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This Is My Son

THE
SON
OF
GOD

Series: Book 2



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To my mother, Mary Cross
She read Bible stories to her children
every night before they went to bed.
She helped us memorize a Bible verse each week
and often played Bible games with us.
Many times I saw her praying
by her bed on her knees.
My mother, like the characters of the Bible,
faced many difficulties in her life
with strength from God.
Mom, I love you
and deeply appreciate you.

Contents

Introduction.....	9
Prologue The First Family of Earth	13
Chapter 1 Meet Your Enemy.....	23
Chapter 2 Papa God	45
Chapter 3 Choose Mercy.....	73
Chapter 4 Feast of Dedication	97
Chapter 5 Mary's Genealogy	115
Chapter 6 John, Son of Zechariah	147
Chapter 7 The Prodigal Returns	169
Chapter 8 Passover in Jerusalem	191
Chapter 9 The Passover Meal	221
Chapter 10 Teaching in the Temple.....	245
Chapter 11 Fantastic Experiences!.....	277
Chapter 12 The Feast of Weeks	293
Chapter 13 A Wedding in Bethlehem	313
Chapter 14 Manhood Recognized.....	325
Index of Characters.....	357
Biblical References.....	365

Introduction

This book continues the story of the life of Jesus that began in *The Son of God, Book 1*. Joseph and Mary, Toma and Kheti, Heli along with Jethro and Moshe continue to interact in the life of young Jesus. The story picks up when Jesus is eleven, before Luke's account of Jesus's visit to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate the Passover.

This Passover experience is the only story from the childhood and adolescence of Jesus that is recorded in the Bible; therefore, it would seem that we know very little about this period in the life of our Messiah. But by carefully considering everything that is written about Jesus in Scripture, as well as researching the time and the culture in which he grew up, we can assume much about this period of his life without moving into a realm that contradicts Scripture.

This book is based on the following assumptions:

- Jesus was Jewish and lived by the laws of the Torah. (Matthew 1:1–17)
- He lived in a typical small Israeli town in the region of Galilee, and he participated in town life. (Matthew 2:19–23)
- It was an agricultural community and he worked with his father who was a carpenter. (Matthew 13:53–57)
- A number of his parables could have come from actual stories within his community and extended family.
- He had both immediate and extended family. (Matthew 13:53–57, Luke 1:36–80)

- During his ministry, he lived and worked in Capernaum. This was not an unfamiliar place. He had already made relationships there. (Matthew 4:13)
- The roots of many friendships and relationships are in his childhood or adolescence.
- First-century Jews were looking for a military and kingly messiah to free them from the Romans. There had been and still were those who claimed to fill that role. To the Romans and some upper-class segments of Jewish society, they were outlaws; to ordinary Jews they were heroes. (Acts 5:33-39)
- Within Judaism, there were three distinct theological streams—Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes—and within those three groups there were subgroups. During the ministry years of Jesus, his teachings sometimes addressed the doctrines of these groups. (Matthew 22: 15–45, 23:1–37)
- This was a period of preparation in the life of Jesus. From his earthly father, Joseph, he was learning how to become a man in Jewish society. From his Heavenly Father, he was learning who he was, who his enemy was, and what his purpose was. (Luke 2:41–52)
- During his ministry years, Jesus often referred to himself as the Son of Man. When Jesus left heaven, he put his divinity aside and confined himself to living as men live. Every miracle that he does is initiated by God and done through the power of the Holy Spirit. From his birth to his death and resurrection, he only does what his Father tells him to do. (John 5:19–30)
- The total scope of the miracles and words of Jesus are not recorded in the Bible. We only have a fraction. And the

part that we have seems to indicate that for Jesus, these events were part of his normal life. He never indicates surprise when someone is healed, the dead are raised, food multiplies, he is visited by heavenly beings, God speaks to him, demons flee, and nature obeys. (John 21:25)

- Just as God moves us step by step into the fullness of our calling, so he moved Jesus into the fullness of his divine purpose. (Matthew 4:1–11)
- Any way that God has communicated with man, he would also use to communicate with Jesus while he is on Earth in human form. There are far too many texts to list in support of this assumption, so I will list a few obvious biblical characters who experienced unique personal communication with heaven: Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, Joseph the Earthly father of Jesus, Mary, Peter, John, Paul, and others.
- The Hebrew scriptures were an important source of divine revelation regarding his purpose. (John 5:39)

So now that I have laid a foundation, we can safely allow our imaginations to consider things that could have happened during the formative years of Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Prologue

THE FIRST FAMILY OF EARTH

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

—John 1:1–4

From heavenly Mount Zion, God the Father watched. His omnipotent gaze penetrated deep space and sliced through Earth's atmosphere. His eyes focused on the deserted Garden of Eden and then moved to a small patch of cultivated ground that Adam had wrestled from Earth's thorny soil.

Restlessly, the Holy Spirit flowed from one side of the throne room to the other. Like an undulating sea of molten lava, his spirit-being remained in constant motion while his eyes never left the family of Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve, with two sons and two daughters, approached the altar Adam had erected not far from the beautiful garden that had been their first home.

“I can never forget what it was like to hold them in my arms,” Yeshua sadly stated. He had also been watching, but now, for a moment, he turned away and looked at his empty hands. “As I created Adam my son and Eve, my daughter, I touched every

organ in each of their bodies. My lips pressed against their lips, and I blew my life into their lungs.”

“That is why we cannot forget them,” Father God responded.

Yeshua nodded in agreement. “Together, we have created many living beings, but only in mankind did we put so much of ourselves. They are truly our children, the image of who we are.”

As the seraphs and cherubim who constantly sang praises above and around the sapphire throne sensed the profound sadness of the Godhead, their praises ceased. Silence prevailed. God the Ruler of the Universe, Yeshua the Creator of All Things, and the Holy Spirit turned their entire attention on the first family of Earth.

Approaching the altar near the entrance to the beautiful garden, Adam led the way, with his two sons walking on either side. Eve followed. Her arms were linked with the arms of her two daughters. As the first family of Earth came over a small rise, Eve could see the flashing heavenly sword that faithfully guarded against any unauthorized return to that garden paradise. Gradually, she slowed her pace, dropping farther back behind Adam and the boys.

