

# The Upside Down Kingdom



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# ***The Upside-Down Kingdom***

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# DEDICATION

To the young hearts and minds who dare to embrace the radical call of Jesus, may your journey through *The Upside-Down Kingdom* ignite a passion within you to live counter to the world's expectations. As you seek to follow Christ, may you embody His humility, love, and justice, turning the world's values on their head.

Remember, true greatness is found in service, true strength in surrender, and true life in giving oneself away. May your faith be bold, your love deep, and your commitment unwavering.

Continue to walk in His footsteps, illuminating the path for others as you go.

Follow this link for detailed introduction to Luke's Gospel:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIb\\_dCIxzo0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIb_dCIxzo0)

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

**1 Timothy 4:12**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Introduction

## *The Upside-Down Kingdom*

I'm Luke—doctor, traveler, and now... historian? Many have tried to write about the incredible events we've witnessed, but I wanted to get everything exactly right. I've interviewed eyewitnesses, checked facts, and now I'm recording it all for you, Theophilus, so you'll know the truth about Jesus. Here's how it all began...

This book is basically one of the OG accounts of Jesus' life, and get this—it's actually part one of a two-part series Luke-Acts! (Yeah, we had sequels even back then.)

I am a doctor (We didn't have TikTok for medical advice back then), and I hung out with Paul the apostle. Think of me as the documentarian of the group—while traveling around, I'm like, "I should write all this down!"



Look, I know there are other accounts out there, but I wanted to go straight to the source—talked to actual eyewitnesses and everything!

I wanted to make an "orderly" account of the "things that had been fulfilled." Translation: This isn't just random history—I'm showing how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and, honestly, the whole world.

Jesus wasn't the typical king everyone was expecting. Instead of conquering with armies, he died to save people, showing that real power comes through love, not force. Mind blowing for people back then.

Jesus invites us to spread this ***Upside-Down Kingdom*** idea and welcome literally everyone into His family.

So basically, this is an eyewitness account of how Jesus completely flipped everyone's expectations and changed history forever.

And you thought your class presentations were important!



# Chapter 1

The morning sun was already blazing as I sat across from Zechariah's neighbor, an elderly man with weathered hands who had lived next door to the priest for decades.

"So Zechariah was chosen by lot to burn incense in the Temple?" I confirmed, writing quickly on my scroll.

"Yes," the man nodded emphatically. "It was during Abijah's priestly division. Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him. His wife, Elizabeth, was from Aaron's line too—both righteous people who followed God's commands blamelessly."

"But they had no children?" I asked, though I already knew the answer.

The man's face softened. "Elizabeth couldn't have any. By then, they were both... well, let's just say they weren't exactly young anymore."

I smiled sympathetically. This detail mattered—God's

pattern of working through the impossible was becoming clearer with each interview.

Later that week, I secured time with Zechariah himself. Now able to speak again, the elderly priest's eyes sparkled with intensity as he recounted that day.

"I was just doing my job, following the ritual like generations before me," Zechariah explained. "The lot fell to me—I was to burn incense while people prayed outside. I entered the sanctuary alone..."

"And then?" I prompted.

"Then an angel appeared on the right side of the altar!" His voice quivered. "I'm not going to lie, Luke—I nearly passed out from fear."

"What did the angel say?" I asked, pen poised.

Zechariah closed his eyes, recalling the moment. "'Don't be afraid, Zechariah,'" he quoted. "'Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.'"

"Just like that?" I asked.

"He said more—that John would bring joy and delight, that many would rejoice at his birth. He would be great in God's sight, filled with the Holy Spirit even before birth. And most importantly, he would prepare people for the Lord."

"But you questioned this?" I asked carefully.

Zechariah laughed ruefully. "Wouldn't you? I basically said, 'Um, have you noticed I'm ancient and my wife isn't exactly a spring chicken, either?'"

I couldn't help but smile. "And the angel's response?"

"He was... not amused. He said, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in God's presence, and I've been sent to tell you this good news.' Then he told me I would not be able to talk until everything happened because I didn't believe him." Zechariah shook his head. "Nine months of not being able to talk! Do you know how frustrating that is for a priest?"

"I can imagine," I replied. "And the people outside were waiting all this time?"

"They couldn't figure out what was taking so long! When I finally came out, unable to speak, just making hand gestures, they realized I'd seen a vision. Talk about an awkward workday!"

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Elizabeth was gracious enough to share her perspective over a simple meal in her home. Her eyes were kind, her demeanor peaceful.

"When I realized I was pregnant after all those years, I stayed in seclusion for five months," she told me. "Can you imagine the gossip? An elderly woman pregnant? But I knew it was God's doing. He had taken away my disgrace."

She leaned forward. "But Luke, you should really talk to my

cousin Mary about what happened in the sixth month. That's when things got really interesting."

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Finding Mary wasn't easy. Her reputation for thoughtfulness was well-earned—she chose her words carefully as we spoke near a well in Nazareth.

"I was just going about my day," Mary began. "I was engaged to Joseph, planning our future together. Then suddenly, Gabriel was there."

"The same angel who appeared to Zechariah?" I clarified.

Mary nodded. "He said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'"

"Were you afraid like Zechariah?"

"Terrified doesn't begin to cover it," Mary admitted. "But not just from seeing an angel—his greeting confused me. Me? Highly favored? I was nobody important. Then he told me not to be afraid, that I had found favor with God. He said I would conceive and give birth to a son named Jesus. That he would be great, called the Son of the Most High. That God would give him the throne of David, and his kingdom would never end."

"And your response?" I asked, fascinated by the contrast with Zechariah's story.

"I asked how this could be since I was a virgin. It wasn't

doubt exactly—more like... practical concerns?" Mary smiled slightly.

"The angel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon me, that the power of the Most High would overshadow me. That's why my child would be called the Son of God. Then he mentioned Elizabeth being pregnant in her old age as proof that nothing is impossible with God."

"And you accepted this?" I asked, amazed.

Mary's eyes met mine. "I said, 'I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.' What else could I say? When God calls, you answer—even when it sounds completely impossible."

"That took incredible courage," I noted. "What did you do next?"

"I hurried to visit Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea," Mary replied. "I needed someone who would understand what was happening."

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My journey took me to the home where their meeting had occurred. A neighbor who had witnessed the encounter described it vividly.

"When Mary arrived and greeted Elizabeth, something extraordinary happened," the woman told me. "Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She shouted at the top of her lungs—startling

all of us!"

"What did she say?"

"She called out, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!'"

I had heard from others about what Mary said next—her beautiful song of praise that revealed both her knowledge of Scripture and her understanding of how God works. She spoke of God's mercy, his mighty deeds, how he lifts up the humble and fills the hungry. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months before returning home.

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The birth of John brought me back to Zechariah and Elizabeth's neighborhood. The celebration was still remembered vividly.

"On the eighth day, everyone gathered for the child's circumcision," a family friend explained. "We all assumed they'd name him after his father—that's tradition, you know."

"But Elizabeth insisted on 'John'?" I asked.

"Yes! Everyone was shocked. No one in their family had that name. So they made signs to Zechariah to see what he



wanted to name the child."

I smiled, knowing what came next. "And that's when he asked for a writing tablet?"

"Exactly! He wrote, 'His name is John,' and everyone was amazed. Then suddenly—boom!—Zechariah could speak again! First words out of his mouth were praise to God. Gave us all goosebumps."

Later, Zechariah shared with me the prophecy he spoke that day, filled with the Holy Spirit—how his son would prepare the way for the Messiah who would bring salvation and forgiveness of sins.

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As the sun set on our final interview, Zechariah looked thoughtfully toward the horizon.

"You know what everyone kept asking, Luke? 'What then is this child going to be?' They could sense something different about John from the beginning."

I nodded, finishing my notes. "And then John grew up in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel?"

"Yes," Zechariah confirmed. "The hand of the Lord was with him from the start. He was just the beginning of the story, though. The best was yet to come."

I rolled up my scroll, thinking about how to organize all these accounts. One thing was certain—this wasn't just

history. This was the story of God keeping his promises in ways no one expected.

The stage was set. A herald had been born. Now it was time to document the arrival of the King himself.

## Chapter 2

### *Day 42 of my investigation*

It all began with that census—the one Emperor Augustus ordered. Everyone had to return to their hometown to register, which was a logistical nightmare. Joseph, being from David's lineage, had to travel from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea—about 90 miles with his very pregnant fiancée. Not exactly ideal travel conditions.

"We had no choice," Mary told me, her eyes reflecting the memory. "The decree came, and we had to go."

"What was that journey like?" I asked.

Mary laughed softly. "Imagine being nine months pregnant and riding a donkey for days. Every bump felt like the baby was doing somersaults. Joseph kept asking, 'Are you okay?' so many times I finally said, 'Ask me that one more time and I'll walk the rest of the way!'"

Joseph, sitting beside her, smiled sheepishly. "I was worried! It's not like we planned to have our firstborn in a strange town."

When they finally arrived in Bethlehem, it was packed with travelers. Every inn was full.

"We knocked on so many doors," Joseph recalled. "Each innkeeper looked at Mary, then at me with this 'not my problem' expression. One actually said, 'Poor planning on your part doesn't constitute an emergency on mine.'"

Mary interjected, "That's when the last innkeeper's wife elbowed him hard in the ribs and said, 'We have the stable, you heartless clod!' I've never been so grateful for a stable in my life."

"It wasn't what we expected," Joseph admitted. "But it was shelter."

Mary's face softened. "That night, my labor began. No midwife, no mother, just Joseph looking completely panicked."

"I was not panicked," Joseph protested. "I was concerned."

"Your hands were shaking so badly you nearly dropped the swaddling cloths," Mary teased. "But you were brave when it counted."

The birth itself was, as Mary described it, "like any birth—painful, messy, and then suddenly the most beautiful moment of my life." They placed baby Jesus in a feeding trough—a manger—because there was no proper cradle available.

"We were exhausted but filled with wonder," Mary said. "We just kept staring at him, this tiny baby who angels had announced."

Speaking of angels, that same night, some shepherds were

in the fields near Bethlehem, watching their flocks.

I tracked down one of those shepherds, Eli, who still gets wide-eyed telling the story.

"We were just sitting there," Eli explained, "complaining about the night shift when BOOM! The sky exploded with light. Not like sunrise—like someone had torn open the sky itself."

"Were you afraid?" I asked.

"Afraid? I nearly died of terror! We all hit the ground like we'd been struck. Then this... being... appeared. An angel, brighter than anything I've ever seen. First words out of his mouth were 'Don't be afraid.'"

"A bit late for that," another shepherd, Jotham, muttered when I interviewed him later.

Eli continued, "The angel said, 'I bring you good news of great joy for all people. Today in Bethlehem, a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.'"

"And then," Jotham interrupted, "as if one angel wasn't enough to give us heart failure, suddenly there were thousands of them, filling the sky, singing, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'"

"What did you do then?" I asked.

"What do you think we did?" Eli laughed. "After they left, we looked at each other like, 'Did that just happen?'"

Then Jotham grinned. "And I said, 'Well, are we just going to stand here like idiots, or are we going to Bethlehem?'"

So the shepherds rushed into town, searching until they found Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus exactly as the angel had described.

"When these grimy, out-of-breath shepherds burst in," Mary recalled, "I thought Joseph was going to stand in front of the manger with his carpentry tools as weapons. But then they started telling us about the angels, and we realized God had sent them."

Joseph nodded. "They were so excited, talking over each other, describing the angels. After they left, they told everyone they met. We could hear them shouting the news through the streets of Bethlehem."

Mary added quietly, "I treasured all these things and pondered them in my heart. How could I not? My son, surrounded by shepherds who'd seen angels... it was overwhelming."

Eight days later, when it was time for the baby's circumcision, they named him Jesus, just as the angel had told them before he was conceived.

Later, when the time came for the purification offering required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As the Law states, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord." They also offered the sacrifice permitted for those who couldn't afford a lamb: a two young pigeons.

"We weren't wealthy," Mary explained. "But we wanted to

honor God's law in every way."

In Jerusalem, they encountered an elderly man named Simeon. I wish I could have interviewed him, but he passed away years ago. According to Mary, he was a righteous and devout man who had been waiting for the Messiah his whole life. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he wouldn't die before seeing the Lord's Messiah.

That day, guided by the Spirit, Simeon came to the temple. When Mary and Joseph brought in Jesus, Simeon took the baby in his arms and praised God.

"His hands were shaking with age," Mary remembered, "but when he held Jesus, it was like he became young again. His face lit up, and he said, 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.'"

Joseph told me, "Mary and I were amazed. This stranger was confirming everything the angel had told us."

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Mary's eyes grew distant at this memory. "I didn't understand then what he meant about a sword piercing my soul. Now... I'm beginning to understand."

There was also a prophet named Anna who was at the

temple. She was very old and had been widowed after only seven years of marriage. She was now eighty-four and spent all her time at the temple, worshiping day and night, fasting and praying.

"She came up to us right after Simeon," Joseph recalled. "She started thanking God and telling everyone around us about Jesus—how he was the redemption of Jerusalem."

"She called him 'the hope we've been waiting for,'" Mary added. "An eighty-four-year-old woman practically dancing around the temple courts, telling everyone about our baby."

After they had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their hometown of Nazareth. There, the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him.

"Even as a boy," Mary told me, her eyes soft with memory, "there was something special about him. The way he listened, the questions he asked. Sometimes I would find him staring at the stars, lost in thought, as if he was remembering something from before..."

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***Later entry:***

I almost forgot to include the incident at the temple when Jesus was twelve! When I asked Mary about it, she rolled her eyes and said, "That was the worst trip to Jerusalem ever," she said. "We went every year for Passover, but this time... well, let's just say it was memorable."

"After the festival ended, we started the journey home, and



traveled for a whole day before realizing Jesus wasn't with our group. We had assumed he was probably hanging out with cousins or friends.

"You know how kids are," Joseph explained, looking a bit embarrassed. "They run around with their friends, and we all watch out for each other's children. I thought he was with Mary's relatives, and she thought he was with mine."

Mary added, "When we stopped for the evening and couldn't find him, that's when the panic set in. We turned to each other and both said at the same time, 'Where's Jesus?'"

"We rushed back to Jerusalem, searching everywhere for three days--Three days!" Mary emphasized. "Every parent's worst nightmare. We checked with relatives, friends, everywhere he might have gone. I barely slept. Joseph kept saying, 'He'll be fine, he's a smart boy,' but I could see he was just as worried."

"Finally, we found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers," explained Joseph.

"When I saw him sitting there, calm as could be, while I'd been imagining the worst..." Mary shook her head. "I don't know whether I wanted to hug him or ground him for life."

I said, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

Jesus looked genuinely surprised. "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my

Father's house?"

Joseph laughed recalling the moment. "He wasn't being disrespectful. He was genuinely confused why we were worried. Like, 'Of course I'd be here. Where else would I be?'"

"But we didn't understand what he was saying then," Mary admitted. "I remember the expression on his face—not rebellious, but certain. Like he knew exactly who he was and where he belonged."

"After that incident, Jesus returned to Nazareth with us and was an obedient child. Mary treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," Joseph declared

"Watching him grow," Mary said softly as we concluded our interview, "was like watching a mystery unfold day by day. But even then, I knew... he wasn't just mine. He belonged to something greater than all of us."

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***Note to self:***

*When compiling this account for Theophilus, remember to emphasize how Jesus' birth fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem, from David's line. Also note the witnesses—shepherds, Simeon, Anna—people from different walks of life all recognizing something extraordinary in this child.*

*Make it clear that from the beginning, Jesus knew his purpose. Even at twelve, he understood his true identity and mission in a way that surprised everyone around him. This is just the beginning of the most important story ever told.*

## ***Chapter 3***

*Entry date: 15th of Nisan, 15th year of Emperor Tiberius*

So I'm sitting here trying to document everything that's happened with John the Baptist and Jesus for my book. It's no small task, let me tell you! I've interviewed so many witnesses, and what's been happening is honestly mind-blowing.

### **John the Baptist Makes His Entrance**

It's the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius's reign. Pontius Pilate is governing Judea (not doing a great job, if you ask most people). Herod is tetrarch of Galilee (that's going to be important later—trust me). Philip, Herod's brother, is ruling Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias is over Abilene.

The high priests at this time are Annas and Caiaphas—serious power players in Jerusalem. These details matter because I want everyone to know exactly when and where this all went down.

So during this time, John—son of Zechariah—is out in the

wilderness when God speaks to him. And when I say wilderness, I mean WILDERNESS. No Wi-Fi, no food delivery, nothing but locusts and wild honey. (I asked him once how he survived out there, and he just shrugged like it was normal!)

