

# FLOOD GATES

LYRICAL NOVEL #5

In the Series  
***THEY MET JESUS***



KATHERYN MADDOX HADDAD

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**DEDICATED TO**

Everyone Who Has Ever Doubted

## **INSERT YOURSELF INTO THE STORY**

Although the events take place shortly before and during the first century AD, this story is written to help you in our modern world identify with the characters who lived then. While true to the life of Christ in every known aspect, conversations often take a modern flavor as though the characters were speaking today. After all, did they not speak what was “modern vocabulary” in their day, even in the Aramaic language?

You will see places in the story where you are invited to participate either as an encourager or discourager of a character, as though you were there with them. This is your chance to become their friend. You will easily spot those places in the story. Instead of wondering who is talking, remember, it is you.

## **A COMMENTARY IN NARRATIVE FORM**



## 1~ DEAF, MUTE, BLIND Out of the Mist Mightily

Summer AD 29

Provinces of Panea, Ulatha, Gaulanitis, Palestine

Things remain dangerous. Keep Herod blindsided.

Keep on the run. Keep ahead of the game.

Out of Syrian-Phoenicia now. Keep moving until the hype of John's death dies down. Maybe Tetrarch Herod Antipas will grow bored with the whole thing and eventually forget Jesus.

Back on the road. Rested enough. Provisions to stop and eat when needed. Throw the enemy off. Head inland now across the far-north pagan provinces under Tetrarch Herod Philip's jurisdiction at the headwaters of the Jordan River.

It is dangerous. They could be caught and arrested. Sometimes they wear disguises and travel in large caravans so they can get lost in the crowd. They pass legionnaires on the road as always. They are too unimportant to Rome to notice, but not to Herod Antipas.

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James has a strange dream. Prince Herod Antipas is now officially King Herod and is also the high priest. He stands in the heavens commanding the armies of God. They head straight for

Jesus' aides. They're not supposed to attack the aides. What is wrong?

Then James spots them. The disguises. The soldiers are really demons. It's really the army of Satan. James runs and hides. But why?

He is not supposed to hide. He is a coward. James is actually a coward. He hears a voice. "James! James! James!" Is it the voice of God come to punish him? No, it is his brother John.

"Time to rise. The caravan is assembling."

As they travel, they silently pray. *God, keep us safe. Especially Jesus. We would die for him if we had to.*

One day. Two days. Three days. Out of the province of Panea, down through the provinces of Ulatha and Gaulanitis. Here they leave the caravan and travel off the main highway at night. They sleep during the day.

## **Hills in Province of Decapolis**

In Decapolis, they temporarily return to the main road and an oasis next to a small town. They fill their water skins and buy some raisins, cheese, and a fresh supply of bread in preparation for going into the hills a while to rest.

It is dangerous. They cannot afford to be recognized. Jesus has to stay alive. At least until he can get to Jerusalem.

They are recognized anyway.

People change their plans.

"Ayelet!" a man calls out as he rushes in the gate. I'm home! Pack some food for me!"

"What are you talking about?"

"You know that Jesus who says he's going to start the new kingdom of God?"

"I've heard a little about him."

"Well, he's here. I overheard him to say where he is headed. I'm going to follow him."

"What in the world for? He'll never conquer Herod Philip or any of Herod's royal family. They are too strong."

"I wouldn't be so sure. He's getting more and more

powerful. Otherwise, why would Herod Antipas be trying to execute him? Even the temple officials are trying to assassinate him. They are afraid of him. I want to know why. I want to know more about that new kingdom.”

“When will you be home?”

“Don't know. Don't look for me until you see me. It just depends on how long he stays around.”

“Half a day? All night? Give me some idea.”

“Well, let's say I'll be back by tomorrow. Maybe. Thanks dear. I knew you would understand. Kiss the children for me. Oh, and send a note over to Jannai. Tell him where I'm headed. He has been trying to check out this strange man too.”

So the word spreads.

“Open up the shop, Simcha. I need some food to take along. Open up!”

“What's going on? Wait until tomorrow.”

“No. That Jesus has been spotted in this area. I'm going to find him. I need some food to take along.”

“Kenan, I've got to cancel drinks with you tonight. You know that Jesus? He's somewhere around here. I'm going to find him. You should go too.”

“Sounds like a good idea. Where did you say he was headed?”

