

*On the*  
**WINGS**  
*of*  
**HEAVEN**

*A True Story*  
from a Messenger of Love

From the Best-selling Co-author of  
*The Messengers*

**G.W. Hardin with Joseph Crane**



*On the*  
*Wings of Heaven*

by G.W. Hardin  
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This is a true story. Some names have been changed at the request of the individual. In Parts II and IV, exact wording from the angel was used.

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To all the sevens, now and to come. May they  
continue to live in their giftedness.

—Joseph Crane

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## *Acknowledgments*

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*I*t was intended from the beginning that this true story come forth by the hands of the many and not the few. Special thanks is given to Doug Oliver, Janet Hardin, Joanne Macko, Sue Diehl, Susi Henderson, and Gary LaCroix, who asked little or nothing for their generous support.

As the sevens continue to quietly fan out with the messages given to us by Heaven, they all must be acknowledged for their sincere tolerance, openness, and compassion to all they come in contact with, for they carry no banner for a new religion or another movement. Their only cause is to bless the hearts of others as they live out their own giftedness. When all is said and done, their lives are an echo of Michael's parting words: Teach only love.





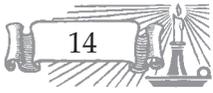
## THE VISITATIONS



## TEACH ONLY LOVE

Once you reach into the unknown, you find yourself reaching for a cup of moonlight. You may think you are sipping the milk of heaven when, in reality, your cup is filled with moonshine. One sip of the unknown, and you know your world is about to change forever. Either it will fill your soul with magic or it will steal your senses. You take your chances. Who of us would dare to do what Joseph Crane did? Some will say he should never have taken that sip. Others will lounge under shaded trees with parched throats, licking their lips for just one drop from Joe's cup. But be careful what you ask of him, for Joe is a generous man. He just might share his cup with you. Before you decide to drink of moonlight, perhaps you ought to ask who filled this cup. Then decide whether Joe's soul is filled with moonlight or moonshine. Has he been touched by heaven, or has he simply lost his senses?

"Joe," the voice called out. Even with the TV going, he could hear it plainly. It was a man's voice. It sounded as if it were coming from inside the house. But there was no one else in the house. "Joe," the voice summoned again. Joe looked down at his dog, Hawg, who was also searching for the source of the sound, his big mastiff head whipping back and forth, the wet nose searching for additional clues. *Must be someone outside playing a trick on me*



*or something*, Joe growled to himself. Abandoning the movie, he bounded down the stairs and whipped open the front door, hoping to surprise the culprit. Nothing but empty night air. The stars twinkled humorously at him as his ears strained to catch a hint of footsteps. Nothing. No one. Just the regular neighborhood sounds. The hair rose on the back of his neck.

*Why is this happening again?* he asked himself. It had been years since the Voice last intruded. Then, like now, it had unexpectedly called him, never to divulge its source. It would be too easy to chalk it up to imagination, but this time Hawg—who had been named after Joe’s beloved Harley Davidson—had heard the calling as well. With stonelike deliberation, Joe eased the door shut. Stuffing his calloused hands into his jeans pockets, he marched up the stairs with Hawg at his heels. As he slumped into the couch, he ran his fingers through his shoulder-length blond hair, then through Hawg’s and let out a sigh. His eyes returned to the movie but his mind drifted elsewhere.

The first time he had felt this sense of eeriness was years ago in the belly of the USS Forrester, on July 19, 1967. The hour: 10:52 a.m. Joe was sleeping soundly after a long night’s work on the decks of the aircraft carrier. Rumors had spread that the North Vietnamese were preparing an assault into the South. If Navy jets were needed for action, all had to be ready. The night was spent loading, unloading, cleaning, and storing while they cruised the waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. Joe finally dove into his pillow at six that morning. It had been a rough night of work. Only twenty-one, Joe was a man of action who put into practice the ideals he believed. He had joined the Navy to help out his country.

“General quarters! General quarters! Fire, fire, fire on the flight deck aft. This is not a drill,” blurted the ship’s speakers. The blaring sirens invaded his dream with such force, Joe could not find the dividing line between dream and reality. An explosion catapulted him from his bunk onto the steel floor. His back felt the cold metal. *What the hell is going on?* he asked himself. Were they being bombed? Thundering echoes filled the carrier. Voices yelled, feet pounded. This was no dream—the carrier was on fire. As Joe sat upright to get his bearings, an eerie feeling swept through him. He realized he was gazing up at flaming fuel falling through the upper decks. A hole the size of a truck had filled the compartment behind him with black smoke. His mind raced, *It must be an attack*. Another explosion erupted, shaking the giant ship with shivers. The explosions continued. Joe knew they were in trouble. Like a man discovered in another man’s bed, he jumped into his bell bottoms.

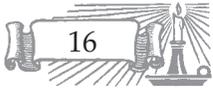


Quickly, he slid his hand under the mattress, where he always hid his shoes just in case of moments like this. Seizing them in the growing darkness, he slipped them on as if they were loafers. More bombs exploded, sending fingers of smoke deeper into the heart of the ship. Joe was getting real scared now. Like a dark hand plunging into the flesh of a wounded whale, the choking grasp of blazing blackness reached closer and closer, now nine decks deep. *There is no way out!* he thought to himself. Panic crept up his spine as clouds of smoke crept downward, blinding him. Squatting down to the floor to find breathable air, Joe swore to himself, *If this ship is going down, it's going down without me.* He looked for some kind of escape.

“Out!” yelled a voice. “Come this way if you want to live. Everybody out!” Joe didn’t need a second invitation. He moved toward the voice even though he didn’t recognize it. Others crawled, ran, or duck-walked toward the promise of freedom. The line of men snaked down a passageway until stopped by a closed hatch. Joe was certain they had correctly followed the voice but nothing was here but a dead end. Water now poured down from above. In the choke of fumes and fire, Joe squatted silently with the rest of the men. He had only one thought on his mind: *Wish I had a cigarette.*

The thought almost made him laugh out loud. *How odd*, he mused to himself, *that I'm not afraid.* The truth was he *wasn't* afraid. Maybe because of the voice that had led them into the passageway. Some of the men stared blankly like lab rats trapped in a maze, dead-ended by the closed hatch. Fear was filling the air. The feeling of a strange presence came over Joe, a sense they weren’t alone in this, that something, *some thing* was protecting him. How he knew this, he had no idea.

At that moment, the hatch opened from the other side. Some guy yelled, “Down this way! Is everybody out?” Joe confirmed that all were out. He had been one of two men to check. The escape led to what is called the mess deck. Everyone was handed five-gallon cans of Fog Foam fire retardant. As the retardant was spread, Joe could hear men nearby crying out in pain. The mess deck led to the hospital area, and the closer they got, the louder the screaming. Among the wounded was one of Joe’s buddies from the mess deck, who worked in the scullery. It didn’t take a surgeon to tell he was hurting real bad. With concerned eyes, Joe tried to think of what to say. This was a guy who always had a good attitude—nice to everyone. His eyes looked up to Joe’s, imploring him to say he was going to make it.



“Nahhhh, ain’t that bad,” Joe assured with as much believability as possible. He had been trained to give encouragement to keep those wounded from going into shock. But the effort proved useless as Joe watched his crewmate die in front of him. He bent over and looked into his glassy eyes. It was obvious that what had been in his friend’s body before was no longer there. But Joe saw more than one man’s death. Strangely enough, he could see the whole of humanity in that moment. And what he saw told him that there was more to humans than ceasing to live in a body. In that moment, Joe knew that humanity, as a lifeform, was infinite. Death wasn’t an end.

“Move along, move along!” commanded one of the crewmen. All hustled up a ladder. A life vest was shoved into Joe’s gut. “Put it on. Don’t inflate it.” Climbing up to the flight deck, Joe could barely fathom the scope of the damage as billows of smoke poured out of the guts of the aircraft carrier, twirling upward to a magnificent sky.

For two days the men of the Forrestal battled the fire, saving their ship and saving their own lives. When it was over, 164 crewmates had been killed. And not by the hands of the North Vietnamese. One of the jets taking off from the carrier deck had accidentally launched one of its missiles, hitting the fuel pod of the plane in front of it, already in flight. One of the bombs of the damaged plane exploded, tearing up the deck of the aircraft carrier, igniting more bombs. Nine decks had been ripped apart by the series of explosions. The tragedy of the fiasco shocked the entire crew for weeks afterwards. But all Joe could think of was the Presence that had been with him. He had felt it. Almost heard it tell him he would be fine. For him it had been a day staring into the heart of eternity through the eyes of his dying buddy. Yet death seemed so remote in the calming Presence that had sheltered him. As hard as the rescued men had tried, no one on Joe’s deck ever found out who had called them from the inferno.



Now, like then, he wondered about the Voice calling out to him—the great sense of otherworldliness about it. Since the war, Joe had heard the Voice call him more than once. And each time, no source could be found. But this time, he knew it wasn’t his imagination. There was no mistaking that Hawg had heard it also. *What can it possibly mean?* he asked himself. *Why is this happening?* He would have to wait two years to learn the answer.



While attending a seminar on spiritual awakening in Washington state, on Orcas Island, Joe unexpectedly confronted a concept he had not considered. The classes he signed up for were taught by his spiritual mentor, Alexander Everett. Alexander and Joe connected from the first day they met, and Alexander had given Joe a place on which to hang his hatful of spiritual questions. During one of the classes, Alexander presented an idea to the attendees, which Joe felt was being directed specifically toward him. “All of us are called to a place of awakening,” Alexander offered, pacing slowly in front of the class. “Sometimes that calling is within, but sometimes that call is heard in other ways: a voice calling out your name.” The hair on Joe’s neck bristled, his ears spreading like microwave antennae waiting for the next signal. “Most people are afraid to answer,” Alexander continued before the group, “while others pretend it never happened.”

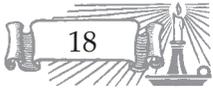
*That does it, Joe thought, I’ve got to talk to Alexander.* His thoughts reeled back to the times the Voice had spoken to him, each detail surrounding each event clinging to his memory like jigsaw puzzle pieces. After the lecture, Joe cornered Alexander. “There’s something I’ve got to talk to you about,” his voice serious, not knowing how much to tell, how much not to tell.

“Let’s meet later this evening, Joe.” Alexander could tell this would need time and an attentive ear. “How about over dinner?”

Barely able to contain himself, Joe patiently agreed. That night Joe revealed to Alexander what he had told no one else. His spiritual mentor listened closely for clues, knowing that such events always left some hint of how to respond. When Joe was done, he folded his hands and looked into his friend’s eyes. “Joe, are you familiar with the story of Samuel?”

“Well, I’ve heard of it but don’t remember the particulars.”

“Samuel was in the spiritual tutoring of a master named Eli,” Alexander started. “One night Samuel went to bed, and just before dawn he heard a voice call ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Not unlike the voice you heard calling out your name. So, Samuel got up, went to his master, Eli, and asked him what he wanted. And Eli told him, ‘I didn’t call you. Go back to bed.’ Samuel did so, but again he heard, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Off to Eli he trots again, only to be told, ‘I didn’t call you! Go back to bed.’” Joe loved the way Alexander told stories. His body barely moved, he was all voice. “For the third time he heard, ‘Samuel. Samuel!’ and went to Eli one more time. ‘Here I am, for you called me,’ he told his master one more time. Eli realized that the Lord must be the one calling Samuel. Eli instructed him to go back to bed and told him,



if he was called again, to say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.' Samuel did what he was told and the Lord spoke to him.

"So, Joe," Alexander said, "the next time you hear your name called, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears,' and see what happens. God just may have something to say to you."

Joe's thoughts pounded against his head. *Oh, sure. With all the people in the world to talk to, God is going to talk to me?* he argued with himself. Once again, memories of past events, when the Voice had called him, played in his mind. He recollected the times over past years where he thought roommates were calling him. Like Samuel, he had gone to them to ask what they had wanted. And each time they had looked at him as if he were crazy or hearing things. *Why me?* Joe asked himself for the umpteenth time. *What would God want with me? I really hope it's not that I am supposed to do something. Maybe I'm just hearing things, or maybe I am going crazy.* But Alexander's advice had always proven wise on past occasions. Why not this one as well?

Three more years would pass before Alexander's advice paid off. By this time, Joe had married, bought a house, left his corporate job, started his own home-renovation business. He now possessed four loving mastiffs to replace Hawg. Mastiffs are rather like St. Bernards in Great Dane skin. He had everything he had ever dreamt of. And this particular night, in his own house, with his new wife sleeping next to him, and his dogs snoring close by, was a night of perfect harmony.

Outside was a beautiful California night. The stars could be seen in spite of the smog from the Bay Area. The air felt balmy although Christmas was just around the corner. Filled with a sense of contentment, Joe nestled into bed with the Bible in hand while his adorable wife slept. Many years had passed since Joe had even owned a Bible. He was not a member of any religion and didn't go to church. But it was Christmastime, and reading from the Good Book seemed appropriate. Part of his reading ritual was to review what he had read the previous night, especially if it hadn't made sense. The previous night had provided a particularly difficult passage, and Joe had prayed to God to help him understand the real message.

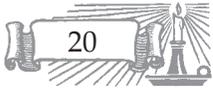
Around midnight he closed the Bible and set it on his nightstand. Looking over at Donna, his mind let forth a hymn of praise. *What a beautiful woman I married.* He gazed down at the foot of the bed at two of the mastiffs fast asleep, one snoring away like a baritone warming up for a song. The other dogs lay on the floor. If the bed were any larger, all four critters would

certainly be resting with Joe and Donna. For Joe loved his animals almost as much as he loved his wife. “Whatever have I done to be so blessed with such a lovely family?” he whispered to himself. A sigh of peace sang from him in harmony with the dogs. He reached over to turn off the light and bestowed a kiss on Donna as the light went out. Laying his head softly on his pillow, Joe settled in, pulling the covers over his shoulders. The warmth of the waterbed nestled him, relaxing him as he drifted off to sleep, all thoughts gone, the world fading away.

“Joe!” the Voice said. His eyes blinked open automatically. Like before, every hair on his body stood at attention. “Joe,” the Voice called again. This time Joe raised himself up on one elbow, his thoughts swimming, the waterbed gurgling against his swift movement. *What am I going to do?* he thought. His conversation with Alexander echoed in his brain. Questions flooded in. *Why would God be wanting to talk to me? Maybe I am going crazy.* Joe took a deep breath. OK, he thought, *Let’s go for it. What’s the worst that could happen? I might feel like a fool, and then I’ll go to sleep and forget all about it by morning.* The words came out like a student reciting the Gettysburg address: “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.”

There. He’d done it. He looked around the bedroom. No reply. No sound but the breathing of the dogs. Joe was just about to roll back over and grab his pillow when he noticed a pinpoint of light in the doorway. His eyes squinted as it began to sparkle like a piece of glitter on black velvet. Was he seeing things, or was it there? The sparkle intensified as if the glitter were being hit by a laser beam of white light. Then it began to enlarge, spreading slowly in a growing circle of light. *Oh boy,* Joe thought, *I’m in big trouble now. Why did I ever start this?*

The light began to fill the doorway with a bright, yet soft, blue-white color that spilled onto the walls, illuminating the bedroom. *If this is a dream,* he thought, *then the dogs are having it too. Each one has its head up looking in the same direction I am.* Somehow, having 700 pounds of dog flesh in the same room lent a kind of security, especially since none of them was growling or barking. Each seemed quite peaceful with the expanding circle of light that had now taken over the entire doorway. *If the dogs aren’t afraid, then neither am I,* Joe tried to convince himself. *Not much, anyway. Maybe if I just sit still, whatever it is won’t see me.* He sat staring at the increasing brilliance taking over the room. *Better yet,* he thought, looking over to Donna who was snoozing away, *if I just pull the covers over my head, it won’t find me and will go away.* The truth



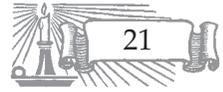
of the matter was that Joe couldn't move. He was mesmerized by the blue-white light which was beginning to reveal some kind of figure behind it. Looking down at the dogs to see if they were going to save him from whatever was invading his bedroom, he quickly concluded they were not. Each pooch was either sitting politely, as if waiting for a bone, or lying comfortably staring at the spectacle before them.

Joe looked into the light again, his mouth hanging open as the figure hidden by the brilliance now moved forward from far back in the light. It was incomprehensible how the outline in the light seemed to be walking yet simultaneously materializing in front of the doorway. At first, the eyes were all that Joe could make out. They were blue, like no other blue he'd seen in his life. It was as if sky, river, and ocean had combined to form the eyes. They exuded the most wonderful kindness and gentleness. Their stare filled Joe with a great sense of peace, not unlike the Presence had done years ago on the USS Forrestal. As the outline began to take the shape of a man, Joe could more clearly see the details of platinum blond hair and alabaster skin. A long, white robe draped the fully materialized seven-foot man who was now smiling at Joe.

The voice was masculine, with feminine softness. "Put down your books, for they hold no truth for you," it said. Odd, Joe thought, that something so beautiful would appear as a male. "As the sands of the desert have been moved to suit the winds of time, so has the light been darkened by man's ink on these pages."

*What is this being talking about?* Joe wondered. He decided to listen fully. As if able to read Joe's mind, the being continued, "This you must do, or you will not be called upon again. Teach this, which the Lord God has charged me to give you. For it is the Last Baptism of God's children. Have those you teach, in turn teach others, for they are well-meaning in their houses of God. You are not a Christ or even a prophet, but a servant of God—who will put words in your mouth—and God's children will hear and understand.

"Take a jug of wine before sunrise and pour it into a bowl. Set this bowl in the sun's path so the light will warm it. Fast and be still until the sun is at its highest place in the sky. At this time, go to where the bowl has been laid on the ground and remove your shoes—for you stand on holy ground. Sit and wash your feet, from your toes to your knees, so that you may stand and walk the earth. Wash your hands from the tips of your fingers to the elbow, so you may do God's work. When this is done, kneel and say 'My loving



Father, your child has come home to your counsel. Guide me in all things that I must do.' Then take up the bowl of wine and pour it on the ground. As your Mother Earth drinks the unclean liquid, all that is unclean within you—her brothers and sisters—is absolved, just as the blood of God's Son was said to do. Go now, be at peace and take care of that which I have given you. Teach only love. After you do this, we will speak again."

With that, the man stepped back into the light and began to become one with its brilliance, fading from Joe's view. The light then shrank back to a single point of bright light and disappeared as Joe, along with the dogs, stared in utter disbelief. Finally, shaking his head, he bounded out of bed to retrieve paper and pencil in the dining room, sat down and scribbled every word he had just been told. Joe waited two days before finally telling Donna what had happened in the confines of their bedroom while she had slept.

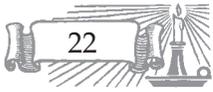
She stared at her husband. Never was there a more down-to-earth person than Joe. It was impossible for him to make up something like this. "What are you going to do?" she asked, not knowing what else to say.

"I don't know," Joe said back, looking deep into her eyes to see if she believed him. His heart melted with relief as he saw her concern staring back at him. She believed him. "It's not every day that an angel comes to me and tells me something this profound. Let alone wants me to do and teach this Last Baptism thing." Indeed, the whole idea seemed preposterous. *Why on earth would anyone want to listen to me?* he asked himself. *It is a good thing the churches don't burn people at the stake anymore. At least, I don't think they do.*

The next day, Joe called Alexander to tell him what had taken place. He felt that Alexander was one of the most spiritual people he had ever known. From the first moment they met at an Inward Bound class, Joe knew him to be a spiritual master. Over the years, their friendship had blossomed into trust and mutual admiration. Joe knew if there was anyone with whom he could discuss this situation, it was Alexander. He let his mentor know that he was a bit frightened by the consequences of following his suggestion to use the same phrase that Samuel had used.

"Joe, you've had a vision. It's nothing to be afraid of," Alexander said.

"But why me?" Joe countered. "It seems to me there are a lot of people in this world who have a much closer relationship with God than I do." People like Alexander had spent their entire lives teaching spiritual truths. Why didn't the angel appear to him, instead?



“Some people wait all their entire lives to have something like this happen to them, Joe. You should be grateful for having been chosen to serve in such a grand plan. Hang in there. It’s my guess that you’ll hear from this angel again.”

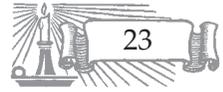
Joe let out a long sigh. “I just *knew* you were going to say that.”

“Don’t be frightened about what has happened. Be open to whatever the angel tells you to do. And let me know from time to time what is happening with this.”

Joe promised to do so, wished his friend and mentor farewell, and hung up the phone. *At least he didn’t think I was insane*, Joe said to himself. What was even more comforting was that Joe no longer wondered about his own sanity, either. Still, it was no comfort for him to think he was on some kind of mission from God. Yet, if God wanted him to do something, he figured, God was smart enough to give some kind of sign for when and how to carry out whatever he was meant to fulfill.