John starts traveling all around the Jordan River region, telling everyone to be baptized to show they're turning from their sins. He's essentially saying, "Repent! Get your lives in order because forgiveness is available!"

This wasn't just some random guy with weird ideas. This was exactly what Isaiah the prophet wrote about hundreds of years earlier:

*"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God's salvation.'"*

You should have seen the crowds coming out to be baptized by John! When I interviewed people who were there, they said his charisma was off the charts, but he didn't sugarcoat anything.

When the crowds showed up, John didn't exactly roll out the welcome mat.

"You brood of vipers!" he shouted. Not exactly Customer Service of the Year.

I asked one guy what he thought when John said that, and he just laughed. "At first I was like, 'Did he just call us snakes?' But then I realized... he's not wrong!"

John continued, "Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Don't just show up here thinking a quick dip in the river fixes everything! Produce fruit that shows you've actually changed! And don't start with the 'But Abraham is our father' routine. God could turn these rocks into children of Abraham if he wanted to!"

One teenager in the crowd whispered to his friend, "Is he always this intense?"

The friend nodded. "You should see him before his morning locusts!"

John overheard and almost cracked a smile—almost—before getting serious again.

"The ax is already at the root of the trees! Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire!"

The crowd was silent for a moment, then someone shouted, "What should we do then?"

John's face softened slightly. "It's actually pretty simple. If you have two shirts, share with someone who has none. If you have food, give some to those who don't."

Some tax collectors came forward—not exactly the most popular guys in town. One of them asked, "Teacher, what should we do?"

John looked them straight in the eyes. "Stop collecting more than you're supposed to. No more skimming off the top."

Even some soldiers pushed their way to the front. "What about us?"

"No extortion, no false accusations, and be content with your pay," John told them.

One soldier nudged his buddy. "There goes our side hustle."

His friend whispered back, "Shh! This is serious!"

The atmosphere was electric. Everyone was wondering if John might be the Messiah they'd been waiting for. I could see why—his presence was commanding, his message powerful.

But John shut that down immediately.

"Look, I baptize you with water. But someone way more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to untie his sandals, much less be compared to him. He'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire!"

He got that intense look again. "His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor—"

A teenager in the crowd whispered, "What's a winnowing fork?"

"It's a farm tool," his friend whispered back. "For separating wheat from chaff."

"—and to gather the wheat into his barn," John continued, "but he'll burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

That got everyone's attention. John kept preaching, challenging everyone—including the authorities.

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Speaking of authorities, John even called out Herod the tetrarch for marrying his brother's wife, Herodias, and all

the other awful things he'd done.

When I interviewed John's disciples about this, one of them said, "We told him to be careful. You don't mess with Herod."

John just shook his head. "Truth is truth, no matter who it offends."

Of course, Herod eventually had John thrown in prison for this. Bad move, Herod. Seriously bad move.

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Now for the part everyone's been asking me about. Jesus himself came to be baptized by John. I've talked to multiple eyewitnesses, and they all describe it the same way.

Jesus was standing in line with everyone else, waiting his turn. No special treatment, no VIP pass.

When it was Jesus' turn, John looked confused.

"You want me to baptize you?" John asked. "It should be the other way around!"

Jesus just smiled. "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to fulfill all righteousness."

So John baptized him, and that's when something incredible happened. As Jesus was praying, the heavens opened up. The Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove, and a voice came from heaven:

"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

The crowd fell silent. Some fell to their knees. No one knew what to say.

One of Jesus' soon-to-be disciples told me later, "In that moment, I knew everything was about to change."

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By the way, Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. Everyone thought he was the son of Joseph, but his lineage goes back much further.

I've documented his entire ancestry, all the way back to Adam, who was created by God. It's a long list (seriously, 77 generations!), but it shows how Jesus' coming was part of God's plan from the very beginning.

***End of Journal Entry***

I've got to interview more people tomorrow about what happened next. This book isn't going to write itself!



## Chapter 4

I had been gathering testimonies for weeks now—interviewing eyewitnesses, collecting stories from those who walked with Jesus from the beginning. My medical training taught me to be thorough, to record everything precisely. But these accounts... they were unlike anything I'd ever documented before.

John the Baptist had just baptized Jesus in the Jordan River when something extraordinary happened. The Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove, and then—well, this is what happened next, as I've pieced it together from reliable witnesses:

After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. For forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them, he was hungry.

I later asked Jesus about this time, and though he was typically reserved about personal matters, he shared enough for me to record what transpired.

"So let me get this straight," I said, scribbling notes while

we walked between villages. "Forty days without food?"

Jesus nodded. "The body hungers, but the spirit requires nourishment of a different kind."

"And then the devil just... showed up?"

Jesus smiled slightly at my bluntness. "He's always looking for an opening, Luke. Weakness, pride, fear—they're all doorways."

"What did he say to you?" I asked.

Jesus looked into the distance, remembering. "First, he pointed to a stone and told me, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'"

"That's... actually pretty tempting after forty days without food," I admitted.

"Yes," Jesus replied. "But I answered him, 'It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

"Then what happened?"

"He took me up to a high place and showed me all the kingdoms of the world in an instant."

I whistled softly. "In an instant? That's some serious visual effects."

Jesus gave me a look that was both amused and gently reproving.

"Sorry," I mumbled. "Continue."

"The devil said to me, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.'"

"Wow. Talk about a power grab," I said. "What did you tell him?"

"I answered, 'It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

"Two down," I noted. "Was there more?"

Jesus nodded. "He led me to Jerusalem and had me stand on the highest point of the temple. Then he said, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

"Wait—he quoted Scripture? That's messed up," I said, shaking my head. "Using holy words to tempt you."

"The enemy knows Scripture well, Luke," Jesus replied. "He just twists its meaning. I told him, 'It is said: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

"Then what?"

"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left me until an opportune time."

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After recording the temptation story, I continued investigating what happened when Jesus returned to Galilee. The reports were consistent—news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone was praising him.

I traveled to Nazareth to interview people who were there when Jesus went to his hometown. What I discovered was... well, things didn't exactly go as expected.

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. On the Sabbath day, he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

I interviewed Eli, a young man who had grown up with Jesus in Nazareth.

"It was the most uncomfortable silence I've ever experienced," Eli told me, leaning against the wall of his carpentry shop. "Everyone was just staring at him."

"What were they thinking?" I asked.

"Well, at first everyone spoke well of him," Eli explained. "We were impressed by his gracious words. But then people started whispering, 'Isn't this Joseph's son? The carpenter? Who does he think he is?'"

"How did Jesus respond to that?"

"It was like he read their minds," Eli said, tapping his forehead. "He said to them, 'Surely you will quote this proverb to me: Physician, heal yourself! And you will tell

me, Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum."

"That's pretty direct," I commented.

"You have no idea," Eli said with a grimace. "Then he really dropped the hammer. He said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.'"

"Oh..." I winced. "So he basically told his hometown that outsiders were more worthy of God's favor than they were?"

"Exactly," Eli nodded. "And let me tell you, that went over about as well as a Pharisee at a tax collector convention."

"What happened next?"

"They went ballistic," Eli said. "All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff."

My eyes widened. "They tried to kill him? The people he grew up with?"

"Tried is the key word," Eli said. "He walked right through the crowd and went on his way. It was the strangest thing

I've ever seen. One minute they had him surrounded, ready to push him off the cliff, and the next... he was just gone, walking through them like they weren't even there."

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After the Nazareth incident, Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee. I traveled there next and found that on the Sabbath, he was teaching the people. They were amazed at his teaching because his words had authority.

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his lungs, "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

I spoke with a young fisherman named David who witnessed the event.

"It was terrifying," David told me, his eyes wide at the memory. "This guy just starts screaming in the middle of the teaching. Everyone knew something was wrong with him, but we never expected... that."

"What did Jesus do?" I asked.

"He didn't even flinch," David said, shaking his head in amazement. "He just looked at the man and said, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And then—I kid you not—the demon threw the man down in front of everyone and came out without injuring him."

"That's incredible," I said, writing furiously in my notes. "How did people react?"

"We were all completely stunned," David replied. "People kept saying to each other, 'What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!' The news spread like wildfire throughout the region."

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I continued gathering testimonies about that extraordinary day. After Jesus left the synagogue, he went to Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

Simon himself later told me what happened next:

"I was worried sick about her," Simon confessed. "The fever was bad—really bad. When Jesus arrived, I immediately brought him to her room."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He bent over her and rebuked the fever," Simon said. "Just like that—like he was telling off a misbehaving child! And immediately the fever left her."

"Immediately?" I confirmed, my medical background making me particularly interested in this case.

"One moment she was burning up, the next she was fine," Simon insisted. "And not just 'feeling better'—she got up right away and began waiting on us. Made a whole meal! I've never seen anyone recover that quickly."

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As the sun was setting that same day, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness. I

interviewed several witnesses who described the scene.

"It was like the whole town showed up at Simon's door," one elderly woman told me. "Everyone who had any disease or affliction was there. Jesus laid his hands on each one and healed them."

"All of them?" I asked. "How many people are we talking about?"

"Dozens," she confirmed. "Maybe hundreds. And the demons—they came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But Jesus rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah."

At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. I later asked him about this habit of withdrawing to pray.

"The crowds were always looking for you," I noted. "Why did you keep going off alone?"

Jesus smiled. "The work is important, Luke, but the connection to my Father is essential. Without it, nothing else matters."

The people were indeed looking for him, and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

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As I compiled these accounts, checking and cross-checking testimonies, interviewing witnesses, and speaking with



Jesus himself, one thing became abundantly clear: this was no ordinary teacher. The authority in his words, the power in his actions, the compassion in his heart—they all pointed to something greater.

I, Doctor Luke, physician and careful historian, record these events so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

## Chapter 5

So there I was, notebook in hand, trying to keep up with Jesus as usual. The crowds were getting bigger by the day—I mean, EVERYONE wanted a piece of this guy. Can't blame them.

This particular morning, we were by Lake Gennesaret (that's what some folks call the Sea of Galilee), and the crowd was practically pushing Jesus into the water, everyone straining to hear what he was teaching.

Jesus spotted two empty fishing boats at the water's edge. The fishermen were washing their nets nearby, looking pretty defeated after what I later learned was an entirely fruitless night of fishing.

"Hey, Simon!" Jesus called out, approaching one of the boats. "Mind if I borrow your office for a bit?"

Simon Peter looked up, shrugged, and gestured toward his boat. "All yours, Teacher. Not like we caught anything to put in it anyway."

Jesus climbed aboard and asked Simon to push out a little from shore. Then he sat down and continued teaching the

people from the boat. Smart move—instant floating platform with built-in amphitheater seating on the shore. The acoustics were perfect, and I could finally write without getting jostled.

When he finished speaking, Jesus turned to Simon. "Now, let's head out to deeper water and drop your nets for a catch."

Simon's face was priceless—that mix of respect and "are you serious right now?" that I've come to recognize when people think Jesus doesn't understand their profession.

"Master," Simon replied, trying to be polite, "we've been fishing ALL NIGHT and caught nothing but seaweed and disappointment. But..." he sighed, "if you say so, I'll give it another go."

I scribbled furiously in my notes. Simon and his partners, James and John (the Zebedee brothers), looked absolutely exhausted as they rowed out and dropped their nets again.

What happened next—I still get chills thinking about it. Their nets began to fill with so many fish that the nets started breaking under the weight! Simon frantically waved to his partners in the other boat.

"GET OVER HERE! HELP! THE NETS ARE BREAKING!"

James and John rushed over, and both boats filled with so many fish they began to sink. I'm not exaggerating—these seasoned fishermen had never seen anything like it.

Simon Peter fell to his knees right there in the sloshing water of the boat.

"Lord, please go away from me," he said, his voice shaking.

"I'm too much of a disaster for someone like you."

Jesus put his hand on Simon's shoulder. "Don't be afraid," he said with that calm smile of his. "From now on, you'll be catching people instead of fish."

When they got back to shore, Simon, James, and John just looked at each other, looked at their boats filled with the biggest catch of their lives, and then... they walked away from it all. Just left everything to follow Jesus. I underlined that part in my notes—talk about commitment!

Later that day, we were in one of the villages when a man covered in leprosy spotted Jesus. Now, lepers are supposed to keep their distance and warn people to stay away, but this guy was desperate. He fell face-down and pleaded, "Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean."

The crowd scattered like startled birds, but Jesus? He did the unthinkable. He reached out and TOUCHED the man.

"I am willing," Jesus said. "Be clean."

I swear I blinked and the leprosy was gone. Just... gone.

Jesus looked at the man, who was examining his now-perfect skin with disbelief. "Don't tell anyone about this," Jesus instructed. "Instead, go show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices Moses commanded for cleansing. That will be your official testimony."

But, well, you try keeping something like that quiet. Word about Jesus spread faster than gossip in a small town. Huge crowds came to hear him and be healed, but Jesus often slipped away to quiet places to pray. I've noticed he does that a lot—like he's recharging somehow.

A few days later, we were in a house packed with people. I mean PACKED—Pharisees and religious teachers had come from every village in Galilee, Judea, and even Jerusalem to hear Jesus. The healing power of God was present in a way I can't even describe on paper.

That's when things got... interesting.

Some guys showed up carrying their paralyzed friend on a mat, desperate to get him in front of Jesus. But the crowd was impenetrable. Did they give up? Nope. These guys climbed onto the roof! They removed some tiles and lowered their friend—mat and all—right in front of Jesus.

The homeowner's face was a mixture of horror and disbelief as bits of his ceiling rained down. I tried not to laugh, I really did.

Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralyzed man, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

The Pharisees and teachers of the law exchanged looks. I could practically read their thoughts: "Who does this guy think he is? Only God can forgive sins!"

Jesus, always aware of what people are thinking, challenged them directly: "Which is easier—to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Get up and walk'? But to show you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He turned to the paralyzed man. "Get up, take your mat, and go home."

Right before our eyes, the man stood up! He grabbed his mat and walked out, praising God. Everyone was stunned silent before breaking into amazed chatter.

"We've seen incredible things today," someone near me whispered. Understatement of the year.

Later, Jesus spotted Levi, a tax collector, sitting at his tax booth.

"Follow me," Jesus said, as casually as asking someone to grab lunch.

To everyone's shock, Levi stood up, left everything, and followed him. Just like that.

Then Levi threw a massive party at his house with Jesus as the guest of honor. The place was filled with tax collectors and others that the religious folks called "sinners."

The Pharisees and their scribes were practically hyperventilating. "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" they demanded of Jesus' disciples.

Jesus overheard. "Healthy people don't need a physician—sick people do," he replied. "I haven't come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners."

They switched tactics. "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the Pharisees' disciples. But yours just eat and drink whatever they want!"

Jesus smiled. "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away—then they'll fast."

Then he told them this analogy that I'm still pondering: "No one tears a piece from a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they'd ruin the new garment, and the patch wouldn't match the old one anyway. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. The new wine would burst the old

skins, ruining both the wine and the skins. New wine needs new wineskins. And," he added with a knowing smile, "no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.'"

I could tell the religious leaders didn't appreciate being compared to old wineskins, but I wrote it all down. Something tells me these words matter more than they realize.

And that, my friends, is just one chapter in the most extraordinary story I've ever chronicled. There's so much more to come.

## Chapter 6

One Sabbath day, as I was following Jesus and his disciples through some grain fields. The disciples, clearly hungry after walking all morning, began picking heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands to remove the husks, and eating the kernels.

Some Pharisees who seemed to be watching Jesus's every move immediately pounced.

"Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" one demanded, his face flushed with indignation.

Jesus stepped forward before his disciples could respond. With remarkable patience, he answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, took the consecrated bread and ate it, which was lawful only for the priests. And he even gave some to his companions."

I watched the Pharisees exchange uncomfortable glances. Jesus wasn't finished.

"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath," he concluded, with such quiet authority that even I felt a shiver run down



my spine.

Later that same day, we entered the synagogue where Jesus taught. I noticed a man with a withered right hand sitting alone in the corner. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were watching Jesus closely, practically twitching with anticipation. They were clearly hoping to catch him healing on the Sabbath.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts (which continues to amaze me), called to the man, "Come and stand in front of everyone."

The man looked nervous but stood up.

Jesus turned to the religious leaders with a sigh that conveyed both frustration and compassion. "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

The silence was deafening. Nobody dared answer.

Jesus looked around at all of them, his gaze stopping at each face, then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

The man did so, and instantly his hand was completely restored! I've seen many medical anomalies in my career, but nothing like this instantaneous healing.

The Pharisees were furious. They stormed out, whispering furiously about what they might do to Jesus. I overheard one say, "This has gone too far."