Though the sun is now setting, there is much activity out in the streets. People telling their families, their neighbors, passersby.

“Hey, did you know Jesus is outside of town?”

“What Jesus?”

“You know. The one who says he's going to be the next king.”

“Where's his army?”

“Doesn't need one. He performs miracles. Probably can make his enemy army disappear into thin air.”

“I'm going with you.”

Spreading the good news.

Spreading the story.

Spreading hope.

The gate out of town is left open a little later than usual.

Although normally dangerous to travel at night because of the robbers who control the night-time hills, people travel in groups. Large groups. Mutually protective groups.

“Have you seen any of his so-called miracles?”

“Nope. But I had a cousin who has. She said there was no doubt what he did was really a miracle.”

“So you believe he really performs them?”

“Can't pass judgment until I see one for myself.”

“Hey, do you have an extra torch?”

People everywhere canceling dinners, business meetings, family reunions. Rushing to market to buy a couple days' food, and heading out of town.

In search of Jesus.

Wait for us, Jesus. Don't go without us. Don't go so fast. We think we need you, Jesus. We think we want you to take over and rule us. We think we could admire you. Wait for us, Jesus.

Torches wend their way to the highway, onto a back road, and up into the hills. Torch light. Trying to illuminate their way down the road of life. Not doing a very good job of it. Now growing darker and blacker. Go slowly. Be careful. Don't get lost.

Catch up with Jesus. He has got a bigger light. Like the sun. With him, we wouldn't need our measly torch lights. With him, we could see better where we are going. Where are we going, Jesus? Where are you leading us?

Up in the hills, they see stationary lights on each side of the road. What is going on? Roman troops? Temple police? A king's entourage? Robbers? *Don't let anyone stop us. Please, God, make them let us through.*

It is nothing to fear. Jesus' twelve aides know they have been spotted. Jesus has told them it's time to quit hiding. At least for a while. His men are outlining the road with torches. Directing the way. The way to Jesus. Pointing the way.

His twelve aides: Should they be doing menial tasks like this?

“Walk in that direction, mister,” says Thomas. “It's level ground.”

“That's right. Keep moving,” says Matthew.

“You can put up a tent over there,” Judas explains. “Just

follow the lights.”

They keep coming. The people.

And coming.

Famished and hungry for Jesus.

It is late. People choose their spot, pull out tents, and set them up, store their supplies inside and cover them with blankets.

Now, what?

They walk around.

“Seen Jesus?”

“Don't know what he looks like.”

“I heard he's tall and has a commanding appearance.”

“What is he wearing?”

“Probably a royal scarlet robe. But maybe he's wearing a blue, scarlet and purple priest robe. I heard he plans to be both king and priest at the same time.”

“Do you think he'll do it?”

“Who knows? That's why I'm here.”

“Seen Jesus? Anyone?”

But they do not find him. It is too dark. Nothing can be done in the dark. Jesus does not operate in darkness.

Go back to your tent. Try to sleep. Nothing happening tonight. Too late. Too dark.

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The sun is up. So is the Son.

As people make their way between the tents and pack animals, they realize how many there are.

It is phenomenal. All the tents. The hundreds of tents. Not hundreds. Thousands. There must be thousands of them. All over the valley.

“He's been spotted. He's up on that ridge.”

“Where? Which one? I don't see anyone wearing a grand robe.”

“Is he that big guy?”

“No, he's the one sitting. Look up there. In the dingy robe. He's just sitting. Like he's waiting.”

“Looks kind of skinny to me.”

“Doesn't he ever eat?”

“That's going to be our next king?”

“Give the man a chance.”

“Spread the word. Get everyone here. Hurry, everyone! So Jesus can start.”

The crowd gradually builds up like an ant hill in the desert. Jesus stands.

The crowd gradually quiets. They quiet like a wave of prairie grass in the wind.

“Shhh....”

Jesus holds up his arms.

A hush. Of daybreak. Of dawning in a land of darkness. But perhaps not darkness. Perhaps of grandeur. Perhaps they will approve of him.

Someone rudely pushes his way through the crowd.

His name is Cherrad. They do not know that.

Cherrad has salt-pepper hair and a gray beard. His long neck bobs when he walks. His eyes are small while his feet are big, causing him to stumble when he walks if he is not careful. When he walks fast, his arms flap. Right now, Cherrad is walking fast. At least, he is trying to.

