

## PRAISE FOR THE CHOSEN: *I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME*

“For over 70 years I have heard the redemptive stories of the Bible told without the emotion and passion that would indicate real people actually experienced these events. Who drained the life blood from the hearts of these men and women? Jerry Jenkins’s account of *The Chosen: I Have Called You by Name* is a refreshing transfusion that restores life to the people of the Bible and to its redemptive story. You will feel like you are there. You will hear the Messiah call YOU by name.”

—**Ken Davis**, award-winning author, speaker,  
and communication consultant

The only thing better than the film is the book, and the only thing better than the book is the film. Jerry B. Jenkins has taken the brilliant project of Dallas Jenkins—this look into the lives of those Jesus *chose* to be his followers, his friends, and his “family”—and gone a step (or more) deeper. Readers will be drawn as quickly into the pages as viewers were into the theatrical moments of *The Chosen* film project. I cannot say enough about both.

—**Eva Marie Everson**, president, Word Weavers International,  
and bestselling author

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The movie series brought me to tears, but Jerry’s book showed me the Jesus I wanted to know. *The Chosen: I Have Called You by Name* draws the reader into the humanity of Jesus. This story captures authentic insight into his personality. His love, humor, wisdom, and compassion are revealed for every person he encountered. Through Jesus’ interaction with the real-life characters, I too experienced the Savior who calls the lost, poor, needy, and forsaken into an authentic relationship.

—**DiAnn Mills**, Christy Award winner and director,  
Blue Ridge Mountain Christian Writers Conference

Jerry Jenkins is a master storyteller who has captured the action, drama, and emotion of *The Chosen* video series in written form. Far more than a mere synopsis of season 1, Jerry has shaped and developed the first eight episodes into a fast-paced novel. If you enjoyed the videos, you will savor the story again as Jerry brings each character to life. And if you haven’t watched the video series, this novel will make you want to start ... just as soon as you’ve finished reading the book, of course!

—**Dr. Charlie Dyer**, professor-at-large of Bible,  
host of *The Land and the Book* radio program

Writing with accuracy and immediacy, Jerry Jenkins immerses us in the greatest story ever told in a fresh and powerful way. Jenkins is a master of taking profound scenes and themes from the Bible and weaving them into captivating journeys, whether they are centered on the time of Jesus or the end times. *The Chosen: I Have Called You by Name* expands on the amazing TV series and will move readers through its unique retelling of the gospel story.

—**Travis Thrasher**, bestselling author and publishing industry veteran

To a girl who cut her teeth on Bible stories, it's no easy task to transform all-too-familiar characters into an experience that is fresh and alive. That is precisely what Jerry Jenkins has done with his newest novel, *The Chosen: I Have Called You by Name*. From the first chapter, I was enamored. And by the second and third, I started to see the Jesus I've long loved with new eyes and a more open heart. This book offers the reader more than mere diversion. It offers the possibility of true transformation.

—**Michele Cushatt**, author of *Relentless: The Unshakeable Presence of a God Who Never Leaves*

What better way to bring the gospel to life than to explore the impact Jesus had upon those with whom he came into contact. And what better encouragement for those of us today who hunger for his life-changing presence. I heartily recommend both the video and the book for any who long to experience his transforming love more deeply.

—**Bill Myers**, author of the bestselling novel *Eli*

The story of Jesus has been told and re-told, but with this beautiful novelization, Jerry Jenkins brings unique and compelling perspectives to the biblical accounts of Jesus and his followers, echoing those in the acclaimed *The Chosen* video series created by Dallas Jenkins. As someone who always thinks the book was better than the movie, I was delighted to discover a book and film series that are equally enthralling and even life-changing.

—**Deborah Raney**, author of *A Nest of Sparrows* and *A Vow to Cherish*

*The Chosen: Come and See* is Jesus in present tense. The story engages the heart and allows you to experience what people see and feel and taste. Get your feet dirty with them. It will transform *your* present tense.

