

War
of the
SEED

by Lorri Frandsen

War of the Seed

The Creator's Plan

Dedicated to the Warriors of Christ
who battle daily
against the Princes and Powers of the air
in our world today

WAR OF THE SEED tells the story of the cosmic, behind-the-scenes battle
between the God of the universe and the forces of evil
for the prize of humanity

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"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

Elohim, the trinitarian God, spoke creation into being through the Word. Although creation would sink into great darkness, Elohim had a master plan - a plan so mysterious that not even the angels understood it at first. As the Word, He would destroy death (through His own death) and a new creation would come into being through His resurrection.



Elohim's angels were part of His creation, designed to act as His messengers, swift as the wind and fierce as flaming fire. In the Book of Enoch 1 seven archangels are named - Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Saraquel, and Remiel. Michael and Gabriel, two of the highest angels, are the Creator's special messengers. They are often mentioned in the Bible.

(The Book of Enoch 1 is not in the Canon of the Bible, but the apostles Jude, James, and Peter quoted from it, thereby relegating at least parts of it as being divinely inspired.)



A high order of angelic being were the Watchers as described in the book of Enoch 1, a book revealing that in pre-flood times, 200 of these Watchers descended on Mount Hermon and made an oath to defy Elohim. They had been present when the human race was created and they had counselled with Elohim around His throne and performed His decrees. But 200 of them saw a way to enslave humans and become gods to them, so as to be worshipped and obeyed. These were exceedingly evil and are believed to have been the ones who cohabited with human women. Elohim pronounced judgement on them and they were bound in the Abyss, a place of suffering, where the wicked receive divine punishment.





The Bible indicates that life in pre flood times was very different from what we know of our world today. Not only did Nephilim giants exist, but also huge animal creatures that were incredibly powerful and frightening to behold. The Bible names Behemoth, who may have been a real type of dinosaur. Many

believe that dinosaurs and humans walked the earth together. If so, the antediluvian world was a very dangerous place. Humans lived a very long time in that era, sometimes for as long as nine centuries!

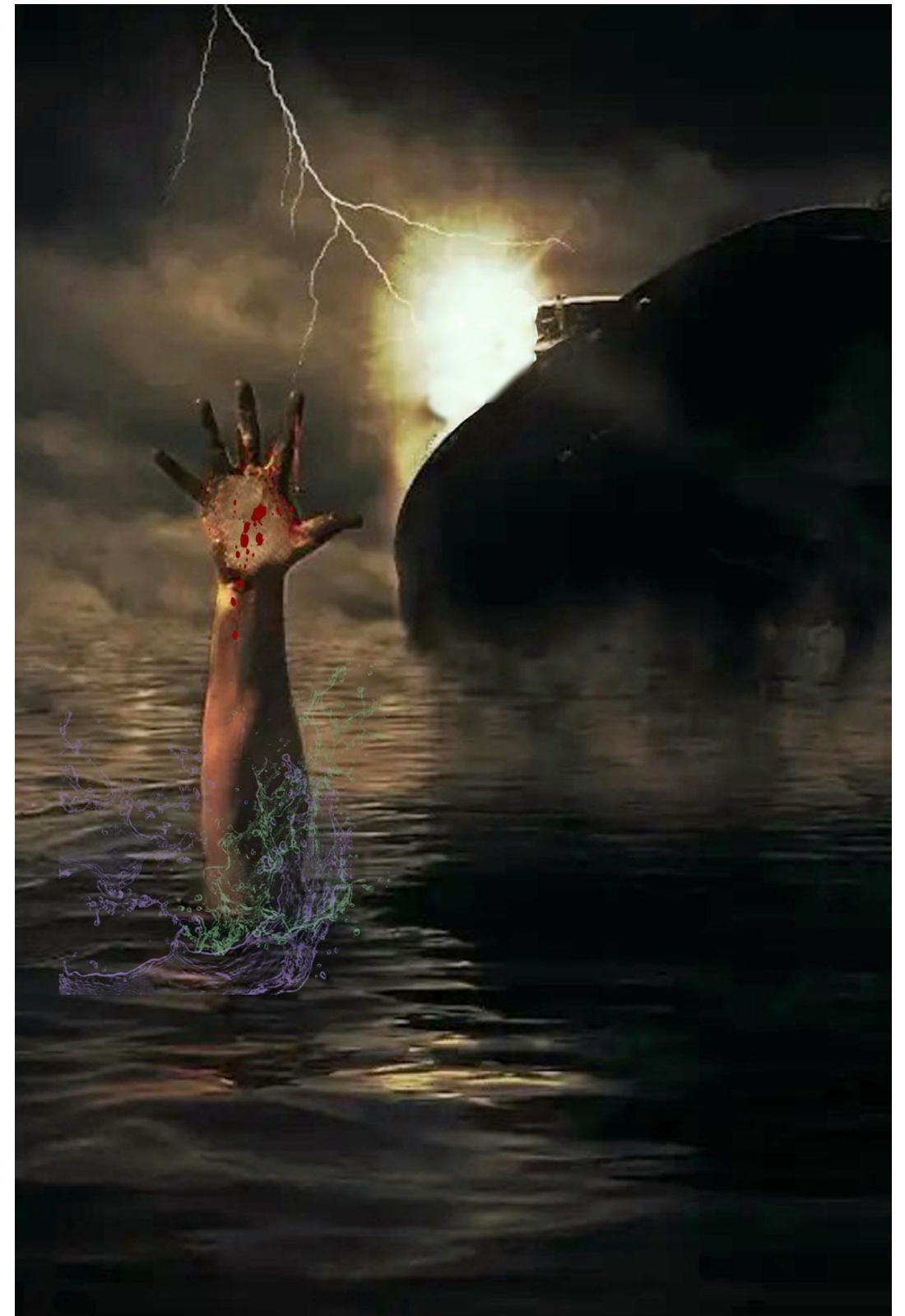
The progeny of the Watchers and human women were the Nephilim. They were giants of great stature, heroes of renown, fierce hunters, and warring fighters. They lived together with humans for hundreds of years in pre flood times, quickly spreading over the earth and becoming increasingly evil. They eventually began cannibalizing humans and destroying the animal kingdom. Their wickedness was so great that the Creator was deeply grieved in His heart and regretted ever having made both the Watchers, and the human race.





The Creator decided to send a flood to destroy them. Only one man, Noah, found grace in the Creator's sight. He was commissioned to build a great ark for himself, his family, and some of the animal kingdom. It took 120 years for Noah and his sons to build the ark so there was lots of time to warn the population of impending disaster. The ark was an ominous warning of what was to come. However Nephilim and human alike went on with their lives as usual, becoming increasingly lawless and violent. Then the flood finally came.

The waters broke from the sky (some scientists think that a cloud canopy may have covered the earth insulating it from the rays of the sun and possibly explaining the longevity of life at the time). The waters in the deep also rose up in a cataclysmic deluge. There was no escape for human, beast, or Nephilim. As the waters rose, they all perished together. Not one remained alive.





The flood lasted a year and after the waters subsided, Noah's ark landed on a mountain. Noah's family multiplied and spread out over the land. One great grandson, Nimrod, settled in the land of Shinar and built a great temple (ziggurat) in defiance of Elohim. He re-instituted all the old religious practices of pre-flood times including prostitution, idolatry, human sacrifice, and sorcery.



Elohim saw that the humans were heading back into the perversity and bondage experienced by pre-flood civilizations. In order to hinder their descent into wickedness, He supernaturally confused their language so that the Ziggurat could not be completed. Many groups splintered off and left for other places to form nation states. The abandoned Temple was then called the Tower of Babel because of the indecipherable babbling that went on there.

Pagan Religions

Enoch 1 states that the Watchers who cohabited with human women were doomed to judgement, the Creator having no intention of ever providing redemption for them. Some Watchers were consigned to a place called the Abyss, to await a final judgement later on. Their Nephilim progeny were likewise destined for judgement and could not be redeemed. When the great flood came, all the Nephilim and all the humans drowned and their spirits went to Sheol (hell). Sheol also contained Elohim's followers who died before the flood, but they were separated from the wicked in a part of Sheol called Paradise. Some of the spirits of the dead Nephilim did not go to Sheol. Enoch 1 says that about 1/10th of the them were allowed to remain on the earth. They soon began to masquerade as gods in the pagan religions that spread over the new world.





The Nephilim spirits, or demons, wanted a global world order similar to the one that had existed before the flood. This would give them much power over humanity. Elohim already shut down one world order attempt at Babel, but people still rejected their Creator and worshipped demon gods instead - except for a man named Abraham. Elohim called him and his wife out of the land of Ur and gave promises to them and to their Seed, referring to the Saviour (seed of the woman) who would battle with Satan (seed of the serpent) for the prize of humanity.



Elohim appeared to Abraham several times over the years, but one day He came with two of His angels. He again confirmed His covenant with Abraham and promised him a son, but then He revealed that the two angels were going on ahead to Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot lived, in order to bring judgement for the terrible sins being done there. This alarmed Abraham because he feared that his nephew Lot and his family would be destroyed along with the inhabitants of the cities.



Elohim promised Abraham that if the angels found as many as ten righteous people living in Sodom, judgement would be withheld. Abraham felt sure there would be at least that number, so he was reassured of Lot's safety. As the angels, who are very beautiful, entered the city, they were quickly noticed and admired by the populace. Their admiration was mixed with lust, for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were very licentious.

The angels appeared in human form and when Lot saw them in the city square, he feared for their safety (not knowing then that they were really angels). He knew that as strangers to the city, they could be attacked, as strangers often were. He brought them to his home but a mob of men - old and young - quickly gathered at his door demanding that Lot send out the angels so they could have sex with them. Lot tried to appease the mob but they threatened to attack Lot himself. The angels brought him inside and struck the attackers with blindness. Then they instructed Lot to gather any other family members together but his sons-in-law refused to come. Next day the angels forcibly led the frightened Lot and his family out of Sodom, warning them not to look back because God was about to judge the cities for their sins. As the angels were leading Lot's family to safety, Elohim rained down fire and sulphur. Lot's wife lingered along the way and turned back to gaze at the destruction, thereby imperilling her life as bitumen and salt smothered her. Some say a stone pillar of her remains overlooks the Dead Sea to this day.



Elohim and Abraham were friends and Abraham now addressed his Friend by His more personal name, YHWH. Abraham had greatly longed for a family. The dream of his heart was to have sons and daughters who would carry on his name. YHWH understood fully. True to His promise YHWH gave him a son who was named Isaac. The Nephilim also wanted family, for different reasons. Their progeny were the giant Nephilim who were to spread over the earth so as to conquer and enslave humanity and establish their rule over the planet.

YHWH also wanted family, but He was a loving God who desired a close personal relationship with His chosen human children, who would be given kingdom rule over the earth.





YHWH promised Abraham he would have descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. They would all come through baby Isaac. In fact, many of YHWH's own children would be among them. They would be children who loved and trusted Him - faith children.

Isaac was treated like a prince. All the dreams of his parents rested upon this precious son of their old age. YHWH told Abraham: "I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him." It was a very great promise and Isaac's parents clung to it with every fibre of their being. Abraham's affection for Isaac was so great that it may even have rivalled the love he felt for YHWH. Perhaps that is why YHWH put Abraham to the test, to confirm that He was the number one priority in Abraham's life. It was to be the greatest test of Abraham's entire life. Sarah wasn't included in the test, perhaps because, as a mother, she would have found it more than she could bear.



Most of the pagan religions of that time practiced human sacrifice, often revolving around blood, and often involving children. Geologists have found many places where the bodies of adults, children, and infants were surrounded by religious altars, ritualistic weapons, and other religious objects. Ancient texts describe the practice of human sacrifice, and artwork depicts such practices in many regions. So when YHWH asked Abraham to offer up Isaac, it wouldn't have been a foreign concept to Abraham since all the pagan gods demanded this. Abraham didn't know that YHWH hated such practices and was only testing him.





Abraham and Isaac journeyed three days to Mount Moriah. Though he trusted YHWH and had faith in His promises, it must have torn Abraham's heart to think of what he was about to do. When Isaac asked where the lamb was for the sacrifice, his father told him YHWH would provide. Little did he know, that was exactly what would happen.

Abraham was just about to sacrifice Isaac, when YHWH's voice stopped him. A lamb was caught in some bushes close by and Abraham was told to sacrifice that instead of his son. Abraham passed the test by being willing to give up his dearest son to YHWH, but YHWH would one day make an actual sacrifice of His own Son for humanity. He would rescue the nations from wickedness by giving up His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of the human race. That sacrifice would atone for sin and put an end to spiritual death, creating a New Creation through Him. This was the grand plan from the very beginning of time, even before YHWH had created the world and everything upon it.

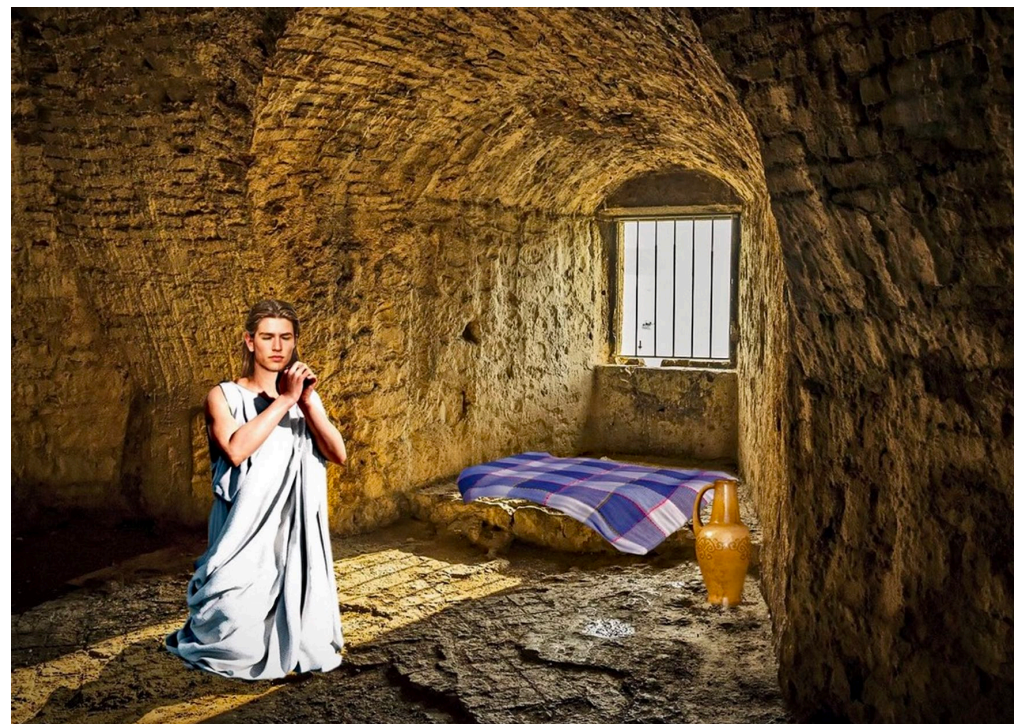




Abraham's grandson, Jacob, had a dream vision where angels were going up and down a stairway to heaven. It was like a portal where the spiritual met the physical. Through this dream YHWH reaffirmed the promise He had made to Abraham that all the earth would be blessed through their descendants and He later changed Jacob's name to Israel.



Jacob had ten sons and a daughter from Leah, one of his wives, and two sons from his other wife, Rachel, whom he loved more than Leah. Rachel bore him a son called Joseph, whom he favoured above all his other children. Jacob made a special coat in royal colours for Joseph, which aroused great jealousy in his other sons. When Jacob sent Joseph out to check on his brothers, they plotted to get rid of him. They threw him in a well before selling him to passing slavers. Jacob thought Joseph was dead and didn't know he had been taken to Egypt as a slave. He was in deep grief for many years. Joseph had once had a dream of his family bowing down to him in honour, but that seemed unlikely now. He was a lowly slave in Egypt, and to make matters worse, he was falsely accused of raping his owner's wife which landed him in prison for several years. But YHWH was with him.



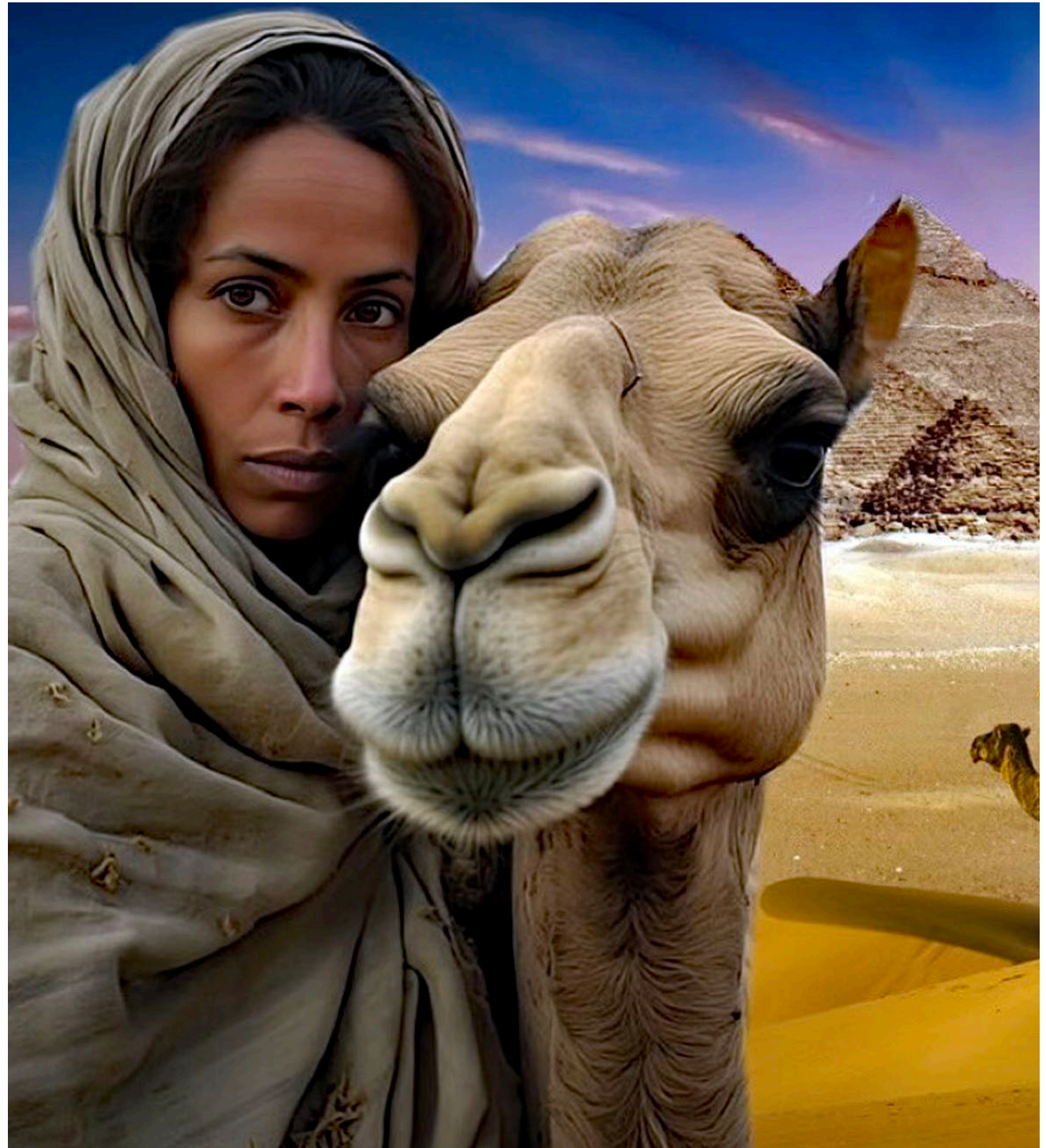


Joseph never lost faith in YHWH who caused Joseph to have favour in all he did. When the king had troubling dreams and he was told that Joseph could interpret such things, the king called for him. Joseph told Pharaoh that his dreams foretold seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's wisdom that he made him second in command over all of Egypt. Joseph stored grain for seven years and when the famine hit, everyone came to Egypt to buy grain, including Joseph's family. Just as Joseph had once dreamed, his brothers all bowed down to him as they begged to buy food. Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him. It had been thirteen years since they had sold him into slavery. He put them through a series of tests, to see if they had changed, and finding them repentant, he forgave them and revealed his identity. Then he arranged for his entire family to live in Egypt.

Joseph's life parallels the life of YHWH's Son, Jesus Christ, the promised holy Seed who would arrive many centuries later. Both were righteous; both were betrayed by their brethren; both were persecuted unfairly and brought low; both were then raised up above all others; and they both forgave their enemies and ruled as kings over a kingdom. Many characters and events in the Bible were types, or shadows, of the redemption YHWH was to bring through His Son, Jesus Christ. He gave many indications of His grand plan, but they were cloaked in mystery. Even the angels longed to look into these things but did not perfectly understand what YHWH was doing.



YHWH carefully guarded the genetic line to the Holy Seed because He loved His human creatures and their deliverance depended on the coming Holy One. Before the flood, the wicked Watchers had attempted to pollute the human bloodline with their own progeny, the Nephilim, in order to make redemption impossible for humanity. Their plan backfired but they continued to search for ways to thwart YHWH's plan. In Egypt they tried to use a severe famine to starve Jacob and his family, who they knew were in the Seed's bloodline. This was why YHWH exalted Joseph to a high position as vice-regent so as to make it possible for him to protect his family. Later YHWH chose his brother Judah to carry on the genealogical line to Messiah.





In the scriptures, there is a prophecy about Joseph's brother, Judah, which has a double meaning referring to YHWH's Seed. "You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his." The Lion of Judah is a symbol of the fierce majesty of an all-powerful King who rules over all. This is a recurring theme throughout the Bible.



