitter. You have to forgive yourself, Otto, because Christ has already forgiven you when he raised you to life again.”

“I can never forgive myself. If I had my life to live over again I would never, never do as I did.”

Lev interjected, “That is the point, Otto. In a sense, you do have your life to live over again. Instead of hating yourself, try loving others with every power you possess. Love begets love, and soon love will consume you as a fire. Just give yourself to others in loving and kind deeds. Yes, the more you reach out in love to others, the more it will grow in your own heart.”

“It all sounds good, Lev, but I’m afraid I’m too low.”

Mabel had been silently listening and finally joined in.

“You are talking like a weakling who can’t change his mind from

evil to good. You failed in the first life because you weren’t determined to do right no matter what the cost. If you haven’t learned anything from your mistakes, then you will be condemned to repeat them. The only thing that can stop you from becoming a follower of the Lamb in your life and conduct is yourself.”

The exchange seemed to have reached Otto’s heart.

“You’re right. I must stand for righteousness all the time. I destroyed your life and my own once by being led into temptation. One such mistake is one too many.”

“Now you’re talking like a man who knows what direction he wants to go,” Mabel exclaimed.

Mabel and Otto Tour the Estate

Lev suggested Mabel show Otto his new home with all its many features, while he phoned the office. Another emergency had arisen, so Lev had to return after lunch.

When Mabel and Otto appeared in time for the meal, Lev had another pot of tea ready with an ample supply of fruit. He also shared homemade cookies that someone had given him at the office to show appreciation for his tireless service.

“Well, does the world look a little more inviting after you viewed your estate?” Lev inquired.

“I can’t believe how beautiful everything is. I lived in relative poverty and now without any work or effort on my part, I am richer than a king. And Mabel tells me about interesting things I have not even seen.”

“Let’s sit down for lunch. The menu is the same as breakfast, but in a few days you will crave this food and nothing else will satisfy. Shall we pray?”

After the prayer, Lev poured the tea while they enjoyed the fruit. He explained that he had intended to spend the day with them but needed to return to the office. Mabel had seen aircraft come and go, but Otto was spellbound at the thought of flight.

“Is it really possible to fly? I can’t believe it.” He was incredulous.

“Otto, didn’t I tell you we only speak the truth? As soon as we finish our delicious lunch, you will be my guests for about a half-hour flight.”

Lev could see the tension between them was past, and they were actually enjoying one another’s company. He knew that there would be hard days ahead for Otto in enduring the stigma of his former life, but he had taken the first step in reconciliation and that was always the hardest.

They both admired Lev’s gleaming aircraft. He pressed a button, and to their amazement the door opened. They both had known only the horse and plow way of doing things, so this was like magic to them. After they were seated and buckled, Lev turned on the power, and they quickly rose. Lev decided to take them to the chapel to show them where it was and invite them to attend tomorrow’s service. They both agreed.

“Wonderful!” Lev exclaimed. I will meet you here tomorrow and have breakfast with you, Otto, if I may.”

Otto said, “Lev, you will always be welcome, and you, too, Mabel.”

The aircraft rose high above the clouds, and both were overtaken with excitement like children.

“I can’t believe this. In one day I have risen from the dead, met my beloved wife whom I betrayed, and now I am flying above the clouds. I don’t deserve this kindness, Lev.”

Lev took them in a circle so they were able to see the blossoming Sahara with houses and orchards spilling out everywhere.

“You will notice that every house has a landing pad, and soon you will all have your own aircraft for local flight. If you want to travel great distances, you will have to take our larger aircraft. You will learn all about this soon enough. Now I’ll take you home where Mabel can show you great learning opportunities. Instead of milking cows for a

living, Otto, you can learn all the wonderful things you need to know to become a productive contributor to society. You owe your fellows more than most people. So if you study hard and learn everything you will need to know, soon you will be able to build houses and plant orchards and work in factories that are making computers and aircraft or whatever. This is a new day of opportunities.”

When Lev landed on Otto’s pad, he and Mabel left the aircraft like children in Toyland. Otto, who shortly before was wishing he were in the grave, was bubbling with enthusiasm. Mabel, too, was overjoyed that this dreadful meeting time was past and that healing was underway to alleviate her own pain.

“Don’t forget, tomorrow morning we have a date at the chapel. Meet you there at seven.”

*“For in much wisdom is much grief”
(Ecclesiastes 1:18).*

Chapter Nineteen

Lev arrived back at the office to find a request from Jerusalem to call the central office at his earliest opportunity. The Ancient Samuel had sought Lev, and usually that meant they needed him for a special assignment.

“Shalom, this is Samuel,” he heard in the usual gracious manner.

“Shalom, Samuel, this is Lev Aron returning your call.”

“Hello, Lev; it is a pleasure to hear your voice. We have all watched how beautifully the regeneration program is progressing in the Sahara Paradise! It seems to be running so smoothly that we thought maybe you could take another assignment for a season to resolve some problems that have emerged and will ultimately affect many nations. We would like you to return to Jerusalem one week from today. That will give you time to get your affairs organized. We know you have your office staff working splendidly as a team. That speaks well of your ability to work with people and to delegate authority. We need your talents. Are you willing?”

“Of course, Samuel. You know I promised I would serve the King wherever and whenever he chooses to send me. I am in his service now and forever. I shall arrange to be in Jerusalem in one week, as you request.”

“I will just tell you that your assignment requires ability to work with people as well as using your scientific acumen. We’ll tell you the rest when you arrive. You may fly home for a couple of days and then meet us in Jerusalem on the 20th, which is Wednesday. You may land on pad 24 in Jerusalem. We shall be expecting you in the morning.”

Lev could see that the Ancient Worthies were still under a heavy load trying to arrange for so many functions that pertained to the good and well-being of mankind. Even though several decades had passed in the regeneration process and most urgent problems had been resolved, still some remained.

Lev had a system for training everyone to function at full capacity. Each knew what had to be done and was tirelessly dedicated to this goal. His staff had expanded as the work accelerated, but he had seen Alvarez develop into a brilliant and gracious manager. He was competent to manage affairs in Lev's absence, and Lev had full confidence in him. He admired Lev's style of management and worked hard to copy that style. Lev called Alvarez into his office and explained that he was being reassigned.

"You will be in full charge during my absence. You have been overseeing most of the work anyway. When you are in charge, you will need an assistant manager. You will need some time off now and again, and the secret to good management is having things running smoothly when you are absent. You have done so well that I have always felt free to take time out. You must find another person who can be your replacement as necessary. That should not be hard to do, as we have many dedicated and gifted people engaged here. I will ask you to make your choice, and then I will confirm it if I think it a wise one."

"Thank you for the confidence you have in me, but I lack the wisdom and abilities that you have, *Señor*. I am but a humble desert man."

"You are indeed humble, Alvarez, but you are no longer a desert man. Try to pick someone with those same qualities to assist you. Within ten years, this whole Sahara will be full of people. Remember that both you and all your staff must answer to the King. You will hear his 'Well done,' only if you have done well."

"I understand what you are saying, *Señor*. We have worked hard to help this regeneration project run smoothly. We all love this exciting work. We will rest only when the Sahara is fully populated with

rejoicing people and the King says the work is done. I give you my word of honor, and all the Ancients for whom you labor, that we will be diligent and honest in expediting the work at hand. When problems are too hard for us, we will call you, *Señor*. We do not have the wisdom of long experience, but we are totally dedicated to the King."

"Alvarez, you have been a joy to work with. It was the Ancients that suggested we engage you, and they also saw in your group of people the heart qualities that were especially needful. Anyway, may God be with you. If I don't return, then it will mean I am unnecessary here."

"You will always be welcome here, *Señor*. You have become like the Master that you serve so faithfully. You have been a beautiful example to all of us, and all the staff love you dearly. *Vaya con Dios*."

Lev found his eyes filling with tears as he slowly walked away.

A "Dreadful Confession"

The next morning, Lev rose a little earlier than usual to meet Mabel and Otto at the chapel. This was to be their first meeting. Christianity had never been of great interest to either of them. However, having life again through Christ made them believers.

Otto knew he had a lot of shame and humiliation to face. He had carried out the so-called "perfect murder" only to now be exposed and humiliated for the horrible murder of his wife. The devil had been a poor paymaster. Today his sin would become known—so it was with fear and trembling he was going with Mabel to the chapel. She tried to comfort him.

"Otto, I have forgiven you—and no one should have a harder time accepting your repentance than I. Take heart; you know that God and Christ also have forgiven you. You must bear the shameful pain and stigma of what you did as the price that sin exacts."

Lev greeted them with his usual encouraging cheer.

"I am so glad you came today, Otto. I know it must be difficult for you to live down your sin, but take heart. Many great people have had to do this, and they gained strength and stature in the eyes of

their fellow men for the courage and fortitude they exemplified. The rewards of confessing sin and the joys of forgiveness are far greater than all the pain you shall be called upon to endure.”

Otto nodded weakly. “If I ever needed courage and strength, it is now.”

The music started and soon everyone was seated, joining in worship. Someone chose an old favorite hymn, “The cross now covers my sins, the past is under the blood.” Nothing could have been more appropriate for Otto’s distressed mind. “If only I could believe these words,” he mused in his heart.

After the opening prayer, there was a short period of testimony for anyone that had something on his or her heart. Otto stood up pale and trembling, but determined to do what was necessary.

“I have a dreadful confession to make before you all. In my former life, I murdered my faithful wife by releasing my agitated bull when she came into the barn. She was crushed to death before my eyes, and I have had to live with that memory. My plan to marry a rich spinster never materialized because she died of the plague. This seemed to be a perfect plan, but every murder is evil. No one else suspected my guilt, but I knew it and bore it every day of my life. I thought I could take my secret with me to the grave. I did, but I did not know it would still be with me in my return to life. I have a deep and abiding sorrow for what I did. My first requirement is that I confess my crime before God and man and throw myself on the mercy of Christ. I have been told that Christ did not bring me to life to destroy me, but to create in me a pure and clean heart. May that process begin? Mabel has forgiven me, and I hope you will find it in your heart to do so. I am sorrier than I can ever express. I pray that Christ will have mercy upon me.”

Some in the audience who knew Otto now and in the former life were stunned by his confession. A long and troubled silence rested on the congregation.

The chaplain broke the silence. “Brother Otto, you committed this heinous crime against God first. Every day dreadful secrets are returning with those coming to life again. Your testimony is one of

many I have heard concerning awful mistakes made in the past. In God’s mercy, you are restored to life again and it is not for us to punish you or reprove you. We all know your actions were reprehensible, but if Mabel has made peace with you, so must we. Your bull crushed your wife, but we cannot allow your guilt to crush you. You must do what we all have done; lay your sin at the foot of his cross.”

After the services of the morning, many in the congregation came to embrace Otto and encourage him for publicly owning his sin. The chaplain came up to Otto and said, “You have done a brave and necessary thing this morning. Confession of sin is the first step in securing forgiveness. I am sure that now the healing will begin. Lovingly, God has provided a Mediator to stand between divine justice and us. This is the day set aside for Christ to take away our hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh. I am sure Christ is pleased that you are taking the steps necessary to be reconciled to God and to your new community.”

Lev also came up and gave Otto a hug.

Lev made his farewells to many in the congregation saying that he would be leaving next week for another assignment. The whole congregation broke into singing, “God be with you ’til we meet again.”

Everyone left that morning’s worship happy that another person was taking the steps necessary to be reconciled to God. It strengthened everyone’s desire to be personally reconciled to God. There were sincere tears flowing as Lev left, walking toward his aircraft.

Wrapping Up Affairs

The remainder of the week was spent getting things squared away at the office. The number of people returning to life was steadily increasing at the rate of four generations a year, but the ability to expand the preparation process kept growing as more families eagerly worked to receive their loved ones to life again. History was awakened from its past and was being accurately rewritten.

Lev made his rounds of farewell during the remaining days. Everything was in good hands, and he felt ready to move on to another project. He enjoyed making new friends and facing new challenges.

The next morning, Alvarez took Lev in his small aircraft to Khartoum to catch the early flight to Israel. Saying his final good-bye, Lev gave Alvarez a hug as he walked to the plane. Alvarez reminded him of John the Baptist, who had separated himself from society with its pleasures and vices and remained apart unto God.

Upon landing in Jerusalem, Lev picked up an aircraft and flew home for a night of rest. After making phone calls to his family and checking his e-mails, he spent the evening rereading his diary and meditating on his many experiences in the Sahara. The Lord's hand had led him at every turn; his many prayers had been remarkably answered. He wanted to write his overview reflections down as a memorial to close the Sahara chapter before a new chapter of life was about to begin. Then he finished the night in prayerful thanksgiving.

*“Send thee help from the sanctuary”
(Psalm 20:2).*

Chapter Twenty

The sunrise was glorious as Lev touched down on pad 24. He loved seeing the ancient city of Jerusalem under the sunrays beaming through delicate pink clouds. He went straight to the main office of the Ancients and asked for Samuel. Samuel came out to greet him and invited Lev into his office to brief him on his new assignment. After a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing on their meeting, Samuel began his briefing.

“Lev, we’ve inherited a number of atomic plants that formerly generated electricity. They are now shut down, but they remain a danger due to radioactivity near the sites. Additionally, they are taking valuable space as toxic waste dumps.

“We have engaged scientists, many of whom were active in building atomic plants for electrical production. We have several plans, but no one is sure which is best for eliminating radioactivity safely. All the scientists working on this project had thought that some safe way to rid the world of these plants would be found when they were no longer functional. To this day we haven’t come up with a solution, despite years of effort.”

“I have often wondered about this problem,” Lev mused.

“Well, Lev, we don’t expect you to come up with a magic solution by yourself, but we want you to meet with the people involved in this project and see if you can arrive at a unanimous decision on a solution.”

An Atomic Assignment

Samuel invited Lev to join some staff members for lunch. Lev was honored to dine with such a noble body of leaders. He graciously greeted each member and rejoiced to realize they truly found pleasure in his company.

The lunch passed quickly and soon they entered another room with about twenty-five Ancients in attendance. Samuel opened the meeting with prayer and then rehearsed a few of the points he had made earlier with Lev.

“Lev, we have asked for you to be in charge of this project because you have two unique qualities. You are a brilliant scientist and an incredibly successful manager. We know that many scientists have toiled for years trying to develop a workable plan for ridding the earth of the atomic plants and toxic waste. You will have several well thought out plans laid before you and the other scientists. It will take the ‘wisdom of Solomon’ to know which, if any, plan is really safe or feasible. We have put off dealing with this problem until the regeneration process has successfully gained momentum. But now is the time to resolve this problem if we can.”

“Thank you for your confidence and trust. I will do my best in the service of the King.”

“Good,” Moses said. “You are our man and we wish you Godspeed. There will not only be radiation to worry about, but also a lot of feelings might get trampled in the process of finding the right solution. We appreciate the efforts these people have made to find solutions. They are brilliant atomic scientists and have been intensely dedicated to finding a solution.”

Samuel assured Lev, “We don’t expect you to find a practical solution if there is none. All we ask, Lev, is that you give it your best effort. If no human solution is really workable, then we shall ask Christ what we must do.”

“I’m eager to learn what these dedicated people have come up with.”

Samuel then gave Lev an envelope that contained the names of all the people he would meet with and the time and place for the meetings.

“Shalom, Lev, and God be with you.”

The meeting was adjourned until such time that Lev would confer with these scientists and reach a resolution on the atomic waste problem.

After saying his farewells, Lev left. He could not help but marvel that the Ancients were still working in the old stone buildings at Jerusalem. These old structures were well maintained and comfortable, but looked more like archaic museums of the past. But the Ancients brought their own majesty.

The Meeting

Lev began reading the three briefs submitted by D. Enstern, N. Oppenheight, and E. Fermit. He found himself drawn into their thinking processes and realized, after awhile, that it would take more than one evening to comprehend what had taken them years to prepare. He decided to clear his mind and turn in for the night.

Travel plans had been arranged for him. He would fly his aircraft to the nearest airport and catch a larger aircraft to New York City. It wasn’t long before he was looking down at Manhattan Island, now so different from what it had been years ago. There were no longer great skyscrapers on the skyline. While it was still a port for ships to load and unload such merchandise as was needful in today’s world, paperwork was at a minimum. Nothing was stolen, nothing missing, nothing damaged, and nothing shipped for which there was not a special need. There was no insurance or money to worry about and no mix-ups. What a different world!

New York City was no longer an ant heap of people crowded together. There were many office buildings and parks. It looked more like the island that was purchased from the Indians many centuries ago—only more cultured and beautiful. As Lev disembarked, a lady who had been sent to meet him and take him to the prearranged

meeting greeted him. She called out his name, “Mr. Aron, please come with me. My name is Laurel, and I’ve been sent to escort you to the meeting arranged by the Ancients.”

“Shalom, Laurel, my name is Lev. Thank you. Yes, I’m looking forward to meeting these outstanding gentlemen. I am so impressed by the briefs that I have been reading. They are incredibly well thought out and brilliant. Are you by chance on the staff?”

“Well, yes, I am an assistant, but also a critic and coordinator to keep these three gentlemen from duplicating anything that may have been done by one or the other. So I am familiar with everything involved in the presentations.”

“Oh, good! Perhaps you can make my work shorter by telling me which is the best and most workable plan,” Lev’s eyes twinkled with a teasing smile.

“I am afraid, and grateful, that that is your job, Mr. Aron. I pray that the Lord will give you the wisdom to understand what we must do after you have heard from everyone.”

“Well, if that’s what you say, Laurel, I can see you are quite diplomatic!”

They arrived at a beautiful building in Manhattan. Laurel offered to help with his case and overnight bag, but Lev said he could use the exercise after sitting on the plane. Soon he was in a spacious room set aside for the meeting. He was introduced to the three gentlemen, all young looking and vibrant, with none of the marks of old age in their faces. Lev greeted each one with sincere warmth and respect.

“Good morning! I’ve gone over each of your briefs and am very much impressed with your brilliant concepts. My job, after we open with prayer, is to listen to each of you present your complete plan of operation. You will each be listening and evaluating along with me. After you have presented your case, the floor will be open to the audience to ask questions and evaluate which concept is the most practical. I am fully convinced from your briefs that each one of you has come up with a possible solution.”