—**Chris Fabry**, bestselling author of *The War Room* and the *Left Behind: The Kids* series

# The CHOSEN®

BOOK  
TWO COME AND SEE

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# JERRY B. JENKINS



**BroadStreet**  
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# Come and See

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Editors: Larry Weeden and Leilani Squires

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To Arthur Taylor,  
an example of the believer in word and deed,  
and Chaplain of the Welland Canal Mission,  
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Based on *The Chosen*, a multi-season TV show  
created and directed by Dallas Jenkins  
and written by Ryan M. Swanson,  
Dallas Jenkins, and Tyler Thompson.

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## NOTE

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*The Chosen* was created by lovers of and believers in the Bible and Jesus Christ. Our deepest desire is that you delve into the New Testament Gospels for yourself and discover Jesus.

*“Nathanael said to him,  
‘Can anything good  
come out of Nazareth?’*

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*Philip said to him,  
‘Come and see.’”*

**JOHN 1:46**

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# **Thunder**

## Chapter 1

# “...BEFORE HE KNEW ME”

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*John's home, Ephesus, AD 44*

**G**rief.

On the fifth day of sitting shiva for his brother, Big James, slain by the sword at the direction of King Herod Agrippa of Judea, John tries to distract himself from his heartache. The disciple who believes he was most favored by Jesus has dug out the scant notes he's kept since his days with the Rabbi. Spurred by this latest tragedy, he's eager to flesh them out before he and his mates risk the same fate. Fretting over getting his account just right, John has invited his friends to share their memories, those who had been with him and his brother with Jesus for three years no mortal could ever forget. The churches, the world, must know.

John has filled the main room of his unassuming home with chairs and benches. But will his mates come, especially on a night like this? They had attended Big James's funeral, of course, and sat with Jesus' mother and John the first evening.

They aren't required or expected to return a second time during the seven-day mourning period, but in truth he has asked them for more than just comfort and support this time.

Black clouds rolled in late this afternoon, and now distant flashes appear on the horizon. If his beloved compatriots don't arrive soon, they will be caught in a downpour. John cracks open the front door, and a cold wind forces him to hold it tight to keep it from banging the wall.

“Patience,” Mother Mary says, raising her shawl to cover her head. “They'll be here. You know they will. It's barely the first hour of the night.”

The radiant woman has lived with John since the crucifixion of her son so long ago. From the cross, Jesus told her, “Woman, behold, your son!” And he told John, “Behold, your mother!”

Indeed, Mary immediately became like a mother to John, and he cherishes her—and feels cherished. The years—and sorrow—have grayed her, yet he values every line in her serene face.

“Close the door,” she says, her hand gentle on his shoulder.

As he presses it shut, a gust through the window extinguishes a candle on the sill, and the rain begins.

“Oh, no,” he says.

“Don't fret,” Mary says. “These men have endured all kinds of weather ...”

“But young Mary will be with them—”

“A grown woman!” she says with a smile. “And no doubt prepared. Just make sure the fire is roaring and be ready to wash muddy feet.”

An hour later, everyone has arrived—shaken the rain from their garments, had their feet washed, and taken their turn by the fire. Regretting that he has put them through this, John is relieved and warmed. The mood is only slightly different from

what it had been the first night of shiva, but clearly his friends feel awkward, unsure what to say, how to act.

“Tonight I just want to talk,” he says, trying to put them at ease.

The mood is somber, but he must raise his voice over the crackling fire and howling wind. He sits at a table before them, his pages illuminated by candles flickering in the draft. “I’ll ask questions, take some notes.”

“About your brother?” Matthew blurts.

“He’s on my heart and mind, of course,” John says, “but no. I want to talk about Jesus. Let me start with you, Peter, if you don’t mind. Tell me about when you first met him.”

Peter smiles through a graying beard. “Long before he changed my name. Hmm. The first time? You *know* the first time, John. You were there.”

“Humor me.”

Peter sighs. “I was out on Andrew’s old sloop. I’d had a bad night.” He gazes up. “At first I didn’t even know it was him. Remember? I thought he was a Roman about to ruin my life.” He chuckles and shakes his head.

“And what happened next?”

Simon Peter recounts the whole story, how he resisted the man’s help, finally acceded to his advice, and was soon nearly capsized by a haul of fish from nowhere. He fell at Jesus’ feet and pleaded, “Depart from me! I am a sinful man.” But Jesus told him not to be afraid, but to follow him and become a fisher of men.

