

# *Conversation in Heaven*

THE TESTIMONY OF

# THREE BROTHERS



John and Elaine McLachlan

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## **THE TESTIMONY OF THREE “BROTHERS”**

Our names are Peter, Paul and John.

The reason for telling our stories in this way is to help you to see that God calls us, from different backgrounds, with different personalities, and trains us to be the best we can be, for His glory.

We will tell our stories conversationally, but from our own perspectives. Though our lives are linked, and we were in the same environment for some time, the link is strong because we met Jesus. It is, however, because we are linked through meeting Jesus that we have our stories, individually and as “Brothers”. Jesus became the centre of each of our lives, and our inspiration.

John put it in these words. “They have overcome him (the Accuser of our Brethren) by means of the blood of the Lamb and by the utterance of their testimony, for they did not love and cling to life even when faced with death (holding their lives cheap till they had to die for their witnessing).” (Revelation 12:11- *Amplified Bible*)

Jesus had put out the challenge not long after we met Him – “Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:38&39)

None of us really understood this when we first heard this statement, but afterwards we came to understand it.

These testimonies go across the “death barrier”. They come through the imagination of the reader. Jesus said that he who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and

believes in me will never die. (John 11:25&26) We are talking in Heaven. God is the great “I AM”, who was when we were on the earth, and is the same as you read and He will be right to the end. We are now in eternity where He always is, whereas you, if you are born from above, are in eternal life but not yet where we are, in Paradise with Him. We will meet you personally one day, but hear and imagine our stories because our lives were meant to teach you to be overcomers too. This was the reason for our calling – our Apostleship.

## **HOW DID WE MEET JESUS?**

### **PETER –**

My brother, Andrew, was a disciple of John the Baptist, who said he was the forerunner of the Messiah, the promised One, whom we Jews believed would save us from our sins. We had heard the Law and the Prophets read in the synagogue (so long as we listened carefully – sometimes it was too sing-song and boring!). He and I had done our Bar Mitzvah but, as fishermen, it was not too relevant to our everyday lives. But Andrew had got caught up in this John’s ministry. It was just so different to what we were used to. John had a good message and preached repentance for sins. He said, “I baptise with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the

one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose.” (John 1:26&27)

One day John the Baptist said to Andrew and another of his followers, “Look, the Lamb of God.” It was clear to Andrew and his friend that John was telling them this man was important, so they followed Him. It was Jesus, and He asked what they wanted. They asked a pretty stupid question but He invited them to where He was staying, and they spent the day with Him.

Andrew came rushing to find me, to tell me that he and his friend had found the Messiah. This was very interesting news so I went with him to Jesus. I will never forget that first meeting. Jesus looked at me. He had the most beautiful eyes, so penetrating, yet so full of love. This man was definitely not like the Rabbis at the synagogue. It was extraordinary and actually it nearly took my breath away. Then He said an extraordinary thing. “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Peter, which means ‘rock’.” (John 1:43) In the song of Moses God Himself is the Rock, and His works are perfect, and all His ways are just; a faithful God who does no wrong. (Deuteronomy 32:3) I did not yet understand why Jesus was calling me a rock, because I made plenty of mistakes.

Luke wrote a story about something that made me very ashamed. Jesus came out in our boat and told us to cast our nets. It was daytime and we had been fishing all night and caught nothing. I could not imagine that Jesus knew anything about fishing, but we did as He told us, and to our shock, we caught an enormous number of fish. I realised that Jesus was no ordinary person and fell down on my

knees before Him. He just told us that He would make us fishers of men. These were incidents that made me realise what a privilege He was offering us.

Although we went on with our fishing, we heard Jesus preach. His main message was “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”

(Matthew 4:17) One day, as He was walking beside the Sea of Galilee where we usually fished, He called to us, Andrew and me, and said “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19)

This time it was not the eyes so much as the voice. It really arrested me. There was something so attractive, so impelling about His call. I felt that if I did not go with Him then and there I would regret it all my life. What was “fishing for men” anyway? Andrew must have felt the same, because we put down the nets and followed Him.

Jesus also called our friends, James and John on the same day, and they came with us. Eventually there were twelve of us in Jesus’ personal group. We were not sure, at first, why Jesus asked us to accompany Him, but His stated intention was to make us fishers of men so He became our Rabbi, but His teaching was not in a formal setting, but on the streets. This was very new and unusual to our cultural thinking.

## **JOHN –**

My father, John Zebedee, was quite wealthy and well-known and employed other men to help in our fishing business. We had contacts

with the authorities and leaders to sell our fish, but James and I had not decided our careers except to help our father.

My mother's name was Salome and she was related to Jesus' mother, Mary. My brother, James, and I were fishing with my father when Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee and called us to follow Him. We both left our nets with my father. He could see that being with Jesus was important and he let us both go quite freely, so we went with Peter and Andrew. Jesus gave us the name "sons of thunder". I think He thought we came on a bit strong sometimes, but He seemed to value us anyway. I called myself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." I was very aware of Jesus' love for people and I knew He felt like this for everyone. That is why I wrote the words that have been quoted down through history. "God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) When I wrote my books I wanted to convey this love. I also wrote in one of my letters that God is Love. (1 John 4:8) Jesus came into the world as a man to deal with the sin problem, which separated us from this Love. Though His own people did not receive Him, all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12) They can be born again by the Spirit of God and received into God's own family. I did not understand all this when I first met Jesus, but when I wrote my book it was my passion to tell about this.

I also wanted to tell about what John the Baptist said about Jesus. "He will baptise with the Holy Spirit", and "He is the Lamb of God."

He was referring to the Passover, though we did not understand that at the time either.

I agree with Peter that Jesus' personality was quite awe-inspiring and magnetic. There was something so attractive, so gentle yet so strong, so patient with people, and we listened to Him teach the Scriptures in a way we had never heard before. It was so inspired, yet so practical. It made me realise that God is so wise, and I developed a longing to acquire this wisdom. After all, Solomon had asked for wisdom and God was pleased to grant his request. I wanted to know what God Himself was saying through the words and actions of Jesus so much that I became one of three of Jesus' closest companions, and saw some things that the other disciples did not witness, such as Jesus' Transfiguration on the mountain.

## **PAUL –**

My first encounter with Jesus was after He had risen into Heaven, and was very dramatic and unexpected. You will have read the story but I never forgot the impact of that encounter. I was absolutely fuming about the Lord's disciples and was going to set them all right, one way or the other. Suddenly there was that Light. I thought I had been hit by lightning as I fell to the ground. No one else heard the voice except me, although they heard the sound, but I knew it was God speaking. When I discovered I was blind I had to ask for help. I did not know what would happen to me next, but at least those who were with me took me to Damascus. It was three days before



Ananias came to me and laid his hands on me, and spoke the healing words so that my sight returned, and I was filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. I was also baptised in water at that time, by instruction of Ananias. (Acts 22:13&16) Ananias also told me that I would know God's will and would be Jesus' witness to all men of what I had seen and heard. I went to Jerusalem but the Lord told me to leave immediately because they would not accept my testimony about Him. The Lord told me He would send me to the Gentiles. (Acts 22:18-21) His commission to me was plain. "I have appointed you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and of what I will show you...I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:16-18) I understood that my testimony about being blind, then being able to see, was a spiritual lesson, and I remembered Isaiah's words, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened..." (Isaiah 35:5) I went to Arabia and later returned to Damascus. It was after three years that I went to Jerusalem to meet Peter, but I only stayed with him for fifteen days and saw James, Jesus' brother. Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. (Galatians 1:16-21) All this time I was learning from the Holy Spirit. I knew the Law and the Prophets so well, but I had to learn the New Covenant – grace not law. I had to learn to be a minister of the New Covenant. This is not by the letter of the Law, because that tells us how we are sinners and under condemnation unto death. It is by the Spirit of God which gives life. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit. He said we must be born again by

the Spirit unto new life. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1) “In Christ Jesus” really means trusting in what Jesus has done on the Cross, and being clothed with power (the anointed one and His anointing) so that His glory is seen on us.

## **THE INITIAL IMPACT OF JESUS’ TEACHING**

### **PETER –**

We saw Jesus do the most amazing things. These are written in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and each wrote how they experienced, although I gave information to Mark to write a lot of his story. It is very interesting how different things impressed each of us. Matthew was most interested in Jesus’ kingship. Mark was most interested in Jesus’ work as a servant of God. Luke, probably because he was a doctor, was so impressed with Jesus’ healing and deliverance. In his second book, Acts, he wrote that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power. He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him. (Acts 10:38) John, who is going to tell his own story, was most interested in the Spiritual meaning and significance of Jesus’ ministry.