The next day Joe’s doorbell rang, sending the dogs into a thunder of barking. Two nicely dressed people stood at the door while Joe ordered the mastiffs to back off. The visitors wanted, with all their hearts, to tell Joe of God’s love for him. *Is this some kind of sign?* he asked himself. *If anyone wants to listen to my story of the angel, surely it would be someone whose life is so God-centered.* And, with the sincerity of a man confronted by an angel, Joe listened for a while to what his guests had to say about God. He then proceeded to tell them about what had happened a few nights earlier. Went so far as to retrieve what he had written down about the Last Baptism. Like a child giving a gift to friends, Joe hoped these wonderful people would appreciate all he was entrusting to them. They stared at the writing, then stared at Joe. By the time these nicely dressed people left, they were warning Joe that he had been visited by Satan, that his soul was in mortal danger, and that if he did not cast out this demon, he would burn in hell forever. Further, even though Joe had no children, they had exhorted him to change his ways lest his son grow up to be the Antichrist. “Just like it says in the Bible.” And, not to leave out any details as they backed away from the front door, they informed Joe that even Armageddon would be his fault if he pursued his belief in this so-called angel.

Joe was crushed. His enthusiasm for what the heavens had brought him had been trampled under foot by those claiming to walk with God. Confusion reigned in his soul as he stood there baffled at how something so beautiful



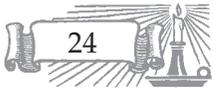
could have been made to seem so ugly. The work of the Devil? How could these, of all people, possibly see that? *What would the angel have to say about this kind of reception?* Joe wanted to know. He promised himself, the next time the angel showed up, there would be several questions he wanted answers to.

Days passed, and still Joe had not performed the baptism. There was much on his mind, much he wanted to think about before getting himself into any other surprises. The unexpected visitors had been a slap in the face. If he never had this kind of visit again, it would be too soon. But, ready or not, Joe was to receive a visitor of another kind. While lying on the sofa—watching an old movie on TV with Annie, the matriarch of the mastiffs—a kind of strangeness began to fill the air. Annie’s head, resting on Joe’s shoulder, jerked back, her torso rising up as if trying to glimpse something in the hallway. In turn, Joe looked toward the hallway, knowing her behavior meant someone, or some thing, was coming toward the living room. Thinking it must be Donna, Joe waited to greet her. But what he saw was a light moving along the wall as if someone were shining a flashlight from the back of the hallway. *It must be the angel, again,* he thought. But what emerged was a man Joe had never seen before. He took a couple of steps into the living room and stopped.

*Who the hell is this?* Joe said to himself as he stared at a perfect stranger, dressed in what appeared to be a monk’s robe. Looking around as if he owned the place, the fellow stood six feet tall—thin as a rail. Long white hair surrounded a strong, determined face filled with angry frustration. A thick, bushy set of eyebrows hung above deep brown eyes, making him look as if he were angry about something. The robe he wore hung to the floor, with baggy sleeves and a hood that draped on his shoulders. He appeared to be quite disturbed.

Looking over at Joe, the monk shook his head and walked through the dining room and into the kitchen, mumbling as he went. Joe looked down at Annie, and she back at him as if asking each other what just happened. Just as quickly as he had entered, the stranger left the kitchen and stood in the dining room, shaking his head and staring down at the floor. Then, without a word, he walked out of the dining room through the closed patio door and into the back patio. He stood there continuing to shake his head and mumble to himself.

First the angel, and now this? Joe looked down at Annie once again. “Yes, indeed,” he said to his favorite, “This boy is wrapped too tight, and



crazy as a pet coon with rabies.” Looking back towards the apparition on the patio, Joe wondered to himself, *The angel never said anything about this. Is this going to be like Dickens, where I get visited by three ghosts, or what?*

Once again, through the glass of the patio door marched the robed figure, stopping in the middle of the dining room once again. He stared straight at Joe and back down at the floor. When he raised his head to speak, Joe saw a calmness coming over him.

“You people have been told from the very beginning,” he said with a soft, slow voice, as if to make sure Joe could hear every word. “Over the centuries, you have been told in a gentle way, so have you been told in a mighty way, of God’s love for you. Do you hear it?” he asked sternly. His voice grew more forceful as he continued, not waiting for an answer. “You people have been given the wonders of the universe, including the world on which you live. Do you say, ‘Blessed are we. God loves us so much that he gives us all this?’ Do you say, ‘Brothers and sisters, we may live long to care for one another. Our happiness and well-being are great with God?’

“NO!” he said in a resounding voice. “You people would rather frighten each other with stories of an angry God that will lay to waste all who do not obey. You get pleasure from thinking of all the horrendous ways your enemies will be made to suffer. You will listen to someone expound for hours about how you are a sinner. They tell you God will forgive you only if you believe as they do. Some are so self-righteous, they believe that only *they* are worthy to enter Paradise. They carry the lie to their brothers and sisters, saying, ‘If you believe as we, you will be saved.’” Waving his arms in the air, he walked about the room, almost yelling. *He must have learned this from some of those evangelists I’ve seen on television*, Joe mused.

“When most of you pray,” the monklike figure continued, “do you ask for guidance? No. All that is asked for are things you want. ‘Oh, Heavenly Father, please make *me* worthy, make the world a better place for *me* and *mine*,’” he mimicked. “‘Help *me* teach the sinners so they may be in heaven with *me*.’ Or you try to bargain with God. ‘If you do this for *me*, I will do that for you.’ Some try to buy their way into Heaven by giving money to their church or the poor. I have seen such bribery when I walked the earth. The killing of animals and the burning of their bodies for sacrifice, or paying someone else to do it for them. Thousands of years have passed since then, and still only a few have heard. People have always sat and wondered why I rant and rave the way I do.

“It’s beyond my realm of knowing why so much time is wasted on all this pettiness. If only you truly knew of God’s love. ... You will learn. I promise, you will learn.” Then, dropping his hands to his sides, he bowed, turned, walked through glass door once again—and was gone. Joe sat stunned, staring out the door. Here was another question to add to his list. *The next time I see the angel, I think I’ll ask him who this mad monk is.*

Little did Joe know how the monk would make good on his promise. His message was intended not only for Joe’s ears but for the ears of humanity itself. What was about to unfold would cause anyone to wonder whether they were being offered a cup of moonlight or the dregs of moonshine. Who of us when offered the choice between returning to Eden or continuing as we are, would choose not to choose? Who of us would step back into the shadows and simply watch as life passed by? At one point, it seemed as if Joseph Crane would.

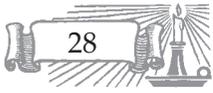




## THE NAMING

Over a month had passed, and still Joseph had not performed the baptism. It wasn't as if Joe was one of those people who kept putting things off. Quite the contrary, his entire life had been that of a doer, a pro-activist. Why, even as early as the second grade, he displayed uncanny ability to protect the underdog. Bullies from the fourth and fifth grade were picking on the littler kids in Joe's class. No one bothered Joe because he had a look about him that made bigger kids wonder whether they ought to mess with him. He talked tough, he acted tough, and no one was about to find out whether it was a bluff or the real McCoy. Funny thing about bullies. As long as they don't have to save face, they tend to avoid the threat of defeat.

There was something in Joe that smelled such cowardice. Like a pint-sized Jimmy Hoffa, he organized a union of little guys. Yep, the Don't-Mess-With-the-Little-Guys Union. With the power of persuasion he convinced all the younger kids, whether they were targeted prey or not, to rally around any kid on or off the playground who was being picked on. And Joe was their leader. Teachers began to notice the fishlike schooling effect of second-graders during recess. They thought it was cute: How nice that the kids are getting to know one another. But what was really happening was a survival of the fittest—strength in numbers. The bullies also noticed, and right away.



It took only one confrontation, resulting in a mob of munchkins surrounding a Goliath, with Joe's fist setting the example, before peace reigned in the second grade. In fact, this was a battle of fists in more than one way. One of the most vulnerable kids in the class had a deformed hand. More than anything else, he wanted to be accepted as normal, just one of the guys. But instead, he became easy pickings for any kid who wanted someone to beat up. His willingness to do anything to fit in touched young Joseph. He talked with the kid about what he had to do if he was going to be in the union, the gang. And the little guy took Joe to heart. Whatever he had to do, he would do it. The next day, Joe told all the other kids that the fella with the deformed hand was his best friend, his main man. And gradually this underdog of a kid became respected by the rest of the guys in the little-guys gang. The bullies had to go elsewhere to make trouble.

So, you see, "activism" is part of Joe's middle name. But this baptism thing was a different matter. What was he getting himself in for? An angel appearing in the middle of the night? A mad monk tromping through his dining room? Donna kept asking him if he had seen the angel yet. Of course he hadn't because he was avoiding the baptism. Then one night, she looked into his icy-blue eyes and said, "I'm setting the alarm clock tonight to wake us up before sunrise. I've placed two bowls and a bottle of wine beside the patio door. Let's do this baptism together in the morning." To be sure, Donna was not the kind of person to organize a second-grade protectionist union. But neither was she the kind of person to stand idly by when she felt the importance of a decision, especially when it involved someone she loved. Action was part of what made her a successful businesswoman, and it was part of what made her a magnificent friend and endearing wife. How was Joe going to argue with her? He knew she was doing it for his own good.

The Cranes were not real breakfast eaters. Donna's mornings were usually taken up with bustling around getting ready for work, taking care of the "kids," and heading out early for a long drive through morning rush-hour traffic. Joe normally poured coffee into his veins as his morning fix before heading out to take care of his business. Because they had to fast the next morning until the sun reached its highest point, Joe decided he'd better grab a bite before bed. As he sat there nibbling away, he started thinking, *I should have done this back in January when the days were shorter and I didn't have to be still for so long.* He smiled at himself as he thought how his waiting had done little



more than cause more waiting. *Donna knows. I've put this off for as long as I could because I don't want to find out what is next.* To be honest, Joe was a little scared.

Had not his life become his dream come true? He had a house, the kind of dogs he always wanted, a wife any man would die for. He didn't need any angel coming around messing things up. *What if the angel tells me I have to give up this lifestyle?* he asked himself between bites. *How do you tell an angel he's got to find another servant? It's taken me forty-eight years to get here, and I don't want to give it up.* Joe continued arguing with himself, *I don't think God would have given me all this just to take it away. God is going to do with me what God is going to do, whether I like it or not. Besides, if I can learn to like spinach, I can learn to like whatever God has in store for me.*

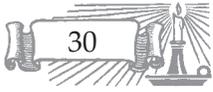
Sleep did not come easy, nor did getting out of bed. Donna braced her foot against the small of his back and gave a shove that dumped both man and dogs right off the bed in Keystone Cops fashion. "What a way to start a Saturday," Joe grumbled. Silently, the two of them donned sweat pants and shirts, and with bare feet tip-toed through the cool grass to the back corner of the yard next to the lily pond.

Night was just beginning to surrender to dawn. Joe glanced around at the one-story houses surrounding the back yard. *Good thing the fence is six feet tall. Only a nut would go out in his back yard, pour wine into a bowl, and wash his feet and hands with it. The whole thing sounds pretty lame to me.* But that's just what the two of them did. As the sun reached its zenith, Donna stood there with her hands on hips and a twinkle in her eye that said, *Go ahead, you big baby. If I can do it, so can you.*

When husband and wife were done with the washing, they recited the prayer given by the angel. Joe looked around half expecting the creature to reappear. Donna picked up the empty wine bottle and the two bowls. A distinct odor from the wine-soaked ground filled the noon air. In fact, it filled more than the air. Back in the house, Joe thought they both smelled like winos. "What now?" she asked him.

"I don't know, but I'm getting a splitting headache," Joe retorted.

Little more was said. Donna cleaned herself off, jumped into more suitable clothes, and continued her day. She kept thinking about the baptism and what it meant to her as well as what it might mean to their marriage. She loved Joe—more than anything. He was like no man she'd ever met. He was tough as nails but had a heart as tender as a rose petal. He could win a swearing contest with any sailor, but she knew he also walked with God.

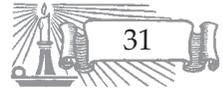


Before any angel had shown up, she knew he walked with God. Her man could lie with the lion or the lamb. But what impact would the baptism have on her own life, let alone Joe's? She had egged Joe into going through with the baptism because she believed he needed to do it. But what about her? What would happen to her for participating in this ceremony?

As Donna drove off to take care of errands, she wondered when she was going to be told what to do with her life. A voice spoke quite clearly in her mind, *What makes you think that I am going to tell you?* Tingling prickled her all over as she weaved her way through traffic, trying to decide whether the voice had been imagined or real. The more she thought about it, the more she knew what she had heard and what it meant. Within her heart lay a calm understanding telling her she would be shown what to do. There was no doubt about it. She simply knew. And Donna was not a woman who hid out in the realms of wistful wondering or played around with woulda-coulda-shouldas. She had earned a Master's of Business Administration with a minor in statistics. Boardrooms, budgeting, and computers did not intimidate her. Hers was a mind that succeeded in a workplace of men. It was unusual for her to accept at face value the answer she had heard in her mind. But accept it she did.

Two days had passed since the baptism, and no angel. Joe was sitting in the back yard contemplating the gurgling waterfall in his lily pond, when the angel materialized. Joe couldn't help but wonder why the angel had not arrived as dramatically as before, perhaps this time rising out of the water and standing in the middle of the pond. But that didn't happen. He was just there. The first words out of Joe's mouth were, "Who is the crazy man?" He was just about to add information about "God's children" coming to his front door when the angel cut him short.

"It is Isaac," the celestial said, "and he is one with God. A very long time ago he was a prophet who walked the earth. So great in understanding of God's love is he, that when he left the earth as its Teacher, God gave him leave to return. Isaac has visited many people over the centuries. Several, in your time, has he spoken to but most of them have run to their ministers saying they had seen the Devil and were frightened of him. For the unenlightened, he is truly a frightening sight to behold. Joe, I am going to speak plainly so you will have no misunderstanding. First of all, if you think every time you open your mouth all will listen and hear the words, you are as crazy as you think you are. Point taken?"



“Point well taken,” Joe responded, wondering where this was leading. “But I have a few hundred thousand questions to ask. OK?”

Before he could ask even one, the angel interrupted, “I am from the Lord God, and my name you could not pronounce if I told you.”

Joe asked anyway. And the name that issued forth was like a melody of beautiful sound. Joe tried once to speak it, but with no success. He could not even get the name out of his mouth.

“You may call me whatever name you are most comfortable with.”

After giving it a few moments of thought, Joe suggested, “How about Michael?” The angel nodded. “What is the name of the one who sent you?” Joe then asked.

With all the authority known to man, Michael said, “No one that walks the earth or breathes the air may know God’s name. For if they did, and spoke it once, they would not live long enough to finish. Many claim to, but none actually do, and this is true. If you are asked who sent you, you say, ‘I AM’ has sent me.”

Joe sat there a bit dumbfounded, wondering what to say. The first thought that came to him was to ask the angel about hell, and where it might be. Before he could even speak the words, Michael answered. “Hell was a dump outside of Jerusalem, called Gehenna, where trash was burned, and not a place for damned souls. God loves all his children and would not damn any of them. Jesus, after seeing how poor in spirit man was, said, if he could, he would cast the unenlightened into it forever. Out of this came the story of ‘If you do not follow God’s law, you will go to hell.’ Fear will make the disobedient flock of a church obey.”

*What about the Devil?* Joe thought to himself.

“Satan is someone Moses made up in the *Book of Genesis* only to explain the power of God. Man, in his great wisdom, found it useful to blame an unseen force rather than take responsibility for the things he did. Man thinks in terms of greater than or lesser than, as though there is a hierarchy, when, in fact, there is only God as everything.”

“This is all well and fine,” Joe said, “I know what you are saying, but just what does this have to do with me? I am not a member of any church. All I do is ask for guidance in God’s will for me. Am I to start a new church or religion? Because, if I am, I can tell you I am not the man for the job.”

“No one is ever the man or woman for the job. They always say that, and some will suggest someone they think is just perfect for it.”

“That’s too bad, because that was going to be my next move.”

“I know,” Michael said. “Starting another church will serve no useful purpose, and will only confuse people more than they already are. So, over the next two years, you will be told of God’s will for his children, and in this time, you will choose three women and four men to take this message out into the world. They will know you and you them. Out of the seven, three will be what you call gay.”

“Excuse me!” Joe interrupted. “Hold on there just a minute. Let me get this straight—not that I have anything against gay people—I can tell you right now the Churches are going to have a field day with this. Just in case you haven’t been keeping up on current events, the Church says that being gay is a sin, and forbids it. Do you have any idea what they are going to have to say about this? My God, Michael, it is going to be hard enough—I mean, that would be like telling the Churches to sell all they own and give it to the poor.”

“I knew you were the right man for the job,” the angel’s eyes gave forth a light that flooded Joe’s soul with love. “You are beginning to know that which I have not yet told you. Besides, God doesn’t care what they think, so why should you? Let them forbid what they will, let them be selective with whomever is let into their houses. God is not limited in his love and will not deny the kingdom to anyone.”

*Great, Joe thought, I will probably get nailed to a cross or burned at the stake—not as a Christ to be remembered, but as a troublemaker who will serve as an example of what happens to such a person.*

“My time is over for now,” the angel concluded. “Think about what I have said; write it down, for it is important.” And with that he faded into the daylight. Joe got up, headed into the house and down the hallway to his office to type into the computer everything that had happened. *Who is going to believe this?* he asked himself.

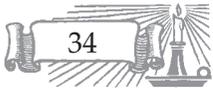




## THE TEACHINGS

**D**uring the next week, Joe replayed over and over again in his mind everything the angel had said. He found himself reflecting not only on his own personal experience, but also on how he had been instructed to search for others. But why? And if they passed right smack dab in front of him, how would he know they were the ones Michael had spoken of? He wondered where it would all end. One thing was certain, he'd better not give up his day job. As the days rolled by, he began to wonder who else he could tell this tale to besides Donna. She had been more than understanding; she had also been supportive, even encouraging. He himself could not believe what was happening to his life, yet she seemed to have less difficulty with it than he. Maybe, just maybe, it was time to talk to Kathleen. Why, he was not sure. Although they had not been friends long, their friendship was strong. They had met at Joe's last job when he had been an instructor with one of the largest corporations in the field of human dynamics. Perhaps he was calling her because she was enduring so much in her own struggle with lupus, a debilitating and strange disease of the nervous system. Perhaps he was calling her because of her great heart.

Kathleen was an enterprising human being, an all-California woman with a rich tan and eyes more alive than the noonday sun. In her forties, she



had the vivacity of someone ten years her junior. In fact, her two teen-age sons gave her grief for being too alive. But when she was ill, her eyelids hung at half-mast. It was enough to sadden anyone who loved her, and almost everyone around her loved her bright nature. Joe decided to give her a call to see how she was doing. She was having one of those days when her great eyelids were starting to droop. It was time to schedule another trip down to Mexico where she could get special treatment not allowed in the United States. She had found a hospital down there specializing in conditions such as hers. Usually, she would be gone for three weeks, but money was tight right now, so a couple of weeks would have to do.

“Kathleen,” Joe hesitated on the phone. “I want to tell you something that might help, and please don’t think I’m nuts or anything.”

“OK,” she said in that encouraging voice of hers. “As sick as I am right now, I’ll try anything. What is it you want to tell me?”

Joe began describing the January night when the sparkle of light had invaded his room revealing the angelic being. Like an ancient storyteller, he mesmerized her with his account of what the angel had told him and how he had performed the Last Baptism rite. He suggested she, also, give the baptism a try, along with taking her treatment, and see what happens. After the words had escaped his lips, Joe wondered if he was doing the right thing. Would Kathleen think him crazy? Was he giving her false hope? Would the baptism have any effect? Perhaps he shouldn’t have told her. But it was too late. The story of the angel had flown from him like a captive bird. There was no telling if it would find a place to roost with Kathleen.

“Wow, Joe. That’s quite a story. What did you think when it happened?” It was so like Kathleen to show concern for others when she herself needed the most help. Her caring question set Joe at ease, allowing the two friends to speak about why such events were occurring in these days of computers and satellites. “You know, Joe, I do believe there was a reason for our coming together. I truly do. From the moment we met there was a strong connection. Something about this baptism thing sounds real right to me. I actually believe everything you’ve told me. I know you are not prone to such wild stories as this, and I’m touched that you trust me enough to share this story with me. I may give the baptism a try while I’m down in Mexico. I’ll call you when I get back.”

After saying their goodbyes, Joe started thinking, *What if she comes back from Mexico cured?* Would this mean that the baptism is a cure for disease?

What would this do in a world of so much illness? Joe had great hope in what was happening to him, and he wanted to share that hope with others. Telling was risky, but the wonder of his encounter was also too tempting to keep to himself. For the rest of the week, Joe thought about Kathleen and how she was doing in Mexico. Her situation weighed on his mind repeatedly.

As he was driving his truck to work one morning, his thoughts again drifted to Kathleen. As he headed up the ramp to the 580 freeway, ready to cross the Bay, he heard a voice say, “Put on your seat belt.” Looking over at the passenger seat, he was startled to see Michael sitting there. Glancing back to the freeway to make sure he was merging into the right lane, he looked back to find no one in the seat. Recovering from the surprise, he revved up the engine and crossed into another lane. Once again, he looked over and spied Michael sitting there again. *Just what I need, Joe said to himself, a comedian along for the ride.* There seemed to be a continuing theme with this angel who went out of his way to display a sense of humor. The truth be known, Joe loved to tell jokes, and he loved people who had a sense of humor, no matter how warped.

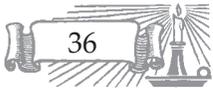
“I see you have found your first of the Seven,” the angel said, this time staying visible. Joe eased his back into the truck’s seat, glad to hear a voice along with the apparition. Somehow, it gave him the sense he wasn’t losing his mind.