Next, it’s Thomas’s turn. He tells John, “It was at a moment when I thought my career and my reputation were about to be destroyed.” He can’t keep from laughing, and John finds this somehow comforting at a time reserved for grief. recording Thomas’s account of Jesus saving a wedding feast, and Thomas and Ramah’s reputation, by turning water to wine.

Nathanael says, “My first time? Philip simply said, ‘Come and see.’ And I did.” He sits staring at John. “And look, I don’t know how to describe it other than ... He knew me before he knew me.” Nathanael had sat alone in anguish under a fig tree, and the Rabbi said he’d seen him there and knew him by name.

“Me?” Andrew says, smiling. “I was standing next to John the Baptizer ...”

“Creepy John,” Simon Peter interjects, perhaps forgetting where he is and why.

“... And he walked by. I got to know him. And John freaked out. He said, ‘Behold!’”

“I’m eating a new bug,” Peter teases.

Andrew pushes him.

*Only Simon Peter,* John thinks.

Thaddeus sits before John and next to Little James. “For me, the first time—Jesus was just sitting there eating lunch with all the construction workers, cracking jokes.” The memory amuses him, then appears to grieve him.

Little James says, “I was on my way to Jerusalem.” But suddenly he breaks down. “I’m sorry. All of this is just—it’s difficult to talk about. It reminds me of how much I miss him.”

“But we have to,” John says.

“I know. I just—I talk about him to others every day. But with all of you, who knew him, it’s difficult.”

Sitting across from the younger Mary, now a mature woman herself—bearing the same docile beauty he has seen in her since her deliverance from demons—John says, “Just tell me about the first time you actually saw him.”

She smiles self-consciously. “It was in a tavern.” Mary nods. “He set his hand on mine.” She looks up quickly. “Which isn’t what it sounds like. Maybe leave that part out. People will get confused.”

“I don’t know yet what I’ll be including,” John says. “I’m just writing it all down.”

“Good,” she says, and recounts the story of the stranger who revealed himself as her creator and redeemer by knowing her name and transforming her life.

John is struck by the contrast between the Matthew who sits before him and the tax collector he had been when Jesus called him. Back then, he wore finery he could easily afford, and his youthful face was bare and smooth. Now he sports a full beard, and his clothes are as plain and ragged as the others’.

“It was the fourth morning of the third week of the month of Adar . . .” Matthew begins. “Sometime during the second hour.”

The same old Matthew. “It doesn’t have to be precise,” John says.

Matthew recoils. “Why wouldn’t it have to be precise? Mine will be precise.”

This surprises John not a bit. He is aware Matthew is working on his own record, and he can’t wait to see how it reflects the meticulously obsessive author. For now, he relishes the story of Matthew responding in wonder to the call of the Master and astounding his Roman guard by simply leaving everything to follow Jesus.

John saves Mother Mary till the end. She settles across from him, looking weary. He asks her the same question he has posed to the others.

“My answer might not make sense,” she says.

“Try me, Mother.”

“I can hardly remember a time when I didn’t know him.” She pauses and seems to study John. “There was one little kick.”

John rustles a clean sheet of papyrus from his stack and scribbles with his reed pen. “Go on.”

Mary hesitates, gazing at him. “My son, why are you doing all this? Why now?”

“Because we’re getting older, and our memories are—”

“I mean why now, during shiva?”

“Because everyone is here. I need to get their memories, so—”

“You need to mourn Big James.”

John can’t meet her eyes. “He won’t be the last of us this happens to. Who knows when I will see the others again, or if? I’m not in a hurry to write a whole book, but I do want to get the eyewitness stories now, while we’re together.”

“Isn’t Matthew going to write something?”

“He’s writing only about what he saw and what Jesus told him directly. But I was there for things that Matthew doesn’t know about. I was in Jesus’ inmost circle. He loved me.”

“He loved all of you.” She smiles. “You just feel the need to talk about it more often.”

John can’t deny that.

Wistfully, Mary says, “I prefer to treasure these things in my heart,” and John scribbles even that. “You know that if you try to write every single thing he did, the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

John looks at her in wonder. “Hmm. A disclaimer. That’s good. I’m going to say that. You see, Mother, if I do not write these things down, they will be lost to history. James would agree.”

