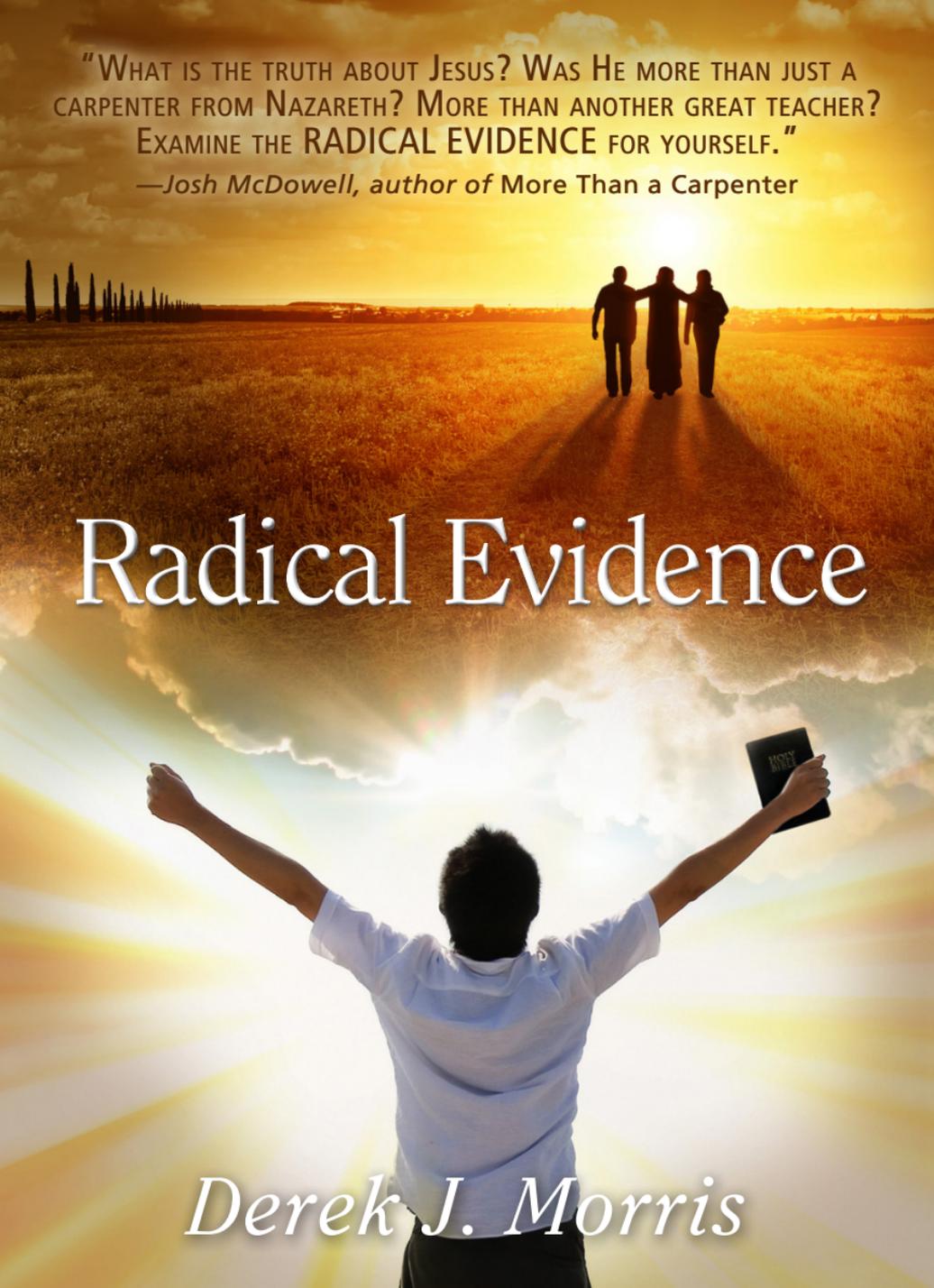


"WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS? WAS HE MORE THAN JUST A CARPENTER FROM NAZARETH? MORE THAN ANOTHER GREAT TEACHER? EXAMINE THE RADICAL EVIDENCE FOR YOURSELF."

—Josh McDowell, author of *More Than a Carpenter*



Radical Evidence

Derek J. Morris

RADICAL EVIDENCE

-compelling testimonies about Jesus

from transformed witnesses

By

Derek J. Morris

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those whose lives have been transformed through a life-changing encounter with their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The word of their testimony has overcome the evil one and shed Light in the midst of the darkness. With them, and the saints of all ages, we declare the praises of Him who called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my appreciation to the numerous individuals who have provided encouragement and assistance in completing this book:

To Nancy Costa, Kimberly Bobenhausen Harris, Monika Bliss Morris, Eve Parker, and Nancy Vasquez—who offered invaluable feedback in the shaping and editing of the manuscript.

To my beloved wife, Bodil—whose whole-hearted devotion to Jesus as Savior and Lord has inspired me, and whose prayers in the name of Jesus have sustained me.

To those whose compelling testimonies are included in this book—who are “not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

Each one of the individuals, along with others unnamed, encouraged me to follow the clear promptings of the Holy Spirit in the preparation of this book.

Most of all, I give thanks and honor to Jesus, who is so much more than just another great teacher or another holy prophet—He is the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Lord.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: The Testimony of Yasmin Sultana – an orthodox Muslim from Kolkata, India

CHAPTER 2: The Testimony of Paul Ratsara – an ancestor worshiper from rural Madagascar

CHAPTER 3: The Testimony of Cleopas – a disciple of Jesus

CHAPTER 4: The Testimony of Moses

CHAPTER 5: The Testimony of the Prophets

CHAPTER 6: The Testimony of the Psalmists

CHAPTER 7: The Testimony of Shahbaz – a Shiite Muslim from Tehran, Iran

CHAPTER 8: The Testimony of Cliff Goldstein – a secular Jew from Miami Beach, Florida

EPILOGUE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Do you know the truth about Jesus of Nazareth? Was He just another great teacher? Or another self-proclaimed holy prophet, as some suggest? The apostle John concluded his inspired testimony of the life and teachings of Jesus with these words: “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).¹

Radical Evidence was written with the same purpose in mind. If Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, that Truth has eternal implications for your life and mine. Jesus boldly declared His desire for each one of us: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). If He is who He claimed to be, His promise has value both in this life and on into eternity.

Radical Evidence includes compelling testimonies from the 21st century and compelling testimonies from the Scriptures. You can read the chapters sequentially or start with any chapter that catches your attention.

I pray you will be eternally blessed as you consider the radical evidence concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Then go with joy and share the life-changing Truth you have embraced.

CHAPTER 1

The Testimony of Yasmin Sultana

-An orthodox Muslim from Kolkata, India

Yasmin is completely convinced that Jesus is more than a great teacher, more than just another prophet. She has trusted her life into His care now and for eternity, and experienced His presence and power in her life. But there was a time when she had not even heard the name of Jesus.

Growing up in Kolkata

Yasmin grew up in an orthodox Muslim family. They were Bengali, and lived in Kolkata, in the eastern part of India. Her parents had a humble beginning in their life together. After getting married and moving into the city, her father started a business and eventually became quite successful. Tragically, their first two sons died at birth, so when Yasmin was born she was welcomed as a precious treasure.

As part of an orthodox Muslim family, Yasmin was trained in the traditions of Islam. She was taught to pray five times a day and given her regular Scripture readings from the Quran. The Sultana family spoke Bengali at home, but all prayers and Scripture readings were in Arabic. Yasmin began her namaz, her daily prayers in Arabic, when she was 8 years old. She was taught to recite the prayers even if she didn't understand them. She also began her directed reading through the Quran. It is mandatory for all Muslim girls to complete reading through the Quran by the age of nine, and once the first reading is finished, they start again. Yasmin read through the Quran at least three times. She was also taught to fast at Ramadan.²

While it is not mandatory to memorize the Quran, a person who has committed the Quran to memory (a Hafiz) is highly respected in the Muslim community. Yasmin's parents paid for a Hafiz to come to their home and help Yasmin read through the Quran.

Today, as Yasmin looks back on her life, she can see God's leading even when she was a young girl. All her cousins went to Muslim schools, but Yasmin's mother wanted her to attend a Christian school in Kolkata so she could learn to speak English. She enrolled at St. Augustine's Day School when she was 6 years old and attended nursery, lower kindergarten, upper kindergarten, class one, all the way through class twelve. They used to pray the Lord's Prayer every day at the school.³ Yasmin was still praying her namaz and reading through the Quran but she

was also learning more about Christianity.

Unanswered Questions

While Yasmin was reading through the Quran, she had many questions. Why this? What is the meaning of that? Her parents got tired of hiring and rehiring a Hafiz to direct her reading through the Quran because it took such a long time—she would stop reading to ask her questions. The typical answer she would get from the Hafiz was: “We don’t have to know the meaning.”

But Yasmin would respond, “No, I want to know the meaning. Tell me the meaning.” Because she asked so many questions, she was considered to be a bad student of the Quran.

When Yasmin was sixteen years old, she decided to find answers to her questions and bought a translation of the Quran by Allama Yusuf Ali. When she still did not find answers to her questions, she stopped reading the Quran and saying her namaz. Her parents were angry, but they did not force her to continue. She had fulfilled the minimum requirement of reading through the Quran once. Yasmin was excelling academically, but there was a hunger in her soul.

Free Food

Yasmin heard about Jesus at school, especially at Christmas, and she began to ask, “Who is Jesus?” She knew nothing about Him. After completing class ten and taking her government examinations, Yasmin had a 3-month break from school. She decided to join a group of six other classmates for some window-shopping and looking around the city of Kolkata. One of her friends told the group about a seminar nearby where free lunch was provided. They didn’t know anything about the meeting, but decided to go anyway. The seminar was in a small building on one of the busy streets in Kolkata. A sign outside said something about “REVIVAL,” but they had no idea what that meant. The group of girls went inside and ate the free food. After lunch, the speaker started a presentation about ancient civilizations. Yasmin had no clue what he was talking about. The girls had missed the first part of the seminar and they felt totally lost. Then the speaker started talking about the Bible and how the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled. He showed evidence from ancient history. He quoted the prophecy about the destruction of the city of Tyre: “They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away

her rubble and make her a bare rock” (Ezekiel 26:4). He also informed the group about the prophecy regarding the great city of Babylon: “Thorns will overrun her citadels, nettles and brambles her strongholds. She will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls” (Isaiah 34:13). He showed that both of those prophecies were fulfilled. Yasmin became interested in what he was saying.

Some of her friends wanted to leave after the free lunch, but Yasmin decided to stay. She was there until the evening. When the seminar ended there were people standing at the door. Yasmin had no idea that this was a Christian church. The people shook her hand and said, “Please come tomorrow!”

She said, “Oh, you have this meeting again tomorrow?”

“Yes, it’s all week!” It was a revival meeting the Christian pastor was presenting on the book of Revelation.

Yasmin could not have attended during the school year but it was summer break, so she said, “OK. Fine.”

The next day her friends wanted to go window-shopping again. Yasmin said, “No, I don’t want to go. I want to go to that meeting.”

“What’s wrong with you?” they said. “Are you just going for the free food?”

“Ah, sort of,” Yasmin replied. She was searching for a different kind of food—spiritual food to satisfy the hunger of her soul.

She attended the seminar all week with about one hundred other participants. The meetings began every day at 9:00 a.m. and continued until 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. It was very intense. So many of her questions were being answered. The presenter was teaching from the Bible. Yasmin took careful notes of every word the pastor was saying. At the end of the week, they had a quiz. Yasmin got the highest score! The prize was a small red Bible—her first Bible. She still has that Bible today and treasures it. She had to take it home secretly because her parents had no idea what she was doing.

Yasmin learned during that seminar that the Bible is a reliable testimony, inspired by God. That was an important lesson for an orthodox Muslim. She also learned more about Jesus. It wasn’t hard for her to accept Jesus as a prophet. Muslims accept Jesus as a prophet, but she regarded Jesus as one of many prophets with Mohammed as the greatest prophet. It was challenging to hear the teaching about Jesus as God. So when Yasmin was given that small red Bible she started reading it.

Putting the Word of Jesus to the Test

She read the words of Jesus, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 15:13-14). So Yasmin decided to put the Word of God to the test. In India, women often wear open-toed sandals, and many times Yasmin’s sandals would break. She decided to pray a simple prayer: “Lord, let my sandal never be broken again.” It was so simple, but it was a prayer from her heart, and she prayed in the name of Jesus. Her sandals never broke again—even to this day. God has been faithful to a simple prayer she prayed in the name of Jesus. It still brings tears to her eyes when she tells her story. Jesus met Yasmin right where she was. He revealed Himself to her as more than just a great teacher or prophet. Jesus revealed Himself to her as the true Messiah, the Son of God.