“It is so painful to remember,” Eve whispered her regret. Tears flowed down her cheeks, a blessing that blurred her vision. “It breaks my heart to see the wonderful garden. It was my first home.” Eve took a few more sorrowful steps, her daughters supporting her on either side. Then she collapsed in the dust, sobbing. “Forgive me!” With her fists, she beat the ground. “My children, forgive me! If I had not disobeyed, this garden would be your home. The Creator and all the heavenly beings would be your companions. You would not have to live in this wasteland with Satan and his demonic warriors.”

“No, no, Mother,” her oldest daughter protested. “We have the promise of a deliverer. He will come and fight Satan.”

“Satan hid himself within the serpent, and he deceived you,” her youngest daughter reasoned. “The Creator who lives in

heaven understands. He will see to it that we are released from the domain of the Evil One. Do not despair!"

"No, Mother, do not despair." The twin sister of Cain tugged persistently at her mother, trying to pull her face up from the dust.

Slowly, the girls coaxed their distraught mother into a sitting position within their comforting arms. Together, they watched as Adam took their most precious lamb from his youngest son, Abel. Leaning heavily on the head of the lamb, he loudly proclaimed, "God, I have sinned. In the garden, I rejected your counsel and heeded the words of your enemy. Forgive me!" Pushing harder on the head of the mute animal, he cried out again, "I am now a prisoner in the land of Satan. My willful disregard of your commands gave that rebellious angel the right to steal my position as companion to the Creator and ruler of this planet."

The head of the lamb nearly touched the ground as Adam leaned with all his might into the animal, laying on that innocent animal the full weight of his transgression and remorse. The man who had once received dominion over Earth directly from the hands of Yeshua now trembled under the weight of his punishment. "Because I did not submit to your authority, my sons and their descendants have lost their God-given inheritance. Forgive me!" With tears streaming down his face, he nodded to each of his sons. "Place your hands on top of mine."

Abel, whose eyes were fixed on the ravaged face of his father, placed both of his adolescent hands on top of his father's work-callused ones, but Cain hung back and had to be told a second time. Then he reluctantly placed one hand on top of his brother's hands.

"Keep your promise, O Lord!" Adam looked imploringly toward heaven. "Remember me and my sons and all the generations that will follow. Send the Deliverer, who will release us from the curses we brought upon ourselves. Accept this sacrifice." He removed his right hand from beneath Abel's hands and picked up the knife.

With one clean thrust, he severed the juggler vein of the innocent animal, and the life of the lamb poured out onto the ground.

Tears streamed down Abel's smooth cheeks. Adam sobbed, but Cain showed no emotion. The young man's face, like a majestic rock, never changed. Once more, Eve sank to the ground, weeping into the dust. "It is my fault. It is my fault." This time, her daughters draped their bodies over hers and cried with her.

"Adam and Eve are truly repentant," Yeshua commented as tears streamed down his immortally majestic face. "My heart aches for them."

"They regret. We regret," God sorrowfully added.

"It is more than regret," Yeshua stated. "They miss being with us. They long to return to those days when we sat together in the garden, when we shared every moment in their lives." Yeshua sighed wistfully. "Adam and I created together. We made plans together..." His words trailed off, and one more crystal tear slowly slid down his beautiful face.

"Adam's children are also calling for the Deliverer," God observed as he watched young Abel assist his father in laying the lamb on the altar. "Adam's youngest boy never lived in the garden or visited with us, yet his heart is pure."

"But Cain!" The Holy Spirit flared momentarily as he spoke the name of Adam's eldest son. "His heart is fertile ground for our enemy. See how he turns away from the altar, how his lip curls in a derisive sneer."

"Our enemy!" Yeshua announced with alarm. "He is coming out of a cave on a nearby hill." The all-seeing eyes of the Godhead fixed on the dark angel who once supported the sapphire throne in their Holy Sanctuary.

"He has become ugly," the Spirit stated. "He no longer reflects the light of his Creator."

"Still, he retains enough light to fool those who have never experienced the brilliance of heaven," observed Yeshua.

“Deceiver!” Father God passionately muttered. “You have made yourself invisible. If Adam saw you, he would know there is no heavenly light in you.”

“Look, Satan is approaching Cain. The boy has no defenses. He does not know his enemy!” Yeshua cried in alarm.

“Michael!” Yeshua called the angelic commander of the heavenly hosts. Instantly, the magnificent warring angel stood at his side. “I commission you to destroy Satan, the cherub I wish I had never created!” Yeshua announced as a glowing sword suddenly materialized in his hand.

“Wait! In the planning stages, when we gave the gift of choice to the beings we were going to create, we also established a plan to deal with rebellion in the kingdom.” God moved between Yeshua and Michael, preventing Yeshua from placing the weapon in the commander’s hand. “We studied serious questions involving cause and effect outcomes within the kingdom. Will the destruction of Satan result in bringing Cain to the place where he yearns for our companionship?” God restated a question from the planning phase of creation.

“He will only fear us,” the Spirit answered.

“And what about the other heavenly beings, the ones who almost joined Satan as he took one-third of the heavenly hosts with him?” God continued his thought-provoking questions. “Will they continue their loyalty to us out of love, or will that love turn into fear?”

“Satan must be destroyed!” Yeshua insisted. “That was our final conclusion!”

Raising his right hand, God reaffirmed, “I have sworn to destroy him!” Like thunder, the words of the Ruler of the Universe rolled throughout heaven. “But I will not destroy the foundations of our kingdom in the process. Our violence will not conquer his violence. We cannot be like that evil cherub.”

“We must never resort to deceit and disregard for life,” the Holy Spirit spoke thoughtfully. “We even have to protect the life

of our enemy until we can demonstrate the essential differences between us and him.”

“We are love,” Yeshua stated. “Satan is hate.”

“We are truth,” Father God added. “Satan is a liar.”

“Satan is the destroyer,” the Spirit growled. His words flew like fireballs around the throne room. “But we are the Creator and the rebuilder.”

“We own eternal life,” Yeshua announced. “And our enemy owns eternal death. I will take death, his most powerful weapon, away from him.”

Stepping aside and looking pointedly at the sword in Yeshua’s hand, God asked, “At this moment, what action will you take?”

