

CHAPTER TWELVE

Resurrection, Millennium and Beyond

Yeshua selected seventy more men to go before him in pairs; they would tell about things they had seen and heard. Again he repeated, “Truly, the harvest is great, but there are few laborers. Pray that the lord of the harvest will send forth more laborers. I am sending you, as lambs, among wolves.”

While selecting these men, one of his followers approached Yeshua, “Sir, I am more than willing to answer your calling, but I must decline at present. My aged father will eventually pass away. I must wait until after I attend his funeral.”

“Let those who are spiritually blind attend to such things...they can bury their blind. When you accept the call to be my disciple of the gospel that must become your first priority.”

Another disciple began, “I fully intend to follow you in all things. However, my family has visiting relatives who would be greatly insulted if I made such severe changes now. I will hasten to you after they depart.”

“Once you make a commitment to me you are to let nothing interrupt or hinder your calling. If you put your hand to the spiritual plough, and turn back, letting physical things interfere, you are not fit for the kingdom of God.”

A richly dressed, slightly rotund scribe came to Yeshua, “Master, if you will accept me as one of your disciples, I will follow you wherever you go.”

“Do you indeed know what you are saying? You are used to the comforts of a warm house, sleeping in a soft bed, partaking of regular meals. Even animals of the wild have holes and nests for homes. I have no home to sleep in at night.” The pampered scribe lowered his head and refrained from commitment.

Matthew whispered to Judas, “What does he mean by that? Does he not have a large estate back in Capernaum? We have visited there with him and his family many times.”

“True, we have,” Judas answered. “Did you not know, some time ago he told his brothers they were to consider the business theirs? Then more recently he entered into the legalities. He gave his share of everything to his mother. Since they rejected him he does not now consider that to be his home; he seldom visits. And can you blame him? They sided with the Pharisees against him. Besides, what need will there be for such a humble dwelling once we have taken over the government in Jerusalem?”

In time, this second group Jashua had sent out as preaching disciples returned elated, just as had the others. "Lord, even the demons are submissive to our commands when we rebuke them in your name," they reported.

"Yes...I know. I have given you these powers. There are many spiritual scorpions and serpents that you have been given power to tread upon; they have no power to harm you. There is a much more important reason to rejoice than this," he reminded them, "that is that your names are written in the book of life, in heaven. You are especially blessed that you are witnessing these things. Many prophets and kings desired to understand, to see the things you are involved in. They were not permitted to do so. As for the powers of darkness, I saw Satan fall from heaven like a streak of lightning."

Cold, rainy days of winter fell upon the land. Yeshua spent most of his spare time on his large, rented boat, teaching and answering the disciples' questions. Time drew closer for the observance of the Jewish national holiday, Feast of Dedication. Once again, many patriotic people would travel from distant cities and countries to celebrate the eight day festival Judas Maccabaeus had instituted over one hundred years previously. It would be a time of joy in commemoration of the re-consecration of the Jerusalem Temple, which had been desecrated by pagan ceremonies. This "Feast of Lights" was marked by the lighting of many extra lamps and candles, joyous meals and fellowship. Along with special ceremonies, traditional readings would be offered daily at the Temple. Yeshua and his men prepared to attend.

On their way to Jerusalem they worked their way slowly from Capernanum, visiting cities along the way. Yeshua thoughtfully sent word to each city's official leaders the appointed time he planned to visit. Two of his disciples entered a Samaritan village with his message. But the leading men spoke harshly, "We have nothing to do with this self-proclaimed prophet," they responded. "Our village was visited by this rabble-rouser once before...unrest and contentions reigned throughout our community for months after he left. We prefer to retain our own religious order. We have no need for this imposter's new doctrines."

An older man, with long, black, religious garb, squinted his narrow eyes. "We are not ignorant of this man's claim, nor of his popularity. We know also that he is a Jew who teaches against our traditional worship. He has never joined with us in worship on our holy mountain; he always goes to Jerusalem. We cannot be party to his erroneous examples. We refuse to extend our hospitality to one who is so openly opposed to our beliefs."

The disappointed messengers returned; they gave Yeshua the news. When James and John heard what had happened they became extremely angry. "They have no idea the trouble they are in for!" James thundered. "The Master has power they have never seen! How dare those swine embarrass us in such a way. We don't have to have their permission; they have no choice. Don't they realize they will bow down and worship at our feet when the new kingdom is established?"

Young John pranced about impatiently. "Master, you just say the word and we will go into that wretched village and command fire to come down from heaven and take care of them. Is that not what Elias did?" he said.

Yeshua shook his head in disbelief. "You two haven't the slightest idea what you are talking about," he reprimanded. "I did not come to this world to destroy men; I came to save them. Would you join my enemy, Satan, in his efforts? Destruction of mankind is his goal, not mine."

"Master, it is in the middle of winter, traveling can be very uncomfortable now. Their rejection will cause us an extra day of travel. You must know what an inconvenience that will be...not only to us but to all the people following us."

"Can you not know...this small insult is very trivial compared to what is soon to happen? The village will not refuse the others, only me. Satan goes before me into Jerusalem, preparing spirits of hatred. We will honor their wishes. Other towns along the way will welcome us."

On several occasions Yeshua was permitted to speak at local synagogues. After speaking on a Sabbath, Yeshua and the disciples were on their way to their lodging. On the street outside the synagogue, a blind man sat, extending a beggar's cup. Occasionally someone would drop him a small coin. Yeshua paused, then walked toward the lone figure. The disciples wondered at the man's sad dilemma. "Teacher, why is this man blind?" John asked. "Is it because he, or his parents, committed a terrible sin?"