The people of Israel (Jacob's new name) also called Hebrews (from Abraham's time) greatly multiplied over the next 400 years. They became so numerous that Egypt's Pharaoh became alarmed. He could see they were forming into a nation. To weaken them, he enslaved them and forced them to make bricks for building the pyramids. Carvings have been found on blocks of stone on the Sinai peninsula that resemble the Hebrew script. These hieroglyphs are very different to those of the Egyptians, providing evidence of the Hebrew culture.



Each of the nations of the world had Watchers over them. They were part of YHWH's divine council and they were called 'gods' and 'sons of the Most High' (they were created beings, unlike the divine Son of God). They were to execute justice over the lands they watched over, but they showed partiality to the wicked instead. Egypt's Watcher stirred evil in the heart of Pharaoh against the Hebrews. The king decided to depopulate the Hebrew nation by having their midwives kill all baby boys as they were being born. When that didn't work, he issued a decree commanding that every male Hebrew child be thrown into the Nile to the crocodiles.



One Hebrew family put their baby boy in a waterproofed basket and set it on the Nile River, trusting that YHWH would save him, which He had every intention of doing. An Egyptian princess discovered the babe and had compassion on him. She adopted him as her own and called him Moses. Through seeming coincidence, the baby was nursed for the first year or two by his own Hebrew birthmother.

Moses was greatly favoured in Pharaoh's house and raised as a high-born Egyptian prince. He was educated and trained in all the arts and sciences of the land. Everyone loved him. But Moses had been nursed by his own mother until he was weaned and perhaps he saw her from time to time, because he knew he was a Hebrew. He identified with his Hebrew brethren and was disturbed by how they were being treated by their Egyptian overlords. When he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave, Moses became enraged and killed the taskmaster. Pharaoh soon heard of it and Moses had to flee for his life.



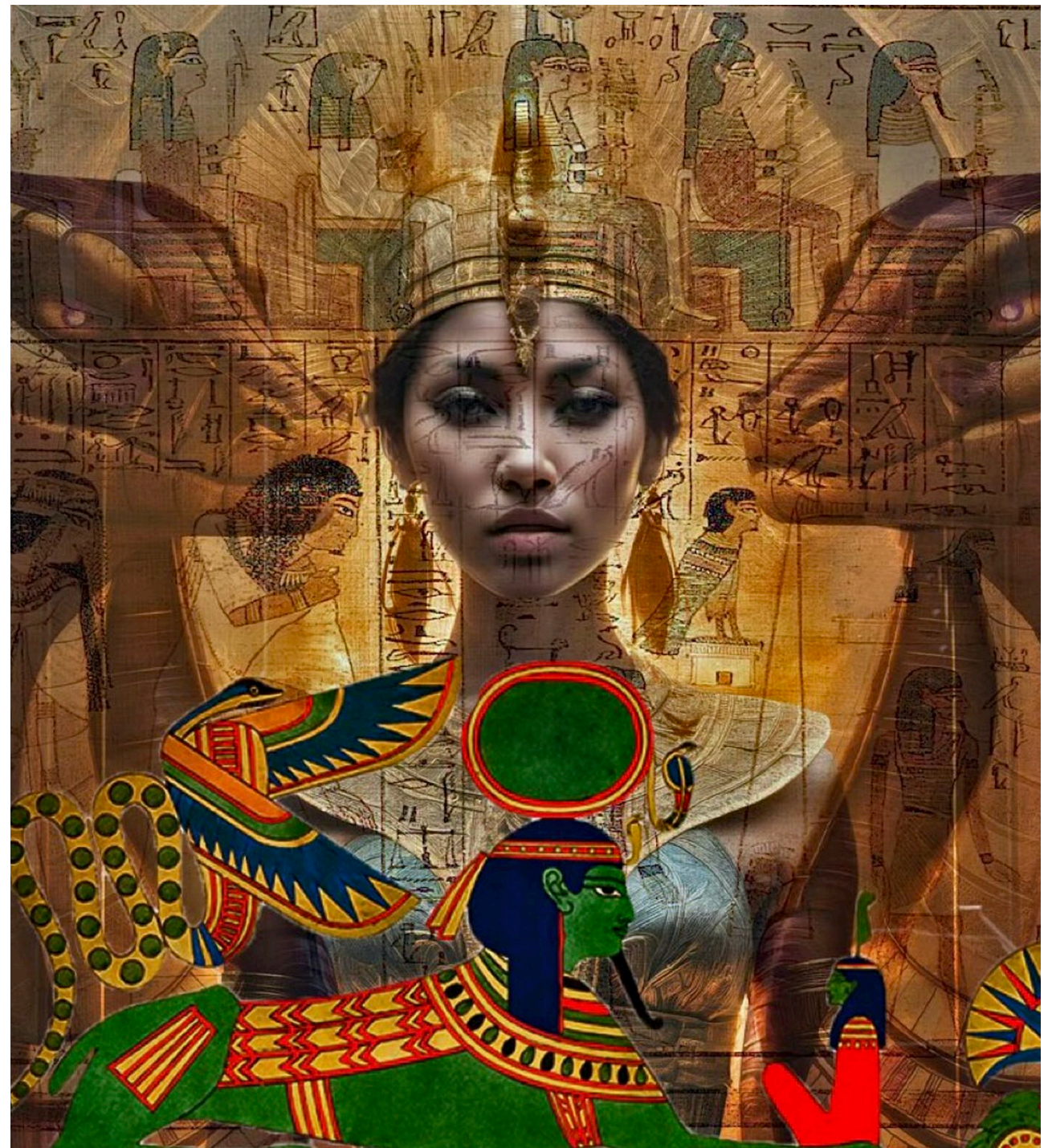
Moses was tending a flock of sheep belonging to his father-in-law on Mt. Horeb in Midian, when he saw a burning bush that was not consumed by the flames. There, the angel of the Lord called to him, identifying Himself as YHWH, the God of his ancestors. He told Moses that He was sending him to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses hesitated and tried to evade the summons, but YHWH assured him He would go with him. He told Moses that he was to bring the people back to Horeb to worship YHWH on that very mountain. He also gave Moses His personal name, 'Yahweh, I AM', to convey His love and presence to His people. Moses still felt a lack of confidence to carry out this mission, so Yahweh had his brother Aaron, meet him on the way.



Moses and Aaron traveled to Egypt together. They knew it was very daunting to approach Pharaoh because he had many powerful magicians trained in the black arts. Even though the old Pharaoh (who had wanted to kill Moses) was now dead, Egypt hadn't changed over the years. Egypt was still full of demonic worship of everything under the sun - planets, weather, animals, sun, death, fertility, even Pharaoh himself - all controlled by powerful demon-inspired priests. Moses well understood the powers wielded by these sorcerers because he had been brought up around them. Moses knew he was in for a heavy spiritual battle. To encourage him, Yahweh gave Moses a stick that could turn into a snake.



Egyptian art was full of snakes, depicted on coffins and even on Pharaoh's crown (as a protective talisman). Snakes symbolized evil and chaos, but also life, rebirth and healing. There was a cobra goddess who represented guardianship over childbirth. Another was believed to guard the underworld and was worshipped during funerary rites. Eventually this snake god supposedly became Ra's successor as King of the Sky. The wilderness had fiery flying serpents and these were also depicted in Egyptian art. It was no coincidence that Yahweh gave Moses a rod that could turn into a snake since Pharaoh would recognize this as a show of power.



The new Pharaoh scoffed at Moses when he told him that the God of the Israelites wanted him to let His people leave Egypt. Pharaoh recognized no authority but his own so he demanded a sign of Yahweh's authority. God had instructed Moses and Aaron to throw down the staff when they met Pharaoh, and when Aaron did so, his staff turned into a huge snake. Pharaoh immediately summoned his own magicians who were also able to turn their staffs into snakes. However, in an ominous display of superior strength, Aaron's snake devoured the magicians' snakes. Yet in spite of this, Pharaoh's heart remained obstinate. He was so hardened that he refused to be impressed by this obvious sign of Yahweh's superior power.





Pharaoh wasn't relenting so Yahweh told Moses to put his staff into the Nile and it would turn the water into blood. All the fish in the Nile died and the Egyptians could not drink the water from the river. Even the water in drinking vessels turned into blood and there was a terrible stink over the land. But Pharaoh's magicians were able to do the same by their secret arts, so Pharaoh's heart remained hardened and he would not listen to Moses.

Like all tyrants, Pharaoh cared more about his own power than for the well-being of his own people. The suffering of others did not move him. The Nile's waters turning to blood affected the Egyptians, but also the Israelites, since neither could drink the water. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened even more. In fact he was so angered that the God of the Israelites would dare to challenge his powers, that he doubled down on his oppression of the Hebrews, making their lives a nightmare. He increased their workload and demanded that they fulfill even more stringent work quotas, threatening to enslave their children if they were not met. Yahweh knew this would happen and acted accordingly.





Yahweh sent plagues of frogs, lice, locusts, boils, livestock pestilence, and days of darkness to get Pharaoh to change his mind, but to no avail. Finally Yahweh sent His destroying angel to kill the firstborn of everyone who did not have the blood of a lamb smeared on their doorpost. All the homes of the Hebrews were passed over because they made sure to put the blood on their doors, but countless Egyptians died. All Egypt was in mourning and Pharaoh finally surrendered after his own firstborn died. He said Moses and the 600,000 plus Hebrews could leave. The huge entourage left Egypt laden with wealth, for the Egyptians were so glad to be rid of them that they gave the Hebrews all they asked.



The lamb's blood on the doorposts foretold the coming of a divine Lamb of God who would bring deliverance from spiritual death. His blood would pay for the sins of humanity. What occurred in Egypt was a shadow of what was to come. The blood on the door lintels was a sign of mercy which applied to Egyptians as well as Hebrews, if they believed Yahweh and took up His offer of protection. Some did, but most did not.

The Hebrews had been slaves in Egypt for 430 years and Pharaoh was losing his entire work force. Yahweh led the 600,000 adult Hebrew men (and likely as many women and children) with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That way they could travel night and day to distance themselves from Egypt. The Hebrews were unaware of what was awaiting them, but Yahweh knew what was about to happen and He warned Moses, giving him instructions on what to do when they all came to the Red Sea.





Pharaoh thought better of letting all his slaves leave Egypt and he was consumed with rage as he raced after them. He had learned nothing from the plagues Yahweh had sent earlier. His army raced after the Hebrews and saw them crossing the Red Sea, with Moses standing on the other side, his rod held aloft as the waters stood parted on either side. Thinking his army could cross as the Hebrews were doing, Pharaoh commanded his men to go forward, but Moses let down his staff and the waters returned to their place. Pharaoh's chariots and soldiers were mired in mud and found no escape when the waters closed over them. Not one remained alive.

Next day the Hebrews saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore and were in awe of Yahweh's great power. Not one of Pharaoh's army made it out alive. Just as in antediluvian days, a flood of water had destroyed evil. The Hebrews celebrated the monumental victory Yahweh had given them. They were so elated that Miriam, prophetess and elder sister of Aaron and Moses, led the women in song and dance with tambourines. Today the 'Song of the Sea' is read on the seventh day of the Jewish Passover, the day on which the sea was split and the song was sung. On this day, many Jews have the custom of staying up the entire night, studying Torah, and recreating the miraculous parting of the sea. Some will even pour water on the floor and then dance through it, commemorating this miraculous event.





The Hebrews soon lost their jubilation at being set free from slavery. The rigours of desert life were hard on the people, who were not used to this kind of life and often grumbled at Yahweh and Moses whenever food and thirst overcame them. Yahweh was always faithful, providing water from a rock, quail, and even bread-like flakes that rained down from the sky every day. The Hebrews called it manna and it sustained them for 40 years until they came to the borders of Canaan.



The Hebrews didn't really know their God and the first thing Yahweh did through Moses was to reveal His holiness and hatred for sin. Moses met with Yahweh on Mt. Sinai to receive the ten commandments written on stone tablets so the people could know what Yahweh expected of them. The fire and smoke were meant to impress them with His power and might.





The ten Commandments are 10 basic moral rules which were necessary to establish order in Hebrew society, plus they clearly showed the extent of Yahweh's holiness. This moral standard is still used today in many nations and civilizations of the world, without necessarily following the God of the Jews. Of course to reach such a level of moral perfection required perfect obedience, and that disqualified everyone. But the Israelites affirmed to Moses that they would keep all ten commandments.

Setting such an impossible standard was Yahweh's way of showing the Hebrews that they could not attain righteousness in themselves. No one can keep the Law perfectly, although many try to do so. The Hebrews needed a Divine Rescuer who would fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law for them, which is why Yahweh gave instructions for a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a mobile temple that the Hebrews could take with them as they traveled. Everything in its construction pointed to a coming Lamb of God whose blood sacrifice would break down every barrier between Yahweh and humanity. The Lamb's righteousness would provide their salvation. The tabernacle, with its many animal sacrifices, was a constant reminder to the Hebrews of their need for a Deliverer and the blood payment for sin that was required to approach a perfect God.





The Hebrews quickly forgot their promise to follow Yahweh and rebelled against Him continually, greatly trying His patience. When Moses sent spies into Canaan, the people were overcome with terror because the spies saw giants living there. The Hebrew people refused to enter. It was at this point that Yahweh gave up on the older generation. They were sentenced to roam in the desert for forty years.

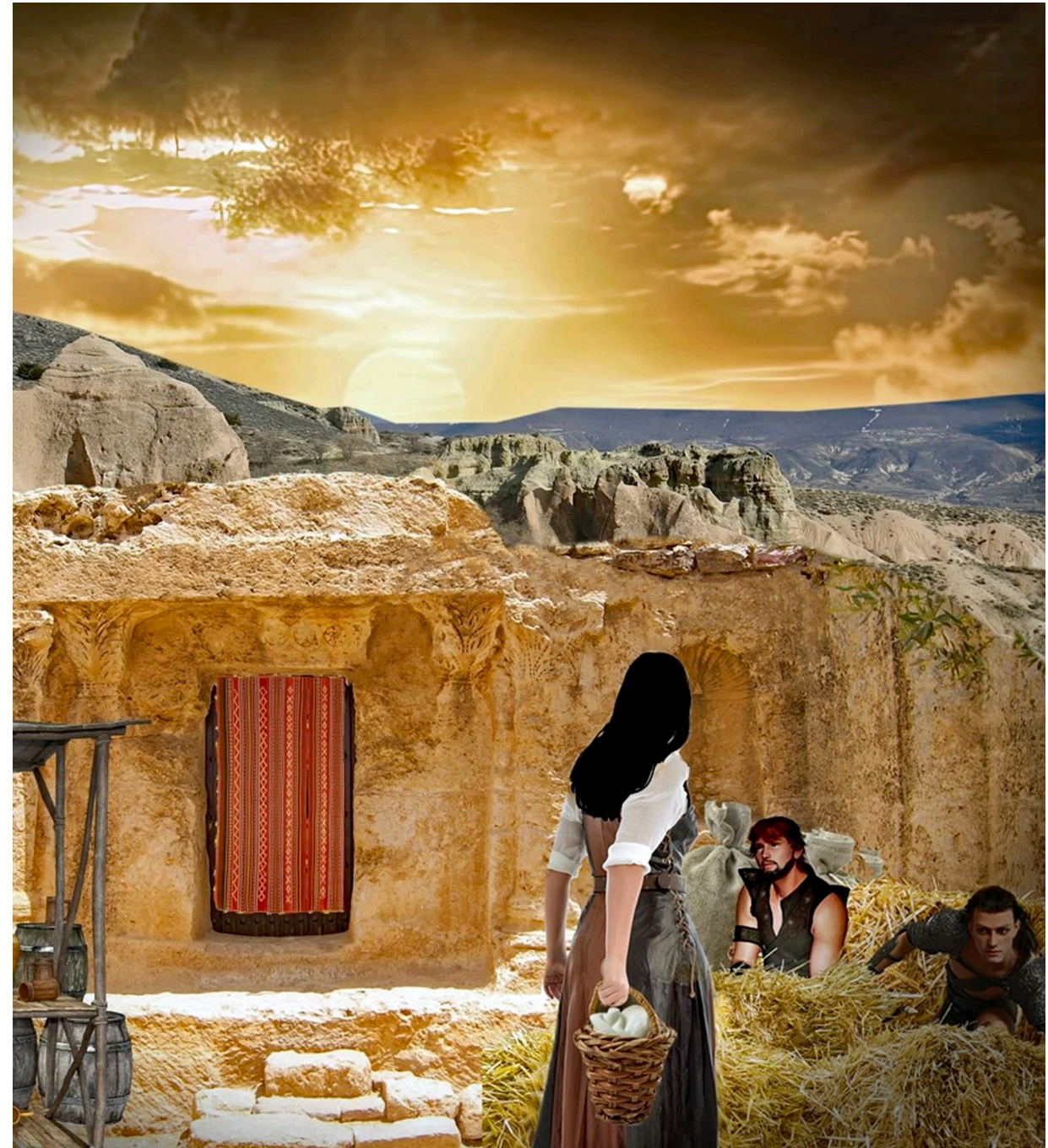


The older generation of Hebrews died off and Yahweh chose Joshua and Caleb to lead the younger generation. They were the only two who had not been dismayed over the reports of giants in Canaan and had wanted to obey Yahweh. They had almost been killed by the fearful Israelites as a result. All who had resisted Yahweh's command to enter Canaan died during the 40 years of wandering. Moses was not permitted to lead the people any longer because at one time he had dishonoured God by presumptuously usurping Yahweh's glory. He died on Mt. Seir, but he watched as the people crossed the border. Then he died and Yahweh buried him on the mountain.

The Hebrews were now a nation, calling themselves Israelites after the name Yahweh had given Jacob. The men had been trained in warfare by Joshua and Caleb and they were ready to conquer Canaan. On the border stood the city of Jericho. As they came near the city, they saw it was a heavily guarded fortress that seemed impregnable. It was very old, dating to 10000 BC. and was surrounded by a stone wall 11.8 feet high and 5.9 feet wide. The city would be the first one attacked by the Israelites, but Joshua first commissioned 2 spies to enter the city and bring back information. It was a dangerous mission and the spies would have stood out as foreigners, making it difficult to conceal themselves among the people.



The spies got into Jericho and came to the house of a prostitute called Rahab. However the king of Jericho found out about them and he sent his men to Rahab's brothel to capture them. Rahab had heard about the great miracles Yahweh had done in Egypt and at the Red Sea. She believed that He would surely give the Israelites victory in taking the city. She hid the spies on the rooftop of her house under some flax. When the king commanded her to send the spies out to him, she told the king that they had left at nightfall and she didn't know where they had gone. She urged the king to quickly pursue them in order to catch them before they left the city. The soldiers left and the city gate was shut.





Rahab asked the spies to promise to show kindness to her family as she had shown kindness to them. The men agreed, as long as she didn't inform on them. Rahab let the spies out through her window which was on the top of the city wall. She told them to hide in the hills for 3 days before returning to their camp. The spies instructed her to hang a red cord from her window to show her location when Israel attacked. Joshua listened to the spies' report and, as Yahweh instructed, he had the Israelites march around the city for 7 days carrying the ark of the covenant while blowing the shofar continually.



On the 7th day Israel gave a loud shout and Jericho's walls fell flat, allowing Israel to march right in. Everyone was killed inside the city. Rahab and her family were the only survivors. The red cord had been her lifeline, indicating her faith in Yahweh, just as the blood of Yahweh's Son would one day rescue all who put their faith in Him. It was a shadow of the plan Yahweh had for humanity.



Rahab married Salmon, a prince of Israel from the tribe of Judah, thereby placing her in the genealogical line of the Messiah. There was no greater honour Yahweh could have given her. She was now a part of Yahweh's people and in direct line to the coming Deliverer. In spite of her being a Canaanite and a former prostitute, she had trusted Yahweh and He had seen her heart and loved her. Her old life was gone and her new life was full of promise.



Israel pushed into Canaan and found many giant clans there - Rephaim, Anakim, Amalakites, and many more. These tribes were related to the Nephilim from pre-flood times. It would seem the Watchers had again cohabited with human women to produce giants. The Bible mentions King Og of the Amorites whose bed was 13 feet long and 6 feet wide. These throwbacks to the Nephilim were evil and a dire threat to Israel and Yahweh's plan for His people to establish His kingdom family on the earth.

Both the Nephilim and their progeny were sometimes called "Gibborim". These descendants were not as tall and powerful as the original Nephilim, but they were nevertheless a very dangerous, gigantic warrior race. They spread quickly, permeating all of Canaanite society, so that it was necessary to eradicate whole clans and their cities, including the animals because of the Nephilim's wicked pollution and distortion of all they came in contact with. Almost no tribe was free of the giants' wicked influence. Yahweh told Joshua to destroy all the giants. With them gone, Israel would finally be able to settle in the land.



Shortly after Joshua died, Israel turned away from Yahweh and began worshipping pagan gods. The people became increasingly lawless and Yahweh withdrew His protection. The neighbouring tribes of the Philistines attacked Israel but Yahweh, in His compassion, sent judges to help them. One unlikely judge was Samson whose birth was a miracle. At first his mother was unable to have children, but an angel appeared to her and said she would give birth to a son. He was to be a Nazarite all his life, which meant he was never to drink wine, touch dead bodies, or cut his hair or beard. Yahweh gave Samson supernatural strength which was linked to his long, uncut hair.





When Samson reached manhood, he was overtaken by lust. He married a Philistine woman from the pagan conquerors of Israel, even though the Israelites were not supposed to marry outside their faith. That led to a confrontation and Samson started killing Philistines. On one occasion, he took up the jawbone of a donkey and killed 1,000 men. He became a scourge to the Philistines who wanted to capture him and make him their prisoner.



In spite of many attempts, the Philistines failed to capture Samson until his love for Delilah, a Philistine prostitute, entrapped him. Delilah was bribed by the Philistines to discover the secret of Samson's great strength. Samson treated her questions as a game and teased her with false answers, until her nagging began to annoy him.