Stepping past the Archangel Michael, Yeshua the Creator placed the sword in the hand of Eternal God. “You decide the time, the place, and the method of Satan’s destruction, only let me do battle with him face-to-face. Let me carry out your final judgment on our enemy.”

Nodding in agreement, God accepted the glowing sword. As he gripped the hilt with his right hand, the sword glowed and flashed.

“We cannot just leave them without assistance!” The Holy Spirit flared in alarm. “Look! Satan is speaking to Cain. He is planting thoughts in the boy’s mind, and the boy is unaware that our enemy is the source of those thoughts.”

“Go!” God and Yeshua spoke at once. “Be our voice. Counter Satan’s words. Give the boy a clear choice and then let him choose.”

Like a fiery comet, the Spirit of God soared out of the throne room, burning a path through space to the altar where Adam and his family lay facedown in the dust, waiting to see if the Eternal One would accept their sacrifice.

Annoyed, Cain lifted his head just enough to view the altar with one eye. How long would they lay in the dust before the great Triune Ruler showed approval by striking the altar with fire and consuming the offering in a blaze of flame and smoke?

Carefully, Cain turned his head to the other side. He could see the faces of his parents pressed flat to the ground. Their bodies still undulated with heartbroken sobs. His sisters also had their faces pressed to the ground, but they were not sobbing. His eyes lingered on his twin. He was drawn to her. Then his eyes strayed to his brother, Abel. The boy was sobbing as hard as his parents.

There was a voice in Cain's head. "When will your family come to their senses? When will they forget the garden and the memories attached to it? When will they move on and live?"

Its presence did not alarm him. Instead, the young man agreed with it and then entered into mental conversation with it. "It is time to begin my own life, time to take a wife and start my own family." He spoke to himself and to the voice within his head. Again his eyes roamed up and down the prone form of his sister. "You will be my wife. I will take you and leave this area. We will live in a place that is no longer under the shadow of the past."

"You know, your parents have chosen your younger sister to be your wife. They are going to give your twin sister to your brother, Abel." Satan leaned close and whispered information gleaned from lurking and eavesdropping on family conversations.

Resentment, like a slow-burning fire, smoldered in the back of Cain's mind.

Suddenly, there was a startlingly loud crack! A blazing ball of fire struck the carcass of the slain lamb on the altar. As the Holy Spirit touched the dead animal, he prophetically signaled to Satan. "The Eternal One plans to consume you in a lake of fire."

Instantly, Satan withdrew to the mouth of a nearby cave, pressing himself into a jagged black crevice. From the darkness, he observed.

The Holy Spirit stretched and spread himself like a shimmering mantle above the entire family. Gradually, gently, he lowered himself until the heat of his presence made their prone bodies glow.

“He is here,” Adam called reassuringly to his wife as he stood up and lifted his arms toward heaven. “The Spirit of God has come to comfort us.”

“I know,” Eve responded as she also came to her feet and walked to her husband’s side. “Remember, he used to come with the Creator. We always felt his presence like wonderful fire all over our bodies.”

“Now it is only tingling warmth. Do you feel it, Abel?” Adam turned to his youngest son.

“Oh, yes, Father!” Abel’s face glowed, and his young arms reached heavenward. “The Spirit is speaking to me in my head. He says I am loved!”

“And you, Cain?” Adam inquired.

“The lamb and the wood under it have been totally consumed,” Cain responded by stating the obvious. “We have spent most of the day in this place. I am hungry and would like to return to our home.”

“But don’t you feel—” Eve pleaded.

Obviously annoyed, her oldest son cut her off, “I feel hungry. I will take my sisters back to our cave.” Scornfully, he continued, “We will prepare a meal. When you have finished staring into the sky—”

Firmly, Adam interrupted, “When we have heard what the Spirit has to say, we will worship again and then return to the cave.” With a nod of his head, he indicated that Cain and his sisters should leave.

Without hesitation, Cain turned away from his parents and his younger brother. Signaling his sisters to follow, he strode down the dirt path toward the cave where his family made their home.

Satan followed, keeping pace and then creeping forward until he walked unseen beside the eldest son of Adam. “In the valley below this mountain is a level fertile piece of ground,” he whispered.

Cain pictured the place where he had recently laid out a new garden. He remembered a beautiful winding stream, a flat rockless meadow. He considered the possibility of taking mud from the stream and shaping it into bricks that would harden in the sun. Then with those bricks, he could build a home.

“No more cave living for you! You can build a home out of mud bricks,” Satan said, encouraging Cain’s dreams. “You do not have to live like your parents, afraid to move to any place that is not within walking distance of that garden where they used to live!” With a wave of his arm, Satan signaled one of his spirit warriors whom he had named Resentment. “Carry on for me,” he ordered as he slipped away from Cain.

Resentment swooped in. Turning his spirit form into a wedge, he forced himself through the opening Satan had made in Cain’s mind. “Your parents have no present and no future,” the dark spirit whispered. “They only have a past that is tied to a vengeful God who requires regular blood sacrifices.”

As the path widened, Cain’s two sisters stepped up beside him. Cain glanced at his youngest sister. She looked like Abel. She had his dark hair and sharp features. “She reminds you too much of the brother you hate,” Resentment spoke again. “Your parents cannot really expect you to marry her and continue to live in the cave with them!”

Cain considered and agreed with the voice in his head. Turning to his right, he smiled at his twin. The rays of the setting sun danced across her thick cascade of straight red hair. Possessively, Cain reached out and put his arm around her shoulders.

“You were meant to be together,” Resentment urged. “Your parents don’t understand. Your union was ordained from birth.”

“Yes,” Cain concurred with the voice in his head, “we are meant for each other.”

“Do whatever you have to do,” Resentment pressed. “Do not let your parents give your twin sister to your brother.”

Chapter 1

MEET YOUR ENEMY

The Spirit of the LORD will rest upon him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

—Isaiah 11:2–3

“**N**ow Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.” Heli bent over his grandson, Jesus, and tried to make his eyes follow the line of Hebrew characters as the boy carefully placed them from right to left on the new Torah scroll. The aging scribe was not worried about accuracy. This son of his daughter Mary had copied from one scriptural scroll to another with unbelievable perfection from the time he had first learned to write all the Hebrew characters.