Yeshua nodded. "No, John. This man is not blind because of sin he has committed, nor because of his parent's sin. He is blind for a very special reason. Because of his blindness, the work of God will be demonstrated. Just as this man has lived in darkness since birth, the world, likewise, lives in spiritual darkness. I have been sent as a light unto the world. As long as the light shines, we must do the work of God. Soon, darkness will overtake the world, then it will be impossible to do God's work."

Having said this, Yeshua knelt down, spit into a small mound of fine, soft dirt and began stirring the saliva with a short stick. After a few minutes he spit on the dirt a second time, and continued stirring more slowly and deliberately. As people came out of the synagogue the numbers swelled; they stopped and watched, wondering what was happening. After several minutes Yeshua scooped up the pasty mixture and approached the blind man.

The man, having been blind from birth, had developed a keen sense of sound and smell. He was aware of conversation and numbers of humans surrounding him. He recognized some of the voices. He guessed some unfamiliar voices belonged to the group of men who followed a man some called a prophet. Earlier in the day, he had heard the prophet reading in the synagogue. Hoping he was soon to experience something wonderful, he became very excited. He rose cautiously to his feet, stretched his unsteady hands toward the sound of voices. He stood waiting expectantly. A hand touched his arm, and then he felt gentle fingers pressing something warm and moist against his sightless eyes. Sounds of rustling cloth and shuffling feet came from the crowd, an occasional snicker came from muffled lips. "He's putting mud on his eyes," someone whispered. "Why do you think he is doing that?"

"Go," the blind man heard a voice say, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash your eyes."

Someone grasped the man's arm, volunteering to lead him to the pool. "Come, Enan, I will take you there," a familiar voice offered. "It is getting late. There will probably be a long wait to get through the crowd at the pool." He allowed his friend, Azaer, to lead him through the crowd.

"This seems a waste of time," Enan thought. "However, I am willing to do whatever the man tells me. I have nothing to lose, everything to gain. I am told the man, Yeshua, has healed many people of their afflictions. He must be a true prophet."

Azaer positioned Enan near the water. Enan trembled from expectation as he cupped his hands and brought the cool water to his face. Nothing happened. Again he lowered his head and splashed more water on his face. His eyes began to tingle, he could tell no other difference. He splashed more vigorously, blinking and stretching his eye lids. He turned his head from side to side, then waited.

Gradually a haze of light opened up around him. His heart beat wildly. He held his breath, afraid if he breathed the blackness would return. Slowly he moved to a sitting position. Then he leaned back onto his stiffened arms, his face lifted upward. The light grew brighter and brighter forcing him to blink rapidly. Tall shadows surrounded him, some turned into moving figures. For the first time in his life he saw things that he had only been able to feel, hear, and smell. His eyes beheld an exploding world of wonders: colors, forms, the sky, the sun, humans bustling about. He saw trees and lofty buildings reaching toward the spaciousness above him. For the first time he looked on the kind face of his friend Azaer. He tried to speak, but found his voice caught in his throat. He grasped his friend's arm and began motioning toward his eyes, trying desperately to explain what was happening. "I can...I can...I can see," he spluttered.

Azaer watched his friend's antics in disbelief. Enan was standing tall, telling any who cared to listen. "I can see...I can see," he kept repeating. "I can see colors! I see brightness. I can see darkness, and coolness, and wetness. I feel warmth...where is the warmth?" His breath came out in sudden gasps of utter astonishment. What...what...what is that?" He beheld a frightful sight. His eyes pained to close; quickly he hid then behind trembling hands. He caught for support as his unbalanced body staggered slightly. Then he cautiously opened his eyes and gave them time to focus again. Slowly he directed them to glimpse the outline of a distant mountain bathed in the brilliance of the descending sun. The dazzling light was decorated by thin, broken layers of milky white clouds. Blinding streaks of orange and red extended for miles, gradually fading into misty hues.

"That's the sun going down behind the mountain," his friend explained. "It is especially beautiful today. It will soon be lost from our sight." As he caught Enan's enthusiasm his perception changed. He began to view the spectacular scene with newly-aroused, deep-felt awe and appreciation. He thought, "This must be the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen."

Enan proclaimed, "This is an exquisite painting created by The Master Artist of all creation. He has hung it in the heavens, displayed for the pleasure of all generations. How utterly wonderful is the Eternal, that he shares with us such splendor." Azaer was finally convinced Enan could really see. He openly rejoiced with him. People watched them curiously as they embraced each other, laughing and crying.

Enan felt an insatiable desire to share this wonderful experience with his parents and family. Through the years he had learned to be fairly independent, traveling short distances, carefully feeling his way to almost anywhere he chose to go. Never had he enjoyed anything as much as he enjoyed the walk back to his home from the pool. He marveled at the change in his stride, the abandonment with which he could lose himself. He had never felt so strong and full of life. He could run, leap, jump over obstacles, and savor the beauty of trees, flowers, and plants along the way. He longed to run through the fields of grain, to climb the towering mountains, to view the heavenly bodies. Now he wanted most to see the faces of his parents. He wondered what their expression would be when he shared with them this wonderful news.

It had been an incredible week for Enan. He had excitedly explored his new world of sight in utter fascination, eager to see all. His family and friends were still reeling from the miracle. When Enan was seen in public, acquaintances questioned if he was the same person they had known during his blindness. He was quick to tell them, "Yes, I am the same...but so different! I was blind all of my life, but now I can see clearly, just as others do."

"Why is it that all of a sudden you can see?" they questioned.

"The man they call Yeshua happened to see me. He made some mud from the soil mixed with his saliva. He put it on both my eyes. Then he told me to go to the pool, Siloam, and wash. I immediately obeyed. Now I can see!" he exclaimed. When questioned concerning Yeshua's whereabouts, he answered, "I don't know. Although, I do hope to see him again. I want to thank him for changing my life from darkness to light. He has given me a whole new perspective on life. What a wonderful deed he performed for me. Surely he is a man from God."