There were other times Yasmin prayed simple prayers in the name of Jesus, and God kept His promise to her. She had diligently prepared for a topic in biology, and she really wanted the teacher to ask her a question in class. Yasmin was timid, and she didn’t naturally speak up in class. So she offered a simple prayer: “Lord, when the teacher comes to class today, I would like him to ask me a question no one else can answer. Help him to notice me.” She offered that prayer in the name of Jesus. During the biology class, the teacher asked a difficult question on the topic to the class of 80 students. “Can anyone answer the question?” Then he pointed to Yasmin. “OK, you. Do you know the answer?” It was a challenging question about mitosis and meiosis and Yasmin was able to provide the correct answer. Her prayer was answered in exactly the way she had asked in the name of Jesus. These were just small prayers, but the answers were so clear to her. This was compelling evidence that God was leading her.

Public Confession of Faith in Jesus

After attending church for about a year, Yasmin decided it was time to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as her Messiah, her Savior, and her Lord. She asked an elder of the church if she could be baptized as a public confession of her newfound faith in Jesus, but she met with resistance. People were afraid of the trouble that might occur if a young Muslim woman became a Christian. There might be a violent reaction. They were happy for her to attend church but they did not encourage her when she asked to be baptized. Yasmin felt discouraged, but before giving up completely she decided to speak to the pastor. It was the same pastor who had conducted the

seminar a year earlier. She said to him, “Pastor, I want to be baptized.”

He looked into her eyes and said, “Are you sure?”

She said, “Yes, sir. I’m very sure. No matter what happens, I am ready.”

The pastor responded, “Yasmin, for one week I want you to pray the way you have been praying, in your own words in the name of Jesus. I will pray too. After this one week, if God gives me the conviction that He has placed a call on you, and you still feel the conviction that you want to belong to Him, no matter what happens, I will baptize you. I will take the consequences.” That was also a risk for the pastor, but his willingness to pray about her situation in the name of Jesus gave her hope. After a week Yasmin went back to the pastor and he said, “I will baptize you.”

Yasmin was baptized on January 6, 2001, after she completed high school. By this time her parents knew she was attending a Christian church but did not know she had made a public confession of her faith in Jesus as her Messiah. Yasmin wanted to tell her parents because the joy of the Lord was bubbling up inside of her, but she sensed God saying to her, “Not now.” Yasmin never lied to her parents; she just didn’t tell them everything that was happening in her heart. One time they asked her, “Why are you going to church?” She responded, “They are a nice group of people. I’m not doing drugs or partying.” Even there she was aware of God working on her parents. What Muslim family would be silent if their daughter was attending a Christian church? But her parents never prevented her from going.

Disowned by Her Family

Everything turned upside-down when it was time to continue her education. Her father made arrangements for her to attend a prestigious college. He wanted her to study science and ultimately go into medicine. He said to her, “Everything is ready. The fees are paid and the papers are ready. Let’s go.”

That is when she told him, “No, I don’t want to study science, I want to study religion.” He laughed. “What did you say?”

“I want to study religion,” she replied calmly.

“What are you talking about?” he asked her.

That’s when Yasmin told him she had been baptized as a follower of Jesus and she wanted to study

Christian religion. Her father pushed himself away from the table and stood up. He looked straight at her and said, “You did what?” Then he walked away from the table in silence.

Her mother spoke up, “What did you do? What is that?” Yasmin tried to explain, but her mother responded, “Have you gone mad?” That was the end of their family discussion.

After a week of silence, Yasmin’s father said to her, “Were you joking? Has your madness gone now? Are you sane now?”

She replied, “Dad, I wasn’t joking. I’m serious.”

He went into her room, came out with a suitcase and said, “Okay, here are your things. But remember, once you leave this place never in your life think that you can ever come back.”

Yasmin didn’t know what to do. She didn’t have any money. She had been sheltered and protected all her life. So she prayed a simple prayer in the name of Jesus: “Lord, what shall I do?” She felt God’s presence. Her father told her, “Leave, and from today your parents are dead. Don’t ever turn your face toward us again.”

In that time of crisis, God gave Yasmin strength. He was there. She said to herself, “I trust God. I’m not going to focus on how I’m going to get money, how I am going to go to school, or where I will stay.” The following promise became real in her life: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As her father escorted Yasmin out the door, her mother tried to intervene: “Where are you taking her? She is just a young girl. Where will she go?” But her father said, “Don’t interfere. She has made her decision. Tell her to get out of my house. There is no place for a *kafir* (an unbeliever) in my house.”⁴

Trip to Spicer Memorial College

Yasmin took her suitcase and went to the church. She told the pastor what had happened and he gave her a check for 25,000 rupees and a train ticket to Pune so she could begin her studies in religion at Spicer Memorial College. Yasmin never knew where the money came from. She simply knew God had provided. It is 3,700 kilometers from Kolkata to Spicer Memorial College on the outskirts of Pune. The train was scheduled to arrive in Pune at around 3:00 a.m. Traveling alone and being out late at night is not something a young woman in India should do. She could be picked up, killed, or sold to a brothel. All kinds of harm could come to her, but Yasmin took

the ticket, boarded the train, and arrived 36 hours later at the Pune train station. She knew no one.

As she waited there at the train station, she prayed. She didn't know what to do. She didn't even know where Spicer Memorial College was. Then a tall slender man approached her and asked, "Where are you going, my child?"

Yasmin responded, "I want to go to Spicer Memorial College.

He smiled and reached for her suitcase. "Okay, I will take you." Yasmin followed, even though she had never met him before. This was her first time outside of the city of Kolkata, but she had peace in her heart. She knew God was there.

The driver took her in his auto-rickshaw about 20 kilometers from the train station right to the front door of the girls' dormitory on the campus of Spicer Memorial College. If he had dropped her anywhere else on the campus, she would have been lost. "Here you are," he said with a smile. As Yasmin recounted this story to me, there were tears in her eyes: "My God is good! My God is very, very good."

Yasmin studied and worked at Spicer Memorial College for the next seven years and several times she tried to reconnect with that kind driver. She will always remember his face but she was never able to find him. Yasmin is convinced God sent him there in answer to her prayer in the name of Jesus.

Times of Discouragement

During her first semester at Spicer, Yasmin faced a major challenge. Someone made a false accusation against her, and she became very discouraged. She went back to her room and started crying. She prayed, "Lord, is this what you brought me here for?" She thought she had made a mistake coming all the way from Kolkata, and she wanted to go home. She even contacted some of her friends in Kolkata to get some money for her train ticket.

In the midst of her struggle with discouragement, Yasmin received a message from the vice-president for student affairs. He asked her to come to his office. "You are Yasmin? You have come all the way from Kolkata? I hear that you want to go home."

"Yes, Sir," she replied. She started crying and shared with him the whole story of the false accusation. Then she said, "Sir, this is not what I left my parents for. I think I made a mistake. I don't belong here."

He listened attentively, and then he said to her, "You know, Yasmin, God knows what He has in store for

you. Don't let His plans fail." Those words touched her heart. "It's true," she thought to herself. "God has led me this far. Why am I doubting Him now?" New strength and courage came to her. She said to that administrator, "You know, Sir, you will see me finish my studies in religion and go out from here." Then they prayed together in the name of Jesus. As Yasmin was about to leave the administrator's office, he said to her, "Yasmin, it is very easy to flow with the current, but it takes courage and God's strength to swim against the current. Don't forget that."

Blessings at Spicer

Yasmin became one of the most distinguished students at Spicer Memorial College. There is one simple prayer she used to pray in the name of Jesus before every examination: "Not in my strength, Lord, but in Your strength I go to write this exam, in the name of Jesus, Amen." Yasmin was blessed. She received five academic awards and finished her undergraduate studies in religion and psychology with a grade point average (GPA) of 3.93.⁵ Then she completed her graduate studies in education with a perfect 4.0 GPA. "I didn't accomplish that in my own strength," she testified. "It was a miracle."

There was another blessing she received during her time at Spicer Memorial College. After two years away from home, she got a phone call from her father. There was a general phone in the administration building, and if students got phone calls their names would be called on the loudspeaker system. When Yasmin heard her name called, she thought, "Who is calling me? No one ever calls me." She made her way to the administration building and picked up the phone. She heard this greeting: "Assalamu alaikum." (Peace be unto you.) Immediately, she knew who it was. She gave a formal Arabic response, then called out, "Papa!" Silence. "Papa!"

"Yes, it's me. Where are you?"

"I'm in Pune, where I told you I would be."

"OK," he replied. "The day after tomorrow I'll be there." That's all he said.

Yasmin replied, "Sure. I will wait for you!"

At the appointed time Yasmin went to the train station to wait for her father's arrival. When he met her, he was very formal. No warm greeting. No smiles. "I was just passing through, and I wanted to see where you are staying," he said. He thought maybe she was wasting her life. He stayed for two days, talked to all her teachers, and then left. He refused to stay on campus, and he didn't say anything personal to her—not a word. He did leave a

suitcase with some clothes and food her mother sent for her. It was the first package Yasmin had received from her parents since being expelled from her house two years earlier. Then her father returned home.

A Second Visit

During the following months, her parents called occasionally. Then, during her third year, she received another phone call from her father to tell her he was passing through Pune again and wanted to visit her. This time he asked her to book a guest room at the college. She was so happy. She gave thanks to God: “O Lord, I know you’re working. I can see it!”

On this visit, her father was much more friendly. He took her shopping. Since her father was staying over a weekend, Yasmin gathered her courage and asked him if he would like to go to church with her. He was silent for what seemed like an eternity and then he said, “Okay.” Almost three years earlier, she had risked being killed for becoming a Christian and now her orthodox Muslim father was willing to sit next to her in church. She could feel the gap between them being bridged, slowly. God was working.

Yasmin’s father spent about a week with her, and then he said, “I have to go home now to care for the family business.” She accompanied her father to the train station. In Indian culture, if you greet someone in authority, like your father, you bend down and touch his feet and then touch your head. It is a way of showing respect. So as her father was about to leave the train station, Yasmin bent down and touched his feet. As she was getting up to touch her head, her father embraced her! That was the first time in the 22 years of her life that her father hugged her. There were tears in his eyes. “Stay well,” he said. “I’m happy to see you.” Yasmin looked back at her father with tears in her eyes. Her prayers in Jesus’ name were being answered.

Now she goes home every year to see her parents. When they eat together, her father says his prayer in Arabic and then waits for Yasmin to say her prayer of thanks in the name of Jesus. She prays out loud, and her father waits respectfully before they eat together. That is a miracle! This is the same father who banished her from his house. He has come to respect her. He doesn’t know Jesus personally yet, but he sees through his daughter’s life that Jesus is real. He sees the peace of God in her life.

Pray for Me

Recently, Yasmin's father was facing some health challenges and her mother called: "Your father is really in pain and he wants to speak to you." Then she heard her father's voice: "I want you to do one thing for me. Will you do it? Will you pray for me?" It was another miracle. Her orthodox Muslim father asked her to pray for him in the name of Jesus. God is still working. Yasmin doesn't know what the future holds, but she knows God is in control. She is certain that every prayer offered in the name of Jesus is heard and answered according to God's will. She has seen evidence time and time again that Jesus is real. She has noticed His leading every step of her journey.

The Journey Continues

Eleven years after her first lonely train ride from Kolkata to Pune, India, Yasmin is the chairperson of the department of psychology, guidance, and counseling at a Christian university in Zambia. God is using her to bless the lives of thousands of students. She is willing to follow wherever God leads, and do whatever He asks her to do.

Her life and testimony provide radical evidence that Jesus is more than a great teacher, more than another holy prophet. Jesus is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Living Lord.

CHAPTER 2

The Testimony of Paul Ratsara

-An ancestor worshiper from Madagascar

Paul should have died when he was 16 years old. The poison added to his food was slowly killing him. The medicine man could not help him. A one-month stay in the hospital failed to save him, and this first-born son of a local Malagasy chief was sent home to die. Reduced to skin and bones, Paul awaited his certain fate. Totally unaware of the power of the living God, Paul had been raised in the midst of darkness. Spiritualist practices and idols could not protect him from the enemy who wanted him dead.

Rescued From Death

What impressed a former farm employee to return to the Ratsara farm? How did he know the antidote to the poison? Those vital questions remained unanswered for several months. Thanks to a mixture prepared by this returning worker, Paul's life was spared. After five months of struggle between life and death, new strength began to surge through his body but this was just a foretaste of his resurrection life.

