

CHAPTER EIGHT

No Turning Back

Yeshua arrived in the city of Bethabara just before sundown.

He made some inquiries and found the small building where Johanan was lodging. He was led down a narrow hall by the householder to a small, dimly lit room. "The man usually gets in about this time, Sir. Feel free to abide here until he arrives." He lit two oil-filled lamps and left; the room was crudely furnished but well kept.

Yeshua had not long to wait. A tall man, dressed in camel skin clothing entered the room. His voice was strong, and compelling. "I am Johanan, the one you seek, Sir." Johanan said.

Instantly, the two men were drawn by a divine force to embrace. Their bodies trembled as they struggled to regain their composure. "I don't know your name...but I feel a kindred to you as I have never felt toward any other man. Surely, we are bond brothers," Johanan spoke in wonder.

"We are indeed brothers. Our heavenly Father has many sons that will rule with us in his kingdom. I am Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Maria. And you are Johanan, the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth. While you were still young, they spoke to you about my mother and me, and about our unusual births. Before our births, our mothers were not only cousins, they were kindred spirits. Our parents were honored in very special ways, and shared special visits from Eloah's messenger. You, my brother, and I, were conceived and born to begin a new age in the history of mankind. He that has talked to you and sent you from the desert land, has, likewise, sent me. The time has come for us to jointly fulfill his will." Johanan stood speechless, stunned by the incredible words of this young man so near his own age.

"You have heard much from your parents about their life and their experiences. You and I were but small children when they fled from their home to protect you from the enemies' sword. They fled to the wilderness, and my parents went down into Egypt. We have lived among different people, in different circumstances, yet, we have been prepared for our mission by the Eternal One. He sent you to warn this age; to repent and accept the Messiah, His son."

Johanan knelt before Yeshua in an attitude of worship. "You speak the truth, my Master. Long have I dreamed of this moment. Please, accept my humble hospitality. I have much to learn from you; many questions I wish to be answered..."

The following day found Yeshua standing among a large crowd of attentive people. Before the crowd stood Johanan, a large, powerful man, speaking in a strong confident voice. "I am a voice from the wilderness, crying out. Repent of your sins; make yourselves ready for the coming Messiah!"

Yeshua stood patiently watching as Johanan and his disciples assisted the many who were being baptized in the depth of the river's murky water. As a dripping man joined others recently baptized, Yeshua stepped from among the jostling crowd and walked deliberately down into the water.

Surprised, Johanan turned toward the curious crowd; he stretched his long arms toward the approaching figure. "Behold the Lamb of The Mighty Eloah!" his strong voice trembled with reverence.

"Johanan...I have come to be baptized. I am the Christ—the son of man." Yeshua stated matter-of-fact.

Johanan froze in utter surprise. He thought, "I am merely a carnal man, begotten by a man. How then can I baptize the very son of Eloah? Should he not baptize me?" Johanan hesitated; his voice heavy with emotion. "Not so my Master. It is I who has need to be baptized by you. It is not fitting you should humble yourself by coming to one as lowly as I...you, The Son of Eloah."

"It is necessary that I be baptized. It is our responsibility to fulfill the example of righteousness." The words were spoken with authority, and finality.

Johanan knew he had not been given a choice. He proceeded to perform the baptismal rite. As Yeshua came up out of the water, he looked toward the sky and began to speak with The Father. Suddenly, the sky was filled with terrible, rumbling sounds. The startled crowd gasped with fright as they witnessed blazing flashes of light cascade about Yeshua. From the illuminated sky appeared a large, unidentifiable figure, shining whiter than snow, its brightness blinding the stunned onlookers. As the figure descended closer to earth, it grew smaller and smaller, until it appeared as a dove. Light shown about Yeshua as the figure hung inches above his head.

From beyond the lights came a sound of many waters—a loud, rumbling voice proudly proclaimed, "This is my beloved son. I am well pleased with you, my son."

Gradually the heavenly scene faded leaving the excited crowd confounded. "Did you see that?" someone asked.

"Did you hear what the voice said? Is this man the Deliverer?" asked another.

As one body, the awed crowd converged upon Johanan and Yeshua.

But Yeshua slipped away undetected and mingled among the crowd. Johanan, still shaken by the experience, instructed his disciples to disperse the people and send them away. "We have been visited by the power of The Almighty. Daylight draws to an end. We will talk more of this tomorrow."

The following day, Johanan continued preaching and baptizing. Sensing his presence, Johanan looked up and saw Yeshua approaching. Addressing the crowd, he proclaimed, "Look, here comes the Lamb of Eloah. He will take away the sin of the world. This is the one I have been telling you about when I said, 'After me comes a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me'. I did not know him before. However, my purpose in proclaiming righteousness and baptizing with water is to introduce him to Israel. I was told in advance by the one who sent me on this mission, 'When you see the Holy Spirit

descending and sitting upon him, you will know he is the one who will baptize with the holy spirit.’ This I saw yesterday. I am convinced. I will testify...he is The Son of Eloah.”