She falls silent again. Finally, she says, “Where will you start?”

“In the beginning, naturally. I’m just not sure which beginning.”

“His birth,” she suggests.

“Earlier.”

“His ancestry?”

## THE CHOSEN: COME AND SEE

"I'm pretty sure Matthew has that covered."

"Maybe the prophecies?" she says. "The promise to Abraham?"

John nods. "I thought about starting with Abraham. But still, so much came before him."

"What was before Abraham?"

"Noah."

"And before him?"

"The garden."

"Well," she says, "you could start there."

"But I want it to be known that he was much more than what could be seen or touched. What was before the garden? 'In the beginning, the earth was formless and void ...'"

A clap of thunder makes John look out the window. Mary says, "I cannot hear that without thinking of you two." Jesus had often referred to John and his brother as the Sons of Thunder.

John shakes his head. "I cannot believe how much he put up with. Others. They will not even remember the sound of his voice. They'll be just words."

"He said they weren't just words, remember?" she says. "'Heaven and earth will pass away'—"

"But my words will never pass away."

"They're eternal," she says.

At more rumbling from the sky, Mary slowly rises. "You'll think of something." She makes her way around the table and massages his shoulders. "Take your time." She kisses the back of his head. "I'm off to bed."

And as John gazes out the window, his friends move to gather their cloaks. The weight of the day and the memory of his brother overwhelms him to speechlessness as everyone leaves. He merely embraces them and nods.

John sits back down to his sheets of papyrus, unable to stem the tide of memories. He finds himself in despised Samaria, of

“...BEFORE HE KNEW ME”

all places, years before, trailing his big brother over stony, unforgiving terrain. A thick rope around his waist, he's straining to pull a rock-laden wood pallet bearing long spikes in an attempt to break up the soil.

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## Chapter 2

# LOST

*Samaria, 13 years earlier*

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Every step proves an ordeal as John and James sweat through their tunics in the unrelenting sun. Why are they even here, tilling who-knows-whose meager plot that seems to resist their every effort? On the one hand, John feels special, having been assigned this mysterious task by Jesus himself. But on the other, he's still unable to comprehend why the Master is even in this godforsaken area—anathema to Jews for generations. Everyone had warned him, questioned him, and advised him to circle wide around it.

John marvels at his own thinking—his mind has been taken to new horizons ever since he began following the Rabbi. He shakes his head at having referred to this region as godforsaken. *It no longer is, is it?* he tells himself, given what he—what they all—believe about Jesus. The Messiah is here, and so the Divine has some purpose, even in this place. And as usual, eventually Jesus will clarify why.

But for now, John follows James, who manhandles a crudely

constructed crossbar that drags a single plow with yet another heavy stone roped to it, forcing it into the ground. And as much as he'd love to continue pondering deep thoughts—the kind Jesus spurs within him—all John can think about is where he'd rather be: anywhere but here. “I'd rather clean out the hold after a long weekend of fishing!”

“Yuck!” James says. “You'd reek for a month! I'd rather mend every hole in Abba's sails.”

John chuckles. “And probably sew your hands together in the process.” He bends to clear rocks from his path, tossing them beyond the narrow strip they've spent more than an hour tilling. “I'd rather wrestle a swordfish.”

James sets down his cumbersome tiller and tosses a few rocks away. “Just get in the water with it?”

“I meant on a hook. But I'd snatch it out of the water with my bare hand if it meant not spending a night with these people.”

“You know it has a sword on its face, right?” Big James says, and they both stoop to plant seeds.

“We lucked out, brother.” John laughs. “Planting while the others try to keep up with Rabbi in Sychar.”

“It wasn't luck,” James says, suddenly serious. “He chose us. You going two thumbs deep with those seeds?”

“Yeah, yeah, rows three handbreadths apart.” John rises. “Why do you think he did that, choosing us for this?”

James seems to study John. “Because we're good workers? And maybe he knows we don't like Samaritans?”

John considers this. “Maybe Jesus just likes us best.”

James smiles. “Yes, that must be it.”

John tries to maintain a light tone, but he's serious. “So why *do* you think he likes me best?”

“For the same reasons I like you best—you pose no threat to anyone, intellectually or physically.”