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A few days later, Jesus went up to a mountainside to pray. He stayed there all night, which struck me as extreme until

I realized what he was doing—seeking guidance for an important decision.

The next morning, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve that he designated as apostles:

Simon (whom he renamed Peter) came forward first, practically tripping over himself in eagerness.

"Ready for duty, Lord!" he announced with his usual enthusiasm.

Andrew, Peter's brother, followed more quietly but with the same commitment in his eyes.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, stepped up next. Those two have such fierce loyalty—John once whispered to me that some call them "Sons of Thunder" because of their tempers.

Philip approached thoughtfully, bringing Bartholomew with him.

Matthew the tax collector—who's been diligently taking notes beside me—joined the group. I've found his attention to detail quite helpful in my own documentation.

Thomas joined with a skeptical but determined expression.

James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot stepped forward together. What a contrast—quiet James alongside politically passionate Simon!

Judas son of James approached hesitantly.

Finally, Judas Iscariot joined them. Something about his eyes troubles me, but Jesus selected him with the same deliberation as the others.

We descended to a level place where a huge crowd had gathered—people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal regions of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear Jesus and be healed, and I watched countless people touch him, seeking healing from his power.

Jesus looked at his disciples and began to teach. What follows are his words, which I've recorded as faithfully as possible:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

A teenage boy near me whispered to his friend, "Did he just say the poor are blessed? That's not what my father says..."

Jesus continued: "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

I noticed a young girl wiping tears from her eyes, nodding slightly.

"Blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you, insult you, and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man."

Some of the disciples exchanged knowing glances—they'd already experienced this treatment.

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets."

Jesus's tone then shifted dramatically.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep."

I saw several wealthy-looking individuals shift uncomfortably.

"Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets."

Then, leaning forward with intensity, Jesus said, "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

A teenage boy near me snorted. "Love my enemies? Is he serious? Like I'm supposed to be nice to the guys who stole my lunch yesterday?"

His friend elbowed him. "Just listen, man."

Jesus continued, "If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back."

The teachings grew more challenging with each sentence.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that."

One teen girl whispered to another, "That's actually deep. I never thought about it that way."

Jesus raised his voice to be heard by everyone. "Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Jesus paused for a moment before continuing, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

A young man near me muttered, "Easier said than done..."

Jesus smiled as if he'd heard. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Then Jesus asked a question that made everyone laugh: "Can the blind lead the blind? Won't they both fall into a pit?"

I could see several teens smirking, probably imagining that scenario.

"The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."

Jesus paused, then added with a hint of humor in his voice, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"

Several young people chuckled at this vivid image.

"How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the

plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Jesus continued with a metaphor that everyone could understand: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars."

I watched understanding dawn on many faces.

"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

As Jesus prepared to conclude, he posed a challenging question: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

The crowd grew silent, contemplating his words.

"As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built."

A group of teenage boys who appeared to be apprentice builders nodded in appreciation of this practical example.

"But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that

house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Jesus finished speaking and the crowd remained silent for several moments, processing his words. I watched as people gradually began to talk among themselves, many looking thoughtful, others confused, and some clearly challenged by what they had heard.

I've documented many teachers and healers in my investigation, but none speak with the authority and wisdom of Jesus. His words today have given me much to reflect upon as I continue to record his ministry.

## Chapter 7

Documenting all these events has been quite the adventure. As a physician, I've always prided myself on attention to detail, but following Jesus around? That requires a different kind of focus altogether. Let me tell you about what happened after he finished his sermon on the mount.

We made our way to Capernaum, where I encountered one of the most unexpected displays of faith I've ever witnessed.

A Roman centurion—you know, one of those military officers everyone typically avoids—had sent some Jewish elders to find Jesus. I'll admit, I was skeptical at first. Romans asking for help? That was new.

"Teacher," one elder said, practically out of breath from hurrying to reach us, "there's a centurion whose servant is deathly ill. He begs for your help."

Another added, "He deserves your assistance. He loves our nation and even built our synagogue!"

Jesus simply nodded and followed them. But before we reached the centurion's house, another group of the man's



friends intercepted us.

"The centurion sends this message," one said. "'Lord, don't trouble yourself to come under my roof. I don't deserve such an honor. I understand authority—I tell my soldiers 'Go,' and they go; 'Come,' and they come. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed.'"

I watched Jesus' face as he heard this. His expression changed to one of genuine amazement—something I rarely saw.

"I haven't found faith like this in all of Israel," Jesus announced to the crowd following us. He looked at the messengers. "Go. Tell him it will be done exactly as he believed it would."

Sure enough, when the messengers returned to the house, they found the servant completely healed.

I remember thinking, *So much for Romans being spiritually clueless*. Made me wonder how many other assumptions I'd been getting wrong.

The next day we headed to a town called Nain. As usual, we had quite the entourage—disciples, followers, curious onlookers. You know, the standard Jesus parade.

As we approached the town gate, we ran into a funeral procession coming out. Talk about awkward timing. The dead man was the only son of a widow, and honestly, my heart broke for her. Without her son, her future was... well, bleak at best.

When Jesus saw her, he didn't just offer polite condolences. His face softened with genuine compassion.

"Don't cry," he said to her gently.

Then—and this is where things got really interesting—Jesus walked right up and touched the open coffin. The pallbearers stopped, probably thinking, *What is this guy doing?* Touching a coffin made you ceremonially unclean, which was a big deal for a religious teacher.

But Jesus didn't seem concerned about that at all. He simply said, "Young man, I tell you, get up!"

I'll never forget what happened next. The dead man sat up and started talking! Just like that! One minute, dead as a doornail; the next, chatting away like he'd just been taking a nap.

The crowd went absolutely wild. I mean, you would too if you'd just witnessed someone coming back from the dead.

"A great prophet has appeared among us!" people shouted. "God has come to help his people!"

News spread faster than a fever in a fishing village. By evening, everyone in the region had heard about it.

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Speaking of John the Baptist—who, by the way, was still in prison thanks to Herod—he sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus a question.

They came up to us while Jesus was healing people, which was pretty much perfect timing if you ask me.

"John the Baptist sent us to ask: 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" they asked, looking deadly serious.

Jesus didn't immediately answer. Instead, he continued healing people with diseases, casting out evil spirits, and giving sight to the blind. It was like he was building his case with evidence.

Finally, he turned to John's disciples. "Go back and tell John what you've seen and heard: The blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who doesn't stumble on account of me."

After they left, Jesus addressed the crowd about John. "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Of course not. A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and I tell you, more than a prophet."

Jesus then quoted the scriptures about John being the messenger who would prepare the way. He added, "Among those born of women there is no one greater than John, yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

I noticed something interesting: The regular people and tax collectors who had been baptized by John nodded in agreement, while the Pharisees and legal experts who had refused John's baptism just stood there with sour expressions.

Jesus wasn't finished though. "What can I compare this generation to? They're like children sitting in the marketplace calling out to each other:

'We played the flute for you, but you didn't dance! We sang

a dirge, but you didn't mourn!'

"John the Baptist came fasting and not drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

I remember thinking how bizarre it was—people criticized John for being too strict and Jesus for being too lenient. Some people just can't be pleased.

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One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to dinner, which was unusual since they weren't exactly fans. His name was Simon, and he seemed like he wanted to figure Jesus out.

We were all reclining at the table when a woman known for her, um, questionable lifestyle came in with an alabaster jar of perfume. She stood behind Jesus, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them.

I still remember the look on Simon's face—like he'd just bitten into something sour. He was thinking (and I could almost hear the thoughts), *If this man were really a prophet, he'd know what kind of woman is touching him.*

Jesus turned to Simon. "I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," Simon replied, trying to sound respectful.

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither could pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now

which of them will love him more?"

Simon thought for a moment. "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You've judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman but kept speaking to Simon. "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You didn't give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but this woman, from the time I entered, hasn't stopped kissing my feet. You didn't put oil on my head, but she's poured perfume on my feet."

Jesus continued, "Her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

Then he said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

The other guests started whispering, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

As we left Simon's house, I couldn't help thinking how different people's reactions to Jesus were. Some, like the centurion and this woman, showed remarkable faith. Others, like some of the religious leaders, couldn't see past their preconceptions.

After this, Jesus traveled from village to village, proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. The twelve of us went with him, along with several women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary Magdalene

(who had been freed from seven demons), Joanna (the wife of Chuza, who managed Herod's household), Susanna, and many others.

These women were using their own resources to support Jesus and us disciples. I was impressed by their dedication—they'd encountered Jesus and their lives had been completely transformed.

As I compile these accounts, I'm constantly amazed at how Jesus connects with people from all walks of life—Roman officials, grieving widows, religious leaders, notorious sinners, dedicated followers. No one is beyond his reach, and no one is beneath his notice.

I'm just glad I get to document it all for future generations. Someone has to keep the record straight, right?

## Chapter 8

After that last trip through Capernaum, Jesus decided we should hit the road again. This time, he was traveling with the Twelve—you know, Peter, John, James, and the rest of the gang—but also some women who'd been supporting our little ministry tour.

There was Mary Magdalena, who had quite the testimony. Jesus had freed her from seven demons! Talk about a life transformation. Then there was Joanna, whose husband Chuza was actually Herod's household manager (awkward, considering what Herod did to John the Baptist). And Susanna was there too, along with several others. These women were actually funding a lot of our travels from their own resources. Without them, we probably would've been surviving on Peter's questionable fishing skills.

Jesus had this way of teaching that drove the religious scholars absolutely crazy—he told stories. Simple stories that somehow contained profound truths. The crowds were massive that day, people streaming in from all over. I had to climb a tree just to get a decent view for my notes.

Jesus sat on a small hill and began, "Listen up! A farmer

went out to plant his crops."

I could see some of the disciples exchanging glances. Matthew whispered to Thomas, "Another farming analogy? He knows we're fishermen, right?"

Jesus continued, "As he scattered the seed, some fell on the hard path and got trampled, and birds swooped down and devoured it."

A few birds actually circled overhead at that exact moment, which was either perfect timing or divine choreography.

"Some seed fell on rocky ground with little soil. It sprouted quickly, but then withered because the soil was too shallow for roots. Some fell among thorns that grew up and choked the plants. But some fell on good soil, grew strong, and produced a crop a hundred times what was planted."

He finished with, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen!" Then he sat there, like he'd explained everything perfectly.

Peter raised his hand. "Um, Master, what exactly does that mean?"

Jesus smiled, almost looking relieved someone asked. "You guys get to understand the mysteries of God's Kingdom, but for others, I use parables. That way, they can look but not really see, and hear but not understand."

John mumbled, "That doesn't sound very inclusive."

Jesus overheard him and replied, "It's not about exclusion, John. It's about readiness. Here's what the parable means: The seed is God's message. The path represents people who hear it, but the enemy comes and steals it away before



they believe. The rocky soil? Those are the people who receive the message with joy but have no root—they believe for a while but fall away when testing comes. The thorny ground represents those distracted by life's worries, riches, and pleasures, so they never grow to maturity. But the good soil? Those are the honest, good-hearted people who hear, really absorb the message, and produce a huge harvest through perseverance."

Judas was writing furiously in his own notebook. "This would make an excellent sermon outline," he muttered.

But, Jesus wasn't done with the metaphors. "Nobody lights a lamp and then hides it under a bowl or a bed. They put it on a stand so people can see! Everything hidden will eventually be revealed. So pay attention to how you listen! To those who listen well, more understanding will be given. From those who don't, even what they think they understand will be taken away."

Thomas whispered to me, "Is he still talking about farming? I'm confused."

I shrugged. "Just write it down. We'll figure it out later."

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Right in the middle of Jesus' teaching session, there was a commotion at the edge of the crowd.

Someone shouted, "Hey Jesus! Your mom and brothers are outside. They want to talk to you!"

I watched carefully, wondering how he'd respond. I mean, family interruptions are awkward enough during normal conversations, let alone when you're teaching multitudes.

Jesus just smiled and said, "My mother and brothers are all those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Peter leaned over to John. "Did he just friend-zone his own family?"

John shook his head. "No, he's expanding the definition of family. Keep up, Peter."

Later that day, Jesus looked exhausted. He turned to the disciples and said, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake."

So we all piled into a boat. As soon as we pushed off, Jesus found a cushion in the back and was out cold. Like, snoring-so-loud-the-fish-could-hear-him asleep.

Halfway across, this monster storm hit us. We're talking waves crashing over the sides, boat filling with water, certain death kind of situation. The disciples—many of whom were experienced fishermen—were freaking out.

Peter was frantically bailing water. "We're going to die!"

James grabbed Jesus' shoulder, shaking him violently. "Teacher! Don't you care that we're about to drown?!"

Jesus sat up, looking mildly annoyed at being woken up. He stood—somehow keeping perfect balance in the rocking boat—and simply said to the storm, "Silence! Be still!"

Immediately, everything went quiet. The wind stopped. The waves flattened. Even the disciples stopped panicking.

With the driest possible tone, Jesus asked, "Where is your faith?"

The disciples exchanged terrified glances. John whispered,

"Who IS this guy? Even the wind and waves obey him!"

I scribbled furiously in my notebook: "Note to self: Never go boating without Jesus."

When we reached the Gerasene region, we were barely ashore when a wild-looking man came running toward us. He was completely naked, covered in dirt and scars, with broken chains dangling from his wrists. The locals later told me he lived among the tombs and would scream day and night.

The disciples formed a protective circle around Jesus, but the man fell at Jesus' feet.

With a voice that didn't sound like his own, he shouted, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, don't torture me!"

Jesus remained perfectly calm. "What is your name?"

The strange voice answered, "***Legion, we are many.***"

And let me tell you, that was some serious horror movie material right there.

The demons begged Jesus not to send them into "the Abyss"—whatever that is—but instead into a large herd of pigs feeding on a nearby hillside. Jesus gave them permission, and suddenly all the pigs went berserk, charged down the steep bank, and drowned themselves in the lake.

The pig herders took off running toward town, probably rehearsing how they'd explain this to their boss.

When the townspeople arrived, they found the formerly

demon-possessed man sitting calmly at Jesus' feet, fully clothed and completely sane. Instead of being amazed, they freaked out and begged Jesus to leave. Apparently, they were more concerned about their pig investment than the miraculous healing.

As we headed back to the boat, the healed man begged to come with us.

Jesus shook his head. "Go home and tell everyone what God has done for you."

And you know what? The guy actually did. Last I heard, he was traveling all over the Decapolis region sharing his story.

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Back on the Jewish side of the lake, Jesus was immediately mobbed by another crowd. A synagogue leader named Jairus pushed through and fell at Jesus' feet.

"My daughter is dying," he pleaded, his voice breaking. "She's only twelve. Please come!"

Jesus nodded and followed him immediately. The crowd pressed in around us, making progress difficult. I was trying to keep up while balancing my writing materials.

Suddenly, Jesus stopped. "Who touched me?"

Peter looked at him like he was crazy. "Master, the crowds are crushing us. Everyone's touching you!"

Jesus shook his head. "Someone deliberately touched me. I felt healing power go out from me."

A trembling woman stepped forward and fell at his feet. "It

was me," she confessed. She explained how she'd been bleeding for twelve years, spent all her money on doctors who couldn't help, and believed that just touching Jesus' cloak would heal her.

Jesus' face softened. "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

Just then, someone from Jairus' household arrived with devastating news. "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the Teacher anymore."

I watched Jairus' face crumple, but before he could speak, Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Just believe, and she will be healed."

When we arrived at the house, people were already mourning loudly. Jesus told them, "Stop crying. She's not dead, just asleep."

Someone in the crowd snorted. "Right. And I'm King Herod."

Jesus ignored the mockery and entered the house, allowing only Peter, John, James, and the girl's parents to follow. I managed to slip in behind them (journalist privileges).

Jesus took the girl's hand and simply said, "Child, get up!"

Immediately, she opened her eyes and sat up. Her parents stood there with their mouths open, completely speechless. Jesus, practical as ever, suggested they give her something to eat.

As we left, he gave strict orders not to tell anyone what happened, which seemed like an impossible request considering the crowd outside had just seen a dead girl

walk out alive. But I guess when you're Jesus, you can ask for the impossible.

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As I finished my notes that evening, I couldn't help reflecting on everything I'd witnessed. A teacher who speaks in riddles yet makes perfect sense. A man who controls nature, casts out demons, and even reverses death. Whoever this Jesus is, he's redefining what's possible. And I, for one, am grateful to document every moment of it.

## Chapter 9

So there I was, collecting all these stories about Jesus for my book. I wanted to get everything right—interview the right people, cross-check my facts—you know, the whole researcher thing. This chapter I'm about to share? It's packed with some wild stuff that happened when Jesus sent out his disciples, fed thousands with practically nothing, and showed three of his closest friends something they'd never forget on a mountaintop.