Before Yeshua returned home he retired to the solitude of the desert for an extended forty day fast. “Now that I have entered into the ministry and will soon become subjected to many terrors and evil powers, I must first receive the full endowment and power of the holy spirit. There is no more effective way than to humbly commune with The Father than through fasting. I desperately need the power of The Father to oppose the attack of my cunning adversary, Satan.”

When Yeshua had fasted many days, neither drinking nor eating, overcome with physical weakness, he sensed Satan’s dreadful presence. Through mental communication, Satan chided, “Where is your power now, son of Eloah? You are as weak as a new-born calf...you can barely stand. It was foolish of you not to stock any food. If you don’t find food pretty soon, you may even die here...all by yourself. Wild animals roam about at night, ready to devour your flesh. If you are—as you claim—the son of Eloah, prove it by using your powers to turn these stones into food. Otherwise, you are going to die of starvation. Look...and smell...”

Through smells of juicy, plump fruit and the aroma of freshly baked bread, dripping with hot, melted butter Satan hoped to entice Yeshua to yield to his suggestions. But Yeshua knew what had to be done. Nothing would detour his mind from fulfilling the purpose he came to earth to accomplish. “Preserving physical life is of no value if in so doing one loses his spiritual, eternal life. True life does not depend merely on the consumption of material food. One must also digest spiritual food. To have eternal life, it is written, one must live by every word that comes from Elohim.”

Yeshua reeled with dizziness as Satan’s hypnotic suggestions took him into the city of Jerusalem. His weakened body trembled as intense fear gripped his mind. “Look...you are atop the highest pinnacle of the temple...about to fall. That’s nothing for the son of Eloah to be concerned about...is it? It is written, ‘He shall give his angels charge over you...they will catch you in their hands and return you to safety.’ If you are the son of Eloah you would jump...that would prove, to both of us, who you are. You are going to slip on a stone and fall, anyway. You may as well jump and fulfill the scripture. That would be proof, indeed. Why should you, the son of Eloah, be afraid?”

Yeshua, drawing upon the inward strength of the Holy Spirit willed himself to courage, freeing himself from the trance. “It is also written, ‘You shall not tempt the Eternal. He will not be manipulated.”

Then, as though from the highest mountain, Satan flashed before Yeshua’s mind, in a moment, a vision of all the kingdoms of the world. “Don’t you know...you can have all of these, and all the power...all the glory that goes with controlling them? These have all been given me to do with as I please. I can give them to whomever I choose. All these can be yours if you will submit and worship me. Why must you lose everything? So, though you are the son of Eloah, what benefit is that to you now? You are handicapped by flesh and blood. Should you, in a moment of weakness, slip and fail to keep the laws perfectly, you will never return to your former state. You will have failed in your mission. All the suffering and humiliation you are about to suffer will have accomplished absolutely nothing. You will be

sentenced to eternal death, along with the rest of these wretched beings of decaying flesh. How are you to know, in advance, whether you will be able to perform your mission perfectly? Why take the chance of losing everything, when you can have all of this?"

Yeshua had no desire, nor was he capable of entertaining such an idea. He was repulsed with the idea of accepting anything Satan had to offer. With confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit within him, Yeshua spoke in unquestionable authority, "Get away from me, Satan. It is written, 'You shall worship the Eternal and him only shall you serve!'"

Satan left Yeshua for a brief time, only to return day after day, chiding and taunting him, hoping to wear down his spiritual resistance. With each day's fasting, Yeshua proved to Satan the emptiness of his evil efforts. "Does Satan not remember that it was I that created all these things he is offering me? Could I not have kept them for myself when I created them? Has he forgotten, it was I who gave him power over the kingdoms of this world, to rule, until I fulfill the plan? As he has blinded the nations, so, vanity, likewise, has clouded his own understanding. If he was of a sane and logical mind, he would know my commission was destined from the beginning, before the creation of the earth, to fulfill the will of The Father, with whom there is no shadow of turning. He would know I have greater goals than to obtain power or material possessions while in this physical body.

"My kingdom shall not rule during this age. My goal is to destroy Satan's power of death, to establish a government of life, of peace, and of happiness. My goal is to rule all nations of the earth as King of kings, and Lord of lords, with love. When my government is established, all nations will know the truth. None shall ask, 'What is truth?' for it will be before them day and night."

When Yeshua successfully completed a fast of forty days, he knew he would soon embark on the most difficult, painful, and humiliating experiences ever inflicted on any being, but he was spiritually ready to fulfill the events of the prophecies. Then the greater Elohim sent angels down to feed and strengthen him.

The following day, Yeshua again visited Johanan at his baptismal services. Immediately, Johanan began to address the crowd concerning him, "Again we are honored by the presence of the Lamb of Eloah!"