I was amazed how the crowds gathered to hear Jesus preach and teach. He really wanted to not only help them change their thinking (and ours) from just obeying Old Covenant laws but to see what God had always intended – to be filled with the love of God so that we are empowered to do His will. The healings were just as much a taste of God's goodness as they were freedom from the awful things that had come upon people. I think, though, that Jesus was a magnet for people because He was such a beautiful person to be with. He just radiated God's love. The anointing on Him gave people such a warm feeling. His teaching was quite riveting. It carried authority which the best teachers of the Law and the Prophets could not match and this made them angry and jealous. One of the special things that happened for me was when Jesus came to the home of my wife's mother. She was very sick but He went to her and took her hand to help her up and she was immediately able to prepare our meal. No fuss and bother, just a flow of God's healing power through His hand.

Jesus did not mind being controversial because the old teaching had gone so far into traditions that did not come from the heart of God, but this did attract a lot of criticism from the Pharisees. He tried to tell them that God is introducing a new way but they did not understand His parables. He talked about new patches on old cloth and new wine into old wineskins (Mark 2:19-22) but they did not catch on. Later He told us that He taught in parables deliberately so that they would not understand. (Matthew 13:34&43) He was good to us though because when we did not understand He explained.

Jesus knew the word of God so well. He always had an answer to the arguments of the Pharisees. These answers were so wise that we were all amazed. Everything He said made sense, compared to those who claimed to know the Law. One time Jesus told them off. He said they were hypocrites, blind guides who shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces, make "converts" who are twice as much a son of hell as they, who neglect the more important matters of the Law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. After He spoke so strongly to them He shed tears because He had come first for the house of Israel but they despised Him.

Jesus challenged us to greater faith. He seemed disappointed with us when we woke Him to calm a storm. We had been really afraid because it was a very violent one but Jesus was asleep in the boat. We realised that Jesus' spoken word had such power, not only for sickness but for weather too. This power flowed out of Him, even when the lady touched His cloak and she was healed. He did not mind that she was unclean and commended her for her faith, even after He had rebuked us for our lack of faith. It was straight after this that Jesus restored a dead girl to life. Actually it was very uncomfortable to us, the value He gave to women all the time! But since only James, John and I were witnesses to this miracle we recognised the privilege of being His closest companions.

## JOHN –

It was not long after we started going about with Jesus that we were invited to a wedding in Galilee. This was the first of Jesus' miraculous signs when He changed the water into wine. He could short-circuit the natural creation. Instead of seed, vine, grape, process, He could do it in just two steps, water – wine. Later Paul wrote, "By Him all things were created...in Him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16&17) Though He was gentle He could also be very strong, especially when He saw those who were trying to make a profit out of the people who had come to worship at the temple.

I was the one who wrote about the teaching about being born of the Spirit. (John 3:3-8) This was one of the things Jesus said was essential in order to see the Kingdom of Heaven and this impressed me and subsequently enabled me to live a long and fruitful life, close to Him and confident of His will in my life, even though some bad things happened.

I was also impressed with Jesus' attitude to women. It was very obvious that He respected them, and understood their difficulties in our society. I wrote about the woman at the well (John 4:4-27) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11), because His way of seeing them was vastly different to the teachers of the Law, which had influenced how we also saw them. Jesus (Matthew 9:13) called the Jews who had judged themselves righteous as children of the devil, yet He showed great love and compassion for those who were caught up in sin. Wow! This was strange! He came, not to call the righteous, but

sinners. He also associated with sinners and we had to learn not to be embarrassed when He was criticised by the Pharisees.

Who could not be impressed by the wonderful miracles and healings that Jesus did? I wrote about Lazarus because that impacted my life. I would have thought that this would have convinced the Jewish leaders to believe, but it seemed to make them more angry and sceptical.

I wanted to write down the very special sayings of Jesus that revealed His direct link to Jehovah. Jesus kept saying "I AM". After the Holy Spirit enlightened me I realised that He truly was saying He is God, come in the flesh, as Paul put it, to be the second Adam. (Romans 5:12-19) The first Adam ignorantly sold out to give Satan the power in the earth, but the second Adam won back the authority for man to rule over the earth, and presented it once more to each one of us to exercise on His behalf.

Something special for me was when we were having the last Passover meal and I was sitting next to Jesus. Peter asked me to ask Jesus a question about who was going to betray Jesus. It was a terrible thought but Jesus gave me such a sad look, sort of resigned, disappointed but then, as quickly as it had come upon His face it was gone. He went straight back to the Passover celebration and handed a piece of bread to Judas Iscariot, who left the room immediately. We had no idea it was Judas who was about to betray Jesus to the Jews. All Jesus said after this was to emphasise His new commandment – to love one another.

## PAUL –

My first impression of Jesus was based on the fact that I was a very good Pharisee. There is only one God, therefore this man who calls God His Father is a sinner, and He is leading people into error. He and His followers must be stopped. I was one of those I wrote about later. “They are zealous for God but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.” (Romans 10:2&3)

At that time I had confidence in my worldly status – circumcised on the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the Law, a Pharisee; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. (Philippians 3:5&6) I was very well educated and knew the Jewish Law and the Prophets scrupulously, and I was very proud of it. I believed I was bound for great things and I was very ambitious too. As I wrote in my letter to the Galatians, I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:14)

That position collapsed as completely as I did on the road to Damascus when I met the risen Lord in person. He was able to come and go from Heaven but His glorified body was dazzling – I think even brighter than when He was glorified on the mountain as Peter and John saw. Jesus had warned the Pharisees when they questioned the blind man who was healed that He had come into the world for judgment, so that the blind will see and those who “see” will become

blind. (John 9:39) That is precisely what happened to me. I think, though, that the scales on my eyes were also to protect my eyes from permanent damage. It is interesting that I had a weakness in my eyes later on. Maybe I remembered what John had written because the Lord had mercy on me and sent Ananias to minister to me. I called my meeting with Jesus as “to one untimely born.” (1 Corinthians 15:8) Judas Iscariot dropped out and the Lord Jesus brought me in to the Apostleship, for the sake of the Gentiles. I have never forgotten that privilege and so I became His most devoted disciple from that time. I did not have the privilege of a human relationship with Him, yet through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, I got to know Him as well as anyone could. This is a precious testimony for all who follow Jesus, by being in relationship through the Holy Spirit, because what God did for me He will do for anyone who desires it. The other eleven Apostles had a special privilege from being called early, but Jesus said that the last will be first, and the first will be last. (Matthew 20:16) If we respond to the Master’s call into the vineyard, when He calls, the pay is the same. Jesus had said to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29) Those who come to Jesus on our testimony will be blessed.



## **PERSONAL WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS**

### **PETER –**

It did make me annoyed when James and John asked Jesus that personal favour to be at His right hand and left hand in His kingdom though. (Mark 10:35-41) We did not know what would happen as a result of their reply to Jesus about drinking His cup. Our envy and vying for top position had later repercussions that we could never have known then. Sin brings its own fruit. Jesus taught us that a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit and will eventually be cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 7:16-20) He also taught us that we could repent and be changed.

Jesus expected us to do His ministry quite soon after He taught us, sending us out and giving us His authority to heal and deliver people from evil spirits. We were to preach repentance so people could be healed and delivered, but if they would not receive us we were to dust off our feet as a testimony against them. (Mark 6:7-13) Soon after this John the Baptist was beheaded. This grieved us all, especially Andrew who had been his disciple before he met Jesus.

One day as we were out on the lake Jesus walked to us on the water. How could He do this? I asked Him if I could come to Him and I got out of the boat and started to walk on the water too. I really freaked out when I realised what I was doing – the sheer impossibility of it and I began to sink. Jesus just reached out His hand and we climbed into the boat. He said to me, “Why did you doubt?” He

expected me to have faith because He had told me to do it. I did not understand that every God-ordained thing is done by faith, not just faith in God, but the faith of God. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is supernatural faith. Jesus taught us this again later when He cursed the fig tree. “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (Mark 11:22-24) The important stipulation is forgiving others, because unforgiveness builds a barrier to our relationship with God. His power to answer our prayer cannot flow through offence.

Although Jesus stated very plainly that He came for the house of Israel, He delivered a Syro-Phoenician woman’s daughter from a demon. He could not touch the daughter because the woman had not brought her, but He commended the woman’s faith in Him and just said the word that her daughter was clean and it was done.

Because I seem to act impulsively, another special thing that happened to me was when Jesus asked us to tell who other people say He is. He then asked who we thought He was. What burst out of my mouth was “You are the Christ.” Jesus told me that the Father in Heaven had revealed this to me. Then He looked at me. “You are Peter, a rock.” He had told me this at the beginning when He changed my name. Over the years I came to understand what He meant. Jesus was prophesied to be the Rock. I would be His representative and we would build His church, founded on Jesus, the chief cornerstone, chosen and precious, and anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. (1 Peter 2:6) What a wonderful and precious privilege. Then He said He would give us the keys of the

Kingdom of Heaven. He had told the Pharisees that they shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces; they did not enter, nor will they let those enter who are trying to. (Matthew 23:13) Jesus was giving us His authority to bind and loose, so that people can enter. John described us as watchmen who open the gate for the Shepherd. (John 10:3)

Much to my embarrassment, almost straight after this, I protested about Him saying that He would be killed and on the third day raised to life. Jesus rebuked me very sharply and said, "Get behind me Satan." I did not want to think about or acknowledge that He had come into the world to be the Saviour. I did not realise that because I was His friend I could influence Him if He did not immediately repudiate my words. I had let my selfish desires overrule Jesus' own desire to obey His Father in all things.