Samson finally told Delilah that his strength was due to his vow to never cut his hair. As they had done previously, the Philistines were waiting outside Delilah's apartment to overpower him in case Delilah managed to get the truth out of him. This time she had succeeded. After Samson fell asleep she quickly told the Philistines about his secret. They came and silently cut his hair. When Samson awoke, he realized that his great strength was gone. His enemies were able to overpower him and they dragged him off to prison.



Samson's eyes were gouged out and he was brought to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind corn at a mill wheel. The Philistines rejoiced that they had defeated their great enemy and they loved to humiliate him. But they also made the claim that Samson's God, Yahweh, was inferior in strength to their own god, Dagon. To show off the superiority of Dagon, they decided to hold a feast in his honour to celebrate. Samson was to be the main entertainment. They were claiming "Our god has given Samson into our control!" Thousands of Philistines were invited to the party.





Samson was chained to two large pillars that held up a house filled with Philistine lords and ladies. Three thousand were on the upper floor alone. No one had noticed that Samson's hair had grown longer over the months while in captivity. Samson prayed that Yahweh would once again give him power to defeat his enemies and Yahweh did so. Samson strained at the pillars and brought the house crashing down.

Samson was impulsive, violent, and driven by his lusts, yet Yahweh used this warrior, with all his faults, for the good of His people. Yahweh Himself is perfect but sometimes uses the sin already existing in the world to fulfill His purposes. The story of Samson showcases this. Samson is listed in the Bible's 'hall of faith' in spite of his many flaws. His name stands alongside those of Moses and Abraham. Though Yahweh's Law demanded perfection (which doomed even the patriarchs), His love for humanity provided a way to His heart through faith. These heroes all pointed the way to the mighty Deliverer who would one day overcome the world for His beloved people.

WHO THROUGH FAITH CONQUERED KINGDOMS,
ADMINISTERED JUSTICE, AND GAINED WHAT WAS
PROMISED...WHOSE WEAKNESS WAS TURNED TO
STRENGTH, WHO BECAME POWERFUL IN BATTLE,
AND ROUTED FOREIGN ARMIES.



MOSES ABRAHAM SAMSON

Israel was not content with the judges Yahweh sent to help them. They wanted a king like the nations around them, and so a tall, handsome man called Saul became Israel's first king. His appearance inspired confidence. After all, he stood head and shoulders above most men. Israel hoped that by having a king, they would be able to defeat the Philistines once and for all. Saul was shy at first and even tried to hide when the people wanted to anoint him as king. However he had a flawed character that soon revealed itself when he was disobedient to Yahweh's commands. He began to like the power of his position and when confronted by a major challenge, he failed miserably.



Goliath was a 10 foot Philistine giant. The Philistines were a warrior race related to the Nephilim from pre-flood times, and they were all fiercely wicked. They constantly tried to conquer Israel, making the lives of Yahweh's people a nightmare. One day Goliath challenged King Saul to a battle wherein each army would send out a champion and whichever champion won, that army would be declared victorious and the losing side would be subject to the winning side. All of Israel's army was terrified and King Saul could find no champion willing to take on the giant. Twice a day for 40 days Goliath taunted the Israelites, daring them to send a champion to fight him, but no one dared to take up the challenge.



A young shepherd boy named David was sent by his father to bring supplies to his brothers in the army. He heard about Goliath's insults to Yahweh and his mockery of Israel. David loved Yahweh deeply and he was incensed. He had complete faith that Yahweh would protect him and give him victory over the giant because he had personally experienced Yahweh's protection and deliverance many times. Often he had encountered wolves and lions which tried to attack the sheep he was guarding. Yahweh had given him the strength and courage to kill or drive them off every single time. Though just a teenage boy, he volunteered as Israel's champion, much to everyone's amazement.



No one had much hope that David would defeat Goliath. A young boy, not yet full-grown, against a ten foot giant seemed sheer folly. King Saul offered his own armour to David, but it was heavy and cumbersome and David refused the offer. He decided to use his sling instead, which he had used many times with lethal accuracy when facing predators in the field. Goliath felt insulted when he saw Israel's champion. He bragged how he would kill him, but David answered right back that Yahweh would give him the victory. He rushed at the giant and flung a stone that pierced Goliath's forehead, felling him just long enough for David to cut off his head. The Israelites were wild with excitement and cheered David as their hero.



David became very popular in Israel after having slain Goliath. He was handsome and well-liked by everyone, especially the young women who made up songs in his honour. He was also the 13th generation after Abraham, exhibiting the same trust in Yahweh that his ancestor had. And he was also in the genealogical line to the coming Messiah. Yahweh called him to be the next king of Israel, for He had rejected Saul because of his disobedience.



King Saul watched David becoming more and more popular. He knew Yahweh had chosen him as the next king and became so jealous that he tried to murder David several times, until David and his followers finally had to flee into the country and hide in caves in the hills.

For the next 10 years David was a hunted man. He and his followers were relentlessly pursued by Saul and his armies, forcing David and his men to be constantly on the run. It was guerrilla warfare training that would later be indispensable when David became Israel's next king. But in the meantime it made David's life very precarious. He also had to watch out for the Philistines who roamed the land. There were enemies on every side and David's faith was often stretched to the limit, yet his trust in Yahweh only grew greater. Eventually King Saul and his three sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines. Saul had been shot with an arrow and fell on his spear rather than be captured and tortured by the enemy. The men of Israel living nearby heard what happened and fled from their cities.



David was 30 years old when he was crowned King of Israel. When the Philistines heard this, they attacked repeatedly, but Yahweh was with David and gave him victory over his enemies. David now took more wives and had more children. He made Jerusalem the capital and brought the ark of the covenant there. His victories in battle were tremendous. He fought the Philistines, the Geshurites, the Gezites, the Jebusites, and the Amalekites. But he had troubles too. His first wife, Michal, King Saul's daughter, despised David in her heart because of his passionate exuberance in dancing before the Lord when the ark was brought to Jerusalem. She also may have resented him for taking her away from her second husband, given to her by King Saul.



During his lifetime David was a shepherd, poet, musician, warrior, and king. He excelled in every area. He was also renowned for defeating his enemies and he managed to retain unfading popularity with his people. He lived in a palace with his wives and children and had everything a man could hope for. His courage and devotion to Yahweh were also exemplary. In fact, Yahweh described him as "a man after My own heart who shall fulfill all My will." But there was one blot on his record that would cost him the loss of his blessings. It happened during a war campaign when he stayed back in Jerusalem while his army was away fighting enemies.



David was walking along the roof of his palace, gazing at the city below, when he spied a beautiful woman at her bath in the house next door. She was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite - one of his Mighty Warriors. David was entranced with her beauty and lusted after her. He sent his messengers to bring her to his palace, where he slept with her. When she became pregnant, David called Uriah back to the city and tried to encourage him to have relations with his wife, so that Bathsheba's baby could then be passed off as belonging to Uriah. However Uriah felt uncomfortable because none of the other soldiers got this kind of preferential treatment, so he didn't take advantage of this favour. Then David had his general put Uriah in a dangerous place in battle so that he would be killed. Everything went according to plan - Uriah was killed and David thought his secret was safe.





Yahweh sent a prophet to confront David about his sins. He told David that even though he would be forgiven, there would be serious consequences. Bathsheba gave birth to a baby son and David loved the child, but true to His word, Yahweh took back the life of the baby and David was heartbroken that he had caused the death of his son. David deeply grieved and repented of his evil deeds and Yahweh, in His mercy, forgave him. David then comforted Bathsheba and slept with her, and she gave birth to another baby. David named him Solomon. Yahweh loved the baby and sent blessings through the prophet Nathan. David then nicknamed the baby Jedidiah meaning 'Beloved of Yahweh'. Yahweh also told David that Solomon would build a Temple for Him and He made it clear that Solomon (meaning peace) would be the next king.



The house of David was plagued by tragedy - Tamar, David's daughter, was seduced and raped by her step-brother Amnon; Absalom, the girl's brother, then killed Amnon in revenge for having dishonoured his sister; David was estranged from Absalom for having committed the murder; Absalom then turned against David and tried to turn the people against him as well; and at the end of David's life, Absalom attempted a coup to get the throne so that his step-brother Solomon couldn't become the next king. Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, quickly summoned the prophet Nathan to help her defeat Absalom, and Solomon was publicly crowned as king. Nathan had once prophesied that the sword would never depart from David's house because of his sins, and this certainly came true, although Yahweh never stopped loving David.

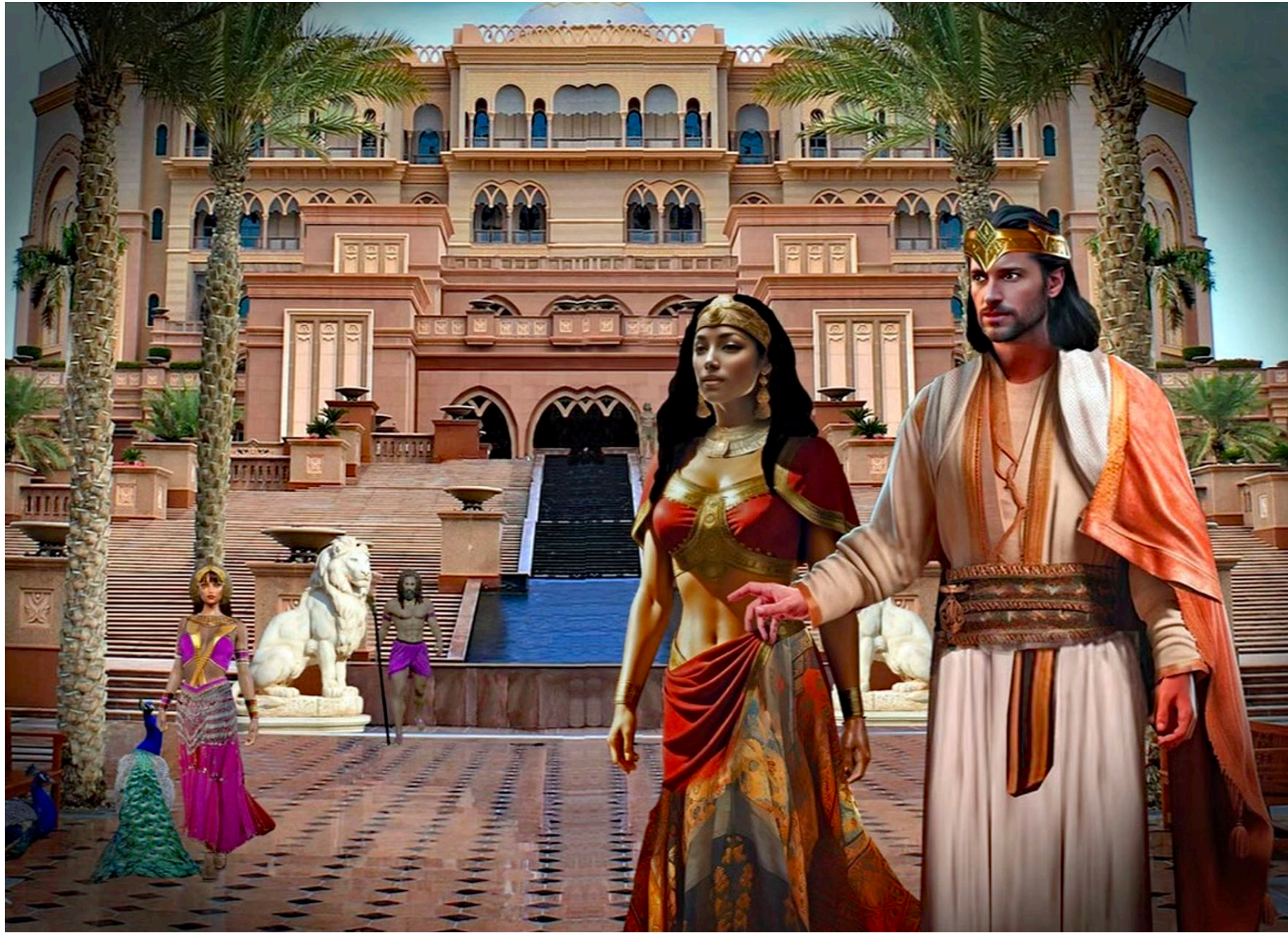


King Solomon succeeded to the throne and he was renowned for his great wisdom and fabulous wealth. Every year he received from his taxes and tributes the value of between \$1,092,906,000 and \$1,165,766,400 (in U.S. dollars!) He was the world's first and only trillionaire. He became so rich that all his cups were made of gold. Silver and other precious metals were as common in Jerusalem as stones. He also had thousands of wives and concubines whom he acquired largely to secure diplomatic relations with other nations. The Queen of Sheba from Ethiopia heard the stories and was intrigued. She traveled all the way from her homeland to meet Solomon to see if the king was as wise and wealthy as purported.





The Queen of Sheba was the ruler of the kingdom of Saba' (or Sheba) in southwestern Arabia. She traveled in a long camel caravan bearing gold, jewels, and spices. The purpose of her visit was to test Solomon's wisdom by asking him to solve a number of riddles. She also hoped to establish trade and commerce ties between Israel and her own country. The journey was 1,2000 miles to Jerusalem.



When King Solomon showed the Queen his palace and the temple he had built for Yahweh, she was overwhelmed, saying that the things she was seeing far surpassed what she had been told. Both heads of royalty exchanged gifts but Solomon's gift was much larger than the queen's.



DATED BETWEEN THE 6TH–14TH CENTURIES C.E., THE KEBRA NAGAST (THE GLORY OF KINGS) IS AN IMPORTANT TEXT TO THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. IT NAMES THE QUEEN OF SHEBA AS THE BEAUTIFUL QUEEN MAKEDA AND IDENTIFIES THE LAND OF SHEBA AS ANCIENT ETHIOPIA. LEGEND HAS IT THAT THE QUEEN BECAME A CONVERT TO JUDAISM AND BROUGHT THE FAITH HOME TO HER OWN LAND.





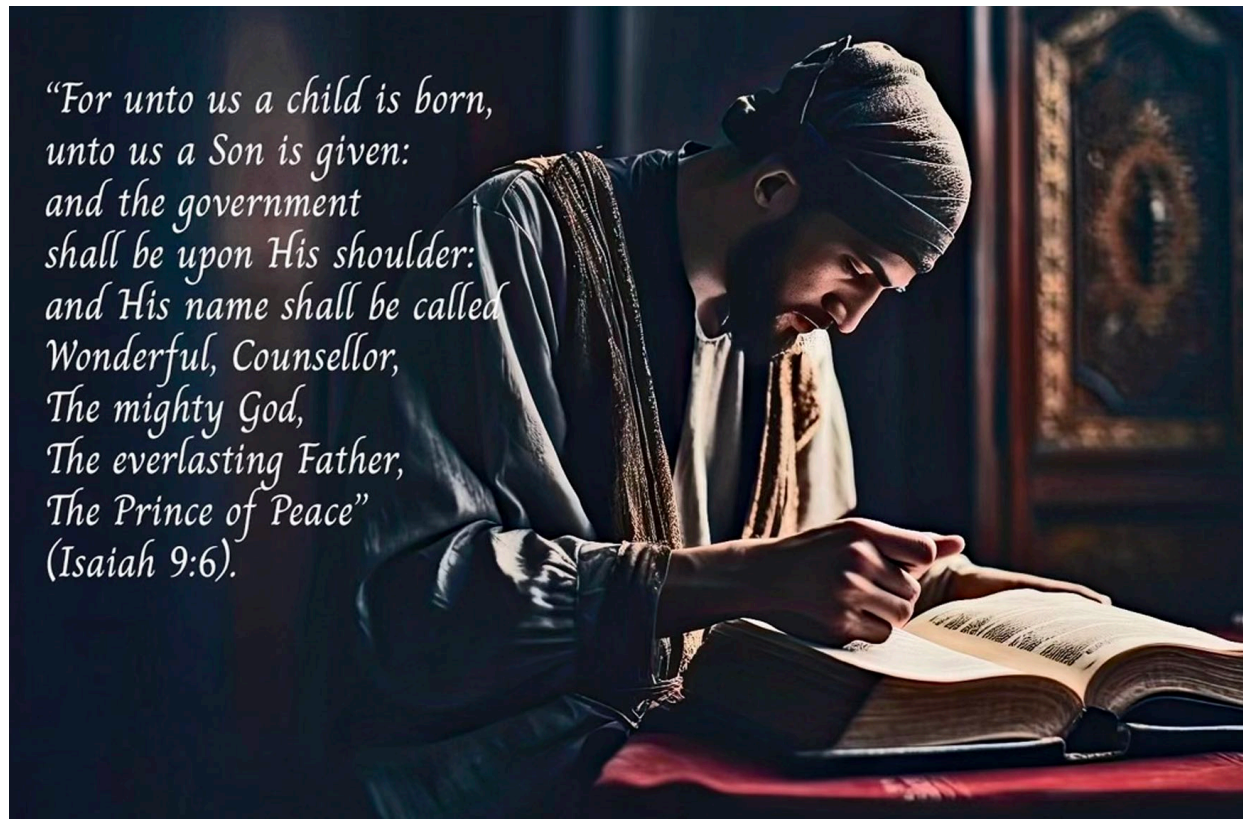
Most of the king's many marriages were formed for diplomatic reasons with neighbouring nations. Many of those nations were pagan and practiced idolatry. Ties with them enabled Israel to finally be at peace with her neighbours, but they also brought pagan practices into her culture. Solomon even set up altars to his wives' gods in Jerusalem.

Yahweh was angry that Solomon had turned to idolatry and broken the covenant. Yahweh warned that Israel would be divided after the king died. Only Judah would go to Solomon's son, for the sake of His promise to David. After Solomon died, it didn't take long for Israel to become embroiled in many wars. Even though the Jewish people had defeated their enemies, built the Temple, and had a wealthy economy, the nation divided into ten northern tribes and two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, the only ones who remained loyal to the House of David in Jerusalem. They became known as the kingdom of Judea (from where the word “Jew” was eventually derived).



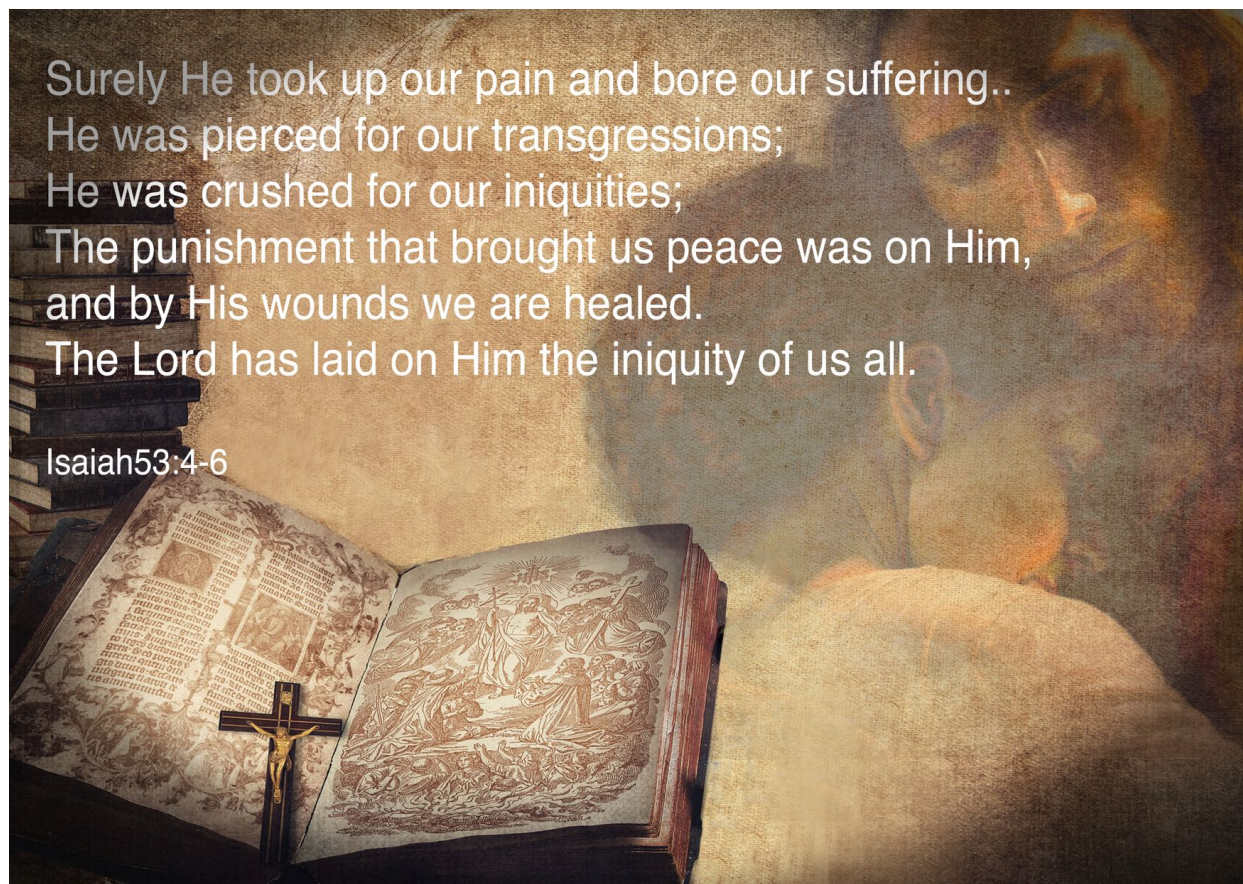


Yahweh sent many prophets over the years to steer Israel away from wickedness. One was Elijah who was expected to come back to earth to make way for the coming Messiah. (This was a metaphorical reference to John the Baptist who would point out Messiah's identity centuries later.) Elijah was taken up into the clouds of heaven in a chariot, his mantle falling down to Elisha, who would become the next prophet after him.