Paul had excelled at his local school and had earned a reputation as a rising academic star. Apparently, a jealous relative had attempted to kill Paul, so his mother was afraid to send him back to school. Surely his enemy would try again, and perhaps be successful in his attempt to silence his adversary. No matter how much Paul begged to return to school, his mother's answer was always the same. It seemed he would be a cattle herder for the rest of his days, confined to a life of manual labor on the family farm.

A Book From Heaven

Then everything began to change. Paul found a small book in his house—a Malagasy translation of the New Testament and Psalms. Paul never found out how it got there, but he accepted it as a gift from heaven. Since he was an avid reader, and his family owned very few books, he took this volume with him out to the fields. Sitting under the blue Madagascar sky, he began to read the inspired text, starting with the book of Matthew. Like the psalmist David, Paul held communion with heaven in the midst of God's creation. He read the story of the wise men that came and worshiped Jesus. He learned of sick people who were healed and demoniacs who were set free. He was captivated by the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and fascinated by the parables of Jesus with

sowers, merchants, and lost sheep. When he reached the last three chapters of that first Gospel, Paul's heart began to burn within him. He marveled at the love of Jesus who gave His life to save us from our sins. The response of his young heart was spontaneous and strong: "I love that Man."

Day by day, Paul took this inspired treasure with him into the fields. He would inspect the cattle then read some more from the Holy Scriptures. He journeyed through the entire New Testament and the Psalms. Then he began to read through a second time, like a hungry man searching for bread. He read the words of Jesus, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." The promise of Jesus was true. It was being fulfilled in his own life!

Saved For a Purpose

Paul reflected back over his sixteen years. Several times his life had been spared. On one occasion, he was caring for his family's cattle when an irritable bull attacked him. Fortunately, Paul was a slender 12 year-old and the bull's horns slipped on either side of his narrow waist. Thrown to the ground, he looked in horror as the angry bull charged, ready to trample him to death. Who gave Paul the wisdom to scramble under a small bush nearby?

On another occasion, he had tumbled headfirst from the high branches of a tree. He was sure his time was at hand, but just before striking the ground, his arms grasped a branch and he survived the near-fatal fall with only scrapes and bruises. Surely his life had been spared for a reason.

Searching the Scriptures

He longed to go back to school again. His thirst for learning was insatiable. Deep in his heart, Paul sensed God had a great plan for his life. After much pleading, Paul's mother gave her permission for her son to continue his education. After some months at their local school, Paul moved to a larger town to finish high school. He lived with his cousin and her husband. In their home, he discovered another treasure—a copy of the entire Bible! Paul was delighted. Now he could also read the testimony of Moses and the Prophets. Jesus had declared, "These are they that testify of Me" (John 5:39). Paul had read the story of Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus, how beginning with Moses and all the prophets Jesus had explained everything in the Scriptures concerning Himself. Now Paul was able to read the Scriptures for himself. He discovered the truth of the psalmist's promise: "Your word is a lamp to

my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Sensing a Call to Service

Paul began to attend a Christian church with his cousin and her husband. Before long, he was serving as a youth leader and then a regional leader of Christian young people. One day, a day he will always remember, Paul heard the clear call of God to become a preacher. It wasn't an audible voice, but rather a clear conviction in his heart and mind. He also received this impression: “Now that you are going to dedicate your entire life to preach the gospel, make sure you preach the truth, not error.” Paul continued to carefully study the Bible and God led Him to some important convictions regarding Bible truth. But Paul struggled with the call of God to become a pastor. His parents were already disappointed he had become a Christian. They had high hopes for him to get a high-paying job. Preachers were poor. What was Paul supposed to do?

He decided to resist the call of God and please his parents. He sat for a government exam that would enable him to receive a full scholarship to study engineering at a fine university in the second largest city in Madagascar. About twelve hundred students competed for twelve places. If he was successful, his path to success was assured. Can you guess what happened? Paul earned one of those twelve scholarships. Soon he was traveling many miles from his home to begin this new adventure, an opportunity of a lifetime—but Paul was miserable. He couldn't concentrate on his studies. After about a month in the program, he went to one of the school administrators and announced his intention to return home.

“Are you out of your mind?” the administrator asked him. Thousands would gladly take his place. But Paul had read the words of Jesus: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:58). When Jesus called His first disciples to follow Him, “they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything, and followed him” (Luke 5:11). It was true he would make lots of money as an engineer, but that was not the call of God upon his life. Paul didn't want to be like the rich fool in the parable of Jesus who stored up treasure on earth but was not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21). He remembered the words of Jesus, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26).

Disowned By His Family

When Paul returned home and announced to his family that he planned to study to become a pastor, his mother stood by the front door of their house and said, “If you walk out of this door, you are no longer my son.” Paul was very close to his parents. Their family was close-knit and filled with love. How could he bear the pain of complete rejection? But how could he resist the unmistakable call of God? Finally the decision was clear. He ought to obey God rather than man. Paul took his suitcase and didn’t look back.

After a year of studies to become a pastor, Paul decided to return home. He missed his family. He loved his parents dearly but would they receive him or reject him once again? When he finally arrived at his home, his parents greeted him with joy. They had missed him too. To his surprise, his father apologized for overreacting and encouraged him in his studies as a pastor. He even asked his son to study the Bible with them. Day after day, Paul opened the Scriptures with his family. He prayed to God that the miracle he had experienced would happen in their lives as well—that their hearts would burn within them as they saw the truth about Jesus in the Holy Scriptures.

Delivered From Death Again

Paul has devoted the rest of his life to sharing with others about Jesus. For several years, Paul and his family served in the war-torn country of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Paul described those dangerous times: “If the soldiers of president Mobutu saw you carrying a bag or case, they would stop you and say, ‘Maybe you have a dangerous weapon there. Let me see.’ They would take everything and say, ‘Don’t turn back. Just go.’ And you didn’t turn back, or they might kill you.”

On one occasion, Paul was kidnapped by bandits. As he crossed a main road in Kinshasa, a stranger pulled a gun and pointed it directly at him. Paul remembered the fate of a fellow pastor who had resisted three days earlier when some bandits tried to rob him. His colleague had been shot three times. What was Paul to do? The bandit pointed towards the open door of a car and demanded that Paul get inside the vehicle. As Paul sat in the back of that car between two armed gunmen, they demanded that he hand over his papers and wallet. They told him they would drive to a quiet place on the banks of the Congo River, kill him, and dump his body in the river. His wife and three children would never know what happened to him. Paul had read the words of the Lord recorded by the psalmist Asaph: “call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me” (Psalm 50:15). Now it was time

to claim that promise. He cried out to God in silent prayer, “Lord, I know if you tarry, I will eventually die, but this is not the kind of death I wish. Please rescue me!”

In the midst of that crisis, Paul was filled with a deep and abiding peace. He had read the words of Jesus, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). He had first read that promise while watching his father’s cattle, but now, as he sat sandwiched between two bandits, it was time to experience that supernatural peace. “I felt Jesus right there by my side,” Paul testified. “I prayed to Him, ‘If You want me to die, I am in your hands.’ I was not afraid.” Then Paul turned to the gunmen and said, “I am a missionary from Madagascar. I have come here to serve God and humanity, including you.” The bandits didn’t want to listen. Suddenly the car began to slow down in a deserted area on the outskirts of town, near the banks of the Congo River. The bandits were arguing with each other in their own dialect. Finally their chief spoke in French, a language Paul could understand: “No! We aren’t going to take this man. He is a man of God. Let him go. We aren’t going to keep him.” Then the chief turned to Paul and said, “Pastor, we are releasing you. You can go.”

Perhaps you are thinking, “That’s amazing! Did Paul get out of the car and run for his life?” No. What happened next might surprise you. The prophet Isaiah had declared, “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3). Paul was experiencing God’s peace. He had read the words of the apostle Paul of Christians in Philippi, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). So instead of running away filled with fear, Paul turned to the bandit chief and said, “Can you give me a ride back?” Foolish? Reckless? Or was Paul’s boldness compelling evidence that Jesus is real, a Provider of perfect peace, the true Messiah?

The bandits continued to argue as they drove back to the outskirts of town. Several of the bandits didn’t want to return Paul’s wallet and travel papers, but the chief insisted. As Paul got out of the car, the chief said, “OK, now we are friends.”

“Yes,” Paul replied, “we are friends. Thank you and God bless you.” As Paul turned to leave, the bandit chief gave this counsel, pointing in a certain direction: “Go on this road rather than that road because there might be more bandits on that road.” Isn’t God amazing? He can even speak words of counsel through a bandit chief.

What did Paul learn through that experience? Here is his radical testimony as a devoted follower of Jesus: “I especially like the words of Paul: ‘I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me —the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace’ (Acts 20:24). I have learned that in order to live, you have to be ready to die. In order to be free, you have to be free from the fear of death. When you no longer hold your life dear, you are free. My prayer every day is to be in tune with God every moment, to know that the angels are with me.”

God longs to give you peace today. He wants you to experience freedom from anxiety and fear. Just as Paul’s life was spared for a reason, your life has meaning and purpose. God loves you and He has a wonderful plan for your future. He wants you to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). That is the way to eternal life, eternal peace, and eternal joy.

CHAPTER 3

The Testimony of Cleopas

Only Luke records the story—not a word from the Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, or John. And at first reading, the narrative leaves us with more questions than answers.

The Emmaus Road

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?” “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:13-32)

What “same day” is Luke referring to at the beginning of this narrative? The answer is found at the beginning of Luke 24. “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb” (Luke 24:1). This is the day Christians call “Easter Sunday.” Jesus was crucified on Friday, rested in the tomb on the Sabbath day, and on the first day of the week women came to the tomb and discovered the stone had been rolled away. Two angels shared this glorious news: “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” (Luke 24:5-6).

It is “that same day”, according to Luke, that “two of them” were going to a village called Emmaus. Who does the “two of them” refer to? According to Luke 24:9, the women who heard the testimony from the angels gave a report “to the Eleven and to all the others.” The close disciples of Jesus had been referred to as “the Twelve” but Judas denied Jesus and betrayed Him with a kiss. Simon Peter also denied Jesus and betrayed Him with a curse but he repented with tears. Judas, on the other hand, experienced only remorse and subsequently hanged himself. So now it was just the Eleven, rather than the Twelve but Jesus had many more disciples than just the Eleven. Luke records, at the beginning of the book of Acts, that there were about 120 disciples of Jesus (Acts 1:15). The women gave their testimony about Jesus being raised from the dead not only to the Eleven, but also “to all the others” (Luke 24:9).

The Identity of the Two Disciples

The two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus were “two of them.” One of these disciples is identified in Luke 24:18. His name was Cleopas. Who was Cleopas? Some have wondered if Cleopas is the same as Clopas mentioned by the apostle John: “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” (John 19:25). If Cleopas and Clopas are one and the same, then Cleopas’ wife was one of the holy women who followed Jesus. She was present at the cross with Mary the mother of Jesus, with Mary’s sister, and with Mary Magdalene. She may also have been among the group of women at the tomb who heard the glorious report from the angels, “He is not here! He is risen!”

That conclusion seems to be supported by a comment Cleopas made to Jesus on the Emmaus road: “some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive” (Luke 24:22). But as we’ll discover from the next part of the story, Cleopas was skeptical about the report.

What about the other disciple? Who was he? We don’t know. Some have suggested it was Matthias, the one who would later become the replacement for Judas, one of the Twelve, but Dr. Luke doesn’t provide that information. There is one interesting piece of information Luke does provide.

These two disciples say, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over” (Luke 24:29). What can we learn from that comment? Perhaps these two disciples were related. That’s certainly possible—brothers like

Peter and Andrew, or James and John. Or perhaps this was Cleopas and his son, or Cleopas and his wife. These two disciples stayed in the same house, and they invited Jesus to stay with them.

The Village of Emmaus

What have we learned so far? We don't know very much about these two individuals. Cleopas could be Clopas, but we're not sure. And we cannot be certain about the identity of the other disciple. What about Emmaus? Where is that located? Unfortunately, we don't know that either!

Emmaus was not a city with walls, like Bethlehem or Jerusalem. A walled city was called a *polis*, from which we get the English word metropolis, but Emmaus is referred to as a *kōmē*, a village or country town as opposed to a walled city. This is the only place in Scripture where Emmaus is mentioned. Archeologists are not sure of its location, though the text tells us it was about 60 stadia from Jerusalem. A stadion was about 185 meters or 607 feet. So 60 stadia is about 11 kilometers, or a little under 7 miles if you're traveling in a straight line—probably a little longer on a winding road. That distance is important for us, because it gives us some indication of how long the disciples were walking on that road. It also gives us a clue as to when they began their journey.