“Thank you, brother... Wait a second ...”

“What I want to know is who we are planting this for. Jesus said it would feed generations.”

“I assume travelers,” John says. “People passing through, like us.” He imitates Jesus: “Hospitality isn’t just for those with homes, John.”

This makes James smile. “Don’t quit your day job.”

“It’s too late for that.”

“Ha! Yeah, me too. Come on, let’s pick it up. I don’t want to lose this job.”

As they return to pulling and straining, John says, “I’d rather talk with Matthew for a whole minute.”

“I’d rather listen to Andrew’s jokes.”

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Thomas, his wedding vintner girlfriend Ramah, and her father, Kafni, stop at a fork in the road in rural Samaria. The three are on foot, Kafni leading a heavily laden donkey. Ramah studies the map. “Sychar is on the other side of Mount Ebal,” she says.

They debate the best route, and Thomas concludes they have to veer south, “because if we keep going westward, we’ll encounter the hostile city of Sebaste.”

Kafni says, “It’s faster to go between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal.”

“But more dangerous,” Thomas says.

“Not if we avoid the cities,” Ramah says.

Thomas smiles. “There’s no avoiding cities on a road. That’s what roads do—they connect cities.”

“You’re not taking my daughter off-road.”

“Kafni, I have given you my word that I will protect Ramah from harm.”

“Can you even protect yourself?”

Thomas sighs. How to put this? “With due respect—”

“You are walking *toward* Samaria,” the older man says, “to find a group of men you do not know.”

“And a woman,” Ramah says.

“A woman who would be with a group of men. Do not talk back to me, young lady. This is foolishness.”

Thomas gives Ramah a long look. She points to a group of Samaritan women washing clothes in a creek. “Maybe they know the way.”

“Shalom!” Thomas calls out.

Two teen boys approach. One hollers, “Hey! What are you doing talking to our mother, Jew!”

Not looking for trouble, the three move on.

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*Late the next morning*

At an inn on the main square of Sychar, Simon has news for Andrew, Little James, Mary Magdalene, and Matthew. “Thaddeus counted fifty, with more arriving every minute. Is Jesus ready?”

“He’s in the back storeroom,” Andrew says.

“He needed a moment,” Mary says.

Simon shakes his head. “But many are begging to hear more.”

“He’s been talking to people since dawn,” Little James says. “He needs a break.”

Andrew says he’ll take Jesus some water.

“I thought most people had left after the first sermon,” Mary says.

“They left to go get their families and friends,” Simon says. “And now they’re back threefold.”

Matthew sits by himself, using a stylus to maneuver beads on a small counting frame. “The population of Sychar is approximately two thousand.”

“Not including women and children,” Mary says.

“There are twelve hours of light per day at this time of year,” Matthew continues. “And he said we would stay here two days, which means over twenty-four hours, so the number of men we need to reach per hour is eight-point-three-three-three-three . . .”

“And what,” Simon says, “is point-three-three of a man, Matthew?”

“Simon!” Andrew scolds.

“There’s a crowd growing out there, and we need to know what to do.”

Mary says, “Why don’t we just tell him the situation and let him decide?”

“It’s what he’s going to do anyway,” Little James says.

“I’ll tell him,” Andrew says, heading off with a cup of water.

“How many stadia wide is the city?” Matthew says, making Simon laugh. “It will give us a rubric for how many square cubits we need to cover per hour.”

*This guy*, Simon thinks, shaking his head. “Rubrics? Cubits per hour?”

“His ministry deserves careful thought,” Matthew says.

Simon faces him, dead serious now—still battling his resentment of the man and his former occupation. “No one’s thinking about it more carefully than me.”

Andrew returns. “He’s gone.”

“What are you talking about?” Simon says.

“He’s not in his room or anywhere in the house. I checked the alley—”

LOST

“We *lost* him?”

“He’s probably not lost,” Andrew says with a glance at Little James.

“Okay, James,” Simon says, “you search the southern side. Andrew and I will search the north. Mary, tell Thaddeus to keep an eye on the crowd.”

Matthew rises. “What about me?”

Yes, Simon thinks. *What about you, who not so long ago kept fellow Jews in bondage to merciless taxes?* “Stay here,” he says. “In case he comes back.”