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I was talking with Peter one evening when he told me about the day Jesus gathered the twelve disciples together.

"Luke, you should've seen our faces when he said we'd be going out on our own," Peter laughed, running his hand through his graying beard. "I think Matthew nearly passed out."

Jesus had called them together early that morning. The air was still cool, but you could tell it was going to be one of those scorching Galilean days.

"I'm sending you out," Jesus told them, "with power and

authority over all demons and to cure diseases."

"All demons?" John asked, glancing nervously at his brother James. "Like, even the really scary ones?"

Jesus nodded with a slight smile. "All of them. You're also going to proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick."

"Great," muttered Thomas under his breath. "No pressure or anything."

"Take nothing for your journey," Jesus continued, "no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic."

Philip raised his hand. "Um, sorry—did you just say no snacks? Not even trail mix?"

The other disciples chuckled, but Jesus just smiled. "You'll be provided for. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. And if they don't welcome you, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

"Dramatic," whispered Matthew to Andrew. "I like it."

And so they went out, village after village, preaching the good news and healing people everywhere they went.

Meanwhile, word about Jesus was spreading faster than gossip in a small town. Herod the tetrarch was hearing all kinds of rumors, and it was freaking him out.

One of Herod's advisors told me later that Herod paced his palace floors, muttering, "Some say John has been raised from the dead, others say Elijah has appeared, and still others say one of the ancient prophets has risen."

Herod shook his head. "I beheaded John. So who is this guy I keep hearing about?" From what I gathered, Herod was



desperate to see Jesus—probably not for the best reasons.

### **Five Loaves, Two Fish, and a Logistics Nightmare**

The disciples returned from their mission trip absolutely buzzing with stories. Jesus took them to a quiet place near Bethsaida to debrief, but privacy? Yeah, that wasn't happening.

"The crowds found out where we were going," John explained to me, "and before we knew it, five thousand men plus women and children were tracking us down."

Jesus welcomed them (of course he did) and spoke about the kingdom of God, healing those who needed healing.

As the day wore on, the twelve came to Jesus looking concerned.

"We should send the crowds away," suggested Judas, eyeing the setting sun. "They need to find lodging and food in the nearby villages. We're basically in the middle of nowhere."

Jesus looked at them with that expression that usually meant he was about to say something challenging. "You give them something to eat."

The disciples exchanged panicked glances.

"Us?" Peter spluttered. "We have five loaves of bread and two fish—unless you want us to go buy food for all these people? That would cost a fortune!"

Jesus just smiled. "Have the people sit down in groups of fifty."

"Is he serious right now?" Philip whispered to Andrew.

"When is he not?" Andrew whispered back.

The disciples did as they were told, and Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

Matthew told me his hands were shaking as he distributed the food. "Every time I thought I'd run out, I looked down and my hands were full again. I can't explain it, Luke. I just... can't."

Everyone ate until they were satisfied, and get this—they picked up twelve baskets of leftovers afterward.

"More food at the end than what we started with," Peter said, shaking his head in wonder. "That's Jesus for you. Always with the impossible math."

Later, when Jesus was praying alone, the disciples were with him, and he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

"Some say John the Baptist," they replied. "Others say Elijah, and still others that one of the ancient prophets has risen."

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say that I am?"

The disciples fell silent. It was the question they'd all been tiptoeing around.

Peter stepped forward. "The Messiah of God."

You could have heard a pin drop. Jesus looked at Peter with an intense gaze, then warned them not to tell anyone

this. "The Son of Man must suffer many things," he said. "He'll be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and on the third day be raised."

"Whoa, back up," Thomas interrupted. "Did you just say 'killed'?"

But Jesus continued as if he hadn't heard. "If anyone wants to come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. What good is it if someone gains the whole world but loses or forfeits themselves?"

I've thought about those words a lot since then. So have the disciples.

About eight days after this conversation, something happened that Peter, John, and James would never forget. Jesus took them up on a mountain to pray.

"I was fighting to stay awake," Peter confessed to me years later. "We were all exhausted. But then I looked up, and suddenly Jesus' face was different. His clothes became dazzling white—like, whiter than any laundry detergent commercial you've ever seen."

"And then," John added, his eyes wide even as he recalled it, "Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, talking with Jesus about his departure—how he was going to accomplish it in Jerusalem."

"I was half-asleep and totally panicking," Peter admitted with a sheepish grin. "So naturally, I started babbling: 'Master, it's good we're here! Let's make three dwellings—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!'"

"He had no idea what he was saying," James said, rolling

his eyes. "Classic Peter."

While Peter was still talking, a cloud enveloped them, and they were terrified.

"Then a voice came from the cloud," John whispered, still awestruck by the memory. "It said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'"

When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silent and told no one what they had seen.

The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met them. A man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son! He's my only child. A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth. It mauls him and hardly ever leaves him alone. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they couldn't."

Jesus sighed—the kind of deep sigh that came from somewhere in his soul. "You faithless and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you and bear with you?"

The disciples shuffled their feet, avoiding eye contact.

"Bring your son here," Jesus told the man.

Even as the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

Everyone was astounded at the greatness of God.

"While everyone was amazed at all he was doing," Matthew told me, "Jesus turned to us and said, 'Let these words sink

into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands."

"But we didn't understand," John admitted. "It was like the meaning was hidden from us. And honestly? We were afraid to ask him what he meant."

An argument broke out among the disciples about which one of them was the greatest. Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, took a little child and put it by his side.

"Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me," he said, "and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. The least among all of you is the greatest."

James looked embarrassed as he recounted this. "We were literally arguing about our disciple ranking system while Jesus was trying to prepare us for his death. Not our finest moment."

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John approached Jesus one day, looking quite pleased with himself. "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he's not one of us."

"Did you now?" Jesus replied, raising an eyebrow. "Don't stop him. Whoever is not against you is for you."

John told me he felt about two inches tall after that exchange.

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When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers ahead of

him who entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival, but the people there didn't welcome him.

"Because he was heading for Jerusalem," Philip explained. "Samaritans and Jews don't exactly get along, as you know."

When James and John saw this, they were furious. "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" they asked, probably a bit too eagerly.

Jesus turned and rebuked them. "You don't know what spirit you're of. The Son of Man hasn't come to destroy lives but to save them."

"He called us the 'sons of thunder' for a reason," John said with a wry smile. "Our temper management wasn't great back then."

Then they went on to another village. As they were going along the road, someone said to Jesus, "I'll follow you wherever you go."

Jesus looked at the person with knowing eyes. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

He said to another, "Follow me."

But that person said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

"Let the dead bury their own dead," Jesus replied. "You go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Another said, "I'll follow you, Lord, but first let me say

farewell to those at home."

Jesus shook his head. "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

"Harsh?" Peter mused when telling me this later. "Maybe. But Jesus wasn't looking for casual followers or part-time disciples. He wanted people all in—nothing held back."

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And that, my friend Theophilus, is what following Jesus is truly about. Not halfway commitments or convenient faith, but a life transformed by the one who spoke truth like no other, performed miracles with compassion, and was preparing even then for the ultimate sacrifice.

I hope this account helps you understand more about the one I've come to know as Lord—Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

## Chapter 10

This morning, Jesus gathered everyone together. I thought it would be our usual teaching session, but he had something else planned.

"We need more workers," Jesus announced. "The harvest is huge, but we have too few laborers."

He scanned the crowd of followers, then said something that surprised us all: "I'm sending you out. Not just the twelve, but seventy-two of you."

People exchanged nervous glances. I overheard someone whisper, "Wait, is he talking about me? I just started following him last week!"

Jesus continued with specific instructions: "Travel light. No money bag, no extra sandals. Don't waste time with lengthy greetings on the road."

Peter raised his hand. "Uh, Master? You want us to go without supplies? How exactly is that supposed to work?"

Jesus smiled. "When you enter a house, your peace will rest on it if people welcome you. Stay there—don't hop from house to house looking for better accommodations."



"So we're basically showing up at strangers' houses and saying 'Surprise! Feed us'?" Thomas asked with his typical skepticism.

"You're bringing them something far more valuable than what they give you," Jesus replied. "Heal the sick and tell everyone: 'The kingdom of God has come near.'"

Then his expression grew more serious. "Not everyone will welcome you. If a town rejects you, shake the dust from your feet as you leave. It will be more bearable for Sodom on judgment day than for that town."

I noticed several of the seventy-two looking considerably more anxious after that part.

Jesus surprised me with what came next. His voice took on an edge I rarely heard as he spoke about certain towns.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" His words echoed across the hillside. "If the miracles performed in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

One of the newer disciples leaned over to me. "What's his deal with Chorazin? Bad experience there?"

I shook my head. "They've seen his miracles and teachings but refused to change their ways. It's not personal—it's about their response."

"And you, Capernaum," Jesus continued, his voice heavy with disappointment. "Will you be exalted to heaven? No, you'll be brought down to Hades."

I made sure to write this down exactly. Something told me these weren't just angry words but a prophecy people

would need to remember.

A few weeks later, the seventy-two returned, practically bouncing with excitement. They looked like they'd just won the regional fishing tournament.

"Lord!" one exclaimed, nearly tripping over his words. "Even the demons submit to us in your name!"

Jesus nodded. "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

"You should have seen it!" another told me while I was writing. "This one guy had been demon-possessed for years, and when I commanded it to leave—boom! Instant healing!"

Jesus quieted the group. "I've given you authority to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you." Then he paused. "However, don't rejoice that the spirits submit to you. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

I noticed several confused faces. They'd just performed miracles, and Jesus was telling them not to get excited about it?

Then something remarkable happened. Jesus himself became visibly joyful—practically glowing with happiness.

"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth," he said, looking upward, "because you've hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."

He turned back to the group. "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. Many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but didn't see it."

I caught a few of the seventy-two exchanging proud glances after that.

Later that day, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus—always a bad idea, if you ask me. These legal experts think they're so clever, but Jesus always turns their questions around.

"Teacher," he asked with that smug tone these religious leaders often use, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus, unfazed as usual, replied, "What's written in the Law? How do you read it?"

The expert answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."

"Correct," Jesus said. "Do this and you will live."

But the expert, wanting to justify himself, asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

I noticed several disciples rolling their eyes. They'd seen this kind of exchange before.

Jesus launched into a story. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him. They stripped him, beat him, and left him half dead.

"A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side."

James whispered to John, "Bet that doesn't surprise anyone here."

"Likewise, a Levite came to the place, saw him, and passed by on the other side."

The legal expert was shifting uncomfortably now. Jesus was targeting his own religious leaders.

"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was. When he saw him, he took pity on him."

There were a few gasps. Samaritans were considered enemies, unclean half-breeds. Making a Samaritan the hero was guaranteed to ruffle feathers.

"He bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and cared for him. The next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I'll reimburse you for any extra expense.'"

Jesus fixed his gaze on the expert. "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert looked like he'd just swallowed something sour. He couldn't even bring himself to say "the Samaritan."

"The one who had mercy on him," he finally answered.

"Go and do likewise," Jesus told him.

After the expert left, one of the younger disciples approached me. "Did you see his face? That's what I call a divine checkmate."

I couldn't help but smile. "Jesus has a way of making his point that's hard to argue with."

By evening, we reached Bethany, where a woman named Martha opened her home to us. I've never seen anyone move so quickly around a house—she was like a whirlwind

of hospitality, preparing enough food for our large group.

Meanwhile, her sister Mary just sat at Jesus' feet, listening to his teaching.

After about an hour, Martha finally reached her limit. She marched up to Jesus, hands on her hips.

"Lord," she said, not bothering to hide her frustration, "don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Several disciples looked up, awaiting Jesus' response. We all knew how much work Martha was doing for us.

"Martha, Martha," Jesus replied gently, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha's mouth opened and closed like a fish. Clearly not the answer she expected.

Later, I caught Martha muttering to herself while aggressively kneading dough. "Only one thing is needed... easy for him to say when there are twenty hungry men to feed."

But by the end of the evening, I noticed something had changed. Martha eventually sat down with us too, the remaining tasks forgotten. The look on her face as she listened to Jesus made me realize she'd understood his message after all.

As I finish writing tonight, I can't help reflecting on today's events. Jesus continues to surprise everyone—sending out ordinary people to do extraordinary things, challenging our assumptions about who's worthy of help, and reminding us that being with him is more important than anything else.

I wonder how many will understand these teachings years from now when they read my account? I hope I'm capturing not just his words but the way he changes everything he touches. This isn't just history I'm recording—it's a revolution of the heart.

## Chapter 11

One afternoon, I spotted Jesus finishing his prayers under an olive tree. I'd been observing him for months now, documenting everything for my records. The disciples waited respectfully until he finished, though I could tell by their fidgeting that they were eager to speak with him.

"Master," John finally called out, "could you teach us to pray? John the Baptist taught his followers a specific way to pray, and we'd like to learn yours."

Jesus smiled. "Of course. When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, Forgive us our sins, as we forgive everyone indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

Simon Peter repeated the words under his breath, trying to memorize them. Matthew was already scribbling on a scrap of parchment.

"Let me explain further," Jesus continued, leaning forward. "Imagine it's midnight and you have an unexpected visitor. You have no food, so you run to your neighbor's house."

I could see the disciples exchanging amused glances as Jesus took on a dramatic tone for his story.

"You pound on your neighbor's door: 'Friend! I need three loaves of bread! A friend just arrived and I have nothing to offer him!'"

Jesus mimicked an annoyed voice from inside: "'Don't bother me! The door's locked, the kids are finally asleep, and if I get up now, chaos will ensue!'"

The disciples chuckled at his theatrical performance.

"But," Jesus continued, raising a finger, "if you keep knocking persistently—"

"Like Thomas when he needs to use the latrine in the middle of the night," James whispered to John, who stifled a laugh.

"—eventually your neighbor will get up and give you what you need, if only to stop the racket!"

Jesus looked at each disciple. "So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, everyone who seeks finds, and to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

He paused, letting the words sink in. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, would give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, would hand him a scorpion?"

Andrew shuddered. "Definitely not!"

"If you, being imperfect, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven



give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!"

Later that day, Jesus was casting out a demon from a mute man. I'd seen many healings by now, but each one still amazed me. The moment the demon left, the man spoke, and the crowd erupted in cheers.

But not everyone was impressed. I overheard some skeptics in the back.

"He's driving out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," one muttered, arms crossed.

Others demanded, "Show us a sign from heaven if you're really from God."

Jesus, somehow hearing these remarks despite the noise, addressed them directly. "Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? You say I drive out demons by Beelzebul, yet if I do this by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out?"

He let that sink in before continuing. "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you."

I jotted this down quickly, noticing how some in the crowd squirmed uncomfortably.

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor the man trusted in and divides up his plunder."

Jesus's voice grew more serious. "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me

scatters."

A woman from the crowd suddenly called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you!"

Jesus smiled gently. "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

As the crowd grew, Jesus continued, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so the Son of Man will be to this generation."

I noticed some confused expressions among the younger listeners who might not know the story of Jonah.

"The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them," Jesus explained. "She traveled from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here."

Later, we stopped for a meal at a Pharisee's house. I was surprised when our host looked shocked that Jesus didn't perform the ceremonial washing before eating.

Jesus, noticing this, said, "You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you're full of greed and wickedness. Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? Give what is inside to the poor, and everything will be clean for you."

I knew this direct challenge wouldn't go over well.

"Woe to you Pharisees!" Jesus continued. "You give a tenth of your mint, rue, and garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should practice the latter without leaving the former undone."

The host's face was turning an alarming shade of red.

"You love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces," Jesus pointed out. "You're like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it."

An expert in the law interrupted, clearly offended. "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also."

Jesus turned to him. "And woe to you experts in the law! You load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves won't lift one finger to help them."

I noticed some of the younger servants trying not to smile as Jesus called out the elders they probably had to deal with daily.

"You build tombs for the prophets, yet it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did. God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.'"

The atmosphere in the room was tense enough to cut with a knife. I caught Thomas's eye, and he mouthed silently, "Awkward dinner party."

"This generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets shed since the beginning of the world," Jesus continued, "from the blood of Abel to the blood of

Zechariah. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all."

Jesus turned back to the legal expert. "Woe to you experts in the law! You have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

As we left the house, I could see the Pharisees and teachers of the law looking furious. They began questioning Jesus intensely, trying to catch him saying something they could use against him.

I hung back slightly, taking notes. Philip sidled up to me. "Bet you didn't expect to document *that* dinner conversation," he whispered.