*"For unto us a child is born,
unto us a Son is given:
and the government
shall be upon His shoulder:
and His name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God,
The everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace"
(Isaiah 9:6).*

Another prophet was Isaiah who foretold that Yahweh's Son, the promised Seed, would establish an everlasting kingdom when He came to earth. More than 300 Scriptures allude to Jesus, His lineage, and method of execution, all of which could not have been accidentally fulfilled. They are remarkable proof of the veracity of the Jewish Scriptures and the clear identity of the Messiah who knew He was fulfilling these prophecies, and used this knowledge to confirm His claims of being the Son of God in the flesh. He would tell His followers: " You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to Me!" (John 5:39)



Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering..
He was pierced for our transgressions;
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The punishment that brought us peace was on Him,
and by His wounds we are healed.
The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah53:4-6

In 589–587 BC) the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the city and Solomon's temple, carting off all the spoils to Babylon. Archaeological research has shown that the Babylonians systematically destroyed the city with fire and that the city wall was pulled down. The Kingdom of Judah was dissolved and 10,000 prominent Jews were taken to Babylon as well. These were set apart to be trained for administrative positions in Babylon. They were given Babylonian names and treated well.





Daniel (renamed Beltashazzar) and his 3 friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were young Jewish noblemen who were given favour in King Nebuchadnezzar's court. They studied all the arts and sciences of Babylon while still remaining true to Yahweh. They were allowed to follow Yahweh's dietary rules and other laws as long as they didn't conflict with Babylonian decrees.

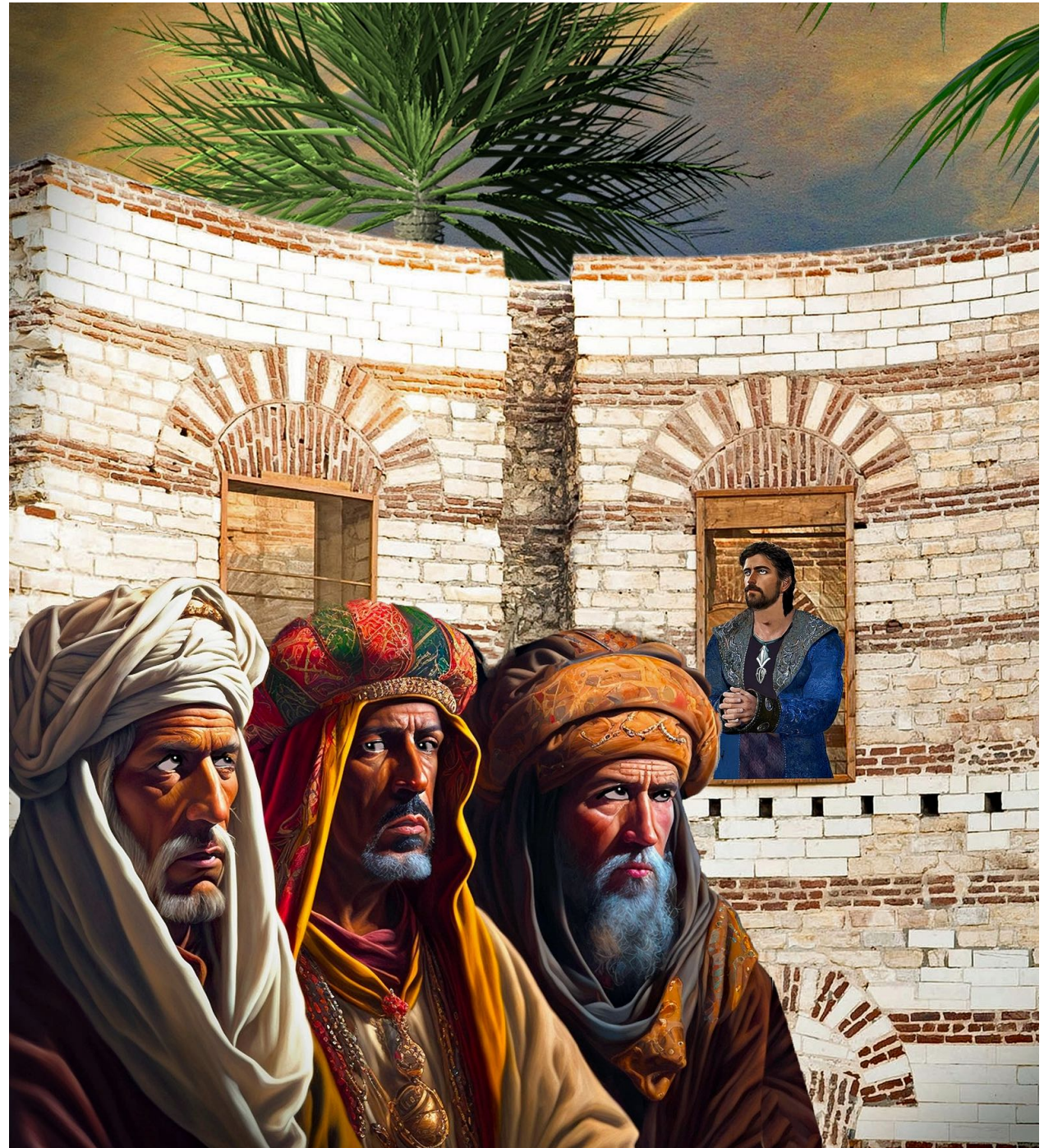


The faith of Daniel's friends was challenged the day the king decreed that everyone had to worship a 90 foot golden statue made in his image. The young men refused to bow to the statue, even after being threatened with death. They said they would bow down to no other god but Yahweh. The enraged king had them thrown into a fiery furnace which was so hot that even the guards, who threw the three Jews into the furnace, died. After a time Nebuchadnezzar looked inside the furnace and was amazed to see four men walking in the fire. One looked like an angel.



Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a tree reaching to heaven and a Watcher commanding it to be chopped down. Daniel interpreted the dream to mean Yahweh was going to humble the king, and after 7 years he would be restored. Everything happened as foretold with the King praising and honoring Yahweh at the end: "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom..and all inhabitants are as nothing. He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say "What have You done?".

Nebuchadnezzar's descendant, Belshazzar, ruled after him, and Daniel served as his counsellor too. Then the Medo-Persians defeated the Babylonians and Darius the Mede came to power. Daniel again served as a counsellor to the new king. King Darius was generous and supportive of the remnant of the Jews, but some of his officials were jealous of Daniel and disliked that he had the king's favour. They tricked Darius into forbidding prayer for one month to any god but the king. Then they waited to inform on Daniel who continued to pray to Yahweh 3 times a day as usual.



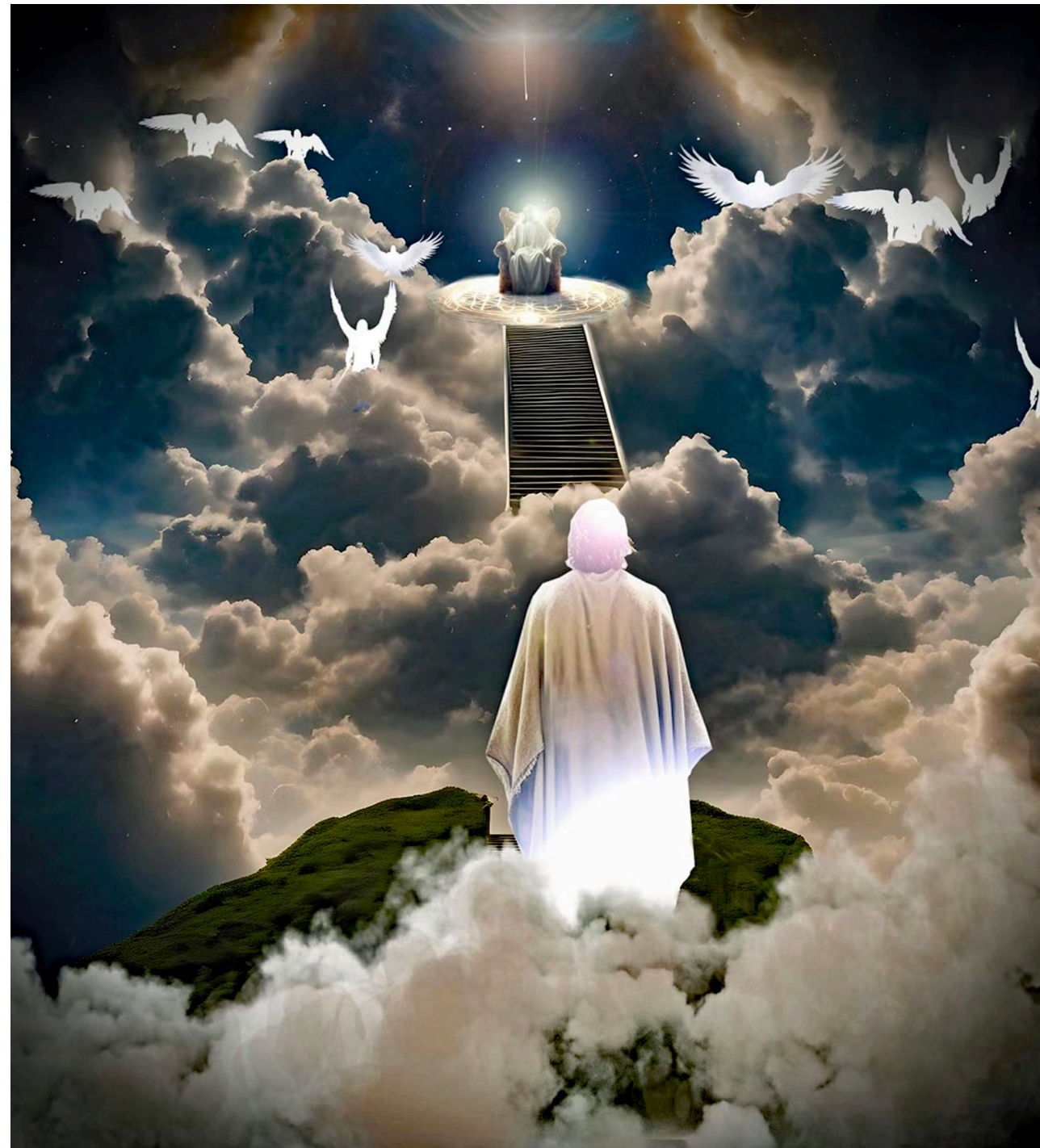


The king was reluctant to have Daniel thrown in a lion's den but he could not go against his own decree. However Yahweh sent an angel to stop the lions from harming him. When Darius went next morning to see how Daniel fared, he was overjoyed to see him alive and well. He had Daniel released and then he had the jealous officials thrown to the lions instead.



Daniel was a high official in Babylon who received many visions from Yahweh. Some depicted the future of the nations, such as the image Daniel saw with a head of gold (Chaldeans), arms of silver (Medes and Persians), torso of brass (Greece), and legs of iron (Roman). Then a stone not cut by human hands destroyed the statue and became a mountain filling the whole earth. This last kingdom was the Kingdom of Messiah.

Daniel received many visions from Yahweh during his lifetime. One vision was of Yahweh as the Ancient of Days, sitting on His flaming throne surrounded by countless angels. His hair and clothing were white as snow which signify His existence before time began, as well as His wisdom and perfection. The throne is symbolic of judgment. Then One who looked human came on clouds and was presented before Him. This 'son of man' received dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom and was a picture of the coming Messiah. Jesus knew this vision alluded to Himself and He often referred to Himself as the 'Son of Man'.





Daniel often received messages from Yahweh in answer to his prayers. One time there was spiritual opposition to a particular message from Yahweh concerning the future of Israel. The angel Gabriel was bringing the message to Daniel in the form of a vision when he was opposed by one of the evil Watchers, the prince of Persia. This wicked angel managed to hinder Gabriel for 3 weeks, until the mighty archangel Michael came to his aid. Many of the conflicts on earth had direct parallels to cosmic spiritual warfare in the heavens.

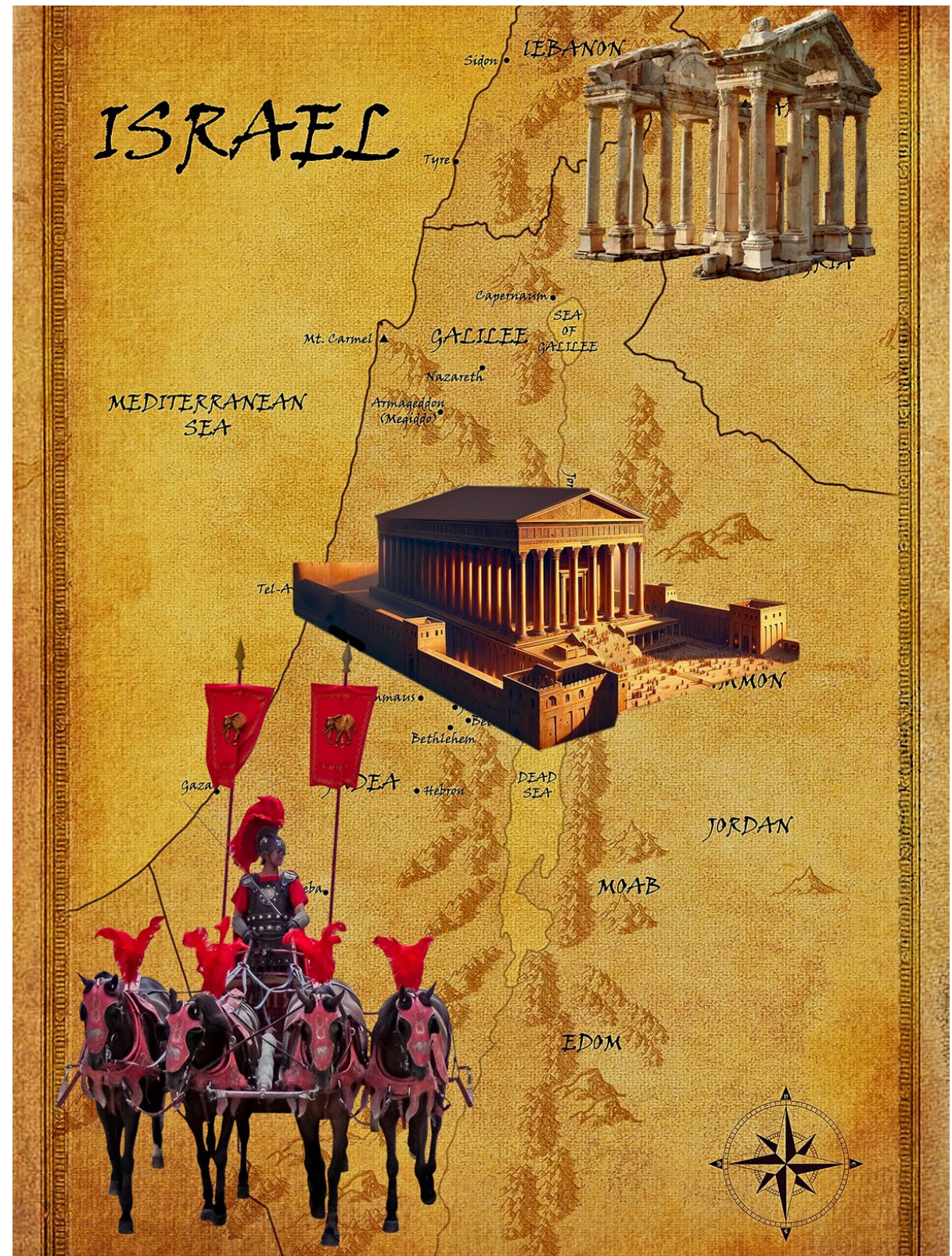
The cosmic battle going on when Daniel was praying to Yahweh to tell him about Israel's future, was intense. It involved Michael, Yahweh's mightiest archangel, and the Prince of Persia. It appears that they were in conflict because the Watcher did not want Daniel to know Israel's future, or the timing of Messiah's arrival to earth. Michael was the Watcher over Israel and always protected her from her enemies, but Israel had fallen away from Yahweh and it seems Michael had been withdrawn from his post. This is why Persia was able to conquer Israel. However because Yahweh loved Daniel and His people, Michael was sent to help make certain that Daniel received Yahweh's reply to his prayer.



Enoch 1 and the Bible describe Watchers as mighty in power and great in stature, similar to the archangels. The book of Job mentions a council of Watchers who carry out Yahweh's decrees and watch over humanity. Yahweh assigned some of these Watchers to the nations at Babel but they became evil and led people into pagan worship and idolatry, just as they do to this day. They are also called 'principalities and powers' but, although powerful, they cannot withstand the great archangel Michael, and they have no defence against the power and authority of the Commander of the Lord's Army, which is a reference to the Son of God Himself. This Commander is also called the Seed of God and the Watchers focus their opposition against Him.



Just as had been revealed to Daniel, the Romans became the next conquerors over Israel. This occurred in 63 B.C. bringing the region under Roman control, although they used local leaders to govern. The most famous was a ruthless military commander named Herod the Great who remodelled the Jerusalem temple. At this time Yahweh came to be addressed as 'God' (derived from the Greek) or 'Lord'. High priests oversaw worship in the temple. One Jewish group was the Pharisees, who adopted the highest standards and were interpreters of Jewish law. The Sadducees were a priestly group that used the law but not the other writings. Another group, the Essenes, lived in separate communities. They considered the temple leadership to be corrupt. There were also Zealots who sought to regain Jewish independence from Rome. Most of the Jews were desperate for a Messiah who would defeat the Romans and cause Israel to rule over the nations.





The Jews awaited a majestic Messiah, a strong ruler who would drive the Romans from their land. It was imagined that He would come with great fanfare and all the nations would become subject to Him. However God had other plans for the Messiah's arrival. His plan was to send the Deliverer by stealth, under the radar of both man and demon. There would be no fanfare to herald His coming or alert the Watchers. Instead He quietly sent the archangel Gabriel to visit Mary, a young Jewish virgin living in Nazareth, to announce His plan.

Gabriel told Mary that she was highly favoured by God. She was a woman of rare faith and strength, which is why God had chosen her to bear the Messiah. She was already betrothed to a man called Joseph, an honest man who worked as a carpenter, but they were not yet married. Both were in the lineage of King David, Mary being descended from the tribe of Judah and a descendent of Boaz and David. However Gabriel told Mary that Joseph would not be the baby's father. Mary would become pregnant by means of a miracle of God's Holy Spirit. Because her babe would have no human father, no sin nature would be inherited by Him through her ancestor, Adam. This was highly important for the rescue of humanity.



Mary must have been an exceptional person for God to have chosen her. She was a virgin, yet unmarried, and pregnant. Being a virgin meant she had never known a man, but as soon as it became obvious that she was with child, the world around her would have assumed that she had slept with a man. The obvious surmise would have been that she and her betrothed husband had sexual relations before their marriage had been finalized. That was not unusual, although frowned upon. There was often a year between betrothal and the marriage feast. However in Mary's case, her betrothed husband would have known the baby couldn't be his. He would naturally assume she had committed adultery.





Joseph loved Mary but at first he made the logical conclusion that Mary had betrayed him with another man. Because of this he felt he couldn't marry her, but it placed him in a dilemma. Jewish Law condemned both the adulterous woman and the man she sinned with to the death penalty. Although this sentence was rarely carried out, exposure to public shame carried many serious repercussions. However God revealed the truth to Joseph in a dream, and he immediately married Mary and kept her chaste while she carried God's holy Child.



Rome issued a census that decreed that all the Jews had to return to the place of their birth to be registered for taxation purposes. This meant Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem, the very location mentioned in the Bible centuries earlier as the place where Messiah would come from. Mary was heavy with child at this time.

Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem fulfilled the prophecy in Micah 5:2. "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."



Mary and Joseph were stragglers into Bethlehem due to Mary's advanced pregnancy. It must have been a very arduous journey for Mary. When they tried to get accommodation in the town however, they found all the inns were already taken. Finally an innkeeper let them use the stable behind his inn.



In a stable used for animals, Mary gave birth to a son, whom she named Jesus ("Yahweh saves"), the name Gabriel had instructed her to give to the baby. Mary placed Him in a manger filled with straw, and probably wondered at such an unlikely setting for the King of the universe.

A few shepherds watching over their sheep were shocked to see a great shining angel suddenly appear before them. They were terrified until the angel gave them the good news that the Great Shepherd Himself had arrived and they would find Him lying in a manger. It was strange that these shepherds were honoured in this way. Shepherds were poor outcasts in society, scorned by the Pharisees and looked down upon by others. Yet these ordinary shepherds were the first to hear of Jesus' birth and to spread the good news. After they saw Him, they joined the angels in glorifying and praising God for the awesome news of Messiah's coming.



God summoned Gentiles from the east to visit the new King. They were magi (like Daniel had been), powerful advisors from Persia. The magi first appear in history in the seventh century as a tribe in eastern Mesopotamia. Many historians consider them to have been Semites, which link them with descendants of Noah's son Shem. They may also, like Abraham, have come from ancient Ur in Chaldea. The magi became skilled in astronomy and astrology (which, in that day, were closely associated) and had a sacrificial system that somewhat resembled the one God gave to Israel through Moses. They were noted for their ability to interpret dreams. They had seen a strange star hovering in the sky, and learning that it portended a great king to be born in Israel, they made the long trek to Jerusalem.





The Magi who followed the star were astronomers, and they likely had access to Daniel's prophecies which spoke of the time and place of Messiah's appearance. They linked the star to the prophecies and were able to follow it because it hovered low in the sky. It took 2 years to make their journey to Jerusalem.

The Magi visited King Herod in Jerusalem and told him they'd seen Messiah's star and were trying to find Him. Herod wasn't even a Jew. He was an Edomite, one of Israel's historical enemies. He ruled by terror and murder and was paranoid about losing his position. One time he thought his own sons were trying to assassinate him, so he had them all executed. In the last few years of his life, he became increasingly mentally ill. When he heard about a new king being born in Judea, his paranoid fears were magnified. He summoned his advisors and discovered that the little king's birthplace was Bethlehem. Then he cunningly told the Magi to find the child's location and inform him so he could worship Him too, which was a lie of course.