The Walk to Emmaus

How long would it take to walk 11-12 kilometers or 7-8 miles? About two to three hours at a normal walking speed. But probably the walk to Emmaus took longer. These two disciples talked together as they walked toward Emmaus, and their conversation became even more intense after they met the stranger along the way. Luke tells us that when they arrived at Emmaus it was already dusk. The sun sets in that region at about 6:30 in the evening so we can infer that these two disciples left Jerusalem in the early afternoon. They had already heard a report from “their women” earlier in the day and now they were heading home to their small village of Emmaus. Apparently, they had not yet heard the testimony of Mary Magdalene who met with Jesus near the garden tomb.

Discouraged Disciples

So these two disciples were walking home on the road to Emmaus, talking about the events of the past few days. Their Master, Jesus, had been arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, betrayed by a kiss. There had been a

mockery of a trial. Even the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, had declared Jesus was innocent, but the religious leaders had demanded that Jesus be put to death. Then there was the spitting, the beating, and that dreadful flogging. How could God allow the Messiah to be treated like that? And then the crucifixion—suspended naked between heaven and earth. Didn't the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree?" (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13). How could these things have happened to the Messiah? Or, worse yet, perhaps Jesus wasn't the Messiah after all.

Cleopas and his companion were struggling. They had heard the report of the women who went to the tomb where Jesus was laid. Apparently two angels had announced to the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6). But these two disciples on the road to Emmaus were obviously still struggling with disappointment, discouragement, and doubt.

The Stranger on the Road

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus, the Risen Lord, caught up with them on the road. It's interesting to note that Luke records "Jesus Himself drew near" (verse 15). This is no hallucination or impersonator. This is Jesus, risen from the dead, and He draws near to them. But "they were kept from recognizing him" (verse 16). What does that mean? Did Jesus look different after His resurrection? I don't think so. Other disciples recognized Him instantly. So what is going on here? Is Jesus wearing a hooded himation and hiding his face or is something supernatural going on? Be attentive to the rest of the story and you'll understand why these two disciples were kept from recognizing Jesus at first.

Jesus Joins the Conversation

Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (verse 17) Luke records their initial response: "They stood still, their faces downcast" (verse 17). We get the impression they were almost speechless. Shocked. Perhaps they were thinking to themselves, "Where have you been?" Then Cleopas verbalized his thoughts. "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (verse 18).

Perhaps you can imagine a little amazement in Cleopas' voice. But Jesus coached Cleopas to share his

thoughts. “What things?” Jesus asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. Now the second disciple is also engaged in the conversation. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see” (verses 19-24).

What do you hear in Cleopas' testimony? Disappointment. Discouragement. Doubt. Cleopas called Jesus “a prophet, powerful in word and deed,” but he did not call Jesus Messiah. And Cleopas didn't say, “The women saw angels who said Jesus was alive.” But rather “they came and told us that they had seen *a vision of* angels who said he was alive” (emphasis supplied). Do you see the difference? Cleopas and the unnamed disciple are not walking along the road to Emmaus rejoicing that Jesus is the Messiah and is risen from the dead. They are disappointed, discouraged, doubting if Jesus really was who they thought he was.

How did Jesus respond? “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’” (verses 25-26).

Why didn't Jesus just say, “It's me! Jesus! I am risen from the dead!”? Perhaps for the same reason the disciples were kept from recognizing Him at first. Jesus had something very important to share with them. What would have happened if Jesus had boldly introduced Himself? Those two disciples would have been so excited; they wouldn't have heard anything else.

The Most Important Bible Study Ever Given

But Jesus had something very important to share with them. He was about to share the most important Bible study ever given: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (verse 27).

Don't you wish you could have been there for that study? Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself! What was the reaction of the two disciples? They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and

opened the Scriptures to us?” (verse 32). What does that mean? “Were not our hearts burning within us?” They were under conviction. They sensed they were uncovering sacred treasure. They realized they were walking on holy ground.

Before Jesus met with them on the road and showed them all the evidence in the Scriptures concerning Himself, their faith in Him as Messiah was growing dim. Now, their hearts burned within them! That’s my prayer for you as we examine the radical evidence from the Scriptures that point to Jesus as the Messiah. I’m praying your heart will burn within you as you discover the truths of God’s Word which clearly point to Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world!

Their Eyes Were Opened

Did the two disciples on the Emmaus road ever recognize it was Jesus who was speaking to them? Yes! “As they approached Emmaus, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight” (verses 28-31).

As Jesus broke the bread, they recognized Him! Was it the way Jesus broke the bread? Did they see the nail prints in His hands? Or was it now God’s appointed time for the veil to be lifted? Luke doesn’t give us that information. But this much is certain: when Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, they recognized Him!

Then something else supernatural happened: Jesus disappeared from their sight. They would see Him again in the company of the other disciples after they hurried all the way back to Jerusalem, this time in the dark! That’s a combined distance back and forth of almost two thirds of a marathon but they were excited! Their hearts were still burning within them. Luke records that when they found where the Eleven were assembled, “the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread” (verse 35).

Jesus Visits the Upper Room

While these two disciples were giving their testimony, “Jesus himself stood among them and said to them,

‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (verses 36-45).

Jesus Brings Joy

After the larger group of disciples listened to an in-depth Bible study by Jesus from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, “they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God” (verse 52-53).

It is a joyful experience when a person recognizes Jesus for who He really is—not just another great teacher or even a prophet, powerful in word and deed, but as Messiah, Savior. And not just Savior of the world, but your personal Savior. Cleopas and the other disciples experienced that joy when they recognized Jesus as their Messiah, their Savior, and their Risen Lord.

People still experience joy today when they examine the compelling evidence from Scripture and come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

David’s Testimony

David has a joyful testimony to share. I received his e-mail while I was writing this chapter on the testimony of Cleopas. David was born in Hawaii and now lives in Southern California. He recently read the Bible from cover-to-cover for the first time. As he read the stories about Jesus in the New Testament, he found himself with tears running down his face more often than he would ever care to admit. What was happening to him? His heart was burning within Him. He was under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, walking on holy ground. David

especially enjoyed reading the Gospel written by the apostle John. “I don’t know if the impact this Gospel had on me is common,” David testified, “but this is a very powerful book!”

If the beloved apostle could have seen David reading his Gospel, he would have smiled. John wrote his Gospel for people just like David, people who are seeking to know the truth about Jesus. John gave this testimony at the conclusion of his Gospel: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

It was obvious to David that he needed help in understanding what he had just read, and he was not sure where to turn. He didn’t know how to pray. So he asked God if He would lead him to a television program that could provide him the help he was seeking. Is God able to do that? He has promised in the Scriptures: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you” (Psalm 32:8).

“God must have heard me,” David exclaimed, “because the next thing I knew I was watching Hope Sabbath School on DIRECTV channel 368.”⁶ Hope Sabbath School is an in-depth interactive Bible study broadcast worldwide on the Hope Channel Network. The group consists of 12 young adults who are earnestly seeking to know the truth about Jesus and His Word, just like the two disciples on the Emmaus road. David was overjoyed. “It is fantastic and I’m learning more and more about the love and grace of God and Jesus Christ.”

Recently, David heard the Hope Sabbath School team sing the scripture song “I Have Been Crucified with Christ.”⁷ Again, his heart burned within him and his eyes were filled with tears knowing Christ gave his life for him and loved him so much.

That miracle is repeated over and over again. The LORD God promised through the prophet Jeremiah, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). As you continue to prayerfully examine the compelling evidence from the Bible that points to Jesus as the Messiah, your life will also be changed. Like the first disciples, you too will worship and go out with great joy to share the Good News you have learned.

CHAPTER 4

The Testimony of Moses

“And beginning with Moses...he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). I used to wish someone had recorded that Bible study but now I’m convinced Jesus wants us to search the Scriptures for ourselves. We need to reconstruct that study so our hearts can also burn within us as we examine the evidence that Jesus is indeed the Messiah!

Beginning With Moses

Why do you think Jesus began His amazing Bible study by sharing the testimony of Moses? There are more than 1000 prophecies and types in the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.⁸ Most of those prophecies are not in the books of Moses.⁹ So why did Jesus begin His amazing Bible study with the testimony of Moses? Let me suggest two possible answers to that question. An obvious answer is that the Hebrew Scriptures begin with the books of Moses. The Hebrew Scriptures in the time of Jesus were divided into 3-parts: the books of Moses (also referred to as the Law or the Torah), the Prophets, and the Psalms and writings. Perhaps Jesus began with the testimony of Moses because Moses comes first, at the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures. Without a doubt, the writings of Moses were highly esteemed by the Jews.

A second possible reason why Jesus started this amazing Bible study with the testimony of Moses is that Jesus met these two disciples where they were. Perhaps they were talking about the writings of Moses, and Jesus started there, and opened all the Scriptures to them. That’s what happened when Philip the deacon met an Ethiopian official on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Dr. Luke records in the book of Acts that the official was traveling in his chariot, reading a prophecy about the Messiah in the book of the prophet Isaiah. When Philip ran up alongside the chariot, the Ethiopian invited him to join him in his study: “The eunuch asked Philip, ‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?’ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:34-35).

Philip didn’t start the Bible study with Daniel or Malachi. He connected with the Ethiopian at the point of his need. This court official had a question: “Who is the prophet talking about?” So Philip began with the writings of the prophet Isaiah and shared the compelling evidence regarding Jesus as Messiah. Perhaps the two disciples on the

road to Emmaus were discussing the writings of Moses as they walked along, trying to understand the promises regarding the Messiah, and Jesus met them where they were.

The Suffering of Messiah

Whatever the reason, Dr. Luke records that Jesus began this amazing Bible study with these two disciples by focusing on the testimony of Moses concerning the Messiah—and not just anything concerning the Messiah, but particularly the issue of whether or not He would have to suffer. “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:36).

The Jews in the time of Jesus expected the Messiah to come as a victorious conqueror. They expected Him to throw off the yoke of Rome and restore Israel to its former glory. That’s why these two disciples on the road to Emmaus were struggling to understand what had just happened to Jesus. Jesus had been beaten, mocked, flogged, and killed. That’s not how they had expected Messiah to be treated.

So where would Jesus have started in the writings of Moses? I imagine He might have started with the words of hope recorded in Genesis 3:15. Our first parents had both sinned against God. Eve listened to the seductive lie of that old serpent, the devil, and Adam had willfully joined her in rebellion against God. But God did not abandon them. Speaking in their presence, God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

He, that is one of the offspring of the woman, would crush the head of the serpent. That is the first mention of a Deliverer, a Redeemer, who would come. Notice, this Redeemer would be part of the human family. The apostle Paul clearly identifies this Offspring, this Seed of the woman, as Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). This One would crush the serpent’s head—that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan, as the apostle John calls him in Revelation 12:9. But the serpent would also strike the Redeemer’s heel. The Messiah would suffer. “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”

The LORD Will Provide

I imagine Jesus reminded these two disciples of the story of the great patriarch Abraham and his son Isaac, also recorded by Moses in the book of Genesis. Isaac was a miracle child—a child of promise. Abram’s wife, Sarai,

was barren, but God promised Abram his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. And the Lord God was faithful to His promise. Sarai conceived and bore a son. Isaac was a fulfillment of God's promise, and Abram and Sarai received new names: Abraham and Sarah!

Then the Lord God tested Abraham. The story is found in the book of Genesis:

“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.’ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.’ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, ‘Father?’ ‘Yes, my son?’ Abraham replied. ‘The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. With Isaac's consent, Abraham bound his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided’ (Genesis 22:1-14).

YHWH Yireh. Jehovah Jireh. The LORD will provide. The LORD will provide what? The LORD will provide a sacrifice. Perhaps Abraham thought his own son Isaac was the Redeemer—the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. Perhaps the miracle child Isaac could be the Messiah. Abraham simply received God's assurance, “The LORD will provide.”

Two thousand years later, Jesus testified, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Why was Abraham glad as he looked forward by faith? He was glad the LORD would provide. The LORD is Jehovah Jireh! And on that same mountain where the LORD God spoke to Abraham and Isaac, on that same Mount Moriah, more than two thousand years later, the LORD did provide. On that same mountain, also called Mount Zion, the LORD fulfilled His promise! Perhaps Jesus reviewed this story with His two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The Passover Lamb

Perhaps Jesus reminded the two disciples about the first Passover, as the children of Israel were about to leave Egypt. Each family was directed by God to take the blood of a lamb and put that blood on the doorpost of their dwelling. You can read the story in Exodus chapter 12. The LORD declared to Moses, “Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13).