Lev offered a prayer for divine guidance and wisdom in trying to reach a solution to the knotty problem. Before Lev invited the three gentlemen to present their plans, he asked if any other staff members were available and invited them in to listen to the discussion.

“There is wisdom in a multitude of counsel.” There were about thirty people given the opportunity to hear this intense discussion.

“We will give each of you about an hour to present your solution to ridding the world of these shuttered radioactive plants. Then an hour of questions may follow from all assembled here. Please keep all questions fair and kind. The gentlemen have spent an extraordinary amount of time and thought in coming up with these brilliant solutions. Each concept submitted is workable, and without a doubt, if pursued, would accomplish the task. The question we will be deciding is not whether any of these plans will work. They all will work. Our task is to find the most efficient plan.”

The First Presentation—Mr. Enstern

“We will start with Mr. Enstern. Please give him your undivided attention.”

“Thank you, Mr. Aron. My plan is similar in some respects to the others. We will need automated equipment to break up the concrete fortresses and haul the rubble away to secure places. The depth at which they would be stored would rule out any radioactivity reaching our water tables or escaping from their burial site. Only a massive earthquake could spoil our plan, but we have learned how to avoid earthquakes, so I think this is a possible solution. Now I will give you an idea of the sheer tonnage involved which will be the same for each of our plans.”

He projected his tonnage figures on the screen as everyone groaned at the figures he presented.

“Now this is how many automated machines we will need to pulverize these plants and the number of automated aircraft we will need to haul the rubble. When this work is done, the pulverizing machines and the aircraft involved must also be buried in these

burial sites. Whatever plan is used, we will need the same amount of automated equipment, and when finished it must be destroyed.”

He listed three burial sites and the tonnage that each would hold.

“This will require enormous resources and effort.”

He had the entirety of his math calculations neatly projected on the screen so everyone could follow what was entailed in detail. The hour quickly passed. The biggest problem was the sheer tonnage of radioactive material requiring disposal. When his presentation was finished no one doubted his figures or plan.

The question period turned out to be very productive, and safety became the principal issue. Storing all this radioactive material naturally raised some concerns, even though the utmost care was to be used. Even the slightest possibility of danger would raise eyebrows. The second hour passed quickly and revealed that the first presentation was incredibly effective.

The Second Opinion—Mr. Oppenheight

After lunch, Lev called on Mr. Oppenheight to present his plans.

“Thank you for this privilege. It was certainly easier creating atomic energy than trying to dispose of these monstrous buildings. I rue the day we ever started. However, my plan is different from Mr. Enstern’s in that I would move the radioactive rubble away from earth and send it as a present to our sun to be consumed in one million degree heat.

“All the figures are much the same as already presented. We differ by only about a few thousand tons, which is nothing in a project of this magnitude. Yes, we would need the same equipment; however, mine would require cargo aircraft that would be required to reach speeds of twenty-five thousand miles an hour. Once this speed was attained and the proper course set, the rubble container would be released to go on its way to the sun. The aircraft would be returned back to earth for another container of rubble. This plan requires more energy, but it is safer. We would get rid of radioactive material forever. When the project was done, all the equipment used would be sent to the sun.”

For the duration of his time, Mr. Oppenheight presented his facts and figures detailing the number of containers and flights that would be required. The math was perfectly in order and every detail spelled out, even to the number of automated aircraft and automated pulverizing concrete machines needed. He had all the logistics of his proposed operation correct in every detail.

While this plan was more ambitious, it would rid the earth of the concrete radioactive cemeteries. However, it was the massive amount of material that had to be dealt with that became mind-boggling.

Another hour passed quickly. The question period was spent with worries as to what might happen should one of these containers of radioactive rubble fall to earth. Other questions concerned all of this radioactive material flying about, even if there were no accidents. Would such constant radioactive aircraft coming and going pose a threat to earth’s atmosphere? Mathematical answers were given that gave the percentage of radiation that might escape into the atmosphere. It was small enough to pose no grave threat. Here again, while this view provided a clean elimination of the radioactive nightmares, the problem became formidable because of the massive tonnage that was to be dealt with from so many places on the earth. However, everyone was impressed with the solution.

The Last Presentation—Mr. Fermi

Lev finally introduced Mr. Fermi.

“Thank you, Lev, for the privilege of presenting a third alternative. My plan deals with the same problems already presented. The statistics that I have projected on the screen are little different from the other two presentations, and we all have much the same tonnage and the same radioactive mass.

“My plan is to use antimatter to create an enormously hot incinerator that will reach such high temperatures as to turn this rubble to plasma and consume all the radioactive material. In that heat, most of the radioactivity itself would be destroyed and only small amounts of residual radioactivity would be left. These incinerators would be far

removed from any areas inhabited by humans and would pose little danger.

“Yes, these sites would have some residue of radiation but all within tolerable levels and out of reach of humans. After it is all said and done, the main problem is the sheer tonnage with which we must deal. This plan is possible and does provide a solution if we think the energy and resources required justifies this endeavor.”

In the question hour, worries were expressed about the residue of radiation. The energy of antimatter required would be no more than that necessary to transport the rubble to the sun. This plan also turned out to be a viable solution. All three presentations were within human capability. Each one had done a complete job of presenting a plausible solution. Yet, the gnawing reality was the immensity of the sheer tonnage that had to be dealt with and the constant danger of radioactive material somehow slipping out accidentally.

Lev closed the day’s meeting saying, “In the morning we must choose one of the three possibilities. We have the evening to consider and pray for heavenly wisdom. We may choose only one of the three possibilities. However, a fourth option is possible. Because any of these solutions are workable, the amount of energy and effort to accomplish this task is horrendous. Possibly we should ask Christ through the Ancients to remove the radiation by divine power. Then we can grind up these monstrous buildings for gravel in building roads and homes. The standard our government has been following is to try to solve our problems by our best endeavors. However, if the problem becomes too immense for us to handle wisely, we can ask for divine intervention. We need to give a rising vote of thanks to these three scientists who proposed brilliant and viable solutions. Shalom! Have a good evening and come in the morning with a decision in mind.”

That evening, Samuel called Lev to find out how the meeting went. Lev reported, “We were all impressed with the three scientists. They each offered viable solutions. The most ambitious was to ship the plants to the sun to be incinerated, which would get rid of all the radiation problems completely. The most practical was to bury

this atomic rubble deeply into the earth. This would rid us of these dangerous eyesores, hiding the atomic plant rubble safely in the earth. The last presentation proposed turning the rubble into plasma under intense heat, and by eliminating most of the radiation, reducing it to a less harmful state.”

“It sounds like they all did their homework. Call me in the morning when a decision is reached, Lev. Shalom.”

Lev studied all three proposals in considerable detail late into the night. He came to his conclusions after long thought and prayer, and then turned in for the night, at peace that he had done what he could.

Lev arose early in the morning so he could take in a chapel meeting. He would be going to a new chapel he had never visited before, but when he was with people eager to praise the Lord, it was always like being with old friends. No one recognized him, but he was greeted warmly as someone new. The services started with beautiful hymns of worship and the chaplain gave a very informative biblical presentation. He wanted to linger for fellowship, but he had to have some breakfast and get ready for the final meeting with the scientists, so he left quickly after the service was ended.

Another Colossal Wall To Be Removed

After breakfast, Lev quickly collected his notes and headed for the meeting site. It was only a brisk walk, and he enjoyed the scenery along the way. He had serious reservations with each of the three solutions, not because they were not workable, but because they all required such enormous resources for so long a period of time.

Lev thought about other cleansing projects in which the people of earth were involved. They were presently dismantling the Great Wall of China in much less time than it took to build. When those who labored building it return to find it disappeared, they will be amazed. This was thought to be an eternal monument. They forgot that the wall also locked them in when it was built. How wonderful that it was not needed as a defense anymore. Now the good earth was getting rid of

this hump on its back and its barrier that separated mankind. Soon it would be ground to gravel, serving again in the building process.

It was the radiation that made the removal of these obsolete atomic plants so dangerous and difficult. Without that, these plants could be removed as easily as the Wall of China. The Wall of China, at least, had some justification for being built. It was to keep enemies out. However, the atomic plants gave the world electricity for a season, but then because of lethal radiation they became the enemy within. Now these plants were monuments to human folly.

The meeting that morning was under a little cloud. Everyone was proper and courteous, but no one was especially happy. The three scientists were to each have a short time to restate their conclusions with whatever recommendations they saw appropriate. They had spent an enormous amount of time and dedication, but they could not reduce the time and energy the project would take. In the old world reckoning of time and money, this would be the most expensive project imaginable.

Enstern argued that his solution would probably be the most practical because it simply buried the reactors in earth safely where they could remain until their radioactivity would be spent.

“My solution requires the least movement of material because there are burial sites in most of the former nations, as I have submitted. Its weakness is that it does not remove the radioactive rubble, but merely relocates it to safe holding places far below the earth’s surface. However, I leave it to your judgment to decide which plan is best considering all factors. I acknowledge that my fellow scientists have each done a splendid job in providing a possible solution to the problem we face. Thank you.”

Oppenheight restated his solution as the safest and most complete method of ridding the earth of the contaminated structures.

“My plan will place these defunct buildings on the surface of the sun where they cannot harm anyone. The only question is, could any of the aircraft employed fail and drop the radioactive material on the earth; that would be harmful. But even if this should happen, falling

back to earth from a very high altitude would create sufficient heat to burn off some of the radiation. My plan would take enormous time and energy because of the logistics of tearing these plants down and shipping them to the sun. With antimatter as our new source of energy, it is in the realm of possibility. However, it would be wasteful in that it would be sending a part of our good earth to the sun. Thank you for considering this plan.”

Fermit presented his solution as being midway between the other two.

“My solution dissipates nearly all the radiation by turning the radioactive waste to plasma with enormous heat, reducing it to reasonably safe levels. It does not lose any of the good earth to the sun, and it does not leave the toxic waste to somehow mysteriously get into our water supply. Admittedly, it would require enormous amounts of energy to accomplish this, but it is a feasible solution that would only leave small traces of radiation, which would not endanger anyone. Thank you for your conscientious consideration.”

The final vote was taken. Since each of the scientists voted for his own plan, Lev’s vote would be critical.

A Miracle Needed

After a long silence, Lev made known his concerns. Finally, Lev said, “Actually, what we need is a miracle, and I am prepared to ask the Ancients if Christ might solve this problem in the most excellent way by removing the total radioactivity in those plants so that they could be removed with regular equipment and turned into gravel.”

When he said this, they all applauded. In the meanwhile he collected all the data from the three scientists to forward with their conclusions.

“I think Christ might be willing to perform this miracle,” Lev continued, “because it would release a lot of extra time and energy for the regeneration project. However, this is only a request and that depends on what Christ is prepared to do. At any rate, the Ancients will review all three projects and will make the final decision, if necessary.

We will meet here tomorrow at the same time. The Ancients said they might have the answer from Christ tomorrow. They also commended each of you for your brilliant solutions to a very complicated problem. I forwarded all the data to them last night, and we did speak of the fourth solution, which only Christ could provide. We have all felt the overwhelming magnitude of this problem. Thank you sincerely for your excellent efforts. Shalom.”

Samuel called Lev that evening after solutions were analyzed, and the Ancients agreed with Lev’s assessment. They immediately petitioned Christ to remove the radiation from those plants. The request was granted and accomplished immediately. They told Lev to report this at the meeting the next day to the scientists and then catch a plane home for his next assignment. It was hard to believe that such an enormous problem could be rectified instantly. It had taken the scientists years to wrestle with the problem, and the divine Christ resolved the matter in seconds.

A Miracle Done—Radiation Eliminated

The next morning everyone gathered to hear the final disposition of the matter. Lev called the meeting to order with prayer, and then gave his report. “Christ has granted our petition as of last evening. All atomic plants no longer have any radiation. Christ concurred that while the processes suggested were proper and sound, too much effort would be required and this time could be better spent in furthering the work of regeneration. So now, the same equipment that is removing the Great Wall of China will be used to remove these atomic buildings. They are no longer radioactive and may be used safely anywhere that such material may be needed. Thank you for your conscientious labors, gentlemen. Shalom.”

There followed an enormous applause and everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief. Enstern stood up, “Now we can sleep soundly tonight with an enormous weight lifted from our shoulders. We tried our best, but Christ knew our best was not good enough. Praise the Lord forever.”

Everyone joined in, saying, “Amen.”

Lev made arrangements for a flight to Jerusalem that afternoon. After having lunch together with the three men, he found they were all relieved and happy to have that particular problem behind them and were eager to get back to their other projects. They were excellent problem solvers, and science would be better served with them being involved in hands-on projects. Many people were so near to perfection that now there wasn’t a large gap between other people and scientists—all were brilliant and gifted. However, some still excelled in one area or another, just as flowers differed in beauty.

*“He openeth also their ear to discipline,
And commandeth that they return from iniquity”
(Job 36:10).*

Chapter Twenty-One

Arriving in Jerusalem, Lev was met at the airport by Gideon, one of the judges of ancient Israel. He had seen Gideon briefly on a few occasions, but had never gotten beyond a warm handshake and hello. Lev was pleased to meet with another of these distinguished heroes of faith.

“Lev, you and I have never worked together before, but you know my background. Not gifted as the other Ancients with abilities to write Psalms as David, or to write laws as Moses, or to be a prophetic writer such as Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel, I was more of a warrior than a statesman; but I did have faith in God, and in His mercy, He has counted me worthy of the honor of representing Christ.”

“Yes, Gideon, I remember how you arose to deliver your people when no one else had the courage and faith to believe that deliverance was possible.”

“True! Remember how it was written in Judges 8:23: ‘And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.’ You see, I held such an ideal and it was good. It kept me from directly grabbing for power. But do you remember how I accepted gold from the people, which they generously gave, and what I did with it?”

“Yes, I do remember. You made a ‘golden ephod’ of it and set it in the city of Ophrah. As written in Judges 8:27: ‘All Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.’”

“You see, Lev, my ideals kept me from seeking to be a king, but my vanity and my desire for personal recognition allowed me to make a monument for myself in a subtle way. Ah, the human heart is deceitful and wicked. It was not an idol in the likeness of a beast or false god. It was an idol that copied the ephod of the High Priest of Israel. I was careful not to make any pagan idol, but what I made was my deceitful heart’s way of getting a seemingly acceptable monument to my glory; it gave me the secret pleasure that I craved. Even worse, this gave the people an opportunity to have a covert form of idolatry and they went a ‘whoring after it.’

“I wanted some recognition, even though I was idealistic enough not to accept the position of king. The people secretly desired a king and something to worship besides the true and living God. The ephod I made appealed to my vanity and to their desire for alternative worship. Looking back, my sin is now so obvious, but in that time and place Satan could not have devised a better plan. Fortunately, the Lord is merciful and forgave me for acting in a form of humility that was disingenuous at that time.”

Lev felt sympathetic to this noble man. “Every man that acknowledges his mistakes stands taller in my esteem, Gideon. I won’t tell you of my mistakes now. I assume you are building up to some problems that are cropping up.”

“Ah, Lev, that is precisely why I gave you this introduction. We have a meeting arranged and another assignment for you, if you are willing to take it.”

“You have my ‘yes’ without asking, Gideon. All of the Ancients have been working ceaselessly through the days and sometimes into the nights. It is an honor to work with them in any capacity I can.”

A Time for Learning, Not Leisure

Soon Lev entered a room with several other Ancients. Barak, Jacob, Isaac, and Sarah were apparently involved with the project, and Gideon was the project manager. Gideon called the meeting to order asking Sarah to seek the Lord’s guidance. He then proceeded.

“We are finding that many people are failing to accept the disciplines needed in our time. Some of the earliest returned to life now have their loved ones restored. They’d been used to being entertained by television, sports, and parties with their leisure time. At first they responded eagerly to carry out their responsibilities. But some are not diligent in continuing their education. They feel the degrees earned in the old universities and colleges make them competent in our society. But when they earned those degrees, they also learned the prevailing concepts of that time, which were not always correct. Hence, they need to unlearn what was error. Their failure to do so is starting to impede progress. Fortunately, the right information is readily available to them, but unless they accept the discipline to study instead of slacking off with entertainment, they will fail.”

Lev responded, “Yes, I suppose that would be normal. They want to enjoy a leisure life. They figure they have an eternity to learn, so why labor to keep up with all the new information exploding in our time.”

“Obviously, you are aware of this problem, Lev. However, some of the old vices are starting to reappear. One of the problems in the old world was alcohol. We no longer have breweries making such drinks, but people are starting to make wine from the various fruits. Now they’re taking juice from the trees of life and making a very delicious wine. While no one is drinking to the point of intoxication, and no one has been punished or prohibited from this wine making and imbibing, it is making people who were once disciplined very lax. They are losing the ‘first love’ they had when they returned to life.”

“I understand. The people who are returning now are not seeing good examples of sacrificing love and works. Soon they, too, will want to slack off and start neglecting the disciplines necessary to be properly trained for increasingly complex projects. They aren’t embracing the opportunities of service at hand.”

“Exactly,” Isaac agreed. “We know that the ‘goats’ will be separated at the end of this age by their sins of omission—actions that they failed to do (Matthew 25:31-46). Such behavior is already starting

to spread. It indicates a great lack of zeal and appreciation in getting this enormous regeneration program completed. Fortunately, most people are not so disposed and still manifest an enormous amount of discipline and dedication. That is what's keeping the regeneration work on schedule."

Barak joined, "Lev, we have less than a century to bring to life every man, woman and child that ever lived. Then we have to rid them of any evil that returned with them. This is no small task. The saving grace we have is that most men and women want to be better. We can't make 'goats' into 'sheep,' but we can show them a better way, and we would like you to get such an endeavor underway."

"Lev, we know you've set a splendid example," Sarah interjected. "Your task is going to be difficult, because the group you will be seeking to help is not interested in keeping you back from your good works. As a matter of fact, they may just pat you on the back and say, 'Keep at it.' No one has stepped over the line into drunkenness, but a few no longer are willing to accept and carry on the discipline they had when they first returned to life. It's a subtle problem. It stems from their former lives when they would work all week and then have a bash on the weekend. That was self-destructive then, and it is more so now. If they fail to love God and Christ and their neighbor as they do self, they will not enter the 'kingdom prepared from the foundation of the earth.'"