It is unknown how many Magi came from the east to see the new king. It is assumed there were three because they brought three types of gifts - gold, frankincense and myrrh - but there could have been more to their number. The Magi were thrilled to see the star return. It probably was not an ordinary star because it hung so low in the sky that it could be followed by the caravan. Very likely it was an angel sent to light the Magi's path to the house where the child lived with His family. The little Messiah looked like any other toddler, but He was actually the highest of all beings, God Himself in the flesh.





The Magi brought gold as a gift to Jesus. This was the Old Testament symbol of kings, so they were proclaiming Him king. They also brought frankincense which the high priest of Israel burned in the temple on the Day of Atonement. The Magi were proclaiming Jesus to be their high priest. The myrrh was an embalming oil, symbolizing Christ's mortality as a man. These gifts may have shown that the Magi knew exactly who Jesus was - a King, a High Priest, and also Deity.



God warned the Magi to return home by a different route, without seeing Herod, and He warned Joseph to flee to Egypt because Herod intended to kill Jesus. The valuable gifts from the Magi enabled Mary and Joseph to make the trip and set up a home there.

When Herod realized that the Magi would not be returning to inform him of the Messiah's location, he was enraged. He sent soldiers to Bethlehem to kill all the male children in the town and its environs who were two years old or under. This was the length of time ascertained from the wise men first seeing the star and then visiting Bethlehem. The Bible says this incident fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Herod was driven by jealous fear and probably by demons in this wicked act.



After Herod died, Jesus' family moved to Nazareth where Jesus grew up in relative obscurity. He probably worked with Joseph at carpentry. Later, after Joseph died, He would have provided for His mother and brothers and sisters. This was a time when He would have been learning many practical lessons about life, people and relationships, and the world around Him. During this time, God His Father protected Him from harm by keeping Him out of the public eye, and with the great Michael as Watcher over Israel, there were no further reported attempts on His life while He was growing up.





Jesus had an extensive knowledge of the scriptures, even as a young adolescent. As He studied Torah, He would have seen Himself as the Second Person of the Triune God and the Redeemer King of Israel. Mary and Joseph would have told Him of the angelic visitations and the Magi, which spoke clearly of His divine destiny. He also would have fallen deeply in love with His Father.

The first part of Messiah's mission involved His identification with the human race, as a figurehead, just as Adam had been the figurehead of humanity before Him. Covenantal headship, also known as federal headship, is a relationship in which an individual represents a larger group and the actions of the representative are imputed onto the larger group. Adam was a covenant head whose actions affected all those who were "in him." Jesus is also a covenant head, and His actions affect all those who are "in Him". It was absolutely crucial to the whole purpose of His coming and it involved the symbolic act of baptism so as to show this identification.



Jesus was baptized by his cousin John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove, symbolizing the peace Jesus would bring between God and humanity. The Father's voice thundered from heaven: "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." God was affirming Jesus as His Son, and therefore also testifying to His divinity. Later John would say: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. And I myself did not know him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." The baptism also points to the Trinity of the Godhead.





The next step to commencing His mission involved a challenge to Jesus' faith. It was a necessary part of His preparation for what was to come. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert where Satan, His adversary, waited. This was after Jesus had fasted for 40 days, which greatly weakened Him physically. Being tempted as He was, gave Jesus a better understanding of the temptations that come to all of humanity. However Jesus was unlike all others in that He had never sinned and had no sin nature.

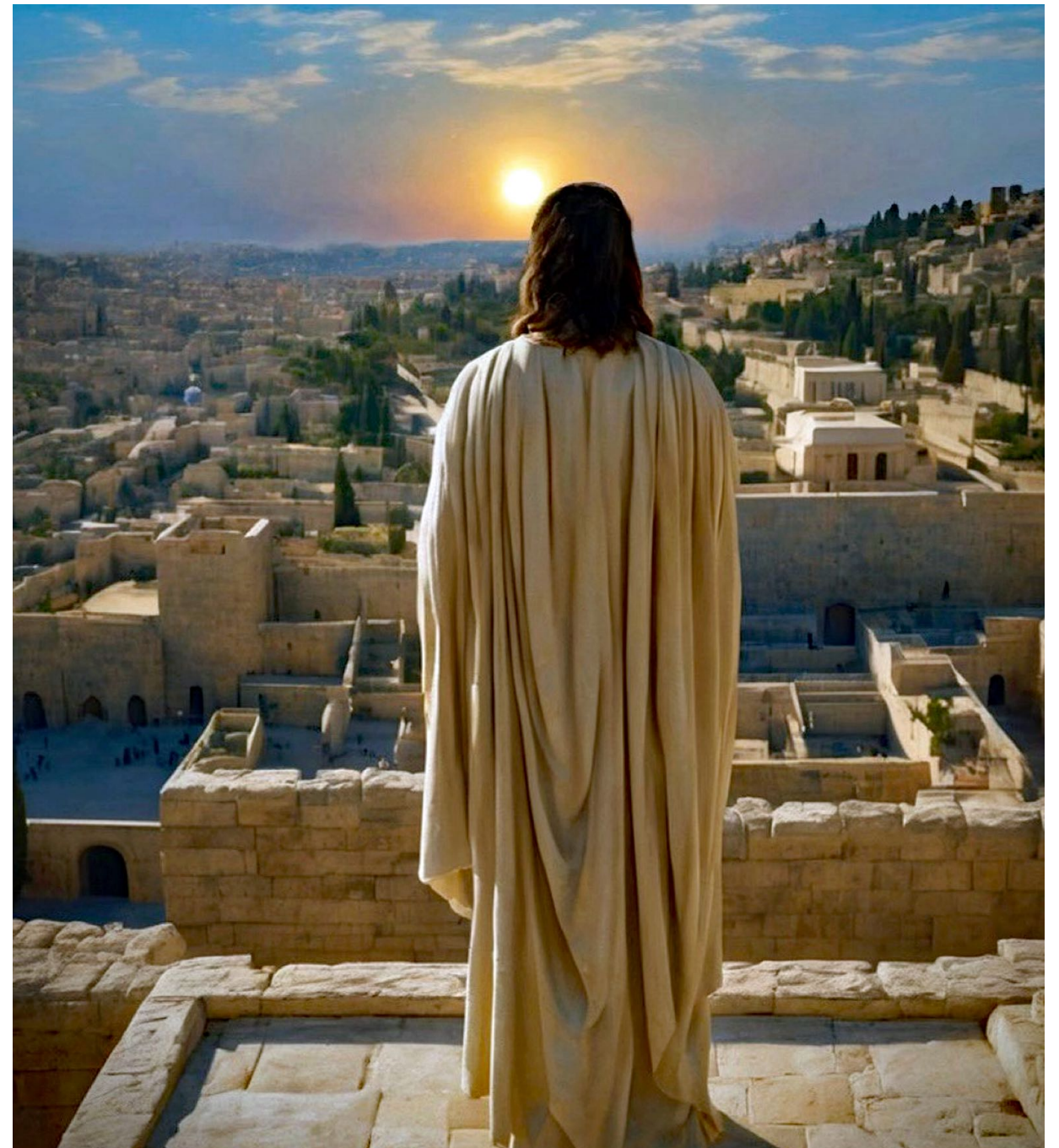


Satan (or Lucifer) was once a powerful and beautiful cherub among the elect angels, until he rebelled against God and was stripped of his authority. He was highly ambitious and wanted to wield cosmic power, even over God Himself. His name means 'light-bringer' but he brings only death and destruction.



Satan caused the first humans to doubt God's goodness, thereby leading to their fall into sin and death. He would use this tactic repeatedly against humanity with great success. He tried it with Jesus, implying that God wasn't providing for Him, so He should make bread out of stones to satisfy His hunger. This temptation concerned the lust of the flesh, but Jesus replied with Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3: " A man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Satan then led Jesus to the top of the temple and threw out another temptation. He quoted God's promise in Psalm 91 which was God's promise to keep His beloved ones safe from all harm. Satan suggested Jesus throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in a spectacular bid to prove He was the Messiah and to force God to prove His Word. This temptation concerned the pride of life, but the Lord again replied with Scripture: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Jesus was stating that it was wrong for Him to abuse His own powers and those of His Father.



For the third temptation, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him a panoramic vision of all the nations of the world, offering them to Jesus if He would worship Satan. This was a temptation concerning the lust of the eyes, and offered a quick route to the Messiahship that would bypass the crucifixion for which He had come. The devil already had control over the kingdoms of the world but was now ready to give everything to Christ in return for His allegiance. However the mere thought caused Jesus to recoil from such a suggestion and He sharply replied: "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only!" Then Jesus commanded Satan to be gone.





Satan's ploys didn't work. Jesus saw right through them. In the Bible, Satan is called the 'father of lies', and likened to a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, an accuser of the saints, and completely evil. His obsession is the enslavement and brutalization of humanity.



One of Satan's greatest deceptions is that he doesn't exist, but the Bible exposes him repeatedly. His cohorts are other Watchers (called 'principalities') and demons (disembodied spirits of Nephilim from pre-flood times). They battle against humanity, bringing disease, violence, murder, sexual licentiousness, poverty, tyranny, Satanic worship, and every form of evil imaginable. There is only one defence.

That one defence is Messiah Jesus. His mission was to bring good news to the poor; to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison for those who are bound. This would also be the mission of His disciples, who seem weak and vulnerable, but have spiritual armour well able to confront Satan who opposes them. They also have the mighty authority of Messiah Himself. He promised them that whatever they asked in His name would be done for them. He also enabled them “to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy.” Followers of Jesus are far from defenceless when it comes to fighting the evil forces of this world.



The language of warfare is everywhere in the scriptures. In Isaiah 59:17 the prophet says of God, “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped Himself in zeal as a cloak.” Angels are created to do warfare for God's people and they make constant appearances as warriors in the Bible. Christians are also called to war and Jesus has given them spiritual weapons - a shield of faith; a sword of the Spirit (word of God); a helmet of salvation; a breastplate of righteousness; a belt of truth; and feet shod with the message of peace. This weaponry is spiritual but all the more mighty because God's own authority is behind it. It can tear down formidable enemy strongholds.



Building faith in His followers was one of Messiah's paramount tasks, which is why He performed miracles. He turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana; walked on water to meet His disciples during a storm; calmed ferocious storms with one word; healed countless people from every disease and infirm condition imaginable; cast out legions of demons; produced a temple tax from a fish's mouth; restored withered limbs; caused an enormous catch of fish; and fed thousands of people on a few loaves of bread and a few fish. His miracles clearly proved that He was divine, while also being human. No one had ever done the things He did in Israel, excelling every prophet in the past.



People heard about Jesus and went out in droves to see Him. Some were just curious, others wanted healing, some wanted to hear His wisdom, and the religious ones (the Pharisees) wanted to see if He could be useful to them. The Enemy, of course, wanted to kill Him. For His part, He did not entrust Himself to the people who came out to see Him. He knew all about people and what was in their hearts. Most of the people in Jerusalem who followed Him did not have true, saving faith. They were greatly impressed by the signs Jesus did, but they did not actually trust Him for salvation. It was a primarily signs-based faith and not a gospel-based faith. Jesus knew this and was not surprised when many turned fickle and later rejected Him.



Some loved Jesus, like women and children who felt safe in His presence. In a society not always kind to them, they sensed the gentle kindness in the Lord and gravitated towards Him. Some of His closest friends were women and they often provided supplies for Him and His disciples. In a time where women could not associate with men from outside their family, they sacrificed social standing to follow Him. But they did so gladly, and many brought their children to Jesus to bless them. Jesus especially loved the little ones and some of His most stern warnings were to those who would cause them harm. "It would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and to be thrown into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble."





Jesus had many encounters with demons who were terrified of Him since He could cast them out of their victims with a single command. One of the reasons He came was to "proclaim liberty to captives and to open the prison to those who are bound." In one incident, Jesus cast out a legion of demons from a man, sending them into a herd of pigs which caused them to become insane. They raced over the edge of a cliff, but the man's mind was restored and he went on to follow Jesus.

Religious Jews called Pharisees wondered if Jesus might be the Messiah. They were hoping for a leader who would restore Israel to greatness and defeat the Romans. They were strict Law-keepers and felt sure they would be approved for leading positions in Messiah's new kingdom. At first they courted Jesus, even flattering Him when they addressed Him, but when Jesus didn't reciprocate and began calling them out for their hypocrisy and accused them of being self-righteous oppressors of the poor, they turned on Him in anger. Their rage only intensified when Jesus said they had hard hearts and were spiritually dead. They got together to discuss these insults and their anger bubbled over into vengeful hatred.



Jesus was shamelessly slandered by the Pharisees. He drank wine, so they called Him a drunkard. He reached out to prostitutes, tax collectors, and Gentiles, so they called Him a sinner. Yet Jesus continued to grow more popular with the common people. That was actually one of the reasons why the Pharisees were so jealous of Him. Everywhere He went, He attracted huge crowds pressing around to listen to His every word, watching His every move. People felt the power of His words which were filled with grace and love, whereas the rulers of the Jews laid heavy burdens on the people, treating them with disdain and scorn. They would never think of having dinner with a tax collector, but Jesus freely associated with people whom the Pharisees considered nothing but vulgar and useless.



Jesus was recognized as being both righteous and merciful. The Pharisees tried to give the impression that they were righteous by strictly keeping the Law and acting superior, but they were unable to hide their hardened hearts and lack of compassion. It galled them that Jesus won the people's hearts with His kindness, without compromising His upright character. It had to stop, or the people would choose Jesus over the religious leaders. After careful deliberation, the Pharisees plotted and came up with a plan to make Jesus unpopular by portraying Him as either a Law-breaker or an unmerciful Judge. They brought a woman caught in adultery before Him, asking Him what they should do about her sin. They thought they had Jesus completely backed into a corner.

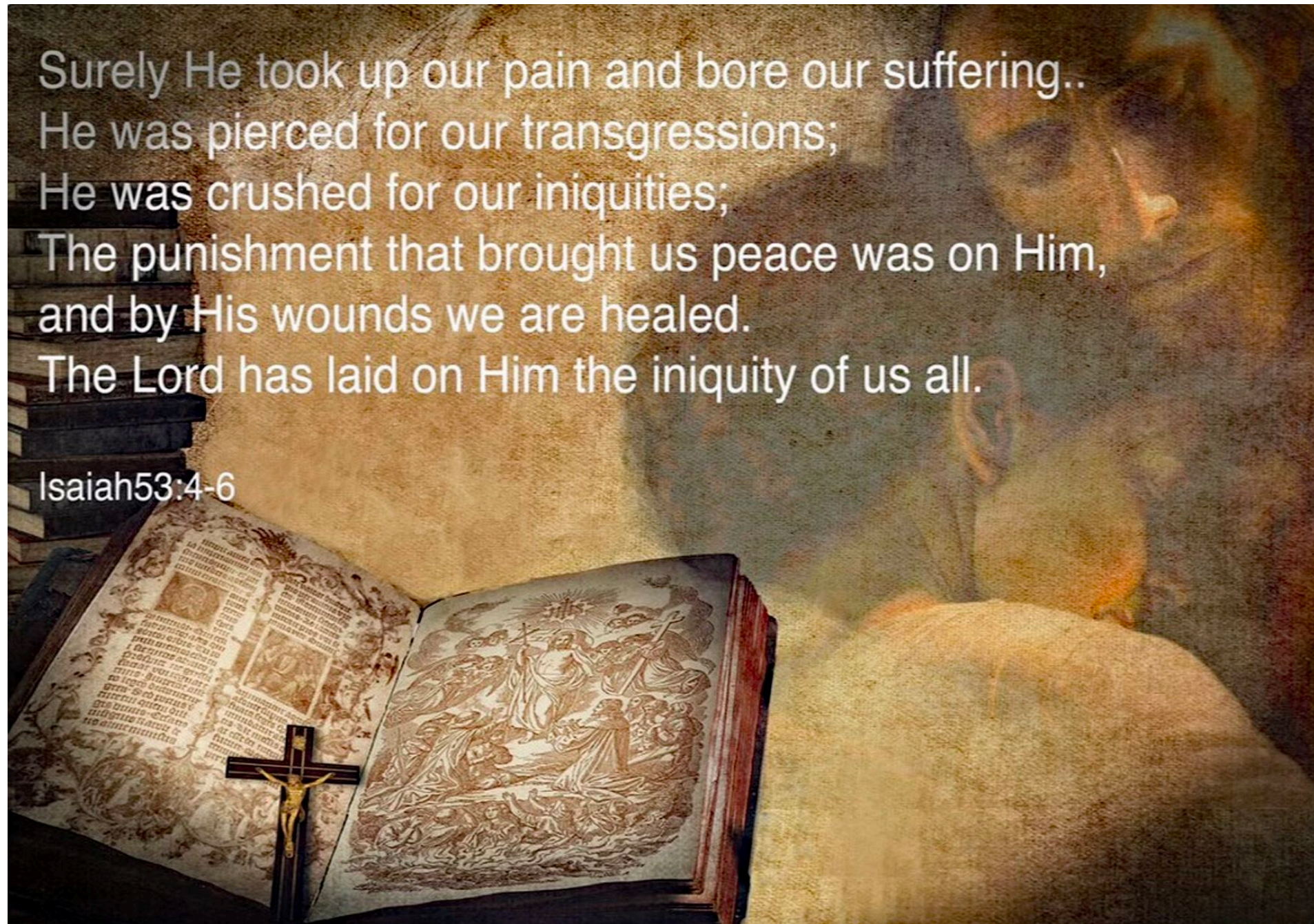


The Pharisees waited as Jesus wrote something in the sand. Then Jesus looked up and told them that the one without sin could cast the first stone. His reply baffled them. Jesus wasn't denying that the Law was right in condemning sin, but His response also made it impossible to carry out her execution. Everyone knew that only the perfectly righteous God is without sin, so they had to admit defeat and left. Jesus alone was qualified to condemn the woman, but He didn't.



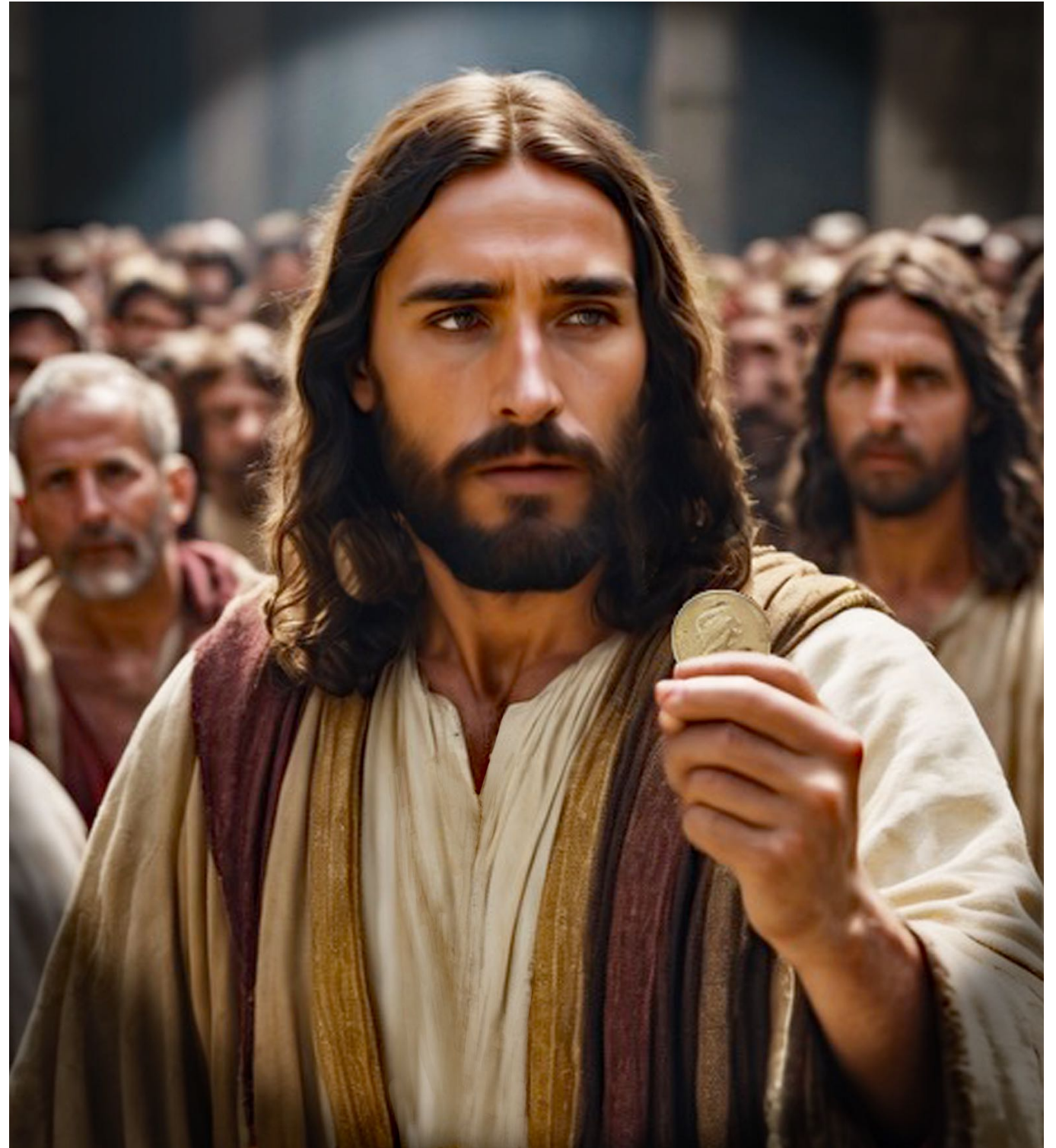
Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering..
He was pierced for our transgressions;
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The punishment that brought us peace was on Him,
and by His wounds we are healed.
The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:4-6



Jesus had not denied the Law's condemnation of adultery, so He was not a Law-breaker, but He had extended mercy to the adulterous woman as well. He would later deal with her sins personally and fulfill the Law's requirement on her behalf, making His act of leniency perfectly righteous. He told the adulterous woman to go her way and sin no more.