“Hey! You're interrupting Jesus even before he starts. Move out of the way,” someone shouts.

“Hey, you! We got here first. Sit in the back.”

“Yeah. It's not our fault you got here too late for a good spot.”

Cherrad keeps walking. Like he doesn't even hear them.

Someone jumps into the path of the man and attempts to force him back. Cherrad stands and forms unintelligible words. “I fwom Wake Gawawee.”

“What's the matter? Rat eat your tongue?” the other man asks.

Some of the people laugh. Some don't.

Cherrad points to his mouth. He opens it and tries to raise his tongue. He cannot. Indeed, his tongue is tied down to the floor of his mouth. He turns in a circle so everyone around him can see.

“I want he'ed.”

Cherrad is old. His clothes are not good. His sandals have

broken straps.

Andrew detects what is going on and works his way over to the old man.

“Excuse me, everyone,” Andrew says. “Coming through. Excuse me.”

He reaches Cherrad. “Would you like Jesus to heal you this morning?”

Cherrad pays no attention. Andrew touches Cherrad’s arm and Cherrad turns to face him.

“Would you like Jesus to heal you this morning? Andrew repeats.

Cherrad points to his ears and covers them with his hands. Andrew understands. He is deaf too.

Deaf, but not. He cannot hear anything, yet he hears everything. He hears Jesus calling him.

Deaf, but not. Not in his spirit. In his soul. In his being. Loud and clear. As he draws closer to Jesus.

Andrew puts his arm around Cherrad’s shoulders and leads him through the crowd toward Jesus.

“Excuse us. Coming through. Excuse us.”

“Hey, move to the back.”

“I am one of Jesus’ aides. You must let us through.”

Jesus has put his arms down and is waiting.

Cherrad had not always been deaf. He recognizes words.

In his youth, he had been a trumpeter in King Herod’s army. One of his buddies had picked up his trumpet as a joke, and blasted it right into Cherrad’s ear. The blast destroyed whatever made Cherrad’s hearing work.

He cannot talk with his tongue the way it is. And since his accident in the army, he cannot detect how effective his words are.

“Excuse us,” Andrew continues. “Coming through. Excuse us.”

“What’s going on?” someone in the crowd asks after Andrew and Cherrad pass them.

“I don’t know,” a stranger replies. “Do you think they’re going to be healed?”

“Healed?”

“Man! Would I ever like to see that!”

“Can't be done. These are modern times. Can't be done.”

Andrew arrives with Cherrad.

Jesus motions for Cherrad to go with him.

“Hey, where are they going?” Philip asks.

“Jesus had intended to preach first, then heal. But this man needs to be able to hear what Jesus has to say. It is only fair,” says Nathaniel.

They disappear on the back side of the hill just out of sight of the crowd. His twelve aides follow.

Jesus has other plans for the rest of the day. But he will make an exception. He is noted for exceptions. He is Jesus the exceptional.

They stop and Jesus faces him. Cherrad knows it is about to happen. He kneels. He even holds out his tongue the best he can. Like a little child before a physician.

An expression of frustration overcomes Jesus. It is in his eyes. The set of his jaw. The throbbing veins in his neck. What is wrong, Jesus? It is those people who are deafer than Cherrad, isn't it?

Cherrad, still kneeling, looks up into Jesus' eyes.

As always, Jesus touches the impaired part. He puts his fingers over Cherrad's ears.

Cherrad waits. He can feel Jesus' gentle touch. He can sense Jesus' gentle love.

Cherrad closes his eyes in complete trust. He opens them again.

Jesus takes one hand away, licks his finger, and touches his finger to Cherrad's tongue.

Jesus now groans aloud. If only he could just unstop the ears of those back in Herod Antipas' territory. Those political people. Those religious people. He should not have to run from them. But they will not listen.

He groans again. How deaf they all are.

His groan slides into words. Quietly spoken. Not in thunder, but a whisper. Cherrad hears them. Shhh....listen...

“Be opened.”

That's it, Cherrad. What do you think?

Cherrad's eyes brighten. He smiles. “Did you say, 'Be

opened, Jesus?' That is exactly what you said, isn't it? 'Be opened.' My tongue and ears both opened."

Jesus smiles. The aides smile.

"I can hear. I can hear! Thank you. Thank you. Wait until I tell everyone. Jesus healed me!"