Jacob continued, "Since things are so efficient now, and the work seems to get done just as well without everyone's contribution, it's very easy to overlook many privileges of service. In the former age, people were isolated in their own little worlds; each with his own TV, computer, or MP3 player, so they weren't as aware of the needs of others. None of these conditions pertain to our time. Everyone is robust and healthy and capable of incredible learning opportunities. The greatest opportunity now is to demonstrate love for mankind."

"It's human nature to be enthused when things are new," Lev agreed. "Then weariness in well doing begins to set in, and there are all kinds of excuses for cutting back. I always love to see the enthusiasm when

people first return to life. That's when they catch the vision of the great regenerating work and they are eager to share in it. If we could only rekindle their first love, they would find the joys of service far greater than an easy path of self-indulgence. I am ready to accept any assignment."

"Good," Gideon replied. "You will be heading out to the former city of Paris tomorrow. Life is for living, but until all are living and prospering in our new world, no one should settle down to self-gratification while billions await a return to life from the grave. Everyone returned to life should be a new recruit to serve in this great regeneration work. If some who once gave themselves freely for this great cause are now slacking off, it should sound some alarms."

Perils of a Sophisticated Culture

France had been a cultured nation with a love for life and gracious living. It had been famous for art, music, fine wine, and entertainment. Lev would find this a change of pace. Since his return to life, he had been engaged in tireless efforts of building, researching, organizing, and helping people with horrendous problems. He would be uncomfortable blending in with a society where some were prematurely relaxing and trying to savor life while a massive regeneration work was still underway. Fortunately, this was not true of most people, but there was an element that came from backgrounds that predisposed them to a life of leisure, while others were diligently engaged in a great work of human restoration.

Lev was to stay with Emile Bolier who had contacted the Ancients with his concerns about trends that troubled him. He had noticed that some of his companions, who once were strenuously engaged in various tasks, were now spending their time making fine wines and having parties for evenings of pleasure. Many were writing music, painting and writing poetry, which, in fact, was very beautiful but occupied most of their time. They were beginning to excuse themselves from building and planting projects for distant relatives or for those generations that had been cut off by plagues, war or other disasters.

Lev Meets Emile

Emile met Lev at the airport, and immediately Lev was attracted to his personality. Here was a man who enjoyed making provisions for those returning to life. He constantly studied to keep abreast of science and technology that was expanding daily. He and Lev had a great deal in common.

Emile greeted Lev, “I am so glad you came. I know you have dealt with all kinds of situations, but I do not know if you have run into the kind of situation I have. To illustrate my concern, the Ancients submitted a list of people who had been cut off in one of the plagues that ravaged our community centuries ago. The whole village died, and there was no one related to them to carry on. They obviously needed volunteers to make provisions for their return to life. They were to be restored not far from here. Surveyors had laid out all the sites and the time for planting orchards and building homes had arrived. I printed out the list. Having been invited to my neighbor’s home with some thirty guests, I thought I would bring up the request for volunteers to build for those who had no families. Well, I finally found a pause in the conversation to point out this pressing need for volunteers, but it was like a wet blanket. My request for volunteers actually spoiled their party.”

Lev smiled, “Did you get any volunteers?”

Volunteers Lacking

“Not even one, Lev.”

“Well Emile, it’s sad to see that people are seeking pleasure for self before loving their fellow men. We all have to be careful not to lose that first enthusiasm and love that caused us to joyfully sacrifice on behalf of others. Parents had to sacrifice to bring children into the world and labor with them to bring them to maturity. Now children have the opportunity to repay them and other ancestors, as well as to help those whose generations were interrupted.”

“Not only did I not get any volunteers, Lev, but my neighbor came over the next day a little indignant that I had sent his guests scurrying

away. When I tried to explain how important volunteers are, he refused to listen. He said, ‘Emile, we have done what was necessary for our loved ones. Why did you have to ruin my party? We have already worked long and diligently bringing our own relatives back through many generations. We need a little respite from all this work. We still contribute to the common good by working at jobs a few hours a day. Isn’t it better for those who lived closer to that time to make provisions for those whose generation had been cut off? If there was no one to do the work, we would gladly do it, but generations of that same era should do this work, shouldn’t they?’

“I said, ‘I am sorry that no one in that whole group was eager to serve the King with a little extra loving devotion and diligent work. I read the same list to a group of people on another occasion just the other day and got an enthusiastic response. Ten people were eager to serve. At your party I was stunned to find a zero response.’

“So you see, *mon ami*, that is the condition of some today. I sense with sadness that it does indicate a lack of one’s ‘first love.’ You know it is not because they are bone weary or in poor health.”

“Yes, Emile, I share your concern. I am sure if the Ancients called them personally and solicited their aid, they wouldn’t refuse to help. They would be ashamed to refuse. Our Lord could have shamed the Scribes and Pharisees into some reforms, but what is done from outward pressure is not true wholehearted giving. In many churches, passing the collection plate put pressure on people to give more than they could afford because they were observed by others around them.”

“*Oui*, Lev, I understand what you are saying and I agree completely. Unless all our deeds are done in love, it will profit us nothing. The problem, then, is not in getting them to donate their time; the problem is getting them to love it and look for opportunities to serve the King.”

“Emile, I wish everyone shared your enthusiasm and love. It was an exhilarating experience to receive someone they loved back to life. That motivated people in the early stages, but now it’s getting common.

There's nothing common, however, in having someone returned to life. We can't slacken."

"I share that view completely, Lev. I am concerned with my brethren who are wishing to enjoy life while some are still in the prison house of death. How do we recreate that first love?"

Lev inquired, "I'd like to learn a little more about your friends. Can you tell me if these people at the party are attendants at worship every morning?"

"Well, they do come, but I do not think it is with regularity. They seem to love the Lord, but God is not their first love."

"It's hard to love God whom we have not seen, if we don't love our fellow men that we do see—or could see if we helped bring them to life again. I want to go to the chapel meeting tomorrow morning, and I would appreciate meeting some of your friends. Please point them out to me."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Nothing, my dear Emile. I hope to meet them and learn to love them. It's not in my power to change anyone. Even God doesn't interfere with the human will. It's too early to conclude who will eventually reach the mark of perfect love for God and fellow men. That test will come when the 'thousand years' of Christ reign is complete. Some who are not doing well now may improve, while some who are ardent in serving now may slack off later."

"*Oui, oui*, that is correct. That is what our Master did. He showed us how perfect love for God and for mankind really performed. I suppose as we lose sight of our pattern we, too, lose our inspiration."

"Very true, Emile. Jesus addressed people in his time, saying, 'Blessed are your eyes for they see: and your ears, for they hear' (Matthew 13:16). I hope we are not finding people insensitive to inspiration."

An Evening of Wine and Fellowship

The next morning, they both agreed they would walk to the chapel for the exercise and to enjoy the beauties of God's varied handiwork.

They arrived early, and Lev was introduced to many of Emile's neighbors and friends. Emile's neighbor, the one who loved holding gatherings and serving exotic dishes with his own homemade wines, was introduced to Lev. His name was Gaston Chirac.

He seemed very interested in Lev and asked, "May I inquire, what is the purpose of your visit here? I have heard of your accomplishments in serving the King, and I must assume that you are here on some special mission."

"Well thank you for your kind words," Lev replied. "Are we not all in the service of the King? Why should I be singled out when each person is endeavoring to serve the King, knowing that he accepts what is done for others as being done for him?"

"*Oui, oui*, Lev. But you are being modest. While we all in our frail ways try to serve the King, not everyone is sent out as a pilot in troubled waters. You have an extraordinary record of accomplishment, if my memory serves me correctly."

"By the Lord's grace and help, I have had many blessings along the way. Some of my greatest blessings have been in helping to build homes and be with people newly returned to life. That is so fulfilling. I find each human being a complete and independent study. Some have left this earth in such despair and suffering. I intend to help with some who are scheduled to return to life here after having succumbed to a deadly plague several centuries ago. Have you heard about those returning in this area as soon as provisions are made for their return?"

Gaston's face stiffened slightly as he replied, "*Oui*, I did hear something of this, but I am sure there will be many volunteers. Why should you be involved in something as common as this? Aren't there many people who sinned that should be doing such work to pay their moral debts?"

"If this work were left to those who sinned greatly, I'm afraid it might not be done. My experience with such people is that only a few are disposed to giving themselves over to extraordinarily good works. Anyway, how would that pay back *my* great debt to the King who gave his life for a sinner such as I?"

The music started and everyone began taking seats. Lev was disappointed in the numbers that were here. It was only about three-quarters full. The chaplain turned out to be a former minister who was more gifted as a speaker than as a student of the Scriptures. After the prayer, he spoke on “The Joys of Life.” He managed to hold everyone’s attention with many illustrations and his personal experiences. It was more a collection of little stories of human interest than a study of the Word.

When the services ended, the chaplain hurried over to meet Lev as he saw many people gathered about him. Reaching Lev, he welcomed him to the gathering and asked if he would be staying long.

“Well, I hope to be here awhile. I’m not sure of the length of my stay, but thank you for the welcome. I hope to be attending while here. You know we do not ‘live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4).”

“Thanks for that reminder. Did you enjoy the message I gave this morning? Actually it was a replay of my former days as a minister.”

The Power Is in the Word

“Well, if you want to hold the attention of people today who are much more intelligent and educated, you will need the Word properly explained.”

Emile joined in, “You know Lev is a deep student of God’s Word. Perhaps you might wish to invite him to serve on occasion.”

“That would be very welcome. I plan to visit South America for two weeks; perhaps you could fill in for me while I am gone, Lev. I was going to leave the services to be praise services and accept volunteers who might wish to say a few words. However, if you would take the services I’d be most appreciative. I will record your messages so I can hear them when I return. I really think I need some inspiration. People think that because I was once a minister that I am really a deep student of the Bible. I never was in the past. Ministers could subscribe to sermons, and that is where I got most of my material. I really envy those who have studied the Bible topically and gained

clear insights into the Word. I am careful not to teach what is not true. I must confess, though, that I need to use more of the scriptures in my presentations here.”

“I would be happy to serve in your absence. When will you be leaving?”

“Next Monday my flight leaves for South America. *Merci.*”

It was announced that Lev Aron would be speaking the following Monday for two weeks. That created a stir, and many came to him thanking him for his willingness to serve.

As they returned home that morning, Emile said, “Perhaps you can bring into focus the vision of this great regeneration program, so that it will again burn in the hearts of the people here.”

“That’s a tall order, Emile. Only if the Word is received into a good honest heart will it bring fruitage. Once rationalizing sets in, we start building a defense that justifies our position. We may draw the false conclusion that to allow others opportunities to serve, we really need to step out of the way. We could conclude that building homes for others is not our gift. The imperfect human heart is so deceitful. We would never admit that our loss of desire to serve is due to a lack of love—that would be an indictment.”

Lev did feel it was providential that he was given the opportunity to serve this chapel. He needed some way to stir up their pure minds. Those who trembled at God’s Word would hear the incitement to good works. If their hearts were not in tune with God, the words would seem appropriate to others, but not to themselves.

Emile was a beautiful person inwardly and outwardly as well. He was a gracious host to Lev, and it was his concern about his brethren that caused him to seek help from the Ancients.

Emile and Lev Lay Out Plans for the First Building Project

Emile and Lev agreed to make preparations for a man named Francois Perot. He was among the last to die during a devastating plague that consumed the whole community. He had helped many when they were first stricken. He took every precaution that he knew

of to be shielded from this contagious scourge. However, no one knew about germs at that time, even though they knew that this disease was easily carried from one to another. Francois ministered to others when they were stricken, and then he helped bury the dead. Even though he knew the risk involved, he couldn't close his heart to his neighbors' needs. For a time, he thought he could escape the plague even while helping his stricken neighbors. His family had been among the last to become infected. He and his wife Mona had been heartbroken when their youngest daughter of five years old became ill. Neither love nor medicine had saved her. Then their seven-year-old son was taken. At last his wife became a victim. He buried each one with tears of anguish and was content when he finally caught the deadly plague.

Francois had been able to comfort and minister to his family and to countless others, but when he fell ill there was no one left to minister to him. He was alone, weak, and unable to feed or care for himself. He'd managed to place a good supply of water by his bed to assuage his fever, but soon he was too weak to lift the pitcher. He had died alone, but satisfied that he had done the best he could. He worried about the afterlife possibilities of hell in torment. He and his wife were not very religious, but they had been good and caring people. However, the priest who visited them on occasion warned him that both he and his family would go to hell unless they joined the church and supported it.

Unable to read or write, he had been troubled by many superstitions, yet he felt in his heart that if there were a merciful God, He could not be so cruel. He didn't like what he saw. The priests had lived graciously and in splendor. He knew that they had betrayed one of his neighbors, accusing him of being a heretic. Inquisitors soon apprehended him. This poor man had repented and accepted the faith but had been sent to prison anyway, where he later died. This poor victim had been wealthier than others and had a beautiful plot of ground cultivated with vineyards and rich farm land. Francois watched the priests and the inquisitor take his neighbor's land and home, leaving his family homeless. It was this that made him lose all faith in the church.

He had an old shed that he once fixed up for a widow and her children in which they could live. Fortunately, it was in back of the house and hidden from the road so no one knew that he was sheltering the wife of a heretic. They planted a little garden of their own on his land and he gave them a goat for milk and a few chickens to live on. An old stove kept them warm in the winter. And so it went until the plague came and Francois had buried them one by one.

Knowing a little of his background, both Emile and Lev were delighted to request the privilege of building for his return. Bringing people back from such dark oppression was an unspeakable joy. Francois had died alone, without a soul to moisten his fevered brow. He would awaken healthy, with a beautiful home, a self-sufficient source of food, and energy. Every human need would be provided. Knowledge that had been kept out of his reach would be at his fingertips. An ignorant peasant would soon be reading and writing and learning. His lost family, too, would be returned to him and share all of these blessings. Sorrow and sighing would flee away, replaced with love and joy. The darkness would be ended.

Work to Begin

After breakfast, they went to the site and found the trees had all been planted and much of the garden was growing beautifully. Excavation had been done, and the site was ready for the foundation; building materials would arrive in a few days. Everything was ready for work to begin. With an adequate workforce, the building could be up in one month; but if they had only a limited number, it would take six weeks or more.

Homes in this age were not only durable but were cleverly designed with panels making an enclosed structure complete with electrical wiring and plumbing, all pre-installed. Everything was integrated with absolute efficiency.

The two faithful friends returned home early because Lev wanted some extra time to study for his new chaplain duties. Soon absorbed in his biblical studies, he never felt better or more fulfilled than when he

was meditating upon the Word of God. What subject would open the hearts of the worshipers to the joys of service?

He decided that his theme for the few weeks he served as chaplain would be, “I know thy works, and thy labor...nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Revelation 2:2-3). He was laying out his thoughts, when someone rang the doorbell.

Gaston Invites Lev and Emile to His Home for an Evening of Pleasure

It was Gaston Chirac inviting Lev and Emile over for the evening. The man was kind, generous and loved hospitality.

“Well, I’ll have to ask Lev. He is in the study preparing for services tomorrow. If he feels he can spare the time, we may accept. However, he is my guest and if he cannot spare the time, I shall remain with him.”

Emile stepped into the study to convey the invitation.

Lev came out to talk to Gaston personally, “Yes, I think I could go for a short visit. I must get back to my studies, but I can spare an hour or two. Thank you, Gaston. Is seven a good time?”

“Ah, oui, mon ami. We will be honored with your presence. I anticipated your coming and invited many other guests who wanted to get to know you better. We heard about so many projects that you successfully accomplished, and we’d like to hear about some of your adventures.”

“Thank you for your kind words, but I hope that my service to the King will not diminish with the passing of time. Emile and I have just received permission for building for Francois Perot. We learned about his life and feel as though we know him already. What a good man he was!”

Gaston simply smiled and said, “How nice. We cannot have too many good people, can we? We shall expect you at seven this evening.”

Of course, Lev was not going for the party but rather to sow some seeds of thought while in general fellowship.

Candles were burning, an abundance of delicacies were available for the ten guests to enjoy, some of Strauss’ newly written music was playing softly in the background, and all were having a very good time when Lev and Emile arrived. Gaston introduced them all around.

While getting to know everyone, Lev learned that most had been alive long enough to make provisions for their parents, grandparents and sometimes even their great-grandparents, but after that, they had left off building in the great restitution project. They did spend about one-fifth of their time in various factories producing products for the general good of mankind. But other than that, they no longer bothered about building and planting in the great regeneration project. When asked why they stopped working after their great-grandparents were returned to life, they answered that they felt if everyone worked to bring back three generations it would make the whole project comfortable for all.

Lev didn’t challenge anyone that evening. He just listened to understand their reasoning. They had developed quite a comfortable philosophy that provided an early retirement from the work at hand.

Lev was called upon to ask the blessing on the refreshments. He was pleasantly surprised at the beautiful way the special foods were laid out. The wine was delicate and distinctly delicious, because it, too, was made from the fruit of Paradise. The cakes served were very similar to resurrection cake. There was no question about this being a gourmet’s delight. Gaston was a perfect host passing freely among the guests to see that everyone was being served generously.

Life Was for Living

During the festivities, Lev listened closely to the discussions going on around him. To his surprise, the subject was of love. Gaston had learned a philosophy advanced by psychologists in his previous life. The philosophy was that one must love self before they could love others properly. Apparently most of those at this gathering were in

agreement. When Lev was asked what he thought, he stated that this view was not scriptural and was, therefore, flawed. Everyone was taken aback.

Lev said, “The real danger is loving self more than God.”

“Oh, but mustn’t one love self before one can truly love God?” Gaston queried. “When one finally learns to love and appreciate self, then he or she is prepared to move on to love God and fellow men.”

“My observation is that we love ourselves automatically.” Lev warmed to the topic. “When cold, we put on an extra garment or turn up the heat. If too warm, we take off the sweater or turn down the air-conditioning. If hungry, we seek food to eat; if tired, we rest. We look out for ourselves in public, being careful to stay out of danger. Doesn’t Paul say, ‘No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church’ (Ephesians 5:29)? We do tend to take very good care of ourselves. Love of self in the sense of appreciating our bodies is inbuilt into our being.”