Andrew, and some of his friends were among the crowd. They had accepted Johanan's teachings, becoming his disciples. Andrew became tremendously excited. He turned to a friend, "I must find my brother, Simon, and tell him that Yeshua is Messiah. How utterly wonderful!" He quickly worked his way through the crowd. When he found Simon he was too excited to speak plainly.

"Simon...you have got to come. I am overcome with astonishment. Johanan, the baptizer, has just announced to the people that Yeshua is the Anointed One, the Lamb of Eloah! Can you believe it? .He was right there all along, right before our eyes!"

"Have you gone mad?" Simon asked. "You have let religion twist your thinking...where is all of this taking place?"

“Let us hurry...perhaps he is still at the gathering. Come, I will show you.”

They arrived just in time to see Yeshua leaving. They ran to catch up with him. Yeshua slowed his pace and turned to his pursers, “Where are you fellows going? What’s on your mind...?”

“Where are you staying, Master?”

He answered, “Follow me and I will show you.” He turned to Simon. “Simon, son of Jonas, from this time you shall be called Peter, a small stone.” They eagerly followed him to his rented accommodations.

Simon was full of questions. “Throughout our lives our families have visited frequently...as youths, we have played, fished, ate, and worked together. Yet, we never knew of these things. Is it true, as Andrew, has said, ‘You are the Christ?’”

“He has spoken true...I am the one Johanan has proclaimed to the crowds. I, the son of man, am sent by The Father to bring peace and prosperity, to establish the government of Eloah, to become Israel’s king. Remember when I read from the prophets about a child born of a virgin maid...one who would come bringing the good news of the coming kingdom from heaven? My Father in heaven sent Johanan before me—he is fulfilling his mission, conditioning the people for my message.

“Why do you think Herod tried to murder me when I was yet a baby? Was he not afraid I would grow up and wrest his kingdom away? In all his cruelty and cunning, he feared me. Have you never wondered why there are almost no Jewish men alive who are my exact age; most were slaughtered, except a very few. In times past we have discussed the prophecy concerning Rachel’s grief...the slaughter of her sons, and I related the events of my birth to you. I, indeed, did tell you many things about myself. My words never penetrated your comprehension. Now, open your ears and listen, your eyes and see. You will witness many wonderful works The Father will perform through the power of His holy spirit. There is yet one thing I must do before I show my authority to the rulers of darkness. I will meet my mother and brothers at the home of Jermia and Judith, in Cana, for the wedding of Jessie and Marta.”

“We, too, have been invited to the wedding. We plan to leave for home tomorrow.” Andrew gave his brother a knowing smile. “The mention of weddings, no doubt, makes Simon anxious to get back to his own wife.”

Simon, still in a state of shock, ignored the remark. “If it please you, my Lord, we will travel together. Consider my home in Bethsaida as your home. My wife and her mother are also excited about attending the wedding. Regardless, a wedding is nothing compared to the thrill of meeting our long-awaited Deliverer. I pray you will bestow this honor upon my household?”

“I will be pleased to accept your generous hospitality, Peter. After the wedding I plan to bring my mother and the family back to Capernaum to scout the city for suitable property. If they deem the city

suitable for their needs, we shall purchase a home there and relocate. In my previous trip to Capernaum I saw many potential possibilities for the family business, and for a home base.

Simon's thoughts, caught between acceptance and apprehension, was whirring with anticipation, savoring the exciting possibilities of what this incredible revelation could mean. He thought of the many military activities the city of Capernaum hosted. "Yeshua is serious...he really intends to set up a government. I want to get in on this. It's about time he uses some of that wisdom and know-how he has been suppressing all these years. Yeshua has the respect and favor of people all over Judea. Our people are anxiously awaiting a wise man with strong leadership ability. All he needs is to convince the people he is determined to set up a better government and the support of a few good men to organize an army. If anyone can free our people from the oppression of the Romans, he can."

Reading their thoughts, Yeshua knew his cousins were very anxious to ask him about when he would organize his army to take over the rule of Israel. "I don't dare tell them what they want to know. They have much to learn and much to suffer before they are ready to bear the truth," he thought.

The following day, after having rested and freshening himself, Yeshua and his followers proceeded into Galilee. Ever so often small groups of travelers could be seen along the way, resting and refreshing their animals in the shade of bushes and trees distanced away from the dusty roads. Recognizing a familiar friend among a small group watering their animals in a nearby stream, Yeshua paused, motioned to a young man in the short distance, "Is that not our friend Philip from Bethsaida whom I have desired to see? Come, let us join him."

After hearty, informal greetings, Yeshua spoke in a serious and authoritative tone, "Philip, my Father has instructed me to extend to you the invitation to be a part of His great plan. I am the son of Eloah, the Redeemer of Israel, sent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of Eloah. Follow me."