“Yeah? And who might that be?” Joe asked sarcastically.

“Kathleen is going to be just fine—not cured, for she has sums to work out. She will be a challenging student. Listen to her, though, for as a woman, she can see and know things you could miss.”

“Look, Michael, I have been thinking about your last visit, and there are some things I need to know.” Privately, Joe was wondering if any of the cars could see his passenger. Wouldn’t it be a hoot to have the Highway Patrol pass his truck and see this angel sitting in the passenger’s seat? “Such as,” he continued, “where do women and gays fit in? Doesn’t the Bible guide people in the direction of God? Aren’t we freed from original sin when we are baptized? Wasn’t Jesus sent to die for our sins, because we are all sinners and would go to hell? Most important of all to me is, What am I supposed to do?”

“If you could only see that in your questions lie the answers to why. But like the rest of the world, you still think that in the beginning you sinned against God and are being punished for it. I tell you truly, when God created man and woman in spirit, a choice was given to them. They could stay with

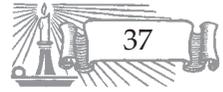


God in Paradise, as spirit, or become flesh and live on earth. Those that chose to stay are what you know as angels, and the rest of you became flesh. However, I say you all were, and are, perfect, whole, and complete in God's eyes. You chose the path you are on with no memory of the time before you chose. A promise was given to all that you would return home, your path would start and end. It would wind through the time you have, mixing with others' paths or going off in another direction. Some last for many years, and some are over in the blink of an eye. But whichever one you took, it was for an experience. Some you would like, and others you would not. But if you do not choose a direction on the path, the nature of the journey will be chosen for you, and most of you won't like it.

"You have been taught that a sin is bad and that it hurts God. How arrogant of you to think you are that powerful. I tell you truly, the only thing God is, feels, or does, is LOVE. The word 'sin' only means 'I have missed the mark I was aiming at' or 'I made a mistake.' No one is sitting in heaven with a tally sheet marking down all the times you have sinned to see if you have been good enough to get into Heaven. Are you beginning to see the obsession you all have with right, wrong, good and bad? These are judgments you make and have nothing to do with your coming home—for all will return in time. I say to you again, you are perfect, whole, and compete just the way you are. So, act accordingly. Treat one another with honor, dignity, and respect. But most all, love each other as God loves you.

"I tell you this: No, Jesus was not given by God to die for the sins of man. You must see, if that was his purpose, he would have died at birth. The Bible, though, tells a story that was told over and over and over until it was written down, and rewritten and rewritten and rewritten to the point that why he was sent has been lost. That is part of your job: to bring back the light that man's ink has darkened over the years. I will tell you what Jesus said and what he taught. You will write it down, not as a new Bible, but as the truth to guide God's children, so they may be healthy, joyous, and abundant on their journey home.

"The Bible has become more important than those it was written for. It is said that only those who have the Holy Spirit in them may read and understand it. This is a *lie* perpetuated by ignorance. Interpreting it is not understanding it. Besides, everyone has the Holy Spirit already in them. Yet, the unenlightened will tell you that you don't have the Holy Spirit in you, and that you are a servant of the Devil.



“Any book that tells you only *it* speaks for God lies. Any book that tells you that if you don’t believe in *the book*, the kingdom of heaven is lost to you forever, lies. Anyone who tells you, ‘Come to me, for I will stand with you before God on your behalf to save your soul,’ lies. For only you will stand before God for your rewards, and you will stand alone.

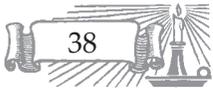
“Jesus said, When you pray, go into a closet by yourself and be quiet. Speak to God like thus: ‘Our Father, which art in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. Forgiven are our debts, and we forgive our debtors. Let us not be in temptation, and deliver us from evil.’ Don’t gather in crowds and pray great prayers for all to hear. Jesus’ reason for coming was to teach that when people speak to God, he hears. No one is needed to speak for you, and no one can. When you pray for someone, you are giving a blessing as powerful as any priest can give.

“There is no such thing as Original Sin, in the biblical sense of it. Baptism is a ritual borrowed from an ancient religion to signify the washing away of ignorance of the existence of God. In this symbolic ritual, what you are doing is saying, ‘I remember.’

“Women are the foundation of natural wisdom and true power. Jesus knew this, and always had women with him throughout his life. Only after Paul of Tarsus began preaching did women start to lose the place that Jesus recognized they should have. It was women who taught of Jesus in the catacombs. And the loss of their presence has brought the teachings to the place they are now.

“As long as humankind has walked the earth, there have been people who are gay—perfect, whole, and complete just the way they are. You see, the more a religion gets accepted, the more self-righteous it becomes in this good-versus-evil. When outside forces begin to let up, pressure begins building from within for conformity, beginning with the smallest number of members who act differently or think differently from the majority. The religion’s actions become no better than those of its earlier persecutors. However, their persecution is now done in the name of God or Jesus or the Bible.

“Sex is a gift from God for you to give to the one you love as your gift of affection. There is nothing bad or wrong about what gender you give this gift to. It is up to you. However, it is the choice of the receiver to accept it or not. If you go whoring, you must understand you are only wasting time. For no bricks are made for building one’s celestial mansion.



“You can be sure, most religions will be up in arms about this—so let them. When they stand before God and find that he doesn’t care, I promise you they won’t either. My time here is over. We will speak again. Go in peace,” Michael said as he vanished.

Joe couldn’t remember the drive over the bridge nor paying the toll, but there he was approaching his exit. Forty-five minutes of driving had passed, and he remembered only the words of Michael. It was as if he’d been in a time warp. The workday seemed almost a celebration. In fact, all aspects of life were taking on a different meaning for Joe, as they were for Donna. After work, Joe got to thinking about what Michael had told him. *I guess I should write a book*, he said to himself. *But I’m a carpenter, a handyman by trade, and not an author. Why is it that when God wants something done, it’s always someone without the necessary skills who is chosen to do it? Let’s face it, my handwriting is unreadable and my typing even worse. So I can see why I was chosen to do this. Yeah, right.*

Joe could not stop thinking about the right and wrong or good and bad to which Michael kept referring. He wondered if Michael was correct, that we as a people are obsessed with the notion of duality. Is it possible our entire culture is driven by such man-made forces? Joe began to think of examples where culture reflected its obsession with right and wrong, good and bad. All around us, in movies, books, and television, we just have to see the good guy triumph over the bad guy. But what about eras before the media? He thought about Moses—a good guy—who was told by God to return to Egypt and tell Pharaoh—the bad guy—to let the Israelites go. That would be a good thing, while not letting them go would be a bad thing—at least according to Moses. So, how different from Pharaoh was Moses? After all, had not Moses murdered a high official who was only doing his job? And did not Pharaoh up and throw Moses out of Egypt rather than have him executed? Which, according to the law, would have been a good thing.

Joe kept batting good versus evil back and forth like a badminton birdie. It depended whose side you were on as to whether something was good or evil. One man’s meat was another man’s poison. And whose side is God on? According to Michael, there was no such thing as sides. We all dwell in God’s love and would do well to remember that. Yet throughout history we, as human beings, have put God into the same patterns that we live by. *We keep bringing God down to our level*, Joe concluded. Maybe Michael was trying to turn all that around: Bring us all back to God’s level.



A week later, Kathleen called, having freshly returned from Mexico. The first person she called on her return was Joe. “Well, I’m back,” she started.

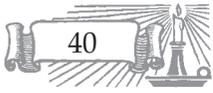
“And how are we doing?” Joe asked in his humorous sort of way, trying to make conversation easier. He could tell by the tone in her voice that she was nervous about something. Usually, Kathleen jumps into conversation the way most people jump into a pool on a hot summer’s day.

“There are some other things I want to say first, so, stay with me here. I don’t think I really told you how I felt when you suggested I was one of the Seven that your angel asked you to find. I honestly never really had a clue as to what that was about. It just felt good that someone thought I had a spiritual bone in my body and was chosen for a spiritual purpose. At the time, you really felt I was chosen as one of the so-called ‘Seven,’ and I felt really sure, like “This guy is insane!” But I trusted you.” There was a lull in the conversation as Kathleen tried to gather her composure. She was putting her heart on the line, and Joe knew it. He simply said nothing.

“At the time you told me this, I was deathly ill, as you know. The pain was unbearable, and the feeling that I was just hanging on was undeniable. I knew that through the depths of my illness, for the first time, there seemed to be a glimmer of hope. Instead of looking at my dying body, I was seeing my spiritual path again—the first time in a long time. Somehow, I had lost that. So I thought this Seven thing was something that was being handed me, and I had a decision to make. Either I can accept with grace what God is offering me or I can turn it right back. You know—take the chance that it *may* be something or not do it. And being who I am, I always thought I could change my mind after doing the baptism and *not* be one of the Seven. I thought I could do the baptism and be the non-committal-commitment sort of person that I am!”

Joe wanted to interrupt and tell her Michael’s message about being perfect, whole, and complete, just the way she is. But this was a time for listening. Kathleen cleared her throat before continuing.

“I figured I could see what would happen. So ...” Kathleen fought for self-control as she searched for the words. “Anyway, time went by; I didn’t do it, I didn’t do the baptism. As I told you before going down to Mexico, I decided to do the baptism down there. Well, I got there, and checked in the hospital, and got hooked up to IVs. The truth be known, I was barely

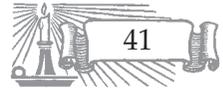


able to even walk—really—at the time. You know, the hospitals down there are different than ours. You can kind of go where you want. They're open-air. Hooked up to my IV, I went outside where I found a quiet spot in the sun."

It had been warm outside, well past noon, as she had headed outside the room in her bare feet with a towel and bowl in hand. She knew it was not the exact time for doing the baptism that the angel had instructed Joe, but she figured she would be forgiven for it, considering the circumstances. As she sat in the grass, away from everyone else, she took out the piece of paper with the instructions that Joe had given her. Setting the bowl on a corner of the paper, so it wouldn't blow away, she poured the wine into it. Closing her eyes and trying to relax, she said to herself, *Joe would not tell me this if it were not true*, and began to wash herself with the wine. After wiping herself off with the towel, she said the prayer scratched out on the paper. She closed her eyes again and listened for counsel. Her body started feeling a numb, tingling sensation like when an arm or leg has fallen asleep and starts to get feeling back.

"It was completely silent, and I fell asleep under the tree next to where I had done the baptism. Because of all the pain I was suffering, I had been unable to really sleep for a long time. But I went into a really, really, really, deep, deep sleep. It must've been four hours or something. But when I woke up, it seemed as if ... I couldn't tell if it had been five minutes or was the next day. I was in a daze, totally disoriented." The tingling feeling was gone, and she heard a voice tell her what to do during the next year.

"It struck me as kind of funny," she said. "You know, like what is going on here? Where am I? I started to get up and the first thing I notice is, *Gosh, I can move*. The pain had subsided. It was a kind of spontaneous healing, in the sense that I was out of physical pain. What was even more noticeable to me was that I didn't have that feeling I have when I am really ill, where I'm just kind of holding on, holding myself together. You know, like there's an inner core, a magnet that's just barely holding me together. And nobody knows but me that I'm just barely bound together. And if I don't hold it like that, I'm going to die ... or fall apart. And that was lifted." It was as if Kathleen felt a little embarrassed to confess how badly she had been feeling. She hadn't told anyone before how precarious her life was. She had sons to care for and a household to try and keep. Other people needed attention she found herself unable to provide at times. It was with a sense of relief that she was able to confess how miserable her life had been.



“I felt like my normal self,” she continued. “It had been a long time since I had felt like that. But I *knew* it, instantaneously. It was like, *Oh my God—I feel like me!* So I went back into my room and continued my treatment anyway. But the doctors didn’t think I needed it anymore. And I wasn’t keen on paying the thousands of dollars more for all the live-cell stuff that I didn’t seem to need. So I came home the second week.” There was a pause on the phone. “Thanks, Joe.”

“You’re welcome,” he said softly. But his mind was running a hundred miles an hour. Michael had said that Kathleen would still have “sums to work.” He wasn’t sure what that was, but he was sure that Kathleen needed to have this moment and enjoy it. He let her know how gratifying it was for him to hear this story, not so much because she had a spontaneous healing of sorts, but more importantly because she now believed in herself, that she was, indeed, the first of the Seven. He asked her to keep him informed how she was progressing and to let him know how the instructions the voice had given her played out.

That evening, Joe sat next to his lily pond contemplating a message: It is not fitting that my Lord God’s children should suffer. He felt compassion for Kathleen and all others who had such tough lives to live. Michael appeared out of nowhere.

The angel said, **“So great has become their longing to know God and the will of God, that they will listen to whoever holds up the Book and claims to know the secret hidden within—the secret which promises everlasting life in Paradise with God. Out of fear, they will believe and obey, unto the point of death, that with the authority of a gnat, their leader has threatened the everlasting fires of hell. The Lord God requires not that you die for him, but that you live to love and give comfort to each other. For death will come to all, so speed it not.**

**“I AM has instructed me to give you these words:** *It is written that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, but I say from this day forward, the debt is paid. Now I say the rewards of the fathers will be visited on the children for a hundred times a hundred generations. It is written that in my house there are many mansions. I say truly, one is yours that you build brick by brick with the blessings you give and the deeds you do. A place is set aside for you in Paradise to build your mansion and live with me forever. The time is close when I will give to you a book that teaches you to make the bricks. My son, Jesus, laid the foundation at the time he walked with you.*

*In your Book, it tells of Revelation, a vision of things to come, written with the knowledge of that time. It has been so corrupted with mysticism and superstition over the centuries, that no man or woman can know its meaning. When I AM speaks, it is cloudless, for what I say is what is—no more, no less.*

*There will be a great calling of my children when a large number will return home in the blink of an eye. So will many follow in the time to come, yet not to a last judgment. They come to their reward and will dwell with me in their mansions forever.*

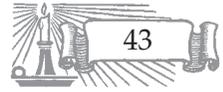
*It is said that I am a jealous God, and you will put no gods before me. This could not be, for I am all that there is and no one is before me. Yet, you build great houses with windows of colored glass and fill them with statues carved from stone. You adorn them in jewels, gold and silver, paintings, and tapestries to tell stories of what was sacrificed for you. This you call a house of God, holy ground, and say I dwell within. I AM dwells not in these alone. Look you well into the eyes of one another, from the poorest of the poor to the richest of the rich. Both in spirit and possessions you will find me there. Look at the fields of grass or flowers, and at the deserts, woodlands, jungles, and at the animals. I dwell there, also. Look to the sunrise or the sunset, look to the stars at night. Open your eyes and heart, for you will see me in all these things. When you have done this, you will know I have no need for such riches. It would be fitting to sell them to feed and clothe the needy and to turn these great houses into dwellings for those living in the streets.*

*You cry out, ‘Oh, Lord, we need these temples to teach your word and pray in.’ Yet, I say to you, teach in the fields, in the light, as Jesus did, and all the prophets before and after him did. You need not the great halls for your prayers. Pray as Jesus has taught you.*

*‘But, Lord,’ you ask, ‘where might we gather to pray for the souls of others?’ I tell you this: Gather not to pray for those who are sick in spirit. Go to them and make their body, mind, and emotions well, and the Spirit within will be free to do my work.*

*You speak of sacrifice and teach that the spilling of blood made a covenant with me, and has since Adam and Eve, along with Abraham. You tell of Cain’s offering to me being displeasing, for it was not blood—so I rejected it. You teach that Jesus’ blood was shed so I would open the gates of Heaven. I say this only once: All things whose blood runs red, who breathe air, have a soul. I gave life to them for my purpose, and it must not be shed.*

*When you speak of ‘Jesus Saves,’ you belittle what he has done. For you speak as if he did not fulfill what he was sent to do. You listen; yet not a word have you heard. Jesus told you, when he said, ‘No one comes to the Father but by the Son.’ By this he made it known that you are saved.*



*Think not that salvation gives you license to do that which pleases only you, casting aside all else. When you do not honor and bless that which is around you, no bricks do you make, and your mansion will be fitting in size for you.”*

With this, Michael became silent, staring at Joe as if waiting to hear what he had to say. Even though his head was spinning with all he had heard, Joe responded, “You know it has always seemed to me that the Bible, Torah, and Koran spoke of a vengeful God, one whose punishment is a swift and terrible thing to behold when he is displeased. Still, he is supposed to be a God of love? That, to me, is a contradiction in terms. Now I see, if the truth be told, he is all-loving—period.

“Yes, Joe,” Michael returned, “God is. And with so great a love for you all that if you could know the feeling of only the smallest portion of God’s love, you would weep tears of joy that would fill rivers.”

“I hear what’s being said about Jesus,” Joe said. “But, as regarding him making it known we are saved, why has it been so difficult for us to understand this concept?”

“Jesus was sitting with his disciples teaching when Simon said to him, ‘Master, you tell these truths, yet how is it they fall on so many deaf ears? The people gather to listen, and know not what you speak.’ Jesus told him, ‘My teachings are not for this age but for the next.’ Jesus knew that the spiritual state of most people was such that it would take 2,000 years before mortals could rise to a level where they could understand what he was teaching. Take a look around your world. Do you see many beginning to know the truths Jesus taught?”

“Yes, I do. I see more and more people looking for the truth. But I also see people returning to the old, established religions and calling the truth ‘New Age thinking.’ Some say New Age thinking is the work of the Devil because it talks about the signs of the zodiac.”

“You know what I have said about the Devil,” said Michael, leaning forward as if to emphasize the point, “so speak of it to me no more. One of your teachers has given you the knowledge of what an age is. I say, truly, to you, the age that is coming is new, for it has never been nor will be again. So, you see it is a new age. The zodiac is just a heavenly clock that measures the movement of the Earth, planets, sun, and stars. But, since the early religions thought the Earth was the center of the Universe and said everything that moved around the Earth was being pushed by angels, anything else was blasphemy.”



Joe had been taught by Alexander that an age lasts 2,000 years with a transition period of 100 years from one age to the next. Each age has specific characteristics. The age we are leaving behind is Pisces, which started around the birth of Jesus. Pisces is considered a water sign of the zodiac with the symbol of two fish. The early Christians used a fish as their sign, not the cross. A common occupation of that age was fishing. When someone was baptized, water was used. Jesus walked on water to signify he had dominion over the age. He changed water into wine to mark the beginning of his teachings from his time to the next age. When Jesus fed the people fish and bread, he symbolized the blending of the ages.

If one goes back another 2,000 years, one is in the Age of Aries, the ram, which is a fire sign. God appeared to Moses, for example, on top of a mountain in a burning bush. A common occupation of that age was herding sheep. The food of the age was sheep. The baptism of the Jewish people was done with fire. The coming age is Aquarius, the water bearer. This is an air sign, and its symbol is that of a man with a stone jar pouring water out onto the earth. What this symbolizes is the pouring forth of knowledge on the earth. He is also holding stalks of grain. The occupation of the age will be farming as well as occupations oriented around the growing of things. The last 100 years has seen an unprecedented growth in knowledge, inventions, and technology.

In Scripture, Jesus tells Peter and John, “Go and prepare for us the Passover that we may eat it.”<sup>1</sup> They asked him where he wanted the meal to be, and Jesus told them to go into the city where they would meet a man carrying a jug of water. “He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.” Aquarius is the age we are passing into. In Genesis it says to let the stars “serve as signs, and for the fixing of seasons, days, and years.”<sup>2</sup> Is it unthinkable to suggest that these signs include the signs of the zodiac?

Joe then asked Michael about not eating anything that bleeds red. “Does this mean that animals have souls, too?” After asking the question, Joe started listing animals in his head: dogs, cats, pigs, cows, whales, lions and tigers, and bears. *Oh my! Goodbye bacon, steak, eggs, and fried chicken.*

“Yes, they do,” said Michael. “If their blood is red, they have souls, not as advanced as yours but souls nonetheless. You and your kind will use them

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 22:8

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1:14

for food for only a little while, and then no more. In the time to come, food is to be in such abundance, animals will not be needed as food. All this will be told to you when the time comes for *The Book of Bricks*.”

“Yeah,” Joe said clearing his throat, “I want to talk to you about that. You see, I figured out for myself it has to do with making bricks for our mansions. So I guess it’s about all these laws we will be given that tell us if we obey them, we get bricks, and if we don’t, we won’t. Right?”

“Are you not listening to the message God is giving? This is not a book of laws that you must obey so you will be given bricks. If you need a comparison, it is as a builder’s manual or an instruction book. This book tells you how to make bricks, not what you must do to get them. Too many laws have been made for you to keep or break, which have earned little. This book will give you what you need to know so that many will the bricks be for your mansions in Paradise.”

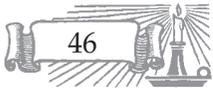
“OK, I understand the distinction. Now, when do I get the book?”

“When you are ready, in God’s eyes, to receive it. Take heart, Joe, for the time is close at hand.”

“Well, I guess if it has taken 2,000 years to get this far, sometime in my life is soon enough. As far as I can see, in our talk today, we, as God’s children, have no idea of God’s love for us. Yet, we want to be with God so much that we listen to anyone who tells us he knows how to get us there based on fear of going to hell, which doesn’t exist anyway. If someone comes along and tells us he is Jesus, we kill ourselves because he says Armageddon is just around the corner. We do what we are told because we don’t understand what was written originally in the Bible, the Torah, and the Koran. We practice idolatry in our churches through our ignorance. We are borderline cannibals because we eat other creatures that have souls. And all the time we tell ourselves that a vengeful and jealous God, who has his son killed to open the gates of Heaven, would send Jesus back a second time to toss us into hell anyway? Because he didn’t get the job right the first time, he would have to come back to save us. Does that about sum it up?”