Stiffly, Heli straightened up and stroked his beard as he tried to remember when he had taught Jesus the skills of a scribe. He smiled to himself as in his mind, he saw little Jesus, five or maybe six years old, standing at his elbow, intently watching while he carefully copied from one scroll to another. “Jesus?”

With his quill in midair, the boy looked up from studying the frayed scroll of the First Book of Moses.

“Do you remember the first time I put a quill in your hand?” Heli asked.

“Oh yes.” Jesus gave a little laugh as he spoke. “I remember. I made the first Hebrew character so big that it nearly filled the whole scrap of parchment skin I was writing on. Then this gust of wind came out of nowhere. That little piece of stretched animal skin went flying. You jumped to catch it and knocked the ink flask over. All the ink spilled into my lap and ran down my legs.”

Heli’s thin lips broke into a big grin, and with a satisfied chuckle, he added, “Your mother scolded both of us!”

Ruefully, Jesus reminded his grandfather, “My legs were black for the entire month, even though my mother scrubbed them every day. I thought she was going to take my skin off!”

“Yes,” Heli agreed, “we both had to pay a little price for that afternoon. That was the last of my ink, and I had to spend days making a new batch. But now, six years later, you are as good a scribe as I ever was!” Heli spoke with proud satisfaction. “Let’s see?” The old man stepped to the side so the fall sunlight would more clearly illuminate the fresh script. He bent close and placed a thin pointer under the first character of the last line Jesus had penned.

Knowing his grandfather could no longer see the characters clearly, Jesus read for him, “*In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.*”

“That’s good!” Heli approved the new copy as if he could see each jot and tittle, perfectly placed. The aging scribe patted the sturdy young shoulder of his grandson. “Blessed be the name of the Holy One,” he whispered as he moved toward the bench next to his home. “You, God, provide for your people. You sent this boy to help me. Praise your holy name! How else could I keep my word and complete this last job? You have seen the need of your humble servant.”

Sitting heavily on the bench, Heli then leaned against the stone wall of his home. He sighed and let the ancient stones take the full weight of his body. Slowly, his eyes closed, and he drifted into the sleep of an old man resting in the afternoon sunshine.

“*But Abel brought some fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.*” As he copied, Jesus tried to picture the scene in his mind: two young men—one still a teenager and the other in his twenties, one bringing a food offering and the other a meat offering to the Lord. Jesus knew about offerings. At the age of five, he, like the rest of the boys in the village of Nazareth, had entered the synagogue school to study the Third Book of Moses, which contained all the laws for sacrifices and living a life that would not be offensive to the God of Abraham.

Heli’s light snoring drifted across the sunny courtyard as Jesus continued to copy. It was tedious work for a boy who preferred the physical labor of helping his father in the carpenter’s shop.

“*The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor—*” Suddenly, Jesus stopped writing. He carefully placed his quill on the edge of the table and then looked around. He felt like someone had been looking over his shoulder, but his grandfather was still sleeping, and no one else was around. Puzzled, he picked up his quill, dipped it again, and continued. “*So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*”²

Stepping out of the shadows, Satan approached. He could see Michael, the great warring cherub who often stood by Yeshua, who was in a boy’s body. Michael had stepped aside giving him permission to approach. Bending over the boy’s left shoulder, Satan read, “*Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry and why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.’*”³ Just as he read the last word Jesus had copied, Satan felt an extremely warm cosmic wind strike his back. Without turning, he knew the Spirit of God was aggressively making the fullness of his presence obvious.

The Evil One turned and angrily objected, "It is not you I want to face. It is the Deliverer. He is the one I am destined to battle and conquer!"

"At one time, you thought Cain was the Deliverer," the Spirit taunted.

"I made him my servant," Satan arrogantly responded.

"Then you thought Abel might be the Deliverer."

"Yes, and by manipulating Cain, I killed him!" Satan announced.

"Now do you know who the Deliverer is?" the Spirit of God inquired.

"Yeshua the Creator in the body of this boy," Satan sneered as he gestured toward the lad who sat conscientiously copying from one Torah scroll to another. "You keep him well protected!" Satan nodded toward Michael, who stood with flaming sword drawn, ready to defend his Creator.

"Father God has decided to give you some limited access."

As the Holy Spirit spoke the name of that part of the Godhead that kept all things in order, Satan snarled. Pure animal-like hatred emanated from his degraded spiritual body.

The Spirit ignored his response and continued, "When you see that I and the warring angels have stepped back, then you and your demonic spirits may approach without fear of being destroyed."

"Why can't Jesus just face me any time I choose to approach?" Satan resentfully argued. "He is Yeshua the Creator, even in the body of this boy!"

"He is equally a boy who must be allowed time to grow up," the Holy Spirit countered. "In his flesh, he must be as able as Adam to recognize you and choose where to place his allegiance."

"Man is easy to subdue," Satan sneered. "Every man has chosen me over you at sometime in his life."

"This boy has never chosen you," the Spirit pointed out.

"Only because you never let me get close enough," Satan asserted.

“At this moment, I am giving you an opportunity,” the Spirit stated as both he and Michael withdrew.

Momentarily uncertain of his next move, Satan stood over Jesus, hating the boy’s purity and considering the various temptations other children of Abraham had easily succumbed to.

Once more, Jesus paused, this time to stretch a little and work the cramps out of his fingers and shoulders. His body was not built for the work of a scribe. For his age, his muscles were thick, accustomed to heavy manual labor. Every evening, he loaded his father’s cart with the building materials that would be needed the next morning. Three days each week, he spent the afternoon planing the sycamore beams his father used to construct buildings. That kind of work made him sweat and breathe deeply. He liked the way his body felt after a few hours of physical labor.

Satan could feel the burning gaze of the Holy Spirit on his back. A little smugly, he thought, I will show him how easy it is to bring this boy to choose my way of life. With a snap of his fingers, the evil cherub summoned two of his most devoted spirits, Resentment and Dishonesty. Then with a mocking bow, he stepped aside, giving them access to the boy.

“Your grandfather has no right to expect you to spend two afternoons each week fulfilling his commitments,” Resentment whispered.