Jesus absolutely loved children. Sometimes we tried to stop them bothering Him, but He was indignant and stopped to give them hugs. Their faces were so trusting, and saw the beauty of Jesus and felt His love. We learnt that this was the attitude Jesus loved, even from adults. This softness and openness was the most appropriate way to come into the Kingdom. Sophistication and worldly knowledge put up a barrier. He had already taught that the poor in spirit will receive the Kingdom, those who are humble in heart. Straight after this a rich man came to Him. This man was self-righteous and, though he wanted eternal life, he went away sad, because he did not understand about childlike faith in Jesus, and valued his money more.

Another example of my impulsiveness was when Jesus took John, James and me onto the mountain. We saw the most extraordinary

event of Jesus being transfigured. His clothes became dazzling white and then Elijah and Moses appeared and spoke with Jesus. (Mark 9:2-8) Actually it was quite frightening, so I started to say things about booths and preserving the moment without putting my brain in gear. Then a cloud enveloped us and a voice came from the cloud. We heard what we realised was God's voice. "This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him." Jesus told us not to tell anyone about this until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. We had absolutely no idea what He meant.

When we came down from the mountain the others were trying to cast out an evil spirit, but they could not. After Jesus had successfully dealt with the problem we asked Him why we could not and He answered that this can only be cast out by prayer. What He meant was by living the presence of God. Jesus carried the presence of God all the time, the anointing that breaks yokes and removes burdens. The word "fasting" with the word "prayer" refers back to Isaiah's prophecy. "The kind of fasting I have chosen is – to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke..." (Isaiah 58:6-9) At this time we were not empowered with the Holy Spirit so we did not understand.

Another extraordinary incident happened when two of us were sent to get a donkey for Jesus to ride on into Jerusalem. As He rode people threw their cloaks on the road and spread branches as well. People were calling out "Hosanna" and acknowledging Jesus as the one who comes in the name of the Lord. These were words in the last Hallel Psalm (118) which are said after the Passover meal, and

also fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah. (Zechariah 9:9) I loved doing things for Jesus, because it made me feel important, though later I needed to learn that it is not about me, but serving others.

The next day on the way to the temple Jesus cursed a fig tree. After this Jesus went into the temple and forced the traders out of there. This made the chief priests and teachers really angry. I commented that the fig tree had withered. I was very surprised but Jesus again spoke to us about the power of believing prayer. Because the fig tree represented Israel (Joel 1:7), I wondered later whether this was the moment when the spirit of stupor came upon those Jews who were against the new way of living. I know that the Spirit of God will not strive with the hard-hearted for ever. (Genesis 6:3) My own commission from the Lord was to the Jews.

Another thing happened that amazed me. Jesus was asked to pay tax, so He sent me to catch a fish and take the coin out of its mouth. This happened exactly as He said. (Matthew 17:24-27) Jesus used my natural ability to show me supernatural things.

There was another incident where Andrew, John, James and I asked Jesus about the future, and particularly the end of the age. He told us the signs but said that no one knows except the Father. At that time, though, men will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

We had no idea of how close was the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. He continued to teach us, but we thought our relationship would go on for ages, until the incident in Simon's house when Mary anointed Jesus' head with expensive perfume. Jesus was really pleased and

said she had prepared for His burial. (Mark 14:8) I think I still thought (but fortunately did not shoot my mouth off this time) that Jesus spoke too much about His death. After all He was only 33 years old.

I learnt another hard lesson when Jesus washed our feet at the Passover meal. Jesus sent us to prepare for it, and we all gathered in the room to eat. Jesus took off His outer garment and wrapped a towel around His waist. He began to wash our feet. He came to me and I was terribly embarrassed. We had not arranged a servant to do this before the meal, and here was Jesus, about to do the lowliest job of hospitality. As He was about to wash my feet, I rashly pulled back and said, "No, you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered me, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." I was terrified. I had come to love Him so much. This was the last thing I would want so I told Him He could wash my hands and head as well. (John 13:1-17) This was not necessary. Jesus said that only the feet were to be cleaned. What did He mean? He said we were to wash one another's feet. This meant to serve one another. He explained gently that this was a Spiritual washing. Walking through life makes our "walk" dirty, as the dust on the ground does. We need to be clean so that we carry the power and glory of God, to be effective in soul-winning. We "walk out" the gospel of peace. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace...salvation." (Isaiah 52:7) Our feet are to be fitted with readiness for the gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:15) "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15)

As we were eating the meal, Jesus said something that made me upset. Someone was about to betray Him and He would only be with us a little longer. I asked Him where He was going and He said something that upset me more. Where He was going we could not follow Him.

My greatest failing is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; how I denied Jesus when He was arrested. I am so glad that Jesus forgives sins and that He demonstrated His forgiveness to me after He rose from the dead. (John 21:15-17)

## **JOHN –**

Jesus called both James and me “sons of thunder”. I think that because we came from a family of some importance in Galilee we were used to being right. Perhaps we were opinionated. When I saw a man casting out demons in Jesus’ name I tried to stop him because he had not been “authorised” by Jesus. (Luke 9:49) Jesus also corrected us when we wanted to call down fire on a village that did not welcome Him. (Luke 9:54&55)

As Peter has already mentioned we asked our mother to ask Jesus about us having a favoured place in Jesus’ Kingdom. (Matthew 20:20-24) We answered Jesus’ question about drinking the cup which He was about to drink without any knowledge of what we were saying. This resulted in James’ early death. He was murdered by Herod. I probably only escaped a similar fate because Jesus commissioned

me to care for His mother after He died on the Cross. God had said in the Law to be careful of what we say, lest it come to pass. Jesus was gentle with us in calling us sons of thunder. The noise of thunder always comes before the light-(ning). I think He was trying to warn us to always think of the consequences before we spoke. I gradually did learn this lesson, I think.

It was an exciting experience to be involved in feeding 5000 people. There were only five loaves and two fish to start with, but as we went around distributing the food it never got less, and there were twelve baskets over. Jesus said later that it is His Father who gives true bread from Heaven. This miracle was one of Jesus' signs as to who He was – "I AM". He said He was the bread of life. "He who comes to me will never go hungry." (John 6:35) Shortly after this people left from following Jesus. They considered that eating His flesh and drinking His blood was too hard to contemplate. Jesus asked us whether we too would leave but Peter answered for us all. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:60-70) Although Peter often spoke impulsively, he also often spoke what we could not express.

Jesus sent us out in pairs to minister in His power and authority and we preached as He did and we healed as He did. We had a bit of an argument as to who was the greatest. We had compared our results from our "mission", and because we still did not understand God's power working in us, we were foolish enough to think that the one who had done more healings was the best. Jesus later sent seventy two others in the same way. This showed us that we were not any



more special than any other ministers of God's power, and helped us to get our priorities right. Jesus was full of joy when the seventy two came back from their mission, full of wonder at what God had done. We caught on and Jesus turned to us and said "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see." (Luke 10:23)

Jesus was such a powerful pray-er. We asked Him to teach us to pray. He taught us a prayer, but He demonstrated how to pray in the most extraordinary way. He felt the Father's heart, identified what was not in line with the Father's will and spoke His will into being, even when, like Lazarus, the man was dead. "Holy is Your Name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Later James, the Lord's brother, wrote, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16) I really wanted to learn how to pray like this.

I wrote a great deal of Jesus' teaching on the Holy Spirit. We did not understand until the Holy Spirit came on us in power in the Upper Room at Pentecost, and then for me it all fell into place. Instead of Jesus being with us in His body, He sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to do the works He had prepared for us. He had sent us out in His authority on our short mission trip to have a try at what was supposed to be our future ministry. I wrote it as Jesus said it. "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12) The Holy Spirit would be our Counsellor and would be with us for ever. Whoever obeys His commands demonstrates his love for Jesus. In my first letter I recommend that we do not pursue

our worldly cravings – what we lust after with our eyes and our flesh, and we do not take pride in what we think we have or do. (1 John 2:15&16) Jesus said that it was for our good that He was going away, so that the Counsellor would come, because He would convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

We did not understand at first how this worked. When we first went out on our mission, we preached our hearts out trying to persuade people to believe and accept the Gospel, and we expected that the miracles would convince people to follow Jesus. Certainly some were convinced but others were not good ground, in that when the cares of the world came upon them, or when other teaching offended them, they fell away. The Holy Spirit was to be the power to connect us to the Heavenly Father and He would guide us into the Truth. I came to believe that relationship with the Holy Spirit would be even greater than being with Jesus in His flesh body, yet just as real.