“What you speak has great truth in the way it has been, yet I say to all of you, Jesus will not return, for he is with you even now. I tell you truly, also, he is not alone. The Holy Spirit is with him as a sister in what will be done.” Both of the angel’s hands were spread apart as if embracing the notion physically.

“So tell me,” Joe said, “how will we know Jesus or his sister when we see them, and what are they supposed to do? What are they going to teach us?”



Michael looked into the distance as if searching for an answer. “You will know them in this way: He and she will be together *and* they will be apart. They will be young *and* they will be old, dressed in rags or dressed in fine clothing. They are well *and* they are lame. They are fair *and* they are dark. The way you will know most of all is that they are in need.

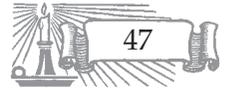
“They have not come to teach, but to learn from you. Compassion, kindness, and giving are what you will teach them. You will know not who they are, yet they will know you. What they will do is open a time for you to make many bricks by the deeds and blessings you shower on them. Be generous in this, and an abundant supply of bricks will be yours. Act meagerly, and you will make no bricks.

“My time is over for now. Be at peace and teach only love.”

With that, he was gone, fading away as before, leaving Joe to ponder what had been said. Scenes from his Roman Catholic upbringing tumbled through his mind, juxtaposing their hard realities against the truths Michael had presented. In Joe’s third-grade catechism class, the new wonders of who, what, and where God is had been unveiled for the first time. Joe did fine with “God is love” and with “God created Heaven and Earth, and all living things.” These concepts Sister Mary Elizabeth explained in no uncertain terms. She made it all factual with no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Where Joe got into trouble was with the “where” thing. To Joe, Sister Mary Elizabeth was the Mother Theresa of his world. He could still see her kind and loving eyes looking through her strong, yet inexpensive and very unfashionable eyeglasses. She had the wise face of a best-loved grandmother, hazel eyes, and graying eyebrows. Her little pug nose and thin lips fit perfectly on the nape of the saddest child when she hugged her pupils. Joe could still see her face, bordered by the white collar around her neck, her bib of white, and her face framed in black. As a boy, he had guessed the bib protected her from any spillage while eating.

“Where is God?” she had asked. And all the children in the classroom had replied, “God is everywhere.”

“That’s correct,” she had encouraged. “God is in the trees, in the animals, in the ocean, in the rocks, in heaven, and on earth. So, you see, God *is* everywhere. Except in you. Because you were born with original sin. Until you’re baptized in the Church, you will never go to heaven.” Even in the third grade, with his limited wisdom and intelligence, it had occurred to Joe, *Wait a minute, this stinks! She just said that God is everywhere. And now she says that God is*



*not within us because we are sinners.* Joe's childlike heart could not handle this. So thirsty for knowledge was he that he had immediately shot his hand into the air, her kind eyes acknowledging him. "Yes, Joseph, do you have a question?"

"Yes, Sister," he had said. "I don't understand how God can be everywhere and not be in me. Either God is everywhere or he's almost everywhere, but he can't be everywhere and not be everywhere at the same time. Could you explain this to me? Because I really don't understand."

Standing at the blackboard behind her desk, something in Sister Mary Elizabeth's eyes had changed as she said, "So, you don't understand?" She picked up a book from her desk and marched to the back of the room. He could now hear her footsteps as she stomped up the length of Joe's aisle. They had been told always to look forward in class because there was nothing in the back they needed to see. Sitting there politely, Joseph knew that in a few moments what he did not understand would be made clear. Her footsteps stopped abruptly behind him. Whack! The crashing thud of the book against the back of his head catapulted him into the aisle, sprawled seven ways from Sunday. He had looked up and seen what used to be a sweet grandmotherly nun transformed into a banshee from hell.

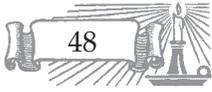
"Now do you understand? Now do you understand?" she had growled.

Humbled by his stupidity for daring to ask such a question, Joseph had responded slowly in the best way he knew how, "Yes, Sister, I understand."

"That's good," she had pronounced with tight lips, "because the Church wants everyone to go to Heaven. And it really doesn't make any difference whether you understand or not. You just believe what the Church tells you."

As she marched back to her desk, the other children had stared at Joe in disbelief. His embarrassment had been overwhelming. He understood, all right. He understood that he would never again admit he did not understand. These memories lingered in Joe's mind like a vulture on a dead tree. He had wanted to live a saintly life in accordance with the Scriptures, but he couldn't. He was haunted by all he had learned about God as a child. Nuns in black and white, espousing black and white edicts to young minds hungering for truth, kept him from exploring anything saintly. Like Sister Mary Elizabeth, such saints were not to be trusted. Their truths did not nurture the mind or the soul, they assaulted both like the crashing thud of the book against his innocent head.

Michael was the antithesis of the parochial school classroom. He did not give ultimatums, nor he did he rule with shame. Everything about this



angelic figure spoke to and about love. If God truly was love, then this angel exemplified it. Joe could understand how others were brought up to believe a certain way all their lives. Compassion filled him as he recognized how others did their best to live their lives by the teachings they had been given. He realized Michael was unleashing a seemingly new truth, based completely on unconditional love. Joe acknowledged that others had a choice of accepting this new truth or their old truths. But this was a luxury he, himself, no longer possessed. He only knew what he must do. He had to trust that God knew where all this was going. Michael's words spoke to his soul with an undeniable love. And he was not about to say no to it. No book against the back of his head would ever change that again.





## **BLESSINGS, GIFTS, AND DEEDS**



## THE FIRST MANUSCRIPT

**T**he full seven feet of the angel stood before Joe as he looked up from his computer. Once again, Joe had climbed the rankings in his latest game of Tetris and surpassed Donna. “Oh. Hi, Michael,” he said in a voice not unlike that of an employee being discovered playing computer solitaire by the president of the company. “I have started writing down all you have been telling me, but you probably already know that.”

“I do. Blessed are the works you have chosen to do. Blessed are you, for you hear God’s words and you follow, setting aside that which you think you know. The path you have taken may not be as difficult to walk as you think, for I AM walks with you.”

“That is wonderful to know, but at this point, I feel as though I’m walking this path in the dark.” Michael smiled that smile that made Joe want to run up and hug him. It was the kind of smile one sees on a child, beaming across the entire face and six inches beyond, all lit up with innocence and joy.

“Joe, you walk not in darkness, but in light. When you emerge from a place that is dim into the bright sunlight, it will take time before you see clearly. In that time, you want to cover your eyes, for such a light brings discomfort. Soon, you will be accustomed to it and see wonders that were only shadows in the darkness before.

*I wish I had a pair of sunglasses for this,* Joe thought to himself.

**“For the first wonder, you will call upon the land of the bear, and say to them, ‘I AM has sent me that you may be strong among nations. Take your boat that sails under the sea and go you to the Valley of the Star. In the deepest part of this valley, you will thrust a hollow rod seven feet into the bottom. Take what you have gathered there back to your land. Give it to your men of wisdom and healing. In this lies the cure for two great plagues that are in all lands. Before a year is finished, you will find it. You may ask a fair price for your labor and medicine. In return, you will give one-seventh to my servant who has brought you this. If you do these things, great riches will be yours.’ ”**

“I think I know what country you are talking about, but why not my own?” Joe asked. “Also, what is this one-seventh given to me for? Is it like tithing?”

Michael answered simply, “Your country would question it for too long, and many would die needlessly. Look to the birds of the field. Neither do they sow nor reap, yet their Heavenly Father feeds them. No, it is not tithing. Tithing was established by the Church as a tax to support itself and the poor. Over the the years, the Church forgot the poor and became rich, powerful, and greedy. Giving little to the poor, the Churches thought the tithe belonged to them, and still do today. It is to be, that only one-seventh may be given to those who teach God’s words. Of that one seventh, a full five parts will be given to the poor and only two may be kept to live on. The gift of one-seventh is so that your brothers and sisters need not suffer. A gift is something that is given and not owed.

**“Say to them that rob God’s children with their tithing, they make no bricks today. Say this also to those who have become wealthy on the tithing, whether they display it as gold encrusted with jewels in great houses, or hide it in vaults, or sell the jewels, or melt down the gold into the coin of the realm. Take once, and once only, one-fourth of your riches gathered by tithing and keep it to live on. Take the remaining three-fourths and heal the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. If you choose not to do this, all will be taken away. You will not be left with even the fourth, and no bricks do you make.”**

“Well, as long as we are on a roll, here,” Joe said with raised eyebrows, “is there any more good news you would like me to break to the Christian community while I’m at it?”

“Tell those who lay hands on their flock, healing sickness and twisted bodies, to stop acting as if they had anything to do with it. Only faith can do this. ‘Physician, heal thyself’ means just that. You and your faith are all you need to heal yourself. Jesus told you that. So believe.

“Go to Kathleen,” Michael continued, “and say to her, ‘Get your house in order, for you are called to do God’s work.’ It was a woman who first saw that Jesus had risen and spoke to him. It was the women who told the men of his resurrection. In the time to come, it is women who will see the light first, and teach of God’s love. It was women who led the men to the light, and will do so again. As Mary gave birth to Jesus, so will women give birth to the light that has been in the womb for almost 2,000 years. Peter’s faith was the rock, then, and a woman’s wisdom and love for life will be God’s rock this time.”

“Ah, yes, I can see it all now. A world ruled by women—this is going to make some men very happy,” Joe said with tongue in cheek. “So, why didn’t you just tell a woman all this? Maybe one with typing skills who is not dyslexic, like me?”

“*Rule?*” Michael had never raised his voice before. He leaned forward in a way that made Joe wish he could back his chair up, right through the wall. “Women are chosen to nurture and guide. It is in their very nature, these things. It is man’s nature to lead. It is only God who will rule out of love for you and your well-being.

“Let me tell you about the birds and the bees.”

“Oh, very funny,” returned Joe. “It’s nice to know you have a sense of humor.”

“Life starts with a seed that is planted by the male in the female,” the angel stated as if ignoring Joe’s informality, “grows, and then is born. This is how it is with you. That which you are writing is the seed you will give. Like Jesus’ earthly father did for him, you will do with these teachings. You will take them out into the world and help them grow. When they are strong enough to stand on their own, you will step aside. Don’t worry, I will tell you when that time has come.

**“The four men that you will choose represent the fourfold nature of God’s children. These four are ...**

**the Physical—to take the teachings into the world,  
the Mental—to think only of the well-being of others,  
the Emotional—to love as you are loved by God,  
the Spiritual—to have a personal relationship with God.**

**“These four are the signs of balance. As the day is balanced by morning, afternoon, evening, and night—the seasons of the year or the points of the compass—all these are in balance with one another.**

**“The three women stand for the Love God is, the Life, which is the work God has done, and the Light, which is the result of the union of the other two.**

“This is not new to you, for Alexander teaches this.”

“Michael,” Joe responded, “you know this is going to anger our Holy Mother the Church. There is no way the Church will buy the idea that women could be on the same level or equal to men. To say this is true will undermine the Church’s authority. Oh, let’s not forget the Muslims, along with most of the other religions of the world, who will not buy women’s equality, either.

“You say: Being gay isn’t a mortal sin and an abomination to God, Women are equal with men, and Give back the money that religions have, more or less, stolen from their members under false pretense. That last one is going to be the hardest of all for the organized religions to swallow. Now, to top the whole thing off, we are going to tell them they can’t rationally use the Scriptures as a basis for their authority because the Scriptures are, at the least, disingenuous. That will start one hell of a *jihad*.”

“The Church is neither holy, nor a mother,” Michael said, the light in his eyes dimming with a kind of sadness. “The people who run it are not being asked to ‘buy’ anything. I tell you truly, any religion that says it is of God is actually a servant of GOD’S CHILDREN”—his eyes flashed with light—“and not the other way around, as it thinks itself to be. Religion has become as unreliable as servants who steal from their masters. With their ill-gotten gains, they act as though they are now masters. I AM will dismiss them as servants if they do not return that which they have stolen and obey those they serve.

“I AM has not given them the authority, nor has Jesus or any heavenly host. Just because they have written it in their Scriptures does not mean it is so. There is only one authority, and is with God. You speak of *jihad*, a holy war. I tell you this, truly: There is nothing holy about war. War is the violent act to steal or to take back that which was stolen. It was not God who ordered war. It was man who did this. To justify it, he lied, saying, ‘It is the God’s will.’ Not until the Crusades was war allowed by the Christian Church. The head of the Christian Church in Rome made war holy, not

God. Most religions, today, still think war can be holy if their leaders say it is so. The children of Israel and Islam fight with one another and lie when they say it is God's will. Yet, they are of the same family of Abraham and the same God he served. When brothers are killing brothers, no bricks are made.

“There will be no *jihad*, for God's children will say, ‘I give my life to God, who is all-loving and asks only that I live to bring joy and happiness to all. I will not serve any religion in war or die for it.’ So that you may see there is no need to fear this Armageddon, I AM has given me the words to tell you what is truly said in the *Book of Revelation*. You must not speak this knowledge to anyone until you first give it to your seven chosen people. Do you understand?”

Joe nodded, mulling over all he had been told by the angel. As *Revelation* was revealed, a sense of awe swept through him. From the very first word that poured from the Michael's mouth, Joe felt that truth flowed forth. The sound of the angel's voice was a beautiful melody that carried rich vowels and consonants that warmed Joe's imagination and quieted the panic of his beating heart, flooding him with the same feeling he had felt when the angel had told him his celestial name. Such great reverie filled Joe that he did not even notice when the heavenly host had finished speaking. Nor did he notice when Michael concluded, “My time is over for now. Go in peace and teach only love.”

Amazement seized every cell of Joe's body as the angel disappeared into the light and faded away. The angel's words made complete sense, filling his mind with a sense of all-knowing. He thought of Bones, who, in a classic episode of *Star Trek*, had been given a megadose of medical knowledge from another world. What was impossible to understand only moments before, now seemed so simple that a child could understand it.

*How is it that a message as simple and clear as this could be so misunderstood?* Joe tried to reason. *No wonder Jesus wept when he saw what man had done to God's words.* The phenomenon was so overwhelming that Joe, too, began to weep. He was filled with incredibly joyous love, and at the same time inundated by profound sadness. He could not make up his mind whether his tears were for the joy or the sadness. As his tears ceased, he began to laugh—just a chuckle, at first. But the more he thought of the Apocalypse, with its demonic armies in a final battle and Jesus coming out of the clouds like the U.S. Cavalry to save the day, the funnier it got. The chuckle rolled into open

laughter, the laughter erupted into uncontrollable hysterics. Tears flowed again, this time from laughter.

In his mind's eye he pictured religious leaders standing before God. He heard himself roaring with laughter, *I guess you get what you deserve—poetic justice at its finest*. He could hear them trying to explain just what had possessed them to teach such foolishness. He laughed even louder as he imagined their response: “The Devil made me do it.”

That night, as Joe tried to sleep, he reflected upon all that Michael had told him that day. Sleep seemed almost a nuisance. How was he going to get this message to “the land of the bear”? He tried to imagine himself contacting the Russian embassy: *I would like to speak to someone about a message I am supposed to give you from God*. As ridiculous as it looked to him, he concluded there was little else to do. After all, Michael hadn't said anything about making them believe the message. He had said just to tell them.

A week had passed since Michael had last appeared. The more Joe thought about it, the more he began to suspect Michael was waiting for him to do something about the Russian message. Every time the angel had told him to do something, and Joe would take his time to do it, he noticed Michael's absence. Not really knowing why, Joe decided to call one of his friends and ask her if she had a clue how he might make a Russian contact. Debbie was a bright woman, totally unassuming, who always made Joe feel he was in the company of Southern hospitality. Her easy smile was a welcome mat and her eyes an open doorway. Deb was the human resources director at the human dynamics firm where Joe had worked as an instructor, and they had been friends ever since.

“Deb, do you have any idea how I might get in touch with anybody who lives in Russia?” he asked out of the clear blue.

“Russia? Why Russia?”

There was no way around it; he had to tell her something about Michael. After giving her the story in a nutshell, he promised also to send her the transcripts he had typed to this point. Her response was as open as her heart. After searching her thoughts for a minute, she asked, “Do you remember the two gentlemen who visited here last summer? They were from Russia.”

“Yes, as a matter of fact I do remember.” Joe was pleased to find a possible connection on his first try.

“Well, maybe you should write or call them.”

“How?”

“Let me see what I can do to track them down. I’ll find someone who has their address or phone number, and have that person give you a call. How’s that?”

“That would be better than a cold beer in the Mojave desert.” Deb laughed, mostly because she knew Joe no longer drank. He always made himself out to be some leftover of the criminal element or some kind of Hell’s Angels reject. True, he had been a biker at one time, but she knew he had a heart of pure gold—a man who would do just about anything for a friend.

Another week passed before Michael appeared again. Joe was sitting at the computer playing another game, and doing quite well, when the celestial interrupted. “It is time for you to write *The Book of Bricks*.”

“OK, Michael,” he replied, “but first, I want to ask a few things. You see, I have been telling some friends of mine of these experiences, and they ask me if I know the answers to their important questions. I told them I had an opinion on almost everything. But answers? No. I said I would, however, ask you and tell them what you say.”

“Ask what you will.” As Joe stared up at his heavenly friend, he could not help but feel he was staring up a tower of light. The angel’s eyes were full of patience as he waited to hear the questions.

“I have a list of things to ask. First of all, why has God made evil, if he is all-loving?”

“God has not made evil,” came the reply. Again, the eyes were like lakes of emotion. They exuded love, as if to impress on Joe how such love could be the source of anything except more love. “Your kind has brought it into being. Mankind has become lazy and will not work. It is the easy way to take from others that which you do not have. If you think about it, you will see the truth in what I say.”

“What about abortion and the right to life? Should abortion be stopped regardless of the means used to stop it?”

“Your kind is always talking of rights, as if God gave any one group the authority to take life. What you seek is permission to kill in order to stop killing. And you have no such permission. This is not protecting the unborn. This is insanity. I tell you truly, abortion is between a woman and God. God, and God alone, will give the woman counsel, and interfere you will not.”

“What is the true religion of God?” Joe then asked. “I know this sounds like I am asking what religion God belongs to, but I hope you understand

my real question. Is he maybe an agnostic that doesn't believe in himself because he just is God?"

"All religions are from God, and none are of God." Joe watched as Michael gestured with open hands. It was those eyes again. They never blinked. Never. He wondered if the angel wanted his love never to be interrupted by a blink. "Religions have taken that which God has given and made of it what they understand it to be. God gave the Word, and mankind heard what it wanted. To answer your question: All of them, and none of them."

"OK. Now what?" Joe knew he had more questions to ask, but he couldn't remember them at the moment.

"I will be with you as you write and will whisper in your soul the words you write. Begin."

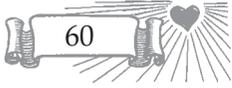




## THE BOOK OF BRICKS

**Y**ou have all chosen to be flesh and blood, with a time to work out sums. You may have as many lifetimes as you need. Yet there is a point when all must be done. This time is known as the Grand Gathering when God's children will be called home. A quickening has begun at this time before the Gathering, so you may add bricks to your mansion. So long have you been away from your home, that you have forgotten it. You have built a new home out of dust in a faraway land. This house you will not keep, for it is of worldly things. Many of you have labored for worldly things for long years, while setting aside your real reason for coming to earth.

I give this book so you may remember and build your mansions in Paradise. This is not a book of laws you must obey. Nor is it a book by which you may judge your neighbor. There is no punishment if you do not use it to make bricks. You are given this book out of love so you may make the number of bricks you want. Your time is short before the calling. And when you are called, your mansion will be complete. Not one brick will be added or taken away from your labors. That which you have built will be yours for all time. When your mansion is finished, you will come home to it. God will furnish it with



all the wondrous things your imagination can hold. You will share Paradise with all whom you have ever loved or were loved by, I tell you now. You must never consider this book as being more important than you are to one another. You will not hold it as holy or sacred. You will worship it not. It will not be kissed or held with affection in any way.

The Book of Bricks is written in three parts. Each is equal unto the other, and none is greater or lesser in value. The first text is of Blessings. This part deals with emotional training. The second is the text of Giving. This part trains the mind. The third text is of Deeds. This part is to train the body. The three stand as separate legs of a tripod. Each is planted firmly on a solid spot. They rise upwards toward a center that holds the platform. On the platform is mounted a transom—the soul—to make sure your direction is straight and level.





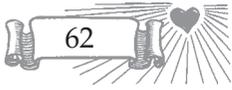
## THE SCROLL OF BLESSINGS

**S**o that this leg may stand on solid ground, and your blessings begin, once-blessed are you who take this leg to heart. Some will find it the easiest to set, while others will find it almost impossible. Yet, set it firmly and you will be giving your first blessing to yourself: 'Bless my soul, for I am a child of God. Bless my heart for it beats to serve you, my God, and your children. God has made me perfect, whole, and complete for I am in God's own image and likeness. With this knowledge I am all I need to be. I set this leg as the foundation of God's will for me and all others.'