Startled, Jesus looked up from the word he was copying. There was a thought like a voice in his head. It had never been there before. Instantly, he responded, speaking in his mind, “Honor your father and your mother and their parents also, for this command is generational. Each generation must honor the previous generations all the way back to Eternal God, the ultimate parent of all mankind.”

Rebuffed by scripture and the mature interpretation of God’s word, Resentment backed off, allowing Dishonesty to search for a way to make a home in the mind of this boy.

"This is such an insignificant part of the scripture you are toiling over," Dishonesty asserted.

Bewildered, Jesus stopped copying and considered the thoughts that were entering his mind.

"This passage is read in the synagogue only once every three years. You could leave out a line here and there. Tell your grandfather you are finished. Then you would be free to run over to the blacksmith shop to see if your friend Simon also has some free time," Dishonesty suggested.

"I cannot be a false witness before God, who gave these sacred words to Moses!" Jesus countered. He spoke aloud, even though he did not know to whom he spoke. "How can I misrepresent my God, my grandfather, and myself? It is unthinkable!" the boy proclaimed. "Where have these thoughts come from?"

"You have asked a good question," the Spirit of God responded as he swept both demonic spirits aside while rushing back to the boy's side. "Reread the lines you have just copied."

*"Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*⁴ The words seemed to jump from the Torah scroll as Jesus reread them. He thought, Sin is crouching like a lion ready to steal a lamb or like a bandit on the road waiting for an unsuspecting traveler! Jesus pondered the scripture and then asked, "How can that be?"

"I will show you," the Spirit responded as he placed in the mind of Jesus precisely selected memories from the mind of Yeshua the Creator. Immediately, Jesus could see a scene from the past.

Sitting on a flat boulder near the entrance to a cave, a young man in his midtwenties scowled into the afternoon sun. Away from the sun, a teenager walked toward him.

Jesus responded to this revelation as he instantly recognized the characters in the scene, "Cain is on the rock and his brother, Abel, is coming toward him!"

With focused attention, Jesus watched, peering into the supernaturally revealed past. He heard a sneering voice and knew Cain heard the voice also, “Here he comes, the favorite son.”

Curiously, Jesus studied the scene to find the source of the sneering voice.

“Look behind Cain, just inside the mouth of the cave,” the Holy Spirit directed.

“There is a tall shadowy figure lurking in the darkness!” Jesus exclaimed. “His body seems to glow, but not with heavenly light.”

“That is Satan, once an angel of light, now an enemy of God and all his creation,” the Spirit informed.

“I see other shadowy figures creeping around Cain. Some seem to be lying in wait for an opportunity to attack,” Jesus observed.

“Yes,” the Spirit responded. “When Satan, who used to be called Lucifer, was cast out of heaven, he took with him one-third of the spiritual beings who had once served God.”

“Demons!” Jesus stated as the reality of the term he had sometimes heard struck his young mind.

“That is the name men have given to these agents of Satan,” the Holy Spirit affirmed as the scene continued while Jesus studied it intently.

“Cain!” Abel called as he came within hailing distance. “Father wants us to go together to the altar and sacrifice.”

“Father wants us to go sacrifice,” a dark mocking voice echoed. “You know what he really wants,” the disembodied voice of evil continued. “He wants you to become like your disgustingly perfect brother, always eager to please, never willing to walk your own path in life.”

“Satan!” Once more, Jesus identified the voice of the enemy of God. Jesus watched as the scowl on Cain’s face deepened and his body became rigid. Unseen by Cain, the enemy of heaven stepped out of the cave. “His body is huge and powerful,” Jesus exclaimed, “and he has four faces: a lion, an eagle, an ox, and a man! They are violent faces!”

“Once, he was a cherub who supported the sapphire throne of the Eternal God. When he lived in a state of heavenly purity, those faces were powerful and majestic, glowing with the reflected glory of his Creator.”

Jesus nodded in agreement as the information the Spirit was giving him sparked his own heavenly memories. The story flowed without further prompting by the Spirit.



Moving closer, Satan crouched at the base of the boulder on which Cain sat. “If Abel was dead, your father, Adam, could no longer compare his two sons and express disappointment in you, his firstborn.”

“Dead, like an animal on that disgusting altar,” Cain muttered. “I would like to see Abel burned up and gone, never to torment me with his piousness again!”

“If Abel was no longer among the living,” Satan further suggested, “then there would be no reason for your parents to require a marriage between you and your younger sister. You would be free to choose the one you desire. With your wife, you could go to another part of the Earth, away from those tedious stories of an ancient garden home.”

As Abel approached, Satan slipped back into the shadows of the cave, placing some distance between himself and the boy whose spirit was so much like the spirit of those who lived in the kingdom of God.

“My brother?” Abel was now close enough to speak normally. “Do you have an offering?” A generous smile flashed across his smooth, beardless face.

Slumped over and glowering, Cain responded with a slight negative shake of his head. He hoped this response would end the efforts of his father and brother to make him participate in another of their frequent oblations to the invisible God somewhere in the heavens.

“I could find a lamb for you in my flock,” Abel eagerly pressed. “I have several unblemished year-old males.”

“A lamb! Another blood offering!” From a black crevice near the mouth of the cave, Satan flashed his taunting response into the mind of Adam’s eldest son. “When you give a blood offering, you confess your sins. You grovel and whine and beg for forgiveness and mercy. Why are you expected to go through such humiliation when you have done nothing that needs to be forgiven? Let your father and your brother grovel. You do not need to humble yourself. Hold your head high,” Satan suggested. “Give a thank offering instead of a sin offering.”



“That is not according to the law as it is written in the Third Book of Moses!” Jesus immediately protested. “A sin offering must be given first to reconcile man to God, then a thank offering would be appropriate.”

“Cain knows the protocol of offerings,” the Holy Spirit responded. “When Adam and Eve were put out of their garden home, the Creator himself explained the procedure and the purpose for each offering. Adam has faithfully relayed that information to his sons.”

“Then why?” Jesus began to ask.

The Spirit of God interrupted, “Keep watching.”

And once more, Jesus turned his attention to the supernatural recounting of the scriptural story.



Begrudgingly, Cain gestured toward a basket of produce. “The first harvest of the growing season is the Lord’s.”