At the Cross Jesus gave His mother, Mary, into my care. I believe that this saved my life while she was alive. I was impressed by the fact that everything that Jesus prophesied came to pass, and it was interesting when Jesus told Peter about his death and Peter asked about mine. Jesus' answer started a rumour that I would not die, but Jesus was firm that He was in charge of the length of my life. (John 21:23)

## PAUL –

I was never married, so I was able to commit my life completely to following Jesus. It was easy for me to take myself off to Arabia to spend time in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and He taught me a lot very quickly through visions and revelations. (2 Corinthians 12:1)

My life and circumstances had made me a confident person, but I had to learn to have no confidence in my superior education, my status and my background. I have a strong and confrontational personality which could sometimes rub people up the wrong way. I think, for example, that John Mark was offended by me. (Acts 13:13)

Barnabas was a good friend and introduced me to the eleven Apostles, and came on my early journeys with me. The church ordained us together for this work so there was a very strong anointing on us and we had a marvellous time. (Acts 13:3) We always considered that unity would bring great blessing from God and worked and prayed towards that. (Psalm 133:3) We also had quite strong persecutions, and had to “shake the dust from our feet” in protest. (Acts 13:51)

The Judaisers (those Jews who were promoting and trying to enforce the Law of Moses for new Christians to obey) were our greatest problem. They pursued us from town to town. God had clearly revealed to me that the New Covenant was not about keeping the Law of Moses. Our preaching was effective to both Jews and Gentiles, and they believed. God had truly broken down the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) and we are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, because we are baptised into Christ and have clothed

ourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26) Jesus had said that we must be born (again) by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3) and that we must also be clothed from on high by the same Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8) There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female – all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:29)

It was very exciting to see the miracles that the Holy Spirit did through my ministry, but they did attract a lot of trouble to my team. One minute they wanted to worship us and the next to stone us. In Lystra I had a miraculous healing myself after being stoned. After these sorts of experiences I was more fired up than ever to preach to the Gentiles. I knew people needed Jesus in their lives so much.

The Council at Jerusalem, when the Apostles and elders had to deal with the complaints against Barnabas and me, grieved my spirit very much. The Judaisers were doing my ministry much damage because they were discrediting my teaching and pushing circumcision again. Barnabas and I had to answer to the church, and particularly James (Jesus' brother) and Peter. Peter gave testimony about his experience in Cornelius' house and then Barnabas and I told about what God had done among the Gentiles. Judas and Silas were given a letter to take to the churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia with the rules for the Gentile churches. Everyone received the letter graciously but I was grieved because in a sense the Judaisers had won round one. God always intended our relationship with Him to be love. We obey Him because we love Him. The Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts exactly what He wants us to do, and we obey God rather than man. I believe this list of rules damaged my relationship with

Barnabas. We had a very acrimonious disagreement, actually over taking John Mark with us on our next mission trip, but our unity had been broken, I believe, by that letter. Barnabas had strong ties and loyalties to the church and to Mark and he knew I was not happy about that letter. We had worked so well together but now Barnabas went with Mark and Silas became my new partner. Almost straight away Timothy also joined us. Although his father was Greek, his mother was a Jew, so he was circumcised because of the Jews. We had to accept and try to live at peace with all men.

I was tremendously encouraged in Philippi, by Lydia from Thyatira. She was a wealthy and very intelligent woman who was also amazingly hospitable. She opened her heart to my message like a flower and it was so beautiful. This response really encouraged us to get through the imprisonment and enabled us to sing, which brought the miracle of our release. (Acts 16:26) This miracle brought about the conversion of the gaoler.

I was always very excited when the Holy Spirit gave me fresh revelation. In Athens, when I saw the altar "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD", I was able to proclaim who He is. (Acts 17:24-28)

I felt this was one of the most powerful revelations for the Gentile ministry, because they could come to God from whatever background they had. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) In Ephesus, God showed me that the Baptism of John (in water) was for repentance, but did not confer power and the Holy Spirit's gifts. However, when I laid my hands on the believers, they did receive the manifestations of power, just as I had when Ananias laid his hands on

me. (Acts 19:5) This was followed by mighty miracles in the whole region, and quite a few others began to join me.

Physically, because of all the persecutions – beatings, stoning, imprisonment in those dreadful prisons, being caught up in riots, and even all the travelling, I was sometimes quite weak but the Lord was always strengthening me.

One of the hardest things was advising, encouraging and pastoring the churches I planted. I had some very faithful people to help me but I felt a responsibility to all those who had become followers of Jesus because of my preaching. This was why I wrote so many letters. The devil was very active to try to destroy the “pure” gospel, which I had received from the Lord. There was this constant “Judaising” – reverting to Jewish practices, because the first converts were Jews, and they still thought in the old ways in worship style and approach to God. Even Peter and James were influenced by their past teaching.

My hardest times were when I was under house arrest, but many people came to support me. I was disappointed, though, that there was no one to stand with me at my trial. (2 Timothy 4:16) It was an honour to taste what my Master had experienced when all His followers deserted Him at His trial, but I did feel hurt as I imagine He also did. At least the Lord stood at my side whereas Jesus was forsaken. That must have been terrible!

## **CHANGED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

### **PETER –**

From the first terrible experience of shame when Jesus was in my boat (Luke 5:3-8), and throughout the three years we spent with Him I made many embarrassing mistakes. I used to wish I could cut my tongue out to stop me blurting out the things I said. There were some encouraging things and then I would shoot my mouth off again and even in one incident cut off someone's ear. Then there was the ultimate shame of denying Jesus, even when He had warned me I would. I actually cried from frustration and grief at my inability to be who I really wanted to be. He asked one time whether we also wanted to leave Him, but I knew that what I said was the truth, even though I felt such a failure. (John 6:68&69)

We did not even believe the testimony of the women after the Resurrection and had to go and check up on them. John believed the evidence of the empty tomb but I did not understand and we went back into hiding in the house, because there was a rumour spreading that we had stolen the body.

Then Jesus walked through the locked door and stood among us. He breathed on us and said "receive the Holy Spirit." He repeated what He had said when He called me the rock previously. He had promised to give us the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven. (Matthew 16:19) This second

time He put it slightly differently. “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven (the sins are remitted); if you do not forgive them (remit them) they are not forgiven (they are retained by the person who will not forgive). I came to understand that forgiveness is imperative for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Offence against a brother is a barrier to our pure relationship with God.

I think Paul put it very well when he wrote to the Ephesians that, having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit... (Ephesians 1:13) This breath of Jesus was like a promise to us, because He told us to wait in the city until we have been clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49) This is what we did until the Day of Pentecost. Then whoosh...we could never forget that day. There was the wind and the fire. Matthew had written that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3:11) We were all filled (overwhelmed) with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in strange tongues that we did not understand ourselves, but others outside in the streets understood their own languages. I began to preach as the Holy Spirit gave me the words and many people were convicted of their sins and turned to the Lord. At last my troublesome tongue was being used for His glory! The sense of God’s “well done” was amazing and this experience gave me the desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit over and over. The deposit of Jesus’ promise to us had become a hunger for more and more. Paul wrote that he prayed that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him better. (Ephesians 1:17)



## JOHN –

I wrote my whole gospel, three letters and the Revelation in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that all Scripture is inspired by God. (2 Timothy 3:16) As I have already said, I was fascinated by Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit. Apart from my outbursts of "thunder" I am more of a thinker. Jesus was a little bit older than me so I gave Him respect for the most part, except for my mistakes. There was something about Jesus which exuded a kind of magnetic energy, yet He was usually a quiet man. I had my personal ambitions, but I was one of His three close companions and loved being with Him. When I realised He expected us to do His ministry, in His authority, I wondered how on earth this was possible. Jesus had said several times that with God nothing will be impossible. (Matthew 17:20) But I was only an ordinary fisherman who was supposed to be learning how to fish for men. We had baptised some people in water with Jesus, but this was for repentance, just like John the Baptist had done. This had not really changed these people because some got offended with Jesus and left from following Him.

When I experienced the empty tomb and remembered what Jesus had told us about going away so that the Holy Spirit could come, I thought Jesus had gone straight to Heaven so I did not expect to see Him again. I remembered that He had told the thief that he would be in Paradise with Him that very day. Then the women told us that Jesus was risen from the dead. Our teaching as Jews said that no

one could rely on a woman's testimony so we did not know what to think.