The deep feeling of infinite compassion is not just an emotion. This oneness with God sets in motion an uncontrollable desire. Your soul wishes only love and well-being for a person, place, or thing. When this happens, you make a brick by saying, 'Bless its heart.' There is no blessing so small that it does not make a brick. Saying a blessing only so a brick will be added to your mansion is done in vain, for no brick is made.

Should you see a child crying, for whatever reason, know they are in pain, and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you tears in the eyes of a man or woman, know they are in pain or joy, and bless their heart, a brick is made.



See you someone who is in anger or rage, know they are in pain for some reason, and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is blind—they see not the wonders you do—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is deaf—they hear not the music of nature—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who cannot speak—their voice sings not the language you share—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is lame—they shuffle with difficulty in the dance of life—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is disfigured—they are ugly only in the eyes that hold them so—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is poor—they know not the abundance that is theirs—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is hungry—they have forgotten how to feed themselves—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is naked or in rags—they know not how to clothe themselves—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is homeless—they have forgotten how to shelter themselves—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is a drunkard or an addict—what they take to numb their pain is now its cause—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is slow of wit—their mind is in a cloud of darkness, struggling to be free—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is a criminal—they have lost their faith—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who steals a childhood—they have had their childhood stolen—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who takes a place before you—they take from you only that which has been taken from them—bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who respects you not—they have no respect for themselves—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who has taken a life—they know not what they have truly done—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who is with disease—they know not that they could be well—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who belittles others—they see themselves as unimportant—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who robs others—they only rob bricks from themselves—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who cheats others—they only cheat themselves out of bricks—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who hollers at others—they want to be heard but know not how—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you someone who lays a hand on others—they only strike bricks from their own walls—and bless their heart, a brick is made.

See you a sick or injured animal, bless its heart, a brick is made.

See you any animal that has died, bless its heart, a brick is made.

See you the meat on your table, know you that the animal gave up its life that you may be fed. Ask forgiveness, and bless its heart, a brick is made.

Let not a day go by that you have not given blessings. Open your heart to the world around you. Find in all things a reason to give blessings.

Your God has blessed you and all else. God's blessings come as easily as the rising and setting of the sun. Should not yours be given with the love you hold in your heart? Should you not bless all things around you that have been given to you? Think not that it makes no difference and is but a small and unimportant thing to do. For I tell you truly, there is no blessing that you can give that is insignificant. Any blessing you give is a brick, and will be given by God back to you unto the nth degree.



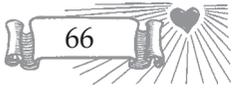


## THE SCROLL OF GIVING

**T**hat this leg may stand on solid ground, and your giving begin, twice blessed are you who take this second leg to heart. So you may give to others, you must give to yourself. Forgive yourself all that keeps you from greatness. 'I am a child of God and from my soul I give. My heart beats to give to you, my God, and your children. I give myself the knowledge that I am made in God's image and likeness, to be perfect, whole, and complete. I am all I need to be to set the second leg as the foundation of God's will for me and all others.'

The gift of giving is more than the mental process of 'I think I should, therefore I give.' Be responsible in giving. If others benefit from your gift, and you or your family are left wanting, this is not responsible giving. This is suffering. Be you abundant so others may prosper, also. God has not meant for you to go hungry so others may eat. You are not to go naked so others may be clothed. You shall not live in the streets that others may live in a mansion. There is no gift so small that it does not make a brick. But to give only so a brick is added to your mansion is done in vain, for no brick is made.

Be you loving to yourself as God loves you—a brick is made. Give in return this love to all else around you—a brick is made.



Be you kind to yourself that you may know kindness—a brick is made. Give this kindness to all around you—a brick is made.

Be you your life's work, for it is the cornerstone of life—a brick is made.

In return, see that others have a life's work to be done—a brick is made.

Be there food on your table so you will not go hungry—a brick is made. Eat no more than you need to live, so there will be food for others—a brick is made.

Be you clothed so you will be protected from the heat or cold—a brick is made. Give that which you do not use to those in rags—a brick is made.

Be you sheltered so you will be dry and warm—a brick is made. Make it so all have shelter—a brick is made.

Be you receiving when someone gives to you—a brick is made. That others may receive from what you give—a brick is made.

Be you filled in your basic requirements and that of your family—a brick is made. See then that others have the same—a brick is made.

Be you relieved of your pain—a brick is made. Give relief to those in pain—a brick is made.

Be you of vision, though you are blind—a brick is made. Give eyes to those who cannot see—a brick is made.

Be you listening, though you cannot hear—a brick is made. Give ears to those who cannot hear—a brick is made.

Be you heard, though you cannot speak—a brick is made. Hear those who cannot speak—a brick is made.

Be active, though you are lame—a brick is made. Put those who cannot move into motion—a brick is made.

Be you beautiful, though you appear disfigured—a brick is made. See beauty in those who seem to be ugly—a brick is made.

Be you healthy, though you are ill—a brick is made. Give health to those who are sick—a brick is made.

Be you not seduced to use drug or drink in ways which were not intended—a brick is made. Give freedom from enslavement to those who are in its bondage—a brick is made.

Be you quick in mind, though you are slow—a brick is made. Take time to understand those whose wit is dim—a brick is made.

Be you honest, though you have committed crimes—a brick is made. Hold responsible those who have committed a crime, and then forgive them—a brick is made.

Be you caring of a child's well-being, though your well-being may have been taken—a brick is made. See that others are caring of children and their well-being—a brick is made.

Be you courteous to all, and assume no place that is not yours—a brick is made. Allow the elderly, the lame, and children to go before you—a brick is made.

Be you respectful, though you may have been disrespected—a brick is made. See that others respect one another—a brick is made.

Be one who does not take a life—a brick is made. Give mercy to and, yet, hold responsible one who has taken a life—a brick is made.

Be you knowing that you are of greatness, though you may have been belittled—a brick is made. Give in return greatness to those who have been belittled—a brick is made.

Be you trustworthy, taking not that which you have not been given or have not earned—a brick is made. Give trust to others that they may be trustworthy—a brick is made.

Be you soft-spoken with respect in your voice, though you may have been hollered at—a brick is made. Require others to speak softly, and with respect, speak to each other—a brick is made.

Be you gentle with your touch, though you have been made to smart by a heavy hand—a brick is made. See you that no one is laid a hand to—a brick is made.

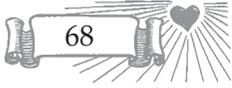
Be you so loving of an animal that you make room in your home for it—a brick is made. Give sanctuary to animals in need—a brick is made.

Be caring of animals, making them neither sick nor injured—a brick is made. Give health to those animals in need of it—a brick is made.

Be you fed by that which has not red blood—a brick is made. Spare the life of an animal that you would otherwise use for food—a brick is made.

Be you respectful of all life—a brick is made. Take not so much that there is no more to come—a brick is made.

Let not a day go by that you have not been giving. Find in all life a reason to give something. God gives life every second of every day.



Should not you render with the same thoughtfulness the sparing of life? Should you not think that all life is as precious as your own?

Think not that no difference is made by your giving, or that any gift you give is insignificant. For I tell you truly, no gift you give is too small that it will not be given back to you to the nth degree.





## THE SCROLL OF DEEDS

**T**hat this leg may stand on solid ground and your deeds begin, thrice-blessed are you who take this third leg to heart. You have blessed and you have given. Take that which needs to be done and do it yourself. Say: 'I am a child of God. My heart beats to do God's will for his children and me. This I can do, for God has made me perfect, whole, and complete. I am made in God's own image and likeness. Therefore, I am all I need to be, and the works I do now anchor fast this leg.'

The work that is done in your name is blessed. The work that is done by your name and your money is twice-blessed. The work that is done by your hand is thrice-blessed. When you see a need to be filled, you first feel it in your heart. Then you are moved emotionally with desire to fulfill the need. Your mind will search for a way to take care of the need. Then you take to task this need, and with your hands, you will fill this need. There is no deed so small that it does not make a brick. Woe unto you who do this only so a brick is added to your mansion. This is done in vain, for no brick is made.





I, by my hand, end the pain of a child—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, dry the eyes of a man or woman—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, soothe anger and rage—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, lead the blind through darkness—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, speak the music of the deaf, that they might hear—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, hear the voice of the speechless, that they may sing—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, bind up the lame, that they may travel their paths and dance through life—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, give comfort to the ill, that they may have health—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, open the eyes of all to see beauty, that none will shun the disfigured—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, raise up the poor, that they may make their own way and have abundant lives—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, feed the hungry so they will learn to feed themselves—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, dress the naked and those in rags with clean clothes, that they will clothe themselves—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, build shelter with the homeless, that they will build shelter for themselves—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, bring the tangibility of love to replace the numbness in the drunkard or the addict, that they might feel the joy of life and release their pain—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, remove the clouds of darkness, so the dim of wit will see they, too, have a place of importance—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, hold those who commit a crime responsible to repay that which was taken, and they are forgiven that which is paid—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, give care, and see to the well-being of children, that they may pass through childhood unmolested by word or action—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will make straight that which I have made crooked through mistake or knowledge, for I am honest—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will make way for those who need a passage, be they young or old—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will not allow a life to be taken, nor will I allow a life to be prolonged to suit my purpose—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will hold up to greatness those who have been belittled—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will not take the life of an animal, nor will I prolong it to suit my purpose—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will open my house and heart to an animal. I will care for its needs and love it as if it were my child—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will build only that which does not destroy the sanctuary of animals in the wild—three bricks are made.

I, by my hand, will set my table with food that does not run red with blood—three bricks are made.

Let not a day pass that a deed is not done. Open your arms to the world around you. Find in all things a deed you might do. God does for you more than you will ever know. Should you not do the same? Should not your deeds be given as freely?

Think not what you do to make little difference, or that it is insignificant. For I tell you truly, no deed is so small that it will not be returned to you unto the nth degree.

Carry this book with you. When you know not what to do, it will guide you. As a builders manual gives you the measurements of work to be done on the straight and level, so does this book give you measurements by which to live your life, that it may be straight and level. Go you now into the world and teach only love, for God is with you all.



Joe did not see Michael leave, nor was he aware of his leaving. Somehow, he knew the angel was with him during the dictation. In two places he had gotten stuck, and twice he received help from the angel. The first occasion had occurred during the writing of the “Scroll of Giving.” He kept starting with “Give you” this or that and could go no further. At that point Joe had said, “OK, Michael, you have to help me on this one. I can’t get past ‘Give you.’”



Joe heard his friend's voice come booming into his ears, "It is not that you give these, but you are these things to give."

The second time he needed help was during the typing of "The Scroll of Deeds." Once again Joe couldn't make sense of what he was writing. Again he asked Michael to give him a hand. Even after writing it once more, he still could make no sense of what he was being asked to write. *How the hell am I to start this scroll about deeds without someone doing something? Screw it*, he said to himself. *I'm going to the bathroom and take a nap*. No great insight came to Joe while visiting the bathroom, as insights often did. So, it was off to bed. First he had to save his work on the computer. "Whoa!" he said out loud as he gazed at the screen. Words he had not typed sat there glittering back at him. "I, by my hand" had been left for him.

"Of course," he said matter-of-factly. "What else could it be?" Inspired by the help apparently left by his heavenly visitor, he sat down and typed until the entire *Book of Bricks* was finished. As he reread it, he realized he remembered none of the text. He knew his hands had done the typing, as if taking dictation, but he was also aware his mind had been in another realm as Michael provided the information. This experience of being present but not aware was an example of the variety of ways Joe interacted with Michael. If he thought he knew the extent of those experiences, he had another think coming. For Joe was about to see what few men in human history are allowed to see. Perhaps this was Michael's way of preparing Joe for what was yet to come.

As Joe continued to read the finished material, he realized how it worked. It was not a list of shalls and shall nots. There was no idiom of right or wrong. These were simply guideposts humanity could use or not use, piecemeal or *in toto*, depending on where each person was in their journey back to God. A sense of pleasure warmed Joe as he began to understand how people could incorporate these scrolls into their everyday lives without a lot of muss or fuss. Everything in the scrolls affords us the freedom to be who we are. *And there is nothing condemning us for what we are or for what we have and have not done*, he said to himself. *I like this just fine, but it appears to take all the control away from religions. It's like getting an instruction book on how to make our lives work. We can choose to use it or not*. Joe could see how the bricks had great worth to any individual wanting to engage with life in a new way. He wondered what the world would be like if everyone really understood what Michael was offering. Without question, it would be a kinder world, a more

loving world, a world where humanity could actually be human. He imagined what it would be like to have a relationship with God based not on judgment or punishment, but a relationship based completely on love, providing us a direction home. No hoops to jump through on the way. *After all, he asked himself, why would God make it hard to get back home?*

The words on the computer screen excited him, inspired him. He knew incorporating all this information into his own life would take a while. That was the genuinely nice thing about Joe: He knew his own limits as a man. He took Michael's opening words to heart, telling him that he was just a servant. But he also took the words on the computer screen to heart. They told him not only how he could better his own life, but how he could better the lives of anybody he passed on the street or sat next to in a coffee shop. He thought to himself, *Even though I have a lot of growing to do, I do believe what I see here will allow me to grow closer to my Maker. I just may have to learn to walk before I can run home. The journey may be a little easier knowing that no one is watching over me, making sure I'm toeing the line. And I don't have to worry about getting home on time, because I will get there when I get there. Yeah. Isn't this nice? It's like we've been sent out to play, to enjoy this grand adventure we call life.*





## THE SEARCH FOR THE SEVEN



## MICHAEL'S GOODBYE

**A**dages often have a way of being right. Like the one, “You don’t know what you have till it’s gone.” Michael had been right: Kathleen was “about her sums” (angeltalk for getting her act together). In its worst form, lupus is a horribly crippling disease. Striking women nine times more often than men, this incurable autoimmune-system disorder can cover its victims with facial rashes, inflict painful arthritic ailments in the joints, or slowly kill with irreversible heart and kidney damage. Kathleen had suffered through bouts with lupus that she thought would end her life. Now blessed with a reprieve, she had every impetus to help her body recover from physical exhaustion and mental fatigue. But this charismatic woman exhibited an unfortunate habit: sabotaging her own well-being. Rather than seize her good fortune, Kathleen lost herself in overly strenuous exercise and poor eating habits. It did not take long before her sickness returned.

If Kathleen had known ahead of time what heaven had planned for her, perhaps she would have paid more attention to herself. It is odd how we humans, with all our greatness, are so willing to don rags of sackcloth and, with shoulders stooped and heads hung, stare longingly through frost-laden windows at the Grand Ball in the palace we call Life. We are self-made prisoners of the Cinderella complex. Had Kathleen suspected she was to

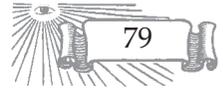
serve as an example to all of us, she might have abandoned her frosty-windowed view. Angels, like fabled fairy godmothers, are none too willing to bedazzle us with knowledge of our future. For it is the journey itself, and not the destination, which is important. Instead of glass slippers, Kathleen had been given knowledge confirmed by the angel that she was one of the seven master souls who were to show others the way to the Grand Ball. She was her own Prince Charming in search of a path to fit her own footsteps.

Something inside urged her to give Joe a call. Picking up the phone, she stood drenched in sunlight before her living room window. “Hello,” came Joe’s gravelly voice on the other end. After exchanging chit-chat, the conversation moved in the direction of concern. “Yeah, I got sick again,” she confessed. “Joe, sometimes I think you’re insane for telling me I’m one of the Seven. I still have no clue what that means exactly. And besides, sometimes I think I’m too screwed up to be a part of this.” Oh, how the beautiful Kathleen loved her threadbare sackcloth.

It made Joe ache inside, the way people were so ready to doubt themselves, to devalue their giftedness. He had seen Kathleen at her best: the way she ran her own business, the way she could be so responsible, even inspirational, with people. She walked into a room the way a swan lands on a lake, with a quiet grace that seizes the eye and won’t let go. There was no denying Joe’s admiration for her professional air, her masterful speaking abilities. “Kathleen,” he finally said, “you’ve got to stop talking that way. Michael has said you’re one of the seven master souls. And he wouldn’t lie. Besides, you are perfect, whole, and complete just the way you are.” This was one of Michael’s quotes Joe loved to roll out repeatedly, the way some people love to post the Stars and Stripes on their front porch, holiday or not.

“I know, I know. You keep telling me that. But there is something inside me that’s afraid to make a lot of changes. The day I woke up under that tree at the Mexican clinic and felt like my old self, I knew the changes I should make in my life. And I thought, *Maybe I will, maybe I won’t*. Something inside was afraid that I might lose Kathleen in the process. So when I came home, I didn’t engage the changes—because I was afraid—and I wasn’t ready. I guess.”

“Are you sure you were afraid of losing Kathleen? Maybe it’s the other way around. Maybe you’re actually afraid of finding the real Kathleen.” The pause in conversation reminded Kathleen of a comedian waiting for a laugh line. But she knew this wasn’t funny, and she also knew Joe spoke from his heart.

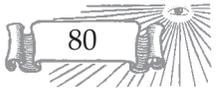


“I don’t know what to say, Joe. I don’t even know for sure if this Seven thing is going to happen, and neither do you. I know I’m committed to go along with whatever emerges, but I’m not going to do too much about it. Interestingly, since the baptism, I’ve had this clarity that’s never left me. Even though I’ve tried to ignore it, it’s become clear to me that everything in my life has accelerated. All my lessons have accelerated, especially my spiritual lessons. There’s something deep within that nags at me, telling me this relapse was a spiritual reminder. And I’m OK with that. It tells me I can do this; I can lick this disease in my own way and in my own time—in spite of screwing up. I will eventually get my spiritual house in order.”

It occurred to Joe that the only thing Kathleen needed was to hear herself talk. And he was glad to listen. As the two friends closed their discussion, Joe made sure to bless Kathleen’s heart. What else could he do? He knew Kathleen was master of her own fate. Hopefully, she would shed her sackcloth, leave her cinder pile, and take her rightful place in life’s palace before a fairy godmother figure had to intervene once again.

Joe had met Kathleen while she was attending one of the courses he taught in human dynamics. Later on, they teamed up to teach a similar class at her own business, and had stayed friends ever since. Joe’s employer provided workshops and training sessions for the general public as well as for organizations wanting their employees to receive leadership training or team-building or classes in how to get along with other employees. Joe would eventually find four of the seven master souls through corporate-sponsored activities. Not that Michael had plans to buy stock in the company. It was that people attending these classes and workshops showed up to grow up. They were sincere about investing in themselves, learning more about who they were as human beings.

Too many days had passed since Joe had updated Deb, the friend who had given him the Russian names. During their long years of friendship, Joe had grown to admire Deb as he did Kathleen. Both women wore their beauty in regal fashion—and it was not a beauty which measured only skin deep. Both were capable of extreme kindness and a frank honesty that could sometimes make others fidget. Deb not only worked hard at everything she did, she also displayed tireless compassion and understanding. Gazing at her California-blond hair and sharp clothing or listening to her soft-spoken voice, one was tempted to assume she was as fragile as a glass figurine. But Joe knew better. He had witnessed her in the corporate trenches where she



could hold her own against strong opinion or pushy character. She was a delightful paradox to him.

Now that Michael had given Joe *The Book of Bricks*, he felt it was time to let her in on the latest. And besides, he had finally written to her Russian friends in hopes they might be able to connect with the right people who would be interested in finding the Valley of the Star that Michael had revealed. The letter told the story about Michael and his message for the Russians. A letter of introduction asked if the bearer could give the angelic information to those who would do more than simply ignore it. And if they could not find the right people, might they direct Joe to someone who could do something. “Well, I’ll just see what happens and take it from there,” he had promised cheerfully while sealing the envelope.

Joe loved the twinkle in Deb’s eyes whenever he handed her the latest the angel had conveyed. She hugged the printout of *The Book of Bricks* like a mother welcoming her child home from school. The envelope to Russia was another matter. That she handled like a sack of uneaten lunch. *What do I do with it?* her hands seemed to say. “Ya know, my husband thinks the land of the bear might be California instead of Russia.”

Joe scratched his head as she rested the envelope on her desk. He couldn’t help but wonder if it would ever escape the patchwork quilt of paper. “Yeah, it could very well be,” he told her, “but I got the impression it was a country and not a state. I could be wrong in thinking it was a country, and if nothing comes of it, I’ll know I was, in fact, wrong about it.”

“How are you doing with all this, Joe? Are you going to be OK if no one believes what you told me?”

“Hey, look,” he countered, throwing his head back in comedic fashion, “it is not my job to make people believe. All that I’m supposed to do, so far, is write it down and get it out for people to read.”

“Aren’t you concerned about what your family and friends might think?” Deb wanted to know if Joe was ready for this. He had wanted her to perform the baptism, which she hadn’t, yet. If Joe wasn’t ready for what might be coming, how could she be?

“People are going to think what they think, and I am not going to stop doing what I have been told to do. If an angel tells someone to do something, I think it would be wise to follow instructions.” A grin angled across her face as she thought about it.