“There is a year-old lamb in a pen near my flock. I have been saving it for the Lord. Together, we can place our hands on the head of that lamb. It can be the sin offering for both of us.” Abel responded. “Let’s go now, before the sun sets.”

Without a verbal response, Cain reluctantly rose to his feet and shouldered the basket of produce.

A big smile broke out on Abel’s young face. “I’ll get my lamb and meet you at the altar.” He turned and ran toward the sheep pens not far from the cave.



As Cain walked, one by one, demonic spirits fell into step beside him.

“Cain is not alone!” Jesus observed.

“Many of Satan’s spirits have attached themselves to him. There is Resentment.” The Holy Spirit drew a glowing circle around the same spirit who had just tempted the boy, Jesus. “He focuses on making people believe they are too good to serve. He tries to make people believe God and everyone else are misusing them. He tells people they should not submit to the authority of God or to the earthly authorities God has established.”

Jesus studied the scene the Spirit of God placed before him. “Resentment looks like a gray cloak hanging on Cain’s back. What is the name of the spirit attached to his hand?” Jesus asked. “It is dark and shaped like the blade of an ax.”

“Spirits can take on many shapes, depending on their current assignment,” the Holy Spirit responded. “You have identified Murder. Wherever you find Murder, you will also find Bitterness, Anger, and Hatred.”

Horrified, Jesus gasped. “Look at those ugly black birds. They are circling and pecking at Cain’s head! Can’t a son of Adam throw those spirits off?”

“He can only throw them off if he unites himself with the Eternal God, but as you can see, Cain has aligned himself against the Creator of his parents. In his heart, he has stepped out from under the protection of the authority of Father God, as well as the authority of his father, Adam.”

In his mind, Jesus could see the sun was close to slipping behind the treetops as the brothers approached the altar. He listened to their exchange of words.



“It is late, my brother,” Abel called as he arrived, a little out of breath from running. “We can sacrifice together. First, we will place our hands on the head of this lamb. You may slay it, and I will prepare it. Then after God receives it with fire from heaven, while it is still burning, you can arrange your first fruits around it,” he suggested.

“I have had to share too much with you already,” Cain angrily retorted. “I will not share this altar with you, and I do not want any part of your lamb!”

“But—” Abel tried to reason.

“Go build your own altar!” Cain shoved his younger brother hard. Abel fell to the ground, losing his grip on the lamb, which scampered away.

“Cain? Cain?”

Jesus recognized an eternal voice. “That is your voice,” he spoke to the Spirit.

“Yes, I was sent from the heavenly throne room to reason with Cain, but he refused to respond. See how I call and call but he never stops arranging the wood or placing his produce on the altar? Now look at Abel.”

“He is building his own place of worship, stacking nearby stones to make a small crude altar,” Jesus responded.

“Cain is finished. The first fruits of his harvest are on the altar, and he is pacing back and forth, waiting impatiently for me to come and consume his offering,” the Spirit of God continued as he moved the story along. “I will not do it!” he suddenly announced.

Jesus felt a warm blast of air as the Spirit spoke so emphatically. The faded brown and yellow leaves covering the ground under the oak tree close to his grandfather’s courtyard gate unexpectedly flew into the air. They swirled and then slowly settled back down onto the dusty ground. At the same time, Jesus felt the Spirit of God like warm tingles all over his skin.

The Holy Spirit spoke again, “Abel my child has struggled so hard to please me. He has given his best lamb. He has built his own altar. And even in the face of his brother’s abuse, he holds no animosity in his heart. That is why Satan hates the boy. Abel leaves no place for the Evil One or his spirits to attach themselves to his life.”

Suddenly, there was a bright flash, and fire from heaven struck Abel’s offering. In an instant, the animal, the wood, and the stones were consumed.

Awed by the powerful display, Jesus continued to be absorbed by the scenes that were being revealed to him. He saw Cain had stopped pacing. The eldest son of Adam looked at the smoldering ashes that had once been his brother’s altar. Nearby, Abel was kneeling, bent over with his face touching the ground.

“Where is the fire for my sacrifice?” Cain ranted as he shook his fist toward the sky.

Jesus heard another voice and knew immediately that it came directly from the throne room of the Eternal. “Why are you so angry? Why is your face covered with an ugly scowl?”

“That is the voice of Father God!” Jesus stated with complete certainty. Then he focused on the communication from heaven to earth.

“If you do what is right, won’t I accept your offering just as I accepted your brother’s offering?” God asked.

“I brought the first fruits of my harvest to your altar,” Cain retorted.

“But sin is stalking you, attaching itself to you,” God warned. “Only blood can atone for sin. You are not coming to me with a heart submitted to my authority. Your heart is being taken over by my enemy. You must say no to the thoughts he is putting in your mind before he becomes your master.”

“I will have no master,” Cain retorted, “especially that boy!” He pointed to his brother, who was still kneeling, caught up in his own private communication with God.

Jesus watched.

Refusing to speak further with the Ruler of the Universe, Cain took hold of Resentment with both hands and wrapped the demonic spirit securely around himself.

“He should throw Resentment off!” Jesus observed.

“He believes Resentment is his friend and comforter,” the Holy Spirit answered. “Man has been given free choice. He only has to give the tiniest indication that he wishes to be free from Satan’s influence, and all the hosts of heaven are at his disposal, but until then, he lives with his demons.”



“Jesus?”

The boy felt a hand on his shoulder and turned to see his grandfather standing behind him.

“Who were you speaking to?” Heli asked with a slightly puzzled, almost confused inflection in his shaky voice.

“The Spirit of God was speaking to me,” Jesus replied with perfect candor. “He was showing me this story.” Jesus pointed to the Hebrew text he had just copied.

“Yes,” Heli responded, “the Holy Spirit often seems to whisper in my mind as I copy from one scroll to another, but I never speak

aloud to it.” The old man shook his head and scratched at his scraggly beard. “You are a strange child, but a good child,” he muttered to himself as he returned to the bench by the wall of his home to complete his afternoon nap.