When Jesus came into that locked room we were overjoyed. He said, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." (John 20:21) Then He breathed on us. It was as if He was creating us afresh, just as God had breathed life into Adam. (Genesis 2:7) I immediately thought about His words, "Because I live, you also will live...whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." (John 14:19&21)

We did not see Jesus again for another week, when He came to the same room through the locked doors. He had also appeared to other groups of people and then He came to us when we were out in the boat with Peter, rather at a loss as to what we were supposed to do next and we did not know where He disappeared to between these visits. It was so great to have Him back alive after the Crucifixion that we took it a day at a time.

It was about forty days later that we were with Him when He told us to wait in the city for the promised gift of the Father. He reminded us again that though John had baptised with water, we would be baptised with the Holy Spirit. At this time we did not understand the difference between being breathed on to receive the Holy Spirit and being baptised or overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit. However we certainly found out on the day of Pentecost in that upper room! The manifestation of tongues and power not only perplexed the people in the marketplace. We had never seen anything like it either. The powerful and effective proclamation of the gospel and the miracles which followed was really mind-blowing. We were really doing the

same things as Jesus had done in the same power as He did His mighty works. We really felt different, with a purpose and enthusiasm which we could not explain to the natural mind, and a faith-filled belief that we would do the work of Jesus, because His power was with us.

## **PAUL –**

Because I was a Pharisee before I met Jesus as Risen Lord I knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well – the Law and the Prophets were “bread and butter”, so I also knew about all the appearances of the Spirit of God to various men and sometimes women. For example the Spirit of God came on Saul in power and he was changed into a different person. (1 Samuel 10:6) But then he sinned and an evil spirit came upon him and he began to do even more evil things. (1 Samuel 18:10 and 1 Samuel 19:9) As students together we used to discuss what this all meant.

David, on the other hand, when he made a mistake asked God not to take His Holy Spirit from him. (Psalm 51:11) If God was One, how could these things be? We used to dismiss these things as in the “too-hard basket”, or just conveniently ignore these Scriptures. When Jesus accused the Pharisees as blind guides He was speaking the truth. What we did not understand we interpreted to suit our own ideas. I don’t say that every Jewish teacher did this but you know how young graduates “know” everything! This self-righteousness

makes the heart very hard and this can happen to the most religious people.

When I was baptised in and by the Holy Spirit, God revealed to me my sin. This is why I wrote, “the Spirit searches all things...no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:11) I could not have believed that I was so deceived. The Scripture say that the heart is deceitful above all things... (Jeremiah 17:9)

When we are baptised by the Holy Spirit everything falls into place. We know Jesus, we know the Father and we begin to understand the plan of salvation which God set in motion from the time that Adam sinned and lost his personal relationship with God, who had walked with him in the Garden of Eden from the beginning. When we know Him we love Him, and our hearts become full of love because he is Love.

When I became friends with the Holy Spirit He gave me all the gifts too, as I wrote about in my letter. (1 Corinthians 12) As I surrendered to Him He also developed in me His fruits. (Galatians 5:22) As Peter pointed out, we are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5) Those Old Covenant priests had a special robe to wear with pomegranates and bells. (Exodus 39:22-26) These represented the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit, so we need the Holy Spirit for all our ministry, in season and out of season, always being ready to give account for what we believe. Our witness needs to be consistent with holiness because God asked us to be “Holy because I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:44&45)

What I wrote to the Romans is really what the Holy Spirit taught me those first few years about the New Covenant. I think the ultimate blessing for me was that my mind was renewed. I no longer wanted to conform to the pattern of the world and this did enable me to know what God's pleasing and perfect will was for my own life. (Romans 12:1&2)

I also wrote about not grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) or putting out the Spirit's fire. (1 Thessalonians 5:19) We grieve Him when we revert to behaving according to our old nature, instead of with love, and we put out the Spirit's fire when we begin to focus on worldly pursuits and do not listen for His soft voice speaking to us. God has called us into fellowship with His dear Son, to share in the anointing, the glory and power. We love Him so much that we do not want Him to feel distant from us. We learn to hate sin and love righteousness. This is the dramatic change that came into my life when I received the Holy Spirit.

## **CALLING AND LIFE WORK**

### **PETER –**

My first challenge came from Jesus after He was risen from the tomb but not yet ascended into Heaven. I had not yet been empowered by the Holy Spirit and I was also feeling guilty and quite miserable after denying Him.

He appeared to us while we were fishing and told us where to throw our net. (John 21:6) John recognised the Lord straight away so I leapt out of the boat, in my usual impulsive way, and left the others to drag the net to the shore. After Jesus gave us breakfast we waited to see what He would say because this was the third time He had come to us.

He looked at me and asked me if I loved Him more than these. It whirled through my mind “more than these – what or who?” Then I caught His eye and said “Yes Lord, you know I love you.” He was talking to my heart, not my mind, but He said “Feed My lambs.” Straight away He asked me a second time whether I loved Him, and I answered Him as before. This time He told me to take care of His sheep. A third time He asked me whether I loved Him. This really hurt me because I did not understand what He was doing until much later, but I answered again that He knew I loved Him. His answer to me was to feed His sheep. Later I realised that this was His way of cancelling out my denying Him three times. He really did want to know if I loved Him. It really had to be said aloud, as a witness to

Satan who had won a victory in my life when I denied Him as well as to myself, to affirm me. It was also a witness to the Father in Heaven so that I would be empowered to do the work of a pastor to His flock. This is why Mark wrote “If anyone would come after me, he must take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mark 8:34&35) Jesus had also said, “Anyone who loves his father or mother, his son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37) I had been scared of my reputation and even my life when I denied Him, therefore I had not trusted God.

I understood that there was a “price” to having the anointing of God for ministry. We must put loyalty to Him above all other loyalties. His word is paramount; both His written word but also His soft voice to our hearts. If we cannot or will not be totally trustworthy in this He allows us to choose our own level but we will not see the glory of God working through us. This was the “these” that He was alluding to.

This commissioning gave me the impetus to stand up in the marketplace on the day of Pentecost and preach. God had designed me to be an impulsive person by His sovereign choice but the anointing of the Holy Spirit directed what was in my personality onto the right path. Where before it had been a grief and liability, now it was a powerful weapon against the kingdom of Satan, and for the claiming of souls for the Kingdom of God. Jesus had indeed given us the keys of the Kingdom and we could release those from Satan’s prison and set them free into the Kingdom of God. Jesus had paid the price of this freedom with His life and it was our responsibility to

be His witnesses. The Holy Spirit prepared the appointments for us and we did exactly what Jesus would have done in each and every situation. Luke wrote down many of these incidents in his book, the Acts of the Apostles, but this book could have been titled Acts of the Holy Spirit.

My ministry story continued mainly to the Jews, but there was the experience in Cornelius' house where God showed me clearly that the gospel was for all people, not just the Jews. Paul wrote that there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Greek) for we are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28) Because my ministry was mainly for the Jews and I was so imbued with Jewishness I did actually find it difficult. Paul actually told me off at one time for not being consistent in my love-walk. (Galatians 2:12) It was the fear thing that I let Satan tempt me with and I did appreciate that Paul pointed it out to me. As we have already said, the Judaisers were a great problem and we had to stand up to them. James, the brother of Jesus, who had not believed at first had become the leader of the Jewish Christians and was heavily influenced by them.

Much later when I went to Rome to the Jewish Christians there I met up with Paul and we had great fellowship and unity in that terrible time under Nero until I was betrayed and crucified during that time of persecution. This is when I no longer had fear of death. I had come to believe what Paul could say. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain...I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:21&23). I experienced for myself what Jesus had promised. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God...in my Father's



house are many rooms...I am going there to prepare a place for you".  
(John 14:1-3) And here I am in Paradise with Jesus and it is all true.

## **JOHN –**

My first commission from Jesus was to take care of His mother. This was given while He hung on the Cross, and I did what He asked and took Mary to our home in Jerusalem. She was a beautiful woman, so gentle and humble and it was a great privilege to have this responsibility.

After Pentecost Peter and I worked together for some time, including testifying before the Sanhedrin after the healing of the crippled man. We had a spell in gaol and were miraculously set free by an angel. Again we were brought before the Sanhedrin which resulted in us being flogged. The more persecution we had, the more the word of God spread.

The first martyr was Stephen and his death was supervised by Paul, who was not yet born again. Stephen's death was followed by even worse persecution, so, although we stayed in Jerusalem, the other believers scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. At this stage the persecution was from the Pharisees.

When we heard that people in Samaria had accepted the word of God, Peter and I went to them. We found that they had not yet been baptised by the Holy Spirit, and knew only the baptism of John, for repentance of sin. They were washed but not empowered. We

placed our hands on them and immediately they received the Holy Spirit, with manifestations of His power, so much so that a man named Simon wanted to buy the gift. Peter immediately rebuked this Simon because he thought that he could earn a “professional living” in this way. This gift of power is first of all to enable us to live according to God’s will, so that we are faithful witnesses to His glory, and also so that we can bless others, and touch them with God’s love. After this we returned to Jerusalem. I did not go with Peter as much after this but stayed in Jerusalem in a pastoral capacity, partly because Mary needed me more.