“Ah,” one of the guests countered, “but unless we love self and become sensitive to our highest interests, we cannot be sensitive to God and our fellow men.”

“Tell me,” Lev asked, “did Adam meet the requirement of the first commandment, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind’ (Matthew 22:37)?”

“I suppose we would have to conclude that he did not, otherwise he would not have disobeyed God’s instructions,” Gaston replied.

“Well, let me ask another question. Didn’t Eve love herself when she was beguiled into thinking that God was withholding from her worlds of light and knowledge? Didn’t she love herself in hoping to improve her wisdom and understanding, even if it meant disobeying God’s instructions? Wasn’t she led to believe that God was withholding knowledge unfairly from her?”

“*Oui*, that is true,” Gaston reluctantly replied.

“Did she get knowledge by eating this forbidden fruit?”

“*Oui*, she did, but it was not as it was made to appear by Satan.”

“Exactly right, my friend. The knowledge she received came in the form of guilt, shame, fear, dread, and a realization that she had been deceived. She was an innocent victim of Satan’s wiles. He told her a half-truth. The forbidden tree was not toxic or poisonous. It would not cause death in itself. However, disobedience forced God to take them from the trees of life precipitating their death. Satan then tried to make believe that death wasn’t real, and mankind had some kind of immortal soul or something that did not die. So Satan not only deceived Eve, but he also deceived the whole world.”

Procreation Began Under a Curse

Lev continued his line of logic, “What this tree did was awaken both Adam and Eve to their sexuality before they were mature enough to be parents. They became conscious of their ‘nakedness.’ It was true they had been commissioned to ‘multiply’ and ‘fill’ the earth, so God would have allowed them to eat of this fruit when He felt they were ready to begin the process of procreation. This tree would give them a ‘knowledge of good and evil’ (Genesis 2:17). Human sexuality has been a source of good and evil. It is good in the sense that when used in God’s intended sacred way, procreation is holy and appropriate, resulting in a structured environment for children to come into the world, to be loved and to be tutored in the ways of righteousness.

“But it has also become evil when used in a common and unholy way. The degradation of the human race has been multiplied greatly by this one perversity. We have had all kinds of diseases due to this evil; also, mental problems, unwanted children, unloved children, and failed marriages. God never intended this kind of world. So much good and evil has resulted from this tree.”

“Well, I confess I have never given this matter much thought, but what you say adds up,” Emile had been listening to this whole conversation.

Gaston was also taken aback somewhat by Lev’s explanations, but he was not one to give up easily.

“Now Lev. You are taking this matter of loving self out of context by relating it to original sin. That would seem to weaken my argument. However, if you keep it in the present context, it is valid. Don’t you see the need of loving self as a basis for loving God and fellow men? After all, if we don’t love self, we would lose our self-esteem and let others dictate our worth. We would not know our self-worth if we think of ourselves in very negative ways. Don’t you agree to this?”

“If we love ourselves, Gaston, how do we know we are worthy? Others may find us not as loving as we think we are. Should we love self with selfish propensities and weaknesses? Remember the ‘goats’ are shocked and surprised when the Son of man says to them, ‘For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not’ (Matthew 25:42-45). These people who are represented by the ‘goats’ obviously had a higher estimation of themselves than the Son of man did. It seems to me these who are designated as ‘goats’ should have loved ‘one of the least of these’ more than they did. There is never a danger of loving God and our fellow men more than we should, is there?”

“*Oui*, I hear what you are saying, Lev. There is little doubt that the Son of Man did find the ‘goats’ in the parable unworthy of life. I agree, they failed the hidden test put upon them under Christ’s reign. They were judged unworthy not by sins of commission, but by sins of omission. But, I hope you realize that we all here have been very active in meeting our responsibilities in bringing our loved ones back from the third and fourth generations,” Gaston tried to defend himself.

Emile joined in, “Oh, *mon ami*. No one is insinuating that you have been remiss in meeting your obligations to your ancestors. I don’t think Lev was talking on that level. He was speaking on the high level of principle. Love of self was a failed religion perpetrated upon the world through psychology, not the Bible.”

“I am not sure that you are correct, my dear Emile. Does not Jesus teach, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself’ (Matthew 22:37-40)? There you have it. Jesus himself teaches ‘love thyself.’”

“Fortunately,” Lev asserted, “we now have almost total recall of the Scriptures, so we do not need to carry the Word with us as we used to. However, let us do some simple arithmetic. We are all here capable of the highest forms of mathematical calculations. I hope we have not forgotten to add.”

Everyone nodded and smiled, confident they could pass the addition test.

“All right, let us refresh our minds with what Jesus said. He was answering a lawyer from among his critical Pharisees. The lawyer asked, ‘Master, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus gave a very direct answer repeating Moses’ summary of the Ten Commandments. He said, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Now, the question is, how many commandments did Jesus identify? Please take note that Jesus mentioned the ‘first and great commandment’ and the second ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ If we add the first and second commandment how many do we have?”

Two Commandments

Everyone answered in unison—“Two.”

Lev smiled, “That is how many commandments Jesus counted. He said, ‘On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ Where do we find a third commandment to love self?”

Gaston was taken aback and looked a bit confused. He excused himself for a moment so he could fetch his Bible. He said, “I had to read this for myself, and, sure enough, my case is sinking beneath the waves. I can’t understand how I misread these verses for so long? You are absolutely correct in concluding there are only two commandments given here. And neither of these two commandments is ‘Love thyself.’”

Lev was pleased with the response. He said, “Loving self is a fact of life unless, as in former days, one suffered from depression or mental problems that stemmed from chemical imbalances. We don’t

have such problems anymore now that we have perfect nutrition from the trees of life.”

As Lev and Emile were preparing to say their goodnights to their host and all the guests, four people asked if volunteers were still needed to help build homes and make preparations for the generation that was cut off by disease. With delight, they accepted the offers and told them they would let them know the particulars as they became known.

Everyone promised Lev to be at the chapel services and also commented on how much they enjoyed the discussion of the evening. Even Gaston gave Lev a hearty handshake, “Lev, I will be there tomorrow. Thank you for setting me straight this evening on the point about loving self. I am embarrassed that my thinking has been so fuzzy for so long. I had the wrong viewpoint on this and no one corrected me. I just don’t understand how I could have this erroneous idea for so long.”

Lev replied, “Take heart, Gaston, religion has been the centerpiece of Satan’s deception for over six thousand years. Even when he is in the ‘bottomless pit,’ his ideas are still stuck in our minds. That is why it will take nearly a millennium to get his brainwashing completely eradicated. And by the way, no one was more deceived than I. When I found the truth, it was very stimulating but also painful to my ego. That ceased when I stopped resisting and accepted it fully. Anyway, thank you for the generous hospitality and pleasant dialogue we shared. See you at the chapel in the morning.”

Emile was all smiles as they walked to his home.

“I think the discussion we had shed some light in many hearts. I had four people volunteer, and several others tell me they wanted to see me in the morning. It just proves that misguided thinking leads in the wrong direction. It is only the truth that sanctifies and keeps us in the right way for the long term.”

Lev nodded a little sadly. “Religion-as-you-like-it has been so ingrained in the human heart that it will take awhile to wash it out.” He turned his head, patted Emile’s shoulder, and smiled. “Take heart, Emile, truth is winning everywhere now all the time. This is the time of the great reversal. Six thousand years of error will be corrected!”

*“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,
Because thou hast left thy first love”
(Revelation 2:4).*

Chapter Twenty-Two

Lev Serves as Chaplain

The next morning both Emile and Lev had a lovely walk along the Seine River that flowed like a silky ribbon. Many of the old bridges retained their former charm. Nestled along both sides of the river were orchards and homes making the once bustling urban City of Lights a pastoral scene worthy of the French masters.

Arriving, they found that nearly the entire congregation was present with an air of expectancy in anticipation of the morning’s blessings of study. Some guests of yesterday’s gathering cornered Emile.

“Sign us up to serve for the building projects,” was their one request.

Gaston was there as well, reiterating his embarrassment over having held an erroneous doctrinal view and expressing a hunger for the truths he expected to hear that morning.

He was so generous with his praise that Lev actually blushed. “You’re very kind, Gaston. We do indeed need the Word to illuminate our pathway. How grateful I am to have the Savior who is ‘the light of this world!’”

Soon the strains of a hymn reminded everyone to quickly find a seat. It was a crowded meeting. The services opened with prayer followed by several inspiring hymns of praise.

Lev expressed his gratitude at seeing so many out to praise the Lord this beautiful day.

“Thank you for the privilege of speaking to you this morning. We’re living at a time when knowledge along all lines is filling the earth. The noblest science today is pursuing the mind of God. All other sciences pale before the throne of the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity and whose name is Holy. I was a Jew who once rejected my Savior and who also kept God at arm’s length. Fortunately, like most of you, I was given a real chance when I awakened to life again. Yes, ‘Once I was blind, but now I can see.’

“My thoughts for this morning are from Revelation 2:2-5—‘I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.’

“This message was addressed to Christians during the Ephesus period of the church and does not apply to us, except in principle. Ephesus was the first period of Christianity, and as you know, it started out beautifully. Christians were opposed by Jewish leaders and by pagan religions that were popular and in power at that time. They had opposition from without that conspired to destroy them and also from within where corruption and deception were at work. The Church at Ephesus was undaunted by false apostles, but with patience and for the Lord’s sake they labored and did not faint in serving the truth.”

All ears were opened wide.

“Now one would think with so many aspects of fidelity, they would have gained Christ’s approval without reservation. And they did, but with one exception for which they were faulted. Yes, ‘I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.’ This is what we wish to speak on today.

“It does not matter if in our previous life we were short in our devotion to God. But, it does matter today. When most of us returned to life and learned of the great restoration project Christ was engaged in, we eagerly joined it. We had every reason to do so, for were we not living testaments of this great work of renewal? We each returned with a certain hangover from the past, but as the weeks and months passed, things became very clear. The darkness of the past was dissipated and light was shining from heaven.

Have We Left Our ‘First Love’?

“We all experienced that ‘first love’ when no work was too heavy and no opportunity was overlooked. We were eager to serve and eager to be happy in serving. For the first time we felt vibrant health, and our mental resources grew easily and almost without effort. We were without worries or fear of any kind that threatened us as in the former life. The joy of being joined with our loved ones lost to us in death was greater stimulation than we had ever known before. Those were the days of our ‘first love.’

“Oh that our ‘first love’ still burned within us. It will with those who inherit the ‘kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.’ When our first enthusiasm burned within, we were full of excitement and anticipation. We not only had that ‘can do’ spirit, but we had the resolve to make it a ‘will do’ spirit. The extra effort that we were called upon to make was never a problem. After all, we were strong. We were healthy. We could go the extra mile, singing as we went. We esteemed it a privilege to sweat and labor for those we loved. It is love that makes all sacrifice a pleasure instead of a burden.”

Lev’s own fervency was manifest in the earnestness with which he poured out his message. No one in the room could fail to hear, at least for the moment. Many were the tears in the eyes of the more sensitive listeners.

“How can we relax and settle down while billions of our brethren are waiting to be called to life again? It is not humanly possible for us to make provisions for everyone that ever lived all at once. The Lord

patiently waits until all the preparations are made satisfactorily before anyone is returned to life.

“Do you know that Christ usually returns people to life within a day’s time after the arrangements we are responsible for have all been made? Never does Christ say, ‘I am too busy to bring anyone back to life.’ Never is there a delay without a justifiable reason. Christ and those with him in glory have not lost their ‘first love.’ That is why this restoration program is gaining momentum every day and already half of the world’s total population has been returned to life. No, there is no stopping or slowing down. It is gaining momentum and will continue to do so until, at last, Adam and Eve are brought back with shouts of acclamation on everyone’s lips.

“That is the vision we must keep before us. This is not the time to settle down to enjoy life while forgetful of those still sleeping in the grave. Of course, they are unconsciously waiting to be called forth to life, but we should be overwhelmed with a desire to see them all returned to enjoy the blessings as we do.

“Many will remember that there used to be a view that all the dead would return in one twenty-four hour day, standing before the Great White Throne, having their sins rehearsed. The righteous would be returned to heaven after the judgment and the wicked to a burning hell. How could anyone be enthusiastic about sending people to a mythical hell-fire to burn for eternity?

“We are now engaged in the reality of a glorious work of calling people back from every walk of life to paradise conditions on earth. Most problems in this world are the ones created in our former lives. Yet no matter how bad people may have been in their former lives, it has not predetermined their fate in the present regenerated life. Everyone will have a full and fair opportunity to make good.

“In yesteryear, Christians by faith preached this gospel of good news of Christ’s Kingdom. We need no faith to believe it now, nor do we need to preach it. All we have to do is work enthusiastically to accomplish it. May it not be said of us, ‘I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.’”

When Lev finished the services, many of the congregation surged forward to express their appreciation of the message. Most members caught the inspiration of the hour and were fired up with their “first love” enthusiasm.

Even Gaston, who took such pleasure in hosting social gatherings and entertainment, came up to say, “*Merci, Lev, merci.* Your clear presentation leaves no room for my relaxed view of life. It is true. Love does labor and faith works. While there is a whole world to enjoy, we do not have to go all out to enjoy it now.”

Lev said, “You mean we will not enjoy your hospitality anymore?”

“Oh, no, my door will always be open to you or anyone who wishes to share a meal together. What I am saying, though, is that I may not always be home to receive you. You may freely enter my home and help yourself to whatever is there. But now, as soon as he is free, I must ask Emile to put my name down on his list of volunteers.”

Lev was relieved that things went that well. While this congregation had risen to life again, this morning they seemed to have been reawakened. They realized the desire to settle down and enjoy the pleasures of life must not replace the joy of regenerating every last human being to life again.

When the men returned from the chapel, Emile was all smiles. He had a full roster of volunteers to work for a lost generation’s return to life. An infectious disease had consumed the whole community leaving no heirs. When he arrived home, Emile immediately sent the names of all volunteers to the Ancients.

Preparing for Francois and Mona Perots’ Return to Life

The very next day, word came from Jerusalem with assigned projects for everyone. Lev and Emile also received their assignment to start building for Francois and Mona Perot. They were to be brought to life one week before their two children. Olivia had been five years old at the time of her death, and Anton seven. Most of this community had died within six months. What a blessing that Christ had every

human being that ever lived in his memory, for otherwise many would be forgotten in the resurrection. Everyone was known and his or her history recorded in the divine information bank.

The gardens and trees had been planted earlier, so Lev and Emile went to the site after the services the next day. As soon as they had done the job, the heavy equipment was removed and they were able to make preparations to lay the footing for the foundation. Lev found it exciting to be in touch with the great reality of what was transpiring. It was overwhelming to think of billions of people returning to life, for the mind didn't function with billions. It was the idea of Francois and Mona as individuals being raised to life that made this project exciting. People who were long dead and actually forgotten would soon be returning. Their lives may have been interrupted by hundreds of years, but for those sleeping in death it would be like yesterday.

Time went quickly for Lev as he worked on the home for the Perots as well as filling in as chaplain, keeping the Word of God central in all of his services. The regular chaplain returned from his two-week vacation. He had managed to record and listen to all of Lev's services, which had such a profound effect on him that he announced he was hereafter going to teach only the Word as diligently as he could.

Chaplain Invites to "Hear My Confession"

Apparently the chaplain had spent his two weeks in intense study of the Bible, because he came back renewed and eager to have the Word discussed in all of his services. He admitted his tired sermons had produced a tired congregation, and he thanked Lev for his renewed inspiration. His first service back was interesting, to say the least.

For a moment he stood looking at the floor. Finally, he raised his eyes and scanned the congregation with a determined expression and said, "Hear my confession. Starting this day, I desire to speak fresh from the Word. As soon as I heard Lev's first sermon, I realized I had returned to my fruitless ministry in the years that I had served as a minister. I hadn't understood God's plan for the restoration of the human race. I believed then that all probation ended for each

individual at death. The centerpiece of the 'times of restitution,' which is the refrain of the whole Bible, was lost to me. Consequently, I did what so many did then. I preached sermons without substance.

"You cannot teach what you do not clearly understand. My ministry then was out of focus, and, unfortunately, I accepted the opportunity to serve as chaplain with a rather out-of-focus view of the Bible. You know the place that I took my vacation had some old books written in the nineteenth century. I was amazed at how some Bible students had a rather clear understanding of God's Word. It seemed incredible to me that so much truth was available in my previous life, and yet I had not found it. I probably would not have believed it anyway, because, after all, I was schooled in one of the most prestigious divinity schools."

He went on to a discussion in the book of Romans that morning for the rest of his sermon and promised to keep going through the whole book in the weeks ahead. When he finished, an enthusiastic congregation gathered around him to compliment him on his new ministry. He always had the ability to speak, but now he combined that ability with fresh insights into God's Word. The congregation was enthused and awakened from its lethargy. Most of the congregation was studying the Bible on their own, and consequently, it was stimulating to hear the exchanges and insights taking place.

Time passed quickly and soon the day came for Francois and Mona to return. Lev and Emile would be privileged to attend their awakening. There was an air of excitement as they arrived to receive these two from their long sleep in death.

Francois Awakens

The first thing I noticed upon awakening was the clean and unsoiled bed. The fever that raged within me was now gone, and I could not believe that I felt so good. My bones did not ache, my joints didn't crack loudly when I moved, nor was my breathing heavy. When I opened my eyes and saw the colorful room, I knew this was not my home. Some good Samaritan must have rescued me and brought me here where I had recovered.

I sat up and looked around. On a chair next to the sweet-smelling bed, I found clothing such as I had never seen. Someone must have cared for me in my illness, because I was clean. There were no vermin in my hair, my mouth was fresh, and there were no sores on my body. Who could have been so kind to be my benefactor? It could not have been my neighbors or my friends. They were all dead, as was my beloved wife.

Whoever was my benefactor, I must find them and thank them. Perhaps it was a prince who rescued me. However, most people traveling through my village were marauders who would steal whatever they wanted and certainly would not be interested in helping someone dying of the plague.

I dressed in the strange clothing, for there was nothing else to put on, and walked quietly about the room wondering what strong medicine I must have received to survive my ordeal. Everything was so brilliant. This house seemed new and certainly unlike anything I'd ever seen before, and the smell of cut flowers in this room indicated that someone was very kind and thoughtful. But why would anyone risk his or her own life rescuing someone half dead?