"No, you must not do that," Jesus interrupts. "You are not to tell anyone what I did for you just now."

Jesus does not explain to Cherrad why. Cherrad does not realize, way over here in Herod Philip's province, that Jesus' life is in danger nearby in Herod Antipas' provinces.

Cherrad kisses Jesus' feet, then rises. He stares in Jesus' eyes, whispers thank you once more and turns. He walks forward. And as he reaches the crest of the hill where he originally met Jesus, he sees the awaiting crowd below. He cannot hold it in. How can he?

"He healed me, everyone!" Cherrad shouts. "He healed me! Jesus healed me!"

"Huh?" someone in the crowd below replies.

"What's he saying?"

Word spreads through the crowd.

"That man can talk. I saw his tied tongue myself. Jesus loosened his tongue and he can talk."

Jesus follows Cherrad to the crest of the hill. Cherrad has told it anyway. Jesus is annoyed but understands. How can he hold Cherrad back? The love of God is so overwhelming. It spills out.

Cherrad does not understand the danger he is putting Jesus in. Jesus must stay alive a little while longer. He has more people to reach. More teachings to teach. His aides need more experience before he leaves them alone. Jesus must stay alive.

"Look. There's Jesus again," someone in the crowd shouts out. "He's not denying it."

"That's because he really healed the man," another declares.

Cherrad works his way into the valley and presses among the people.

"He healed me. Jesus healed me!"

A woman at the front grabs her young son and makes her

way up to Jesus.

“Can you heal my son? He was in a terrible accident. He lost his foot and part of his leg. Please, Jesus. Can you make them grow back?”

Jesus cannot turn her down anymore than he did Cherrad. He takes the boy in his arms and lowers him down to the ground. He supports the boy with one hand, and moves his hand down the boy's stump, starting at the hip.

“No, this cannot be!

As he lowers his hand toward the ground—such things do not happen—as his hand is lowered...

“His leg is longer!” someone shouts.

“He has a foot!” someone else cries out.

Applause. Abandoned applause. Wild. Thunderous.

“Can you heal me?” someone implores loudly.

Jesus knows what is about to happen. How can he turn them down?

“Come up here. Let's see what we can do.”

“How about me? Heal me, Jesus.”

“Me too. Please.”

Desperate people work their way up to the crescent where Jesus is standing. Hobbling. Crawling. Being carried.

Jesus' aides, the destined dozen, keep order and assist the weaker.

“How can he stand all those people crowding in around him?” Judas asks now and then.

All day.

Someone brings him a little lunch. And dinner. He pauses just long enough to take a bite of the bread and set it down on a rock nearby to eventually dry out.

The sun works its way across the everlasting sky. The Son works his way into everlasting souls.

People sit below astounded. How can he be doing these things? Is he from outer space? Was he born on another star? Is he using some kind of secret force? No. He has to be from God himself.

It is dusk. Jesus has healed hundreds of people.

Yes, it is dusk. Jesus has not preached. He had wanted to.

So little time left.

Yet he has preached. His deeds have planted themselves in their universe and enlarged it beyond all imagination.

When people can no longer detect Jesus at the top of the hill, or even the hill top itself, they work their ways back to their respective pack animals and tents and branch booths. Luckily it is early summer. The night is warm.

As the stars come out in their clarity and brilliance, the crowd grows still. Still in movement. Still in word. They are hushed with wonder.



Jesus spends one more day with them. Feeding with the bread of life. Then feeding with the bread of man. They are hungry. He feeds the families of four thousand men with just a few rolls and dried fish. How does he do that?

The following day, everyone gets back up, expecting more miracle food. But Jesus and his twelve aides have disappeared. They have other places to go. Besides, it has become too dangerous to stay around. Too many people know where they are.

Back to a highway heading farther north. Everyone will be looking for them toward the south, toward Jerusalem and his takeover. Whenever they spot Herod's soldiers, they look down to hide their faces.

## Magadan & Dalmanutha, Province of Gaulinitis

Still out of the way of Herod Antipas and his henchmen. Still out of the way of the executioner. Still in hiding. Hiding. Thinking. Self-examining.

"If anyone tries to get to you, I've still got my dagger," Simon the Revolutionary says. "I'll defend you to the death."

"Jesus," big Little James says. "We'll die for you if we have to."