"Come; let us share this wonderful news with our priests. They will be overjoyed," some persuaded. When he presented himself to the leaders he was met with cool disdain.

"You insist on claiming you were given your sight on the Sabbath?" they queried. "Your healer actually profaned the Sabbath for this reason? Does he not know it is against our law to engage in work on the Sabbath?" they demanded hotly. "Yet, you have the audacity to imply this lawbreaker is a holy man? He is not from God; he has no regard for keeping the Sabbath!"

Those who had brought Enan began to question, "How can a sinner do such miracles?" They turned to Enan. "What do you have to say about this man? It was your eyes he healed."

"Well, of course, I am convinced the man is a prophet," Enan answered confidently. "How could I believe otherwise?"

The stubborn, religious leaders refused to admit Enan had ever been blind.

Enan was dismissed. Later the Pharisees had Enan, along with his parents, brought before them again. "Have you a son, Enan, who was born to you blind?" they questioned the parents. "Is this sighted man standing before us the same man? If so, explain how he now sees perfectly."

The aged couple glanced toward their son. "Well...we are positive of two things...he definitely is our son, and he was born blind. We have led him around for over thirty years. We have gotten to know him quite well. How he came to see, or who is responsible for such an act, we will let him explain. He is old enough to speak for himself. Have you not questioned him once already?" his father insisted emphatically.

The priests turned to Enan. "If it is true that you have been given your sight, give God the praise. This man, Yeshua, is a known sinner. Tell us again, what did he do to you?"

Enan shrugged his shoulders. "Why must you keep questioning me? I've already told you...how much time must I waste repeating the same thing over and over again? Perhaps you should become his disciples, too," he chided. "Do you feel there has been sabotage or treason committed against you, just because I have had my sight restored? If so, why do you not go to the man and present your complaint to him directly?"

"You were never blind," a red-faced Pharisee screamed at Enan. "What do you hope to gain from this hoax? No doubt you are this fellow's disciple. Or perhaps you have been paid by this trouble-maker, in hopes such a testimonial will build him a greater following. We have no desire to associate with such an actor. We are disciples of Mosheh. We know God spoke to Mosheh. If God was speaking through this person we would know about that, too. We know absolutely nothing about this fellow. We don't even know where he comes from!"

Enan knew he was asking for trouble, but he could not resist answering. "Isn't that incredible? Here is a man who has the power to open blinded eyes, and you don't even know him? I know for sure that I have always been blind, and that now I can see perfectly. I am beginning to wonder about your sight. You passed by me on your way to and fro for a number of years, yet you don't even recognize me! You never so much as tried to get to know me, let alone heal me. I know that no one has ever heard of a blind person ever being healed by any of you. Though I was blind, I am not ignorant. God does not listen to sinners prayers in such matters, but only those who worship God and do his will. Therefore, he who healed me must be sent from God, otherwise how could he have done this? On the other hand, if you are more righteous than he, why have you never showed equal compassion?"

Livid with jealous rage, they shrieked at Enan, "You were conceived in sin at birth; your blindness is proof of that. How dare you lecture us about righteousness! Throw this imbecile out!" they commanded.

Yeshua heard how they had treated Enan, and went to him to reassure his faith. After identifying himself to Enan, he was pleased by Enan's worshipful reaction. Boldly, before the Pharisees, Yeshua spoke to him about spiritual darkness. "This is one of my missions, that I may open the blinded eyes and give them light. Many who profess to see are blinded."

When the Pharisees heard Yeshua's words they retaliated. "I suppose you are trying to imply that we are blind, too? We understand what you are saying."

“If you were blind—did not understand—you would not be guilty of sin. Since you admit you do understand, you are most guilty. Your sin remains; you shall be judged accordingly.”

A curious crowd had gathered about as he continued to speak, “Let me tell you this: anyone who does not enter by the door into the sheepfold is a thief. The shepherd of the sheep will enter through the door, not climb up some other way. When he calls, his sheep knows his voice; they will follow him.” When he realized that no one understood what he was talking about he explained, “I am telling you that I am the door of the sheep. Everyone who goes in and out through me shall be saved and find pasture.

Thieves come to steal, kill, and to destroy. I have come to give more abundant life. I am not a hireling who will abandon his sheep when things get difficult. No...I will protect my sheep to the very death. I will shepherd one flock. That is why the father loves me because I willingly lay down my life for my sheep. I have power to lay down my life, and power to take it again.”

Some accused him of being demon possessed, but others asked, “How can he have a devil and heal the blind? These cannot be the words, or the works, of a devil.”

Near Jerusalem, Yeshua left most of his traveling companions behind, taking only Peter, James, and John. They skirted around Jerusalem and entered into the nearby city of Bethany. It had been several months since Yeshua had seen his close friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

In their comfortable, stone home, the two sisters, Mary and Martha, were actively preparing for the coming festival. The day was overcast and dreary. The women had started their chores early, working quietly, with an occasional comment. Gradually Martha noticed a change in Mary’s facial expression. For no apparent reason she began humming a cheerful tune, a broad smile flickering across her comely face.

“Martha,” Mary begin, “I can’t explain it, but suddenly I feel like something marvelous is about to happen. You know...I have been thinking of Yeshua a lot lately. I can’t think of anything more wonderful than for him to visit. You know how disappointed I was when he didn’t visit us in the fall, how hard I cried. I had looked forward to seeing him all summer. I was only able to get a few glimpses of him during the Feast of Tabernacles. He was always surrounded by mobs of people. Do you think it likely he will attend the Feast of Lights? If he does, perhaps he will also visit us. I do so pray that he will.” As an afterthought she added, “He gets so overpowered with the people. Well, at the least, there won’t be as many people attending the winter festival as there was at the fall festival.”