As Philip gazed in amazement upon the face of his friend, his mind recalled past experiences. "This is not the first time I have witnessed this righteous man demonstrate unusual powers. How truly blessed am I to be given this wonderful opportunity." He bowed his head in reverence and proclaimed, "My Lord and my King. I am your servant to command." Elated, he instantly wanted to share this exhilarating news with a close friend. "Let me, I pray, share my joy with my dear friend, Nathanael. Together, we have heard Johanan, the baptizer, speak of you. Please excuse me...he is a short distance ahead of us. If I hurry I can overtake him."

Philip rushed ahead in search of his friend. When he had gone a short distance he found a small group of people resting. A familiar figure sat apart from the others, meditating under the shade of a large fig tree. "Come, my friend...see whom I have found! Mosheh wrote about him in the law and the prophets—Yeshua of Nazareth—the son of Joseph. He is now, at this moment, on his way to Cana, traveling in this direction, just a short distance from us."

Nathanael's forehead wrinkled in doubt, "Is it possible that anything good can come out of Nazareth?"

Philip motioned vigorously, "Come, see for yourself."

As the two men approached Yeshua, he extended his arms in a warm welcome. "Greetings Nathanael. At last I am privileged to meet an Israelite of exemplary character, devoid of deceit."

"You know me, Sir?" the man stammered in surprise.

Yeshua smiled. "I observed you meditating beneath your fig tree, long before Philip reached you."

"Rabbi, you truly are The Son of Eloah...the king of Israel."

"You believe me to be The Son of Eloah simply because I tell you that I saw you beneath the fig tree? You shall see greater demonstrations of power than this. In the future you shall see heaven open and the angels of Eloah ascending and descending upon the son of man."

After the wedding ceremony, the activities gave way to the traditional week-long, merry-making. Yeshua and his newly-acquired disciples joined the many guests in customary, festive eating, drinking, singing and dancing. Three days into the festivities, Yeshua went to the wine canister to fill his cup and discovered the container nearly empty. Thinking to assist in refilling the serving receptacles, he entered the servants' kitchen to find Maria in a quandary. Maria's face was drawn with concern as she gave him a helpless, pleading look. "Oh, Yeshua...I'm so glad you are here. I was afraid this would happen...they have run out of wine and the festivities are not nearly over." She wrung her hands. "What are we to do?"

Yeshua had no doubts what his mother was hinting at as he tuned in to her thoughts, "Yeshua has worked many miracles...some much more powerful than these. Why won't he help us? He said he was soon to embark on his mission. Soon, all the world will know he is empowered with special abilities. It would be no great feat for him to solve this problem for his new brother-in-law and our dear friends."

Not waiting for his distraught mother to speak, Yeshua answered, "What am I going to do with you, Lady? A wedding is not the place at which I prefer to expose Eloah's miraculous powers. It is not yet time for me to introduce myself to the world." His heart melted as he felt her disappointment turn to frustrated pain.

"I cannot bear her disappointment. And it is within my power to solve a very embarrassing situation. Increasing the supply of quality wine will add to the pleasure of my many friends and relatives...It will be interesting to see how they react, for soon many will see greater demonstrations of the power of Eloah," he reasoned. He gave Maria a comforting smile and nodded his consent to her request.

Maria's saddened face brightened with relief. She motioned to two servants. "My son has need of your services. Whatever he instructs you to do, do it."

Yeshua led the servants out to the court of the home and motioned toward six twenty-five-gallon stone pots, used for water storage. "Empty these and carry them back into the serving quarters and fill them with fresh water," he calmly instructed.

When the pots were filled to the top he handed a serving ladle to one of the servants. "You may serve the guests now. First take a sample to the activities director."

The director thanked the servant as he received a fresh glass of crimson nectar. At first taste his eyes widened with pleasant surprise. He called to Jessie, "You have chosen a different method of serving wine, my good fellow. I must commend you...usually the bridegroom serves his best wine first. Then when everyone has had enough to dull their taste, he serves his cheaper vintage. You have done just the opposite. I have never tasted better wine at any of the many weddings I have attended!"

The wine was passed among the guests. The word was spread that Marta's brother, Yeshua, and his followers, had supplied the quality wine. Most had little interest as to how; it was enough that the delicious wine was available to refill their glasses. Maria and the servants knew the truth, but they were not talking.

The deed would leak out soon enough.

After the wedding celebrations had ended, Yeshua and his family went home with Maria's sister, his aunt Salome, in Capernaum. While there Yeshua took his mother and brothers to view a large, spacious, stone house he had selected for them to decide on.

Looking about the premises, Yeshua explained, "The house is ideal. It has ample room for guests and a larger than average great room with convenient shelving for a library room...the kitchen hosts several small storage rooms and two larger rooms that serve as servants' quarters. James and Jose will appreciate the adjoining building suitable for storage for building materials and perhaps a work shop."

Turning to his younger brothers, he flashed them a teasing smile. "The place has been neglected for some time, and needs quite a bit of repair. With our expert work force, here, I'm sure we can have the place in palace condition in no time."