"We're with you all the way," Jesus. "If you die, we all die." It's Thaddeus.

When they stop at a well by the road, Jesus is spotted again. Were they followed?

“Mordecai! Come over here. Guess who that is?”

“So he is finally showing his face,” Mordecai responds.

“He certainly is good at hiding himself,” says Noach. “I wonder where he has been these last few months.”

“Spread the word,” Tzvoi says. “We need witnesses when we trap him. They need to tell their friends Jesus is nothing but a fraud and to quit following him.”

Jesus and his friends fill their water skins and walk over to lean against some nearby rocks to rest.

The three religious leaders saunter up to Jesus and his aides.

“Well, well. If it isn't the great and holy Jesus. Come to try taking over the synagogue here too?” says Mordecai with a smirk.

Jesus does not answer.

One of them, Noach, walks around Jesus, bumping his shoulder against John to push him out of his way. Back in front of Jesus, he leers. “You know, we would probably believe you if you would show us a sign from heaven.”

“You know,” says Tzvoi, “lightening, a cyclone, something earth-shattering.”

Jesus' twelve aides look over at him wondering what he will do. He looks up at his inquisitors but says nothing.

“Well, how about it?” says Noach with a sneer. He looks, turns his back on Jesus, then turns around to face him.

“How about a sign?” says Tzvoi. “Then we'll believe you are really supposed to take over the synagogue.”

“Maybe even the temple,” Mordecai adds, elbowing Tzvoi in the side with a wink.

Jesus listens and sighs. They do not get it. They do not want to get it.

“We're waiting, Jesus,” says Noach.

“Yeah. Just one sign,” says Mordecai. “Make something float in midair. How about that rock over there? Make it float. Then we'll believe you.”

Jesus remains silent. He looks at the ground, then up into the sky. He takes a drink from his water skin, then looks over at

them. “When the sunset is red, you predict it is going to be a good day tomorrow.”

“Well, of course,” Mordecai replies. “So?”

“When the sunrise is red, you predict the weather is going to be bad today.”

“Come on, Jesus,” says Noach. “Everyone knows that. Let's see a real sign.”

“How about making the sun turn dark in the middle of the day?” says Tzvoi “Can't do it, can you, Jesus? You're such a phony.”

“No one else has ever demanded a sign except people whose egos are bigger than their desire to obey God,” Jesus replies.

The three religious leaders scowl, pull at their beards, and stare with slitted eyes.

Jesus continues. “No one else has had the audacity to dare God like this. Well, you're not going to see one from me.”

“None?” Tzvoi asks. He shrugs his shoulders. “That's about what I would expect out of a charlatan.”

Jesus does not back down. “The sign of Jonah. That's the one you should look for.”

“So?” asks Noach. “Jonah was as good as dead in a big fish three days and three nights, then returned to tell about it. So what?”

“Watch for it,” Jesus says. “Watch for it.”

Jesus turns his back on the three and leaves. His twelve aides leave too, surrounding him protectively—four on each side, two in front, two in back.

---

Back off the main road and up into the hills.

Back onto a side road. Keep a low profile.

“You sure told them,” says Peter.

“Why don't they just give up? They know they're losing,” says Philip.

Several hours go by.

“Let's stop for lunch,” big Little James suggests, from the front, turning around and walking backward.

They stop by the side of the road and sit on their haunches in a circle.

“Where's the bread supply?” Andrew asks.

“Who has our bread?” Thaddeus asks.

The thirteen men look around. Everyone shrugs.

“We don't have any bread?” Philip asks.

“After that miracle feeding thousands?” Nathaniel asks.

“I have a few bites leftover from breakfast,” James says.

“It doesn't matter,” Jesus interjects. “Just be careful not to ever make bread using the Pharisees' and Sadducees' yeast.”

“What are we going to do?” Thomas whispers to Simon.

“Does he expect us to stop right now and make some bread?” Nathaniel asks.

“What in the world is he talking about?” asks John. “We don't have an oven even if we wanted to make bread.”

“Maybe there's a farmer nearby who will let us use his oven,” says Andrew.

“Anyone have any yeast on you?” asks Philip.

Jesus sighs once more. So little time left.

Are they deaf and blind both? Like the religious leaders?

“You don't understand, men,” Jesus says, standing. “We can get bread any time we need it. Do you soon forget the thousands of people who ate from such a little bit of bread? It was done twice.”