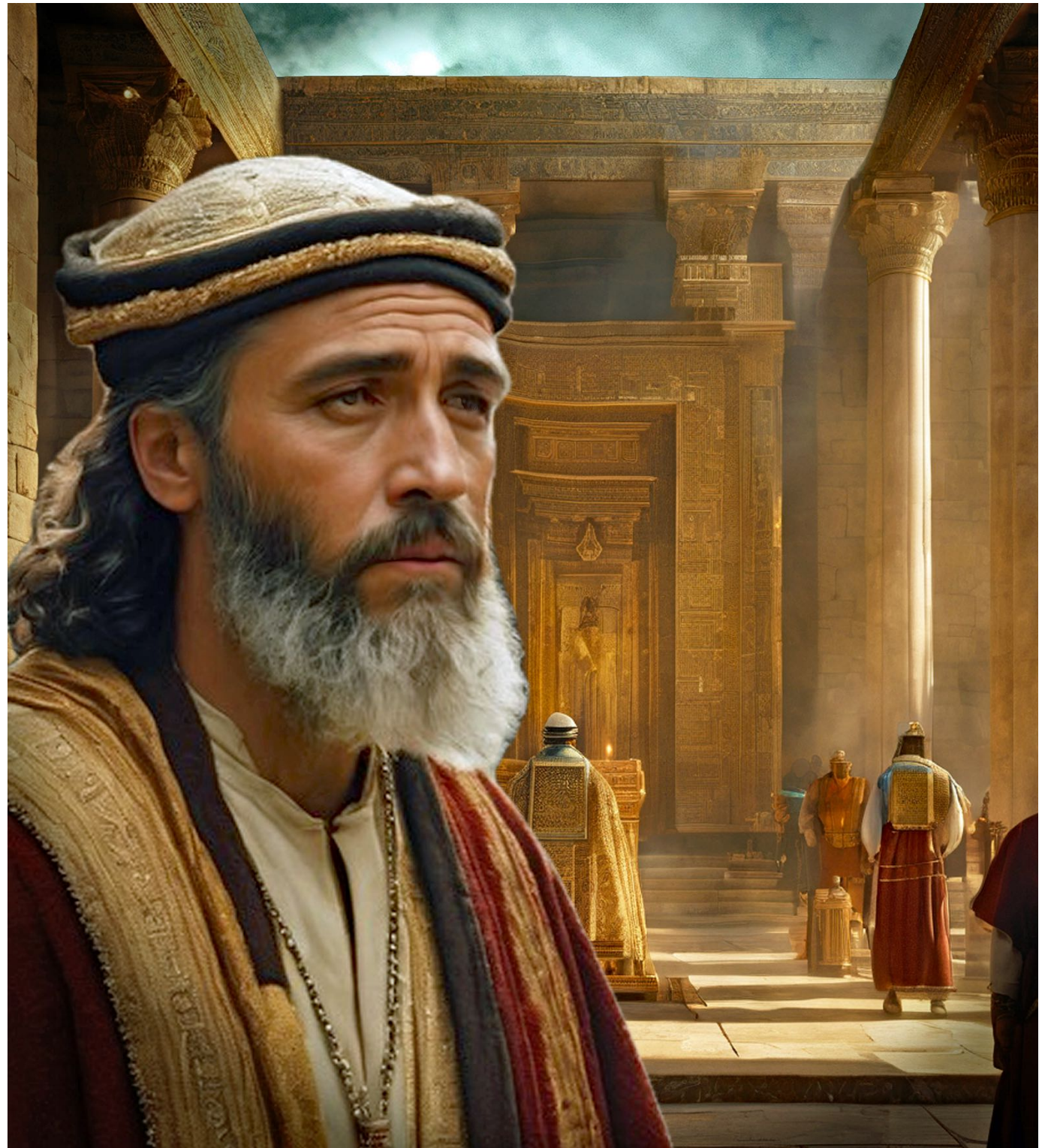
The Pharisees had failed to make Jesus unpopular by using the woman caught in adultery, so they looked to other means. They devised a plan to get Jesus in trouble with the Roman authorities. They asked Him if it was right for the Romans to tax the Jews. It was a loaded question because the people hated the Romans and their burdensome taxation, so if Jesus said it was lawful to be taxed by them, the people would be angry and turn away from Him. If He said Roman taxation was not lawful, He would be seen as an insurrectionist and possibly be arrested. Jesus knew exactly what they were up to. He told the Pharisees to bring Him a coin commonly used for paying taxes.



Jesus took the Roman coin and asked the Pharisees whose inscription was on it. They answered that it was Caesar's. Jesus then told them that they should give to Caesar what was his, and give to God what was His. This was a very clever way of bringing home a clear message to the Jews. Caesar minted coins and some had his image on them. God has 'minted' the human soul and stamped His image on every one. So Jesus was saying to give to Caesar his due - the temporary stuff of this world - but to give to God His due - our hearts and souls.



Most Pharisees were very proud of keeping the Law. They even followed hundreds of extra rules to make them appear super righteous. Of course not all Pharisees were opposed to Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee who considered Jesus a teacher from God, and there were others who thought so too. However, generally a Pharisee sought righteousness through the Law, believing he could be justified on the basis of his own merits. The Law of Moses was given to the Jews to keep them pure and separate from the nations around them, acting as a schoolmaster in order to bring the Jews to Messiah, but most Pharisees didn't believe that. They missed the point that the Law required perfection, for breaking even one command was to break them all. Jesus was the only One able to keep all of the Law.



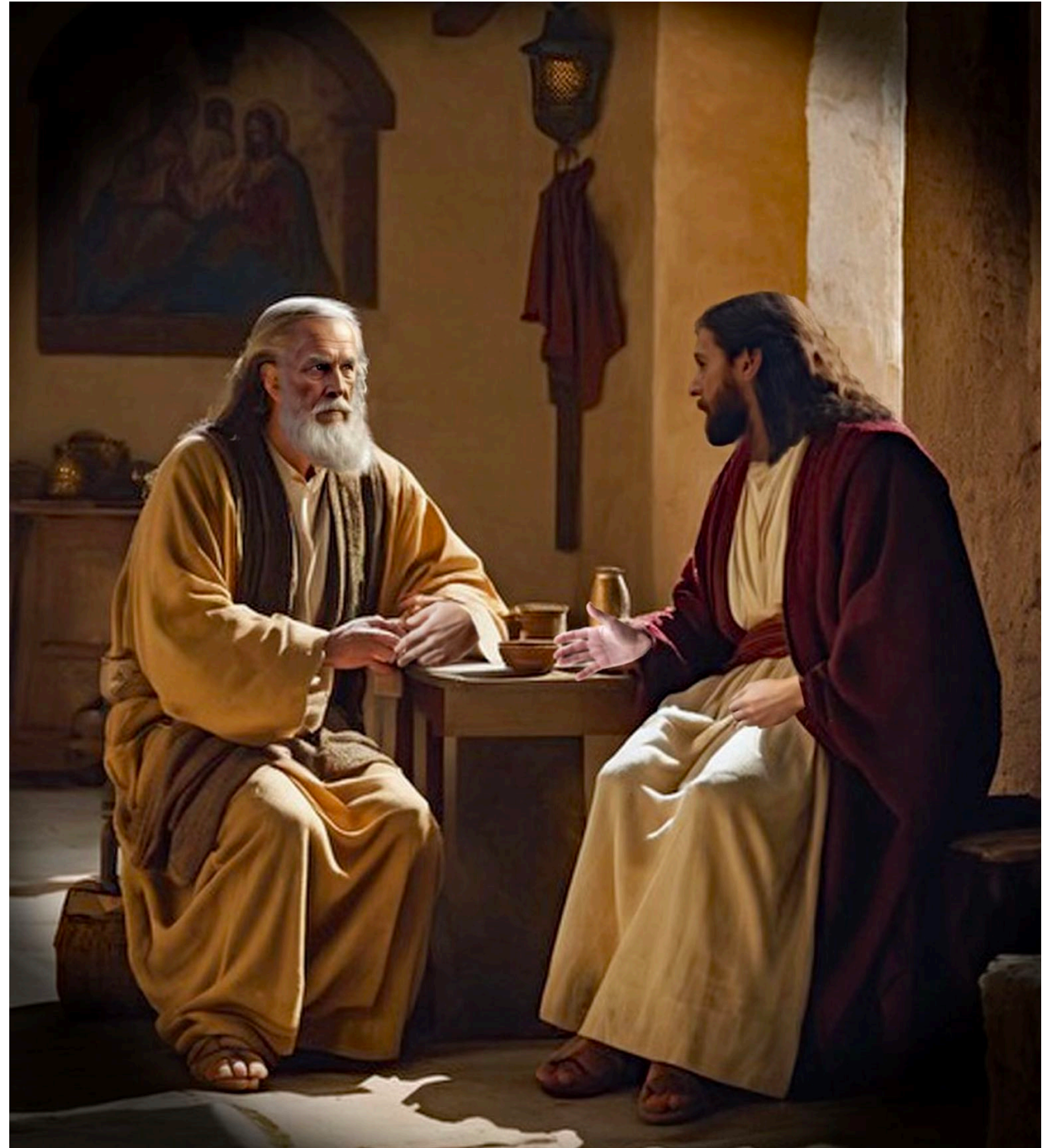


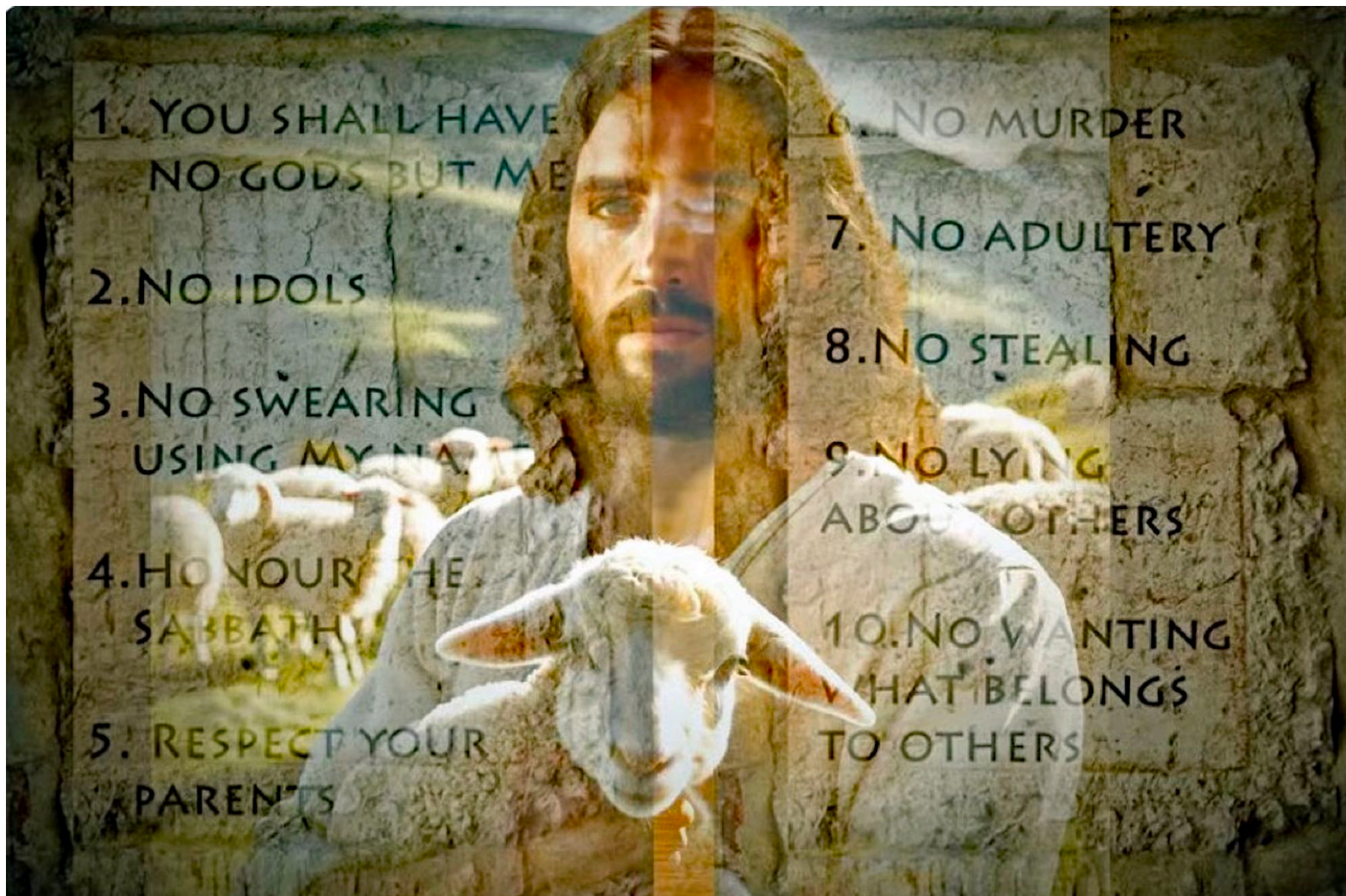
*Be perfect, therefore,
as your heavenly
Father is perfect.*

Matthew 5:48

Jesus said that keeping God's Law applied to not only actions, but thoughts as well. Sexual lust and hatred made one a lawbreaker just as the acts of adultery and murder did. The Pharisees were dismayed. They could act holy, but who could keep themselves from unholy thoughts?! No one could keep the Law and all the commandments perfectly, so what did Jesus mean by this?

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, was intrigued by Messiah's teaching. He visited with Jesus at night to ask Him how anyone could be accepted by God if no one could keep the Law. Jesus told him that no one could approach the Father unless he was born again. Nicodemus asked: "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time, can he?" Jesus told him that unless a person had a spiritual rebirth, making him a new creation, he would not be able to enter the kingdom of God. He added: "What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."





The Pharisees had not considered that the Law was never able to save humanity. Everyone broke the Law at some point, so they assumed that God didn't expect perfection. In actuality the Law was added to keep sin in check during the interim until a perfect sacrifice for sin could be offered. Animal sacrifices offered in the Temple couldn't save anyone either. They were only reminders that fallen humanity needed a Saviour, a perfect sacrifice without blemish or flaw - a Lamb of God without sin. Believing in that divine Sacrifice caused the Holy Spirit to bring about the rebirth experience that Jesus talked about. Rebirth alone could do what the Law never could.

God had always intended to create a new humanity that would have His heart, mind, and Spirit. This new humanity would be His own "holy seed" birthed from the Seed of God, which is Jesus. God had told this to Abraham, promising an inheritance of countless descendants. The promise would be fulfilled apart from the Law. Later, the Mosaic Law was introduced, but it did not annul the promises made to Abraham or to Abraham's Seed (Christ). These promises were for a new genus - a new creation - which would live with Him forever and would share in His very own Life. But to bring that Life would cost Him everything.

*"I will give you a new heart and a new spirit.
I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh
and give you a new heart of flesh.
I will put My Spirit within you
and cause you to walk in My ways."*





Jesus knew the high cost He would pay to rescue the human race. He told His incredulous disciples He would die in Jerusalem, but one of them, Peter, tried to rebuke Him for saying so. Jesus knew immediately that Satan was influencing Peter's mind to dissuade Him from His purpose, and sternly commanded Satan to leave.

Satan and his minions had been watching Jesus and His disciples all along, hoping for an opportunity to destroy them. But Jesus had guarded His followers over and over again. He had stopped demons from attempting to drown them in a raging storm at sea by calming it with one word of command. He had stopped the attack of a demoniac filled with a legion of devils by casting them out. He walked through violent mobs that were going to stone Him. He healed the family members of His disciples when they became gravely ill. He was ever on the alert for Satan's evil strategies and quelled every onslaught in the power and authority of the Spirit inside Him. No one could come to harm with Jesus there to protect them. But the Enemy never gave up trying.



Jesus went on performing miracles, even raising the dead, which caused great alarm among the Pharisees. After Jesus raised His friend, Lazarus, from the grave, His popularity skyrocketed and the Pharisees saw their influence over the people rapidly disintegrating. Much to their consternation, their propaganda and malicious slander weren't working. Their attempts to trick Jesus were futile because He was too clever for them. If they didn't manage to stop this new Rabbi - and fast - they would lose all political and religious clout in Jewish society. They would lose their hold over the masses. Even some of the Pharisees and Sadducees were defecting to Jesus. It couldn't go on! They began to make secret plans to have Jesus arrested and killed.



Whenever Jesus went into the countryside to teach, thousands came out to hear Him. They would gather on the hillsides, listening with rapt attention as He spoke of His heavenly Father and His coming kingdom. His Words carried the unmistakable ring of authority. Sometimes Jesus would teach for hours and the people would be too enthralled to return home for dinner. On at least two occasions Jesus was concerned about this and provided a simple meal for all of them - 5000 one time and 4000 at another - from just a few fish and loaves of bread. This miracle was a strong reminder to the Jewish people of how God had miraculously provided manna for their forebears in the Sinai Desert. However Jesus could see that most of the people were more interested in the food than in hearing the truth about God.



Wanting the people to have the right focus, Jesus told them: "I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty." He was speaking metaphorically, but the people didn't get it and some lost interest soon after. The Bible later described this kind of person as being : "...darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart." This is because the natural person is unable to accept the things of the Spirit of God. They appear foolish to him and he rejects them. Spiritual truth has to be spiritually discerned and many of the Jewish people were not focused on the eternal. They were seeking temporal benefits which they hoped Jesus would provide for them.





The crowds became confrontational when Jesus told them that whoever obeyed His words would never taste death. They asked if He thought He was greater than Abraham who had obviously died. Messiah replied, "Before Abraham was born, I AM." This was God's name, as given through Moses. It was a red flag to the Jews who recognized that Jesus was claiming He was equal to God. In their minds, this was absolute heresy.



One time Jesus indicated the Temple in Jerusalem and told the Jews, "Destroy this Temple and I will raise it up in three days." He was referring to Himself as the Temple and His coming death and resurrection. But He was also speaking of the Jerusalem Temple's destruction by the Romans. Most of the people missed this allusion to Himself, and even the disciples did not understand what He meant until after the fact.



The Temple symbolized the Messiah, and so did everything in it. Jesus often pointed this out to let the Jews know that He was the heavenly fulfillment of the earthly Temple - the Lamb of God, the Narrow Gate, the Light of the world, the Bread of Life, and the Living Water.

Messiah's speech became increasingly intense. He reminded the Jews how God, in the past, had withdrawn from Israel whenever they rejected Him. Now they were again rejecting God in their repudiation of their Messiah. He told the Jews they were in grave danger and He wept when He looked into their future. He foresaw the siege of Jerusalem that would occur in 70 AD, when Titus, the future Roman emperor, and his 60,000 troops, would decimate the city and its Temple. The siege would last 5 months, during which time many of Jerusalem's inhabitants would starve to death. When the army finally breached the city walls, they destroyed the Temple by fire and the people were massacred or enslaved. All the Temple treasures were carried off to Rome. Jesus foresaw it all and it broke His heart.





The Jews were in danger from earthly threat, but even more so from a spiritual one. Jesus warned about Sheol (hell) as a place of spiritual darkness, a place apart from God's presence and without His protection, where all who rejected God would go after death. But even the faithful, like the patriarchs of old, went there. It was divided into a place for God's people (called paradise, or Abraham's bosom) and a place of torment for the wicked. The faithful awaited deliverance from the grave when the Messiah would come to deliver them.