I found another curious room. I turned a small lever and water came out. Mon Dieu. I quickly turned it back and tried another lever to see what would happen and found hot water coming out. This was incredible. How could this be? I saw the odd looking bowl with water in it. I pulled the lever and water swirled around like a whirlpool in the river. There was magical light around the mirrors. Such wonders I had never seen or even heard of. I noticed the scar on my cheek was gone. My head was full of light brown hair replacing my usual entire head of gray. I felt stronger than ever — like I could run for miles without stopping. Something was very strange here. I did not know whether to be very frightened or very happy!

I thought I must step out of this large and beautiful room and thank whoever it was that so kindly rescued me from my deathbed. I had never known such kindness before. I had heard of a wizard. Could some kind wizard have rescued me and magically fixed my blemishes?

I must find the answer. Someone must be around who owned this house and would be able to tell me what had happened.

“Pardon me, Monsieur...”

He opened the door of his room cautiously; a little embarrassed to be in someone's home uninvited. As he stepped out into a foyer that led into a very large room, he saw two men dressed as strangely as he was, sitting there. Looking at Lev he said, “Pardon me, *Monsieur*, I do not mean to be trespassing in your home. Forgive me, but I do not know how I got here, but if either of you is responsible for rescuing me from my sickness or bringing me here, I want to thank you. Now that I feel good, I shall return home; if you will return my clothes and show me the way. I am very confused and have no idea where I am or how I arrived here.”

Both Lev and Emile arose, smiling as they went over to Francois to shake his hand and welcome him. Lev said, “We have been waiting for you, Francois. Those clothes are for you, and don't worry about trespassing, for this is your very own house which is to be shared with your wife Mona and soon with your children.”

Francois could only hear parts of what they said due to his being so completely overwhelmed. “Pardon me, *Monsieur*, but my wife and children have died. I know, for I buried each one with a heart full of pain and sorrow. Anyway, how would you know me and my wife and children? Tell me your names so that I may know to whom I am indebted.”

“My name is Emile and my friend is Lev,” Emile explained. “Come and have some breakfast, and we will explain as best we can how you arrived here and about your new conditions.”

As they entered the sunny kitchen, Francois' eyes fell upon the table. A sparkling white cloth covered it, and there were blue plates filled with fruit from the trees of paradise. Emile went to the refrigerator and brought out different pitchers of fruit juices. The aroma of fresh tea from the leaves of the trees of paradise filled the air. Lev poured the tea and Emile the fruit juices. Francois was astonished to feel the

cold juice and the hot tea. He said, “*Monsieur*, the air is warm, so how could the juice be this cold and where is the fire for the hot tea?”

Lev said, “You are living in a different time, Francois. That beautiful box is called a refrigerator, and it makes whatever you put in it cold. This is a gas stove and it makes instant flames that are very small and controlled so that you can heat anything quickly and then turn off the flame. See how it works?” Lev turned the knob on and off. Francois could hardly believe his eyes.

Emile then said, “By the way, Francois, all this belongs to you and your dear wife. Actually, Lev and I are *your* guests. You are very rich now, as is everyone. We have no poor people anymore and no sick people either.”

“*Monsieur* Emile, it is kind of you to include her, but my dear wife is buried, so she will never enjoy this home. She was a lovely person. I only wish she could have lived to enjoy this. I do not understand how I survived, but I thank you for bringing me to this place. I am very confused, so please be patient with me. I was so sick and there was no one to help me or keep me clean. Thank you for saving me and bringing me here. What kind of medicine did you use?” A wave of anguish passed over the peasant. “If only you had come earlier, you could have saved my wife and children. And maybe even the whole village.”

Suddenly, he realized something said earlier. “You said that this is my house, *Monsieur*? Why would you give me such a beautiful home? I am just a poor peasant who struggled to make a living all my wretched life.”

This must be a dream...

Lev said, “We know this will be very hard to understand, Francois, but you did die back in your little hut. We weren’t there and neither we nor anyone else saved you from dying. However, Christ promised, ‘all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth.’

“Christ raised you from the dead this very morning, and in another hour or so your dear wife Mona will also be returned to life.”

In answer to Francois’ shocked look of disbelief, Lev assured, “It’s the truth. Only the truth is spoken now. It is Christ who is your great benefactor. He has provided this home for you and your family. Within the week, your children also will be returned to life. As you endured pain and suffering, you will also know true happiness and joy. You will never be poor again or in want of any kind. You will never be sick again or feel any pain. You will have an abundant life and ‘sorrow and sighing will flee away.’”

It’s a good thing Francois was already sitting, or he would have collapsed to the floor. “*Monsieur*, I do not wish to contradict you, but I am very confused and disoriented. It almost seems that there is a time void in my life, but no one ever said I would be brought to life again on this earth like this. I was taught that good people go to purgatory where they suffer until some day they may be released to heaven. I do want to believe what are you saying, and it sounds beautiful that Christ should bring me to life again and provide so generously for my family and me. How can I believe this? It is all too wonderful. Yet you say only the truth is spoken here. How can that be? How can you end deceit and misrepresentation?”

Emile joined in, “Francois, you are living in a different time today. Christ is ruling this world from shore to shore and from the river unto the ends of this world. Were we to lie to you, that very instant we would be punished and remain speechless until we repented and sought forgiveness from the Ancient Worthies, great men and women who lived in the times of the Bible and who now govern the world from Jerusalem. The Ancients themselves have been raised to life in full human perfection. They are all people who proved their fidelity to God under very difficult trials. God was so pleased with all those faithful ones that now they are honored to represent Christ in all matters here on earth. You will soon see them. Many things will seem like miracles to you, such as this gas stove that we turned off and on, but they are not. Men have learned how to do all these things. They can even send

pictures and sound in the air so that we can receive them anywhere in the world. We will show you this in your own home.”

“I am afraid when I blink, I will be back in my sickbed. This must be a dream. Tell me that I am not mad.”

Lev said, “We know exactly how you feel. When we were restored to life again after having died, we felt the same way. While there was no consciousness while dead, there is a sense that we were somehow disconnected from life. On top of this, the world is so vastly different and superior to the world we left. We were all in a dying state before, and now life and vitality is so abundant. From our pain-wracked bodies in which many of us left our former life to the vibrant life we have entered is a world apart. You are conscious of crossing some great divide. This feeling will leave in a week or so. Soon you will have both feet planted squarely in life, and the fear of returning to the dying past will end.”

“I am actually afraid to eat this wonderful fruit placed before me for fear my stomach will not receive it, and I don’t want to embarrass you by my condition.”

“Have no fear, Francois,” Lev assured. “This is perfect food from the Garden of Eden, and it will never upset your stomach or make you feel uncomfortable as did our former foods. This food is not only the most delicious food you have ever tasted, but more importantly, it will satisfy your appetite as nothing ever has before. Do you smell this tea? It’s made from the trees of life and not only does it smell wonderful, but it has healing qualities that settle the nerves and restore health. Shall we have breakfast now?”

My Whole Village Ceased to Exist...

After Emile prayed, Francois reached for the strange fruit that smelled so good. Biting into it, his eyes opened wide.

“Oh *mon Dieu*. Where does this exotic fruit come from?”

“Right from your own orchard,” Lev said, pointing out the window to the orchard. “Each month a tree will bloom so you will be sustained fully by those trees. There is also a tree of life that gives fruit continually

to sustain you forever. There are also other normal fruit trees that you are familiar with. See that vegetable garden without a weed in it? You may also eat from it whenever you desire.”

“You keep speaking of my wife and children. Please understand they all died in the plague. I buried them myself before I fell ill. Our whole village ceased to exist. I somehow survived, and I still cannot explain my being here.”

“We have told you that you did not survive, Francois. You did, in fact, die. You have been dead for a long time. Christ raised you from the dead this morning, and before noon your wife will also return to life. We know it is hard for you to believe.”

Lev went on, “If you were heartbroken when your wife died, your joy will be full today. Mona will return, not as the sick and emaciated woman who died in your arms, but beautiful and healthy.

“Your children will return within the week. This will give you time to adjust to your new and happy life together. You have very much to learn. You are now living under the rule of righteousness and truth.”

Emile suggested they show Francois some of the wonderful features of his home and the abundant provisions of food and energy he had.

“Francois, you will not believe what we are going to show you, but as strange as it may seem to you now, in a few days it will become as common as eating and sleeping.”

*“I hid my face from thee for a moment;
But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee”
(Isaiah 54:8).*

Chapter Twenty-Three

Mona Returns to Life

“If my Mona is returning shortly, how will that happen? Will there be earthquakes and lightning?”

Francois’ head was spinning with an overload of sensation, smells, sights, and impossible-to-believe concepts all in the space of a couple of hours. He so wanted to believe this wasn’t all part of a fevered dream he was having in his illness, but it was all so beyond anything he could even have imagined that he felt both numb and over-stimulated at the same time.

Emile could see just how fantastic this all seemed to his new friend. How could a simple explanation do justice to the scope of an entirely regenerated human race in a completely restructured earth? “Just as Christ healed the sick and raised the dead by just speaking the words, so it is now. He will command that she be brought to life and it will be. We were just sitting here, Lev and me, this morning. The only way we knew you were alive after offering prayer for wisdom to be the best help to you we could was when you opened the door and came out. So it will be with Mona. Christ has the power to raise every human being that ever lived to life again, every person in his own order.”

“While we are waiting for her return, let us show you how wonderfully you are now provided for,” Lev continued.

They strolled through his home showing Francois all the beauties and trying to explain the technology. He knew nothing of electricity

and was startled when they turned on lights by just pressing a switch. They showed him how electricity was generated from hydrogen fed fuel cells. They showed him the state of the art septic system that processed human waste so that nothing either polluted or was lost. They hesitated showing him the television and computer for fear of overwhelming him all at once. Finally, they showed him his orchard and garden that was enclosed and heated in the winter so that food was produced at all times.

By the time they had shown him this much, Lev realized they should go in, for Mona would be awakened at any moment. Francois' eyes flooded with tears as they said she would shortly awaken in her own room. He was trembling with emotion. Remembering the last days of his former life filled with such sorrow and pain, the contrast of joy was all the sharper. Every dreadful thing that had befallen them was being undone.

While Emile went into the kitchen to make another pot of tea, Lev and Francois sat in the living room waiting to hear signs of life from Mona's bedroom. Soon the door to her room opened a crack. Francois could not contain himself. He cried out her name.

As the door opened, there stood Mona dazed, but lovely. Francois was almost paralyzed in awe. As they fell into each other's arms, everyone sobbed openly with tears of joy.

Francois said, "Mona, I cannot believe it. Are you truly alive?"

"*Oui*, Francois, I think so. How handsome you look! Where are we? Is this heaven?" She was only vaguely aware of Lev and Emile.

"No, I do not believe so. These gentlemen tell me that this is our home until our children are grown." What was he saying? Francois surprised himself.

"Francois, our children have died. You yourself buried them. Forgive me, but I feel very strange."

"I am in shock myself, Mona. We both died, *mon cher*, and I buried you as I did our children and many other people in the village. Messieurs Lev and Emile are here to help us get used to living again

on earth. Even this earth has been marvelously changed. It all seems unbelievable, but I did not believe them when they told me you would be returned to life at this very time, yet here you are. They spoke only the truth!"

"I Cannot Have Died"

Mona dared not let go of Francois' hand, for she surely would have collapsed in shock had she done so. Finally acknowledging Lev's and Emile's presence, she struggled to be courteous, "I am pleased to meet you and thank you for your kindness in sharing your home with us. I am afraid Francois is not thinking clearly. I cannot have died, for I am here, very much alive."

Francois spoke. With hands on her shoulders, he held her at arm's length, "Ah, but did you notice that the mole on your left cheek is gone? Remember your crooked little finger on your left hand? Well, it is now straight. How else can we explain this, *mon cher*?"

"I cannot explain it. I fear I am going to faint. May I sit down until my heart calms down?"

Francois said, "You are saying the exact thing I said to Lev and Emile. I just awakened to life this morning. I, too, fear I will awaken from this wonderful dream to find myself back in our old house burning with fever."

The veteran "*resurrectees*" led them to the kitchen where they all sat down to lunch, and this time Francois did the explaining about the fruit and tea. He was learning fast! It was a little easier for Mona having her husband there. Here was someone she knew she could trust. It was always a little shocking to die in one environment and to awaken to life in a completely different one.

Lev and Emile decided to take a walk after lunch to leave Francois and Mona time to be alone with each other. As they walked, Lev said to Emile, "It is such a blessing to see good and noble people return to life. They do not bring with them a terrible load of evil that is so oppressive for those who committed horrible crimes against others. My experiences with this sort has been that many may not really want

to die the second death, but it actually seems an easier option than trying to live down the evil that they did. However, it depends on the mettle of character.”

Emile nodded in agreement.

“They did not factor in the regeneration when men must give an account for every evil deed,” Lev continued thoughtfully. “The supposed brake for evil was the mythical idea that if people sinned, they would go to a burning hell.”

“But it didn’t work, mostly because it was a lie,” Emile added. “Religion only contributed to the evil in the world. Smart people could see that. They saw that religious leaders who wanted their way could promise heaven as a reward to induce people to commit murder and mayhem. They saw that the religious leaders that threatened hell-fire to others never seemed to be personally concerned, so why should they?”

“If they had known God’s true purpose, Emile, it might have been a brake to evil. But just as ‘burning hell’ did not stop people from doing wrong, knowing the truth about the regeneration would probably not have changed their course of conduct that much either. Now that people have returned to life, the biggest burden they bear is facing past violations in dealing with others. And it was when the evil was intentional that it becomes so hard to overcome today.”

“So true, Lev. The good people are rejoicing now. That is why it is such a pleasure to see Francois and Mona. They were noble. Francois really risked his life to minister to the sick and dying. Then he died helping others. What a contrast his helpfulness to others will be now. Just think. Instead of assisting people as they die, he will be working to settle them into life!”

Lev laughed aloud at both the irony and the beauty of Emile’s remark. “We’d better get back to them now. They’ll have plenty of time to be together from now on, but they need much more instruction before the children return next.”

They returned to find the two stunned but happy souls bubbling over with enthusiasm. They were among those people not far from the

Kingdom of God, for they were good, kind, and giving in their former life needing no change in direction now.

“This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made...”

Lev and Emile waited until evening to introduce them to television and computer-generated programs for learning. They were in time to see a few Ancients giving a progress report on the regeneration program. It just so happened they mentioned the return of Francois and Mona as ones who had come from a generation that had no one to work for them. They mentioned that this would begin the restoration of all those who had died during a plague.

Francois and Mona were shocked to hear their names, but this only served to impress upon them that what they had been told about dying and coming to life was indeed true. They got goose bumps. They couldn’t believe that these men were speaking from Jerusalem as though they were in the very room with them.

After the evening update, they were shown the programs that taught reading and writing. They instantly became addicted to learning. Within the hour they memorized the alphabet and were forming small words. How exciting to be reading! They had no opportunities to learn before and like all other peasants had been kept ignorant. When they realized now how easily they could have been taught to read and write, but were kept ignorant so they could serve more or less as slave labor for the wealthy land barons, they felt a moment of justifiable anger. As the night came on, they were too excited to sleep.

Francois said, “Mona and I want to learn to read before our two children return. How exciting it is to be able to read even simple words! We were never shown the alphabet or taught the simplest things. We were told that there was no money to waste on teaching peasants. We were deprived of one of the greatest gifts. It was a way to keep us inferior.”

Lev filled in a bit of history. “Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they started compulsory education. That is when a flood of knowledge began along all lines. They had the ability to print books

cheaply. The first book ever printed in the sixteenth century was the Bible. It was wonderful in the nineteenth century as Bibles were printed in all the major languages of the world and were in languages that people understood. Many learned to read using the Bible. That opened a floodgate of information that brought about advances in government, science, and human rights.”

Lev told them that when they were tired, they could just push a certain button, and the programs would turn off. They could start it again in the morning after they returned from the chapel meeting. Meanwhile, Lev and Emile would each take a bed in the children’s rooms and turn in for the night.

Lev had his hand-held computer he took everywhere, in which several versions of the Bible were loaded. He always managed to study some Bible topic for the evening. He used to just read the Bible chapter and verse, but he found he learned more by topical study. He would take a Bible subject and let the computer show him all the verses in the Bible on that topic. It was a very stimulating and logical approach to a very complex book.

Lev heard Francois and Mona finally go to their rooms about midnight. They were so interested in the learning process that they found it difficult to break away. They were tired, but happy. In one day, they had awakened, been reunited, and seen unbelievable advancement in both technology and quality of life. They had learned to read simple words when they could not read in their entire previous life. A whole new world was opening up to them with no limits. All their heart’s desires to learn and grow would be gratified. It had truly been a day that the Lord had made.

Reading Opens the Knowledge of the World

Everyone was up early the next morning. Like children on Christmas morning, Francois and Mona could not have been more excited. They were eager to learn, eager to live, eager to love and be loved. They had been peons in hovels while the land barons and aristocracy lived in the castles on the hills. Now they were rich and blessed. They were

bursting with exhilaration knowing that their two children, Olivia and Anton, would be with them again shortly. Mona said as they drank juice before going to the chapel, “I want to learn to read so I can read Bible stories to them at bedtime. Do you think that is possible, Lev?”

“Of course, it is possible. You might stumble over a word or two, but you will be able to read rather well by then. Remember, the more you read, the quicker you will become proficient in reading and writing. Then nothing will be out of your reach; reading will open the knowledge of the world to you. As you learn, you and your children will soon be able to contribute to this growing stock of knowledge. The best of times are before you, and the worst of times are past. No one can keep you in a hovel anymore. Your home is as good as anyone else’s. It offers all the resources of knowledge your heart may desire. However, you must remember— ‘knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.’ You learned to love without much knowledge, but you must not forget to continue to grow in love when your head is full of knowledge.”

They arrived at the chapel with everyone excited to meet Francois and Mona. Many there had worked very hard in building and preparing for their return, so it was rewarding to see these two beautiful people in full vigor of life standing before them. The magic of seeing people return to life would never grow old, even as they would never cease to be enthralled by a beautiful sunrise.