The twelve discuss it among themselves while Jesus walks off toward a wild grape vine he has spotted.

“Jesus made the bread grow, that's for sure,” says Simon. “We all know that.”

“So, how did he make it grow?” Philip, the perpetual inquirer, asks.

“Just by a word,” John says. “Yes, by a word.”

“His word is his yeast,” James says, helping out his brother.

“So, the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees would be what? Their false teachings?” Peter surmises. “He's warning us to be careful of the teachings of egotistical leaders?” he continues.

“Their teachings are puffed up with their egos and watered-down drivel sermons,” says Judas

“Where's Jesus?”

“Oh, no. Someone has grabbed him. Man your weapons. We’ve got to go after him.” It’s Simon.

The twelve look around and spot him picking wild grapes.

## **Bethsaida-Julius, Province of Gaulanitis, on border of Galilee**

Jesus decides to go back to a previous strategy. They will become lost in a crowd. They decide to go to Tetrarch Herod Philip's Bethsaida. The Bethsaida he has renamed Julius in honor of Caesar's daughter. The new Bethsaida far outclasses the fishing town where several of Jesus' aides had grown up.

Herod Philip's soldiers are not interested in Jesus. They are instructed that, if they spot him, to keep going as though they had not. What with Herod Antipas stealing his wife, Herod Philip does not really care what his brother wants. He certainly is not going to help his brother kill his enemies.

“I guess you’re right, Jesus,” Nathaniel says. “We need to send word to our families. Let them know we are safe.”

“Besides, it would be nice to sleep in a real bed for once.”

The thirteen rent some rooms at a hostel in the newer part of town where they are not likely to be recognized.

Tomorrow Jesus will take care of some business while he is here. There is someone in the city who is blind. Jesus decides to help him out.



As usual, Aram’s sister guides him to his begging spot at the marketplace.

Aram has brown hair and big eyes, though they are useless eyes.

His ears are big and twitch when he wills them to, much to the amusement of his nieces and nephews. He claims twitching them helps him hear better what is going on around him. The same with his small nose. Twitching makes his ears and nose work better, so he claims to the children. They delight in his

teasing.

“Do you want the same corner as yesterday?” Bracha asks.

“Better not go there. One of the shopkeepers threw rotten vegetables at me. Said I was running off his best customers.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Aram. They should be ashamed of themselves,” Bracha replies.

“It wasn’t all of them. Just the one with the fruit market,” Aram explains.

“They should know you have to work just like everyone else,” Bracha says. “You’ve got to help pay for your share of food, and a new tunic and shoes now and then.”

“It’s not like I’m living in luxury,” Aram says.

“So, where do you want to sit?” Bracha asks.

“A little closer to the city square I think.”

They walk down the street, Aram with his hopping-like gait, taking a few steps, stopping to hear and smell what is going on around him, then taking a few more steps. Bracha is used to it. It is his way of coping with his blindness.

The brother and sister arrive at a corner they agree on. Bracha puts a pallet down on the ground for Aram to sit on. Aram unties the large bowl with a hole in one side, seats himself, and places the bowl in front of him.

“Alms for the poor,” he begins. “Alms for the poor.”

“None of the shopkeepers are paying any attention to you, so I think this will be a good spot for you for today.”

“Alms for the poor. Good. See you tonight, dear sister. Alms for the poor.”

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Having had breakfast, Jesus and his twelve aides leave their hostel and walk over to the city square near the main gate.

They see a group of dirty men trying to wash up in a spring there. They do not have any soap.

Although this is the new part of the city, the poor are always around. They are tolerated.

Though homeless, they try not to be a burden on others. They do not ask for money or handouts. They do the best they can

on their own. Trying to maintain their dignity until they can find another job and get back on their feet, they hope to be hired today. So they stay at the square, the hiring pool.

Jesus strikes up a conversation with some of them.

“Think you’ll find work today?” he asks.

“We’re hoping so,” says Ovadia. “The summer crops are coming in.”

“We have been here a few days,” Noach adds, “and no one has hired us yet.”

“Maybe today some farmer who is shorthanded and lives out a little farther will come into town looking for help,” Giel says.

“Are you looking for hands, sir? We can do anything. We’re fast learners.”

“No, he’s not,” says Peter. “But we wish you well.”

