

THE PRODIGAL SONS: Part Fourteen, "Jesus of Nazareth"

"What can I say," Mark began. "After all these years and even witnessing his death, although from a distance, there is so much to tell."

"Well," Abe encouraged him since this was the last stop before Mark would go his separate way to Ethiopia, "start with his death."

"Yes," Michael also encouraged him, "tell us why they killed him?"

"I have to admit, we can't blame only the Romans," Mark began, "since it was the High Priest with the Sanhedrin who turned him over to them."

"Why," Abe said confused, "if he was such a good man?"

"And" Michael added, "if the people loved him so much and followed him, why would they allow it?"

"That is exactly why the religious leaders handed him over to the Romans because he was so popular among the people," Mark explained, "and the leaders couldn't put him to death."

"What was Jesus like," Abe was getting excited again, "at the beginning?"

"To be honest, I wasn't there at the beginning," Mark admitted, "but I met him later when he preached in Galilee where my uncle Barnabas is from."

"I thought you were a disciple of Paul," Michael asked.

"That was much later," Mark explained, "after the resurrection of Jesus when Paul joined our group, except he didn't experience his resurrection firsthand but in a later appearance of Jesus."

"What do you mean, 'a later experience' of Jesus?" Abe asked.

"Paul claimed that the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus while he was pursuing our Christian brothers and sisters on behalf of the Sanhedrin," Mark said.

"What was it that Jesus said that people were so attracted to him," Abe tried to steer Mark back to their original question.

"Not only what Jesus said by how he said it and what he did," Mark tried to explain. "Jesus would talk of God's love for us, no matter who we were."

Jesus would make the effort to go even to the tax collectors and sinners, the outcasts from the temple. Even one of his apostles, the first twelve, Matthew, was chosen."

"Really," Michael said in surprise. "Why did he do that?"

"I guess to emphasize that God really does love us no matter who we are. And besides," Mark added with emphasis, "Jesus worked many miracles of healing, casting our demons, and performing wonders of nature!"

"Wonders of nature?" Abe asked confused. "Like what?"

"My uncle said he fed over 3000 people with the multiplication of only a few loaves of bread, and Peter claimed that Jesus walked on water," Mark said with wonder. "And a Roman Centurion even told me that Jesus healed his servant at a distance!"

"Amazing!" was all Michael could say. "What did you like about him, Mark?"

"I must admit, I found him a person full of love for anyone and everyone, even those who did not like him and even planned to kill him. Judas, one of his disciples who betrayed him to death, just had his feet washed by Jesus then gave him the blessed bread before he left to make arrangement for his arrest," Mark said with sadness.

"If you hadn't told us," Abe said, "I would never would have believed it."

"I was there when Judas came with the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest him," Mark said a little embarrassed. "I was the one who ran away naked since they soldiers tried to arrest me too by grabbing my clothes. I slipped out of them and ran off naked."

"I see," said Michael. "I guess that is why you know the rest of the story."

"But what I do know are the stories your friend Eliud told me on our journey about your father, which his own father knew so well. I could say that he was an example of the love that Jesus had for all of us!" Mark said with conviction. "I think I can say with certainty that you already are attracted to the person of Jesus because your father's his love for you."

At that point both Abe and Michael filled Mark in with their part of the story. When they finished, Mark said cryptically, "What a beautiful story, especially how it will end."

"What do you mean?" Abe and Michael asked almost at the same time.

"I think you both are already followers of Jesus in spirit but just need to be baptized officially," Mark said.

"Funny," Michael pointed out, "that is what our friend Telesphor said of this Philip who baptized his own father on his journey back from Jerusalem!"

"Somehow we are all connected in a mysterious way through Jesus' Holy Spirit," Mark said. "That is why when you brothers return, you need to look up this friend of Paul. He is from your area and you can look him up and learn more about Jesus. He should be easy to find since he is well known and he is a physician."

"What is his name?" Abe asks.

Mark eagerly tells them, "His name is Luke."