“I will be back soon, Matthew,” Mary says, making Simon wonder why she’s so unfailingly kind to him. “And I won’t be far,” she adds.

As she turns to leave, Matthew says, “Staying here gives me the greatest likelihood of locating Jesus first.”

She smiles. “Well, there you go.”

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## Chapter 3

# FINDING JESUS

Simon wonders how it could have come to this. Can one actually lose the Messiah? Oh, he is independent, sure, and untruffled by whatever comes his way. He will, no doubt, be found and no worse for wear, but that makes Simon no less frantic to find him. Simon and Andrew dash through the teeming Sychar market, asking everyone, “Have you seen the teacher from Galilee, the man who arrived here yesterday? He was in the square. My Master, about yav high, beard, long hair? No? The Teacher?”

Elsewhere in the square, Little James limps about. “The one called Jesus of Nazareth, has he passed this way?”

“Have you seen the teacher, Jesus?”

Simon recognizes a woman merchant who had been in the crowd the day before. “You wouldn’t happen to have seen the Teacher up this way?”

“He passed by earlier,” she says. “Is he going to be back in the town square?”

Andrew carefully chooses his words. “He’s on—an errand. Where did he go?”

She points. “Down toward that alley?”

As they hurry off, she calls after them, “I was just about to go see him again and bring my friend!”

“He’ll be there,” Simon assures her. “He’ll teach more. You won’t be disappointed.”

• • •

In the alley, Jesus lies on his back beneath a cart jacked up on rocks, tinkering with the underside. The owner, an African, peers down. Jesus presses the parts, testing their tautness. “There,” he says. “All tightened up.”

“So it *was* the axle,” the African says. “I told my brother it was the axle.”

“Sometimes all you need is a fresh set of eyes. Now hand me some pitch and it will be as good as new.”

The man gives Jesus a bucket and a brush. “You’re good at this. You should stay in town and open up a shop.”

Jesus imagines it, amused. “Should I?” He nods. “A shop.”

A beaming woman enters the alley with a couple of friends. “Rabbi!” she calls. She turns to her companions and shoos them back. “Quickly, get the others!”

Jesus recognizes Photina, the woman he met at the Well of Jacob, the first person to whom he revealed his true identity. She laughs, obviously thrilled to see him.

“That woman,” the African says, “is going to introduce you to every Samaritan in the country.”

Jesus chuckles. “I hope so.”

He smiles at her, and it’s clear she doesn’t know what to say or do. She cocks her head, claps her palms against her skirt, then wipes her face and neck. “It’s hot,” she says.



Back at the inn, Matthew sits alone, fidgeting, compelled to run his fingers up and down the elaborate tunic that reminds him of his days of plenty. Someone knocks at the gate, and he leaps to his feet. Jesus?

He hurries over and swings it open, only to find three people he doesn't recognize—a young man, a beautiful young woman, and an older man. The young man says, "Shalom."

Matthew furrows his brow. It's only polite to respond. "Shalom," he says without emotion.

The young man studies him. "I don't know you," he says.

"Maybe you're in the wrong place," Matthew says, and begins to shut the gate.

The young man pushes it back open. "Ah, we are looking for Jesus."

"Everyone is," Matthew says and closes the gate, heading back to his bench.

But from the other side of the gate, he hears Mary Magdalene. "Oh, you're here! Thomas! And Ramah, yes?"

Matthew opens the gate yet again, this time to find the young woman smiling. "Yes, Mary?" she says.

"Good memory," Mary says, embracing Ramah. "It's so good to have you!"

"It's good to see you again, Mary," Thomas says, bowing.

Kafni clears his throat.

"This is Ramah's father, Kafni."

Mary smiles at him, but he ignores her and enters the inn.

Thomas mouths, "I'm sorry."

Kafni seems to examine the place, eyeballing Matthew but not greeting him. When they're all inside, Ramah says, "Where is everyone?"

"They're out looking for Jesus," Mary says.

“Is he lost?” Thomas says.

“He’s never lost,” she says. “He probably just needed a moment. The townspeople have been clamoring to see him. He’s been changing many hearts.”

“I know how that works,” Thomas says. “So, your friend here wasn’t just being rude.”