The death of the lamb didn’t accomplish anything in itself. It was a symbol, pointing forward to the Lamb the LORD God would provide. Who was that Lamb? John the Baptist declared Jesus was that Lamb! “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Had the disciples on the Emmaus road forgotten that the Lamb would be slain? Jesus reminded them from the testimony of Moses, “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”

Striking the Rock

I imagine Jesus told a story recorded in the second book of Moses, the book of Exodus.

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?’ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’ Then Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ The Lord answered Moses, ‘Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel” (Exodus 17:1-6)

Who did that rock represent? The Psalmist declared, “To you, I call, O LORD my Rock” (Psalm 28:1) and “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation” (Psalm 95:1). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul specifically refers to the rock Moses struck in the wilderness: “(they) drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

So what was the significance of the rock being struck? Why did the LORD God instruct Moses to strike the

rock? I imagine Jesus asking the two disciples that question as they walked along the road to Emmaus. When the rock was struck, a stream of life flowed forth. So Messiah would be stricken, and a stream of life would flow forth.

But what about entering into His glory? “Didn’t Jesus say in Luke 24:26, ‘Did not the Christ have to suffer these things *and then enter his glory?*’ Does Moses testify anywhere about Messiah entering into glory? It’s clear from the testimony of Moses that Messiah would suffer, Messiah would be smitten but what about a glorious ending?”

I’m going to give you a homework assignment! Remember, Jesus doesn’t give us the whole Bible study in outline form because He wants us to search for ourselves. I encourage you to study the testimony of Moses. Jesus said, “These are they that testify of Me” (John 5:40). See if you can find a reference in the testimony of Moses to a glorious ending for Messiah.¹⁰

The Witness of Job

I will share one testimony of a glorious ending. It’s not found in the 5 best-known books of Moses. It’s found in a book that was written even before the book of Genesis—a book that many believe was written by Moses during his 40-year sojourn in the wilderness of Midian. It’s the story of a man of God named Job who lived in the land of Uz. We could devote an entire chapter to a study of the book of Job, but I want to focus on the words of Job, recorded in Job 19:25. Job declares, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.”

According to the testimony of Moses through the book of Job, the story of Messiah doesn’t end with sufferings and death. Our Redeemer lives, and in the end He will stand upon the earth! Did Jesus share those words recorded by Moses with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? We don’t know for sure. But this much we do know—as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them, beginning with the testimony of Moses, and showing them everything concerning Himself, their hearts burned within them. Why? Because it became absolutely clear to them that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. His sufferings and death did not disqualify Him from being the Messiah. Rather, His sufferings and death demonstrated He was indeed the Messiah. That precious truth will become even clearer as we continue our study together.

Prophecy Fulfilled

Before Moses died, he gave this prophecy, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” (Deut. 18:15). Who was that prophet of whom Moses spoke? In the time of Jesus, the Jews were still waiting for that prophet. In fact, they asked John the Baptist, “Are you the Prophet?” (John 1:21), referring back to the prophecy of Moses. But John the Baptist said, “I am not.” John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness. He had come to prepare the way for that Prophet. That prophet was Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. This was the One of whom Moses testified.

When Jesus gave His amazing Bible study to those two disciples on the road to Emmaus their hearts burned within them. Perhaps they remembered what Jesus had already told them before His sufferings and death. “This is what I told you while I was still with you,” Jesus said. “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).

Jesus had told them these things before His sufferings and death. He had told them that everything must be fulfilled that was written about Him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. There was no need for the two disciples to have been downcast that day. If they had diligently searched the Scriptures, their hearts would have burned within them with the clear conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

But the disciples had allowed their preconceived ideas to blind their eyes. Jesus had clearly declared, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise” (Mark 10:33-34). Why didn’t the disciples believe those words? Why weren’t they rejoicing all weekend that Jesus would rise on the third day? Why weren’t they praising God as they walked on the road to Emmaus?

It’s easy to sit in judgment on the disciples, but I have a question for you. I have a question for myself. Are we diligently searching the Scriptures to learn more about Jesus, our Messiah? Are we setting aside our preconceived ideas and letting God’s Word be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path?

The testimony of Moses clearly points to Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. And Jesus, your Messiah, your Savior, wants to walk with you. He wants to open your eyes, to open your understanding. Do you

remember the testimony of the two disciples on the Emmaus Road? “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (verse 32). I’m praying that you will have a similar experience as you search the Scriptures for yourself.

Evelyne’s testimony

Evelyne began her life in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Her parents were childhood sweethearts and holocaust survivors. Having escaped from Hitler’s rule in Vienna, Austria in 1938, Fritz and Annie had set sail for South America. Before their ship arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina closed its doors to the Jews. There was one last chance—Haiti. God touched the heart of a Haitian resident named Charles Bigio to sponsor the entire ship, or Evelyne’s story might have ended at sea, a wishful thought in the minds of her yet unmarried parents.

Once safely on shore in Haiti, Fritz and Anny were married and established their new home. Two years later Evelyne was born. She was raised in a nominal Jewish home—they celebrated yearly feasts but did not observe Sabbath. She heard the testimony of Moses but did not comprehend its meaning.

When Evelyne was a teenager, her parents sent her to a Christian boarding school based on the recommendation of a Christian missionary couple that had befriended them. They had no desire for Evelyne to learn about Christianity but Florida was far away from Haiti where she was having “boy problems” and Forest Lake Academy was cheaper than a Jewish boarding school. At Christian boarding school Evelyne learned about her Messiah, Jesus. As she learned more about Jesus, her heart burned within her. Jesus was more than another great teacher, more than another holy prophet. Jesus was the Messiah—her Messiah! Joy and peace flooded her soul.

Evelyne made plans to attend a Christian college but her hopes were dashed when her angry father threatened to disown her if she did not renounce her newfound faith in Jesus. Without direction and hope, Evelyne began a downward spiral. She had embraced the precious truth about Jesus, but the way seemed barred for her to follow her Messiah. Instead of following Jesus no matter what the personal cost, Evelyne went searching for meaning in all of the wrong places.

During her third marriage, Evelyne got involved with a cult group called “I AM.” She was taught to believe in Jesus, but not the Jesus she has learned about at the Christian boarding school. According to her cult teachers, Jesus was just one of many spiritual masters. And the Bible? They never read it.

After moving to Florida, one of her high school classmates told her about an online church service broadcast from the Christian church next to her old boarding school. She started to log on every week and listen to the teachings from the Scriptures. Evelyne's heart began to burn within her once again. She felt like she was coming home. After attending church online for several years, Evelyne decided it was time to make a public confession of her faith in Jesus as her Messiah. She had abandoned the idea that Jesus was a deceiver. She had rejected the false teaching that Jesus was just one of many spiritual masters. She was ready to confess Jesus as the true Messiah, her Messiah.

Evelyne discovered that Jesus doesn't leave you where He finds you. According to her own testimony, she "got a talking to by God." These were the startling impressions that came to her: "We cannot have you involved in an adulterous relationship and work for God." "You do not have a broken heart—we are giving you a new heart." "And you do not have to leave the country to work for God." Evelyne was startled. She responded in humble obedience: "Okay God." She immediately severed the adulterous relationship. She also got involved in a unique Christian ministry, rather than waiting for some special overseas mission adventure. Using her special gift of sewing, Evelyne became an active member of a Prayers and Squares Quilting Ministry. More than 2000 prayer quilts have been distributed to families both locally and around the world, reminding hurting individuals and families that someone is praying for them.

Evelyne will always be thankful for those who prayed for her, including the Christian missionaries who befriended her family so many years ago in Haiti. Only in the Kingdom of Heaven will they see the miracle of transformation that Jesus performed in Evelyne's life.

CHAPTER 5

The Testimony of the Prophets

What prophecies concerning Messiah from the Hebrew Prophets do you think Jesus might have quoted to His two disciples on the road to Emmaus?

The Prophecy of Micah

Perhaps Jesus mentioned the prophecy of the prophet Micah: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (Micah 5:2). That prophecy of the prophet Micah was fulfilled 700 years later when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Here is the testimony of Luke: “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them” (Luke 2:1-7). Matthew gives this testimony: “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him’” (Matthew 2:1-2).

Jesus didn’t choose where He would be born! His mother Mary was living in Nazareth. Her husband Joseph was the town carpenter (Matthew 13:55). But at the right time, in the right place, a prophecy concerning Messiah was fulfilled, and Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah.

The Prophecy of Zechariah

Perhaps Jesus mentioned the prophecy of Zechariah concerning Messiah: “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding

on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech. 9:9). That prophecy concerning Messiah was fulfilled more than 500 years later in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke records, “After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’” Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’ They replied, ‘The Lord needs it.’ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’ ‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out’” (Luke 19:28-40). A prophecy given over 500 years earlier about Messiah was fulfilled in every detail in the life of Jesus of Nazareth!

The Prophecy of Malachi

Perhaps Jesus mentioned the prophecy of Malachi: “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me” (Malachi 3:1). Who is this individual the prophet is referring to? John the Baptist! The prophet Malachi continues, “Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap” (Malachi 3:1-2). That prophecy was fulfilled on two occasions, 400 years later in the ministry of Jesus. The apostle John records the first time that Jesus, having begun His ministry as Messiah, comes to His Temple: “

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’” (John 2:13-19).

Why didn’t the religious leaders try to stop Jesus? Malachi had prophesied more than 400 years earlier “who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a

launderer's soap." And the apostle John records, "His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

Then the Jews demanded of him, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days'" (John 2:17-19).

That was a clear prophecy by Jesus about His death and resurrection. But the religious leaders didn't change their behavior. Many of those religious leaders probably said to themselves, "We're never going to let Jesus of Nazareth treat us like that again!" But three years later, Jesus came again to His temple, and Matthew records, "Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.' The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant. 'Do you hear what these children are saying?' they asked him, 'Yes,' replied Jesus, 'have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?"'" (Matthew 21:12-16).

The Prophecies of Isaiah

I'm certain that in His Bible study with the two disciples on the Emmaus Road Jesus mentioned the prophecies of Isaiah. More than 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah foretold, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Critics suggest this reference has nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth. But the apostle Matthew would strongly disagree with their assertion: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')" (Matthew 1:22-23). Matthew recognized Isaiah's Messianic prophecy as a revelation "the Lord had said" in reference to the coming Messiah, Jesus. The prophet Isaiah had also foretold that Messiah would take a special interest in Galilee of the Gentiles: "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in

the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:1-2). Seven hundred years before the ministry of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would take a special interest in Galilee of the Gentiles. That was totally contrary to the expectation of the Jews. The Galileans were social outcasts, a mixture of ethnic groups imported after the Assyrian invasion of the 8th century BC. But Luke records that the prophecy of Isaiah about Messiah was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus: “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him” (Luke 4:14-15).

But most of all, I’m certain Jesus mentioned the later prophecies of Isaiah. Remember the words of Jesus recorded in Luke 24:26: “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” No prophet describes the sufferings of Messiah more vividly than the prophet Isaiah. I’m certain Jesus reminded His two disciples of the prophecy of Isaiah recorded in Isaiah 50:6-7: “I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.”

I also hear Jesus quoting from Isaiah 53.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:1-12).

Examine the Evidence

I urge you to read the following chapters from the New Testament: Matthew 26, Matthew 27, Mark 14, Mark 15, Luke 22, Luke 23, John 18, and John 19. Every single detail of Isaiah’s great Messianic prophecy was

fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Examine the evidence. The testimony of the prophets is clear. Jesus is the Messiah! Hundreds of prophecies concerning Messiah were fulfilled in every detail in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Transformation in Mongolia

When Bold Batsukh examined the evidence of the Scriptures he was deeply moved. Indoctrinated under the godless system of atheistic communism in Mongolia, Bold had searched for meaning through a study of Tibetan Buddhism. His Buddhist monk taught him that there is no purpose in our existence. We must try to overcome self and sinful thoughts through meditation and at the end of our journey we will suffer based on the amount of sinful acts we have committed. There was no mention of a creator God or a Savior. Bold was taught that by his own merit he could become a god. But countless hours of chanting and mystic rituals to unleash and control supernatural powers failed to satisfy the longing of his soul.