"Definitely going in the book," I replied quietly, watching Jesus walk ahead, unintimidated by the crowd of angry religious leaders following us.

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Even surrounded by hostility, his confidence never wavers. That's why they followed him. That's why *I* followed him, documenting every word for those who would come after us.

## Chapter 12

The crowd had swelled to thousands by midday—so many people that they were literally stepping on each other's toes. I kept detailed notes as Jesus first turned to his disciples, his expression serious.

"Watch yourselves with the Pharisees," he warned. "Their hypocrisy is like yeast—it starts small but spreads everywhere. Everything hidden will eventually come to light. What you've whispered in private will be shouted from rooftops."

Peter nudged John. "Sounds like my mom when she found those snacks I'd hidden under my bed."

Jesus overheard and almost smiled before continuing with intensity. "My friends—and yes, I call you friends—don't fear those who can only harm your body. Fear the One who has authority over your eternal soul. That's proper perspective."

He pointed to some sparrows being sold nearby. "Five sparrows sell for two pennies, right? Yet not one falls without God knowing. You're worth more than a whole flock of sparrows! Even the hairs on your head are numbered."

Thomas couldn't help touching his thinning hairline. "That's getting to be a smaller number every year," he mumbled, causing a few stifled laughs.

"Whoever acknowledges me before others," Jesus continued, "I'll acknowledge before God's angels. But whoever denies me before others will be denied. Almost any sin can be forgiven, but rejecting the Holy Spirit won't be—not now, not ever."

The mood grew serious again. I noticed some of the younger followers shifting uncomfortably.

"When they drag you before authorities," Jesus said, looking directly at the younger disciples, "don't stress about what to say. The Holy Spirit will give you words when you need them."

Suddenly a man pushed through the crowd. "Teacher! Tell my brother to split the inheritance with me!"

Jesus gave him a look that I can only describe as a mixture of compassion and exasperation. "Friend, who appointed me judge over your family finances?"

Then he addressed everyone: "Watch out for all kinds of greed. Life isn't measured by how much stuff you own."

He then told a story that I made sure to record word-for-word:

"There was this rich guy whose land produced an amazing harvest. He thought to himself, 'Where am I going to store all this grain? I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones! Then I can store everything and just chill for years—eat, drink, and live it up!'

"But God said to him, 'You fool! Tonight your life will be demanded back. Then who will get everything you've prepared?'

"That's what happens," Jesus concluded, "when someone stores up treasures for themselves but isn't rich toward God."

Looking at his disciples, he softened his tone. "Don't worry about everyday life—what you'll eat or wear. Life is more than food, and your body more than clothes. Look at those ravens! They don't plant or harvest or have storage rooms, yet God feeds them. You're far more valuable than birds!

"And who of you by worrying can add even one hour to your life? If you can't control something that small, why worry about everything else?

"Consider wildflowers—they don't labor or spin thread, yet not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed as beautifully as these! If God clothes temporary grass this wonderfully, won't he do much more for you? Where's your faith?

"Don't chase after what you'll eat or drink. The world is obsessed with these things, but your Father knows what you need. Seek his kingdom first, and these things will be given to you."

I noticed several teenagers in the crowd exchanging glances. One whispered, "Is he saying I don't need the new cloak my parents won't buy me?" His friend elbowed him to be quiet.

"Don't be afraid, little flock," Jesus said, his voice gentle now. "Your Father delights in giving you the kingdom. Sell

possessions and give to those in need. Make yourselves moneybags that won't wear out—a treasure in heaven that never fails, where no thief comes and no moth destroys. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Jesus' voice grew more urgent. "Be ready for service, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so when he comes and knocks, you can immediately open the door. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will have them recline at the table and will come and serve them!

"If the owner of a house knew exactly when a thief was coming, he'd be ready and not let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come when you least expect him."

Peter raised his hand. "Lord, are you telling this parable just for us, or for everyone?"

Jesus looked at him thoughtfully. "Who is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he returns. But if that servant thinks, 'My master is taking forever,' and begins mistreating others and partying hard, the master will return unexpectedly and cut him to pieces.

"The servant who knows his master's will but doesn't prepare or act accordingly will be beaten with many blows. But the one who doesn't know and does things deserving punishment will receive fewer blows. From everyone who



has been given much, much will be demanded."

One of the younger followers whispered, "That's like when my dad says, 'With great privilege comes great responsibility.'"

Jesus continued, his expression intense. "I came to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I'm under until it's completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on families will be divided against each other because of me."

The crowd grew uncomfortably quiet. I saw confusion on many faces. This wasn't the gentle teacher some had expected.

Jesus then turned to address the crowd. "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why can't you interpret the present time?"

"Why don't you judge for yourselves what's right? If you're on your way to court with your adversary, try to settle beforehand, or you may be dragged before the judge, turned over to the officer, and thrown into prison. You won't get out until you've paid the last penny."

As the crowd began to disperse, I saw a group of teenagers still lingering, talking intensely among themselves. One of them caught my eye and asked, "Does following him always mean giving up everything?"

I paused before answering, "It means putting him first in everything. Sometimes that requires sacrifice, but he never asks without giving something greater in return."

The young man nodded slowly. "That's... actually helpful. Thanks."

I smiled as I watched them walk away, still deep in conversation. Jesus' words challenged them, but they weren't walking away—they were wrestling with the truth. And that, I realized, was exactly what Jesus intended.

## Chapter 13

So there I was, following Jesus around Galilee, documenting everything for the book I was writing. I wanted to get every detail right—this was important stuff! As a doctor, I'd always been meticulous with my notes, but chronicling Jesus' ministry required a whole new level of attention.

That morning, some people rushed up to Jesus with the latest horrific news from Jerusalem.

"Teacher! Did you hear what Pilate did to those Galileans? He had them killed while they were offering sacrifices! Their blood literally mixed with the sacrifices!"

Jesus looked at them with those penetrating eyes of his. I'd seen that look before—he was about to flip their understanding upside down.

"Do you think those Galileans suffered because they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans?" he asked. "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you'll all perish just as they did."

He paused, letting that sink in, then continued, "Or those eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else living in Jerusalem? No way! But unless you repent, you'll all perish just as they did."

I scribbled furiously in my notebook. Jesus had this way of taking current events and using them to reveal deeper truths. Not exactly what people expected to hear, but always what they needed to hear.

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but didn't find any. He said to the gardener, 'Look, for three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'"

"Sir," the gardener replied, "leave it alone for one more year. I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, great! If not, then cut it down."

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I glanced around at the crowd. Some were nodding, others looked confused. I jotted down a note: *Fig tree = Israel? More time for repentance? Ask Jesus later.*

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Later that Sabbath, we were in one of the synagogues where Jesus was teaching. I spotted a woman who caught my medical attention immediately. Her back was severely bent—she was completely hunched over and couldn't

straighten up at all. According to whispers in the crowd, she'd been like that for eighteen years. Eighteen years! I couldn't imagine living with that condition for so long.

Jesus called her forward. "Ma'am, come here."

She shuffled forward slowly, her gaze fixed on the ground—not by choice, but because of her condition.

Jesus looked at her with such compassion and said, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity."

Then he placed his hands on her, and immediately—I mean IMMEDIATELY—she straightened up and began praising God. The transformation was astonishing! As a physician, I'd never seen anything like it. Spinal deformities don't just vanish with a touch.

But the synagogue leader was furious. His face turned this alarming shade of red as he sputtered, "There are six days for work! So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath!"

Jesus fired back, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you untie your ox or donkey from the stall on the Sabbath and lead it out to give it water? Then shouldn't this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

I had to hide my smile behind my notebook. The logic was flawless—if you'd help an animal on the Sabbath, how much more should you help a person?

The synagogue leader and his allies were humiliated, but the rest of the crowd was delighted by all the wonderful things Jesus was doing.

Later, Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?"

He thought for a moment, then said, "It's like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches."

Then he added, "Or, it's like yeast that a woman mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."

I loved how Jesus used everyday examples to explain profound mysteries. Farmers and bakers in the crowd nodded in understanding. Even I, who was more familiar with medical scrolls than agriculture, could grasp the point: small beginnings, massive results.

As we continued toward Jerusalem, Jesus went through towns and villages, teaching as he went. Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

Jesus didn't give a simple yes or no. Instead, he said, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and won't be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you'll stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us!'"

He mimicked their desperate tone: "'But he'll answer, 'I

don't know you or where you come from."

"Then you'll say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets!'"

"But he'll reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'"

Jesus's voice grew more somber. "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. And listen, those who are last now will be first, and those who are first will be last."

I watched the crowd's reactions. Some people shifted uncomfortably; others looked thoughtful. This wasn't the "everyone's automatically in" message many hoped to hear.

Just then, some Pharisees approached with what seemed like a friendly warning. "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

I tensed up. Herod was bad news—he'd already executed John the Baptist. But Jesus didn't seem concerned.

He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

The tone in his voice changed, becoming tender and filled

with sorrow. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

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I wrote down every word, but I also watched Jesus's eyes as he spoke about Jerusalem. There was such love there, mixed with profound grief. It was one of those moments that reminded me why I was following him, documenting everything. This wasn't just another teacher or prophet—this was someone who loved with an intensity I'd never witnessed before.

As we continued our journey toward Jerusalem, I couldn't help but wonder what awaited us there. Whatever it was, I knew it would be worth recording for generations to come.



## Chapter 14

There we were at this prominent Pharisee's house for a Sabbath meal. The tension was thicker than honey in winter, I'm telling you. Everyone was watching Jesus like hawks, and not just because he was the guest of honor.

Right in front of Jesus was this poor man with abnormal swelling throughout his body. I recognized the symptoms immediately—edema, potentially fatal if left untreated. The Pharisees were practically holding their breath, wondering what Jesus would do.

Jesus looked straight at the legal experts and Pharisees and asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"

Complete silence. You could have heard a sandal drop.

When no one answered, Jesus gently took the man's hands, healed him, and sent him on his way. I'm still amazed at how effortlessly he performs these healings—no elaborate rituals, no lengthy prayers, just compassion in action.

Then Jesus turned to them and said, "If your child or even

your ox fell into a well on the Sabbath day, wouldn't you immediately pull them out?"

Again, silence. What could they say? He had them cornered with pure logic and compassion.

During the meal, I couldn't help but notice how some guests were desperately angling for the seats of honor. Jesus observed this too, and I could see that little smile he gets when he's about to drop some wisdom.

"When someone invites you to a wedding feast," he said, taking a sip of wine, "don't rush for the best seat. Someone more distinguished might show up, and then the host will come over and say, 'Give this person your seat.'" Jesus mimicked an embarrassed walk. "Then you'll slink away to the only seat left—the one by the kitchen where you can hear the servants arguing about who burned the bread."

A few people chuckled uncomfortably, recognizing themselves in his words.

"Instead," Jesus continued, "take the lowest place. Then the host may come and say, 'Friend, move up to a better seat!' Then you'll be honored in front of everyone." He paused, looking around the table. "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

I glanced around and noticed at least three guests subtly sliding down to less prestigious spots at the table. Message received.

Jesus then turned to our host, who was looking increasingly uncomfortable.

"When you host a dinner," Jesus said, "don't just invite your friends, relatives, and rich neighbors who can repay you. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. They can't repay you, but you'll be blessed and repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

I could almost see our host mentally revising his next dinner's guest list. This wasn't just counter-cultural advice—it was revolutionary.

One of the dinner guests, trying to sound spiritual, blurted out, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God!"

Jesus smiled—that smile that says, "I'm about to tell a story that's going to flip your world upside down."

"A man prepared a great banquet and invited many guests," Jesus began. "When everything was ready, he sent his servant to tell those who were invited, 'Come! Everything is ready!'"

Jesus then put on different voices for each excuse, which had several of us trying not to laugh.

"I just bought a field," Jesus said in a pompous voice, "I simply must go see it. Please excuse me!"

Then switching to a different tone: "I just purchased five pairs of oxen and need to try them out. So sorry!"

And finally, with a dramatic flair: "I just got married! Surely you understand I can't come!"

Peter whispered to me, "That last one actually seems reasonable," which earned him an elbow from John.

Jesus continued, "The servant reported all this to his master, who became angry and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame!'"

"The servant returned and said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, but there's still room!'"

"So the master told him, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

The silence that followed was deafening. Everyone knew Jesus was talking about them—the religious elites who were too busy with their own affairs to recognize God's invitation standing right in front of them.

After the meal, we were walking with a large crowd following us. Jesus suddenly stopped and turned to address them. I could tell from his expression that he wasn't going to water down his message.

"If anyone comes to me and doesn't love me more than their father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters—yes, even their own life—they cannot be my disciple."

A teenager near me whispered to his friend, "Wait, did he

just say I have to hate my parents? Mom's going to love that!" His friend shushed him as Jesus continued.

"Whoever doesn't carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Jesus looked at the crowd thoughtfully. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough to complete it? Otherwise, you might lay the foundation and not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees it will ridicule you saying, 'This person began to build but couldn't finish!'"

I saw a local builder in the crowd nodding vigorously. He'd probably seen this happen more than once.

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first consider whether his ten thousand soldiers can defeat the twenty thousand coming against him? If not, he'll send a delegation while the other is still far off and ask for peace terms."

Jesus paused, letting his words sink in.

"In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

I watched several in the crowd shift uncomfortably. This wasn't the easy teaching they were hoping for.

Jesus concluded with a penetrating look, "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It's fit neither for the soil nor the manure pile; it's thrown out. Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

As we walked away, I overheard a group of teens discussing what they'd heard.

"So he's saying following him is going to cost us everything?" one asked, looking troubled.

"Yeah," his friend replied, "but think about what we get in return—him."

I smiled to myself.

Sometimes the youngest ones understand the deepest truths.

## Chapter 15

I've been traveling with Jesus for months now, documenting everything for my book. Today was... interesting, to say the least. I had to scramble to keep up with my notes as a crowd gathered around Jesus. The usual mix—eager listeners, skeptical onlookers, and of course, the tax collectors and "sinners" who somehow always find their way to him.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law weren't happy about this, as usual. I overheard them muttering among themselves.

"Look at him," one scoffed, adjusting his immaculate robes. "He welcomes sinners and actually eats with them."

I've noticed Jesus has this incredible hearing—or maybe just an uncanny sense of when people are talking about him. Before I could even finish writing down their complaints, he turned to address the crowd with that sparkle in his eye that usually means a story is coming.

"Let me ask you something," Jesus said, looking directly at

the religious leaders. "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them."

One of the younger Pharisees rolled his eyes. I jotted that down—details matter in good reporting.

"Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until you find it?" Jesus continued.

An actual shepherd in the crowd nodded vigorously. "Every time!" he called out.

"And when you find it," Jesus went on, smiling at the shepherd, "don't you joyfully put it on your shoulders and head for home? Then call your friends and neighbors together and say, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!'"

A tax collector near me whispered, "I've never owned a sheep, but I'd definitely throw a party if I found something valuable I thought was gone forever."

Jesus's voice grew more serious. "I tell you, in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who don't need to repent."

I glanced at the Pharisees. Some looked confused, others annoyed. But Jesus wasn't done.

"Or picture this," Jesus said, his eyes scanning the crowd. "Imagine a woman who has ten silver coins and loses one."



A few women in the crowd nodded knowingly.

"Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?"

One woman called out, "Last month I lost my best cooking knife and tore apart the entire house! My husband thought I'd gone mad!"

Everyone laughed, including Jesus.

"Exactly!" he said. "And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I've found my lost coin!'"

Jesus paused, making eye contact with several people in the crowd. "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

I noticed a tax collector wiping his eyes. This was getting interesting.

Jesus took a deep breath. I could tell he was about to tell an even bigger story.

"There was a man who had two sons," he began.

I settled in, quill ready. His longer stories were always the most profound.

"The younger one said to his father, 'Dad, I can't wait for you to die to get my inheritance. Give me my share of the estate now.'"

A few gasps from the crowd. Even in my limited experience with Jewish customs, I knew this was essentially telling your father you wished he was dead.

"So the father divided his property between them."

"Wait, the father actually gave it to him?" someone muttered nearby. "If my son asked me that, I'd tan his hide!"

Jesus continued, "Not long after that, the younger son packed up, left for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth on wild living."

A young man in the crowd chuckled and nudged his friend. Jesus shot them a look that wasn't angry but definitely made them straighten up.

"After he had spent everything, a severe famine hit that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs."

The Jewish crowd collectively winced. Pigs? Unclean animals? This kid had really hit rock bottom.

"He was so hungry that he longed to fill his stomach with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."

Jesus's voice softened, "Finally, he came to his senses. 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I'll go back to my father and say: Father, I've sinned against heaven and

against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants."