We had regular reports of what was happening as the church grew. Peter had his experience at Cornelius’ house and when he explained his story to us we realised that God indeed desired all people in his “church”. Mary reminded us that when she and Joseph had taken Jesus to the temple when He was eight days old, that Simeon had prophesied He would be “a Light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel”. (Luke 2:32 and Isaiah 49:6) Actually these memories of hers were very precious to us, and we appreciated them so much.

Things had begun to change. Fourteen years had gone by since Jesus’ ascension. Paul had now become a Christian and Barnabas had gone to bring him to Antioch, where he was a fiery but effective preacher. Then a personal disaster for me was when James, my brother, was murdered by Herod Agrippa. Peter was put in prison but Mary and I went to Ephesus to live. We found a place right behind the temple of Diana, on the very outskirts of Ephesus, where the

Christians could visit us relatively safely because the authorities thought they were coming to worship at the pagan place. We lived there for eleven years until Mary died. She was so loved that we acquired a burial place which would also suit our family needs, so that many could pay their respects to her throughout history.

I had another reason for going to Ephesus, where I wrote my gospel. I was increasingly disappointed with the effect that the Judaisers were having on the gospel that we received from Jesus – a new way of living, where everything done was out of a love relationship with the Holy Spirit. Jesus had said, “If the Son sets you free you are free indeed.” (John 8:36) There is no longer any Law to keep except the law of love. Even James the Just was trying to introduce rules for the new Christians, and he had written a letter which the Judaisers were using to enforce their opinion. I felt that the Ephesians, who had begun a pattern of hands-on ministry to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, needed all the encouragement they could get to continue practising this baptism of Jesus (Holy Spirit and fire!). This was a reality in their lives and enabled them to stay true. Paul had come in the previous year to show them after he found that they had only been taught by Apollos about John’s baptism (in water). We had these Holy Spirit meetings in my place, which attracted a lot of people. They were not all solemn and religious like the Jewish Christians under James, who was rather austere, but were joyful as we sang psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in our hearts to the Lord, and giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:19&20)

I heard how terrible was the persecution under Caesar Nero and how Peter had been crucified and then about three years later that Paul had also been betrayed and beheaded, but it was not until Caesar Domitian that persecution came to Ephesus, and witness for Jesus was precarious. I went back to Jerusalem a couple of times because James was stoned after the death of Festus in the year of our Lord, 61, and I hoped to encourage the church in the new way of living.

Eventually I was betrayed too and sent to Patmos. It is a very barren place. If you are a political prisoner you do not get any food or shelter. Criminals get fed (sort of!) and sheltered but they also get beaten and abused physically and mentally. But God had me there (and hungry) for His own purposes. It was there that I had the Revelation which I wrote down about the End Times. It was an extraordinary time for me. I was quite old, so, physically, it was a great hardship, but spiritually it was probably the most exciting time of my life. It seems strange that this revelation came so late in my life. Eventually a wonderful friend, Gaius, brought me back to Ephesus, and I wrote my three letters. Friends used to help me to the worship meetings and I was always telling them “Love one another.” At last came the time to meet my Lord in Paradise. There was a wonderful reunion with Him and also with Paul and Peter.

## PAUL –

My first instructions from Jesus were, "Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (Acts 9:6) During those three days when I did not eat God spoke to my heart many things. I shared some of these things in Damascus but people tried to kill me so I escaped to Arabia where I had fellowship and revelation of the new Covenant, alone, with the Holy Spirit. After many years Barnabas came and found me in Tarsus and I went to Antioch with him. This was after Peter had his vision of God reaching out to the Gentiles, and Barnabas remembered that I had a calling to the Gentiles. I loved sharing my faith and the Holy Spirit gave me a powerful anointing for this, but at first I preached only to the church.

Eventually the Lord considered me ready and Barnabas and I were sent out on our first mission. We went to Seleucia and Cyprus and preached in the synagogues. John Mark had also come with us to learn and to help us, but he became fearful when Elymas was blinded by the Holy Spirit in Paphos and he left us when we arrived in Perga. (Acts 13:4-14) This made me very annoyed. I cannot tolerate half-heartedness and fear weakens and negates our faith, and destroys our unity which was so essential for the power of the Holy Spirit to flow. The Jews in these places received us quite well, and they enjoyed learning their history afresh. We were able to challenge them about what Jesus had done for them and quite a crowd gathered. Unfortunately this also brought on jealousy in the leaders who tried to refute what we were preaching. It was at this point that we decided to

give up on the Jews and go to the Gentiles who received us very thankfully and responded to our message. Of course this stirred up some persecution for us, but we shook the dust off our feet and went to Iconium.

Actually, in Iconium we were surprised because those in the synagogue loved the message and believed. They were very hungry to learn and consequently many miracles occurred as we taught them. This time the Jews who did not want to believe stirred up the Gentiles and we had to leave in a hurry and went to Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding country. At Lystra, after God had done a wonderful healing we had more trouble, which resulted in me being stoned. I needed a miraculous healing too, and God was faithful. In Derbe a large number of people believed. We went back to Lystra and Iconium to strengthen the new churches and to appoint elders to pastor the disciples. We went on to Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga and Attalia and then returned to Antioch where we reported all that God had done through us, and especially how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. We had actually been away two years.

It was after this first journey that we had our trouble with the believers who had their first loyalty to the Pharisees' teaching. I do not think they were really born again, but just assented to the fact that Jesus was "the Saviour". At this time I really believed that they were "saved", but I eventually had a revelation from the Lord that they did not really know His heart. (1 Corinthians 2:7-16) It was most unpleasant having to explain to the Apostles and elders, even though Peter stood up for us. The outcome of this Council in Jerusalem was not to my

liking, and I believed that the gospel of the New Way had been compromised, but there was nothing I could do, because it all “seemed” reasonable. Although Barnabas and I worked together in Antioch, our relationship was not as unified and we broke our partnership over a relatively minor matter which became a major disagreement. Silas and I went back to Syria and Cilicia.

In Derbe Timothy joined us. He was very keen to learn and because his father was a Greek, he would understand the culture specifics of the Gentiles and they would identify with him. His mother was a Jewess and so the Jews would also identify. He would be a great blessing to our team, and a loyal and faithful disciple.

We travelled to Phrygia and Galatia and then to Troas where Luke joined us. He had done a wonderfully orderly account of Jesus’ earthly ministry and wanted to be just as accurate with His continuing work through the Holy Spirit. He was a great companion and kept records of events during our travels.

In Philippi we met Lydia, who insisted on ministering to us. However this was also the place where Silas and I were put in prison after being flogged. The miracle of our release by the earthquake resulted in the gaoler being converted and baptised.

In Thessalonica we preached in the synagogue and many people were persuaded to believe the gospel; some Jews and a larger number of Greeks. This brought on more persecution and unfortunately Jason and some of the others were dragged before the authorities. Silas and I escaped to Berea where we were well received and there were many new believers, both Jew and Greek.

Our persecutors heard we were there and followed us so I left Silas and Timothy and went to Athens.

It is amazing that, when we stand up to preach, God brings out new revelation for the occasion. I saw the altar “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD” and I was inspired to use this as a springboard for proclaiming who our God is. (Acts 17:24-31) As I spoke it out I realised afresh that we are all human beings who have been given life and breath from our Creator. No matter where we were born God had it in His hand. But God has one longing in His heart; that men would seek Him, reach out for Him and find Him. We must repent from going our own way because Jesus is the Way. This realisation is what motivated me to evangelise, to fully proclaim the gospel of Christ, no matter what the cost. I also want to go where the gospel is not known, so that I would not build on someone else’s foundation. (Romans 15:19&20)

In Corinth I met Aquila and Priscilla and tried to preach to the Jews and Greeks at the synagogue but they opposed me so I went next door to the house of Titius Justus where we had people who wanted to hear and who believed and were baptised in water. We stayed for eighteen months and then sailed for Syria and went to Ephesus.

My next new revelation was at Ephesus. I had been troubled that there were believers who did not really know God’s heart and tried to preach “a different gospel”. I found that the believers did not know the Holy Spirit, although they had been baptised in water. Apollos had taught what he knew faithfully but only knew the baptism of John, for repentance. I placed my hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them with powerful manifestations just as had happened at



Pentecost. We moved out of the synagogue and into a lecture hall for the next two years and God did extraordinary miracles. It seemed to me that laying hands on the new believers conveyed the power of God in a wonderful way. Many people in Ephesus, who had previously practised sorcery, completely renounced their practices and burnt their tools of trade. Of course Satan attacked and there was a riot but the city clerk was able to quieten the crowd.