As the services began, both Francois and Mona picked up their hymnbooks, able to turn to the page numbers announced, continuing to learn reading as they sang heartily. Their gratitude and joy knew no limits. They were no longer ignorant peons but were at the primer level of reading. The services were a beautiful study in Romans that they followed in their Bibles learning information and improving their reading at the same time.

Francois and Mona thanked everyone who assisted in the preparations of their home.

At breakfast, Lev told them they could spend the next several days studying their reading. This was the most important thing for them,

because until they had this skill, they would be unable to keep up with all they needed to know. They certainly did not need a second invitation. As soon as breakfast was over they eagerly returned to their lessons.

Lev and Emile used the time to work on another home building project for those of this lost village. Later Francois and Mona would join them and learn to build homes and plant gardens. It would be important that Francois and Mona become instructors of those returning to life.

When they returned later in the day, they found Francois and Mona eagerly absorbing knowledge while Huldah, an Ancient Worthy, taught the reading and writing class. It looked as though they had not moved from their seats since breakfast.

Mind Opening to Worlds of Light

Lev made preparations for the evening meal. He served vegetables along with the fruit, and soon he had a gourmet dinner waiting for everyone.

Mona sighed with delight. "This must be heaven after all...after listening to a grand teacher all day, all I have to do is sit down to a sumptuous meal. *Merci*, Lev. Everything tastes so good. The best thing, though, is that I feel like my mind is opening up to worlds of light and knowledge. It is more than my fondest dreams. The saddest thing for me before was when Francois was risking illness while caring for me."

"Some things are more important than preserving your life, Mona. Jesus taught us to lose our life, and then we would save it. That used to seem exaggerated, but now that billions of people have already returned to life, we see that those who gave themselves most freely in the service of others are the ones running up the 'highway of holiness.' The present opportunities are what they had longed for, and now that they have them, they are fulfilled."

"I heard one priest say, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' It sounded nice to me," Francois said, "but in my previous life this was not true. But now it is!"

"Right!" Emile exclaimed. "Only the meek will ultimately inherit the earth. Unless the proud and powerful learn to humble themselves, they will find themselves out of harmony with Christ."

Lev explained, "You will have another full day of instructions, and then you will be privileged to work on your neighbor's home. You will come with us, and we'll show you how homes are made today. The idea is that when you build for your neighbors and they return to life, then you can train them to work with you, and soon your whole lost village will be back. Also, we have many volunteers who will gladly assist you, especially in the more difficult things that may take you many months to fully understand. All the help you need is available to you."

Emile added, "Mona, you must come with me to a center to select clothing and shoes for Olivia and Anton who will be coming back to life in a few days. We thought we would leave that to you. We have been told the size clothing each will need. Because they are growing, you will only select what will fit them in the next six months. Children grow rapidly now living off the fruit of Paradise."

Mona beamed with delight.

"Yes, that will be your privilege. You will have to let them join you in learning classes. They will be home schooled with the finest education and no limits on learning. Most importantly, your learning will not be corrupted with error. When we went to school as children, we would learn some things that were true and many things that were just the opinions of the time. All that wasted time spent learning things that were not true," Lev lamented. "This doesn't happen anymore. Only truth is taught, so you never have to unlearn anything."

Francois said, "I thought with envy about wealthy boys going to school. We would have loved that opportunity, but we were just peasants and shut out of education. If only they would have taught us the alphabet and some simple basic instructions on reading, we could have learned the rest. But then, even the rich had very little in the way of literature. That is why we are rejoicing in how quickly we have

been lifted up from poverty and ignorance. Nothing is withheld from us. It is so wonderful—we could dance for joy.”

Lev said, “You will have every reason to dance for joy when Olivia and Anton come back in a few days. Francois knows what it is like to have someone returned to your arms. Next week, you will have the same experience as he had, Mona. It will be a triple joy for us to see this happen again.”

Mona said, “I am living in the clouds these days. I was happy enough in my former life, even with all its hardships and denials. We were blessed with a family that made us happy. But when we lost our children, the light of life was extinguished in our hearts. When Francois dug their little graves, we stood there in such sorrow.” Even the memory made her voice quiver. “We lost faith in God and felt forsaken by heaven, with no one who cared much about us on earth. Little did we know that God had this day of blessing for us, a day of blessing such as earth has never known or even dreamed of. I wish we had known the truth of God’s plan for all mankind.”

Would You Have Believed the Truth Then?

Lev thoroughly understood what she felt. “But perhaps if you had been told the truth, you would never have believed it. You would not know if it was true, and you probably wouldn’t have believed the truth when it was given to you. It took faith to believe these things. There were always a small number of people who knew the truth, because God never left Himself without a witness here on earth. I know I was a man of the world, full of pride and self-will. I did remember hearing from someone whose parents were devout followers of Christ about a coming kingdom on earth. However, it stayed in my memory, even though I made light of it, because it had a ring of truth about it. I dismissed it, because I figured these people were so insignificant that no truth could come from them. Anyway, who believed it? The churches ridiculed such beliefs. I was Lev Aron, full of pride and vainglory. Thankfully, I had a great awakening when I returned to life.”

Another day ended with contentment that all felt. Francois and Mona were all aglow in anticipation of their children returning. That

was a religious experience almost without parallel, anticipating the power of Christ personally directed in returning to them children torn from their bosom by death. If one did not see this power occurring on a daily basis, it would be beyond belief. One did not even need faith to believe it now. Whether you believed or not, it was happening.

The day finally arrived when Olivia and Anton were to return. Francois and Mona stayed home from the chapel meeting to be there to receive their children. The power of Christ was going to perform two miracles that very morning. This was to be done without any demands or requirements on their part. They did not have to beg or grovel for this favor. It came as the morning dew, so quietly and gently, as only Christ would have it.

Olivia and Anton Return

Lev and Emile went to the chapel so Francois and Mona could receive their children back to life without any distraction from them.

The appointed time came, and both Francois and Mona listened for the first stirring of life. Soon they heard Olivia cry, “Mama.”

Mona opened the door to Olivia’s room, and there she was sitting up in bed dewy-eyed and beautiful, her long blonde hair curling down her back and her blue eyes luminous with health.

“Where am I Mama? How did I get here?”

Mona ran to her, hugging her and smothering her with kisses.

“Oh, *mon chère*; here, put on your clothes,” as she gave her the clothing provided.

She dressed quickly and Mona said, “Let us go out and find Papa. He is waiting for you in the other room.”

As they stepped into the hallway, the door to Anton’s room slowly opened. There he stood with a curious look on his face, “Where are we, Mama? This is so beautiful. Did I die and go to heaven? I remember being sick. I could hardly breathe and my body hurt so. I feel so good now. I am confused. Everything is so different.”

Mona hugged him and kissed him, “You have many questions, my son. Come, Papa is waiting for you in the living room.”

“Come to Papa, my children, come.”

They eagerly ran toward him, and he caught them in his arms and lifted both up and whirled them around the room. He said, laughing and crying at the same time, “This is the happiest moment of my life. We are together again and everyone is so beautiful and healthy. Praise God for His kindness.”

Olivia said, “Papa, we were always together. The only difference is that we are in such a beautiful house. I do have a strange feeling Papa. I do not know how to explain it. Could we all be in heaven?”

“No, *mon chère*, we are very much on earth. We all were dead and woke up with that strange feeling, but it will go away in a few days.”

“How did we get here, Papa,” asked Anton. “What happened to our old house? Where are we?”

“The simplest answer I can give you is that you are both at home. This beautiful house is now our new home. We are very rich now. Have no fear, my children. I know many things are strange to you but be at peace. Your Mama and I are both here and all is well. You have many things to learn, but the first thing we must have is breakfast. Come.”

They entered the sunny yellow kitchen, with lacy curtains dancing at the windows and filled with so many beautiful things the children had never seen. They were both wide-eyed as they looked at the sparkling refrigerator and stove. “Where’s the bread?” Anton asked.

“We do not eat bread very often,” Mona said.

“But I want some bread,” Olivia wailed.

“What’s that wonderful smell, Mama?” Anton asked.

“That is a new kind of tea that we drink now. It is better than anything you ever tasted before,” Francois explained.

As soon as they were all seated, Francois asked a blessing on the food and thanked God for his great kindness and mercy.

Anton observed, “Papa, you are acting different. I’m confused. I feel good, but what if I am sick again? I don’t want to be sick, Papa.”

“You shall never be sick again, Anton.”

Olivia exclaimed, “Oh, this tea is *trés bon*—not like what we used to drink.”

“Yes, and it is even better for you than it tastes,” Mona asserted.

Anton bit into his first piece of fruit and his eyes opened wide. “I never tasted anything so good before,” as juice ran down his chin.

“Papa, how did we get here?” Olivia asked.

You Children Died and Are Raised To Life Again

“This will sound like a fairy story that your *grandmère* used to tell you, but it is true. We all died and were dead for many years. I buried both of you with such a heavy heart. You were the light of my life, and when you died, your mother and I thought we would die from sorrow. There was no laughter in our house, and our eyes filled with tears with every thought of you dear children. Then your mother became very ill, and she died, too. I lived in the saddest house in the world. So when I became ill and knew that I would die also, I was not sad. I knew I was dying, but I died without knowing that we would all be raised to life again. Only a week ago, I awakened in this beautiful home. I did not know where I was or how I got here. I had been sleeping in death for many centuries, just as you, my dear children.”

“What?” Anton thought his ears were hearing wrong, or maybe his father had gone mad.

“*Oui*, that is what happened to our little family. I was raised to life first, and then your mother was raised a couple of hours after me, and after one week, both of you. We are all living again, but now we are rich, better than kings were before. As soon as you eat your fruit and finish breakfast, your mother and I will show you how wonderful everything is. Oh! How would you like to learn to read?”

“Oh Papa, you mean we can go to school like the rich children?” Olivia asked.

“*Oui*, but you won’t have to leave this house to learn everything and anything you want to.”

“What made all these changes? Where are we?” asked Anton.

“Son, we are living in the same area but in a new house. I will take you to the old creek where you used to wade and try to catch fish. You will recognize it, although now there are no briar patches or poison ivy. There are no bugs to bite you and no animals to fear. Christ is the new King of earth, and he is the most kind and generous King. Yet, he does not permit any crime or any war. You are going to love life now as never before.”

As they left the table to take a tour of their home, a little goat wandered onto the property. The two children were drawn to him as to a magnet. “Oh, isn’t he cute,” said Olivia. “Can we keep him?”

Animals Must Be Free

“No, my child; you can play with him and all the animals, but these are not indoor pets and they must be free to wander outside. You do not have to be afraid of even the wild animals. Sometimes you will even see a wolf and lamb together now. Animals do not eat other animals any more.”

“Look at these marvelous trees,” their mother said. “They are the kind of trees they had in the Garden of Eden. Now Papa will take you to the little creek you used to play in. It is still there, but it is so beautiful now. It used to be a muddy color, but now it runs with pure water.”

They all took a walk down the road, the children skipping and jumping with joy. Around the bend, Anton exclaimed, “Yes, Papa, I recognize this creek! I used to wade there barefoot.”

“You may wade there again, my son. However, most of the time you will be learning everything you must know to become an intelligent citizen. Soon you will be helping build homes like we live in for your *grandmère* and *grandpère*. They will be coming back to life. Someday Adam and Eve, our first parents, will return to life. Won’t that be wonderful?”

They returned from the walk and all sat down before the television screen. Francois turned it on to start their first lesson in reading. When the screen lit up, Olivia was frightened, “How did these people get into our room?”

Mona quieted her fears, “Honey, they are not in our room. They are in Jerusalem far, far away. This is a modern miracle. People have found a way to send pictures through the air and this television picks them up and makes them look real. The people you see are ones who pleased God. They lived even longer ago than we did, and we can learn about their lives in the Bible. Now they are princes in the earth who are instructed by our Lord Jesus. They are going to teach you to read and write so quickly you will be surprised. Papa and I have learned to read a little already. We can read the hymns as we sing at the chapel now because we hear the words and now can recognize them. So once you learn the alphabet and how the letters can be turned into different words, every time you see a new word you will learn it. Once you learn to read and write, then all knowledge will be open to you.”

“Now let us listen as this Ancient Worthy teaches the alphabet.”

The children were just as enthralled as their parents had been with what they were seeing. Just as they were told, at the end of the first study they had learned the alphabet. Like the Native American Indians who called written pages “talking leaves,” so now these written letters would begin to talk to them.

Lev and Emile returned to join this happy family for their evening meal. They had been laying out projects for building more homes. While they had many volunteers, Francois and Mona were to start helping on this project. They were to spend the week getting the children adjusted to their new life and environment. The following week they were to join Emile and learn how to build modern homes with all of the new science employed in the process. The building projects were all within walking distance of their home, so even the children could visit the site for breaks in their schooling and a bit of hands-on learning in the real world.

Wrapping up Affairs

Lev and Emile returned to Emile’s residence that evening. That very evening, Lev received a call from Gideon.

“Please wrap up your project there, Lev, and return to Jerusalem. We have another assignment for you, if you are willing.”

“Yes, certainly, Gideon.”

“Wonderful! I’ll meet you at the airport and we’ll explain your next mission. You may then fly your craft to your home. Several of your family members are there now, so you will have a happy reunion for a few days. Shalom.”

As joyful as it was to share the happiness of living again with the Perot family, nothing ever replaced the longing heart for his own family. The beauty of love was that it could grow and increase in one area without being diminished in others.

Lev said his farewells. He had come to love another circle of people very dearly; it was amazing how precious they each were to him.

*“The merchants of . . . slaves, and souls of men”
(Revelation 18:11-15).*

Chapter Twenty-Four

Landing in the Beloved City of the Great King was always a special joy to Lev. So much of history that centered on God’s involvement with his people in Israel, from Melchizedek to King David to Christ, took place here. It was “beautiful for situation” (Psalm 48:2) and was now the joy of the whole earth. Having Christ’s earthly representatives here, the Ancient Worthies, created an almost legendary atmosphere.

Gideon was there to meet Lev with his constant exuberance.

“Lev, welcome to the Holy City. Well done, well done! You seemed to have awakened some good people from pursuits of pleasure to seeking opportunities to serve mankind. It proves that most people have good hearts, but sometimes they just drift in their thinking and lose sight of the goal.”

“Thank you for your kind words, Gideon, but the Lord’s providences helped in returning many of these good people to their ‘first love.’ Everything fell into place so easily that I feel I arrived there at just the right moment for a change of course. Oh! And Gideon, thank you for the privilege of working with Francois, Mona, and their children. These people compare favorably to the ‘salt of the earth.’ If more people had been as kind and loving, there would be no problems at all now.”

“Lev, that’s precisely why we have called for you again.” As they entered the car, Gideon continued.

“You know we do not waste a lot of time in protocol, Lev. We’re facing a problem that has deep and bitter roots...slavery. Not that

slavery exists anymore, but memory of it does, and those responsible for slavery and those who suffered because of it are not easily reconciled. Our nation, Israel, knew what slavery was like. We suffered in Egypt under very harsh conditions. However, the slavery we suffered was not as bad as those poor humans captured in Africa and sold to America. They were treated worse than animals without any rights and simply left to the mercy of their masters. For the most part, they found little kindness, although some masters were kinder than others.”

“Yes, I have often thought about this situation. I know that slavery began as punishment for soldiers who were defeated in battle. Their punishment often was to go into slavery, but that was the price for losing the war. They were being punished for fighting. Then, too, those captured soldiers were often talented and gifted men that soon distinguished themselves even in servitude. They were valuable and were treated with some respect.”

“Those taken from Africa were dignified human beings, Lev. Some were steeped in superstition and witchcraft, but others were Muslim and knew about us. At the time, many Africans were still living in family units much like the nomads in other parts of the world. In the United States, slavery was very profitable and economically desirable. Slavery only ended because it was humanly unacceptable, not because it was not feasible economically. Africans also had slaves, some captured in raids upon other tribes and some sold to one another.

“There were a few Africans who found white merchants who would pay them something for these slaves. Soon they found it profitable to war against other tribes and take them as merchandise for the white slave traders. It was easier to secure slaves this way for the traders than to fight for them. While the white traders would also engage in capturing whole tribes, the traders used savage people to harvest slaves for them as the easiest means of collecting this human merchandise. It was a cruel and terrible form of slavery without a shred of human decency.”

The Problem of Slavery Should Have Been Dealt With Earlier

“I thought we would be dealing with this kind of problem earlier in the regeneration program, so why is it become such a sore spot now, Gideon?”

“Well, Lev, the slaves were freed and actually their lot was much better than those tribes left in Africa. Africans were free to return to their native countries, but some found life better in the Western world. Others were so distanced from their own culture and had been assimilated into some of the countries in which they lived that they lost their African identity. As a result of a combination of exploitation, superstitious religions, and poverty, Africa descended into anarchy.

“Voodoo witchcraft learned in the islands en route to America kept them in slavery to evil spirits. Ignorance and superstition hindered them from entering the open door of progress. Promiscuous lifestyles forced upon them by evil slave owners left them vulnerable to AIDS and other diseases. Actually, slavery with all its evils brought a richer and higher standard of living to those who survived in the United States. The Civil War was a very painful and bloody one. The cost in human life and suffering in that Civil War cannot be measured. Hence, the cause for bitterness is not that strong because a lot of blood was spilled to gain freedom for the slaves. This is an over-simplified explanation, but the problems are not simple.”

“Yes, Gideon, but we are many generations back in time now in the regeneration process, so why is it becoming a problem now?”

“Most Africans have been brought back to life in the beautiful continent of Africa that was given by God to Ham and his descendants. This is the place of their inheritance. There is abundant rain and the temperatures have moderated. There are no more mosquitoes and swarms of biting bugs. Carnivorous animals are tame and harmless. With perfect government, this whole continent is rising in splendor.

“Now those tribes that captured their fellow tribes and sold them for slaves are living again. Remembrances of past sins have returned with them. Those who suffered as slaves cannot easily accept what

happened to them and do not look kindly on those who so ruthlessly captured them and sold them into slavery for a pittance. They also hate the white slave traders who made merchandise of them. The regeneration is bringing back all those who were on the stage of life at that awful time. Only now the whole drama of history is open to their eyes. Anyway, Lev, you see the problem. We can keep people from hurting one another, but it is difficult to get them to love each other with such perversity lurking in the background. That needs to be addressed.”