Brilliant sunlight bathed the white stone walls of the recently rebuilt city of Sepphoris. Joseph’s cousin Toma held his hand above his eyes to lessen the glare. Then with a wave of his arm, he signaled the caravan forward toward the man-made pool and watering trough where water from Roman-built aqueducts was available. Turning his head, Toma looked back along the line of heavily loaded camels, trying to spot Kheti, his trading partner and coowner of this caravan. When he saw his Egyptian partner walking briskly toward the front of the caravan, he called, “We can water the camels and donkeys here and then push on to Nazareth. There will be good grazing not far from the home of Joseph and Mary, but the water supply there is limited to the one spring that sustains the village.”

Kheti responded with a nod of his head. Then he relayed instructions to the drovers who managed the long strings of camels interspersed with donkeys.

Before Toma reached the next Roman mile marker, his partner caught up with him. “It will take some time to water the entire caravan,” Kheti stated. “Why don’t you and I go into the city and see what the prospects are for doing some business in their market?”

“Never!” Toma spat the word as he raised a work-hardened fist toward heaven. “I will never enter that heathen city!”

“Sepphoris is a Jewish city in the region of Galilee.” Kheti scratched his wiry black beard as he tried to understand his partner. “You want to go to Petra, capital of the Nabataean kingdom, to take advantage of the new trade routes that have been opened

by Herod Antipas, who recently married the daughter of King Aretas IV, but you will not enter this city in your own land?”

“Sepphoris is no longer a Jewish city,” Toma responded. “It is a Roman taunt flung in the faces of all Jews, a city built on the graves of my people for the friends of Herod Antipas!”

“Your anger is talking again. Most of the time, you are a brilliant merchant, but when bitterness and anger rise up in you, there is no profit to be made.” Kheti slowly shook his head from side to side. “What has it been? Ten or eleven years since the Romans marched into Bethlehem and killed your family? I thought time would eventually quench that flame of hatred.”

“The death of Sarah my wife, Leah my mother, and my beautiful little son, Avrahm—” Toma choked on the familiar knot in his throat before continuing. “It pains me every day. But here”—Toma pointed to the walled city—“thousands of my people were killed. Like my family, they were put to the sword in their own homes just at the whim of a tyrant. Don’t you know, forty years ago, when Herod the Great came to power, he slaughtered most of the population of this city? Then he built an arsenal and a palace for himself. Not long after the death of that wicked monarch, the famous Galilean, a self-proclaimed messiah, led a raid on the arsenal and the palace. As retribution for that act of rebellion, Varus, the Roman governor of Syria, razed the city again. He killed or enslaved every Jewish person inside these walls! That was just seven years ago. All who survived to be enslaved live every day with both the loss of their loved ones and the loss of their freedom!”

“Yes, I know about that tragedy. I also know the Galilean is still somewhere in these hills.” Kheti’s arm swept the rock-strewn landscape around Sepphoris. “Chances are very good it was a band from his camp that attacked our caravan just a few days ago.”

“What choice do our enemies give them?” Toma gestured angrily toward a small group of Roman soldiers lounging beside the aqueduct.

“You need to be less angry and more calculating,” Kheti advised. The dark-skinned Egyptian pointed to the Roman guards who were casually watching two slaves as they turned the giant waterwheel, continuously refilling the watering troughs. “You cannot physically harm these Roman soldiers without bringing more harm on yourself than you inflict on them, and you cannot get rid of every son of Herod.”

“Jerusalem got rid of Archelaus!” Toma interrupted.

“Yes,” Kheti agreed, “and Rome appointed a governor to oversee the region.”

The caravan came to a halt near the watering troughs. Toma and Kheti turned to the task of unstringing and unloading the camels and then started to help the drovers lead the animals to the water. Between tasks, Kheti continued making his point. “Toma, listen to me! Do you think you are hurting Herod because you will not sell trade goods to his friends? You hurt them more when you get a good price for our goods. When you make a hefty profit, you injure their purses.”

“It’s blood money!” Toma emphatically retorted. “If I do business with them, I feel like I am betraying my son, my wife, and my mother. I am also giving my silent approval to the slaughter and enslavement of my people.” As Toma talked, his gaze was drawn to the two strapping young men who were steadily turning the waterwheel. Instinctively, he knew they were Jewish. “In this city, my people are forced to do the work of animals! We should not have stopped to drink their water.” In disgust, he turned away.



At the mouth of the aqueduct, the young slave Barabbas steadily pushed and then pulled on the wooden pole that protruded from the wooden waterwheel. Leather buckets of water splashed one

after another into the watering trough at the side of the reservoir. His work-hardened muscles bulged, and a fine film of sweat soaked the ragged tunic covering his scarred and sun-browned back. This was mindless work, but his mind always worked on a way to escape. Several times over the past seven years, he had tried to run away, but each time, he had been recaptured.

With one eye on the ever-present but rarely watchful Roman guards, Barabbas gave the pole he was pushing another strong shake. It wiggled loosely in its wooden socket. Soon, it would break loose and become another tool of escape.



“Toma!” Kheti came up behind his friend and partner. “You have been an asset to my business. You encouraged me to expand, and then you became my partner. Look at our caravan! It is almost too big to manage! Remember when we were in Jerusalem? You refused to go with me to meet some wealthy Jews who were friends of the new Roman governor.”

“Yes,” Toma replied with a little irritation, “I stayed in the market and sold our goods.”

“One of the friends of the governor is a man who is looking to buy rare and expensive jewels, and even pearls if we can find them. I’m sure we can find gems in Petra.”

“What is your point?” Toma grunted as he hefted a basket containing bolts of fine Egyptian linen from its place on the side of a kneeling camel and carried it to a central area where all the goods were being guarded.

“There are wealthy Jews in Sepphoris, friends of Herod Antipas. I have a few names of men who also might want us to procure pearls and fine stones.”

“Go!” Toma waved his hands toward the city in an exasperated motion. “You go. I’ll stay with the caravan. You can catch up with us at Nazareth.”

“You’ll see!” Kheti called over his shoulder as he turned and began walking briskly toward the city gates. “You’ll see. This is a very good city for business.”

“Debir!” Toma turned his back on his partner and called the head drover to come over for instructions.

The Holy Spirit took advantage of the moments while Toma waited for the head drover to respond. “Toma?” the Spirit spoke into his thoughts. “Many have forgotten the innocent lives that were lost here and in Bethlehem, but I have not forgotten them. Their names are in my Book of Remembrance.”