Martha swept up the last particles of dust from a corner. “Yes, we all were disappointed. However, we are not without news of his activities. You know he has been terribly busy. I don’t know how the man can endure such hardship, traveling about, sleeping outdoors, hardly taking time to eat, never knowing when he might be stoned for speaking the truth. And I keep thinking about all the things he has explained to us, about him having to die.”

Mary shivered, “I don’t even want to think about that today, Martha. I just want to believe that he is on his way to Jerusalem that I will get to visit with him before he vanishes again. I have been praying

very earnestly for that.” She sat down and clasped her arms to her breast. Her voice filled with emotion as she confided, “Oh, Martha, if you only knew how much I love Yeshua...”

“Of course...we all love him,” Martha agreed impatiently. “He has always been an important part of our lives...he and his entire family. We have all spent many happy times together. He is as dear to us as a brother.”

“That really isn’t what I mean, exactly,” Mary said. “I have a very special feeling for him, as if he is the only man that I ever want in my life. And, of course, you know why we can never be married. I will never be able to consider marriage to anyone else. No other man will ever come close to being like Yeshua. When I think about him, I feel so very, very blessed just knowing him, being close to him—even though he may be in far away places—I still feel his presence, his gentleness, his love. His words are so alive, so vivid in my mind. Every day I relive every moment that we have ever had together. These memories bring me a mixture of intense joy... Of course, there is also some sadness, and pain. But I push the pain away and dwell on the joy. I can’t stand to think about the things he has revealed to us concerning his death...but I know it is drawing closer. I know, no matter how devastating it will be, I shall want to be with him when it happens. I want to share his pain, let him know that I will always be there for him.”

Embarrassed, Martha tried to change the subject. “You always were overly emotional, my dear little sister. The day is far spent and we still have so much to do before attending the festivities. Most of the work is for us to handle. We can hardly depend on Lazarus for much help. He has me very worried. Have you noticed how thin he has become lately? He seldom eats. You know food was never far from our brother’s mind, but lately he eats less than a sparrow. He insists that he is ‘healthy as a ram in green pastures’...and he gets very upset if I try to talk to him about it. I can tell he has much less energy than is normal for a man his age. He just will not admit to himself, or anyone else, that there is something wrong. Stubbornness seems to be man’s strongest trait, eh?” She noticed Mary was off in her own private world, so she dropped the subject, devoting her attention to the work at hand.”

Humming softly to herself, Martha thought, “That girl...she is always talking about Yeshua. He probably never thinks about her. Lazarus may be right...I know he was only jesting, but just the same, he may have two fruitless women to contend with the rest of his life. I have no burning desire to get married again, especially in these troubled times. Neither one of us is getting any younger. From the way Mary talks...she will never accept a suitable husband, either. She has her sights set too high. Lazarus has been such a comfort to us...I know he feels obligated to look after us, especially since my beloved husband passed away. He works much too hard...he would be much happier, and healthier, too, if he took a wife...someone to give him that special tenderness that every man craves. He never complains, but I think he is quite lonely at times.”

Martha’s thoughts were interrupted by a loud, excited squeal from the other room. Mary came running in, “Martha,” she exclaimed, “It’s him. He is in the outer court, talking with Lazarus. Listen...you can hear their voices.” She ran outside to greet the man of her dreams.

Martha welcomed Yeshua and his friends as they followed Lazarus and Mary into the great room. "What a wonderful surprise!" Martha greeted them. Would you believe Mary and I were just talking about you earlier?"

"That is easy enough to believe," Lazarus laughed. "Mary is always talking about you, Yeshua. Sometimes, if we are swift enough, and insist, she will allow Martha and me to share in the conversation. She is not the only one who longs for your visits, though; we have all missed seeing you. Your visit is much overdue, my dear friend."

The four men settled into the large reception room. Martha hastened to attend to their comforts and serve them refreshments. Mary positioned herself on a large cushion, at the foot of Yeshua, quietly basking in raw adoration as she hungrily drank in every gesture, every word of her beloved. "I knew he was near," she thought. "He must have known how I yearned to see him again. He felt my deep, yearning love drawing him...I have no doubt of that."

Martha continued bustling around, refilling the emptied platters of fruit and cups of wine as the men exchanged small talk, filling each other in on things of interest. "These men have traveled many miles today," she reasoned. "They must be starved. If I can get Mary to help, we can prepare a nice meal. I have been so preoccupied with getting organized for tomorrow's festivities I have almost nothing to serve that does not require several hours. Let me think...perhaps a chicken...but that would not be appropriate for our guest, no...a leg of lamb would be better. I will send Jodab to purchase one at the meat market." She went off in search of their house servant.

When she returned she found Mary sitting at the feet of Yeshua, intently listening as the men talked. Martha motioned her younger sister to the kitchen where she had started an elaborate meal. "Mary, I must have your help," she insisted. "We have five hungry men to feed. I have sent Jodab for meat...I have fresh baked bread and dried fruit pastries all ready to set out...but the rest must yet be prepared. Will you get out the best dinner service and wine goblets?"

Mary nodded agreement and quickly began the task. While arranging the table, she strained to keep listening to the words coming from the other room. She became so engrossed in Yeshua's conversation she was soon drawn to his feet again; nothing else was important.

"The people are lost...they are burdened with heavy loads of sorrow, suffering, desperation, and confusion," Yeshua was explaining. "The Father has sent me to bring them peace and joy;

I bring good news. Because of sins, mankind became separated from The Father, from the beginning of Adam's disobedience to this present generation. I have come to bear their sins that they may be reconciled to The Father. If they would only believe my words...believe that he sent me. I find myself repeating these truths over and over, but they hold on to their traditions, refusing to accept me. Your teachers and leaders have corrupted the truth. They have taken away the key of knowledge.