I had quite a lot of supporters and fellow workmen now and we were able to spread ourselves out a bit, covering more territory. It was at this time that the Holy Spirit gave me the experience of raising the dead. (Acts 20:10) This is where I wrote to the Corinthians for the first time because they were having quite a lot of trouble in the new church. Not long after this I left Ephesus to go to Jerusalem, although Agabus warned me there would be serious persecution. I went via Macedonia where I had longed to go after my vision. (Acts 16:9) I also had to write a second letter to the Corinthian church from there.

Just before I went to Jerusalem I wrote a letter to the Romans. I wanted to outline what a precious heritage the Jews had, which was useless to them if they were not circumcised in their hearts. I was very passionate, because I was conscious of what God had revealed to me so that I could come into the fullness which the revelation of Jesus as the Christ gives. I had written to the Galatian church after the Council at Jerusalem because of my grief that Jewish laws were being placed on them. I wanted them to know that they were in the grace and love of Jesus Christ. I had also written to the Thessalonian church very shortly after I left them because false teachers were

trying to confuse them about the end-times. God had revealed to me such wonderful revelation of His grace it was quite a responsibility to protect my precious converts.

The first thing I had to do in Jerusalem was Jewish purification rites. This did not satisfy the Jews and they accused me of bringing Greeks into the temple area. They wanted to beat me to death but I was arrested and taken to the barracks. When the officials found out who I was they allowed me to speak to the crowd who accused me. I told them what Ananias had told me. "The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard." (Acts 22:14&15) "The Lord told me He would send me to the Gentiles." This statement made them angry and a centurion was about to flog me until I told him I was a Roman citizen. This resulted in me being brought before the Sanhedrin. I was beginning to suffer like Jesus had done with all these hearings and trials. I testified before them the next day but this resulted in a great uproar too. Jesus appeared to me and assured me that I would testify about Him in Jerusalem even though there was a conspiracy to kill me. God uses even children for His purposes and my sister's son overheard the plot and reported it so I was taken to Caesarea at night.

My next trial was before Governor Felix. I was able to tell my testimony to Felix, who had knowledge of Jesus, but was too fearful to put his trust in Him. He and his wife wanted to hear more but when the Holy Spirit began to convict them they stopped me from talking

any more. Actually they were hoping I would bribe them so that they could let me go and this is really why they wanted to talk to me often. (Acts 24:26) This farce went on for two years until Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, a very apt name because he was as fat as a pig.

My next trial was before Festus because the Jews requested that they might present their charges again. Because Festus was a bad man who wanted to do the Jews a favour I chose to appeal to Caesar. Before this happened I was able to testify to God's grace and power in my life to King Agrippa and his wife Bernice. This was when God gave me the words to say out of my own mouth which inspired me to continue; words that I had known all along, but when your own ears hear them..."to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God..." (Acts 26:18) Festus thought I was mad but King Agrippa felt the pull of the Holy Spirit because he commented, "Do you think that you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28)

Shortly after this I set sail for Rome. We endured a shipwreck and did miracles and healing in Malta and eventually arrived in Rome, where I was placed under house arrest, but actually had a lot of freedom because my guard was a good man.

I preached in Rome to the Jews, as God had promised, but only a few were convinced. The people's hearts were calloused and the prophecy came to pass; they hardly hear...and their eyes are closed. (Acts 28:27) For two years I preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ because the Gentiles did want to hear. I

also wrote letters to the churches at Philippi, Ephesus and Colossi during this time.

The persecution of Christians under Nero had increased and I commissioned Timothy and Titus to continue the work. Peter had been killed already but I did hope to visit the churches. I also wrote to Philemon but Alexander, the coppersmith, betrayed me and, although I survived the first trial, (1 Timothy 4:16) I was beheaded and my body was buried in Rome by friends. I had fought the good fight, I had finished the race, I had kept the faith and now I have my crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, has awarded me. Paradise is a beautiful place with the all-pervading presence of Jesus. My labour was fruitful but to be with Christ is far better. (Philippians 1:22&23)

## **OBSERVATIONS FROM HEAVEN**

In this beautiful place we have time to observe. Angels are coming and going all the time, bringing news from the earth. There is a lot of singing and rejoicing because of the excitement of each new “baby-in-Christ” being born by the Holy Spirit. There are also new people coming here every moment, as they leave the earth and come to Paradise.

(**Peter**) Everything is glorious because there is no sin here. Everybody loves Jesus, and love just fills this place. There is no

night-time so we do not really know how many years are gone by on the earth. I wrote that, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (2 Peter 3:8) As those who have come to Paradise have shared their stories we have heard of their successes and their persecutions too. Those here are all overcomers.

**(John)** From the Day of Pentecost the church has grown but alongside of that growth has been corruption too. I was on the earth 30 years longer than you, and the persecution increased so that many Christians hid from the authorities. In spite of the fellowship in the Ephesian church, there was an increase of falling from grace to law, as you put it in one of your letters, Paul. (Galatians 5:4) Groups did their own writings, much of which was not inspired by the Holy Spirit, although it had some historical significance. From all these writings the church leaders eventually decided on what was inspired and what was not. Paul, you had written that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16) so these leaders took those words very seriously so that readers down through history could rely on the written word as the words of the Living Word.

**(Peter)** One of the strangest developments in the church was the pattern of headship, where there was no agreement but one person, who they named “pope”, had all the power to decree what was “orthodox”. Apparently I was the first pope. This came about in spite of Solomon’s words, “Many advisers make victory sure.” (Proverbs 11:14) Traditions quickly developed which were not really scriptural, but much more like the traditions of the Jewish beliefs. This soon

became known as Judeo-Christian belief. James and Jude really promoted this from early days because they appreciated their upbringing in the Jewish faith and also believed that Jesus was Messiah.

The churches were magnificent buildings but they were designed like the Temple, with a section like the Holy of Holies with a curtain or screen across where only the priest could go and where an Ark-like box was placed to represent the presence of God. Even though they celebrated the remembrance of what Jesus had done on the Cross (1 Corinthians 10:26) they seemed to forget that the curtain was torn from Heaven to the earth so that we may “approach the throne of grace with confidence”. (Hebrews 4:16)

**(John)** Some have shared with us that they were persecuted by the Establishment, which was called “the church”. Whenever anyone was truly touched by the Holy Spirit and chose to obey what He laid on their hearts there was as much opposition as we had endured before AD100. We have met so many of them here and they are truly beautiful people who are filled with the love of God. When they arrived here they also found it to be so glorious that all the pain and grief turned to joy in God’s presence. It is interesting that they are most valued on earth when they have left! Down through history these wonderful people have been celebrated, yet still no one really wants to emulate their example.

**(Paul)** They have been classified as Saints, yet I taught that the saints are all those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy; (1 Corinthians 1:2) to those who are loved by God and called to be

saints; (Romans 1:7) to those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:1) The instruction that Jesus gave to be born by the Spirit of God and to be filled with His love on a daily basis, to take up His Cross and follow Him is too much for those who choose to be “religious”. (Tied to the law, venerating the law, superstitious – from the Latin) The Establishment church promoted piousness and ritual prayers which did not have faith in God’s own promises as their basis. Knowledge of what the world has to offer in history, art, medicine, anthropology, theology and other fields increased, and most people have been satisfied with study for study’s own sake. This “study” knowledge has given rise to many man-inspired theories in which God has not been acknowledged as the source of all wisdom. Knowledge has been regarded as wisdom. On the other hand, true wisdom is inspired by the Holy Spirit, whom people who have not been born again cannot know, because He speaks to our spirits from within.

**(Peter)** Even more horrible was “holy” war, which genuinely faithful people were sent to fight, even though Jesus clearly warned why there are fights and quarrels which give rise to wars. (James 4:1-3) Because these were done in the name of Christianity it has set the cause of Christ back, especially to Jews and Muslims. Yet again Jesus clearly stated that we would be known as Christians by the way we love one another.

**(Paul)** Alongside of all these abuses there were prayerful people who were really born again by the Spirit of God, which kept the witness of the real church (the family of God) alive down through all the years. John, you wrote truly that Jesus came...and to all who

received Him, who believed in His name (His character, His work and His words), He gave the right (authority and power) to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12&13) God transformed His enemies into His sons and daughters just like He did me, and they have been powerful witnesses to Him.

**(John)** It is interesting about God's timing. We really expected that the Lord would return very soon after we left the earth. Paul, you had to write a letter to reassure the Thessalonians that the Lord had not yet returned way back, even before the fall of Jerusalem. (2 Thessalonians 2:1) We have heard about the prophecies that are being fulfilled on the earth today which we believed but did not understand. It is wonderful to hear all this news from those who come here and from the angels. From recent "days" has come news of Revivals, spontaneous moves of God's Spirit to turn the hearts of people to God in repentance and resulted in completely changed lives.