After touring the house, stables, and grounds, Maria expressed her approval. "I dare say, I do not relish the thought of moving...yet, I must admit, I do love this house. There is plenty of space in the back for a small garden. And I love the stately, old fig tree near the side entrance. I remember attending the town's beautiful synagogue with your aunt Salome last year. It will be wonderful to attend such a grand synagogue with my sister and her family."

"Since I usually have the honor of taking care of the animals, I am more impressed with the roomy stables than I am with a synagogue," Jude responded.

James was impressed, too. "I especially like the location of Capernaum, and the accessibility to good roads. The city is becoming quite prosperous with many commercial, as well as private, businesses all up and down the lake area. Should the carpentry business have slow periods, there is plenty of extra work available year round. I'm sure you fellows will enjoy the fishing and other pleasurable activities the lake makes available."

Yeshua was pleased with their response. "We shall bind the contracts before we leave. I will help move all our personal belongings before the Feast of Trumpets. As for myself...I shall remain in Nazareth for a while, until our present property has been properly disposed of."

The following month, Yeshua, his family, and those whom he had called to be his students, and their families, arrived in Jerusalem for the holy day season. The first part of the feast was sheer joy as they feasted and visited with familiar friends and relatives. Finally, the long-awaited dream of Maria became reality. She cried with joyous relief when she and Johanan the Baptist were brought together. Holding onto Johanan's hand she reminisced, "I could not have asked for a greater blessing at this Passover. If only your blessed mother and Father, and Yoseph, could be here to share this wonderful reunion. Together, you and Yeshua will take your rightful places...ascend the throne of Israel and bring our nation out of its bondage and raise it to its prophesied greatness. What a glorious beginning this festival ushers in."

Later, walking about the temple court with his friends, Yeshua, once more, viewed the perverse scene of cruelty to animals and cunning thievery practiced at the expense of the poor. His righteous indignation against man's cruelty to man turned to quiet rage. All the pent up need to intervene in this perverse situation came to a head. The disciples watched with unsuspecting interest as Yeshua calmly, but deliberately, braided together several thin strips of leather. Suddenly their eyes widened with surprise, then with shock; an unbelievably, daring panorama unfolded before them.

Yeshua sprang swiftly into premeditated, assured action. His nimble fingers snapped locked latches on cage after cage. Leashes flew as he untied and jerked free cords that secured frightened animals. With lightning speed, he grabbed the money boxes and poured the coins out on the tiled floor. Next he grabbed money-laden tables and flung them over, scattering coins all under the feet of stunned witnesses. Loudly yelling and snapping his leather whip in the air, he herded the startled animals out of the temple. Then he turned a fixed, steady gaze upon the dumfounded traffickers. His angry command boomed with unquestionable authority. "Take these things out of here! At no time was my Father's house ever meant to be a house of merchandise!"

Philip turned to Nathaniel, and with some effort, found his voice still worked, "Remember...in the scriptures, it is written, 'The zeal of thine house has eaten me up'? Now I know what it refers to."

Suddenly from amid the parted crowd stormed a group of impressive looking men dressed in priestly robes; their eyes bulged with anger. "By what sign do you do these things?" they demanded.

"This is my sign: destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again," came the answer.

"You are insane! It took forty-six years to build the temple, and you claim to be able to reconstruct it in three days?"

Yeshua turned a deaf ear to their insulting inquiries and worked his way through the crowds as they scrambled around, frantically gathering up the scattered money. He thought, "Though these hypocrites are the spiritual leaders of my people, they have no knowledge of spiritual truths. Only the spiritual can

comprehend that I speak on a spiritual level. When I am resurrected from death, after three days in the grave, my followers will remember that I spoke these words. Then they will understand that I speak concerning my body.”

Suddenly a scream of pain came from the crowd, “Have mercy...have mercy...please!”

Yeshua turned to witness a strong, burly man beating a frail, crippled creature sitting huddled on the ground with blood seeping from his swollen mouth. Yeshua recognized the middle-aged man as being the beggar who often showed up in the city during festival days. It was well known that the man had been a cripple from birth. Desperately, the man clutched a few coins in his gnarled, shriveled hand.

Yeshua rushed toward the threatening figure standing over the cringing form. “Stop that—immediately!” he commanded in a loud authoritative tone.

The startled, hostile man glared at Yeshua. “What business is this of yours, man? I’m not doing you any harm. He grabbed my money...I saw it first. I was just taking it back from him. Mind your own business,” he growled, reaching for the beggar.

The hushed, motionless crowd watched as Yeshua quietly touched the powerful abuser’s shoulder. The angry man whirled with upraised fist. Suddenly, with a moan, he crumpled to the ground, his face twisted with terror. “My arms...my legs...they won’t move. What did you do to me?” he accused loudly.

Yeshua spoke calmly, “I know you, you are a man who uses his strength to oppress the weak, who has never practiced kindness and mercy. That you may know what it is like to be weak and frail, you will remain this way until this time tomorrow. What better way could you spend your time than learning such a valuable lesson?”