“Would you do me a favor? Next time Michael shows up, would you ask him what I am supposed to do?” The truth be known, Deb was in personal conflict. She just knew she was one of the seven people being called forth the moment she read the first of the manuscript from Joe. Her heart had spoken to her, but she did not know if she could trust her heart. Like Kathleen, she didn’t really believe she was worthy to consider herself one of the Seven. That was part of the reason she had refrained from doing the baptism. She wanted everything to be perfect because she wanted so much to believe in it. This was a woman who could deal with cold reality like few could, but put an angel in her coat pocket and she’d spend the rest of the day wondering whether she was worthy to wear her own coat.

“Just do it,” Joe chided. He loved quoting commercials. “Maybe if you do the baptism you might just be told what to do.”

“I’m not sure I’m ready for that,” Deb countered. “What if I find out? Then what? I don’t think this is any accident that you’re sharing this material with me,” she added. “But what am I supposed to do with it?”

“There’s got to be a reason why I feel so compelled to share this with you. So why don’t you just do the baptism and we can both find out. I have to be going now. We’ll talk again soon.” Joe understood that this phenomenon was scary for Deb. But he also knew that she had to take a leap of faith, just as he had, if she were going to be a part of it all. He dared not tell her how something was already changing in him. That would surely scare her. He understood how newness made people uncomfortable, especially if that newness started being noticed. People might say something like, “What’s happened to you?” And if you told them that you were reading transcripts from an angel, well, they just might think you’d lost your mind. They might not speak to you any more. Newness can do that to a person. Never mind that slapping the word “NEW!” on a tube of toothpaste or a box of detergent was a surefire gimmick to get Americans to buy it. But apply the same label on a human being, and people begin to murmur, or wonder out loud, maybe even turn away. It was as though you’d betrayed your friends by daring to grow. Both Deb and Joe had witnessed such behavior around clients who had participated in company workshops and classes. Their friends had grown suspicious of their positive changes. Perhaps it reflected on the old adage, “Misery loves company.”

Joe was sympathetic to the concerns expressed by Kathleen and Deb. Why, he was finding himself getting less crazy these days while driving his

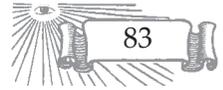
truck. It was not that people had stopped doing dumb things. Now, instead of cussing and yelling at them, he'd just say, "Bless your heart," and let it go at that. Now that's crazy.

It used to be if someone cut in front of him on the freeway, he'd speed up and pass them leaving a patch of blue smoke. No way they could put one over on him, no-sir-ee. But now it was, "Bless your heart," chalking it all up to their need to be somewhere and not be late. What really would have gotten his relatives to talking was his stopping at yellow lights. Well, mostly stopping, anyway. It was legendary how he could gun his car through an intersection without going airborne. Now, he held open doors for the elderly, women, and children. He even let people behind him get in line first. Even his wife would have wondered about that one. Watching the evening news was no longer a grumbling match. Whenever he heard about someone being harmed, he'd say, "Bless your heart," and he'd bless the heart of the person who had done the harm as well. These weren't empty gestures. For he could actually feel that something had happened to these people that caused them to resort to violence, to deliberately harm someone else. Yep, if Deb knew all this, she might never read another word from Michael.

Deb's conversation replayed in Joe's mind later that evening. In the middle of a TV rerun, Michael's voice interrupted. "Joe, you are in doubt. The weight of what you do is heavy with you, and you know not how to lessen it." Joe turned to see his angelic friend standing behind him.

"No kidding, Michael," he replied. "I thought I would do what I was told to do, and in return you would see that things go my way. I bust my hump to get work and make a living, but right now, things are slow." Joe's home-renovating business seemed to be suffering from his divided attention. Things were slow, and it bothered him. "It's not like I am asking for the winning lottery numbers or anything like that. Quite frankly, I could use the money.

"And another thing. What about the Seven I am supposed to meet? Just when might this happen? All I've got is one, and she is working her sums out. No one else is in sight, and here I am writing this book for you. Well, maybe there is one other person. But if it's one of the Seven, how will I know? Do I just go up to people and ask them to follow me? Tell them I will make them fishers of men, like Jesus did? Or what?" The angel's eyes were filled with love, watching Joe's emotions pour out. "Sorry about complaining, but do you think you could give me a hand here?"



“What would you have me do? Give you all the work you could handle, give you the lottery numbers you ask for? Why do you ask for these things? Are you poor? Are you hungry? Are you naked? Are you homeless? How much have you been blessed since you said, ‘OK, God, do with me what you will?’ ”

Michael’s questions reminded Joe of a time when he did not have a home, did not have a job, and did not have money. The war was over, and his idealism had been shattered by the harshness of an angered populace that had looked at him with contempt upon his return from Vietnam. He himself had been numbed by watching friends die during the war. His rifle had been exchanged for a Harley-Davidson, and his navy uniform for black leather. His first year back had begun with his living in a hollowed-out giant redwood tree at Big Sur. He had begun to wonder if life was worth living when one day a strange Presence surrounded him. He didn’t know what it was, but it was quite like the Presence that had filled him with a sense of well-being on the day the USS Forrestal had been blown up. Yes, he had come a long way since those days right after the war.

Michael continued, “What you have now will eventually seem like what you had then.” The angel had read his thoughts. Those days at Big Sur had been lived out of a liquor bottle and the kindness of others—a kindness that would eventually run out. But Michael was speaking of an unending kindness. “God knows what you need and will see that you have it. I promise that money will not be a problem for you and yours. Worry not that your earthly work is slow. For you need it not. Soon this book will be done and you will be about doing God’s work on earth. A hundred times your worth will be yours. In spirit and in riches will you prosper all the days of your life. Trust the path you are on.”

Michael changed the subject: “You have seen two more of the Seven, and they know you.” Joe’s mind swept his memories wondering whom the angel meant. It had to be Deb. But who was the other? His wife, Donna? The only other person he had talked to was Mark, a nice guy he knew from the human-dynamics workshops. It could be Mark. For he had already talked to him about the transcript, promising to show him a copy later. “Tell them not to follow you, that you will not make them fishers of men, for that time is past. Tell them, who would hear, to follow that which you teach, and this will make them tillers of souls. I tell you truly, as the farmer tills the soil to open it so that a crop will grow, so shall you and yours open the minds of

humanity. Love will grow in the depths of their hearts like a seedling grows into a tree. The crop that has been planted will be raised up to God's light and be gathered in His arms to Paradise.

"You are forgiven your complaining, for it comes easily to your kind. Did not Jesus ask that the bitter cup pass from him? Did not Abraham, Moses, and the prophets complain? You see only the beginning of God's plan, and it is almost overwhelming. Therefore you do not know the all of it, and because of this you complain.

"Go now and ask those around you what they want you to ask me. I will answer that which they need to know. My time is done. Be at peace and teach only love."

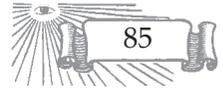
As the angel faded away, a strange thought hit Joe: *What if he is really gone? What if he is not coming back? Boy, wouldn't I have something to complain about then?*

A few days later, Joe called Deb, telling her of Michael's appearance. Based upon what the angel had said, Joe felt she was, indeed, one of the Seven. She had to be. She was the only one besides Kathleen who had seen parts of the transcript and knew the particulars, other than Donna. He'd only hinted to Mark what might be happening. The conversation turned once again to the baptism. Deb had planned on doing the baptism over the weekend, but had changed her mind because of the rains. She still wanted everything to be perfect. He decided not to press her any further. With a sense of daring, she asked Joe if he would ask some questions of Michael that she would like answered.

"You know, I feel a bit excited by this, now. It's like I'm a kid in a candy store who can have anything I want, I just don't know where to start."

"Maybe that's how we are all supposed to feel. Wouldn't it be great if everyone could go through life like a child? Being innocent and filled with amazement like children are?" As they hung up, Joe couldn't help but think how much simpler all this would be if Michael would just give him the names of the Seven, and he could simply call them. As he continued to write down the questions he and Deb had discussed, a startling, "What is it you would ask?" boomed in his left ear. Joe jumped three feet straight into the air. In a move that would make a ballerina proud, he managed a half-pirouette before his feet hit the ground again. It was the angel.

"Don't do that, Michael," Joe gasped, trying to catch his breath. "You could give a man a heart attack sneaking up on him that way. Couldn't you just appear in front of me from now on, so I know you are coming?" There



was a bit of a twinkle in the angel's eyes, as if to say, *You fragile humans. Can't an angel have a little fun?* His eyes kept playing with Joe while his lips stayed motionless.

Finally able to breathe normally again, Joe continued, "I have some more questions for you from Donna, Deb, and myself."

Before he could even ask the questions, Michael began, "Tell Donna she worries as if worry brings value. Did I not tell you riches would be set upon you and yours? When it is time for you to take up that which is yours and cross the land to your new home, I will see that you are supplied with means to do so. Those whom she calls 'the children' will live the life they are meant to." Joe knew he was talking about the four mastiffs. "She would do well to believe with all her heart and trust that they are not only in your care, but in God's care, also. God has guaranteed you a place of prominence on earth and in Heaven. She shall not want for herself or the children. Say to her, 'Know you of all this, wife of God's servant, and your headache will be gone. Guide your husband in matters of money, for he cares little for it. A fool he is not. Yet he would lose it all if left alone. Your job in life is to guard him from himself.' "

A funny look hung on Joe's face. He wasn't sure whether he should be offended or not. He decided that the truth was the truth, and continued his questioning. "Deb wanted to know how she could serve God and see that children are cared for and nurtured. What I think she really wants to know is what her purpose is in all this." From the first moment she had read Michael's teachings, Deb felt in her heart that children were to be her calling.

"She knows as well as you that she is one of the Seven. Act not as if this is a mystery to you or her. Had she not heard the call, she would not have to ask. Know also that your third master is with you. Deb will be known as the one who brings light to the souls of children. She will lift the loads that have been placed on them so they may play as a child is meant to do. She will learn what you teach and take it into the world so that a child will hear."

"What do you mean, third master? I count only two unless you mean Donna. Is she one of the seven, and I just didn't see it?"

"Donna is not one of the seven you will teach. She is a master in her own right, and it would do you well to listen to her counsel."

*It has to be Mark,* he thought. *I'll have to give him a call soon and see what happens.* Joe looked down at his list of questions to see what else he might ask. As was her way, Deb had wanted to share with others the excitement of

asking God any question she wanted. However, her excitement had been checked by her inability to let anyone know what was going on with the angel. Wanting her question to be just perfect, she had asked a friend of hers, "If you could ask God any question you wanted, what would it be?" Her friend had been having trouble with her new boyfriend's children, causing the girlfriend to address that particular issue. Having discussed this with Joe, Deb decided it might be a good question to give Michael.

"Deb has this friend who, it seems, lives with a divorced man. The man's kids are telling her and their father that they are living in adultery. Is this so?"

"Within the laws of man, she is," said Michael. "However, according to God, adultery is much different. When God gave to Moses, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' He did not give his permission to go whoring. If a husband or wife goes to lie down with another, this is whoring and no bricks are made. Divorce is not adultery in God's eyes. It does not please God that a man or woman stays with one who would abuse them. Abuse is the highest form of adultery, and grounds for divorce. Should a man or woman marry or live as husband and wife with one who has been divorced, this is not adultery."

"What about the other commandments? What are they saying?" Joe questioned.

"The only commandment that humanity should concern itself with is the one Jesus has given: 'Love one another even as I have loved you.'"

"Another thing Deb wanted to know is if I may tell the Seven all you have told me?" Deb and Joe had drunk many coffees while discussing the information that Michael had imparted to Joe.

"You are free to tell all that I have told you, save for the meaning of the *Book of Revelation*. This you will only tell to all seven at once, when they are gathered. They will take this teaching to the world then, and not before."

"One other thing we talked about: Which will be completed first, the Seven or the book?"

"The book shall you finish before the year is out. The Seven shall you have before you are half a hundred in years. I tell you this of the Seven so you alone will know." He then went on to tell Joe events that would happen to him and certain members of the Seven. These situations could not be disclosed until the Seven had gathered.

"What is going to happen with the religions other than Christianity? Like Islam, for example, or Hinduism, or Buddhism? You haven't talked about them?"

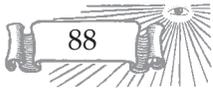
“What you will teach is for all faiths, for all have strayed from the truth. Each has had its prophets enlightening the people as to God’s word. Even as Mohammed is God’s prophet, so are they all. When Mohammed spoke of the infidel, he was speaking of the believers who say they believe and do not. An infidel is not outside of his own religion, but infidels are in each of them. If one seeks the infidel or sinner to enlighten, I say look no further than your reflection in a pond. If you see one there, enlighten him. Should you see none there, you will see none anywhere.” Without skipping a beat, Michael turned his attention to another topic, leaving Joe to wonder why.

**“I will give a second wonder from God. If you will leave the seas unmolested for two years of your time, God will bring forth such abundance in the sea that it will feed the world till the time of change. If you do not, it is you who fish who will go hungry.”**

“Go now. Be at peace and teach only love.” And with that, the angel vanished.

Joe’s mind was weedy with questions. Michael’s teachings were a garden of truths to him, blossoming with answers to long-held questions. Yet each teaching stirred his soul like a gardener mulching stale soil. Along with these lush truths, new questions would spring up like weeds. It seemed like a unending cycle. Why had Michael requested that he not speak of the *Book of Revelation*? For it was there where the real questions persisted like so many weeds. What the angel had shown him was nothing less than stunning. Not to speak of it was like asking a gardener not to pick flowers. Joe began more fully to understand the passage in the Lord’s Prayer: “And lead us not into temptation.” For it was so tempting to tell others about *Revelation*, the real story.

When Michael next returned, Joe was gazing into his lily pond, his mind on the topic of the *Book of Revelation*, which some call *The Apocalypse*. If people could only know the truth of what he had been told. So why had he been forbidden to speak of this profoundness? “Joe, you are not forbidden to tell,” came Michael’s voice out of nowhere. He looked in the direction he’d heard the voice, amused how his thoughts were apparently no secret. “However, if you do tell, you will not be heard. The time is not now for this knowledge. Those who would hear are as green as fruits, and would be bitter unless they are ripened on the vine. That which is picked before it is ripe will, no matter how long it stands, stay bitter until it rots. You would not tell a child something that he could not understand or use until he is grown. There is growth taking place in all those you will teach. Let them grow.”



“I hear what you are saying, Michael, and I will wait. To what do I owe this visit?” Another question hoping for an answer that would add to Joe’s garden of knowledge.

“I come to give you the last and final word of God. You will give this to all nations of the world: **My Lord God honors those who do these works and says: ‘Hear you, my children, that you may live joyously and long. War not with your brothers and sisters, for they will be shown the way of peace. Fear not the mighty armies, for in the time to come I will hold them at bay.**

**‘Replant the lands you have made barren with that which you have taken from them. I will give rain to the lands that have been dry that you may grow food. I will make clean the waters that you have made unclean, as will I the air you breathe and the earth you walk on.**

**‘I will take from you disease and your misshapen bodies so you will be strong. Know that you are loved and will be with me for all time. For I have made a place for you. Fear not death, for you live forever with me. You are of me. Fear not the words of those who damn you, for those who do so are unenlightened.**

**‘I will call each of you into my arms and bestow the gifts of Paradise upon you all. That which you have earned will be multiplied a thousand times over. That which you have given to those I have sent, though you know them not, will you receive a thousand times a thousand as gift.**

**‘My servant has written the truths for you to see. He will teach his masters but for a little time and then will teach them no more. He will send them into the world and teach other masters to teach. Hear them.**

**‘My words are done. My love is not. Blessed are you all, so says I AM, the Lord God.’ ”**

The angel’s words left Joe mesmerized and in need of regaining his composure. By the time his mind had cleared, Michael was gone without another word.

“Michael. Oh, Michael,” Joe called out. But there was no answer. “Are you gone? Oh, please don’t be gone. There is so much I have to ask you yet. Can you hear me?” Joe’s heart pounded with emotion. The thought of losing his celestial companion left an ache in him. “Talk to me if you can hear me, damn it. I need you to tell me ...” His voice dropped off, knowing that Michael was gone. *He could have at least said goodbye.*

Joe sat listening to the water gurgling from the fountain in his lily pond. He felt like he was at a funeral for a best friend who had died. His throat cramped as tears meandered down his rough face, falling with a plink into the pond. How could it be over? Would Joe have to wait until he went home to God before he would see his friend again?

Rubbing his nose, his thoughts snapped back to one of Michael's sentences. *Hey, wait a minute. What is this 'I will teach for just a little time'? Does this mean I am going to die?*

"No, Joe, it doesn't mean you are going to die."

"Michael, I thought you were gone forever and I would never see you again."

"All it means is that God has other work for you. You will not see me again until the Seven are together, but you will hear me in your heart. I will guide you in all that you do not know. All you need to do, is listen. My time with you is done. Get that which you have written out into the world. I will be with you and the seven masters soon. And, Joe, one more thing: Goodbye."

With that Michael faded away just as he had the first time Joe saw him. Longing filled Joe's heart. He knew he would miss the presence, the love, the teachings of his heavenly cohort. But at least he would see him later when the Seven were found. There was only one other thing left for Joe to do: to get the message out to the world. And there was no time like the present.





## JOURNEYS OF THE MASTERS

**D**<sub>EB</sub>

*Nothing. I bear nothing.* She was sure she had done everything right. *Not a darn thing. I've been waiting all this time for this?* Deb reviewed the procedures in her head as they had been given to Joe. The final prayer had been said, a good cabernet wine picked out and poured into a bowl just before sunrise. The sweet smell of fermented grape wafted above what was now holy ground. The baptism was complete. Searching for some kind of sign, Deb turned her head in periscope fashion. *Nothing.* No angels, no sounds, no visions—nothing. All her anticipation, her hope for heavenly direction met with nothing but silence.

Considering how the week had gone, silence was actually not so bad. Of all days to set aside for the baptism, she could find time only on this day: her father-in-law's funeral. Family had gathered, so relatives were occupying the kids, husband, and dogs while Deb focused on her own preparations. She had promised Joe she would “just do it.” The funeral was to be held in the afternoon—plenty of time to spend the morning in prayer and meditation. Deb had always wanted this moment to be perfect, and today was no exception. She had started her morning preparing for the Last Baptism

ritual, retreating to the brightness of the master bedroom for silence and prayer. And here she was at high noon sitting in her back yard, having finally completed the baptism, waiting to hear something from the heavens. And ... nothing.

The heat of the sun was turning Deb's hands and feet to purple stickiness. She had a funeral to go to later. *Better hit the shower before this permanently stains my skin.* A short laugh escaped her lips as she envisioned herself at the church with her arms dyed reddish purple. The family was already wondering why she had escaped to the back yard. If truth be told, Deb wished she could have had the whole house to herself. Because the family as a whole needed time to grieve, they assumed Deb was either seeking a quiet place to do the same or prepare herself for the service.

The shower handle squeaked anxiously as the stream of water shot out. Deb loved showers, especially hot showers. In no time at all, steam rose from the jets of water ready to massage and clean her wine-stained body. As she scrubbed away with soap and cloth, she also scrubbed her mind for answers. Why had nothing happened? She had convinced herself that she would hear something: a word, a phrase that would tell her what role she would play as one of the Seven. Certainly it meant a great deal to her that Joe had conveyed the angel Michael's confirmation that she was, indeed, a part of what was for her a heavenly drama. But why through a second party? Why couldn't she be told directly? After all, this mission to carry forth Michael's teachings was serious stuff.

Her stained legs stubbornly resisted the scrubbing, but repeated washings finally yielded clear skin. Deb laughed at herself. What would the family think of her smearing red wine all over herself because of words from an angel? A professional woman like herself in league with angels. The very thought. Ducking her head under the hot stream of water once more, Deb rinsed her hair as if trying to wash away her thoughts. Time to get ready for the funeral.

Stepping out of the shower and into a swirl of steam filling the bathroom, Deb retrieved a towel at the vanity, sneaking a pleased glance from the large wall mirror above it. Deb loved how the six-foot width of glass filled the bathroom with reflected brightness and a sense of roominess. As she unfolded the towel to dry herself, she watched how her tanned form moved. For a woman in her late thirties, she held her shape rather well, she thought. Exercise was a part of her busy schedule: All things in balance. The

lush towel now covered her head, her fingers vigorously massaging her scalp. All of a sudden, she realized why she kept looking at the mirror.

“Wait a minute!” she said out loud, her body frozen in place. She stood suspended in thought for a few seconds before slowly uncovering her head, not unlike a sculptor undraping a new masterpiece. Her stringy, wet hair framed a face full of puzzlement. How come she could see herself in the mirror? Why wasn’t it covered in steam like it usually was after she took a shower? The bathroom was full of steam—why not the mirror?

*Weird!* she thought. *Ab, it must be the warmth of the sunlight. The mirror is probably too warm for condensation.* A silly grin smiled back at her in the mirror. She finished drying herself off and turned to grab a comb to unsnarl her tangles. Her eyes froze, locked on the image in the medicine cabinet mirror hanging on the side wall. Plainly, she could see the reflection of the wall mirror—covered in steam.

*What is going on?* she asked herself, turning her head back to the main mirror. *What is this?* her mind puzzled as she stood in front of the unfogged wall mirror. Again she turned to the medicine cabinet mirror. And again she saw the reflection of the wall mirror covered with steam. Deb’s mouth dropped open as she continued to examine the cabinet mirror. The reflection of the large mirror appeared to have an arc of condensation across the top with a similar arc curving in the opposite direction across the bottom. In between the two arcs was an oval shape. The more she scrutinized the shapes, the more obvious it became that a large eye was shaped on her bathroom mirror.