I watched the crowd. Everyone was completely silent, hanging on every word. The Pharisees too.

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

An older man in the audience wiped away a tear.

"The son said, 'Father, I've sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.'"

Jesus's voice changed as he took on the character of the father. "'Quick!' the father interrupted, calling to his servants. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate! For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate."

I noticed several of the tax collectors nodding, eyes glistening.

"Meanwhile," Jesus continued with a slight shift in tone, "the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked, 'What's going on?'"

Jesus mimicked the servant's reply: "'Your brother has come home,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the

fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound."

"The older brother was furious and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him."

Jesus's voice took on an indignant tone: "'Look!' the older son said to his father. 'All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has wasted your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'"

I glanced at the Pharisees. Some were shifting uncomfortably.

Jesus's voice became gentle again, taking on the father's character: "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Jesus fell silent. The crowd was completely still. I looked around at the faces—the sinners with hope, the self-righteous with discomfort, and so many in between looking thoughtful.

As a physician and a writer, I've observed human nature closely. I could see Jesus's words working their way into hearts like medicine, healing some, challenging others. I quickly finished my notes, knowing these stories about lost things being found were important enough to include in my book.

These weren't just stories. They were invitations—to the lost to come home, and to the "found" to celebrate their return rather than resent it.

And me? I was just grateful to be there, documenting it all, watching the greatest physician of souls at work.

## Chapter 16

I was following Jesus and the disciples through a village when he suddenly stopped to address the crowd. I noticed he was looking directly at his closest followers as he began to speak. I quickly pulled out my writing materials to document his latest teaching.

"There was this rich guy," Jesus began, "who had a manager handling all his business affairs. Someone reported that the manager was wasting the rich man's money – basically embezzling."

Andrew leaned over to Peter and whispered, "Sounds like that tax collector from Jericho."

"Shh," Peter nudged him. "I'm trying to listen."

Jesus continued, "So the rich man called in his manager and said, 'What's this I hear about you? Give me a full audit of your management because you're fired!'"

I could see the disciples shift uncomfortably. Financial accountability wasn't the most exciting topic, but I sensed Jesus was going somewhere important with this.

"The manager thought to himself, 'I'm in serious trouble now. My boss is firing me. I'm not strong enough for manual labor, and I'm too proud to beg. Wait—I just had a brilliant idea! I know how to make sure I'll have plenty of friends who will take care of me when I lose my job.'"

Jesus had everyone's attention now, especially the younger followers who were grinning in anticipation.

"So the manager called in each person who owed his master money. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?'"

Jesus changed his voice slightly for each character, which always made his stories more engaging.

"'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' the man replied."

"'Here,' the manager said, 'take your bill, sit down quickly, and change it to four hundred and fifty.'"

Thomas's eyes widened. "That's fraud!" he whispered a bit too loudly.

Jesus smiled slightly but continued, "'What about you?' he asked the next debtor. 'How much do you owe?'"

"'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied."

"'Take your bill,' the manager told him, 'and change it to eight hundred.'"

Several people in the crowd gasped. I frantically wrote everything down, wondering where Jesus was going with

this story about a clearly dishonest manager.

"The rich man had to admire the dishonest manager's shrewdness," Jesus said. "And it's true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the children of light."

John raised his hand. "Master, are you telling us to be dishonest?"

"Not at all," Jesus replied. "I'm saying use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they'll welcome you to an eternal home."

He paused to let that sink in, then continued, "If you're trustworthy with little things, you'll be trustworthy with greater responsibilities. But if you're dishonest in small matters, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you're not trustworthy with worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? If you're not trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you your own?"

Matthew, the former tax collector, was nodding intensely. This clearly resonated with him.

"No one can serve two masters," Jesus said firmly. "You'll either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

The Pharisees standing nearby started snickering. I saw Jesus notice their reaction.



"You guys," Jesus addressed them directly, "love to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight."

One young Pharisee trainee looked uncomfortable, glancing between Jesus and his mentors.

Jesus continued, "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John the Baptist came. Since then, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is trying to force their way into it. But it's easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of the Law to be dropped."

Then Jesus addressed a controversial topic: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

The Pharisees were now fuming, but Jesus wasn't finished. He launched into another story.

"There was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. Outside his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to eat just the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores."

Some of the younger listeners grimaced at the vivid description.

"Eventually, the poor man died and angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In

Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side."

Jesus's voice grew more intense. "'Father Abraham,' he called out, 'have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I'm in agony in this fire.'"

"'Son,' Abraham replied, 'remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things. Now he's comforted here and you're in agony. Besides, there's a great chasm between us, so no one can cross over from here to you, and no one can cross from there to us.'"

Jesus looked around at his audience, making eye contact with many listeners. I noticed several wealthy individuals shifting uncomfortably.

"The rich man answered, 'Then I beg you, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so they won't come to this place of torment.'"

"'They have Moses and the Prophets,' Abraham replied. 'Let them listen to them.'"

"'No, father Abraham,' he begged, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they'll repent.'"

"Abraham said to him, 'If they don't listen to Moses and the Prophets, they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

When Jesus finished, there was a heavy silence. I looked up

from my writing to see many thoughtful expressions. Peter walked over to me.

"Did you get all that, Luke?" he asked.

"Every word," I assured him. "But do you understand what he meant about the dishonest manager being shrewd?"

James joined our conversation. "I think he's saying we should be as strategic about eternal things as dishonest people are about worldly gain."

"And the part about Lazarus and the rich man?" I asked.

"That's clearer," Peter said solemnly. "How we use our resources in this life has eternal consequences. We can't say we weren't warned."

I nodded, adding these interpretations to my notes. As a doctor who had treated both the wealthy and the destitute, I found Jesus' teachings on wealth particularly challenging yet refreshing.

As we walked to our next destination, I noticed a group of teenagers following along, animatedly discussing what they'd heard. One said to his friend, "I never thought about my allowance as something that could make an eternal difference before."

"Yeah," his friend replied. "Makes me wonder if I should spend less on new sandals and more on helping people like Lazarus."

I smiled to myself. Jesus had a way of making everyone—from religious leaders to everyday teenagers—reconsider their priorities. And that's exactly why I'm writing all this down. Future generations need these words.

## Chapter 17

Jesus looked at His disciples with that expression He gets when He's about to drop some serious wisdom. "Listen up," He said. "In this life, stuff that causes people to sin is inevitable—but seriously, watch yourselves. If you're the one causing someone else to stumble? Yikes." He made a gesture like a millstone around His neck. "It would be better for you to be tossed into the sea with a millstone around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall."

Peter gulped audibly. James and John exchanged glances.

"Also," Jesus continued, "if your brother or sister sins against you, call them out on it. And if they say 'my bad,' forgive them. Even if they mess up seven times in one day and come back seven times saying 'I'm sorry,' you've got to forgive them. Every. Single. Time."

The apostles looked at each other with these "are-you-kidding-me" expressions. I'm not gonna lie—I was thinking the same thing. Seven times? In one day?

"Lord," Bartholomew finally said, "you're asking a lot here. Could you maybe... increase our faith? Because this seems impossible."

Jesus smiled. "If you had faith even the size of a mustard seed—" He held up His thumb and forefinger, barely apart, "—you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Hey you! Uproot yourself and plant yourself in the sea!' And it would obey you."

I almost dropped my stylus. A flying mulberry tree? That would be something to document!

Then Jesus told this story that hit home for me, probably because I've spent time around wealthy households in my medical practice.

"Imagine you have a servant who's been plowing fields or tending sheep all day," Jesus said. "When he comes in from the fields, are you going to tell him, 'Hey, kick back and relax! Dinner's ready'? No way! You'll say, 'Make my dinner, put on your serving clothes, and wait on me while I eat and drink. After that, you can eat.' And do you thank the servant for just doing his job? Doubtful."

Jesus looked at all of us. "It's the same with you. When you've done everything you were told to do, just say, 'We're unworthy servants; we've only done our duty.'"

I quickly wrote that down. Not exactly the "employee appreciation day" they have in some Roman households, but it was about proper perspective.

A few days later, we were heading through this region between Samaria and Galilee. As we approached a village, I noticed them first—ten men standing at a distance, their skin marked with the unmistakable signs of leprosy. Being a physician, I instinctively took a step back, but Jesus stopped walking.

"Jesus, Master!" they shouted in unison. "Have mercy on us!"

Jesus didn't hesitate or move away like most people would. He simply said, "Go show yourselves to the priests."

That's it? I thought. No touching? No dramatic healing moment? But as they turned to go, I noticed something incredible happening before my eyes. Their skin began to clear. The lesions started fading as they walked away.

One of them—a Samaritan, judging by his accent—suddenly stopped, looked at his hands in disbelief, and then turned around. He ran back to Jesus, shouting praises louder than any town crier I've ever heard. He fell at Jesus' feet, face to the ground.

"Thank you!" he kept saying. "Thank you!"

Jesus looked around. "Weren't all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

Then He helped the man to his feet. "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

I couldn't help but think: nine out of ten people forgot to say thanks. That's... actually pretty accurate in my medical practice too.

Later that week, some Pharisees approached Jesus with what seemed like a trick question.

"When is the kingdom of God coming?" they asked, all smug like they'd caught Him in something.

Jesus wasn't fazed. "The kingdom of God isn't something you can predict with signs or say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' Because, surprise—the kingdom of God is already among you."

After they left, Jesus turned to us. "The days are coming when you'll long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you won't see it. People will say, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Don't fall for it. Don't go running off after them."

He gazed upward. "For the Son of Man in his day will be like lightning that flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first... I must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."

I noticed how His voice changed at that last part. The disciples shifted uncomfortably, but Jesus continued.



"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying—living life as usual—right up until Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and wiped them all out."

Peter raised an eyebrow. "That's... cheerful."

Jesus went on, undeterred. "It was the same in Lot's time. People were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building—until Lot left Sodom. Then fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. That's how it will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

"On that day," Jesus warned, "no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife!"

I made a mental note: "Do not turn into a salt pillar. Bad for health."

"Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it," Jesus said, His voice growing more intense, "and whoever loses their life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

Andrew raised his hand like a student. "Where, Lord? Where will they be taken?"

Jesus gave him one of those looks that makes you feel like He can see right through you. "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

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As I wrote this down, I thought: Well, that's cryptic. But that's Jesus for you—always giving us something to think about. And I should know; I've been documenting these sayings for months.

The sun was setting as we continued our journey toward Jerusalem. I had a feeling things were about to get even more intense, but that's a story for another chapter in my book.

## Chapter 18

Jesus gathered us today after we'd finished our morning meal. I could tell he was concerned about how easily some followers were losing heart.

"Let me tell you why you should always pray and never give up," he said, leaning forward. The group grew quiet.

"There was this judge in a certain city," Jesus began, eyes twinkling. "Total nightmare of a person—didn't fear God, couldn't care less what people thought of him."

Some of the disciples chuckled. They knew exactly the type.

"In that same city was a widow who kept coming to him with the same request: 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' For a long time he refused, but she just wouldn't quit. She was like that one friend who keeps texting you even when you don't respond."

"Finally, the judge said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing

me out with her constant requests!"

Jesus looked around at all of us. "Listen to what the unjust judge said. And won't God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly."

His expression grew more serious. "But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on earth who have faith?"

I wrote those words down carefully. It was a troubling question, and I could see it weighed on him.

Later that afternoon, Jesus noticed some people nearby who were clearly quite sure of their own righteousness while looking down on everyone else. He seized the teachable moment.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector."

James nudged John, whispering, "This ought to be good."

"The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer," Jesus continued, standing tall and putting on an exaggerated pious expression. "'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers—or even like that tax collector over there. I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'"

I had to admit, Jesus's impression was spot-on. The younger disciples tried to stifle their laughter.

"But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed." Jesus hunched his shoulders, looking down. "Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'"

Jesus's voice softened. "I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

I glanced around, wondering how many truly understood this reversal of conventional wisdom.

As we traveled on, people started bringing their children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them and bless them. But some of the disciples began shooing them away.

"Hey, come on, the Master's tired," Thomas said to one mother. "He doesn't have time for the little ones right now."

I watched Jesus's face transform from weariness to indignation in an instant.

"Stop it! Right now!" Jesus called out. "Let the children come to me. Don't send them away! The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children."

He knelt down to eye level with a small boy who'd been hiding behind his mother's robes.

"What's your name?" Jesus asked gently.

"Eli," the boy whispered.

"Well, Eli," Jesus said with a warm smile, "did you know that to enter God's Kingdom, you have to receive it like a child would?"

The boy shook his head, eyes wide.

"It means with open hands and an open heart," Jesus explained, taking the boy's small hands in his. "No complicated questions or conditions. Just... trust."

I made a mental note to remember that exact phrasing. So simple, yet so profound.

We hadn't gone much farther when a young man—clearly wealthy from his clothing—came running up to Jesus. He couldn't have been much older than some of the teenagers who occasionally followed us.

"Good Teacher," he called out, slightly out of breath, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus gave him a curious look. "Why do you call me good? Only God is truly good."

"But as for your question," Jesus continued, "you know the commandments: 'You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.'"

The young man's face brightened. "I've kept all these commandments since I was a child."

He looked so earnest that I believed him. Jesus seemed to as well, because his expression softened with genuine affection.

"There is still one thing you haven't done," Jesus told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

The young man's face fell faster than a stone in water. He stared at Jesus for a long moment, then turned and walked away, shoulders slumped.

Jesus watched the young man go with sadness in his eyes. "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God."

"Wait, what?" Philip blurted out. "A whole camel through a needle? That's impossible!"

Several disciples looked at each other in dismay. "Then who in the world can be saved?" Andrew asked.

Jesus's reply was gentle. "What is impossible for people is possible with God."

Peter, always quick to speak, piped up. "We've left our homes to follow you."

I could tell he was wondering if they'd made the right choice, unlike the rich young man.



Jesus smiled at Peter. "Yes, and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come."

The relief on the disciples' faces was palpable.

As we approached Jerusalem, Jesus pulled the twelve closest disciples aside. I hung back but stayed within earshot—I didn't want to miss anything important for my account.

"Listen," he said, his voice low and serious. "We're going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true."

"He will be handed over to the Romans," Jesus continued. "They will mock him, treat him shamefully, and spit on him. They will flog him with a whip and kill him."

Peter's face had gone pale. "Master, surely not—"

"But on the third day," Jesus finished, holding Peter's gaze, "he will rise again."

The disciples looked completely lost. I could tell they were trying to process his words, but they couldn't—or wouldn't—understand what he meant. I wrote his prediction down word for word, determined that when these events came to pass, there would be a record.

As we neared Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road. When he heard the noise of our large group passing by, he began asking what was happening.

"Jesus of Nazareth is coming this way," someone told him.

The man's entire demeanor changed instantly. He began shouting at the top of his lungs, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Some people at the front of our group turned around, annoyed. "Be quiet!" they hissed.

But the man only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped walking and turned toward the sound. "Bring him to me," he said.

As they led the blind man to Jesus, I moved closer to hear their conversation.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man's face was upturned, his unseeing eyes somehow finding Jesus's face. "Lord," he said, "I want to see!"

Jesus's voice was tender. "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you."

What happened next nearly made me drop my writing tools. Instantly, the man's cloudy eyes cleared. He blinked rapidly, then stared at Jesus in wonder. A smile broke across his face like the dawn.

"I can see! I CAN SEE!" he shouted, and began praising God at the top of his lungs.

The crowd that had just told him to be quiet now joined in his celebration.

As I watched the formerly blind man dancing and praising God, I reflected on everything I'd witnessed that day. The widow who wouldn't give up. The tax collector who humbled himself. The children Jesus welcomed. The rich man who couldn't let go. The disciples struggling to understand. And now, this blind man receiving sight.

These were stories the world needed to hear. And I, Luke, would make sure they were told.

## Chapter 19

We entered Jericho, and let me tell you, the place was buzzing. As usual, Jesus attracted quite the crowd. Everyone was jostling to get a glimpse of him.

There was this wealthy tax collector named Zacchaeus who couldn't see over the crowd—not exactly blessed in the height department, if you know what I mean. The guy was so desperate to see Jesus that he actually climbed a sycamore tree. Not exactly dignified for someone of his status, but points for creativity!

Jesus approached the tree, looked up, and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I need to stay at your house today."

The crowd went silent. You could practically hear their thoughts: "The holy teacher is going to the home of... a tax collector?"

Seriously?"

Zacchaeus scrambled down so fast I thought he might fall. "Welcome to my home, Teacher!" His face glowed like someone who just found a chest of gold.

