

PRODIGAL SONS

Part Ten

"Are we there yet," asked Abe.

"Really, brother," Michael said exasperated. "How many times are you going to ask? I'm almost embarrassed you're my brother."

"Almost?" Abe said. "I'm just excited about getting to our next oasis before it gets too crowded...in the middle of nowhere!"

"You really mean to eat," Michael teased.

"I really want to know more about this Jesus," Abe said seriously, "and I am a little hungry," he admitted.

"I know what you mean," Michael admitted.

Since the journey began, this was the first time that they were both really excited about traveling together, especially because of the camaraderie and the conversations about this Jesus of Nazareth.

"It seems almost too much of a coincidence that Felix and Simon have this special connection with Jesus," Abe admitted.

"Plus, the fact that Telesphor actually knew one of his disciples," Michael added. "Maybe not a direct disciple but one that knew of the others who knew Jesus."

"Not to mention that even Eliud's father had even traveled with Jesus' family when he was a baby!" Michael reminded him.

"Too much," was all Abe could respond. "You think this is an invitation to us?"

"Eliud did mention that their journey to Egypt was without incident," Michael said. "He felt it seemed like they were protected in a special way the whole journey."

"May be like when the angels visited Abraham and Sarah," Abe said.

"I'm not surprised at your comparison, since he is your name's sake," he said. "I would like to talk more about this Jesus. They are never around

when we are on the move. Of course, it does give them more time with their families.”

“I have to admit, I appreciate their traveling separate from us in case they do run into any more Roman soldiers,” Michael said.

“I would say, ‘What are the chances?’, but we seem to keep meeting people who know each other out here in the middle of nowhere,” Abe said jokingly.

“For myself,” Michael admitted, “I do like the company, now that I have gotten to know Simon a little better.”

“And knowing Felix has restored my trust in humanity, that there are decent people in the world,” Abe said added. “I wonder who we will meet next?”

“Well, Eliud said that this next oasis is literally in the middle of nowhere and actually marks our halfway point in our travels,” Michael said.

“In the middle of nowhere,” Abe repeated to himself, “which means we will have an even more splendid visitor.”

Michael just laughed but looked at his brother with wondering himself.

Soon the caravan came to the next oasis, which always seemed better than the last. Traveling long distances does make the stops more appreciated. After the women finished serving the meal, the men continued their conversations, especially about Jesus the Nazarene.

“Felix, why did you switch your allegiance from Rome to Jesus?” Michael asked.

“It wasn’t a matter of switching allegiances but following my heart. This Jesus is different.” Felix began, “At his death when I saw him die, that is when I truly believed.”

“Why was that, Felix?” Abe asked.

“This Jesus had concern for those who were executed with him,” Felix said with emotion, “and he died with dignity and did not respond to those who came and ridiculed him.”

"Who would ridicule him while hanging on the cross," Michael asked astonished that some would do so.

"Not us Romans, not while he died," Felix said, "but the High Priests of the Hebrews! Anyway, over the years I have got to know Jesus better through his disciples."

"At first I felt sorry for Jesus," Simon added. "I thought he was just another Jew being persecuted by the Romans. At first his execution was no concern to me, but at the end I believed in him myself."

"I have to admit, I am growing interested in knowing more about this man, Jesus," Abe admitted.

"Ah," Felix said. "But that is the difference, this man Jesus is also God."

"It is one thing for humans thinking that they can or will become divine," Simon said, "but why would God become human? That is still a struggle for me."

"It depends on what we mean by God," Eliud tried to explain. "Is God for you an emperor, or a creator and all-powerful being? The Greeks believe that God is beauty, goodness, truth, and justice in their philosophies?"

"Or is God love?" Telesphor added.

"I have to admit," Felix added, "as a Roman I am used to the fact that our dead heroes and emperors become divine. I do have difficulty when a live emperor declares himself God, thought! And to his credit, this Jesus never claimed that while alive."

"Well, if God is like the emperor," Abe posed, "I cannot believe, since they behave worse than humans with all their petty faults and weaknesses."

"For me," Michael added, "I like to believe that Israel is the bride and God is the spouse in love with his people, despite our sins and weaknesses."

What was it that Jesus said," asked Abe, "that continued to convince you?"

"It was not just what he said," Telesphor replied, "but also what he did!"

"Do I see someone approaching?" Telesphor was obviously surprised.

Abe just said, "In the middle of nowhere?"