Shaken by the sight, she stepped back and once again looked directly into the main mirror. And again, she saw nothing but herself. Immediately her mind searched for an explanation. *Of course!* she laughed. It had to be the nanny. She must have cleaned the mirror and somehow left streaks that were accentuated by the steam. A sense of relief touched her for a moment. It still did not explain why the eye could be seen in one mirror but not the other. Nor did it explain satisfactorily why the bathroom was clouded with steam but the main mirror was not.

Deb rotated her head back and forth between the mirrors like a sports fan watching a tennis match. There was no denying it. The eye could be seen in the reflection of the cabinet mirror, but not while looking directly at the vanity mirror. The tennis match over, her body turned statuesque. Only her lips moved. “Don’t judge it—just accept it,” she said to the shocked person

staring back at her. Turning her head one more time to the cabinet mirror, she began to sob. Lightly at first, as she studied the eye on the mirror. Her whole body began to shake with emotion. No matter how hard she tried, she could not stop weeping. A part of her was scared while another part was flooded with awe. The emotional intensity of logic fighting against heart erupted across her body as she shook uncontrollably, tears washing her soul the way the shower had washed her body.

When the shaking subsided, Deb heard her own voice speak, “You’ll know when it’s time. You’ll know what to do.”

*How odd*, she thought. The voice she had wanted to hear in the back yard at the time of the baptism was the voice she heard from herself now. She had her message. And it had emerged from within herself.

That afternoon, as Deb delivered the eulogy at the funeral, a brightness emanated from her countenance. Her words were not perfunctory, nor was her message superficial flattery. She meant every word she had to say to everyone attending. The spirit never dies. Her husband’s father simply had gone from one home to another. Life was full of wonder that death could not hide. Deb looked at the congregation the way she saw the eye in the mirror looking at her, the new way she looked at herself. Accepting. Loving. Hopeful.



## MARK

There wasn’t any real explanation for it. Joe had just always felt that Mark walked arm in arm with the Sacred. He could be counted on to help out at any seminars or workshops he might attend. Trustworthy—that was a word that fit Mark. The guy was always pleasant, talked only when he had something to say, and when he did have something to say, his words flowed with simple charm and warmth. No glibness, no judgment. Joe didn’t know why all these notions hit him so strongly on this particular day. But they did. Like some landscaper spellbound by the beauty of an unassuming daisy that had never really been noticed before, Joe stood staring at Mark.

*Of course!* the voice in his head whispered. And without another thought, Joe walked up to Mark, his hands jammed into the back pockets of his blue jeans, and blurted out, “You going to be home tonight? I’d like to call you and talk about something.”

A wiggling grin spread across Mark's cherublike cheeks. With eyes that frolicked as if in a square dance, Mark searched Joe's face, wondering what had brought this on. They had known one another off and on for several years. Mark's quest for personal growth had lured him to many seminars and workshops over the years, even to the point of volunteering at functions where help was needed setting up.

"Sure. I'll be home after eight," Mark said.

That evening the two men conversed about what had gone on in their lives since last they had chatted. It mattered not to Joe that Mark was gay, nor did he see his friend as being any different from himself, even though his Black heritage was the source of some interesting stories. Mark felt he could say pretty much anything he wanted to Joe, and vice-versa.

A short lull in the chit-chat provided Joe the opportunity to change the topic to Michael and what had happened in Joe's bedroom. "There's something I'd like to show you tomorrow at the workshop, if you're open to it." After Mark expressed willingness, the conversation was adjourned until the next day. The two men would meet before the workshops and classes began.

Angels were not a foreign topic to Mark. His Baptist roots had provided him a strong religious foundation that had not crumbled when he "came out" to himself. Like many who walked in Mark's shoes, the path of religion was replaced by the broader path of spirituality. There was no reason, in Mark's mind, to disown those who might disown him: friends or relatives who continued to walk the straight and narrow. For Mark's path had plenty of room for others. As he had grown older, he found himself repeatedly able to embrace opposing views, opposing groups, and opposing philosophies, as if he were a human bridge capable of connecting islands of people.

The following morning, Joe flagged down Mark on his way to set up one of the conference rooms. "Here's what I'd like you to read," Joe said, stuffing the computer printout containing the story of Michael and *The Book of Bricks* into Mark's chest. "Let me know what you think of it."

"OK," he consented. "But I have to tell you I don't read too well. Dyslexia. It may take me a while."

"No kiddin'," beamed Joe. "We share the same affliction. I'm dyslexic as well. You can take all the time you need. You're gonna be here the whole week. Right?"

“Actually, I am,” Mark’s eyes twinkled back. *What is this all about?* he wondered. Joe had to get going with his class. He patted his cohort on the back and took off, trusting he would wade through the story when he could.

Three days later, Joe spied Mark at the conference. As he approached, his friend seemed to wear a question mark on his face. “You get a chance to read the manuscript?” Joe asked without a hello or a hi, how are you.

“Actually, I did finish reading it. Once I started, I couldn’t quit. Is the reason for asking me to read it because you think I’m one of the seven souls?”

“Do you feel you are one of the Seven? Does it speak to you?”

“I have to tell you, it *really* spoke to me. The ideas, the words, the mission, all make sense to me.”

“So, you get it. Good,” said Joe. “I tell you what: Have you done the baptism yet?”

“No, not yet,” Mark admitted.

“Why don’t you do the baptism, and we’ll take it from there.”

“Can I keep the printout?”

“Be my guest,” Joe gestured with his right arm like a waiter at a restaurant. A twinge of excitement gurgled up within him. He now knew for sure that Mark was the third of the Seven. *This went nicely*, he said to himself.



Like those before him, Mark took his time doing the baptism. He wanted it to be a special event and decided the day to set out the bowl of wine would be Christmas Day. Company had been invited over for Christmas Eve, the bottle of wine set aside for the following morning. As the evening wore on, one of Mark’s friends spotted the bottle sitting in the bowl.

“Hey, Mark. Christmas cheer?”

“Uh, no, it’s not for what you think.” How was he going to explain this? Choirs of angels appearing to the babe in Bethlehem was one thing, but angels appearing in 1994 was quite another matter.

“What’s it for?” the friend asked, holding the bottle up to the light to see if anything was inside besides wine. No dead worm in it, like his favorite brand of tequila.

“It’s for a spiritual ceremony I’m doing tomorrow.”

“Cool,” his friend concluded, returning the bottle to its resting place. Mark’s eyes rolled in relief. *How are people ever going to understand this stuff?* he asked himself.

The next morning Mark set out the bowl of wine to begin his Christmas Day. Presents were then unwrapped, phone calls made to friends and relatives, and the Last Baptism performed at high noon. Mark had no expectations of seeing angels or visions or of hearing heavenly choirs grace his presence. To Mark, this sacred moment was simply to be cherished. As the baptismal prayer of commitment was finished, however, a sense of knowingness flooded through him. He felt the rightness, the clarity of why this ceremony needed to be done and of why he would live out the messages given to humankind by the angel. Over the coming weeks, Mark would come to realize that this day was the beginning of a new spiritual journey. To dedicate himself on the birthday of Christ to a new message from Heaven was a reward that could only be appreciated in the most sublime of ways. Blessing people’s hearts, living out the guidelines of the scrolls, all this bathed him in a wondrous love. And that kind of love changes a man, makes him more aware of kindness in the world, kindness seeking to flood forth from people, kindness that sweeps away polarization and suspicion. There was little doubt in Mark he had, indeed, been called by Heaven to bridge walls, serve the least as well as the greatest, and quietly span distances over troubled waters. This Christmas Day was meant for him.

“So, did you do the baptism?” It was Joe, calling to wish Mark a Merry Christmas.

“Yeeeeees,” Mark sang back, as if rehearsing a line for one of his opera performances.

“Good. Let’s go out for a coffee or something and talk. You up for that?”

“I wouldn’t mind that. When and where?” Joe loved coffee the way some people love breathing. He was anxious to hear Mark’s take on all that had happened with Michael. He knew Mark would be no different from Deb or Kathleen in wanting to know what these seven people were actually going to end up doing. The truth of the matter was that Joe didn’t have a clue. He was hoping that the seven master souls would somehow tell him. When Michael departed, he had left only a clue as to what might happen—a clue with no directions.



“Mark,” Joe began while hugging his cup of coffee as if it were an extension of his hands, “you’re an opera singer, a taxicab driver, and a travel agent?”

“Yes, that’s right. I tend to have a busy life. All three jobs allow me to enjoy people in different ways. With opera, I get to use my voice to bring joy to people. In my taxi, I meet all kinds of different people with different stories. And some would make your hair curl. I love to bring people together on cruises or plane trips to different lands, so they can escape their drudgery and have a chance to find themselves again. I have a blessed life.”

“If you were like me, dyslexia wasn’t such a blessing.”

Mark chuckled as he raised his cup. “Maybe once upon a time. But, yes, those former times were humiliating and troublesome. Everyone thought I was stupid because I had such trouble reading. The shame I endured is not something I would wish on anyone. In fact, it was worse dealing with dyslexia than it was dealing with being gay. In some parts of Black society, being gay amounts to betrayal of family or manhood. But being dyslexic is almost more shameful, ’cuz you’re made out to be something you’re not. It’s difficult trying to find pride in being thought stupid. But I can find pride in being gay. It’s tough having to convince yourself, let alone others, that you aren’t dumb, that you have talents and gifts, but in different ways than others.”

Joe nodded knowingly. “You’re still active in your church, aren’t you? Isn’t that kinda tough?”

“In a way, yes. In a way, no. My mom’s church is an interesting story. This is a Baptist church, and I never really liked it as a kid. There’s never a sense of a real message for people to hear. I go because I feel that I’ve been drawn there to teach or to help in some way.”

Not too long ago, Mark had put together a travel package to Atlanta for the members of the church. Because of his efforts he became friends with the church administrator. Casually talking with her the Friday night before everyone was scheduled to leave, the subject of gay people in the church had come up.

“Oh, there are a lot of gay people in our church,” she had volunteered. “Yes, there are. And they don’t think that people know.”

*Is she trying to say something to me?* Mark had asked himself. And then she repeated it. *OK, I’m not going to touch this,* he had decided.

Mark went on to tell Joe how the two of them had sat next to one another on the flight back from Atlanta, how she brought up the topic of gays in the church once again. “So I basically told her I was gay. And she said, ‘Well, why did you think I didn’t know that?’ ”

Joe smiled at hearing this. He had given up long ago trying to figure out who was gay and who wasn’t. He’d known straight men with enough kids to form a basketball team who you’d swear were gay. And then he’d known gay guys so straight-acting you’d bet your paycheck they had eyes for every skirt that passed by.

The real issue had come forward when Mark responded to the administrator, “Well, like ... the church doesn’t accept this. So gay people in the church don’t feel accepted. They don’t feel that they can come out and be accepted.” And, the administrator had to admit, “Well, it’s true, the church doesn’t accept it!”

Mark had countered, “There’s something wrong with that, then. There’s a problem there.” In response, she had asked Mark if he wanted to be on the church HIV Committee. “What’s wrong with this picture?” Mark felt compelled to ask. Not waiting for a reply, he pursued his thought, “It’s fine to have me work on a committee that tries to help those with AIDS, but what about the bigger issue? The gay issue still needs to be addressed.”

Her reply had been, “What do you think is going to happen if we have a roll call? Who’s going to show up if I ask for a church discussion on this?”

“How could I answer that?” Mark asked Joe. “Because what I’ve seen in the church—especially the Black church—is that there are *so* many gay people in the church. I mean it’s full of them, but no one comes out. They live in glass closets.”

“Kind of like you were doing?” Joe decided to ask.

“I never really went to church. I just tried to help out whenever I could. With this trip to Atlanta, I just sort of showed up again. But ... I mean ... I guess so—yeah. So everyone lives in glass closets. But then she shocks me by telling me there are married men in the church who are gay, too. And I’m sitting there with my mouth hanging open. And I’m, like, ‘How do you know that?’ ” Mark laughed out loud remembering the scene. He reached over to dab at a small coffee spill. “ ‘Give me some hints!’ I asked her. ‘How do you know?’ It was just really interesting that she was able to pick out many of the gay people in the church who I knew were gay. She’s right, of course. There are a lot of bi men. A lot. It’s quite amazing, actually. At one time I

thought it was the other way around—just a few bi men compared to all the gay men. I’ve come to learn that it’s not true. I’ve also come to learn that more and more people know what’s going on even if you don’t tell them. People don’t want anyone to mention these issues, because that may mean they’ll have to deal with them.” Mark looked up at Joe, who was taking all of this in. The more he listened to Mark, the more fortunate he felt to have him as one of the Seven.

“I know what you’re saying,” Joe finally said. “We seem to be a nation in denial. Rather than face our problems, we’d rather sweep them under the carpet.”

“You’re absolutely right,” Mark acknowledged. “Reminds me of an incident in my Freemason lodge. Not too many people know this, but there used to be separate lodges for Blacks. The lodge for Blacks was known as the Prince Hall Lodge. I didn’t even know that when I became a Freemason. A high-school counselor suggested I go into DeMolay after finishing Boy Scouts as an Eagle Scout. He saw how much I enjoyed working as a leader in Boy Scouts, and felt I could pursue my talents in DeMolay. From DeMolay, where I did very well, I moved into the Freemasons. I was elevated to master of my lodge and ended up representing my lodge at the Grand Lodge, where policy changes are voted on. I’m proud to say that I spoke before the Grand Lodge when the issue came up for bringing the Prince Hall Lodge into common fellowship with the Freemasons. It passed overwhelmingly. It was as if I had been prepared for that moment.

“Years earlier, when I was eighteen—1981 or ’82, I believe—I had gone to DeMolay camp at Greeley, Colorado, near Denver. When I arrived, I realized I was the only Black to attend the camp. Apparently there had been another DeMolay camp where Black members typically attended. I didn’t know this, and had insisted on going to Colorado because it seemed like a fun place to go. I’d only known San Francisco for most of my life. So when camp started, the camp administrator seemed rather uncomfortable, always asking me if anything was wrong, had I been treated well, telling me I could come to him if I had any problems. There were 300 kids and leaders in camp, and I guess he was concerned I might get mistreated or hassled. Subgroups were set up, made up of ten to twelve guys and an adult supervisor. The supervisor of my group was a young police officer by trade. The first thing he did was get the guys in our group to talk about race and anything else that might be bothering us. It went great. We bonded right away. It didn’t take a rocket

scientist to figure out that we began to shine as a group within the camp. We were always having a good time, but also always respecting one another. The same could not be said for other groups, some who got in trouble with their rough-housing, or staying up late, or trying to prove their manhood. I was having such a good time with my group that I made up a song about them and sang it to the guys. It became our camp song.”

“Somehow, I could just picture you in your prime, using music to bring people together,” Joe said. “It amazes me, Mark, how you have this natural sense about you, this natural ability to dissolve barriers, bring people together.”

“Thanks, Joe. But it didn’t end there. The last day of camp was a day-long general meeting. And here I was, this eighteen-year-old kid going up and talking with one of the camp leaders, asking if my presence, my being the only Black man, could be brought up at the general meeting. I felt the tension needed to be broken. The camp leaders were a bit nervous about it. So I decided to give the system a little help. One of the rules of the camp was if you lost your name badge, you had to sing in front of the camp at lunch. And ... gee ... clumsy me ... lost my badge. Standing up in front of the whole camp and singing the most humorous song I could think of did the trick. Let me see. I think the name of the song was something like ‘She Waded in the Water and She Got Her Mmm All Wet.’ After that, lots of the other guys in camp came up and started talking with me, asking me questions. Did I come from an all-Black DeMolay—no such thing. What kinds of projects did our organization sponsor? How well was it received? That afternoon, the topic of bringing more Black kids into DeMolay was brought up at the general meeting. It made everybody uncomfortable. But so what. DeMolay is supposed to be all about brotherhood. And it’s good to do more than spout off about it. We need to live it. Nothing was resolved at that general meeting, but at least the ice was broken. And I believe that set the stage for the overall passage at the Grand Lodge years later for inclusion of Prince Hall as part of Freemasonry. It was the right thing to do, and I am only too glad to have been a part of it.”

This would not be the last time Joe would hear about Mark’s efforts at breaking down walls. And it would not be the last time Joe would marvel about this incredibly gentle man who had the strength to pass through roadblocks with nothing more than a kind word. This dyslexic, gay, Black man was perfect as one of the master souls. Joe could easily see why Heaven had called him forth.



STEVE

Joe's lily pond was like an old friend who always listened. On this day he felt a bit melancholy as the pond reminded him of Michael. How Joe longed for his angelic sidekick. What was he to do next now that Mark had joined Kathleen and Deb? Four more masters needed to be found. Where should he start looking? He didn't have a clue.

That night, Joe logged on to the Internet and signed into America Online (AOL). He wasn't much in the mood for chat, so he decided to hang out in one of the electronic chat rooms and watch as conversation scrolled across his screen. It proved uninteresting to him. *Let's try another room; perhaps something with a spiritual angle to it.* As he entered the room, three others were already engaged in a conversation about healing and the ability to read people psychically. A small grin suspended across Joe's face as he eavesdropped. One of the participants, Light\_Touch, caught his attention right away. The other two onliners were pumping the third for answers about how diseases occur and whether "the light" he was talking about could be accessed by anyone. Light\_Touch seemed to enjoy the barrage of questions and challenges as his words zipped across the screen faster than Joe could read. The more Joe watched, the more he realized Light\_Touch was echoing some of the same concepts Michael had told him. *I've got to get to know this guy,* Joe said to himself, gulping down coffee. Carefully wording a message that would not say too much or too little, Joe zapped an Instant Message from his computer to Light\_Touch that only he would see. Watching his screen for a response, Joe noticed a pause in the words flowing across his computer screen. Apparently Light\_Touch had read the message. Could a response be far behind? Two more gulps of coffee passed before the chiming sound on Joe's computer announced an Instant Message back. It was Light\_Touch. A gurgling laugh rumbled out of Joe like fresh water from an artesian well. It had begun. Joe was in pursuit of the fourth master soul.

Like a fly fisherman teasing a brook trout, Joe mentioned bits and pieces of what had happened to him, feeding Light\_Touch segments of what Michael had given, watching to see how the respondent would react. Each nibble seemed to engage both men more deeply. "Take a look at this," Joe typed as fast as his mumbledy-peg fingers could stab at the keys. A copy and

paste from one of the “Michael files” saved away on his disk drive transferred several quotes, one after the other, in Light\_Touch’s direction. There was a wait. Then a computerized chime, followed by, “We’ve got to talk.” Joe erupted with a loud “Hah! You bet we do.” His fingers searched for the keys as he directed Light\_Touch to the Web site where Joe had excerpts of Michael’s teachings. “Read what is there, and then let’s talk again.” Joe asked his new computer friend to e-mail him after he had visited the Web site.

As he turned off his computer screen for the evening, a sense of relief filled Joe. He could quit worrying. A heavenly conspiracy obviously was in place. All he had to do was not get in the way. He would patiently wait to hear from Light\_Touch. It would take only a day before Joe found out that Light\_Touch’s real name was Steve. His e-mail was direct and to the point. “I’m in,” it started. And from that point forward, Steve was dedicated to doing whatever was necessary to bring forth Michael’s teachings. With a directness Joe was not accustomed to, Steve provided further details on the modalities he used in his healing arts. Joe read these remarks with a grain of salt. *Well, that’s interesting*, was the limit of his response. After all, what comments could Joe make to others when he himself was hoping they’d believe his story that an angel had materialized in his bedroom? Steve seemed to have no problem with such a tale. There were several messages back and forth regarding how many masters had come forth and whether Steve was one of them. Like the rest, Joe encouraged him to do the Last Baptism. One week later, Joe got a phone call from Steve.

After formalities were exchanged, Steve dove right into the topic both men were waiting to discuss. “I want you to know, Joe, that I now know I am one of the Seven. I don’t know what I’m supposed to do, but you can count on me 100 percent for whatever it is I need to do.”

Joe breathed easier. “That’s fantastic, Steve. Something in me knew you were one of the Seven, also. To tell you the truth, though, there isn’t much for us to do until all seven of the masters have come forth. Michael mentioned something about a gathering, but I’m not sure what he was talking about.”

“I can wait,” Steve volunteered. “I’m totally committed. I want you to know that. You can count on me.” If only Steve had known what would be required of him in the future, he might not have been so enthused. For there is a passage in Scripture that states, “From those to whom much is given much is expected.” And Steve had been given a special gift.

Joe decided to carry the conversation over to another subject. “So, Steve, what happened with your baptism? Do you mind telling me about that?”

“Not at all,” he said, clearing his throat. Emotion was already starting to invade his voice. “I was looking for a day when I would have some privacy, and asked for that in my prayers. A few days ago, my partner was called away on assignment, leaving the house all to myself. She thought it was a bit odd that she had been given so little notice to make this trip. But I had to smile to myself.

“It was completely overcast when I set the wine out before sunrise. Kind of chilly out. After pouring the wine into the bowl, I sat for a while praying for protection. The five hours of fasting presented a problem to me because of my diabetes.”

“Hell, Steve, your health comes first. You could have forgone that.” Joe always wondered why healers have the capacity to help others, but rarely have the capacity to help themselves. Diabetes was a serious disease which requires stable blood sugar levels. Joe knew that Michael would not require someone to put himself in danger as part of the baptism.