He turned to the whimpering beggar. “Rise up and give your enemy the money in your hand. You will no longer have to beg for your sustenance. You will learn to work for it.” He reached down and clasped the man’s hand and pulled him to his feet. The crowd gasped in astonishment. Before them stood a strong, healthy body that only minutes before had been shriveled and twisted with paralysis.

The following day, Yeshua and his disciples observed a large crowd gathered, surrounding the cursed offender, waiting to see if indeed his original form would be restored. Suddenly the sound of cheers and applause traveled through the throng. Minutes later, the healed man threw himself at the feet of Yeshua, “Master, all my life I have taken by force what I wanted. Now...how can I change...what must I do to make amends?”

The answer, “Where possible, repay sevenfold what you have taken by force. Devote the rest of your life assisting the needy. Deal honestly and show mercy to all.”

Throughout the remaining days of the festival, Yeshua amazed the crowd by demonstrating other acts of compassion by performing miracles of healing. Many believed that he was, indeed, The Son of Eloah.

The following fall, during the Feast of Tabernacles, Yeshua was visited secretly, after dark, by a distinguished Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, by the name of Nicodemus. "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from Eloah. No man can do the miracles that you do otherwise. What must one do to enter the kingdom of heaven?"

"No one can see the kingdom of Eloah without being born again."

"How can a man be born when he is already old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

"Truthfully, except you be born of water and of spirit, you cannot enter into the kingdom of Eloah. Those who are born from flesh are flesh. When you are born of the spirit, you become spiritual. Does this confuse you? Listen...when the wind blows, you can hear its sound. But you cannot see the very wind...as it comes and goes. So it is with those who are born of spirit."

"How can these things be?"

"You are a spiritual leader of Israel and you don't understand these things? I tell you truthfully, we who have come from heaven, know what we are talking about. We speak only of the things we have heard and seen. Even then, you do not believe. If you are unable to understand simple, earthly things...how do you expect to understand heavenly?"

Yeshua wanted to share the deeper things of the plan with Nicodemus, for he perceived he was an honest man. He thought, "Nicodemus is too steeped in traditional customs and teachings of the Pharisees to truly grasp spiritual knowledge. It is beyond his comprehension to accept the truth of humans becoming sons of Eloah. After the holy spirit is given, added to the spirit of man, he first becomes begotten from above. This same man must die to the flesh and grow in the spirit. For his final rebirth, he will be changed from mortal into spirit, entering into the family of Elohim. He will be born again at that time. These things are revealed only to those whom Eloah has given the power to understand. Nicodemus cannot yet understand about the resurrections, or the deeper spiritual things of Eloah. He has accepted and believes the teaching that one either goes to heaven, or to hell immediately upon death."

Yeshua continued speaking, "Do you not understand...there is no human in heaven. I am the only body of flesh that has ever been there. Just as Mosheh lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the son of man will be lifted up. Whosoever believes me shall not perish, but will live eternally. For Eloah loves the world so much that he is willing to sacrifice me, his first and only begotten son, that the world may escape the curse of eternal death. I was not sent to condemn the world; I was sent to save it. If you believe what I tell you, you are not condemned to death. If you do not believe, you are already condemned. This is the condemnation: light is being brought, men, however, love darkness more. They prefer not to know the truth because they resist change; they want to continue in their evil deeds. Those who are willing to live lives of righteousness eagerly embrace the light of truth. The light reveals his deeds and shows life is given through the grace and righteousness of Eloah."

After the festival, Yeshua proceeded to educate his disciples in deeper truths. “As you heard Johanan speak of baptism by water, and as I also explained to Nicodemus...one cannot please The Father without first repenting of his sins and acknowledging his change by the rite of water baptism. This act signifies spiritual cleansing and purification. Though you have all been baptized, at this time you cannot fully understand the deep significance of this important observance. In time you will. Nevertheless, I give you—as my followers—the authority to also baptize the multitudes that seek repentance. The harvest truly is great; with time it grows greater. We shall begin preaching and baptizing, just as Johanan has. However, I will do the speaking, you shall baptize.

“Johanan still baptizes in Enon. Even now he is telling the crowds, ‘A man cannot receive anything except it is given him from heaven. You yourselves heard me admit that I was sent before the Christ. He is the bridegroom who will choose his bride. I am the friend that rejoices greatly that he has arrived. He must increase, I must decrease. He is from above, and is above all. He tells only of what he has seen and heard, yet no one believes him. If you believe him you have set your seal that Eloah is true. He speaks the words of Eloah who sent him. Eloah has given him His holy spirit without measure. The Father loves the son and has given everything into his hand. If you believe Him, you will have everlasting life. If you do not believe Him you shall die. Instead you will experience the wrath of Eloah.’ By these words Johanan is redirecting the multitudes to us for baptism. For they will leave him and seek us.”