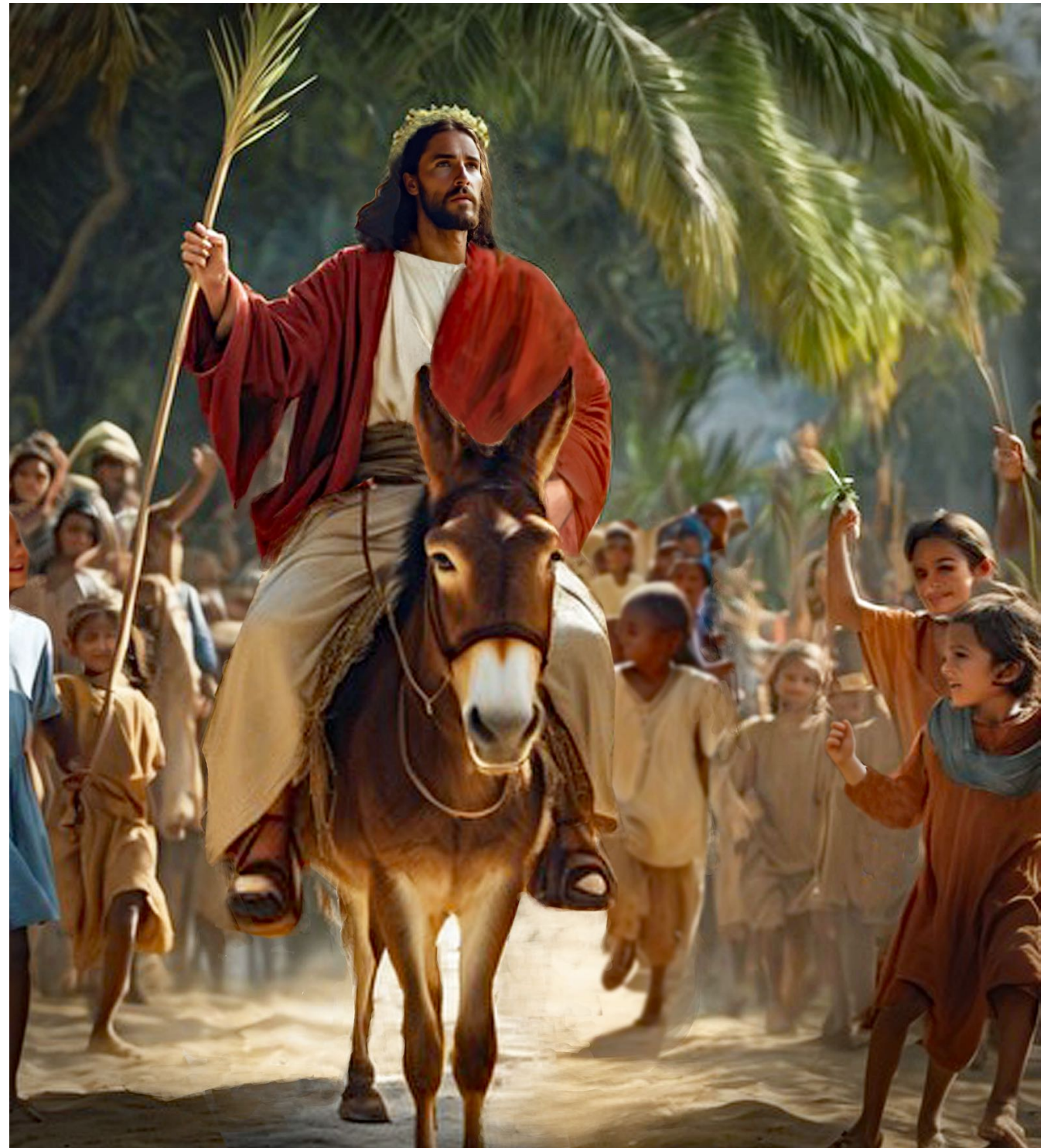
Horrible as Sheol is, Jesus warned of a final hell called the lake of fire, where the wicked, both human and angelic, would end up. It is a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" - an eternal state of spiritual anguish. Jesus also referred to it as an "outer darkness" describing it as the final destination of those who reject Him. This is a state of complete separation from God, never-ending and inescapable. Though it is the kindness of God that draws people to Him, Jesus also used the fear of judgement and hell to awaken people out of their spiritual lethargy, giving repeated warnings to seek Him before it was too late. Only Messiah's advocacy can protect one from this doom.



Jesus often spoke of His kingdom, and His disciples and the Pharisees asked Him when it would come. Jesus said it would come without observation and it would span the entire earth. He was speaking of a spiritual kingdom that would be comprised of people from every nation of the world, not just the Jews. The people of this kingdom are those whom God has called out of darkness into His light. They are a chosen race, a holy nation, sojourners and exiles on the earth, whose citizenship is in heaven. Nothing evil exists in this kingdom - no child traffickers, murderers, liars, no idolators, abusers, extortionists, or adulterers. It is a kingdom of grace and glory.



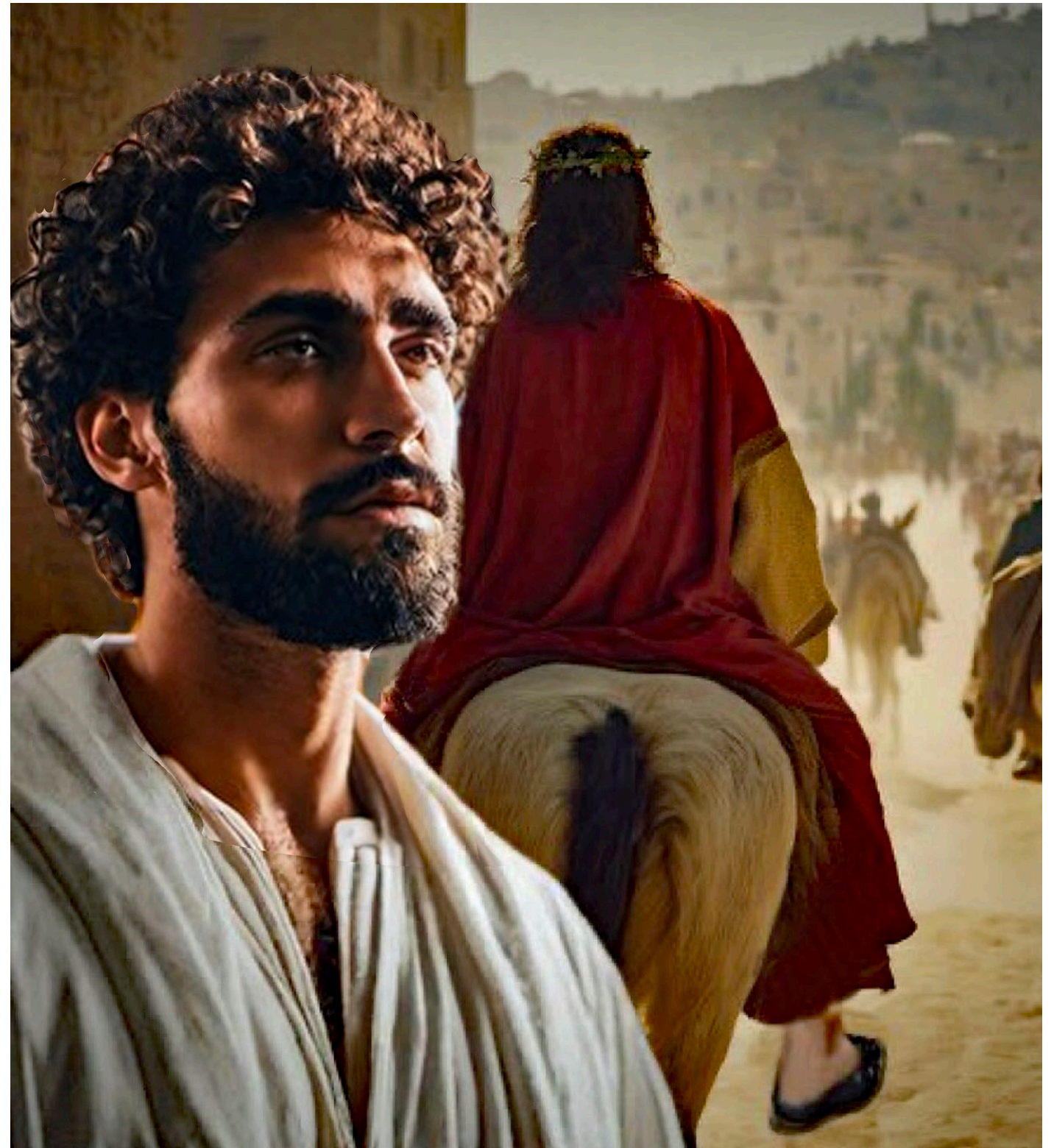
It was as a king that Messiah entered Jerusalem on the Passover. Upon their coronation, kings would commonly ride in on a mount. Jesus chose to ride on a donkey colt that no one had ever ridden. It was a public announcement that He was Israel's King. The prophet Isaiah had written: "For a child will be born to us; a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." Zechariah, another prophet, had written: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."



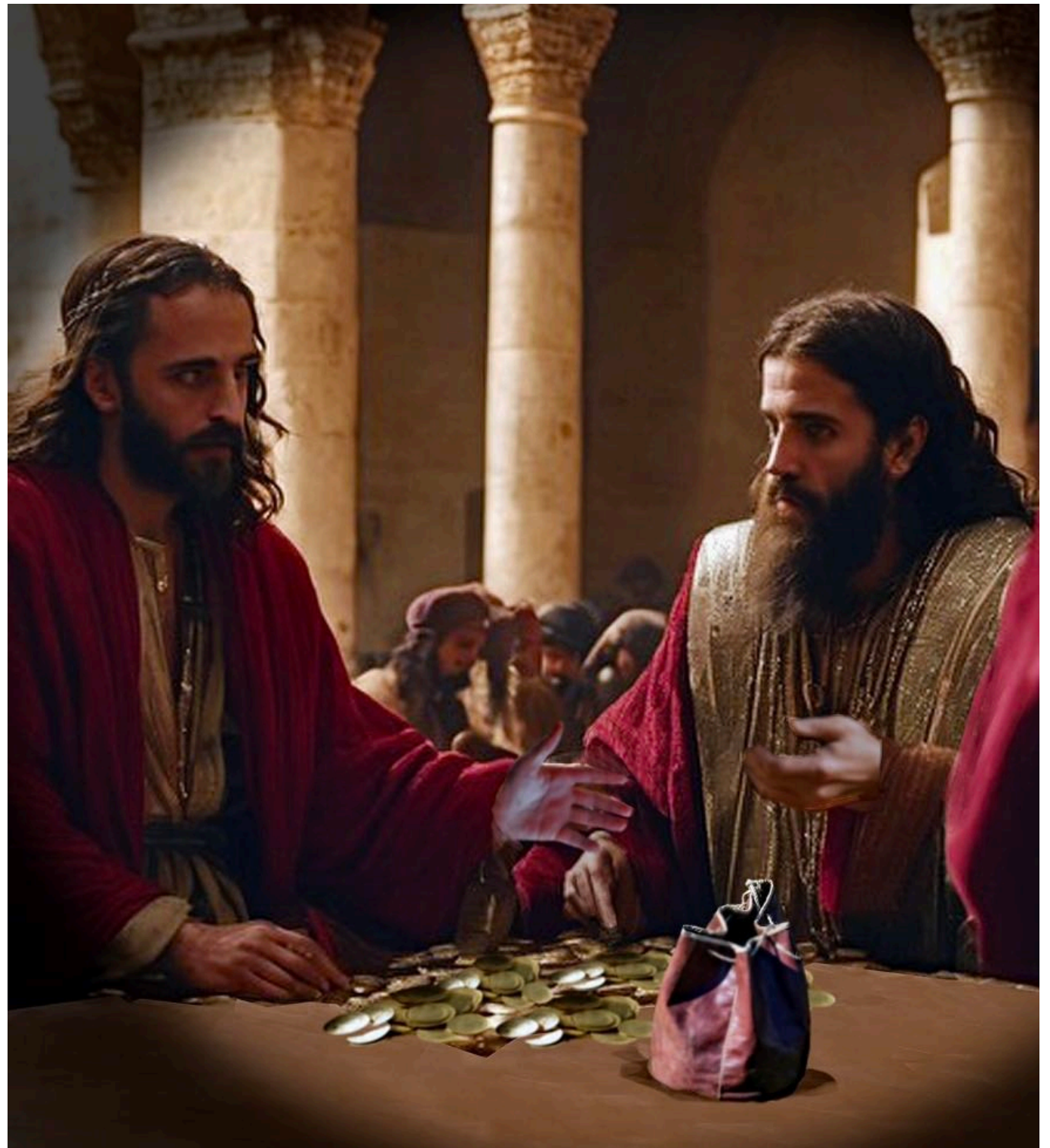
One disciple, Judas Iscariot, never referred to Jesus as 'Messiah". He would only refer to Him as "Teacher." Judas followed Jesus in hopes that He would overthrow Roman rule and thus give Judas a position of power. Jesus had entrusted him with the funds for the group, and Judas was often pilfering from it. Perhaps he was hoping that once Jesus was crowned King of Israel, he would retain his financial post and become fabulously wealthy. Judas was also a member of the Zealots, known for their extreme hatred of Rome. Many were violent and aggressive, and they have been called some of the world's first terrorists. Not all Zealots were violent, but they had a reputation of being forceful, aggressive agitators.



Jesus had never been in any doubt as to Judas' character. In fact he was chosen as a disciple because Jesus knew he would betray Him. It was a part of God's plan. Jesus had once referred to Judas as a "son of perdition", indicating what his end would be. One time Jesus' friend Mary took some expensive perfume and poured it over Jesus' feet, wiping His feet with her hair as an act of worship. Judas objected, saying the money would have been better spent on the poor. Of course he didn't care about the poor, but saw it as money he could have skimmed for himself. Jesus told him to leave Mary alone. It was intended that she should save the perfume for the day of His burial. He added: "You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me'.



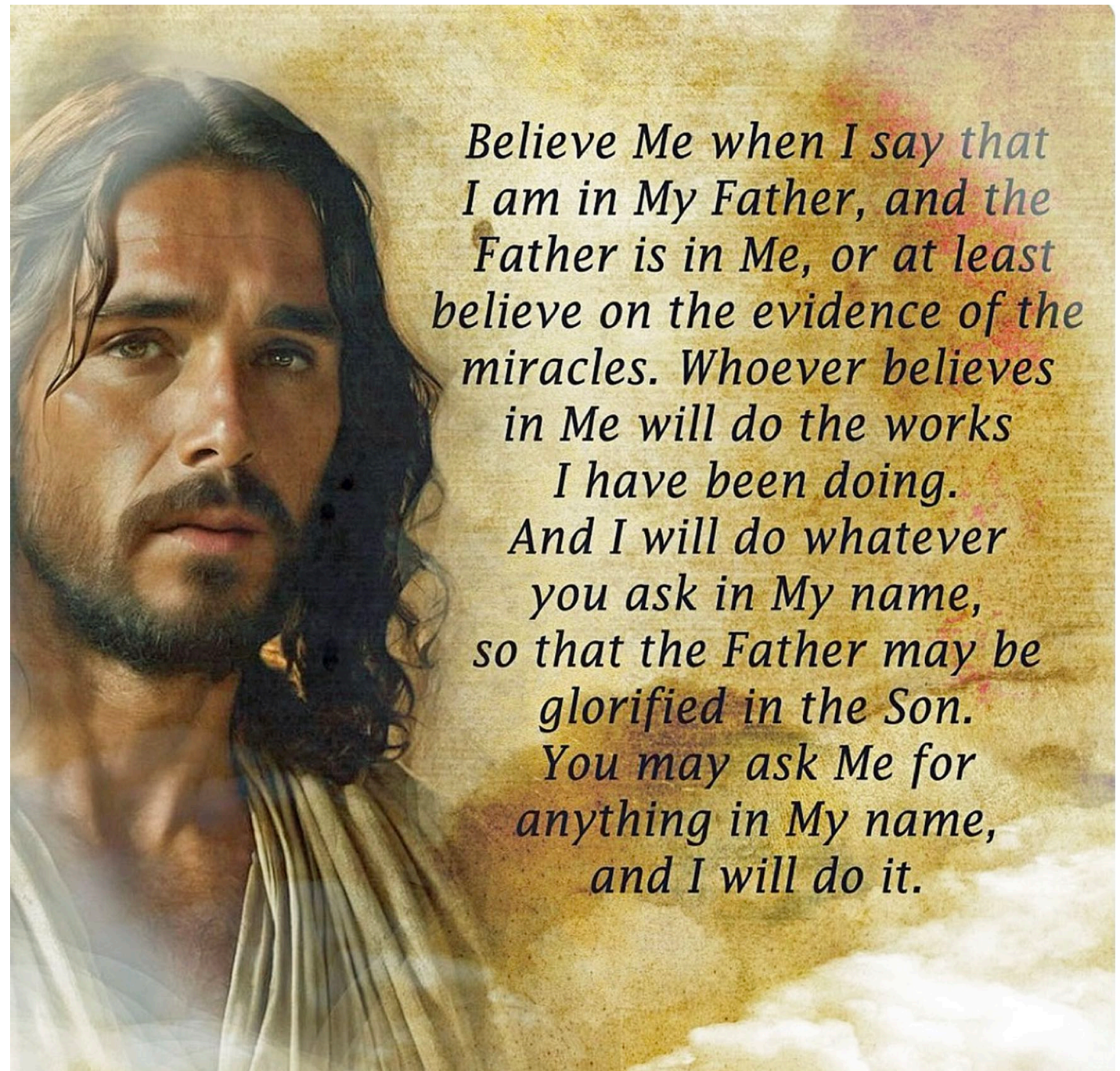
Judas made a decision to do a most despicable act. He decided to betray Jesus to His enemies. Perhaps he felt disillusioned that Jesus was not turning out to be the Jewish ruler he had hoped for. Maybe he was disgruntled at being reprimanded by Jesus over Mary's pouring perfume over His feet. When Jesus mentioned His coming death, Judas may have thought he had wasted three years of his life by following false hopes of becoming wealthy and becoming important and powerful. Whatever his motive, he approached the chief priests of the Pharisees and asked what they would give him if he delivered Jesus over to them. They offered him 30 pieces of silver, and from then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Messiah over to the authorities.





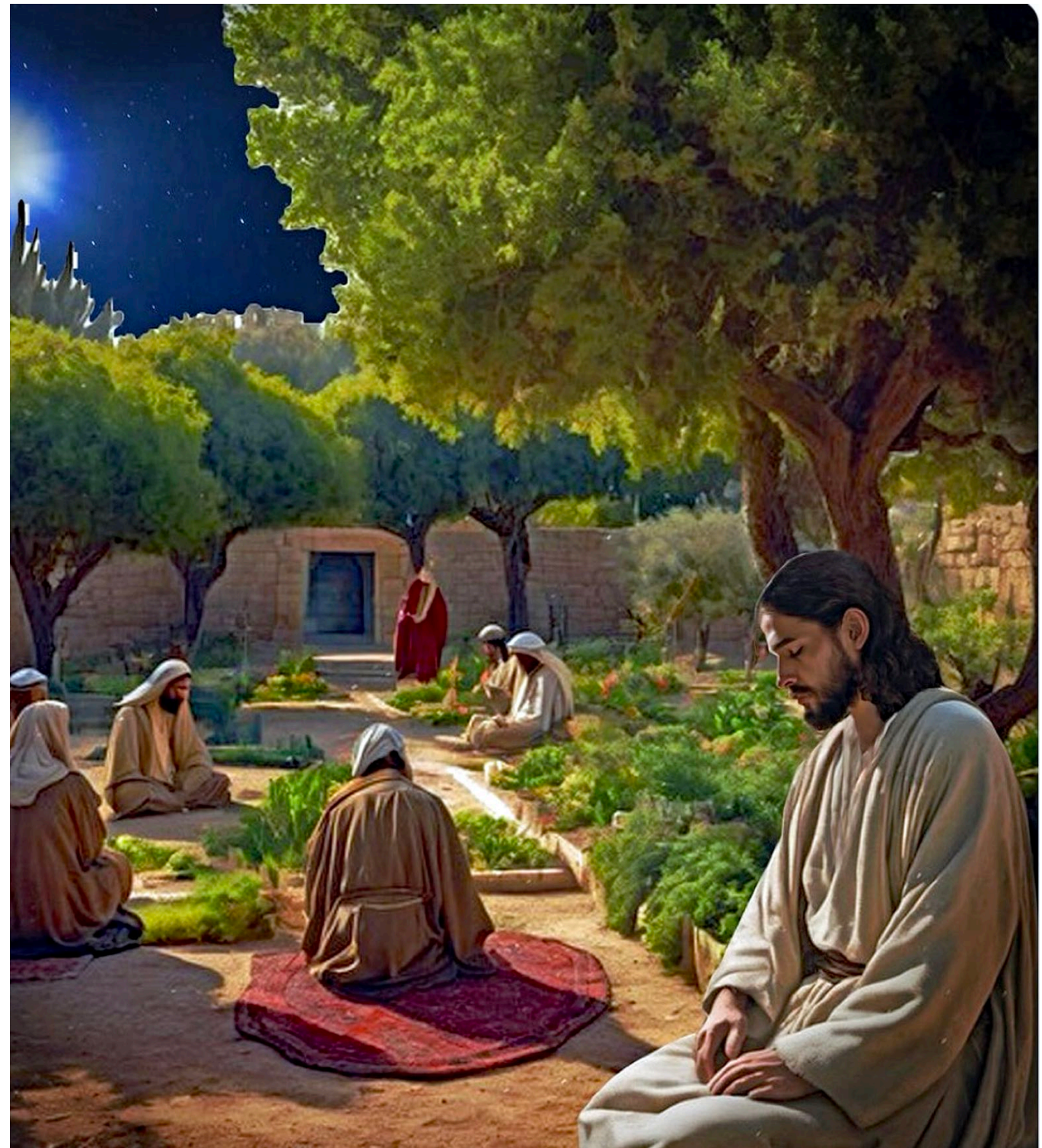
Jesus and His disciples had their last Passover supper together in an upper room. Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him. Judas asked if it was he and Jesus affirmed it, and told him to quickly do what he was planning. Then Satan filled Judas' heart and he left them.

The disciples were troubled as Jesus talked about His coming death, but He assured them He was going away to prepare mansions for them, and He would come back for them. He would also not leave them orphans, but would send His Spirit to be with them. He also assured them that they could ask anything in His name, and He would do it. Jesus also took some bread and wine and said these were to be used as symbols to remember Him by. He likened the wine to His blood and the bread to His body. He said: "For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink" meaning that salvation would come through the sacrifice of His physical body on the cross.



Believe Me when I say that I am in My Father, and the Father is in Me, or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles. Whoever believes in Me will do the works I have been doing. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.

Jesus and His disciples went to the Mount of Olives, to a private place called the Garden of Gethsemane. There He prayed about the cup of suffering He was about to undergo. He wanted His Father's will, but He was dreading the spiritual separation between Him and His Father that would happen when He took on the sins of humanity. Being human, He was also dreading the pain and suffering that was sure to come. He asked His disciples to pray, but they soon fell asleep and were no solace for Him. He was alone with His anguish, with no one to comfort Him. The Bible says that Jesus was a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” and probably at no time was this more evident than when He prayed in the Garden that night.