Mary introduces them. Matthew says, “You approached a strange home, and when the occupant answered, you said, ‘I don’t know you.’ Isn’t *that* being rude?”

Thomas appears taken aback. “We had a brutal journey,” he says at last. “It wasn’t easy. And the Samaritans! Whew! I thought we’d be torn apart.”

“Samaritans and Jews are historical enemies,” Matthew says.

“I’m aware,” Thomas says evenly. “We knew the journey would be fraught, but it’s like Jesus is actively making it difficult to follow him.”

“I’d have come,” Kafni says, “just because of his saving the reputation of my vineyard—and your careers. Not that you care about that.”

Thomas addresses Matthew and Mary. “I’m glad we found you at least. But why aren’t you—”

“Out looking for him?” Matthew says. “I stayed. It’s likely he’ll return to the last place he was seen.”

“—a little farther from the city is what I was going to say. But what do you base that on, this returning to the last place he was seen? Isn’t it most likely that he’s gone on to his next appointment?”

“He does not keep a schedule.”

“Oh!” Thomas says. “Perhaps I can be useful as an organizer then. I’m good with figures, times.” He glances at Ramah, who nods. “Precision is my specialty.”

Matthew is about to counter with his own credentials

when Big James and John arrive, filthy head to toe and sweating through their clothes. “Ah, you made it!” James says, shaking hands with Thomas.

“Good to see you again,” John says, also shaking hands.

Thomas recoils and stares at his hand.

“Oh, sorry,” John says. “It’s been a long day.”

“We were working,” Big James says.

• • •

By now Jesus has returned to the square where he is surrounded by a crowd. Some sit on stairs, others mill about on catwalks above. From a small, shaded booth high overhead, Photina’s fifth husband, Nedim—the one she tried to divorce so she could marry yet a new lover, before Jesus met her at the well—watches and listens.

“We know,” Jesus is saying, “that God pursues the sick more than the healthy. Think of it this way—are there any shepherders in the crowd?”

A longhaired young man bearing a tall staff says, “I am.”

“Ah!” Jesus says. “We are honored you are here. I have a very warm place in my heart for shepherds.”

Little James limps into view, smiling. Across the square, Simon and Andrew arrive, breathless, with Thaddeus. Simon is greatly relieved.

“Who is tending your flock now?” Jesus asks the young shepherd.

“My brother. We’re taking turns.”

“How many sheep?”

“One hundred, Teacher.”

“Say one of them goes astray. What would you do?”

“I’d go look for it, of course.”

“Of course! But what about the other ninety-nine?”

“I’d have to leave them behind. I can’t lose the one sheep.”

“Hmm. And if you find it?”

The young man beams. “I’d lay it over my shoulders and bring it home. And I would probably do a little dance!”

Jesus laughs. “And what would you say to your friends—who have been worried for you?”

“I would tell them to rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!”

Jesus turns back to the rest of the crowd. “Do you see what he just said there? He rejoices more for one sheep than over the ninety-nine who never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father that one of these should perish. In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Simon is fascinated by the rapt attention of the crowd. Andrew whispers, “Look at them ...”

Simon says, “You couldn’t tell Jew from Samaritan, the way they’re listening.”

• • •

As dusk slowly settles in the outskirts of Samaria, Melech, the owner of the gravelly field Big James and John spent the day tilling, tells his wife and seven-year-old daughter he must try to exercise his badly broken leg. “Where will you go?” his wife asks.

“I’ll just walk the property, Chedva,” he tells her, setting out from their ramshackle farmhouse on his homemade crutch.

“Are you sure you can make it, Father?”

“I’ll be fine, Rebecca. I’ll take it slow.”

Overcome by the shame of his poverty and now his inability to do anything about it, Melech hobbles a half step at a time, his leg wrapped ankle to thigh in a makeshift wood and leather

splint he and his wife fashioned. Feeling helpless and worthless, he wonders if this is what the end feels like. He can't imagine what Chedva will do for meals the next day, let alone after that. Surely their paltry supper has depleted her stores of flour and other essentials. *They would be better off without me.*

But what's this? In the waning light he doesn't trust his eyes. The last bare patch of ground with even a hope of growing anything looks nothing like it had the day before, when he wondered if he had a prayer of hiring someone to work it—unable to pay them unless and until it produced a crop. Melech squints and shambles closer.