His sister was also searching for meaning and hope. She had connected with a young couple in their capital city. Her teachers were followers of Jesus. The only knowledge Bold had about Jesus was from reading a schoolbook on history—there was a section about a person called Jesus. It said he was mentally challenged and claimed to be God and his followers betrayed him and killed him. Bold wondered why his sister would involve herself with people who believed such strange ideas. “We are Mongolians,” he asserted angrily. “We have to respect our own religion and not follow foreign religions.”

Bold registered for college as an English major and began his studies. Perhaps mastering English would open a door to a successful and happy life. At first, Bold struggled with his studies and he realized that he needed help. He decided to swallow his pride and ask his sister if he could accompany her to the meetings she was attending. “I want to learn English and I need some help. Could you ask your teachers if I could attend the meeting? But I will have nothing to do with their religion because I’m a devout Buddhist.” She said she would ask if it was okay for him to attend the meeting. The next day she told Bold that her teachers would be happy to help him and he should come to their meeting place.

When he entered their apartment there were about a dozen people sitting in circle. They were studying the Bible. Bold listened attentively. It was a genuine experience of fellowship, caring for one another, discussing and

sharing ideas, asking questions without any reservation.

Some time later, Bold was given a Bible. When he started reading the testimony of Moses in the book of Genesis, his heart was moved. The message was so simple and yet so profound. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Listen to his own testimony: “The Bible was very clear. God created the world in such an orderly manner. Things didn’t just evolve, but were created with love. When it came to the creation of man, I was impressed with how God took much care creating us in His image. I was so relieved to find a God who cares. At that moment, I found meaning in my life. I was very valuable. I could trust this God who was very orderly, caring, and loving. Since those days, my life has never been the same.”

Later Bold learned that this loving Creator became flesh and dwelt among us. He read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-3,14). Today, Bold is a devoted follower of Jesus. He knows deep in his soul that Jesus is more than just another great teacher—He is Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:18-23).

What does this compelling evidence have to do with you today? That same Jesus, that same Messiah, that same Savior who walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and now walks with Bold in Mongolia, wants to walk with you. He loves you. He cares about you, wherever you are on life’s road. He will meet you in the midst of your sorrows, in the midst of your anxieties, in the midst of your cares, in the midst of your joys. He wants to be your Savior. He wants you to be a part of His kingdom that shall never pass away. He wants you to know Him whom to know is life eternal. He wants you to experience an intimate encounter with Him, and when that happens, your heart will also burn within you!

CHAPTER 6

The Testimony of the Psalmists

My wife and I love to sing Scripture songs. We sing when we walk together in the mornings. We sing as part of our worship together. We sing in the car. It all started when our children were little. My wife was impressed to compose Scripture songs to help our children memorize Scripture. That was thirty years ago. Now our children are grown, but through the years their lives have been blessed. In fact, singing Scripture songs from God's Word has profoundly impacted our whole family. Now those Scripture songs are played in people's homes and on Christian radio stations around the world! I'm so thankful today for a wonderful Christian wife who has helped us hide God's Word in our hearts!

Singing Scripture songs is not a new idea. Did you realize there is a whole collection of Scripture songs in the Bible? It's called the book of Psalms. It really should be called the books of Psalms, because there are 5 books of Psalms all bundled into one! Did you know that there was more than one psalmist? The most well known psalmist was David, but there were many other psalmists who made contributions to the 5 books of psalms: David's son Solomon, Asaph, the sons of Korah, and Moses. These are more than human songs about God. Here is one psalmist's testimony: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). Each of the psalmists was inspired by God to give a testimony in song.

When we think of the Scripture songs known as the Psalms, our first thought is probably songs of praise, songs of worship, songs of confession and songs of petition. Most people don't realize there are over 90 prophecies about the Messiah in the Psalms.

Having already considered the testimony of Moses and the testimony of the prophets about Messiah, perhaps you're wondering, "Why are we now examining the testimony of the Psalmists?" The answer to that question is found in a comment made by Jesus some time after his walk on the road to Emmaus. Speaking to a larger group of disciples gathered in a room in Jerusalem, Jesus said, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). Jesus gave a more extensive Bible study than the one on the road to Emmaus. "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45).

Startling Prophecy about Messiah

In this chapter, we will focus primarily on one psalm that contains startling prophecies about the Messiah, and every prophetic detail of this psalm was fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Every detail of this Scripture song points to Jesus as the Messiah.

Sufferings and Death

Psalm 22 begins with these startling words: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1). You say, “Stop right there!” Those same words are recorded in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus cried those words from the cross! (Mark 15:34).

The psalmist continues, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God: “Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ‘He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him’” (Psalm 22:1-8).

Didn’t the enemies of Jesus mock Him and hurl insults at Him while He was hanging on the cross? See the testimony of Matthew: “Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!’ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ‘He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matthew 27:39-43). That mockery, those insults were prophesied 1000 years earlier!

Let’s continue reading this ancient Scripture song: “Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water,

and all my bones are out of joint.” (Psalm 22:9-14).

Notice, the psalmist doesn’t say, “All my bones are broken” but “all of my bones are out of joint.” This prophecy was also fulfilled in the person of Jesus. It was customary to break the legs of a crucified criminal, but the apostle John testified, “But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken” (John 19:34-36). Here the apostle John is quoting another prophecy given by the psalmist David: The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:19-20).

The psalmist continues: “My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death” (Psalm 22:14-15).

Remember the cry of Jesus from the cross? It’s recorded in John 19:28: “I thirst.” One thousand years earlier it had been prophesied by the psalmist, “my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.”

Let’s read on. “Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet” (Psalm 22:16). That’s a prophecy about the crucifixion. There were two ways a condemned criminal could be fastened to a Roman cross. Some were simply tied to the cross and left to die. Others were tied and nailed to the cross. How do we know Jesus was nailed to the cross? How do we know they pierced Jesus? Here is the testimony of Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus: “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (John 20:25). That prophecy of the Psalmist, recorded 1000 years earlier, was fulfilled! “They have pierced my hands and my feet.”

Let’s keep reading from Psalm 22:17-18. “I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record the fulfillment of that prophecy of the Psalmist. Here is just one testimony, from Matthew: “When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots” (Matthew 27:35). The prophecy was fulfilled with startling accuracy!

“But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the

sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen” (Psalm 22:19-21).

Glorious Resurrection

At this point in the Scripture song, the psalmist makes an abrupt shift. It’s an entirely new theme of praise and adoration. What marks the shift from cries in the midst of suffering to words of praise and adoration? The New International Version (NIV Bible) does not have the best translation here. The NIV reads this way in Psalm 22:21. “Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.” But the Hebrew can also be translated this way, as it is in the New King James Version: “Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me!”¹¹

That’s why there is such an abrupt shift in Psalm 22:22 (NKJV): “You have answered Me!” The Messiah has the assurance that His cries are heard in the midst of His suffering! “You have answered Me.” Messiah catches a glimpse of what was prophesied by the psalmist David in Psalm 16:9-11. “Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

There it is! A clear prophesy about the resurrection! And when the women came to the tomb early on the morning of the first day of the week, two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words” (Luke 24:5-8).

My personal testimony

My own life was transformed through the testimony of one of the psalmists. Unlike Yasmin or Paul, I grew up in a Christian family. The name of Jesus was often heard in our home but I lacked a personal life-changing relationship with Him. I was the captain of my own ship, master of my own destiny. Or so I thought.

Everything changed one Friday evening. My self-constructed reality came crashing down around me.

Overwhelmed by external challenges and internal conflicts, I cried out to God. As I tried to pray, it seemed to me that my prayers were ascending no higher than the ceiling of my bedroom. Was it too late for me? Had I damaged my soul beyond repair? In desperation, I took a Bible from my bookcase and opened it. My eyes fell on an ancient psalm and in that moment I heard the voice of God speaking directly to my heart:

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps (Psalm 40:1-2, NKJV)

It seemed to me that I was reading the story of my life. Temptation. Sin. Failure. Captivity. But as I continued to read, I discovered a word of hope:

Let all those who seek You rejoice
And be glad in You;
Let such as love Your salvation say continually,
'The LORD be magnified!'
But I am poor and need;
Yet the LORD thinks upon me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
Do not delay, O my God (Psalm 40:16-17, NKJV).

That dark night, the psalmist's prayer became my prayer. The psalmist's promise of a Deliverer became my hope. In the quiet of my room, I surrendered my life fully to God and joyfully accepted the gift of His salvation. Burdens lifted. God's purpose for my life became clear.

I slept that night with peace in my heart. The following morning I received a letter in the mail. I still remember opening it. The envelope contained a small piece of blue writing paper and a stack of bank notes. On the sheet of paper was a simple note: "With Christian love and God's blessings." No name. No return address. That stack of bank notes was the exact amount of money needed for me to begin my studies at a small Christian college in England. I graduated four years later and entered full-time ministry as a Christian pastor. Like Yasmin, I have witnessed more miracles than I can count as I call out to God in the name of Jesus. God has been faithful to His promise: "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Since that dark night many years ago, I have never stopped praising Jesus, my personal Savior and Friend.

No wonder one of my favorite Scripture songs is taken from Psalm 9:

I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.
I will be glad and rejoice in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High (Psalm 9:1-2, NKJV).

CHAPTER 7

The Testimony of Shahbaz¹²

-A Shiite Muslim from Tehran, Iran

Shahbaz was a special child. From an early age, his family called him “haji boy” because he often spoke about God and was interested in spiritual matters. He remembers when he was four years old, going outside his house in his hometown of Tehran, Iran, and watching the snowflakes come down. This young Iranian boy was very curious, and asked himself, “Who is this God who made the snow?” He wanted to know Him better. Who is God? What does He look like?

Early Encounters with Jesus

Shahbaz had several encounters with Jesus during his childhood and young adulthood that eventually led him to accept Jesus as the true Messiah, the Son of God. His first encounter with Jesus occurred when he was seven years old. It happened by the Caspian Sea where his father owned a summer villa. One time, in the middle of the year, his family was at their villa watching an old Hollywood movie called *The Robe*. It is a 1950s film about the soldiers who crucified Jesus. The movie had been dubbed into Farsi, their mother tongue, so they could all understand it. Toward the end of the movie, one of the soldiers pointed to Jesus and said, “This Man has died for the world!” Shahbaz was only seven years old, listening attentively to the testimony of this Roman soldier, and he said to himself, “What a beautiful prophet! Why would a prophet like Jesus die for the world? How could He be such a wonderful man that He would die for the world?” He didn’t know what the world had done that Jesus would come and die for it, but Shahbaz fell in love with Jesus. He was the most precious person in the little boy’s mind at that moment. Shahbaz became oblivious to his surroundings, closed his eyes, and imagined meeting with Jesus in a beautiful garden. Jesus appeared as a beautiful fatherly character that came and met with him. If the film producers had made an invitation for people to accept Jesus as their Savior, Shahbaz probably would have responded.

When he was nine years old, Shahbaz felt the desire to stand up some day and preach for Allah, not in a mosque, but on the street corners. He didn’t realize that one day he would be speaking for God but in a different context. God had given him the desire to speak for Him even as a child.

On the Move

Shahbaz's father was a wealthy businessman in Iran, and when Shahbaz was eleven years old, his parents decided to buy a house in New Hampshire, and move their whole family to the United States of America. It was an exciting experience for Shahbaz and his twin brother Shahin. They loved the yellow school buses and the Twinkie doughnuts! But the excitement didn't last long. At the end of one year, their mother became homesick. She didn't speak English and wanted to go back home to Iran.

Attending a Christian School

Since Shahbaz and his twin brother had learned English in the United States, their parents decided to send them to an American school north of Tehran when they returned to Iran. They even had a yellow school bus that had been shipped all the way from America so the students could ride to school! One beautiful August morning, they drove to the school and Shahbaz's mother went inside to talk to the administrators. The twins waited in the car. After some time, their mother returned. She looked so disappointed—the school was full. They had no space for more students. The administrator told their mother about another English-speaking school about 15 minutes away. He remembered the first time he saw the school sign: Adventist School. He thought to himself, “What is an Adventist School?” He had never heard of such a thing! It was a boys' school and there was room for more students, so their mother enrolled the twins at the Adventist School.

They soon discovered this was a Christian school, but 80% of the students were Muslims. The Christian teachers at the school were careful not to offend any of the Muslim students. However, there was one person at the school who was very bold—the school principal. One day, when Shahbaz's teacher was sick, the principal came to their classroom, asked the students to stand up, and then instructed them to follow him. He led the students to the School chapel. Shahbaz had never been in a Christian chapel before. When he went inside, he was really amazed by the sight that caught his eyes: seats that could hold eight or ten people! He had always thought chairs were private things. He had never seen a church pew before!