They arrived for a brief meeting with the Ancients. Lev was privileged to meet with Gideon, Rahab, Abraham, and Sarah. It was always a greatly inspiring experience meeting these noble people. Lev had also matured to a point very near human perfection.

Abraham greeted Lev with his usual warmth and gracious manner.

“We need someone to pour oil on the troubled waters. Things that happened in the past left room for much bitterness and resentment. When one has experienced such massive abuses as being sold as a slave to a life of misery and heartbreak for self and children, it is very hard to forgive or forget. Being killed seems to be easier to forgive than being turned into a slave. There is no doubt that this practice was heartless and totally insensitive. Yet, the past must not prevent anyone from regaining moral rectitude once it is diligently sought.”

“It is easier said than done,” Lev interjected. “People who committed such heinous crimes against their fellow human beings have had to deaden their sensitivity to human compassion. The slave trader simply rationalized that these people were only half-naked savages who were crazed with voodoo demonism. They’re better off as slaves than dancing around fires in trances.”

“We think you understand human nature well enough to deal with this situation,” Sarah interjected. “However this happened, it doesn’t make for happy relationships now. We know you will find the wisdom and grace from the Lord. God speed, Lev.”

“Thank you, I will surely need it. Where will I be going?”

Africa Is a Beautiful Continent

“You will be going to what used to be the Belgian Congo. It was a hot steamy jungle infested with snakes and crocodiles but with very rich and fertile ground. There was plenty of food to live on without much work or effort. Instead of building cities and a higher culture, the easy way was to live in thatched huts that required little work to build. There was abundant time for leisure and time to make war on surrounding tribes. The voodoo religion in that region was abhorrent and contributed to human depravity more than most demon religions. These poor people were first debased by their religion and then by ruthless slavery,” Rahab asserted.

Gideon said, “You will leave in two days. Some of your family is home already, so you will have a few days together. Report at the airport in two days for Africa.”

Lev heartily shook everyone’s hand and turned toward the door.

Arriving home, Lev found his son Allon waiting to greet him. He had matured without aging, a phenomenon of the time.

“Dad, I’m so glad to see you.”

Lev, who had often longed to embrace his son, now did so with a sense of indescribable joy. Allon was a magnificent person inside and out. Lev felt a father’s love for his beloved son.

“I’m going to call Mom, and also your parents are waiting for a call so they can come over. Our whole little family will have some time together. Uncle Jake is on his way here with Aunt Rachel. It just worked out that most of us are between projects,” Allon declared.

The entire family was gathered with only Annie, Jake and Rachel’s daughter, missing. She was on assignment elsewhere. The remainder of the day was spent in learning all the various activities in which everyone had been engaged. Lev was the only one who knew what his next assignment was to be. When he mentioned that his visit would end shortly, everyone wanted to know what was next.

“I’m going to be dealing with African slave traders, white slave merchants, and those who were sold into slavery. There are a lot of bitter feelings.”

“If anyone can help, you can, Lev,” Hannah, Lev’s mother, said.

“It is quite a challenge because of the extreme bitterness. Those who worshipped at demon altars tended to lack compassion. Those who worshipped money did whatever it took to gain their fortunes. The plantation owners found that having slaves allowed them to live in luxury without working. Everyone hardened their own hearts by trying to believe that the slaves were somehow inferior, not even quite human. The slaves found themselves enduring cruelty of every kind. Yes, it would make one bitter very easily.”

Allon said, “Dad, are those responsible for such crimes ever going to own up to the enormity of their sins against humanity?”

“Well, that remains to be seen, Son. One thing is certain, holding anger will not fix anything. It’s very destructive when stored in the human heart. It is like storing acid in metal containers that will eat its way out. Yet, there is cause for anger. No one should have been treated as slaves were. They had inalienable rights taken from them by unrighteous laws and evil men. At the same time, hating and being bitter will not fix anything now.”

Ariel Aron remarked, “Every sin is ultimately against God. God created all men to be free and equal, and those who forgot God’s laws will not go unpunished. However, in that time frame everything seemed logical to sinful hearts. But for the slave, nothing was logical or right. Everyone who touched him victimized him. Now the time has come to heal and undo the effects of all that evil.”

After everyone else had left, Lev and Rebekah, who continued to be one another’s dearest friend, talked late into the night. How beautiful life was now. The love mankind shared was so sweet and precious because it was increasingly being lifted from any trace of selfishness or self-gratification. In their respective homes, they each slept peacefully, their bodies replenishing energy for a new day of service to the King.

Lev Leaves for a Mission to Belgian Congo

After his short vacation, Lev said farewell to those he loved so dearly and took off for a new adventure.

En route, he used his time to consider how he might steal the bitterness from hearts that felt such pain and from those who rationalized the evils of slavery. The cruelty and hopelessness that slavery created over so long a period of time gave rise to the old slave mantra that they were often “tired of livin’ and afraid of dyin.” There was no solace in that desperate condition.

When Lev landed, there was no one to meet him. This was unusual. However, he did find a private aircraft waiting for him, and he had some addresses and phone numbers of those he was to see. He knew he would be lodging in the home of Elimu Kinsa, one of the first slaves captured and sold to the merchants who had delivered them to America. Lev was eager to meet him but first called him to see if the arrangements the Ancients had made were still agreeable to him.

He answered the phone, “Shalom. This is Elimu Kinsa.”

“Shalom, this is Lev Aron. I have just arrived in Belgian Congo, and before I leave the plane to visit you, I wanted to be sure that I was welcome.”

“Shalom, Mr. Aron. Yes, you are indeed welcome. My former wife Nya and I both will be happy to entertain you while you are here. We heard you would have your own personal aircraft, so you may use our phone number to land it on our pad. We’re sorry we couldn’t meet you, but it would have consumed a great deal of time. Thank you for calling; when shall we expect you?”

“I should be done here at the airport in ten or fifteen minutes. So within the hour I should be landing on your pad. If staying with you is inconvenient, I can commute from a hotel here.”

“Oh no, please, do plan on staying at our home. We are expecting you and would be disappointed not to have you.”

“Very well, I am looking forward to meeting you and Nya.”

Soon Lev landed at Elimu Kinsa's pad. He had a lovely house perfectly suited to the location and with all the necessities for an abundant life. Lev saw a small child come running toward the plane. The boy was adorable and full of excitement at having an aircraft land. As soon as the door to the plane opened, he scurried up, "Are you Mr. Aron? Is this your own airplane?"

"Well I will answer your questions young man, if you tell me your name."

"My name is Hanisi, and I live here. My daddy tells me you will be living with us for a while. He tells me you are a very important man."

"No more important than you are, Hanisi. I am just a little older and have a little more experience. You are the most important person to your mother and father."

Soon both Elimu and Nya appeared smiling. Elimu strode quickly toward the plane, but Nya held back.

"Welcome, my dear Mr. Aron. We are honored to have you stay with us. You are just in time for our evening meal. My son Hanisi has been waiting anxiously for you."

Lev laughed good-naturedly. "Probably more for the excitement of the aircraft—perhaps after supper I can take you all up for a ride around your area. Would you like that, Hanisi?"

His eyes widened with anticipation.

"Will you do that Mr. Aron? I have never ridden in an airplane before. It would be so exciting."

"Well, if your daddy and mommy agree, that is what we shall do."

"Oh, you must not trouble Mr. Aron. He is tired from a long trip. However, if he feels up to it, I see no reason not to. Nya and I would also enjoy the ride."

"Well, count on it then. After supper we will let you see your surroundings from the air. It is quite different looking down from above, Hanisi. I am sure you will enjoy it, and it will be my pleasure to give you your first ride."

"Oh, *o se*, thank you, Mr. Aron. I can hardly wait."

Nya Curtsied

Nya waited for Lev to come where she was standing. She curtsied graciously as he approached her as obviously she had been trained to do. However, a smiling Lev extended his hand so she could not help but notice the friendly gesture. She hesitatingly extended her own lovely hand. "So pleased to meet you, Nya, and your handsome son."

Soon they were all seated around a table filled with fruit and the strong aroma of tea in the air. Elimu asked Lev to offer the blessing on the meal. Dinner conversation was warm and lively. Lev hesitated to bring up anything about the past, but soon Elimu did.

"You know, Lev, my neighbor who lives only several miles from here was the man who led his warriors against our tribe and prevailed in battle against us. This time the chief, Umani, tied us all up and took us as booty to his tribe. We expected that a few of us might be killed or that they would make sport of us for a while and then release us, but not this time. A white slave trader, a Captain Blade, was waiting in the village. Captain Blade put us in steel chains, which were heavy and cut into our flesh. Our tribe was forced to march for days to reach the coast."

Lev saw Hanisi fidgeting in his seat. "Perhaps we should take our short flight now before it gets dark."

He smiled broadly, "*Be ni*, yes."

"All right. I have always wanted to fly like a bird. May we join you?" asked Elimu.

"Of course, it would be a pleasure to give you a bird's eye view of your beautiful land."

They climbed aboard, and Lev started the power when the door was closed. The craft gradually rose and began flying in a large circle over the whole area. Hanisi looked over the terrain pointing out various places with which he was familiar. Astutely he said, "Daddy, there is Umani's house, that very bad man."

Lev took note of the house and its location on the highest place in the area. He flew the craft over another scenic area along a winding river punctuated with exquisite homes and a majestic landscape. Even Hanisi noted how gorgeous that area was. As the sun began to set, the craft landed effortlessly with all its passengers enthralled with the glory of the land.

Hanisi was a well-mannered boy who didn't forget to thank Lev for the ride. "*O se*, Mr. Aron. Can we do it again?"

"You must not be so bold," Nya reproved. "You have no right to make such a request. Mr. Aron gave us this wonderful ride and that was most generous of him, but you mustn't pester. That is not polite."

"Oh, that's all right. Yes, I will be glad to take you for a longer ride, even to the ocean where Daddy and Mother walked to, where a great ship carried them to a land far off. You know I am a Jew and my people, too, were enslaved in Egypt. My ancestors suffered under the whip and the unreasonable demands of hard taskmasters. This history is in my heart, and I hear the pain of your own parents who were treated even more cruelly than we were in Egypt."

Lev's Ancestors Were Slaves

Elimu was intensely interested in Lev's revelation about his forefathers' slavery.

"I remember reading in the Bible about Moses delivering the Jews from slavery in Egypt. Often we only remember the bad treatment of the African people. But now I know that millions of people of different races have experienced the pain and degradation of slavery."

"While I never knew the misery of slavery personally, Elimu, my people remembered many stories of that awful time, and we never forgot that God delivered us. God reinforced our memories with our annual celebrations, because he never wants us to forget our deliverance from Egypt and from bondage."

Nya started opening up, "We lived a very plain and happy life here in Africa. We were ignorant of the large world around us, although we've since learned that parts of Nigeria were very developed and

even engaged in commerce with Europe. However in our little village, we were in terrible darkness steeped in witchcraft and demonism. The tribe was our security, and it took care of its members. Since we lost our ability as a people to communicate and think outside of our tribe, we were doomed to ignorance and superstition. Even as a slave in America, I could not help but admire the ability of my captors to govern and work together. I was amazed at the power of the people who could read and write.

"My mistress saw my fascination and decided to teach me to read and write. She taught me the alphabet and how to put these letters together into words. Soon I was able to read a little bit. It was like magic having words talk to me from paper. Then the master found out. He stopped my training, because he believed slaves had to be kept ignorant to be happy. I never forgot the alphabet, and at every opportunity I kept trying to learn to read. In secret, I was able to read many things. I realized if our people had learned to read and write, it would have freed us in many ways."

"Nya, you are very wise. My people were blessed with literacy, and we have recorded the oldest history of man. We never lost that ability, and consequently our people were successful in every nation where we were scattered. We never lost our identity or our knowledge of the past, and because we had written records, knowledge was easily transferred from generation to generation. As you know, we are the only people who had a written genealogy from Adam to Jesus—over seventy-five generations. We always knew who we were, and that we had a destiny in this world. No matter how bitterly persecuted and mistreated, we knew that God had planned for us to become a blessing nation." Lev recounted this history almost as a reverie but then returned to the present. "I have only come to understand all this since I returned to life. I didn't have the insights that you express, Nya."

Sold for Rum

Elimu had been quiet all this time. "I've learned of the sufferings of your people and how often others tried to destroy them simply because

you were Jews. Other races betrayed you, but our own people betrayed us. I cannot begin to explain how that felt. Our lives were valued at a few barrels of rum, some trinkets, and steel knives. I wonder if our fellow Africans who sold us had any idea of what we were to eventually endure. Perhaps that knowledge would have stopped them.”

“I’m glad you understand that what they did was without full knowledge, Elimu. It seemed a simple solution to the conflict between your tribes to simply ship you to an unknown somewhere. How could they have had any idea what awaited you? It seemed like a good plan to continue capturing other tribes and sending them off to America and make a profit all at the same time. It was a grim business.”

“All I remember is seeing Umani’s face as he took Captain Blade’s payment. We had been friends as children. When our tribes were not at war, we children would hunt and fish and play together. He assured me that if he were to become the tribal chief, he would end the wars that occasionally erupted. We both promised each other we would make peace. As I was dragged away in chains, I caught his eye and he merely stared at me. I knew he had lost his heart.”

“Yet, his profession of friendship was not forgotten, Elimu, it was just suppressed,” Lev comforted. “Surely you know that what he did is a haunting memory, and he would like to forget it ever happened.”

“I wish I could believe that. I’ve met him on several occasions, and he always turns his back on me. He doesn’t like seeing me. I suppose he wishes that I would go away again.”

“I am sure those are exactly his feelings. I have dealt with many people who have done terrible things, and few of them have the courage to face up to them. Would you like to go with me to meet him tomorrow?”

“No,” Elimu was adamant. “I can hardly bear to look at him. I know the devil is in the abyss, but somehow I think something of him remains in Umani’s heart. If you’re going to see him, it’s best you go alone.”

“Very well, I’ll visit him tomorrow by myself. Perhaps you’re right. He might be overly defensive with you there. I know what he did to

you was horrible. In his heart, he knows it, too. Maybe you’d like to visit Captain Blade with me when I go. He was really a man without a heart. Most men would have treated animals with more kindness than he showed you. Money was his god, and he only fed you enough to keep you alive until he could sell you.”

Unpunished and Unrepentant

“Yes, I should indeed like to visit Captain Blade. I confess I’d rather strangle him with my bare hands than to talk to him.”

“God’s work is only begun; nobody is getting away with anything. You may count on it that every sin will receive a just punishment, Elimu. It might help to remember that although you suffered greatly in slavery, certain blessings came to your posterity. Tens of thousands of men died in securing your progeny’s freedom. Your people went on to learn to read and write, and many became educated, distinguished men and women. Many who remained in Africa were caught up in tribal conflicts, extreme poverty, corrupt dictators, and rampant disease.”

“Point well taken, Lev. When I was raised and met with some of my family who stayed here, they couldn’t understand how hopeless my life was. All I ever knew in America was the whip on my back and contempt shown the Negro slave. How often I wished for death, but I had to live for Nya and Hanisi, who was born on the ship carrying us to America.”

“Oh my, how did he survive birth on a slave ship?”

Nya told that part of the story. “It was a nightmare. It was autumn, so I had really nothing to cover Hanisi from the chill on that ship. I had to give birth without the benefit of privacy also. The only thing that saved my baby was that one of the sailors snuck me a handful of rags. Every day he snuck me some bread covered with lard and an occasional bite of meat. I am sure if he were caught, he would have been beaten. Some of the crew would endure the smell of our quarters to look at us. Fortunately for us, the captain couldn’t tolerate the odor, so he kept himself as far away as possible.

Elimu joined in, “You know the smell on that slave ship was as foul as it can get. There were no sanitary provisions. We were chained to one another on rough boards with no freedom of movement. Occasionally they would take us up on deck and wash our quarters down with salt water, but then back into the hold we would go. Our wounds from the chains and from lying for weeks on rough boards were unbearable. No one cared; we weren’t human beings in their eyes, so it didn’t matter.”

Nya spoke again, “The joy of having a son was lost in that hold. One thing I knew, I was going to love him so that he would know what love meant. I could not change the world, but I could, as long as God gave me breath, love my child. He would live in my eyes and I would breathe hope into his heart.”

“Apparently you succeeded. He’s a lovely child. But, obviously, he didn’t survive long, since he was resurrected as a child.”

Hanisi Dies as a Child

“Yes, he did die a young child. At first it seemed we were blessed because both Elimu and I were sold to the same master. He seemed pleased to gain an extra slave without having to pay for him in my newly born son. We learned to work from dawn until dark. I would have to leave Hanisi alone in our cabin while I went out to work. I was permitted to come home during the day to feed him and care for him, but if I took too long with him I would be whipped for being a lazy slave. Our master was not as cruel as Captain Blade. He allowed us some privileges and did give us Sundays off to rest and be with my son. We only had light duties on Sunday. Elimu thought of running away, but he wouldn’t even try because of Hanisi and me.”

“Yes, I thought of running away. But where would I go? Nobody would hide a runaway slave. If you were caught, you would be savagely beaten and sometimes they would chop off a part of your foot to keep you from running away again. We were isolated from each other. We were ignorant and poor. At times, even I believed we must be inferior. They lived in splendid homes and drove around in beautiful carriages.

I would see our master sit and read. The pages he looked at would speak to him but not to me. He would occasionally read to us from the Bible and allowed us to go to a church for slaves on Sunday. The white men seemed to know how to work together. They had no tribal wars. Of course, I had no idea of the scope of international war that went on. They may have bought and sold us, but they didn’t sell one another into slavery.

“I thought they had created a higher civilization than we had in Africa. They read by lamplight and played beautiful music. Our white masters had learned something that we did not have. I was determined to learn these secrets and take them back to our people in Africa.”

“Yes,” Nya added, “but being a slave and knowing that our son would be a slave was like living under a curse. We were just like cattle, but at least we were expensive, so we had some value to the masters. Slavery was an economic necessity to them and allowed them lives of leisure while we toiled in the fields, cut wood, painted their houses and cooked their meals. If we were sick or tired, it did not matter. We had to do what we were told or be beaten.”

Nya continued, shuddering at the memory, “One day our white master came to me saying that Elimu was too small a specimen to sire children. A large, muscular man was to be rented from another plantation so he could sire powerful slaves with the slave women.