He cannot make sense of it! What had been a sketchy strip of unyielding dry dirt now stretches out before him, rich in moist, black soil someone has expertly furrowed. He forces himself closer yet. If he is not mistaken, the ground—now appearing fertile—has also actually been planted! Who would do such a thing?

He glances heavenward. *What did I do to deserve this? Nothing! Less than nothing!* And tears roll. Dare he say anything to his wife and daughter? No. What if it turns out to have been a cruel dream?

• • •

### *The inn at Sychar*

Thomas, Ramah, and her father sit in awkward silence, sipping water at a table in the anteroom when Jesus and several disciples enter, fresh from the long day of preaching. They're exulting over all they've seen. Thaddeus is saying, "Did you see the woman and her little girl though?"

"I know Simon did," Little James says.

Simon shrugs. "I always get emotional."

"I know," Andrew says. "You think you won't, and then—"

The three at the table rise, and Thomas calls out, "Shalom!"

“Hey, you came through!” Simon says. “You made it.”

“Of course he did,” Jesus says, smiling, rushing to embrace Thomas. “It’s good to see you.”

“You too, Rabbi. You remember Ramah?”

“How could I forget? So you will be joining us also?”

She hesitates. “Well, Rabbi, this is my father, Kafni.”

“Oh, yes, the owner of the vineyard that produced such fine wine for my friends! Shalom.”

Kafni clearly struggles to remain cordial. “Very kind of you to say.”

“I imagine you’ll want to speak to me, yes?”

“If you have some time, I would like to ask you some questions.”

“You wouldn’t be a good father if you didn’t. Here’s what I’d like to propose, if you approve. We’ve both had very long days, yes? This establishment has rooms available for you. So, why don’t we get some rest, and tomorrow morning we’ll talk about everything. Sound good?”

“I-I’m—I suppose we could.”

“It’s a plan,” Jesus says. “Thank you.” He places a hand on Kafni’s shoulder, and the man stiffens. “We’re delighted that you are with us. Now if you’ll all excuse me for a moment, I must go speak with a couple of men who performed a truly remarkable act of service today.”

Simon steps forward. “Let us escort you, Rabbi.”

Jesus appears to stifle a smile. “If you like.” He steps through a curtain to the kitchen, Simon, Andrew, Little James, and Thaddeus behind him. There he finds John and Big James at a table full of food, still sweaty and filthy, stuffing their mouths. They look up with alarm. “We’ve arrived,” Jesus announces.

“What happened?” Big James manages, mouth full.

THE CHOSEN: COME AND SEE

“I was just telling everybody that work you boys did today, how remarkable it was. You must be famished.”

“Uh, yes, um,” John says, clearly embarrassed. “We were hungry.”

Jesus chuckles. “Eat. Restore your strength. And when you’re done, please describe the work to the others. I hope everyone takes note of what John and Big James did here. Good night, friends.”

On his way out past the other disciples, Jesus claps Simon on the shoulder. Simon steals a glance at Andrew and sighs. These guys have been singled out again. The brothers raise their cups and affect looks of humble pride, as if to tell Simon, “That’s right. Did you hear that?”

The last thing Simon wants is to hear all about it. The truth is, he knows he’ll likely never hear the end of it.

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## Chapter 4

# THE ERRAND

*Sychar, the next morning*

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Jesus has given John and Big James another assignment, instructing them to take the entire rest of his entourage along. Simon, none too pleased to be in the dark—and frankly miffed that he’s not in charge—finds himself among the gaggle of disciples. They follow the brothers up and down stone city steps, through alleyways, and into narrow streets.

“Where are we going?” Matthew asks Andrew.

“I don’t know any more than you. Jesus gave them an errand and said to come with. I don’t get it either.”

“They described moving stones and digging. Are they leaders now?”

“I don’t know,” Andrew says with a smile. “Didn’t sound all that much harder than fishing, but ...”

“I have never performed hard labor,” Matthew announces.

Andrew stares at him, appearing unable to imagine it. “Guess you’ll just have to tag along like the rest of us.”

Simon tells Thomas, “The list of things he might do is long.