"I must warn you against their hypocritical influence. Soon they will take me and do to me whatever the enemy has planted in their hearts...but when you see this, do not be afraid of them. They can do no more than kill the body of flesh. Fear to anger the Eternal, for he has full power to destroy both body

and spirit, and to cast it into gehenna. There they will experience total destruction, of both physical and spiritual life. The Father loves those who hear my words and believe them. Those who accept the truth and obey will be accepted and embraced by The Father. They shall live eternally in the glorious kingdom of God.”

Lazarus passed a platter of sweetened almonds and dried fruit to the men and returned to his couch. “Will all men, rich and poor, be given the same positions in the kingdom?” he asked. “And how shall the wealth of the kingdom be distributed among the poor?”

Yeshua noted the sudden interest the question aroused in his three disciples. “The possessions one has in this life is more likely to be a hindrance. This story will illustrate the point: There was a certain rich man; all of his life he lived in luxury.” In answering the question he added a spark of interest by using Lazarus’ name. “There was also a cancerous beggar named Lazarus. His only comfort was the soothing effect of stray dogs licking his painful sores. He lay at the gate of the rich man, begging for scraps of left-over food.

“Eventually the beggar died; he was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom...accepted by The Father. The rich man also died, and was buried. At the second resurrection, the rich man was given back to physical life. From his grave, he was tormented by an alarming vision. He saw Lazarus enjoying all the comforts of the children of God. He realized, because of his selfish, past sins, and his refusal to repent, he was destined to be destroyed in the lake of fire. Suddenly his mouth became painfully dry; he gasped for air. In mental anguish, terrified, he cried out for help. Because he had been dead for a thousand years, he did not realize that Lazarus, as Abraham, had been resurrected to immortality. They had come alive in the first resurrection, and had lived and ruled with the King of kings for a thousand years, previously. Confused, and sobbing, he begged, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me; send Lazarus with a few drops of water to moisten my mouth, for I am tormented—knowing I am to be destroyed—in this flame.’

Then Abraham replied, ‘Remember Son...in your life time you lived in luxury, unconcerned and uncaring for the suffering of anyone. Lazarus lived in poverty and pain. Now the situation is reversed. Not only that, but because of the great gulf of time, it is impossible for either Lazarus or you to make the transition.’ Finally the rich man realized that Lazarus had indeed been resurrected. Suddenly he had a horrible thought. If his brothers continued their greedy, uncaring life style they, too, were sure to reap this same disastrous future. Accepting the futility of his own situation, he pleaded, ‘Then...can you send Lazarus to my father’s house and warn my five brothers, that they will not receive the same punishment?’

Abraham replied, ‘They have the writings of Mosheh and the prophets...if they will hear them they will escape.’ Desperate, the rich man continued begging, ‘Oh, no, father Abraham; they will not listen to mere writings of ancient prophets. But, if you send someone that they have known, who has risen from the dead, they will listen.’ Abraham replied, ‘If they refuse to listen to Mosheh and the prophets, not even one resurrected from the dead can convince them to change.’

Having told the story Yeshua paused, waiting for their reaction.

“Then God makes no distinction between rich and poor...it is the lives, the attitude that determines their entry into the kingdom?” John asked.

“That is true. Had the rich man shared his abundance and loved mercy more than wealth, he would have been shown mercy.”

Mary had listened silently, touched by the sadness of the story, she felt compelled to ask, “My Lord, is this a true story...where are the beggar and the rich man now?”

“Yes, Mary, this is a true story. It has happened in the past, and is now taking place, and will continue in many forms and places throughout this age. This story pictures many Lazars and many rich men. The son of man can project his mind into the future and back into the past, back to the days of Abraham, and beyond. I see many rich, greedy, powerful men, using material gain to control and oppress, at the expense of the suffering masses. It is not sinful to have wealth, but it is impossible for one to enter into the kingdom if he loves riches more than me. As for the two men; they are both dead, awaiting their resurrection. As the prophet said, ‘For in the grave there is no memory’.”

“Is it impossible, then, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?” Peter asked.

“Indeed, it is very difficult. Remember the young ruler who came to me and asked, ‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ When I reminded him that he must keep the commandments, he said, ‘I have kept them from my youth up.’ He was surprised when I told him he lacked one thing, that he must sell all his possessions and give to the poor. Then I would accept him as my disciple.

“It is not necessary that all wealthy people do this. Their attitude concerning their wealth, and how they use it does matter. The young ruler is a very selfish man...he uses his wealth, as do most rich men, for his own pleasures. He is unmindful of the needs and sufferings of others. He has never learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive. He has been led to believe, by the teachers of religion, that to keep the letter of the law is all that God demands. This he has been careful to do...but the purpose of the commandments is to define how to love. Without love and compassion toward all, none can see God. Can a rich man enter the kingdom of God? It would be impossible for man...however; it is possible for God to convert and save any who will repent.”

“Then the teachings of the Pharisees are correct; there is to be a resurrection from the dead,” Peter stated. “When will this take place; who will be included in it? Will everyone?”

Yeshua smiled. “I am pleased you perceived another point from the story, Peter. Indeed there will be a resurrection; in fact, more than just one. Those who are called to be my first fruits, those who respond, obey, and bear much fruit, will be quickened in the first—the best—resurrection. Because of their obedience, their sacrifices, and their loyalty to me, I will give them the gift of eternal life. They will share my inheritance. Their salvation will be assured when they are changed from flesh into spirit. The rest of the dead will not come alive until after one thousand years later. Unlike those in the first resurrection, they will not be resurrected as spirit beings. They will be resurrected flesh and blood. That

is why the first resurrection is the best resurrection. Only those who are counted worthy will be given eternal life, living in the spirit world with me.