“However, a plague of smallpox erupted among the slaves, and we all became very ill. Our white master would not even enter our cabin for fear of the disease. Soon Hanisi died, and we were so sick we couldn’t bury him. We carried him out of our cabin and covered him with cloth. My will to live was gone. My condition worsened, and soon I knew I would get my wish. And there was another reason to welcome death. I would not have to be bearing another man’s child. I remember calling to Elimu when I felt my strength was gone. He was so weak with fever that I could barely hear him speak.

“He said to me faintly, ‘Go in peace, my dear Nya. You will be free from our master, as is our son. I, too, shall follow you.’ His eyes were filled with tears as he gathered all his strength to kiss me.

“Soon I faded into a coma and died shortly after.”

Elimu finished the tale. “I soon became delirious. I was dehydrated and feverish, yet I felt relief that my miserable existence was ending. And then nothing.”

Lev listened to this tragic story with tears in his own eyes. Sharing their horrible experience moved him greatly.

Lev sipped his tea as he gained composure. “I would like you to meet Captain Blade. He is coming to Africa specifically to talk to all the slaves he transported to America. He transported over two thousand slaves before he became ill and died. He wants to apologize individually to every one of those ex-slaves to pay his debt in some way. He knows everyone will have a hard time forgiving him, but he wants to make every effort to serve them and help them as much as he can.”

“It is good that no one is able to raise a hand to hurt anyone anymore. I’m not sure I could resist the urge to attack him. Okay, Lev, I will behave as I am required to do. Christ is my new Master; only he is kind and loving. It is a joy to serve him. I’ll make every attempt to open my heart.”

“I have been in his service many years, Elimu, and I will gladly serve him forever.”

Nya joined in, “Yes, we will surely be glad to see Captain Blade. What excuse can he have for his cruelty and savage treatment of slaves? I am glad now that I am not responsible for such conduct. I don’t know how I could find peace after doing so much evil to so many people.”

*“So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that
Are done under the sun: and behold the tears of
[such as were]
Oppressed, and they had no comforter;
and on the side of their
Oppressors [there was] power; but they had no comforter”
(Ecclesiastes 4:1).*

Chapter Twenty-Five

“You have a kind and loving heart, Nya. You must remember that Captain Blade was a simple man who took advantage of an opportunity. It was the white plantation owners who wanted slave labor, and they paid him handsomely for boatloads of slaves.”

“But why did they make it worse by isolating us from each other? If we had others from our village, life would have been somewhat more tolerable.”

“The slaves were separated going to various plantations purposely to break their will to rebel. Since Africans from different areas didn’t share a common language, they couldn’t organize an army. They were in a strange land, and they knew of no way to return to Africa. They lost their roots and their identity. They were ignorant of Western ways and were purposefully kept that way in fear. You know the church and aristocracy in Europe kept the peasant class poor and ignorant for the very same reason. As soon as people become educated, they understand what is happening to them and will rise up in revolt.”

Nya nodded sadly.

“I’ll take you to a special meeting Captain Blade is arranging at your chapel, Lev went on. “He’s going to travel from place to place

until he meets every person to whom he owes repentance. It is a kind of surprise visit, but your chaplain agreed to have him speak there. I know you have deep wounds. But God has forgiven us our sins because of Christ's sacrifice, so maybe we can learn forgiveness too."

"You make a good case, Lev. But this is going to be very difficult," Elimu replied.

"I didn't say it would be easy. It takes great strength and character to overcome our pain and bitterness. However, it can be done and it must be done."

Nya nodded in agreement.

Everyone turned in early. Lev was tired from his travels. He realized how deep and grievous was the pain of slavery, and he wondered how Captain Blade would present himself to those he subjected to such intolerable conditions.

Early in the morning, they all shared breakfast before leaving for the meeting. Lev could see that both Elimu and Nya were very tense. Facing the one responsible for delivering them into slavery was going to be traumatic.

They arrived early and Lev was introduced to the chaplain. "Where is Captain Blade?"

The man ran his hand over his eyes, almost wearily. "I've asked him to remain in the other room until the meeting is underway. We didn't want any confrontation. After he says what he came to say, people may speak to him, but by then at least they will know something of his present state of heart and mind. He is not the old slave trader he once was."

The room was overflowing with every seat taken and many standing. The chaplain chose the hymn, "The Cross Now Covers My Sins" to open the meeting.

Captain Blade Speaks

After the prayer, he announced, "Captain Blade is waiting for me to call him to speak to you. Please promise me that you will hear

him out. Give him a chance to express sorrow for his actions. I know you have memories of intense pain, but you must remember God has forgiven you your sins through Christ. Now, Captain Blade."

There was profound silence in the room. Many there were victims of Captain Blade's cruelty and the mere mention of his name brought revulsion.

Although he had wavy brunette hair, deep brown eyes, and glowing health, the man before them looked almost beaten.

"I have no sufficient defense or excuse for the agony I caused so many of you. You have every right to hate me, and I certainly deserve all the reproach that you may wish to bring upon me. I am here to publicly acknowledge my sin. I cannot undo the damage. Oh, how I wish I could! If it would undo the pain and grief I caused you, I would willingly die. All I can do is say that I am very, very sorry.

"Whatever appearance I gave you of a ruthless and uncaring person was only on the outside. Inside, I knew what I was doing. I drank a lot of rum to dull my senses. Every trip I made brought me a handsome profit. The plantation owners couldn't get enough slaves to satisfy their needs. Whenever the subject of cruelty to slaves was brought up in conversation, these men would all claim they treated their slaves humanely.

"I was better. I didn't feel the whip on my back. But I was becoming rich and powerful. Why should I worry about the lot of miserable slaves? We didn't even acknowledge your humanity. You were being treated better than cattle that would be slaughtered. Oh, how I regret it all.

"You will ask how these words I speak can undo the bitterness and suffering of the past. Well, they can't. Your very lives were stolen from you. Every lash of the whip on your backs degraded you into hopeless despair. Worst of all, we took away from you all hope."

"I Am Not the Same Captain Blade"

"So why am I speaking to you? I cannot change the past. I stand guilty and condemned before you. I did not come here to justify myself.

I was a criminal and abuser of my fellow man. But, I am here to say I am not the same Captain Blade who proudly walked the deck of his ship beholding your misery. I have come to ask your forgiveness and to become your servant. I am here to offer my services to you to help you build for your loved ones and to contribute to the common good of your country and your people.

“I will be your servant to the extent of my ability. I myself am subject to my Heavenly Master. Therefore, I am ready to love you and to give myself to you. Only Christ can heal the wounds I inflicted, and he will. I owe you more than I can ever give back but will come as close as I can. If you hate me, I will love you in return. Thank you.”

The silence continued, only this time the very air seemed to have improved. Every eye was moist with tears. Those who had restrained themselves from seeking vengeance suddenly realized all desire for revenge was gone. The chaplain closed the service with prayer. Almost immediately, the Captain was surrounded by free men who accepted his apology and offered their hands in friendship and peace.

Captain Blade was as good as his word. That same day he asked the community to give him work assignments, so he could begin to serve immediately.

Lev asked Captain Blade, “Will you accompany me on a visit to Umani? I am sure you remember him. He was the man from whom you purchased slaves.”

“Indeed, I remember him. It is only right that I should meet him again and discuss the evil in which we both participated.”

Elimu and Nya returned home in Lev’s aircraft. They were quiet and not even the splendid scenery attracted their attention. Only Hanisi remained excited about the flight.

As Lev set the plane down, Elimu said, “I never believed I could look that man in the face again without a burning hatred. To my great surprise and relief, my hatred is gone. He truly is repentant. He is doing all the things that a truly repentant man can do. How can I hate him now?”

Nya added, “I went this morning trembling with fury in my heart, but I am returning with peace. I hate what he did, but he is doing the only thing he can do—repair the harm that he caused. Even killing him wouldn’t fix things. Love is the only way to resolve this whole matter. He has chosen to live down his sin. That is the best way.”

Lev Visits Umani Along with Captain Blade

After supper Lev called Umani, the man who overpowered Elimu’s tribe and sold them as slaves to Captain Blade. When he received Lev’s call, he was not interested in meeting with him.

Umani said, “I do not know you. Why should I meet with you? I am always nervous about meeting strangers. If you are looking for information on a story of some kind, no thank you, I am not interested in telling any stories.”

“Do you remember Captain Blade?” Lev inquired.

There was a long pause. Finally he said, “Yes, I know the man. However, he is no friend of mine, and I would have no reason to speak with him or you.”

“Well, Umani, I must tell you that you do have reason to speak with me. I am here in Africa sent by the ruling Hill of Zion. Your name is on my agenda of people to speak to. It is in your best interest to speak to me and perhaps Captain Blade as well.”

Umani immediately changed his attitude. He said, “Oh, I thought you were someone else. I did not realize you were an ambassador from Zion’s Hill. Please forgive me. Will tomorrow at nine o’clock be convenient for you?”

“Yes, Captain Blade and I will arrive at that time. It is very important that we speak to you. You may also bring your family and friends. We have no secrets. It is important that everyone understand clearly that we are serious in working for reconciliation. If things were going well with you, we would not need to be here.”

Umani was shaken. “Yes, yes, sir. Please accept my apology for being so abrupt with you. I will welcome you.”

“Very well, until tomorrow. Shalom.”

Captain Blade would be a valuable person to have along. He had repented and was endeavoring to do things the right way. His example would be very helpful.

It was only a few minutes to Umani’s. Almost as the clock struck nine, they sat down. Umani and a number of his friends and relatives were there to greet them. Lev could see they were very nervous and he wanted to set them all at ease.

“Shalom to all of you. Please allow me to introduce Captain Blade to you. Perhaps some of you remember him from the past. We’re here to bring peace to your home.”

“Please come in,” Umani said. “I did not think quickly enough to invite you to breakfast.”

“Thank you.” They all went in and sat in the living room that was comfortably decorated with elements of both past culture and present ease.

Lev began. “As you have probably already guessed, we are here because you were involved in selling your brothers into slavery.”

The group’s discomfort was evident on every face. “I have brought Captain Blade with me because he was also involved. You helped provide him with slaves, and he gave you some trinkets and rum. He made a lot of money in the business. Greed was his motive. What was your motive?”

Tribes Were in Conflict

Umani paused before answering.

“We were always in some sort of conflict with our tribal brothers. We would have a few years of peace and then violence would break out again. Although Elimu and I grew up meeting to fish and play, we grew apart because our tribes were often in conflict. Elimu and his soldiers would attack our village and humiliate our men. So I led a mission against Elimu and his people to punish him. We captured many people and had them bound and imprisoned in a *boma* of thorns.

We really had no use for them. We had no way to feed or care for them without making a lot of extra work for ourselves.

“As I was wondering what to do with them, I thought to kill a few and then let the rest go. When Captain Blade was raiding villages to take slaves, he found I had prisoners, all bound and he made me a deal. He would pay me for my prisoners and he would not attack my village if I would continue to collect slaves for him. He offered me swords, knives, and many other things, plus a few barrels of rum. I wanted those steel swords and knives, and this would solve the constant warfare between our tribes. So I accepted his offer.”

“Is that true Captain Blade?” Lev asked.

“Putting it in the simplest form, yes. He did ask me what I would do with these people. I told him that I would take them far away so he would never have any warfare with them again.”

“Did Captain Blade tell you that they would be crammed into stinking boats with as many as a couple of hundred of their brethren and taken to America to be sold as slaves? But not as slaves in your old culture; they would work from dawn until dark under the scorching sun and would be treated worse than oxen. Did he tell you that?”

“No. He said these slaves would work to feed themselves and their masters. So I knew they were going to work, even though here in Africa our life is very simple. We did not work except to build mud and straw huts to live in, and hunt and fish and pick fruit. Life was very easy here.”

Lev could see that Umani was experiencing some confusion, and he tried to pursue the matter gently. “Did you realize if you had worked with other tribes you might have prevented this tragedy, but because you betrayed your brothers, you, too, would become forced laborers for the white men right here in your homeland?”

“No, Mr. Aron. We were simple people. We did not know how great and powerful the white men had become. We should have known, since they had superior weapons and large oceangoing vessels. We saw them put iron chains on their victims from which our brothers

could never escape. The white men had guns, metal armor, and talking paper. When Captain Blade spoke to his men, they obeyed him completely. Even as he spoke to me, I knew his men were prepared to take us captive if we did not do what he wanted.

“Mr. Aron, I was a simple man. Captain Blade offered to take this troublesome tribe away from here. Should I have cared where they were going and what was to become of them?”

“Umani! You were a simple man but not as simple as you claim,” exclaimed Captain Blade. “You knew I was buying slaves and you were selling. I bought Elimu and his tribe from you and numerous other tribes as well. You were eager to provide me with slaves, and never did you express any concern as to what was to become of them. You made my miserable work easy. I didn’t have to risk my life or the lives of my men trying to capture these people. Your black brothers looked in vain into your eyes to show them pity but there was none. I knew what I was doing was very wrong, and I believe you knew that as well.”

“Why Do You Fault Me?”

“If you knew it was wrong and still did it, why do you fault me?” Umani asked.

“I sinned against God and man in what I did, and so did you, Umani. The only difference is that I have confessed my sin and have asked God and these good people to whom I did much evil for forgiveness.”

“You knew what was happening to these slaves better than I, Captain Blade. I only saw them boarding your stinking boats. I didn’t know what became of these people. That was your responsibility and the responsibility of those who bought them. What makes me guilty for your crimes?”

“Umani,” Lev exclaimed, “You must surely know you were a partner in the slave trade. Before Captain Blade took them off your hands, you would keep slaves and sometimes kill them for sport or for food. The only differences between you and the white men who

used slave labor is that you did not have any work for slaves to do. Otherwise, you might have been a slave master as well.”

“I am sorry, but I only did what was commonly done. That does not make it kind or good, but that is the way we lived. We lived simple lives providing food and shelter for ourselves. Now that I am eating from the trees of life and have become much more knowledgeable, I look back at my former life wondering how I lived on such a low plane.”

The captain continued to entreat Umani. “You’re excusing yourself from the grim responsibility you had in destroying the lives of so many of your brothers and sisters. I confess that I had more knowledge than you, Umani, but what you did was still evil. Since I cannot live my former life over again, I have decided to live now as I ought to have lived then. I am going to live down my sin whatever the cost may be. I owe that to myself, I owe that to God, and I owe it to those I treated so badly. I am no longer the old Captain Blade, but by God’s grace I am going to refashion myself into the likeness of Christ to the extent that it is possible. Please, Umani. That is what you must do also.”

“If I knew then what I know now, I would not have done it. It’s not easy to say I’m sorry for what happened, but I am. But I don’t feel all the guilt you do, because my brothers would have gladly sold me to you if they captured my people and me. I was no different from them. We knew nothing of the nobility of Christ and the Christian religion. What we knew of the Christians who claimed to follow Christ was evil. When they came to our land, they had the Bible and we had the land. Soon, they gave us the Bible and took the land. That is what I have learned from history. They made slaves of us in our own land and maybe we were worse off than slaves abroad. Here our labor was cheap and we had no value. Whether we lived or died did not matter. If one black man died, there was always another to take his place. My mistake was that we did not organize and fight the white tyrants.”

Tribes Could Not Be Organized

Lev looking directly at Umani said, “You know very well that you could never organize all the various tribes to work together. Every

tribal ruler, you included, looked out for his own position and office. That is why you were never able to form governments and become great nations. You were too busy protecting your tribal headships. Anyway, you are justifying what you did on the basis that others were more evil than you. How can that justify you or anyone? Whether others did greater evil than you is not relevant. That will not bring you reconciliation with God or with your fellow men, Umani.”

“I said I would not have done what I did if I knew all that I know now. I have talked to some who lived and died as slaves in America, and I realize now what tragedy I brought upon them. I was guilty of taking away their dignity, their hope, their freedom, and their right to live as God ordained that men and women should live. I did that, and now I am sorry for it. I can’t change the past. What do you expect from me now?”

John Blade responded, “What you need is a new heart, Umani, but instead you’re justifying yourself. I know exactly what you are doing, because that’s what I did at first. I rationalized that I could not carry a cargo of people as first class passengers and still pay my expenses. I didn’t make slaves of these people. I owned no slaves. That was supposed to give me a clean slate in the matter. You are playing the same game.”

By now, some in the room were expressing irritation at their host, but he was most irritable when he said, “If you expect me to grovel and beg for forgiveness, I am not prepared to do that. I admit some guilt, but I will not assume the blame for what happened. My tribesmen became drunkards from all the rum and that ruined my people. You, Captain Blade, are the one who prospered and accumulated wealth for yourself. You took people to a cruel existence and ruined the rest of us in the process.”

“That I did, Umani, and I’m the first to admit my guilt and shame now. I am willing to grovel before anyone and willing to give back all that I can as long as I have life and strength. I owe God and my brothers godly repentance and godly sorrow. I am the man who did all

those evil things and more, but I fall at the cross seeking forgiveness, and I fall before those I injured doing the same.”

Umani Refuses to Show Godly Sorrow

“I cannot and will not do that.”

Lev could see that Umani was as determined as some others he had seen who seemed to choose death over life, if it meant openly confessing before the world their pernicious and evil ways.

So he said with a resigned sigh, “Umani, you are your own man. You must choose either the path of life or the path of death. That is your right. As the days pass you will find life exceedingly beautiful and fulfilling. We have only begun to taste of God’s blessings, and they are so sweet. The deathbed repentance has always been an illusion. You reap what you sow—it’s that simple. If your pride prevents you from owning your guilt before your brethren, your pride will not bring you acceptance by God or Christ. God’s word to you is, ‘Choose life that you might live.’”

Umani’s eyes opened wide with a measure of realization. He knew that he wanted life. Did he have the strength of character and the courage to take the way of life?

“I will think about your words.”

Lev knew they had left the matter squarely in Umani’s own hands, and that he alone could chart the course he would take. Lev’s task here was done and he would report to the Ancients for his next assignment.

THE END

John Class has written a series of five books to cover the experiences of the regenerated human race under Christ's rule—*Alive Again*, *From Ashes to Beauty*, *Fingers Stained with Evil*, *Adam and Eve Live Again* and *When the Thousand Years Expire*.