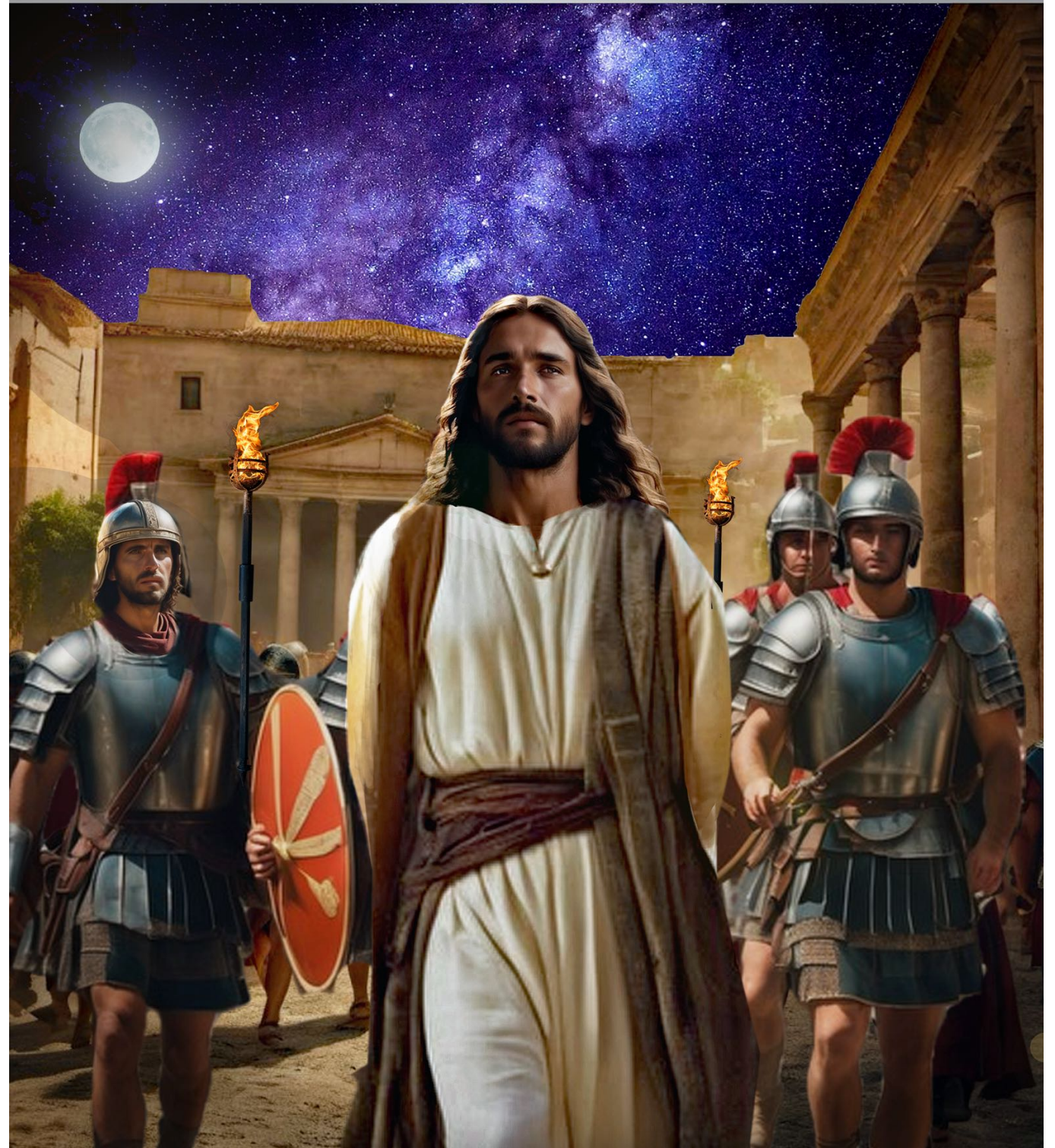
Being the Son of God, Jesus knew in detail everything that was about to happen to Him. He knew that He was facing one of the most horrible forms of capital punishment in history. He contemplated not just the pain He would suffer, but more importantly the spiritual separation that would come as He took on the sins of humanity. So severe was His agony that it caused Him to sweat great drops of blood. This sweating of blood is a real, but rare clinical condition called "hematohidrosis," in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture. It only happens under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress. Jesus asked His Father to remove the cup of suffering from Him, but added that He would do whatever He wanted. His Father then sent an angel to encourage and strengthen Him.



Judas knew where Jesus often met with His disciples, so he brought a Roman cohort of soldiers (about 300 or more men) and also some officers and chief priests to arrest Him - a literal army sent to capture one man. They were probably expecting an insurrection of some sort, which is why they came at night. Also it was well known how powerful Jesus was for He had quelled storms and walked through murderous mobs, so they were taking no chances. Judas came up to Jesus, calling Him "Rabbi," and then he betrayed Him with a kiss (a traditional greeting at the time). Jesus asked the soldiers who they were looking for. When they said "Jesus the Nazarene," Jesus responded, "I am He." The guard and soldiers drew back and fell to the ground, unable to move because of Jesus' Power.



At the Passover Supper Jesus had cautioned His disciples to bring a couple of swords with them in case they needed to defend themselves. Jesus said this because He knew that once He was arrested, events would be in play where He would not be able to protect them as He always had done before. When the soldiers came for Jesus, Peter swung his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. He was thinking to rescue Jesus, not understanding that it wasn't Jesus who needed protecting, but him and the other disciples. Jesus stopped him from going further and healed the servant's ear. Jesus had prayed to His Father that not one of those the Father had given Him would be lost, so after seeing that His disciples were safe, He permitted the soldiers to arrest Him.



Jesus was tried before Annas (father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest) who interrogated Jesus, but the Lord said everything He had done had been in the open, so He wouldn't defend His actions. In frustration, Annas sent Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas. It was actually illegal to hold a midnight trial on the Passover, and there were no credible charges. However Jesus being sent to the High Priest was essential to God's plan because the scriptures stipulated that the sin offering for Israel had to be delivered by the High Priest himself. Caiaphas asked Jesus if He was the Messiah and Jesus answered: "I AM. And you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Mighty One and coming in the clouds of heaven." In a rage, Caiaphas tore his clothes and accused Jesus of blasphemy.



The Pharisees met together and realized that their charge of blasphemy might not be considered worthy of a death sentence by the Romans, so they changed the charge to Jesus declaring Himself a king. That way Rome would see Jesus as an insurrectionist and give the death penalty. The council of religious leaders then sent Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, who had power of life and death and could reverse capital sentences passed by the Sanhedrin. Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews, and Jesus replied: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.' Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king."





Pilate heard that Jesus was a Galilean and saw an opportunity to hand the problem over to Herod who had jurisdiction over Galilee. Herod was delighted because he hoped Jesus would perform a miracle. However Jesus remained aloof. In frustration, Herod handed Him over to his soldiers who mocked Jesus by putting a crown of thorns on His head and a royal cape over His shoulders. After a severe beating by his soldiers, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate to share in his joke.

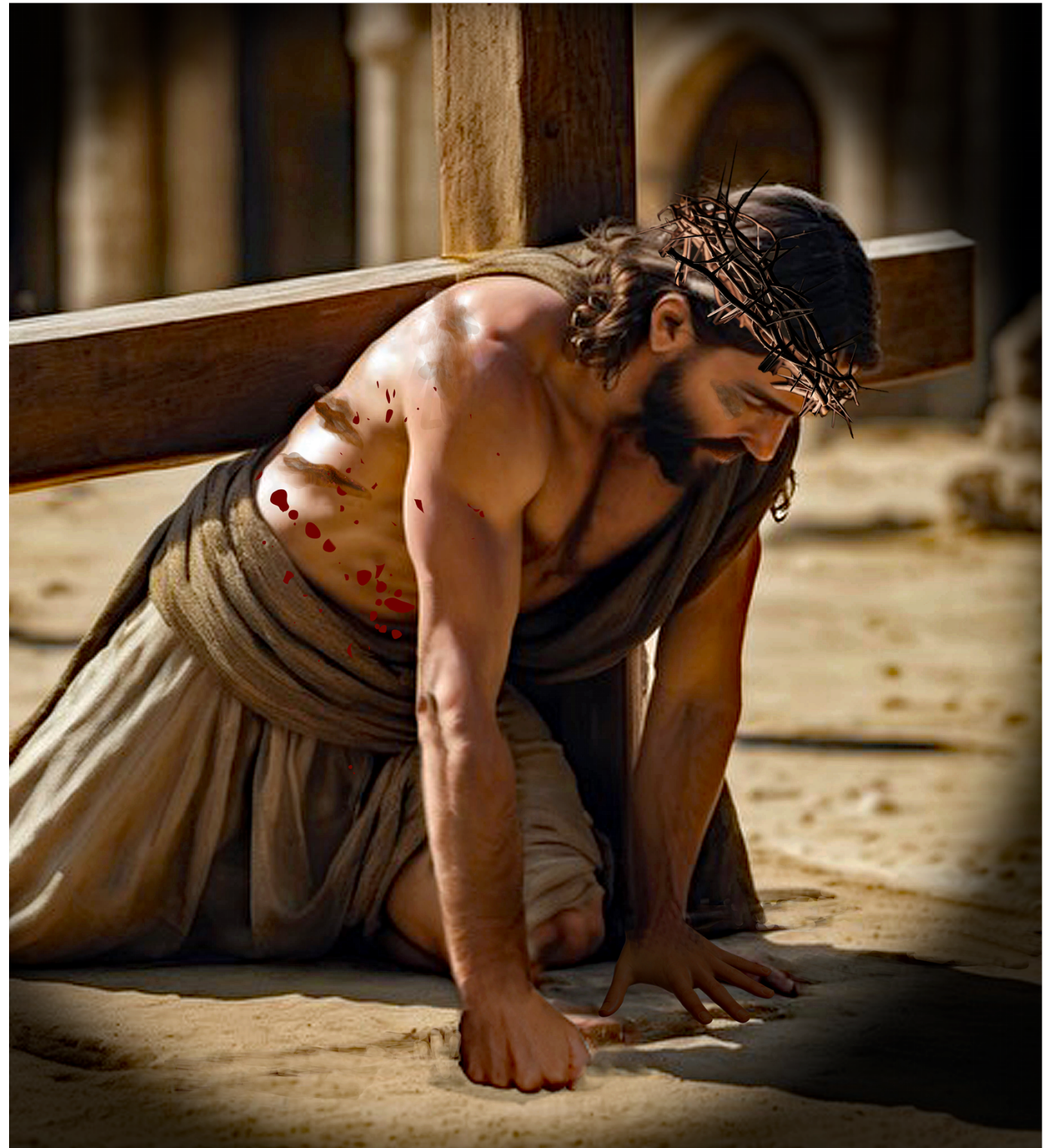
Meanwhile Judas was overcome by guilt and went back to the priests to return the money they had given him. He told them he had betrayed innocent blood. The priests couldn't have cared less and told him it was his responsibility. Judas then threw down the money and left in despair. The chief priests picked up the money, and, because it was against the law to put blood money into the treasury, they used it to buy a potter's field for a cemetery, calling it the Field of Blood. After leaving the priests, Judas must have felt the disappointment of his lost dreams and the horror of his wicked act of betrayal, for he committed suicide by hanging. Because Jesus had said Judas was doomed to hell, it is unlikely that Judas truly repented or ever believed in Jesus as a Saviour.



In the early morning, Jesus was again in the Praetorium in front of Pilate. The governor felt the charges against Jesus were spurious, and he was hesitant to condemn Jesus to death, especially after Procle, his wife, sent a note telling him about a dream she had, and warning him not to murder an innocent man. (Some say Procle later became a Christian). However Pilate didn't feel he could ignore the Jews or their accusations. Since it was the annual custom of releasing a prisoner on the Passover, he offered to release Jesus, but the crowd (many of whom had been bribed by the Pharisees) loudly objected. Then Pilate had Jesus brutally scourged, hoping this would satisfy them, but they kept crying out for the death penalty. Finally Pilate washed his hands in a basin, declaring he found no charge against Jesus and was innocent of His blood.



Pilate was afraid to run afoul of higher authorities if this conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders wasn't resolved. But he still wavered on his decision. Jesus told Pilate that he would be held responsible for his decisions, but the one who handed Him over to him would bear the greater guilt. He was referring to the High Priest. Pilate was unnerved by these words and again tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders accused Pilate of being no friend to Caesar if he did so. Pilate asked them: "Shall I crucify your King?" to which the Jewish leaders replied, "We have no king but Caesar!" Pilate found this ironic but saw no other option but to issue the death sentence. Jesus, who was already weakened by loss of blood, was made to carry a heavy cross to Golgotha. Some grieved for their Messiah as He struggled with His burden.



Eventually Jesus, the soldiers, and the crowd all arrived at Golgotha. Pilate had issued orders to fasten a sign on the cross of Jesus saying: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The chief priests objected to this and wanted it changed, but Pilate refused, saying: "I have written what I have written." Crucifixion could take many hours to kill the victim, causing heart failure, suffocation, cardiac rupture, and dehydration. It was an excruciating form of torture, with the added humiliation of being stripped and in full view of the public. Satan, who would have been watching everything, obviously thought Jesus was finally in his power, but the Lord once said He had legions of angels at His beck and call, and He told Pilate that he had no power over Him, except whatever His Father allowed. So it was only His great love for His followers that kept Jesus on His sacrificial mission.



Jesus was crucified with two thieves, one on either side of Him. One thief mocked Jesus telling Him to walk off the cross if He was truly the Messiah. The other thief declared Jesus was righteous and asked to be remembered when Jesus went to paradise (the part of Sheol for God's followers). Jesus told the thief he would soon be there with Him.



Jesus was surrounded by those Pharisees who wanted Him dead. They mocked Him and gloated that they had succeeded in having Him crucified, saying: "He saved others but he can't save himself. He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him if he wants him". Satan and the demons were also celebrating because they assumed they finally had power over God's Son, who had so often defeated them. They didn't know that this war with God's Holy Seed was all a part of God's Master plan. They should have known, because throughout history God had always managed to manipulate evil to bring about His righteous purposes..as He was doing right then.



After excruciating hours of pain and suffering, Jesus cried out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was asking His Father why He was so far from saving Him; why He had deserted Him. This was the moment when Messiah bore the full weight of humanity's sin and the Father's consequent rejection. The prophet Isaiah had prophesied this moment when he wrote: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."



A great darkness fell over the land at three in the afternoon. But this wasn't all that happened. The earth shook, rocks split apart, and some tombs broke open. A Roman centurion was shaken by all this and exclaimed "Surely He was the Son of God!" Later it would be discovered that the bodies of many holy people, who had recently died, were raised to life and these went into Jerusalem where they appeared to many people. Their names are not mentioned and it is unclear whether they had physical bodies or not. Neither do we know if they died a second time or were translated like Enoch and Elijah. But the incident showed that something of a cataclysmic nature was happening in the spirit realm involving Life overcoming death.





At the moment of the earthquake, the thick, heavy curtain of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. This was astounding because the curtain was 60 feet long and 4 inches thick. Only God could have done it. This revealed the Father's great anger over sin and what was being done to Messiah. It signified that the barrier to God because of sin was torn down. Messiah, through His death, had removed it. But there was still something more that Messiah had to accomplish.

It was the Passover festival and the priests didn't want bodies left on crosses during the festival, so the soldiers broke the legs of the thieves, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. A spear was thrust into His side to make sure. All this fulfilled the prophecy that said: "He protects all His bones. Not one of them will be broken." This ties in with the instructions Yahweh gave to Moses about the sacrificial lamb they were to eat during the Passover in Egypt. "It must be eaten inside the house. Take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones." Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and He was laid in the tomb belonging to a rich disciple, who together with Nicodemus, wrapped the body in cloth.



The next day the chief priests went to Pilate because they remembered that while Jesus was still alive, He had said He would rise from the dead after three days. They wanted Pilate to secure the grave until the third day to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and telling people Jesus had been resurrected. Pilate told them to take a guard and make the grave as secure as they wished, which they did by sealing the tomb with a great rock. Mary Magdalene and another Mary saw where Jesus was buried.



Jesus went in spirit to the paradise part of Sheol, although Jesus' body was still in the tomb. Paradise was where Jesus told the thief they would meet up after they both died. However Death couldn't hold Jesus because He was without sin. The scriptures predicted the Messiah would overcome death: "You will not abandon Me to the realm of the dead, nor will You let Your faithful One see decay." Other prophets foretold that God would one day abolish death: "He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces" and "I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?"



At dawn on the Sabbath, there was a violent earthquake and a mighty angel came down from heaven and rolled away the stone covering the tomb. The angel's appearance was like lightning. He was so glorious that the guards who were guarding the tomb trembled and fainted, becoming unconscious. When they awakened, they found the tomb empty. They were afraid that Pilate would punish them so they hurried off to the Pharisees who said they would tell Pilate that the disciples had stolen the body.

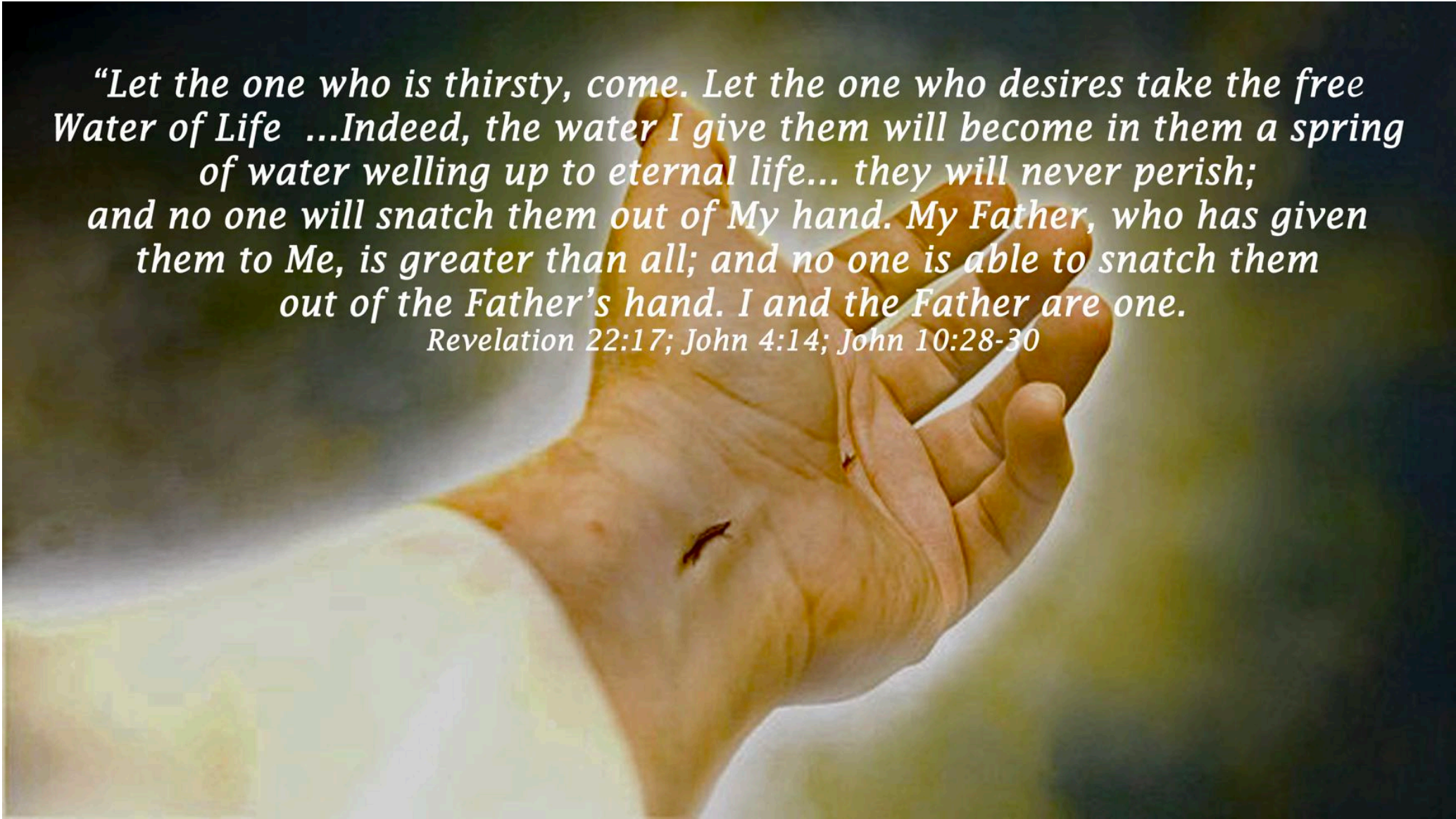




Jesus returned to earth to bring the good news to His followers. He made several appearances; one was a personal appearance to Mary Magdalene who was in very deep grief. At first she didn't recognize Him, but when He called her name, she was overjoyed, and rushed to Him. Jesus also visited His disciples and singled out Thomas, who had doubts about Jesus rising from the dead. He showed Him the wounds in His side and hands, and told him to doubt no longer.

Jesus met with His disciples many times; once on the road to Emmaus where He explained the scriptures to two of His followers; once to encourage Peter who had denied Jesus during His arrest and was deeply guilt-ridden; once on the shore while the disciples were fishing where He provided a miraculous catch of fish; once to His brother James and all the apostles; once when He met with His followers for 40 days and spent time encouraging them; and then He was seen by 500 of His followers at the same time in Bethany. Then it was time for Him to return to His Father in heaven. He was taken up before their very eyes in a cloud that hid Him from their sight. Before He left, He promised to send His Holy Spirit to be with them, commissioning them to spread the good news of salvation to the entire world.





“Let the one who is thirsty, come. Let the one who desires take the free Water of Life ...Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life... they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.

Revelation 22:17; John 4:14; John 10:28-30

The Seed of God had completed the mission which had been planned in the Godhead before the beginning of time. God had always wanted a family of beloved children who would love Him and reflect His righteous character. Through Messiah He had created a new genus - a new creation - that would live with Him forever in heaven. He had battled Satan, Nephilim, demons, and every kind of wickedness in high places on their behalf, and through it all, He had come out the Victor. He told His disciples, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

The War of the Seed had been won.