“The second resurrection has been described by the prophet Ezekiel, where the whole house of Israel is brought back to life, and will be taught the right way to live. During their lifetime, they will have to choose which way they will live...The Father’s way, or Satan’s way. Then they will be shown the errors of their ways, and finally they will repent and accept me as their King. After this, they will finally begin to fill the role expected of them from the beginning; they will lead the rest of the nations in righteousness. They will be my people and I will be their Lord and Master. Throughout the ages there will be other resurrections of Gentiles. For an example to future ages, judgment will be passed and recorded; wickedness will be destroyed by fire never to live again. This is the second death. All humans must die a physical death, shedding their bodies of flesh. Only the righteous escape the second death.” Yeshua paused, waiting for another comment.

“I grasp another point from the story,” James offered. “Through the rich man’s experience you make clear that we must use the scriptures from the ancient writers to guide us into God’s way of righteousness or we, like the rich man, will awake to eternal destruction by fire. The rich man remained dead right through the first and any other resurrection. Why was he not in the second resurrection?” James puzzled.

“You are to be commended, James,” Yeshua nodded. “This point is of grave importance; you must search the scriptures, for they testify of me, and instruct in the ways of love. As for the rich man; he was not in the first resurrection for he had known the way to righteousness and had willfully rejected it. He, as many others, rejected the writings of Mosheh and the prophets. However, he was not ignorant of their teachings. The second resurrection is solely for the whole house of Israel who have been blinded to the truth. Their eyes have been closed, that they may not see spiritual truth. After their resurrection, they will be given that choice. Then they shall be judged. For how could a righteous judge condemn one to death who had never received enlightenment?”

Martha seldom asked questions, but all through the discussion she wondered why God had allowed the righteous beggar to experience such suffering. “Master,” she ventured. “If Lazarus was allowed to be in the better resurrection, why then was he subjected to such pain? Why didn’t God rescue him out of his misery?” she asked.

“Many righteous men must suffer in this short, physical life in preparation for important positions in the kingdom. Some must endure hardship and suffering to cleanse them of prideful attitudes. Others suffer because of the sins of their parents, or as a result of their own past sins, or from unwise choices. Penalties are seldom removed even when changes are finally made. My laws have been set in motion to protect mankind. There are laws of cause and effect that govern every thought and action of mankind. Unless The Father determines in his own wisdom to miraculously remove the effect, the penalty will surely be exacted.

“Some righteous few will deliberately choose to suffer rather than accept Satan’s enticements. There are many lessons to be learned, many rewards to be gained through suffering. Above all, we learn

obedience. We obtain righteous character from suffering, especially if we suffer for doing right. The hotter the fire the purer the gold.”

From a sudden surge of compassion, an eruption of tender love overwhelmed Yeshua. He spread his arms wide, his hands outstretched in open invitation to those before him. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I have learned to accept The Father’s will. In spite of any suffering, I will give you hope, peace, and tranquility of mind. I shall never leave you nor forsake you,” he promised.

Mary sat on the floor, leaning against Yeshua’s recliner. Afraid he was going to start talking about things concerning his own impending suffering; she wiped away an unexpected tear and waited. “Tell us more about the future, my Lord,” she requested. “I never tire of hearing the beauty of it. What changes will take place concerning the earth, the people, and the animals in the new kingdom?”

Pleased at Mary’s question, he answered, “You have a love for my favorite subject, dear one. I wish you could project your minds into the future, to see and comprehend. You cannot now understand the descriptive words that would properly describe the glory of it all. But, alas, so many tragic things will mankind bring upon himself before the new world will emerge in all of its magnificent changes. The prophet wrote of me when he said, ‘Rejoice, shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.’ I have come to take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem; I will break the battle bow. To a rebellious people I proclaim peace.

“When all nations are gathered against Jerusalem I will make her an immovable rock. Any who go against the rock will be mortally bruised. I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness. I will give Jerusalem strength to be victorious over every foe. I shall save the dwellings of Judah, and restore the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem’s inhabitants. I will destroy the armies that attack my people. Upon the house of David and the people of Jerusalem I shall pour out a spirit of grace and a repentant attitude.

“They will look on the one they have rejected and mourn and grieve bitterly as though for the loss of a firstborn son. A fountain will open to the house of David and Jerusalem, to cleanse them from their impurities. I will banish the names of their foreign gods from their memories, and remove every false doctrine. If anyone still dares to preach contrary to my words, his father and mother will condemn him to death; they will slay him.

“Those who have taken it upon themselves to proclaim their own thoughts and practices will become deeply ashamed of their presumptuousness. When confronted, they will deny their involvement, insisting they have always been farmers.” Yeshua’s face was somber and his eyes mirrored a painful, far-away look. “The sword comes soon, and from a dear friend. When their shepherd is stricken, my flock will be scattered. In the end of this age Israel shall be struck down; two thirds shall be destroyed. The remaining third will be taken into captivity and suffer much at the hands of their captors. They shall go through the fires of affliction, but those who turn to me shall emerge as fine silver, and as pure gold. When they call to me in their desperation I will rescue them from their enemies.

"I hear a cry as of a woman giving birth to her firstborn. Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands and crying, 'Alas! I am destitute; my life is at the hands of murderers.' I see strong men holding their stomachs, faces deathly pale. I see Jacob's descendants in the furnace of tribulation. And again...I hear repentant voices humbly crying out, 'We abhor our sins, we cry out in our shame. We plead for mercy and forgiveness.'

"After the great resurrection of the whole house of Israel, those still living, scattered in Gentile nations, will be given their freedom. As a mother hen gathers her chicks under her protective wings, I will gather them from all directions of the earth. I will restore David's throne, and replant my chosen nation on their own land. They shall rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, never to leave again. To those nations who keep my laws, the weather shall be perfect in its seasons. I will give the whole earth a new and pure language; all nations will speak as one. Time will erase memories of false ways. Each generation will be educated and trained in the way of righteousness."