**(Paul)** There has also been a renewed interest in what I learnt in Ephesus about the laying on of hands to impart the power of God. This practice has also been abused by those who did it in a religious way, but the people who call themselves Pentecostals apply their faith and expect God to do a mighty work, which He does according to His promise. (Mark 16:18)

**(Peter)** Apparently the Godless are worrying about global warning. They obviously have not read what the Holy Spirit revealed to me that the elements will be destroyed by fire. (2 Peter 3:10) It is extraordinary that we were given these words to encourage the believers, yet



even the church people have begun to worry about what Godless people prophesy, as if they knew anything!

**(John)** Those who have joined us here in recent “days” have told us of the wonderful inventions and discoveries that God has revealed to people – people can fly and move across the ground very fast; communications are instant and knowledge is increasing second by second. Even people who are only grandparents cannot keep up with the new technology. What you wrote, Paul, to Timothy about increase of Godlessness (2 Timothy 3:1-5) has been relevant in every age, yet until recently people still respected the church and attended the meetings. In these last days people do not want to attend church meetings unless they are members of that group, and most groups do not really want people to attend unless they are willing to be a member of that group. There needs to be, even more than before, evangelists who are “sent”, out into the streets and countryside like the servants who went out at the King’s bidding. (Matthew 22:8-10) After all, the harvest is even more plentiful than it was when Jesus told us to go. (Luke 10:2)

**(Peter)** As Matthew wrote, Jesus wants all His people to be ready for His coming because no one knows when that moment is. They are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the oil of the Anointed One and His anointing so that they are ready to meet Him. (Matthew 25:1-13) It would not be good to have Him say, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” Because the Holy Spirit inspired me to say that with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day, perhaps this is literally true. God gave Man His authority to rule the earth for six days and he was to rest on the seventh day. There have been

now six “days” since God had fellowship with Adam in the Garden of Eden. Is it now time for God to take the authority back from allowing Man to rule in his own way, and instead only allow a Man who is an agent for the Holy Spirit to speak the words of rule? Jesus called Himself the Son of Man to demonstrate how to rule the earth, and you wrote, John, that Jesus commissioned us to do His works and even greater. (John 14:12)

There have been prophets who have envisaged a new strategy for reaching the lost. People who have been baptised by the Holy Spirit have had their hearts set on fire to go, just as Jesus sent us and the seventy two, empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the authority of Jesus to be harvesters in the last days. They will have supernatural power to persuade people to ask Jesus into their lives, people who are really hungry for an encounter with God. We are waiting with eager anticipation for the day when Jesus will gather us all together in the clouds, those of us who are determined to be overcomers.

## **LOOKING TOWARDS WHAT WE HAVE EXPECTED**

### **— REUNION IN HEAVEN AND THE GREAT BANQUET**

(John) This is where I can talk a bit about my vision which I received on Patmos. I wrote about this to encourage the church. I really believe that those who read this Revelation will be blessed.

Jesus has called us to be a Kingdom and Priests to our God. He loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood. (Revelation 1:5&6) When He comes in the clouds every eye will see Him, even those who caused His death and all people will mourn because of Him. (Matthew 24:30&31) People who are not at that time His own will see those that are rising into the air to meet Him. It will be a terrifying experience for them, and they will not know what is about to happen because they have not believed. It will be too late for them when the Rapture happens – they will be left behind. Jesus set all people free when He died on the Cross but those who do not believe or receive the heavenly gift have missed what they could have had. No wonder there will be great mourning!

Trying to describe the glorified Jesus was very difficult. Words could not do justice to His beauty, His voice, His emanating goodness and love and His glory. It is an almost indescribable experience to belong to Him, to be able to call Him Brother, to magnify Him and worship Him as Risen Lord. Who could not want this above all things?

The Lord is trying to encourage the people of the churches to be overcomers, even in spite of the various trials and weaknesses, and He makes wonderful promises for them.

- I will give the right to eat from the tree of life. (Revelation 2:7)  
Eating from the tree of life enables us to live forever. (Genesis 3:22)
- The overcomer will not be hurt at all by the second death. (Revelation 2:11) The lake of fire is the second death. (Revelation 20:14)

- I will give some of the hidden manna and a white stone with a new and very personal name. (Revelation 2:17) The manna, which was “hidden” in the Ark of the Covenant, (Hebrews 9:4) was symbolic of God’s faithful and eternal provision. Jesus is the bread which comes down from Heaven. (John 6:33) He is also the cornerstone and believers are living stones being built into a spiritual house to be a holy Priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5) White represents clean and pure and Jesus is delighted to acknowledge us personally.
- I will give authority over the nations and also the morning star. (Revelation 2:26&28) Jesus is the Morning Star and He already has been given the authority which He freely shares with us. (Revelation 22:16)
- They will walk with me, dressed in white. I will acknowledge each one before my Father and His angels. (Revelation 3:4&5) Jesus is proud of us, He wants to associate Himself with us in close fellowship and He acknowledges us because we identify with Him.
- I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and I will write on him my new name. (Revelation 3:12) Jesus’ name will be on their foreheads. (Revelation 22:4) Jesus’ plan for us is to be kings and priests. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:16) Just as a wife takes the name of her husband, so also we take His name and are in partnership with Him.

- I will give him the right to sit with me on my throne. (Revelation 3:21) Equality with Jesus! This concept is almost unbelievable! How could this be?

Just before He gave this promise He said, “Be earnest, and repent...I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” There is a constant challenge to repent – to turn from our own ways to His ways, and the Holy Spirit enables us to do this.

If there are no attacks from the devil there is nothing to overcome. Jesus showed us the way during His ministry on the earth and He has given us His authority and His power in the Holy Spirit. God has wonderful plans for His children who are in His likeness to rule and reign with Him.

(**Peter**) Jesus taught a parable about the banquet in Heaven and those who were invited. The invitations had gone out but on the day of the banquet those who had been invited had other things they wanted to do. As Jesus told the story it was interesting to see that the excuses were all valid if they were going to war. (Luke 14:15-24) (Deuteronomy 20:1-8) They did not understand the significance of the banquet. I think that it was important that you wrote what you did about Jesus standing at the door and knocking, John. The Giver of the banquet sent servants to bring any and all who would be willing to come, but they must also have a wedding garment for the banquet. (Matthew 22:11&12) This is given to them in exchange for their “filthy rags”. (Isaiah 64:6) Jesus exchanged our unrighteousness for His righteousness (2

Corinthians 5:21) so that our acts are in obedience to Christ and this is our wedding garment. (Revelation 19:8)

**(Paul)** Many of the churches asked questions about eternity and I wrote that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep...all those in Christ will be made alive, but each in his own turn; when He comes, those who belong to Him. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44) We will see Him face to face...we shall know fully, even as we are fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12) From the moment we believed and received we became citizens of Heaven. Each of us must wait until Jesus calls us home or until He comes on the clouds, then He will transform our lowly bodies to become like His glorious body. (Philippians 3:20&21)

I wrote to the Thessalonian church that we believe that the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God. God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (those who are waiting in Paradise). Those who are still alive, who are left (on the earth) till He comes, will be caught up to meet them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. We will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18). It is the Christians who hold back the Antichrist at present but he will be revealed after the

overcomers are taken out of the earth to meet Jesus. This time will bring the great tribulation and great deception.

(2 Thessalonians 2:6-10)

**(John)** In my vision I was shown the wedding of the Lamb. I heard the roar of the multitude. It sounded like rushing waters and loud peals of thunder. The bride had made herself ready in fine, bright and clean linen which had been given to her. It will be a time of great rejoicing and happiness. The praise to God will be overwhelming. The people will be so full of love and joy. God Himself will be present, the Glorious Father who is so full of pride and satisfaction that at last His Son is properly honoured.

(Revelation 19:6-9) Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2:10&11) It is during this time that the Great Tribulation is taking place on the earth, but others will still be joining us in Paradise as they believe and are martyred.

After Jesus has led the army of Heaven to bring the final judgment on the earth the beast and the false prophet will be destroyed, and Satan will be bound for 1000 years. He will be loosed for a short time and then he will be thrown into the lake of fire. Those who have still refused to receive and believe that God has anointed Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords will also go into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:14) This is a clear warning that God means what He says but He does not want any to perish and longs for all to accept the truth as you wrote, Peter and Paul, for our encouragement. (2 Peter 3:9 and 1Timothy 2:4)

The time will come for all of us to come to the Judgment Seat and the Books will be opened. It will be then that the deeds of the Saints will be read out, and there will be commendations for those who completed their “good works”. (Ephesians 2:10) There will be those who are in the Lamb’s book of life but have few or even no good works recorded, because they lived for themselves and not to serve Jesus, whom they said they loved. Yet Jesus said “whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.” (John 14:21) Some will even hear “Away from me, I never knew you.” (Matthew 7:23) It will be very embarrassing or even shocking, and this is why we want to encourage you to be overcomers. Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

We look forward to meeting you when you come. We will hear your stories too.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. **Amen.**  
(Revelation 22:21)



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