Ovadia looks over at Jesus. “That’s a pretty nice coat you’re wearing, sir. I used to be a weaver and you don’t have any seams in it,” he says.

“You’re not a spy are you?” Giel asks.

Jesus smiles and assures him he is not.

Concerned that the job seekers might turn them into the local religious leaders, Matthew speaks up. “Do you go to the synagogue here?”

“Uh, well, there’s the old one down closer to the lake, and we never went to it since we’re not really from here,” Noach replies.

“What about the one in the newer part of town,” Matthew continues.

“Well, we aren’t much for synagogue. Don’t think we’d be accepted. Most of the rich people go to the new one,” says Giel.

“They probably wouldn’t even let us in the door.” It’s Ovadia.

“We know about the Scriptures,” Noach says. “I don’t know about anyone else, but I never read it all the way through. They say no one can understand it unless one of the Pharisees or a scribe is around to explain it.”

Andrew frowns. “If you know how to read, then you can understand them.”

“Yes,” Philip adds. “Why would God order a book to be

written for everyone that everyone can't understand?"

"Would you guys like some soap?" Simon asks. "I have some extra I carry with me; I'm used to living outside."

"Thanks."

Eleazor, walking by the market square, watches the men in conversation. "Hey!" he calls out. Eleazor walks onto the square to see better.

"Well, what do you know?" Giel asks. We've got us a job."

"By any chance is your name Jesus?"

He walks right up to Jesus. The others stare alternately at Eleazor and at Jesus.

"Hey, leave the man alone," Peter says standing between Jesus and Eleazor.

Jesus steps around Peter. His work is about to start.

"Yes, I am," he says softly.

"Well, let's just keep this between you and him. Don't go telling it around," Simon says, laying his hand on the sheath of the dagger strapped to his leg under his tunic.

"I knew it!"

Eleazor looks at the other men in the square, not realizing some are Jesus' aides. "This is that Jesus everyone has been talking about! He's right here! Talking to us! In person!"

"Hey, wait right here, Jesus. I have a friend who needs to see you. I'll be right back."

"Don't expect us to be here," Thaddeus answers, just as Eleazor turns to leave."

"This is exactly where we will be," Jesus says in rebuttal.

"Are you sure?" John asks?

"I'm sure."

Eleazor hurries back across the square, out into the street that circles it, and heads down two blocks. "Please, God," Eleazor prays, "let Aram be there."

He is not.

Eleazor looks around. He heads toward the fruit stand. Not there either.

"Sir, have you seen a blind man around here?"

"Yeah. He was here yesterday and ran off all my best customers with his constant chatter. 'Alms for the poor. Alms for

the poor'. Drove me nuts."

Eleazor knows better than to ask the shopkeeper where his friend might be. He looks down the street to the west, but decides to head south.

"Alms. Alms for the poor."

Eleazor has chosen right. He hurries closer to the voice.

"Aram! I thought I was never going to find you."

"Well, I'm right here, Eleazor," he replies to his old friend.

"You've got to come!"

"Come where? I've got work to do."

"You've got to see this man," Eleazor replies.

"What for?" Aram asks. "There's nothing to see. Now leave me alone."

"I can't. And I won't," Eleazor says. "Now put that bowl away. You're coming with me."

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

Eleazor squats, scoops the change out of Aram's bowl, and puts it in Aram's patched money pouch before Aram can stop him.

"Hey, what are you doing?" Aram objects.

"The man. He's that Jesus everyone has been talking about! He's at the square! Come on! We're going to get your eyes back today!"

Eleazor grabs Aram's money bowl with the hole in the side and throws it on the pavement.

"Hey, you're going to crack it. Then where am I going to find another one," Aram objects again.

"Too late. It's already cracked, and you're not going to need another one."

"Come on. Get up, Aram." He pulls on Aram's arm until Aram gives in and stands. The two shuffle their way up the street and across the square. Stumbling. Struggling. Falling. Getting back up.

"Jesus, this is my friend Aram. He is blind."

Jesus has been seated on a bench in the square.

"You're just asking for trouble," James had said.

"Someone else is going to recognize you." Thomas had said.

"We promised not to tell," the three job seekers had said.

Jesus now rises from his seat and walks toward Eleazor and Aram.

“Hello, Aram. You and I have some business to take care of today.”

“Uh, well, uh...”