Yeshua was pleased by their anticipation, their zeal. "They are but babes; they find it so difficult to grasp the most simple things," he thought. "If I could only complete the picture, and explain beyond the ages, their hearts would overflow with unspeakable joy. Without the Holy Spirit to open their understanding it is impossible for them to comprehend clearly. Even with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit they will still need to dig deeply into the scriptures to grasp spiritual truths. They will always need my help and my guidance."

John interrupted Yeshua's thoughts. "How long must we wait before the new kingdom is brought under your authority? Will you call down an army from heaven to bring it about?" he asked.

"When the nations gather to fight against the holy city, Jerusalem, I will fight against those nations in my fury. I will muster my army on the Mount of Olives and divide the mountain, making a great valley for my people to flee by. Then they will see me, and all my holy ones, as I appear in great power.

"From Jerusalem the surviving generations of the warring nations will be taught the way of righteousness. All nations will be required to celebrate my holy days. Every year they will go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The punishment of those nations that refuse will be to suffer the plagues of ancient Egypt. Their land will turn to dust for want of rain. For those who obey...their crops will produce so plentiful the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman. The planter will be overtaken by the treaders. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from the hills.

"And again the prophet speaks of me, 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. There will no longer be a need for preachers to introduce me among my people; they shall all know me.'" Yeshua's gentle eyes glowed with expectation.

"Yes, my beloved friends, the future holds much pain, many sorrows. But everything works together for good to those who love me and keep my commandments. You are not to grieve over the things you have no power to control. Only see that you live righteously, and you surely will share in the coming glory of the kingdom of God."

Mary had lost all sense of time, completely entranced in the words of her beloved friend. The voice of her impatient sister brought her thoughts back to the present. "Master, is it right for Mary to sit here with you while I am loaded down with all the cares of preparation?" she asked. "She knows I have need of her help." Martha gave an exasperated sigh.

"Martha, Martha. You are a kind and caring woman. You demonstrate this by your desire to serve. We sincerely appreciate your care and concern. Mary has chosen a wonderful, important part, too. She has a deep love for the words of life, and knowledge of the kingdom; I cannot deprive her of this. Come..." he coaxed, "Sit with us and partake of the spiritual food. One cannot live by bread alone but by every word of God."

Yeshua reached for Martha's hand and gave it a comforting squeeze. "It is a little thing that we shall all assist you with the serving. Mary has questions that interests and concerns all mankind." Content that Martha was comforted, he resumed speaking. "In the end time, after the first resurrection, after I have been given power over all nations, the good news is exciting beyond words. The scattered tribes of Israel will no longer be separated by time and lost identity. Israel and Judah will be reunited as one nation.

"After the first resurrection, the wicked ruler of this earth will be imprisoned for a thousand years. He will be unable, as he will have done for thousands of years, to deceive and destroy the nations. With Satan's influence gone, the few people left on earth will begin to learn and know a peaceful world. Families will be knit together, loving and sharing; divorce will not so much as be mentioned. The land shall be healed of its sickness. It shall blossom in beauty as it was in the Garden of Eden. The air, the food, the waters, all shall be cleansed. Diseases and sickness shall be a thing of the past. The Father's Holy Spirit will be given freely. Peace shall prevail throughout the earth. The nature of wild animals shall be tamed; they will no longer devour one another. Children of all ages shall play in safety, in fields and in woods."

The snack platters and wine cups had long since been emptied. Peter, James, and John cast hungry glances toward the dining area. Yeshua rose from his seat and said to his disciples, "If we are to please our hostess we must show her our appreciation for all the food she has been preparing...Come, let us see what we can do to assist." Everyone followed him to the kitchen. Soon several hot, tasty dishes of steaming food was being enjoyed by all. The conversation continued, centering around the subject of the kingdom. Yeshua's own words gave him added courage for the immediate time of sorrow ahead. He felt intense love urging him on toward his astounding goal. Their individual reactions to the things he had told them gave him immense pleasure.

Now that they were all well fed, they quietly relaxed. Yeshua looked with tenderness at his young cousin, John, sitting beside him. Thoughts of John's future flooded his mind. John was the youngest of his students, always attentive and eager to please Yeshua. "When the time comes, you, my devoted, loving friend, will record what you learn from me. I will reveal many mysteries for you to share with my church. You will address each consecutive time period of my flock, from the beginning of their calling till they fulfill the work entrusted to them. Your visions of heavenly things will both excite and comfort them; the world will not understand. You will speak in mysterious symbols. Only the righteous, who

have the Holy Spirit, will begin to comprehend. Their minds, being limited by the flesh, will see many things, but not yet clearly.

“When I appear before you in my power, it will be as Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. You will see me standing, throughout its history, in the midst of my church. I will lead it with my presence. And you will see me as the slain Lamb, as The Lion of the tribe of Judah, The Root of David, as The Word of God, and as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

“When the symbols of the four great horses appear before you, you will learn their meaning. You will identify the powerful white horse as Satan’s counterfeit religions, swiftly speeding across the earth. Its rider intent on conquering the minds of all who will yield. Then the fiery, red horse of war will follow. Its great hoofs thunder from nation to nation, its fierce rider leading them into war. The third horse, black and dreadful, follows, its rider proclaiming world famine. Lastly, the sickly, pale horse will usher in deadly diseases. Its rider is death; millions will go to their graves.

“You will depict the judgment of the nations, the day of my wrath on the wicked. You will warn a dying world of the terrible result of their wicked ways; they will not heed. You shall record the number of Israelites sealed with The Father’s Holy Spirit, and the millions of Gentiles who endured great tribulation for the sake of truth.