Angrily, Toma snarled back at the voice in his head. “The God of the Jews has surely forgotten and dismissed the entire nation! Look at the crosses where Romans hang Jewish men and look at these slaves!” Toma could see Debir was approaching. His eyes strayed from his camels and piled-up goods to the slaves who steadily turned the waterwheel like beasts of burden.

The Holy Spirit continued, “Many of my people have forgotten, and others have invented convenient excuses, but this is a Year of Jubilee. That means it is my time for debts to be canceled. You are no longer indebted to Kheti. He brought you under his wing during your time of bereavement, but now that debt has been paid. It is also time for farmers to rest and slaves to be freed.”

“It is time for slaves to be freed,” Toma muttered.

“I’m not a slave,” Debir protested as he approached.

“No,” Toma hastily agreed, “you are a valuable servant. I was not thinking about you when I made the comment about slaves.” Toma continued his explanation, “I was remembering the ancient laws of my people regarding slaves. They are to be freed after seven years of service and at the beginning of each Year of Jubilee.”

With his eyes, Debir followed Toma’s line of vision to the waterwheel. Intuitively, he responded to Toma’s thoughts, “I am an Egyptian, and I do not know all your customs. In this land, I am very uncertain about what I should and should not do, but one thing I am certain of, those two men are slaves of the

Roman army.” He casually gestured toward the waterwheel as he continued, “The Roman army does not care about the laws of your people. Those men will be slaves until they die.”

After a thoughtful pause, Toma pulled his thoughts back to the business of the caravan. “Assign eight men to water the animals and four to guard the merchandise.”

Debir nodded an affirmative response.

“Work quickly,” Toma added. “I want to get on the road to Nazareth as soon as possible.”



With one strong twist of his massive arm, Barabbas freed the loosened pole from its wooden socket. It was a stout piece of wood, good for a club or a tool of diversion. Suddenly, Barabbas’s attention was drawn to a commotion near the watering troughs.

“Stop! Thief!” Toma shouted the alarm as, with cattle prod in hand, he broke into a run, chasing the man who had slipped close enough to the baskets of merchandise to grab a wineskin.

Nearby drovers joined the chase. The Roman soldiers suddenly became alert. All but one moved toward the scene, but not before Toma and his drovers had apprehended the man.

Toma saw the soldiers approaching. Debir had a firm hold on the captured thief, so taking a steadying breath, Toma took several steps away from the commotion. The soldiers were within a few paces of the man who lay bloody and pleading for mercy. Toma caught Debir’s eye and nodded for him to deal with the situation. Then Toma retreated further from the scene. He did not want to interact with Roman soldiers unless there were no other options.

At the waterwheel, Barabbas never broke his push-then-pull rhythm. He watched the drovers tackle the thief, throw him to the ground, and then begin to beat him unmercifully. He noticed that only one Roman soldier remained close to the waterwheel.

Ungodly Opportunity immediately whispered, “Jam the waterwheel. Get that one soldier within arm’s reach and then do to him what Herod’s soldiers did to your father.”

Without considering the consequences, Barabbas pulled the wooden push-pole from its socket and jammed it into the mechanisms of the wheel. Water sloshed prematurely from the leather buckets as the wheel suddenly became unturnable. The other slave sank gratefully to the ground. Only Barabbas remained on his feet. “The wheel is jammed!” he called to the soldier who was focused on the chaotic scene near the trading caravan.

Annoyed that he was left alone to deal with this problem, the soldier removed his helmet and tossed it to the ground before striding meaningfully toward the immovable wheel.

Deliberately, Barabbas stood in front of the wheel, using his body to block the soldier’s view of the jammed mechanism.

“Get out of my way!” With the butt of his whip, the soldier landed a heavy blow on the bare shoulder of the slave.

Barabbas didn’t flinch. He had been beaten so many times in the past seven years, that it no longer mattered. Without emotion, he took a calculated step to the side, just enough to let the soldier get close and bend over for a better look.

“It’s jammed! You did-”

The soldier never finished his accusation. With a quick snapping motion, Barabbas broke the neck of his military overseer, letting the man’s body fall heavily into the mouth of the watering trough.

Toma had seen it all. Now he watched as the young slave looked quickly around, searching for an escape route. He glanced back at the thief, bloody, unable to walk, and supported between two Roman soldiers. Debir seemed to be ending his statements. Toma knew the soldiers were about to turn back toward the city, back toward the motionless waterwheel. Immediately, he hurried from his aloof vantage point and injected himself into Debir’s

conversation with the soldiers. “I am the owner of this caravan. What are you going to do with this man?” he demanded.

The explanations started again. Toma asked question after question for as long as he dared. When the soldiers finally turned toward the city, Toma could see that the waterwheel was still jammed and both slaves had disappeared.



Rocks and scrub brush, the land outside the walls of Sepphoris did not offer many hiding places for runaway slaves. Barabbas knew somehow he had to get away from the city and into the hills where there were caves. Furtively, he exchanged glances with the other runaway slave. Both seemed to instinctively know they would have a better chance alone. Without a verbal exchange, they separated. Barabbas ran toward the watering trough, straight to an ox-drawn wagon full of iron scraps and covered with a tarp. Quickly, he slipped under the tarp and pressed his body flat against the jagged chunks of scrap metal, hoping that the form of his body would not be outlined under the heavy fabric. Sharp points of broken implements gouged his skin, but he ignored the cutting pain. Protecting only his eyes by covering them with his hands, the rest of his body surrendered to innumerable superficial piercing wounds.

Unmeasured time passed. Through the tarp, the autumn sun raised his body temperature. Sweat mingled with blood. He listened. Outside the wagon sudden, alarmed shouts eclipsed the ordinary sounds of watering and hitching animals. The dead soldier had been found! Running feet, more shouts. Barabbas could tell the soldiers were fanning out and calling for assistance as they searched for both runaway slaves. The running, the shouted threats, the curses of the soldiers—it seemed to go on for an eternity. Stoically, he refused to respond to his physical pain and the prodding impulses of fear that urged him to throw off the tarp and flee. Barabbas focused on controlling his breathing so

his body did not move the heavy fabric covering the wagon and its load. Time passed painfully, suffocatingly. To the seventeen-year-old boy, it seemed he lived a lifetime of misery before he felt the wagon move.