Then the principal began to preach. This was the very first Christian sermon Shahbaz and his brother had ever heard. The principal talked about Jesus Christ. Shahbaz looked at his friends. They were fooling around and

weren't at all interested, but he was totally captivated by everything the principal was sharing. The principal never asked the students to accept Jesus as their Savior, but these words about Jesus made a deep impression upon Shahbaz's mind and heart.

Return to the United States of America

The Iranian revolution was underway, and things were becoming very dangerous in Iran. They had already experienced eight months of fighting, gunshots, and death. Shahbaz's two older brothers and older sister were already in America, so his parents decided that his mother would bring the twin boys back to America. Fortunately, they still had valid US visas in their passports. Two days after they left Iran, the airport in Tehran was closed.

Shahbaz was so happy to be back in the United States. He could ride the yellow school bus again! The twins attended public school in Los Angeles and then the family relocated to Concord, in northern California. By this time, Shahbaz was a little older and even though he knew about Jesus he was more committed to Islam. He would tell his Christian classmates: first step Judaism—failed; second step Christianity—failed; third step Islam—hasn't failed. That was his logic. He told his friends, "You need to become Muslims!"

First Prayer to Jesus

By the time Shahbaz was seventeen years old, his second oldest brother was sick. He had severe schizophrenia. It was about this time Shahbaz had his next encounter with Jesus Christ. His older brother did not always take his medication and then would become quite violent. It was one of those times. The family members tried to force him to take his medication but it didn't work. They begged him, but he just wouldn't listen. Shahbaz was desperate, because he knew if his brother refused to take his medication the police would come take him away, and someone at the hospital would force him to take his medication. So Shahbaz went into another room and began to pray to Allah to intervene. He prayed for fifteen to twenty minutes, but nothing happened. In his desperation, he put his head on the table, and a startling thought came to his mind: "Pray to Jesus!" Pray to Jesus? Where did that thought come from? He had never prayed to Jesus. But he was so desperate he did it! It was a simple prayer: "Jesus, make my brother take his medication." As he looked over into the other room, his brother jumped up from the couch, went into the kitchen, poured his medicine into a cup, and took it! Shahbaz said to himself, "Wow, Jesus is powerful!" Something phenomenal happened to Shahbaz that day, and he slept well with peace in his heart. He

didn't become a Christian but he was learning to trust Jesus.

Jesus Draws Near

When he was eighteen years old, his mother took his older brother back to Iran. Their father had lost everything as a result of the revolution. Shahbaz was left in a two-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek, California with his older brother, his twin Shahin and his older sister. They had grown up in an affluent home and had never needed to work before, but now the siblings had to provide for themselves. Shahbaz got a job in a fast-food restaurant, the very first job he ever had. One Friday night, his friends invited him to go to a wild party. He had never done anything like that before. He stayed out all night long. When he came home at 6:00 a.m. the next morning he felt terrible. He had broken all the rules of his family, and he felt so guilty. So he decided to pray to Allah. He prayed in a way that a Shiite Muslim would do—he bit his hand. Every time he said, “I repent,” he would bite his hand again. He did this for ten minutes until he could no longer feel pain in his hand, but he experienced no relief from his guilt. Then he began to bite his tongue for ten minutes, while asking Allah to forgive him, but still he experienced no relief. He became desperate. He didn't know what to do. So he broke down and wept for several minutes and in his mother tongue he asked God to forgive him. Suddenly, he sensed a holy presence right there in his bedroom. He could not see this Person, but Shahbaz knew He was there because the entire atmosphere of his room became thick with the presence of this Person. He experienced a mixture of peace, power, and love. It was so wonderful to be in that room but he felt like such a sinner that he ran out of the room. He did not feel worthy to be in the presence of such holiness. Shahbaz went to his bathroom, threw some water on his face, went back to his bedroom, and the presence was still there. He returned to the bathroom a second time, and when he went back to his room the presence was gone. Something supernatural had occurred. Shahbaz felt free—totally relieved from his guilt for the sins he had committed the previous night.

Searching for Help

Shahbaz wanted to get spiritual help but there were no mosques in Walnut Creek, California. He asked a few of his Christian friends if he could speak to their pastor, but nothing ever happened. Shortly after his second encounter with Jesus, all the siblings lost their jobs in one week. Then they lost their apartment and the creditors

repossessed all the furnishings: Persian carpets, silverware—everything. At first they slept in the homes of their Muslim friends, and later in their cars. They were just trying to survive. Worst of all for Shahbaz, he was searching for God but didn't know where to find Him.

One day, when Shahbaz was staying at a friend's house in San Mateo, he got a phone call from his twin brother Shahin: "Shahbaz, I met a Christian man about our age out on the street, and he told me wonderful things about Jesus. I think you need to talk to him." So Shahbaz made an appointment to meet with him the next day. His plan was simple: after the man blessed him, Shahbaz would convert him to Islam! The next afternoon, he met this Christian on North Main Street in Walnut Creek. Instead of trying to tell Shahbaz what to do, this man spent about 15 minutes sharing his testimony about Jesus and what Jesus had done for him. That morning, Shahbaz had felt like he was locked up in a concrete box with no doors and no windows, but the testimony touched his heart. Then the Christian shared with him the truth about Jesus and the plan of salvation. As Shahbaz listened, it was as if someone was breaking up the concrete box with a hammer and allowing the light of Jesus to dispel the darkness. The man asked Shahbaz a simple question: "Will you give your heart to Jesus? Will you become a Christian today?" Shahbaz responded, "What must I do?" He replied, "Pray with me." He asked Shahbaz to close his eyes, and then he read a text from the Bible and prayed a beautiful prayer.

When Shahbaz opened his eyes, the Christian reached out his hand to Shahbaz and said, "Congratulations, you are a Christian now!" He responded, "I am?" Then he looked around, and the sky looked deeper blue than ever before. The trees appeared greener than ever before. The wind on his face felt gentler than ever before, and even the ugly people looked beautiful! He was so excited. He started to run back to the café where his five Muslims friends were waiting for him and he said to them, "Guess what? I'm a Christian now!" He thought they would be happy. Instead they said, "What? Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind? You talk to this man for ten minutes and you're a Christian now?" Shahbaz didn't know what to say. He kept silent, but he knew he had experienced Christ in a living way. He knew Jesus was alive, Jesus was powerful, and Jesus was able to save a sinner out of any condition.

His sister found a one-bedroom apartment in Oakland, California, so they all moved in with her. They had no furniture, but they did have a TV and VCR. So Shahbaz spent his time watching Christian programs on television. He also started reading a Bible someone gave him, but he had no one to teach him. One evening a Muslim friend visited their apartment. Shahbaz started telling him about his experience with Jesus. He longed for his

siblings and this guest to come to know Jesus as he had come to know Him. That was his greatest desire—that everyone he met would come to know Jesus. But they all started to mock him—first their Muslim guest, and then his brothers and sister. They made fun of him. They said terrible things about Jesus and about Christians. Shahbaz didn't know what to do. He just looked out the window and began to weep. He wept for them and for himself. He didn't know how to reach them. He went into the bedroom and prayed, "Jesus, please help me. I'm trying to tell them about You. I want them to know You just as I have come to know You. Please take this pain from my heart, Lord. I cannot bear it."

Supernatural revelations

Shahbaz got up and went into the bathroom. As he stood there, he felt a blessing flow through his body. Every pain was gone, and in its place came sweet love, sweet joy, and sweet peace. Everything heavenly was given to him. He didn't know what to do. He started to weep like a little baby. He came out of the bathroom and was speechless. When his sister saw him, she said, "What's wrong with you?" But he couldn't respond. He went into the bedroom and he had a sweet rest. The Lord blessed him that night.

God also gave supernatural revelations to members of Shahbaz's family. Through dreams, the Lord told his family members, "You must do what Shahbaz has done if you are going to be in heaven." It took eight years, but eventually his twin brother Shahin became a follower of Jesus, and is serving Jesus as a pastor and evangelist. His sister also became a Christian and has started a radio program to tell people about Jesus. His older brother who hated Christ the most, and even cursed His name, is now a follower of Jesus.

Compelling Testimonies

Perhaps you are wondering what happened to his parents. His mother visited him when he was living in Sweden in 1999 and he studied the Bible with her for about three months. The following year, she visited him again after he had returned to the United States. It was not easy for her to separate from her Islamic faith. She said to her son, "How can I deny Islam? I've been in this religion all my life." But then she said, "How can I deny Christ and all He has done for you, and all my children? He has sustained you and provided for you. He has brought you to a deeper knowledge of God and of Himself. How can I deny all these things? I want to have Jesus in my heart." She

became a follower of Jesus, and even though she returned to Iran in 2001, she continues to openly witness for Christ in the marketplace. She has led five other people in Iran to know Jesus as their personal Savior.

Shahbaz had very little contact with his father through the years after he became a Christian. His father finally came to visit them in 2006. During his visit, Shahbaz was able to speak with his father about Jesus. He showed him a series of video recordings done by Shahin and himself in the Farsi language. He noticed that his father was very focused when he watched those video recordings. When he saw tears in his father's eyes, he felt compelled to give him the invitation to follow Jesus with all his heart. His father looked at him and said, "You know, if I accept Christ today, and go back to Iran, I cannot be silent. I would probably be killed. I will come back to the United States and then I will be baptized as a follower of Jesus." When he returned in December 2011, he was seriously ill with cancer. Shahbaz gave him three books, all in Farsi, including a book on the life of Jesus.¹³

One day, while he was reading about Jesus, he started to shake his head, closed the book, and began to wail. He cried like a baby. He was filled with a flood of emotions as he considered what Jesus had done for him. Some weeks later, while in the hospital, he asked Shahbaz's twin brother Shahin, "Will Jesus really forgive me for everything I have done?" He listed different sins: "Will He forgive this sin? Will He forgive that sin?" Shahin assured him that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). His father cried out, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus—don't let me go. Hold me, hold me, hold me!" Then he exclaimed, "He's holding me. I can feel His arms around me." His father felt himself wrapped in the arms of Jesus.

Shahbaz's father returned to Iran 50 days prior to his death. He couldn't take his Bible with him, but he knew Jesus would never leave him or forsake him. Often he would exclaim, "Sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus!" There is no doubt in Shahbaz's mind that his father will see His Savior Jesus face to face on that glorious day when Jesus returns in glory.¹⁴

CHAPTER 8

The Testimony of Cliff Goldstein

-A secular Jew from Miami Beach, Florida

How could a self-proclaimed “hard-core philosophical materialist” who hated Christians ever come to believe in Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life?¹⁵ Such a radical life transformation would require a miraculous intervention by God.

Cliff was raised in a secular Jewish home and educated in a post-modern secular environment. He remembers: “I grew up on Miami Beach and went to a high school where everyone was either Jewish or stoned, or both, and where I learned nothing about religion, either my own or anyone else’s. The only time I ever spoke the name of Jesus was as a curse.” Cliff was taught there is no Truth, and no overarching meta-narrative. You can have your truth, your reality, and your morality, but there is no grand story that explains reality or defines morality. Everything is relative. You yourself, your culture, your education—these are the factors that determine right and wrong for a person. There is no God’s-eye view of things to stand above and judge what is truly right and truly wrong. Each person has to decide for himself or herself.

Cliff’s Search for Truth

One day, when Cliff was twenty-one years old, he was sitting in a pizza parlor in Gainesville, Florida, reading a book by Benedict de Spinoza. The author challenged his readers to discover the answer to the question “Why am I here?” and to live life accordingly. That thought penetrated Cliff’s mind and impacted his life. “Why am I here?” There must be some reason. Truth has to exist.

As he looked at the pizza in front of him, Cliff realized that a thousand people could give a thousand different explanations as to how the pizza got there. Someone might believe the Babylonian god Marduk made the pizza. Someone else might announce aliens from Venus traveled through space in a flying saucer and put the pizza there. Some might have believed it just evolved and got there. Others, that it created itself, even. There could be a thousand views out there on the origin and meaning of the pizza, views that people would be willing to die for or even to kill for. But Cliff realized not all of those explanations could be right. In fact, all of them might be wrong. But the fact remained that somewhere out there, the explanation for the pizza did exist (even if no one knew what it

was), and that explanation was the truth about the pizza.

Suddenly Cliff realized that in the same way that there was a truth to explain the pizza, there had to be a truth that explained the cosmos, that explained human existence—and that explanation, whatever it was, would be *The Truth*. He then decided, right there in the pizza parlor, that he wanted to know that Truth if it was humanly possible. He didn't care where it took him, what it cost, or what he had to suffer.