“You will write about Gentile armies occupying the city of Jerusalem for three and one half years. Satan’s world will rejoice over the murder of my two righteous prophets that witness against them. To their enemy’s frightful amazement, I will bring them back to life. You will give a brief summation, an overview of my church and its persecution by its enemies, and how its enemies will overcome them and kill many. My church will be scattered, like crystals of salt, across the earth, unrecognized by the world.

“You will show the great evil power of another evil empire. You will tell of Satan’s religions struggling for control of a deceived world. You will record the fall of these great ruling powers and their ultimate doom. You will announce my engagement of marriage as the faithful saints make themselves ready for the wedding. They shall become the glorious Bride of The Lamb, which is given to me by The Father. This is the wonderful beginning of the planned, extended family of Elohim. The earthly, physical family of man, was originally instituted to picture the spiritual unity of the Elohim. But mankind refused to embrace this wonderful mystery.

“Only a third of the once great Israelite nations will survive. The other two-thirds will be defeated. Those who barely survive will be scattered and held captive throughout the world. Great powers will emerge. Led by Satan, control of the world becomes an obsession of these powerful, greedy rulers. Satan’s plan is to destroy all of mankind, especially my elect. He divides the nations of the earth and brings them together to compete for world power. To prevent the world from total destruction, mankind will force me to intervene. Accompanied with my faithful, celestial army, I will appear in all my power, unleashing my fury. Satan, in his burning hatred and jealousy, will redirect the power of his nations away from each other and against my army.

“No longer will I tolerate the evil cruelties nations impose upon one another. They have had thousands of years of human history to learn the bitter results of their greedy, perverted, inhuman

atrocities. They refuse to listen to my pleading. As in the days of Noe, they insist on following after their own ways of misery. They insist on deciding for themselves what is right and what is wrong. They are past changing...their nature has become as wild beast, devouring as they go.

“I will totally defeat their armies, and throw their leaders into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Then I will call a great army of scavenger birds to come down from their habitants and gorge themselves on the flesh of the slain, cleansing the earth of their rotting flesh.

“I will bring the descendants of Jacob back from captivity, having compassion on them. Their children will forget the shame and unfaithfulness their parents showed to me. See, I will bring them from the north land and gather them from all ends of the earth. Among them will be blind, lame, pregnant mothers, and women in labor. A great multitude will come weeping and praying. They will come shouting for joy in the bounty of their land. They will take up musical instruments and dance in sheer exhilaration. They will plant vineyards and orchards and enjoy the fruit. Farmers will prosper abundantly, raising animals, grain, and oil. Then I will show myself holy through them in the sight of the nations. They will know me as the Lord their God. My people will finally be satisfied with my goodness.

“I will show you, John, the imprisonment of my enemy, Satan. His ambition has been to destroy the plan from the very beginning. Though he can never be destroyed, he is confined for a thousand years, unable to influence or deceive the world.

“Then will appear an unusual period of time. The heavens will be disturbed, daylight will appear at evening, the darkness will hold back its curtain. There will be no heat of the sun, no cold nor frost. The water of life will flow out from Jerusalem, to the east and to the west, in summer and winter. I hear my people singing, ‘The Lord, the Lord, He is my strength and my song; He is my salvation and joy. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion.’

“Yes, my little children,” his thoughts continued racing through time. “If only you could see the wonderful picture. John will tell of his visions of these future times, of the first resurrection of the saints, and the establishment of my kingdom upon planet earth. For a thousand years, with my resurrected, spiritual wife, we will rule the world. Under my authority David, a resurrected spirit being, will be king over Israel. With him my twelve apostles will each rule over one tribe of Israel. Many faithful, resurrected, spirit beings shall have other important, powerful offices of authority. They will rule in love and righteous judgment, leading multiplying Gentile nations in the ways of God. Then the knowledge of the Lord will flow like water, gushing out into everlasting life.

“Yes, John,” he thought, “You will write about these things, and even beyond the thousand year reign of God, into the millennium. Toward the end of the thousand years there will be great excitement and expectation. The new world society of the sons of God will have been preparing, eagerly anticipating the next awesome step in the plan. The great event will be the second resurrection of all those who have died. They are those who, from the days of Adam on, were disqualified to be in the first resurrection. These will be souls that have lived through the thousands of years of Satan’s rule. They are those who, during their life had been deceived by their destructive spiritual leader, Satan, and his ministers.

“Then I shall set my hand to save all who will listen to my voice, for they shall all be educated to my way of life. These millions of resurrected human beings will be given free choice, to accept and live the way of righteousness, or to listen to the voice of their former leader, Satan. For Satan, for a short time, will be released to test them, as he had tested mine elect. When they are placed, as separate nations, in their former lands, many will accept Satan’s deceptive leadership. They will follow him in his last, desperate effort to destroy the plan. Their vast armies will cover the earth as they march against my saints and the holy city.

“Death shall be their end, for fire will come down from heaven and devour them. Satan’s punishment shall be to spend eternity mentally tormented. He will be cast into the same lake of fire and brimstone as were the great, wicked leaders, the beast and false prophet, that envelopes the earth. Thereafter he will be confined to the bottomless pit of outer darkness. After the great white throne judgment, all of mankind will have been judged. Some will be sentenced to eternal death, others given eternal life as spiritual God beings. Then death and the grave will exist no more. Those who are worthy to live shall be given eternal life as sons of Elohim. All others shall be destroyed in the lake of fire. The former earth and its environment, with its sea will disintegrate. All remaining life will be composed of spirit...members of the one family Elohim.

“I will show you, John, in vision, the fabulously beautiful New Jerusalem as it comes down from heaven, the new home for the family of God. From it The Father and The Lamb, with The Bride, shall begin to populate. They will plant The Elohim Family throughout the universe.”

End of ch.12