“Come with me, Aram. Eleazor, would you mind staying here in the square with the other men? My aides and I will take care of this outside the city.”

Jesus takes Aram by the arm and leads him through the city gate. What’s going on? The twelve know and grin at each other.

Once outside the gate, Jesus goes off the road so they can be alone. He must not draw attention to himself. He is still a wanted man.

The twelve gather around Jesus and his new friend protectively so outsiders, even from the road, cannot tell what is going on.

“Do you believe?” Jesus asks.

“I’m not sure. I think I do. Are you going to help me see again? That’s what Eleazor told me.”

Jesus and Aram sit on the ground facing each other.

Jesus licks his fingers and touches Aram's useless eyes. His fingers are cool and soothing. He pauses and takes his fingers away from Aram's eyes.

“Do you see anything?”

“Well, I think I see people, but I’m not sure what people look like. They look like trees walking around.”

Clear your mind, Aram. Think people, not trees.

Jesus puts his fingers back on Aram's eyes. Concentrate, Aram. God is helping you. Let God do it.

Jesus takes his fingers away. He looks Aram in the eyes. “How about now? Do you see people now?”

“Yes, I think I do. Those trees were really people.”

Jesus smiles. The twelve aides standing around them smile. Aram grins.

“I can see! I can tell all of you clearly. I see him and him and him. I can tell what they're wearing. I can see clearly now. And I can see you too. At last, I can see you, Jesus. Thank you!

Thank you!”

Suspecting Jesus has brought the man outside the city for another reason besides hiding his identity, Judas asks, “Where is your home?”

“In Gergesa.”

Jesus encourages Aram to go back home. “Don't go back into Bethsaida-Julius.”

“You're right. I can go back to live with my parents now,” Aram says. “I don't have to rely on my sister and her husband. I can move back in with my parents and support them. I can hold a job now. I can have some dignity.”

Judas counts out some money. “Here, Aram, is a little money to take home with you. It will help out until you find a job and receive your first pay.”

“What kind of work do you think you'll be able to do?” Nathaniel asks.

“I've tried my hand at the potter's wheel. I think I did okay. Now that I can see, I'll be able to tell for sure if my work is good enough to sell.”

“Well, good luck, sir,” Matthew says.

“Just follow this road and it will take you to your home.” It is James.

Without answering, Aram looks again at Jesus. He bows to the ground, his hands folded in front of him. “How can I thank you enough?” he asks Jesus.

Aram turns south and heads for home. Home to a new life. Aram has been reborn.

“Oh, by the way,” big Little James calls after Aram. “We'll hire a boy to go back into the square to tell your friend where you're going.”

Aram does not notice. He is busy looking around. He closes his eyes so he can return to his keen sense of smell. He senses the aroma of a flower, opens his eyes, wanders over to the Rose of Sharon, and picks a bloom. “You are more beautiful than I ever imagined,” Aram says.

Other times he closes his eyes so he can return to his keen sense of hearing. He hears a bird, opens his eyes and looks in the direction of the song.

“So that’s what you look like, little one,” he says.



Jesus, too, does not go back into the city. He doesn’t want to press his luck too far. It is time to move on.

“Where to now?” asks Thomas.

“Caesarea Philippi farther north.”

As they go back out on the road, they talk among themselves.

Sometimes they walk in silence.

So many yet to speak to. So many eyes yet to open. All wandering around deaf and blind.

## LIFE APPLICATION

1. In what way do you purposely become blind to at least part of the scriptures? What will you do to correct your blindness?
2. In what way do you purposely become deaf to, rather than listen to life applications to the scriptures? What will you do to correct your deafness?
3. In what way do you purposely become mute rather than share the scriptures with others? What will you do to correct your muteness?

### **CITATIONS IN THIS CHAPTER (In Order of Appearance)**

NEW TESTAMENT OF THE BIBLE: Mark 7:31; Luke 13:33; Mark 7:32-37; Matthew 15:29-39; Mark 8:10-12; Mathew 16:1-12; Mark 8:22; John 19:23-24; Mark 8:23-26

OLD TESTAMENT OF THE BIBLE: Exodus 39:1; Zechariah 6:11, 13

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 18, 1 and 2.

### **REFERENCES TO OTHER BOOKS IN THIS SERIES made in this chapter in order of appearance**

Book 4, *Folk Hero*, "Gates of Glory"

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