The crowd started muttering. One man whispered to another, "He's going to be the guest of a sinner? What kind of holy man is this?"

But Zacchaeus stood tall (well, as tall as he could) and declared, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor, and if I've cheated anybody, I'll pay back four times the amount!"

Jesus smiled. "Today salvation has come to this house. This man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."

I made sure to write that down word for word. It seemed important—Jesus didn't care about Zacchaeus's reputation or past. He cared about his heart.

As we continued toward Jerusalem, Jesus told a story that caught everyone's attention. Several of his followers thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately, so Jesus set the record straight.

"A nobleman went to a distant country to be appointed king," Jesus began. "Before leaving, he called ten servants and gave each a mina—about three months' wages."

"Just one mina?" a young man in the crowd asked. "That's not much to work with."

Jesus continued, "The nobleman told them, 'Put this money to work until I come back.' But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'"

"I don't blame them," someone muttered. "Nobles aren't exactly known for their generosity."

Jesus gave the heckler a knowing look before continuing, "When the king returned, he summoned the servants to find out what they'd done with his money."

"The first servant approached and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more!'"

Jesus deepened his voice to play the king: "'Well done! Because you've been trustworthy with very little, take charge of ten cities.'"

Some of the younger disciples exchanged impressed glances.

"The second came and reported, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'"

"You take charge of five cities," Jesus said in his kingly voice.

"Then another servant shuffled forward and said, 'Sir, here's your mina back. I kept it hidden away in a cloth. I was afraid because you're a hard man, taking out what you didn't put in and reaping what you didn't sow.'"

Jesus's expression turned stern as he continued, "'I'll judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew I was a hard man? Then why didn't you at least put my money in the bank so I could collect interest?'"

"The king ordered, 'Take his mina and give it to the one who has ten.'"

"'But sir,' the attendants protested, 'he already has ten!'"

"The king replied, 'I tell you, to everyone who has, more will be given. But from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.'"

Jesus let the story sink in before adding, "As for those enemies of mine who didn't want me to be king—bring them here and kill them in front of me."

The crowd went silent. I could see the disciples processing what this parable meant about our responsibilities and the coming kingdom.

As we approached Jerusalem, we reached Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives. Jesus called two disciples aside.

"Go to the village ahead," he instructed. "As you enter, you'll find a colt tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks why you're untying it, just say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

The disciples exchanged puzzled looks but went off anyway.

I whispered to Matthew, "Isn't this technically borrowing without permission?"

Matthew shrugged. "With Jesus, there's always a reason."

The disciples returned with the colt, looking slightly embarrassed.

"Well?" Jesus asked with a hint of amusement.

"The owners did ask why we were taking their colt," one admitted.

"And?"

"We said exactly what you told us to say—"The Lord needs it"—and they just... let us take it."

Jesus nodded as if this was perfectly normal. The disciples threw their cloaks on the colt, and Jesus mounted it.

As we continued toward Jerusalem, people started laying their cloaks on the road, creating a makeshift red carpet. The crowd swelled, waving palm branches.

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" they shouted. "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some Pharisees in the crowd called out, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples! This is blasphemy!"

Jesus replied with unexpected firmness, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

As we approached Jerusalem, Jesus suddenly stopped. His eyes filled with tears as he gazed at the city.



"If you, even you, had only known today what would bring you peace," he said, his voice breaking. "But now it's hidden from your eyes. The days will come when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you. They'll dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They won't leave one stone on another, because you didn't recognize the time of God's coming to you."

His grief was palpable. I'd never seen Jesus this emotional before, and it struck me how deeply he loved this city and its people.

We entered Jerusalem and headed straight for the temple. What we found there made Jesus's face darken with anger. The outer courts were filled with merchants selling animals for sacrifice at inflated prices and money changers charging excessive fees.

Jesus strode forward purposefully, overturning the tables of the money changers. Coins scattered everywhere, rolling across the stone floor.

"It is written," he shouted, "'My house will be a house of prayer,' but you have made it 'a den of robbers!'"

The merchants scrambled to collect their money while the temple guards looked on in shock. No one dared to challenge him.

For the next several days, Jesus taught at the temple. The chief priests and teachers of the law were furious but couldn't do anything because the people hung on his every word.

I stayed close, writing down everything I witnessed. Something momentous was unfolding, and I knew these records would be crucial for future believers to understand what happened during these pivotal days.

Each evening, we'd retreat to the Mount of Olives to rest, and each morning we'd return to the temple where crowds gathered early to hear him teach. The tension in Jerusalem was building. I couldn't help but wonder what would happen next.

## Chapter 20

The massive temple columns cast long shadows across the courtyard as people gathered to listen. The chief priests and teachers of the law approached, their ornate robes sweeping the stone floor. I could tell by their stance they weren't here for friendly conversation.

"Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," demanded one priest, his voice carrying across the courtyard. "Who gave you this authority?"

I glanced at Jesus, curious how he'd respond. His expression remained calm, almost amused.

"Let me ask you a question first," Jesus replied.

"John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

I nearly laughed out loud at their expressions. Classic Jesus move—answering a challenge with an even bigger challenge. The leaders huddled together, whispering frantically. I edged closer to catch their conversation.

"If we say 'from heaven,' he'll ask why we didn't believe him," one muttered.

Another tugged nervously at his beard. "But if we say 'from people,' everyone will stone us! They're convinced John was a prophet."

Finally, they straightened up, looking thoroughly uncomfortable. "We don't know where it was from," they mumbled.

Jesus raised an eyebrow. "Then neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Game, set, match. I made a note: *Jesus: 1, Religious leaders: 0*

The crowd was still hanging on Jesus' every word, so he launched into a parable. I recognized his strategy—he often used stories to make difficult truths more digestible.

"A man planted a vineyard," Jesus began, "rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some fruit. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed."

Jesus continued describing how the owner sent more servants, each one beaten or treated shamefully. Finally, the owner sent his son, thinking, "They will respect my son."

"But when the tenants saw him," Jesus said, looking directly at the religious leaders, "they plotted together. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

The tension in the air was thick enough to cut with a knife.

"What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" Jesus asked, his voice carrying across the silent crowd. "He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

"No way!" someone shouted from the crowd. "That can't happen!"

Jesus looked straight at them. "Then what is the meaning of what is written: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?"

I jotted down his words quickly. The religious leaders were practically fuming, their faces turning interesting shades of red. They knew exactly what Jesus meant—they were the tenants, rejecting God's messengers and now plotting against his Son.

They wanted to arrest him on the spot—I could see it in their eyes—but the crowd's presence stopped them. Instead, they slunk away to regroup.

"Well, that was intense," Peter whispered to John, not realizing I could hear.

Later that day, they sent spies who pretended to be sincere. I spotted them immediately—they were trying too hard to blend in, like wolves wearing sheep costumes from a discount market.

"Teacher," one called out with exaggerated respect, "we know you speak and teach what is right and aren't swayed by status or position. You teach the way of God truthfully." The flattery was so thick you could spread it on bread.

"Tell us, is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

I nearly dropped my stylus. Talk about a loaded question! If Jesus said yes, the people would turn against him for supporting Roman occupation. If he said no, he'd be arrested for treason. These guys thought they were so clever.

Jesus wasn't fooled for a second. "Show me a coin," he said simply. "Whose image and inscription are on it?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Jesus tossed the coin back. "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

The spies stood there with their mouths hanging open. I desperately wanted to sketch their expressions—priceless! They'd been completely outmaneuvered.

Next came the Sadducees—religious leaders who didn't believe in resurrection. They approached with what they clearly thought was their ultimate gotcha question.

"Teacher," one began with fake politeness, "Moses wrote that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, he should marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother."

He then launched into this convoluted scenario about seven brothers who all married the same woman after each brother died childless.

"Now then," he finished with a smug smile, "at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since all seven were married to her?"

I could almost hear the eye-rolls from Jesus' disciples. These guys thought they were so smart.

"The people of this age marry and are given in marriage," Jesus explained patiently. "But those considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels."

He wasn't finished. "Even Moses showed that the dead rise, in the account of the burning bush. For he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

Some of the teachers of the law nodded appreciatively. "Well said, Teacher!" one exclaimed. I noticed no one else tried to ask him any more questions after that.

Jesus looked around at his disciples, then at the crowd, and finally at the religious leaders lingering in the background.

"How is it that they say the Messiah is the son of David?" he asked. "David himself says in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The silence was deafening. No one had an answer.

Jesus then turned to his disciples, but spoke loudly enough for everyone to hear: "Beware of the teachers of the law. They love to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."

I watched the faces of those he called out. Some looked angry, others embarrassed. But none could challenge his words because everyone knew they were true.

As the crowd dispersed, I noticed Jesus watching people putting their gifts into the temple treasury. Rich people tossed in large amounts, making sure everyone noticed their generosity.

Then a poor widow came along and dropped in two small copper coins worth barely anything.

"Hey, check this out," Jesus called to his disciples, gesturing toward the woman who was walking away. "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in all she had to live on."

The disciples looked confused, but I understood. It wasn't about the amount—it was about the heart behind the giving. This woman trusted God completely with everything she had.

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As we left the temple that evening, I reviewed my notes from the day. Jesus had faced every challenge with wisdom and integrity. He'd exposed hypocrisy but showed compassion to the genuine and sincere.

I knew then that my account needed to capture not just his words and actions, but the heart behind them—a heart that saw beyond appearances to what truly mattered to God.



## Chapter 21

Jesus was sitting across from the treasury, watching people drop their offerings into the collection boxes. The wealthy were making quite a show of it—jingling their coins loudly, making sure everyone noticed their generosity.

Then, a tiny elderly woman shuffled forward. Her clothes were worn thin, and she moved with the careful steps of someone who had known hardship. She dropped in two small copper coins, worth barely anything.

Jesus nudged his disciples. "Look there," he said, his eyes following the widow as she walked away.

Peter squinted. "The old woman? What about her?"

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said, his voice gentle but firm, "that poor widow has given more than all the others combined."

John's forehead wrinkled in confusion. "But Master, she only put in two small coins."

"Exactly," Jesus replied with a knowing smile. "The others gave from their wealth—what they could easily spare. But she gave everything she had to live on."

I scribbled furiously in my notes. This was exactly the kind of moment that captured the essence of Jesus's teachings.

Later that day, some of the disciples were admiring the temple's architecture.

"Look, Teacher!" exclaimed Thomas, pointing upward. "What magnificent stones! What impressive buildings!"

Jesus's expression turned serious. "You see all these great buildings?" He gestured broadly. "Not one stone will be left upon another. Everything will be demolished."

The disciples exchanged concerned glances.

"Um, that's... intense," muttered Philip.

Later, when we'd settled on the Mount of Olives overlooking the temple, Peter couldn't contain his curiosity any longer.

"So, about what you said earlier," he began cautiously, "when exactly will this destruction happen? And what will be the sign that it's about to take place?"

Jesus looked at them all with deep compassion. "First things first—don't get deceived. Many will come claiming to be me, saying, 'I'm the one!' and 'The time is near!' Don't follow them."

"So basically, avoid spiritual clickbait," James whispered to John, who stifled a laugh.

Jesus continued, "You'll hear about wars and revolutions. Don't panic. These things have to happen first, but the end won't follow immediately."

"Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom," he explained. "There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues in various places, and terrifying events and great signs from heaven."

The disciples were hanging on his every word. I noticed how their expressions shifted from curiosity to concern.

"But before all this," Jesus's voice grew more serious,

"they will arrest you and persecute you. They'll hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you'll be brought before kings and governors because of my name."

Matthew gulped audibly.

"This will be your opportunity to testify," Jesus emphasized. "So make up your minds not to worry beforehand how you'll defend yourselves, because I'll give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict."

"That's... reassuring?" Thomas said, though it sounded more like a question.

"You'll be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends," Jesus continued, his eyes reflecting sadness. "Some of you will be put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me."

The silence was heavy.

"Well, that escalated quickly," Andrew whispered, trying to lighten the mood but failing.

Jesus reached out and placed his hand on Andrew's shoulder. "But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm, you will gain life."

Jesus's expression grew even more solemn as he described Jerusalem's future.

"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you'll know its desolation is near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, those in the city must get out, and those in the country shouldn't enter the city."

"Why not?" asked Thaddeus.

"Because these are the days of punishment, fulfilling all that has been written," Jesus explained. "How dreadful it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this

people."

I watched the disciples' faces as they tried to process this. It was heavy information, and I could tell they were struggling to understand.

"They'll fall by the sword and be taken as prisoners to all nations," Jesus continued. "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until their time is completed."

"And after that?" John asked softly.

Jesus described cosmic signs—the sun, moon, and stars—and nations in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

"People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world," he explained, "because the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

Then his voice took on a tone of hope. "At that time they'll see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

I noticed how some of the disciples straightened up at this, their eyes lighting with anticipation.

"When these things begin to happen," Jesus said with a smile, "stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

To make his point clearer, Jesus told them a parable.

"Look at the fig tree and all the trees," he said, gesturing to the trees around us. "When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near."

"So what you're saying," Peter tried to clarify, "is that when we see these signs happening, we'll know the kingdom of God is near?"

"Exactly," Jesus nodded. "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have

happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

He leaned forward, his voice dropping to ensure they were paying attention. "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life."

"Dissi-what now?" asked Thomas.

"Wild partying," Jesus clarified with a raised eyebrow. "Those things will distract you, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap."

"Like when you're supposed to be studying for an exam but spend all night playing games instead?" offered John.

Jesus chuckled. "Something like that. That day will come on all those who live on the earth. So always be on watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

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As the sun began to set, I made one final note in my journal. Each day Jesus taught at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the Mount of Olives. And each morning, people came early to the temple to hear him.

Watching him interact with his followers, I understood why they were drawn to him. There was something in his words that transcended the moment—a timeless wisdom and warning about what truly matters in the end.

I hoped my account would capture even a fraction of his presence and power, so future generations could understand what it was like to walk alongside him in these momentous days.

## Chapter 22

I've been following Jesus and documenting everything I can. As a physician, I'm trained to observe details, but nothing in my medical training prepared me for what I've witnessed following this remarkable teacher.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which everyone calls Passover, was approaching. The tension in Jerusalem was palpable—you could practically feel it in the air. The chief priests and teachers of the law were looking for a way to get rid of Jesus, but they feared the people's reaction if they moved against him openly.

I noticed Judas—one of the Twelve—had been acting strangely. Later I learned that Satan had entered him. He went to the chief priests and officers of the temple guard to discuss how he might betray Jesus. They were ecstatic and agreed to give him money. Thirty pieces of silver, to be exact. The price of a man's life.

When the day of Unleavened Bread arrived—the day the Passover lamb must be sacrificed—Jesus sent Peter and John ahead.

"Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover," he told them.

"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked, looking confused.

Jesus gave them one of those instructions that makes you

wonder how he knows these things: "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters."

I wanted to point out that men rarely carried water jars—that was women's work—so he'd be easy to spot. But I kept quiet.

Jesus continued, "Tell the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

Peter and John exchanged glances that said, "Here we go again with the mysteriously specific instructions." But they went and found things exactly as Jesus had told them.

That evening, we all reclined at the table. The room was lit by oil lamps, casting long shadows on the walls. The familiar Passover foods were before us—bitter herbs, unleavened bread, wine, and lamb.

Jesus looked around at all of us with an intensity I hadn't seen before.

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," he said. "For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

The word "suffer" hung in the air. Nobody wanted to ask what he meant.

He took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Then he did something unexpected. He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to us.

"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of

me."

Thomas whispered to Matthew, "Is he speaking metaphorically again?" Matthew just shrugged.

In the same way, after the meal, Jesus took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

We all fell silent. The implications were staggering.

Then his tone changed. "But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table."

Everyone froze. You could have heard a feather drop.

"Surely not I, Lord?" several disciples asked almost simultaneously.

While everyone was busy denying it would be them, I observed Judas. His face betrayed nothing, but his hand trembled slightly as he dipped his bread.

Jesus simply said, "The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!"

Then, as if things weren't tense enough, the disciples started arguing about which of them was considered the greatest.

I couldn't believe it. Here we were at what felt like a pivotal moment, and they were bickering about status like teenagers arguing over who gets the front seat.

Jesus silenced them with a sigh. "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves."

He looked at Peter. "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that



your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Peter straightened his shoulders. "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"

Jesus gave him a sad smile. "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Peter looked like Jesus had slapped him.

After dinner, Jesus led us to the Mount of Olives as was his custom. The night air was cool, and the full Passover moon cast everything in silver light.

"Pray that you will not fall into temptation," Jesus told us.

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond us, knelt down and began to pray.