Within time Yeshua’s prediction materialized. As the crowds swarmed to his disciples for baptism, he realized he would soon have to leave that part of the country. He confided to his disciples, “Johanan’s work is finished. Herod has imprisoned him. If we linger, he will attempt to prevent our work, also. We must return to Galilee.”

Going through Samaria, on the way back to Galilee, they reached the suburb of Sychar. As was their intention, they arrived at the well-known landmark, in the heat of the day. “Master,” Simon suggested, “We no longer have food for the remainder of our journey...we are all growing hungry. Allow us to go into the city for provisions while you rest beneath the shade of this sycamore tree near Jacob’s well.”

Yeshua was not just tired, he realized if he went into the city with his friends, he would be recognized. The people of the city would very likely delay their travels. “Very well...I shall remain here at the well.” He took the empty water skins and laid them aside.

He breathed a prayer of thanksgiving for the comfort of overhanging, leafy limbs, and protection from the searing, noon-day sun. This was a rare moment to relax alone, away from the curious, inquiring crowds. He used the next hour to communicate with The Father.

After prayer, he felt refreshed and anxious to continue the journey. He looked down the road the disciples had taken. No group of men were in sight. However, he did see one lone figure approaching in the distance. As the figure came closer he saw it was a tall, thin, middle-aged woman. She carried a large water pot on her dark head. When she reached the well, it was plain to Yeshua she was a Samaritan woman of ill repute.

With his special ability to perceive the lives of those about him, he read her past and present life situation. "This is a woman who has been ill-treated, afflicted with many emotional and physical sorrows," he thought. "She is a kind and honest person, with a gentle disposition." Tender compassion swelled in his heart for the lady drawing water from the well.

She kept her head lowered as he approached her; he sat on the well. "May I have a drink of water, please?" Yeshua asked softly.

Startled, the woman lifted her head. For a few seconds she observed him with quiet suspicion. As she extended him a cool dipper of water she answered timidly, "I am surprised that you, being a Jew, would openly approach a woman...especially a Samaritan woman. Is this not an insult to the custom of the Jews...to speak to a woman in public, to ask me for water?"

"True. But you will see, I am not ruled by the customs of men," he stated bluntly. "If you knew of the gift of Eloah and who I am, you would have asked for living water and I would give it to you."

Puzzled, she looked at the empty water skins lying in a neat pile. "Sir, this well is very deep. I notice you have no cord to draw with. Where do you have this living water? Do you have a greater ability than our Father Jacob, who gave us this well?"

"Whoever drinks the water from this well will thirst again. I speak of giving spiritual water. The water I give shall spring up into everlasting life."

"Sir, give me this water that I will never thirst nor have to draw and carry water again."

Yeshua knew that the woman had not bothered to formally marry the man she was presently living with. He put to her a test. "Go back and get your husband and bring him here."

"I do not have a husband," she answered shamefully.

"You have answered honestly. Even though you have been married five times, you are not married to the man you are presently living with."

Her face had turned a crimson red, and her eyes glistened with the moisture of threatened tears. "Sir, I suspect you are a prophet to know these things about me, having never met me before this day. Please, explain something...I have always been taught, by our religious leaders, that we are to worship Eloah in this mountain. Yet you Jews teach that Eloah can only be worshipped in Jerusalem. I am confused as to what Eloah requires."

"Believe me, lady, very soon, now, it will not matter whether you worship The Father here, or in Jerusalem. You are indeed confused. You have not been entrusted with the knowledge of salvation. You do not even know whom you worship. We know whom we worship. Up until the present time Eloah has given only the one nation, Israel, his laws, and the opportunity for salvation."

As he spoke the thrill of anticipation built within him, he felt the urge to shout with joy. He struggled to suppress his excitement. He yearned to share the wonderful gift of life with her. "Just as

this woman has been used and abused by cruel men, so do many women of the world suffer. My own countrymen, though they have been given the laws of love and compassion, yet they practice that it is shameful to speak in public with a woman, even to a close relative. Women are made to feel worthless, objects of lust and labor. It is to the shame of pious men that they have scorned and ill-treated their women, withholding honor and loving consideration. Eloah never intended it to be thus. Because of their self-righteous prejudices, they have despised and abused others that are more righteous than they.

“It is fitting and just that my first spiritual message of salvation—to the Gentile world—be given to...not only a woman...but to one with a history of low repute and despised descent.”

Savoring the joy of this historical moment, his jubilant spirit silently sang within him. Before him danced visions of a future glory, the beginnings of the plan of infinity, life for all mankind. His vibrant voice trembled with suppressed elation, “I rejoice to tell you, a wonderful change is in the process right now. The Father desires and seeks true worshipers who will worship him, not confined to a mountain, nor in a specific place, such as Jerusalem. He wants to be loved from the heart. Eloah is a spirit. He wants his people to worship him in spirit, in truth.”