As he walked outside the pizza parlor that night, and erratic shadows confused the night, this thought burned inside him: *If it is possible to know this truth about my origins, about my existence, then I want to know it no matter where it leads me, what it costs me, what I have to suffer, what I have to give up. If I could ever know it, I want to know it—no matter what.*

During the next few years, he searched for that Truth in many places: philosophy, Eastern religions, Marxism. “Show Your face if You have one, if You dare,” he once challenged God.

Animosity Toward Christians

There was one group Cliff hated—Christians. Even though he wasn't a religious Jew, he was bitter about all the persecution of the Jews by “Christians” in the name of Jesus. He had read about the Crusaders who entered Jerusalem, rounded up all the Jewish men, women, and children, herded them into a synagogue and burned them alive. That persecution of Jews by “Christians” had continued down through the ages: the Inquisition, pogroms in Russia, anti-Semitism in its many ugly forms. Cliff used to vent his anger on a Christian preacher named Jed Smock who came to the University of Florida campus in Gainesville, Florida. His university friends gave him the nickname “Heckle” because he would harass that Christian preacher when he tried to share his convictions about God. More than one preacher told Cliff there was no hope for his soul, that he was damned and going to go to hell.

A Passion for Writing

Cliff graduated from college in 1978 with a single goal: he wanted to be a novelist. Writing was in his genes: “If you shook my family tree, pens, pencils, typewriters, and books would clatter to the ground, followed by reams of fluttering manuscripts, magazines, and newspapers. I have generations of writers in my blood, and whatever inspired them pulses through me too.” While still a senior in college, he started working on his first novel.

All that mattered to him was writing that book. It was his obsession. “I kept writing, furiously writing, pouring all my soul into every sentence, paragraph, and page. The novel was the center of my life. Everything else was peripheral.”

Searching for Inspiration

He decided to use some of his limited savings to travel to England so he could work on his novel. He spent a few days in a Cistercian monastery on Caldey Island off the Welsh coast until the monks evicted him from the island for getting drunk. Then he hitchhiked across Wales and England, caught a boat across the Channel, and made his way to Greece in the hope of meeting a friend there. When he finally arrived in Athens, Cliff discovered his friend was thousands of miles away, visiting his hometown of Miami, Florida!

Discouraged, with nowhere to stay and not much money left, he rolled out his sleeping bag under some bushes and settled down for the night. While he was sleeping, this hard-core philosophical materialist had a dream: he booked a ticket to Israel so he could live on a Jewish collective community (kibbutz) and work on his novel.¹⁶ When he awoke the next morning, he decided to follow his dream. He went across the street to a travel agent, bought a ticket to Israel, and before long he was living on a kibbutz in Galilee. He was expected to work 30 hours a week, and the rest of the time was available for writing. Nothing else mattered. His novel was his life. “At least here there will be no Christians to harass me,” he reasoned.

Cliff had only been working on the kibbutz for one week when a group of Christians arrived from America. He was furious and started harassing them: “I started in on them immediately and yet no matter what abuse and blasphemy came out of my loud, dirty mouth, these people showed me continual kindness and love.” It got so bad the people on the kibbutz threatened to throw him out. Then another Christian arrived, but he was different from the rest. He was a Jew who believed in Jesus. Now Cliff was really mad, so he started harassing him and haranguing him, but this man was deep, and very intelligent. Cliff had grown up believing the Bible was a collection of Late Bronze Age camel herder myths. He couldn’t understand how anyone who was intelligent and educated could believe in the Bible, but his deep discussions with this Jewish Christian really made him think.

After about a year, Cliff left the kibbutz and traveled to Denmark. He spent a few days on a large commune called Christiania, but after a fight with someone who threatened him with a knife, Cliff connected with an old

friend who was deeply involved with the occult. It was obvious this man was deeply troubled. One day, when his friend was having a particularly bad day, Cliff said something to him about Jesus. “I don’t know why Jesus came to my mind because I surely didn’t believe in him,” Cliff remembers.

Crying Out for Help

Cliff eventually left Copenhagen and headed south to Paris. His life was heading downhill. He even considered jumping off the Eiffel Tower. As soon as he had that suicidal thought, another thought passed through his mind: “Hang on, because maybe this Jesus stuff is true.” Cliff remembers feeling angry with himself at that moment for even considering that thought. After all, religion was for weak people who couldn’t handle life. But in desperation Cliff looked up in the sky and said, “OK, God, if You’re there, if You exist, You have to reveal Yourself to me. Otherwise, I’m never going to believe.” He needed a miraculous intervention by God.

Cliff left Paris and went back to Israel, but they wouldn’t let him back into the kibbutz. He told some of the Christians there, “I’m open, but God has to reveal Himself to me.”

“You ask, He’ll respond,” one of the Christians told him. Someone gave him a Bible and the Christians even baptized him in the Jordan River, but he still didn’t know Jesus, or have any relationship with Him. “I was no more born again than a corpse,” Cliff recalls.

Dangerous Deceptions

Cliff had some strange sensations before he left Israel—tingling in his toes and the strange feeling of moving through a wind tunnel. Cliff remembers sitting up and thinking, “What was that?” It happened again after he returned to the United States of America. One afternoon when he laid down to take a nap, he felt the same tingling in his toes and pounding in his head. This time he decided not to resist. Suddenly, he felt himself going right out of his body and through the roof. He didn’t know what was happening but it felt real. After that experience, he decided to start studying the occult. Perhaps his spiritualist friend in Copenhagen was on to something.

The next day, Cliff went to the library to find a book on spiritualism. On his way there, he stopped at the health food store. When Cliff mentioned about his interest in the occult, an employee at the store tried to warn him about the dangers of spiritualism. He even gave Cliff a book to read: *The Great Controversy*. That book would

answer many of his questions about Truth and reality.¹⁷

Encounter With Jesus

Several days later he was sitting in his room with his fingers on the typewriter. As he mused about his precious novel, the presence of Jesus came into his room. In that instant, Cliff knew exactly who He was and he knew what He wanted: “For months the Holy Spirit had been quietly convicting me that my commitment to Christ must be total, absolute, and that my fervent, unwavering devotion toward the book needed to be directed toward God alone.”

That night, in his ramshackle room in Gainesville, Florida, Jesus said to him, “Cliff, you have been playing with Me long enough. If you want Me tonight, burn the novel.” He revealed to Cliff his novel was his god. Cliff pleaded, “Please God, let me finish the book and then I’ll give my life to you. I’ll rewrite it all to Your glory, but let me keep it.” Finally he said, “Let me just put it away for a while.” He had poured his entire life into that book—it was his life. He jumped up, burst into tears, and hurried out of the room. After running through the streets of Gainesville, he finally stopped under a street lamp. “Okay, God,” he said. “I want You and I want Truth more than I want this book. But I just don’t have it in me to burn it. If You want it burned, You’ll have to do it Yourself.”

The moment Cliff made that choice, the burden lifted. He walked back to his room, and burned his precious novel: “In an hour all that remained of two years’ work lay scattered on my front porch, smoldering like war ruins. The battle was over. I had surrendered, unconditionally.” That night, all Cliff’s occult experiences ceased. The words of the apostle John were fulfilled in Cliff’s life: “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Writing with a Mission

When Cliff burned his novel that night, he thought he might never write again—but he was fine with that. He had died completely not only to the book but to writing itself. If that is what it took, the price was cheap enough.

For about two years, he didn’t do any writing. Then one day the door opened for him to write an article, which he did. Now more than 22 books later, Cliff is still writing. But now Cliff writes with passion about a new message—the Good News about Jesus. He doesn’t live for his books anymore. Cliff lives for Jesus who rescued

Him from a meaningless life and delivered him from certain death.

EPILOGUE

The two disciples on the Emmaus Road could not keep the Good News about Jesus to themselves: “They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread” (Luke 24:33-35). Yasmin, Paul, Shahbaz, and Cliff have done the same—they have become passionate witnesses for Jesus.

I challenge you to follow their example: share with others the Truth you have embraced. Send a copy of this book to someone who is searching for meaning and purpose in life. Invite some friends to start a study group.¹⁸ Give your compelling testimony. You have Light to share.

I close with the words of Jesus to each one who has come to know Him as “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3): “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matthew 5:14).

May the Light of the world shine through you as you “declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP STUDY

CHAPTER 1: The Testimony of Yasmin Sultana

1. Where do you see the first evidence of God's leading in Yasmin's life?
2. What does it mean to pray "in the name of Jesus"? (John 14:13)
3. What experiences with prayer have convinced you that Jesus is a prayer-answering Savior?

CHAPTER 2: The Testimony of Paul Ratsara

1. What experiences in your life has God used to show you your great need of Him?
2. Some people read the Gospels and get nothing out of them. In contrast, Paul's heart was transformed as he read Matthew's inspired testimony about Jesus. What makes the difference?
3. How can you experience freedom from fear and holy boldness as a follower of Jesus?

CHAPTER 3: The Testimony of Cleopas

1. What disappointments in your life have caused you to question your faith in Jesus as Messiah?
2. What part of the Emmaus Road story impacts you most profoundly?
3. How have you handled the truth that has been revealed to you about Jesus?

CHAPTER 4: The Testimony of Moses

1. Why do you think Jesus began his Bible study with the inspired testimony of Moses?
2. What important lesson do you glean from the story of the fiery serpents in the wilderness?
(Numbers 21:4-9)
3. When did you decide to look to Jesus and live? If you have not yet made that decision, what holds you back?

CHAPTER 5: The Testimony of the Prophets

1. Many liberal scholars deny that any of the prophecies of the Old Testament point directly to Jesus

as the Messiah. What compelling evidence in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles confirms that the prophets do indeed provide compelling testimonies regarding Jesus as Messiah?

2. Which prophecy concerning Jesus as Messiah impacts you the most?
3. Who has encouraged you to believe the testimony of the Scriptures regarding Jesus as the true Messiah?

CHAPTER 6: The Testimony of the Psalmists

1. Which of the psalms is your favorite? Why?
2. What portion of Psalm 22 impacted you the most in reference to Jesus as the Messiah?
3. What are some ways you can share the truth about Jesus with others?

CHAPTER 7: The Testimony of Shahbaz

1. Why did God reveal himself to Shahbaz through dreams and supernatural manifestations?
2. Why was it such a struggle for some of Shahbaz's family members to accept Jesus as the true Messiah?
3. How does confidence in Jesus as your Messiah enable you to face death unafraid?

CHAPTER 8: The Testimony of Cliff Goldstein

1. What god has tried to take first place in your life?
2. What prejudices hindered you, or still hold you back, from fully embracing Jesus as your personal Savior?
3. What is the most important lesson you learn from Cliff's testimony for your life today?

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

² Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar when Muslims observe strict fasting from sunrise to sunset.

³ Jesus gave His disciples instruction regarding how to pray. Matthew records this teaching of Jesus, including a model for prayer often referred to as The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:6-13).

⁴ Kafir is an Arabic term used in an Islamic doctrinal sense, translated as "unbeliever," or "infidel." The term refers to a person who rejects God or who hides, denies, or covers the truth of Islam.

⁵ A perfect GPA with all As is 4.0.

⁶ Hope Sabbath School is an in-depth interactive Bible study. To learn more, go to www.hopetv.org/hopess.

⁷ "I have been crucified with Christ" is a TRILOGY Scripture song with lyrics from Galatians 2:20-21. You can download a copy of this song at iTunes or visit www.trilogyscripturesongs.com.

⁸ Liberal scholars reject any prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures as a direct reference to Jesus and regard them as purely local in their application. For example, the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 would be interpreted as purely local in application. However, the apostle Matthew would disagree with that conclusion: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')" (Matthew 1:22-23). Matthew recognized the Isaiah's Messianic prophecy as a reliable testimony of "what the Lord had said through the prophet."

⁹ The majority of the Messianic prophecies are in the writings of the prophets and the psalms.

¹⁰ You can share with me the results of your study at dmorris@radicalevidence.com.

¹¹ The Holy Bible, New King James Version, Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved.

¹² Shahbaz's family name is omitted to protect his family members still living in Iran.

¹³ For a free electronic copy of this remarkable book on the life and teachings of Jesus, write to dmorris@radicalevidence.com.

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

¹⁵ This radical claim of Jesus is recorded in John 14:6.

¹⁶ A kibbutz is a collective community in Israel. Kibbutzim began as Utopian communities based on a mixture of socialism and Zionism. There are currently more than 200 kibbutzim in Israel.

¹⁷ For a free electronic copy of this remarkable account of the cosmic struggle between good and evil, write to dmorris@radicalevidence.com.

¹⁸ A companion DVD and small group study guides are available at www.radicalevidence.com.