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

I've seen many men in physical distress, but never had I seen anguish like this. An angel appeared and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When he rose from prayer and came back to us, he found us asleep. We were exhausted from sorrow.

"Why are you sleeping?" he asked. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

While he was still speaking, a crowd came up, and the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him.

Jesus looked at him with more sadness than anger. "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

When we saw what was going to happen, we said, "Lord,

should we strike with our swords?"

Before Jesus could answer, Peter—impulsive as ever—slashed his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant.

"No more of this!" Jesus said, touching the man's ear and healing him instantly.

I blinked in disbelief. Even now, even to his enemies, he showed compassion.

Jesus addressed the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders.

"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns."

They arrested Jesus and led him away to the high priest's house. Peter followed at a distance.

A fire had been kindled in the middle of the courtyard, and Peter sat down with the others warming themselves. A servant girl saw him and said, "This man was with him."

But Peter denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said, avoiding eye contact.

A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter insisted, his voice rising.

About an hour later, another person asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

Peter's face flushed red. "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!"

Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.

I've never seen such immediate realization and regret wash over someone's face. Peter remembered the Lord's words and went outside and wept bitterly.

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?"

As a physician, I winced at each blow. These were not disciplined soldiers administering punishment; these were men enjoying cruelty.

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people gathered. They led Jesus before them.

"If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You say that I am."

Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

---

As I watched these events unfold, I knew I was witnessing history that would change the world forever. As a physician, I've seen many suffer, but never someone who suffered willingly, knowingly, for the sake of others. What kind of love is this? What kind of man? Not just a man—something more. Someone worth following, even to death itself.

## Chapter 23

The morning air hung heavy with tension as I pushed through the crowd gathering outside Pilate's headquarters. I'd been following Jesus and his disciples for months now, documenting everything for my historical account, and this morning's events were unfolding at a terrifying pace.

"Excuse me, pardon me," I muttered, squeezing between agitated onlookers. The religious leaders had dragged Jesus to Pilate at daybreak, and I needed to witness this. As a physician, I was accustomed to observing carefully, but nothing prepared me for what I was about to document.

I spotted Peter standing at the fringes, his eyes red, shoulders slumped. He'd been uncharacteristically quiet since the rooster crowed earlier that morning.

"What have I missed?" I whispered, pulling out my writing materials.

Peter shook his head. "They're accusing him of subverting the nation, opposing taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be the Messiah."

The accusations were ridiculous. I'd been meticulously recording Jesus' teachings for months. He'd never incited rebellion or told people not to pay taxes—quite the opposite, actually.

Inside the praetorium, Pilate looked bored and irritated as

he addressed Jesus: "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied simply, "You have said so."

I scribbled frantically, trying to capture every word. Pilate turned to the chief priests and the crowd, throwing his hands up. "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

The priests erupted, their faces reddening. "He stirs up the people all over Judea with his teaching! He started in Galilee and has come all the way here!"

Pilate's eyebrows shot up at the mention of Galilee. "A Galilean, is he? Then he's Herod's problem, not mine." He motioned to his guards. "Send him to Herod. He's in Jerusalem for the festival."

I rushed after the procession, nearly knocking over a water vendor in my haste. This was not justice—this was a cosmic game of "not my problem."

---

Herod's palace was even more chaotic. The ruler of Galilee, dressed in ostentatious purple robes, looked delighted to see Jesus, like he'd been given an unexpected birthday present.

"Finally!" Herod exclaimed, actually clapping his hands. "I've heard so much about you. They say you can perform miracles. How about showing me one? Turn water into wine? Make something float? Anything?" He leaned forward expectantly.

Jesus stood in profound silence. I'd never seen such dignity in the face of such mockery.

The chief priests, not to be outdone, shouted their accusations with renewed vigor. Herod tried a few more times to get Jesus to speak, becoming increasingly frustrated at his silence.

"Some miracle worker," Herod scoffed finally. He turned to

his soldiers. "Dress him up. If he wants to be a king, let's make him look the part."

I winced as they threw an elegant robe over Jesus' shoulders and began bowing dramatically, their laughter echoing off the marble walls.

"Send him back to Pilate," Herod waved dismissively. "I've had my fun."

As they led Jesus away, John appeared beside me, his face ashen. "Did you see how he endured their mockery without a word?"

"I've documented it all," I assured him, showing my notes. "People will know the truth someday."

John nodded grimly. "If we survive to tell it."

---

Back at Pilate's headquarters, the governor looked genuinely annoyed to see Jesus returned to him. I squeezed through the crowd again, finding a spot where I could see and hear clearly.

"This is getting ridiculous," Pilate announced to the crowd. "I examined him, Herod examined him. Neither of us found him guilty of anything deserving death. I'll have him flogged and then release him."

The crowd erupted, an angry beast with one voice: "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"

I turned to a young man beside me. "Barabbas? The insurrectionist?"

"Yeah," he replied. "The one who actually did start a rebellion and killed people."

"You want me to release a murderer instead of this man?" Pilate asked incredulously.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" The chant began somewhere in

the back of the crowd and spread like wildfire.

Three times—I counted—Pilate tried to reason with the mob. Three times they shouted him down. I watched his resolve crumble like a poorly constructed wall.

Finally, Pilate called for water. In a dramatic gesture that would forever be etched in my memory, he washed his hands before the crowd.

"I am innocent of this man's blood," he declared. "It's your responsibility now."

The crowd roared in approval: "His blood is on us and on our children!"

I shuddered, wondering if they understood the weight of those words.

---

They led Jesus away, forcing a man named Simon from Cyrene to carry his cross. I recognized Simon—he had been in Jerusalem for the Passover with his sons Alexander and Rufus.

A large crowd followed, including women who mourned loudly. To my surprise, Jesus turned to them.

"Daughters of Jerusalem," he said, his voice hoarse but clear, "don't weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children. Days are coming when you'll say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'"

I frantically wrote his words, sensing their prophetic weight. Even now, facing death, he was thinking of others.

---

The place called the Skull was as ominous as its name suggested. The Romans were efficient in their cruelty. I forced myself to watch as they drove nails through his

hands and feet, lifting the cross with a sickening thud.

"Father, forgive them," Jesus gasped through the pain, "for they don't know what they're doing."

I looked up from my writing, stunned. Forgiveness? Now? For this?

The soldiers divided his clothes by casting lots, an eerily casual act amid such horror. The religious leaders sneered from a safe distance.

"He saved others," they mocked. "Let him save himself if he's really God's Messiah!"

The soldiers joined in, offering him wine that was turning to vinegar. "If you're the king of the Jews, save yourself!"

A sign had been placed above him: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Pilate's final jab at the religious leaders who had forced his hand.

Two criminals hung on crosses beside Jesus. One joined the mockery: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But the other rebuked him. "Don't you fear God? We're getting what our deeds deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then, turning toward Jesus with difficulty, he said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus' reply was immediate and certain: "Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise."

I underlined those words three times in my notes. Even here, even now, he offered hope.

---

Around noon, an unnatural darkness fell over the land. Not a cloud in the sky, yet the sun's light failed. For three hours, we stood in this otherworldly gloom. The temple guards looked nervous. The mockers fell silent.



Then, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"

With that, he breathed his last.

The Roman centurion overseeing the crucifixion had been watching Jesus intently. At Jesus' final breath, he straightened suddenly.

"Surely this was a righteous man," he declared. The words sounded torn from him, a confession he hadn't planned to make.

The crowds who had gathered began to disperse, beating their breasts in remorse and shock. I saw familiar faces—disciples, followers, women from Galilee—standing at a distance, their faces etched with grief.

---

A council member named Joseph approached Pilate later that day. I knew of him—a good man who had not consented to the council's decision against Jesus.

"Let me take his body," he requested. Pilate, seeming almost relieved at this small act of decency, gave permission.

I followed at a respectful distance as Joseph wrapped Jesus' body in linen and placed it in a tomb cut in rock, one that had never been used. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed too, noting where the body was placed.

"We'll come back after the Sabbath," one of them whispered, "to properly prepare his body for the burial, with spices and perfumes."

---

As the massive stone rolled across the entrance of the

tomb, I put away my writing materials, my hands shaking. The story seemed to be ending, but something in me knew it wasn't over.

"What will you do with all your notes?" asked Mary of Magdala, noticing my scrolls.

"I'm going to write it all down," I replied. "Everything I've seen, everything he taught. Future generations need to know what happened here."

She nodded, tears streaming down her face. "They won't believe it."

"Some will," I said, looking back at the sealed tomb. "Some will believe, and it will change everything for them."

I had no idea then how true those words would prove to be—or how the events of the third day would transform my account from a tragedy into the greatest news humanity had ever received.

## Chapter 24

I'd been documenting everything about this Jesus of Nazareth for months, interviewing eyewitnesses, collecting stories, and trying to piece together what really happened. But nothing could have prepared me for the events of that Sunday morning.

It started before dawn. I was fast asleep when someone pounded on my door so hard I thought it might break.

"Luke! LUKE! Open up!"

I stumbled to the door, hair a mess, to find Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, all speaking over each other, faces flushed with excitement.

"Slow down! One at a time!" I said, rubbing my eyes. "What's happened?"

Mary Magdalene grabbed my arm. "The tomb is empty! Jesus isn't there!"

I blinked. "Wait, what?"

"We brought spices to prepare his body properly," Joanna explained, "but when we got there, the stone was rolled away and—"

"Angels!" Mary interrupted. "Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning!"

I motioned them inside, reaching for my writing materials. This was either the greatest development in my investigation or mass hysteria. Either way, I needed to document everything.

"Start from the beginning," I said, trying to sound calm while my heart raced. "You went to the tomb at dawn..."

"Yes," Mary nodded. "We brought the spices we had prepared. But when we got there, the stone was rolled away from the tomb!"

"So we went in," Joanna continued, "but Jesus' body wasn't there."

"We were standing there, completely confused," Mary added, "when suddenly these two men in dazzling clothes appeared."

"We were terrified," Joanna admitted. "We fell with our faces to the ground."

"What did they say?" I asked, frantically writing everything down.

Mary's eyes widened. "They said, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"

I paused my writing. "And... did you remember?"

The women exchanged glances. "Yes!" they exclaimed in unison. "He did say that!"

"So what did you do next?"

"We rushed back to tell the disciples," Joanna said. "But..."

"But what?"

Mary sighed. "They didn't believe us. They thought we

were talking nonsense."

"Peter did run to check," Joanna added. "But he just saw the strips of linen lying there and left, wondering to himself what had happened."

I finished my notes, mind whirling. "And you're absolutely certain about this? The tomb was empty?"

"See for yourself," Mary challenged.

---

Later that same day, I heard another remarkable story. Two of Jesus' followers had been walking to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, when Jesus himself appeared and walked with them. The funny part? They had no idea it was him!

I tracked down Cleopas, one of the two, and cornered him for an interview.

"So you're saying Jesus walked with you for miles, and you didn't recognize him?" I asked, trying not to sound too skeptical.

Cleopas ran his hands through his hair. "I know how it sounds! But it was like... It couldn't be him. We thought he was dead. We had seen him die!"

"What did he say to you?"

"Well, we were talking about everything that had happened. We were pretty downcast, you know? And this 'stranger' comes up and asks what we're discussing."

"Must have been the only person in Jerusalem who hadn't heard about the crucifixion," I remarked.

"That's exactly what I said!" Cleopas laughed. "I said, 'Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?'"

"Bold move," I commented, scribbling notes. "And then?"

"He asked, 'What things?' So we told him about Jesus of Nazareth, how he was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, and how the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be crucified."

"And about how we had hoped he was the one who was going to redeem Israel," added his companion, who had been quietly listening. "And then we told him about the women finding the empty tomb, and the angels saying he was alive."

"And what did this 'stranger' say to that?" I asked.

Cleopas shook his head, smiling. "He called us foolish! Can you imagine? He said, 'Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And then he explained everything from Moses through all the Prophets about himself in the Scriptures."

I raised an eyebrow. "About himself?"

"Well, we didn't know it was him yet!" Cleopas defended. "Anyway, we got to Emmaus, and he acted like he was going farther. But we insisted he stay with us since it was getting late."

"So he stayed?"

"Yes! And when we sat down to eat, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to us. That's when our eyes were opened and—poof!—he vanished!"

I stopped writing. "He vanished?"

"Right before our eyes!" Cleopas confirmed. "One second he was there, the next he was gone!"

"That's... convenient," I muttered.

"Look, I know how it sounds," Cleopas said earnestly. "But weren't our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

His companion nodded vigorously. "We got up right away

and returned to Jerusalem. Found the Eleven and told them everything."

"And they believed you?" I asked.

"They'd already heard! The Lord had appeared to Simon too! And then, while we were still talking about all this—"

---

I didn't have to wait long for confirmation of this last part. I was still interviewing Cleopas when a commotion broke out in the house where the disciples were staying. I rushed over with them to find everyone in a state of excitement.

"He was here!" John told me breathlessly. "Jesus was standing right here, in this room!"

"All the doors were locked," added Thomas, looking pale. "We were terrified at first, thought we were seeing a ghost."

"What did he say?" I asked.

Peter jumped in. "He said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he asked why we were troubled and why doubts were rising in our minds."

"And then," James continued, "he showed us his hands and feet. Said, 'Look at my hands and my feet. It's me! Touch me and see; a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see I have.'"

"Did you touch him?" I asked.

Several of them nodded. "He was real," Peter said firmly. "Solid. Not a ghost."

"And then," John added with a laugh, "he asked if we had anything to eat!"

I blinked. "He was... hungry?"

"I guess proving you've risen from the dead works up an

appetite," Matthew said with a small smile. "We gave him some broiled fish, and he ate it right in front of us."

"To prove he wasn't a ghost?" I clarified.

"Exactly," Peter nodded. "Then he opened our minds so we could understand the Scriptures."

"He told us that everything written about him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled," John explained. "He said, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'"

"So what happens now?" I asked.

"He's sending us what his Father promised," Peter replied. "But we need to stay in the city until we get power from God."

---

After gathering all these testimonies, I joined the disciples when they went with Jesus to the vicinity of Bethany. I kept to the background, still observing and documenting. I wanted to see this risen Jesus for myself.

And there he was—just as they'd described. The wounds in his hands and feet were visible. But there was something more, something my notes couldn't quite capture. A presence that radiated both authority and love.

He lifted his hands and blessed them. And while he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven before our very eyes.

The disciples praised him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.



## What is Next?

I have finished writing my report, but I'm still processing everything I've seen and heard. Originally, I set out to investigate the facts, to compile an orderly account of what happened. What I found was far more extraordinary than I could have imagined.

I've spoken to dozens of eyewitnesses. Their stories are consistent. Jesus of Nazareth truly died. And on the third day, he truly rose again and turned the world upside-down.

But this isn't just a story. This is an invitation—to get to know Jesus, to experience his forgiveness, to be transformed by his love.

This story changes everything!

Jesus hung out with the people everyone else avoided. He called out hypocrisy but showed compassion to the broken and taught with such wisdom that crowds followed him for days, forgetting to even eat.

Look, I get it. Following Jesus in today's world isn't always the "cool" choice. Trust me, it wasn't exactly trending in my day either. But here's what I've learned: living for likes and follows is exhausting. Living for the One who knows and loves you completely? That's freedom.

You don't have to have it all figured out. The disciples

certainly didn't—these guys asked some seriously stupid questions! But Jesus met them where they were. He'll meet you there too.

So my invite to you is simple: investigate for yourself.

If you have read what I wrote, then you know I'm not glazing these remarks. Ask your tough-to-know questions. Maybe, like so many of us, you'll discover this isn't just His story—it's your story too.

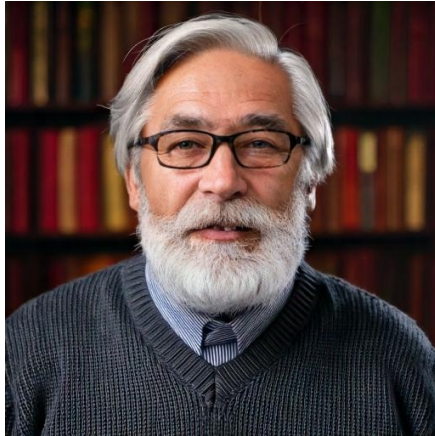
The adventure of following Jesus is the greatest one going!

Peter and the other guys didn't quit after Jesus returned to Heaven. They caused society to tip and continued telling the story over and over with some awesome results.

My next book is all about the acts of the Team That Turned Things Topsy-Turvy to form this Upside-Down Kingdom.



## About The Author:



Vaughn Jennings has dedicated most of his life to education and mentoring young people, serving as a teacher, educational superintendent for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, pastor, and youth advocate.

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