Catching his excitement, she responded, “I believe Messiah, which is called The Anointed, is coming. When he comes he will explain all this to us.”

He looked deeply into her soul, his face shone with radiant joy. He stated matter-of-fact. “I am the one you speak of. I am he, now speaking to you.”

Their conversation had been so intense they hardly noticed that the disciples were returning. So excited at Yeshua’s last comment, the woman, ignoring the shocked Jews, whirled—forgetting her water pot. She ran as fast as her legs would move, back in the direction she came from.

Yeshua could no longer hide his pleasure. Nor could he ignore his amusement at the disciple’s perplexed expressions. He vented his glee with a hearty, robust laugh. He knew they lacked the nerve to mention what they were thinking. “Surely the Master knows it is against our law for a Jew to talk to a woman in public. It is even more degrading if she be a Samaritan. And what could one so wise as he have to discuss with a low-life like that? Why is he acting so strangely; what could be so utterly amusing? This definitely is no way for a future king to conduct himself. Perhaps the heat...or hunger has affected him temporarily,” they reasoned.

When they offered him lunch, he shocked them even further by refusing. The highly emotional, excitable encounter had driven his physical appetite to a spiritual plane far more satisfying than partaking of earthly nourishment. They began to whisper among themselves, “We know he must be hungry; he has not eaten since yesterday. Do you suppose someone has given him food while we were gone?”

He composed himself and addressed them in a serious tone, “I have spiritual food to eat that you have no understanding of. My food is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work. Have you not said, ‘We have but four months until harvest?’ Let me tell you about another harvest.” He

swept his arms toward the city. “Look!” The startled disciples turned to see the woman leading a large group of people in their direction. “I am telling you...look on the fields of humanity...they are white with ripeness, already to harvest. There are great rewards to those who partake in the harvest. Let us begin to gather fruit of infinite lives. Then both we that sow and He that reaps will rejoice together. This is what this saying means, ‘one sows, another reaps. I sent you to reap what you did not sow.

Other men labored and you enter into their labor.’”

Watching the cloud of people advancing toward them, the wary disciples moved closer to Yeshua. Soon a noisy crowd of men and women, led by the same excited woman, surrounded them. Pointing to Yeshua the woman gasped, “This is the man who said he was the Christ. He is the one who, though he had never met me, knew all about me.”

A dark-skinned man stepped out of the crowd. “Tell us more about the water of life, Master.”

Another voice came out of the crowd. “Tell us about the new way to worship Eloah.”

Yeshua looked over the eager crowd and answered, “Do you believe that I am the Christ because I told the woman she has no husband? You shall see greater than this. What would you think if you were to see me ascend into the clouds, back to The Father from where I came? The angels rejoice to see my day. The time comes and now is when anyone who calls upon my name shall be given this water of life. It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and life. The kingdom from heaven has come to all men equally. Through sin the children of man have separated themselves from The Father. Now you may be reconciled to him through His son. My heavenly Father has sent me to establish His government among you. His ways are clearly defined in the pages of the law and prophets. I come to preach to the full everything I have received from him—both to Jew and to Gentile.

“When I have fulfilled the earthly mission he sent me to accomplish I shall give this water of life freely to all who call upon my name. You believe in the writing of Mosheh. Now believe in me—for Mosheh wrote of me. The Father cares not about the location of a temple. When you drink deeply of the living water, your body becomes His temple. I am here to tell you The Father will accept your worship on Mount Gerizim as well as in Jerusalem...in Jerusalem as well as on Mount Gerizim. If you repent of breaking my commandments and believe my words—begin to show mercy and love to both Jew and Gentile, whether male or female, he will accept you into his kingdom, whether you be on a mountain, in a city, on land or in the sea. We seek those who will humble themselves, and in the spirit of love and total surrender keep our commandments. My Father and I agree as one. I speak only the words he gives me. There is no other way to The Father than through His son. If you love The Father you will love me.”

“Now we believe you, not because of what the woman told us, we believe because we ourselves hear you speak words of life. We pray you will come to our city and teach us more concerning this wonderful truth. Our homes are your home. Please accept our invitation,” they pleaded.

He had planned to go directly into Galilee for fear that if he lingered Herod might send soldiers looking for them. The people's sincerity and need stirred within him a burning zeal to share with them the way of life. The humble attitude of these rejected people stimulated his depth of compassion. He consented to go with them. He knew the disciples were horrified at his decision. Turning to them he said, "Go where you choose, I shall meet you here again in two days. I must be about the business of the kingdom of heaven." He proceeded to follow the crowd to the city. He was pleased to see all of his disciples we're following at a distance in the back. "I know this is a hard decision for them to make, but soon they will understand that I am no respecter of persons. I have come to give life to whomsoever The Father calls, regardless of their beginnings."

He had taken the first steps into the dreaded hour of the plan. He was now fully committed, exposed to his enemies. There was no turning back, no further delay.

End of chp 8 Edited 6/22/13