“I know, I know,” admitted Steve. “But I wanted to participate fully in the instructions Michael left. So I prayed throughout the morning, ‘Lord, please protect me.’ I checked my blood sugar halfway through the morning and it was right where it needed to be. I was doing fine. After that I turned the phones off and stayed in meditation. At the appointed hour, I went out back and did the ceremony. As I started washing myself with the wine, the sun broke through. It was the darnedest thing. Had been chilly and gray all morning. As I finished the prayer for guidance, I started getting hot, real fast. I looked up and said ‘WOW!’ in capital letters. Three-foot high capital letters. The hotness enveloped me while I stayed in prayer. My whole body was hot, not just the parts exposed to the sun. Something was going on within me. It was great. Almost half an hour I stayed there. I got up off my knees, went inside, washed myself, and turned the phones back on. Almost immediately the phone rang. It was my company asking me to come into work. Good timing.”

“So how’d you feel after that? I mean, besides the fact that you knew you had to be one of the Seven Michael wanted me to find? You’ll have to pardon me. I want to know as much as possible what happens to you guys. I keep hearing different things happening to different people. Makes me realize how different you four are.”

“Well, I believe I had what might be called a delayed reaction,” Steve decided to confess. “Something happened two days later. It was like I was a different person. At first, that kind of bothered me. But after I did some healing work on a friend of mine, I realized that even the healing energy that flows through me was different. Something’s changed. It’s more powerful, more pronounced. And people notice it. It left me wondering about what I need to do with my life. I have a job and all. But I’d like healing to be my real job. I’d like to be able to make a living at it. But how? What do I do?”

There was a pregnant silence on the line. “Well, ya know, Steve, there’s only one person that can answer that. And it’s you.”

This would not be the last time the topic of avocation versus vocation would come up in discussions between the two men. Over the following months, Joe would come to respect Steve’s gift. The two men would visit with one another and Joe would watch as Steve worked on people. Steve felt changed in more ways than one by committing himself to Michael’s teachings. More and more, an awareness of the fabric of life that extends from one human to another, from humanity to all of life, touched his soul. Although his relationship with Joe had started out on a computer screen, he would grow to become close friends with this servant of God, who talked with an angel named Michael. Steve’s life was no ordinary life. Perhaps it was never meant to be. As much as Steve loved having these marvelous events open him up, little did he know he would be destined for changes even he could not foretell. Perhaps Joe should have warned him or at least discussed with him that much is expected from those to whom much is given—both by heaven and by humanity. But even Joe did not fully understand the magnificent process unfolding as the seven master souls began their journeys toward one another.



## SHARI

On an occasion or two, Joe had noticed Michael display what could only be construed as a sense of humor. It made him wonder if this whimsy was indicative of I AM as well—that Heaven possessed what humans might consider a divine funny bone. It had taken discipline on Joe’s part not to burst out laughing when Michael asked him—a dyslexic—to write a book.

What he did not know was that he would not be the only paradox in the making. He was about to discover another.

Over the passing months, Joe constantly scouted for anyone who might drop out of the sky with a sign attached to their back—"I'm the fifth. Come and get me!" Something caught Joe's eye at one of the week-long corporate conferences. The fascination started at one of his sessions when a classy blond woman named Jennifer announced during the introductions that she was a lesbian. "And I'm here with my life-partner, Shari." Every head turned as Shari rose as slowly as a dawning sun, her six-feet-plus stretching above the sitting crowd. With head bowed slightly, as if in prayer, Shari waved politely, even shyly, her soft, low voice forcing out a "Hi." She looked as though she could qualify as one of the legendary Amazons, except her demeanor and gentleness draped over her a bit clumsily. She was a pussycat hiding in a mountain lion's body. Joe figured she could arm wrestle, if not throw, any guy in the room. The more he listened, the more curious he became. Shari had converted to Buddhism where love for all and her desire for personal, spiritual freedom could escape the constraints of Judaism. Jennifer's entrance into her life had added to her self-discovery on many levels, both women seeing no reason why love such as theirs should be hidden or stifled, even in public.

After comparing notes with Mark, who was helping out, Joe found a quiet moment to introduce himself to the two women. The more he heard from them during the remainder of the week, the more drawn he was to share Michael's teachings with these two dynamic people. It turned out that Shari was a free-lance photographer who was also into meditation and chanting. Her curiosity and questioning of what Joe had to say contrasted with Jennifer's watchfulness and careful declarations. Before the conference was over, Joe had placed a copy of the manuscript in Jennifer's hands, not knowing that Shari would snatch the document to her bosom the first night home.

As her eyes traveled over the angel's words regarding gays and lesbians, a rush of nervous warmth flowed through her. *Hmmm*, she said to herself, *Why did you give this to me, Joe?* Her eyes became a lioness hunting the text for more words of truth. The inner hunger gnawed at her. She might have stayed up all night had not sleep ended the pursuit.

Finally, during phone calls back and forth between Joe and Shari, she opened her soul even more, to the point where she drove over to Joe's house for a long talk. When their cascade of words fell silent, her eyes were cold

with intent, as big as two full moons against the darkness of her hair. She wanted nothing less than the truth. “I really feel I’m supposed to do this, but I don’t know where or how I fit in, with my Buddhist background and all. I don’t want to give up my Buddhist teachings or my Buddhist practices.”

A broad smile invaded Joe’s face. This was the first time anyone had taken Michael’s teachings so seriously as to think of them as a way of life, a set of disciplines. *What a spiritual warrior you are*, thought Joe. Clearing his throat with a swig of espresso, he spoke deliberately. “You don’t have to give up anything, Shari. Michael’s teachings aren’t asking you to give up anything or to replace anything. It’s a kind of enhancement to whatever path you’re already on.”

After thinking about it for a minute, Shari came right out and asked, “Do you think I am one of the Seven? And if so, what am I supposed to do?”

“I don’t know if you are the fifth of the seven masters. Only you will know that. And if you find out you are one of the seven master souls, then there’s going to come a time after I’ve gathered all seven when I will teach the Seven to teach. And *what* I’m going to give them, *how* I’m going to teach them, I have no idea. Michael hasn’t told me that yet.”

Like those before her, Shari decided the Last Baptism would be the deciding factor. She and Jennifer traveled into the desert to a friend’s house. And on the day of the summer solstice, both chanted, prayed, and meditated until the sun reached its zenith. By sunset, Shari knew she had been called to carry forth Michael’s teachings. Jennifer would bless her efforts but not join in them. The love they had for one another was like a fortress, and within that fortress would reside their spiritually parallel worlds. Shari could dare to venture outside this safe haven to explore new worlds. Because of this safe oasis for the heart, Shari the pussycat would soon discover that she could open fully to the power of the mountain lion. It meant that she, as a woman, as a lesbian, as a spiritual teacher, would have to recognize and embrace all of herself as she had already embraced all others.



BEN

If the Internet had worked once, why not again? Joe was growing restless wondering whether the sixth master would show. By process of

elimination, he knew the last two of the seven had to be men, since all three women were already in place. Nights at his computer, pecking away his keyboard, proved fruitless. Steve provided moral support with a faithful stream of e-mails, asking if it might be better if others joined in the search. "Sure," was Joe's response. Michael had said nothing about who had to find these people; they simply had to be found. With typical dedication, Steve also began mining the Internet. Several conversations were started, and over a year's time, one person in particular seemed to stand out. His screen name was Music\_Man, but he later told Steve his real name was Ben. In personal e-mail, their conversations turned more inward, more spiritual, more personal. Messages flew back and forth between the two men, Ben inventing more questions than Steve had answers for. As the friendship grew over time, Steve found out that Ben worked on the World Wide Web for a living, usually creating website pages for clients who contracted with the company that employed him. Oddly enough, Ben was not a techno-nerd by profession. His master's degree was in music, specializing in piano and French horn. Several nights a week he played for the Community Orchestra, conducted a church choir, or played organ at the Jewish temple. Ben was one of the most talented and unusual men Steve had ever conversed with. Eloquent, joyful, and witty, he constantly bounced between extremes.

Even though baptized as a Baptist, Ben chose to honor the Jewish heritage he inherited from his father. Through his own efforts he studied Judaism, and in his own inclusive way practiced Judaism as a Christian. Although few might understand his capacity to pull off such a melding of two poles of religious thought, Steve easily recognized Ben's ability to walk as a living example in both camps. He saw in his friend the kind of love that knows no bounds, the kind of love that could span from one end of the cosmos to the other. His friend seemed to relish the dualities of humankind. Perhaps it was his way of displaying his own belief that dualities, for all practical purposes, are manmade illusions. Ben could talk hi-tech one night and high spirituality the next. He could provoke Steve into thunderous laughter with his tongue-in-cheek anecdotes. Yet, there were those other times when Steve nearly wept for him. At times, Ben's personal life mimicked a Shakespearean tragedy. For those who sometimes love too much, such tragedies are a part of life. And Ben seemed to understand even that paradox. Consequently, nothing could sway Ben from his own journeys in pursuit of enlightenment. Yet, the greater the light that shone in his life

and in his heart, the greater the shadows that formed in his personal life. Over ensuing months, long letters back and forth between the two men fostered a growing friendship that would eventually escort Ben to Joe's e-mail address.

e-mail: Joe Crane  
from: Music\_Man  
subject: Hellos & Halos

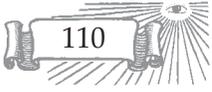
Dear Joe,

Steve has suggested I write you about the friends you pick up in the oddest of places. He tells me that only you could make friends with a perfect stranger showing up in your bedroom while your wife is sleeping beside you. However, I try to remind him that I could display remarkable courage with 700 pounds of fanged dog meat standing guard next to me. :)

Over this last year, Steve and I have corresponded back and forth. At his suggestion, I have read your "Book of Bricks" and have performed the baptism. It has taken me a while to come to this conclusion (good things take time), but I do believe I might be one of your Seven. Now that I've said that, I feel like running to the nearest cave and hiding in it.

Ben's letter went on, giving Joe a brief description of his spiritual path and the many directions it had taken. His latest path had been in the realm of healing energy, in which Ben was studying to become a Reiki master, a healing discipline requiring its students to learn how to tap into the Universal, the Source, the Oneness of love that heals all. He and Steve had involved themselves in long discussions regarding Steve's own healing techniques, which also incorporated Reiki modalities, among others. Ben felt his spiritual journey was ready for the next step. And, like the others Joe had worked with, Ben wanted to know what was the next step.

During the past year, Joe had heard from several others. Like Ben, they had expressed an interest in being considered one of the Seven, but in the end, after doing the baptism, found themselves called to other tasks, or felt



this journey was ultimately not theirs. Something about Ben appealed to Joe. So, without hesitation, he pounded at his computer keyboard, sending a response.

e-mail: Music\_Man  
from: Joe Crane  
subject: Steps

Dear Ben,

I am pleased to hear from you. You asked what the next steps were. The truth of the matter is that I don't know. The angel only told me to find seven master souls, and then to gather them. Until I find the seven souls, I'm not sure what is going to take place. Steve has sent me a few messages over the past months about you. It's a pleasure to finally meet you one on one.

I guess what I'd like to find out, is what happened with your baptism, your reaction to it, and how you felt afterwards. Then perhaps we can discuss where to go from there.

Bless your heart,

Joe Crane

The engagement had begun. Over the ensuing week e-mail flew back and forth between the two men. Joe observed carefully the trust that Ben walked with, the tenderness of his heart, the innocence of his spiritual path. One particular e-mail that told Joe Ben was, indeed, one of the Seven. It was more than e-mail, it was a confession of the soul, an outpouring of human wonder.

e-mail: Joe Crane  
from: Music\_Man  
subject: Holes and Wholes

Dear Joe,

It hasn't been an easy year for me. Things at home, my emotional life, my professional life, were not stable or gratifying—for various reasons. I was

working in a place that did not want me. They made it very well known. I'm a very creative person; I was not doing creative work. Also, I had no sanctuary, neither at home nor at work. There was no place for me to be me. However, I've been involved with spiritual studies for the last 15 years—in fact, I don't know when I WASN'T spiritual. I worked at a place where I had an office cubbyhole ... a "cubby space" we called it. And the person next to me was not always aware of how he affected everybody else in the office—he was very loud. He would play sound bytes on his computer very loud. He was annoying and disturbing, and I'm supposed to be dealing with customers.

One day, I got an e-mail from Steve. Basically, the e-mail said, "You need to read this book. Here is the URL on the World Wide Web. I've talked to Joe, and I think you are one of the Seven. Are you?" That's all it said. Right there, I felt something within me, and went straight to the website. It was your book about Michael and the scrolls he had given you. As I was reading it, I had this love-rush, which told me I needed to keep on reading. About that time, the nerd next to me started blasting out one of his sound bytes on his computer. It was the "Theme from the Magnificent Seven." When I first heard it, I thought, "Oh, the theme song from the Marlboro Man commercial." Having a second thought, I remembered our orchestra had just played that piece. It was the "Theme from the Magnificent Seven." I reread Steve's comment about being one of the Seven, and thought, 'Maybe I am. Whatever the Seven are.'

Not wanting to take work time to finish the book, I downloaded a few chapters to my computer; took them with me to lunch. I couldn't put it down. Kept missing my mouth with food. When I got to the chapter about the baptism itself, I knew that this was something I needed to do. It made sense with all my other spiritual studies.

After downloading the rest of the document, Ben finished the entire manuscript that night and into the next day. The more he read, the more he

wanted to read. He was transfixed by everything that tugged at his soul. A quick e-mail was sent out to Steve thanking him profusely for leading him to this wondrous book of teachings. He could not yet answer Steve's question as to whether he was one of the Seven. He needed to perform the ceremony with the wine, first.

I had decided I HAD to do the baptism. But, being the thinker I am, realizing that this was October with the first snow already on the ground, I kept finding reasons why I couldn't do it. After all, I live on the second floor of an apartment complex with residents all around. No privacy. The balcony wouldn't work as 'ground' or 'earth.' If I put a bowl of wine out in another person's yard or in a park, it could be stolen. Wine wouldn't last long if one of the indigents found it. You get the idea. I had no sanctuary.

Like Steve, Ben wanted to be able to enter fully into the sacred ritual spoken of by the angel. But Ben held several jobs. Doing the baptism during the week was out of the question because of work constraints. And on Saturdays he played organ at temple, including bar mitzvah services in the morning. Sundays were usually taken up with obligations with the symphony or Freemasonry functions or traveling to see relatives. There was no way he felt he could tell his wife what he was about to do, so he could not sit down and ask for a day to himself. Before he knew it, Thanksgiving had rolled around. The weather was now fully into winter. All of October had hovered around zero degrees. And November was not much better. The Thanksgiving holiday provided a window of opportunity which Ben kept eyeing.

As it turned out, because Thanksgiving is on Thursdays, an interesting scenario began to develop. My wife and I joined the rest of my family in Southern Illinois. When my obligations drew me back to town to play for services on Friday night and Saturday morning ... well, I knew this would be the only time I would be alone.

Saturday morning turned out to be a warm front—it was 23 degrees. So after Friday night services, I returned to my somewhat empty apartment complex to find a place to do the baptism in private. In one of the commons

areas, there was open space, almost a field with some bushes in one section. I realized I could hide the bowl of wine in the bushes. It wouldn't get full sunlight, but it would get enough for me to do the baptism. The next morning, I got up at dawn, carried the wine and the bowl, with a flashlight in the other hand, a quarter mile (it's a huge apartment complex) to the open area, and left the bowl of wine there. I looked around knowing it would be safe from man and weather. Any other day the wine would have frozen completely before the washing.

I returned to the apartment for quiet time, prayer and meditation before heading off to play at the bar mitzvah. This was a holy day for me, having all of God's services in my hands as well as squeezing in time for the baptism. I got back from the morning services, put on my sweat pants and tank top so I could wash my arms and legs without too much trouble. With a light windbreaker covering me, I stepped outside and ran to the spot where I had left the bowl of wine. If you could have seen me you would have laughed. Thank God no one did see me. Some weirdo, scurrying across the commons in sweats and into the bushes is enough reason to call the cops. I breathed a sigh of relief once I reached the bowl, being thankful it had not been removed or stolen. I quickly looked around to see if anyone could see me as I started removing my jacket and shoes. I tried to think of the sacredness of the moment, but could not stop myself from visualizing some neighbor's relative peering out the window and asking cousin Myrtle what this guy was doing over in the bushes. Thank God for football. Nobody was looking out any windows. Probably glued to the TV set.

I should have been chilled to the bone as I started the washing ceremony, but I wasn't. A welcome warmth completely surrounded me. Of course the wine was freezing cold, but my body didn't react to it. After saying the thanksgiving prayer at the end, I waited in contemplation as long as my body would allow in the cold weather. After slipping my shoes on over my purple feet, I tip-toed back to the apartment as fast

as possible, trying not to drop the bowl. After taking a hot shower, I jumped into the car and drove the hour-and-twenty-minute trip back to family and food. No one suspected a thing.

Joe had to laugh, picturing Ben sneaking around in the dead of winter, hiding in bushes, performing secret rites in the middle of a busy neighborhood. It wasn't just the story that warmed Joe's heart, it was the totality of sacrifice and effort from Ben which spoke to him. He was, indeed, one of the Seven. Ben's concluding paragraph in his e-mail message said it all.

From that day forward, I felt blessed with a sense of peace of mind, a knowledge that I possessed a sanctuary that no one could take away. It was not a physical place outside of me; it dwelt within. That Thanksgiving was one of the most beautiful times of my life spent with family. A great clarity has filled me since that day. My needs were no longer empty holes, but opportunities to be addressed, and filled with love. Something had changed in me, and I knew I had to change things around me. I started making those changes, getting a new job, speaking more openly about the tensions at home, addressing my own personal issues. It was a great blessing. Thank you, Joe, for being the conduit of that blessing. And as you always do with others, I now do for you:

Bless your heart.

Ben





## THE MISSING SEVENTH

Sometimes the most common of lessons in life are learned in the strangest of ways. Cult figures from Jonestown to Waco have shocked our senses with disturbing scenes on our TV screens. They have shown us how willingly we, as observers, give up our free will; they remind us how eager we can be to surrender our own power, our own rights in decision-making, to others. It never occurred to Joe that Michael's words might effect such kinds of responses, for the simple reason that the angel constantly sought those who would carry on the teachings by realizing their own giftedness, their own inheritance as master souls.

But what does it mean to be a master soul? Michael's words, "You are perfect, whole, and complete just the way you are," warmed and affirmed any who heard them. But such a message began to bump up against the fact that these six people who had now dedicated themselves to the angel's messages were all too human. Joe would ponder over the contrasts confronting him every time one of these six people sent e-mail or telephoned, questioning their worthiness or what role they could possibly have. These people worried about paying bills, anguished about love, fussed and complained about personalities at work, and daily stared into their bathroom mirrors ever asking the question, "Who are you?" How could any

observer reconcile this apparent paradox in these people? How could these people, called forth by heaven, be so human and also be called master souls? Weren't these people just like the rest of us? Maybe so, maybe not.

Somehow, each one knew he or she was one of the Seven. But how? Each had some spark burning deep in their hearts, telling them that a brighter world lay ahead. These sparks were to be applied to tinder made of the inherent tenderness residing in us all. These sparks portended a burning future threatening to ignite the hearts of all humanity. They didn't know how this was to happen, but something within each smoldered with a hope that simply could not die. Not until later would the secret of the mystery, this smoldering hope, flame into full view. But until that time, both they and Joe confronted the light bouncing back from their morning mirrors. Is the image in the mirror the truth, or is it illusion? Even scientific fact tells us the image in the mirror is the reflected opposite of who we really are. But who among us stands there each morning before the glass and says, "What I see is the opposite of who I really am"?

What the mirror does not show us is the light that cannot be reflected by glass. It is reflected only in each and every one of us. Deb understood that, now. The miracle of the mirror, after her baptism, had taught her never again to trust the image she saw only with her eyes. She knew that what really counts is what she sees with eyes that can look into the soul of another. And, as she had learned in her own shocking way, all the answers are to be found within. That is where the master resides. Some part of us, some small spark waiting to burst into a bonfire of grand light, whispers deep within, "All the answers are to be found here. Look here. Seek here. For this is the place of the master that is you. To see is to feed the flame. To love is to unleash the flame. Teach only love, and the master is reborn."

Time was running out for finding the last of the Seven. Joe's birthday was only a few months away. Michael had said he would find all seven before the end of his fiftieth year, and he was beginning to wonder if the angel had made a mistake. Usually, Joe took care of the December training sessions at conferences or corporate-sponsored events, as he had done for the last thirteen years. It had become his Christmastime celebration. But this December he contracted the flu, which put him in bed in a way he never wanted to be bedridden again. Because someone else covered for him over the Christmas season, Joe moved his training schedule to cover January. Ever watchful for the missing seventh, it was at one of the sessions where

he spotted Keith. *All I need is one gay man*, he said to himself. It wasn't that Keith was flamboyant or effeminate or a flaming queen or anything like that. But Joe just knew he was gay. He'd been around enough gay men to catch certain phrases, recognize certain attitudes about give-away topics, to pick up on Keith's orientation. The guy was humorous, loved to crack jokes at just the right time to get everyone laughing. Joe's eye kept examining him like the Pink Panther spying a tempting jewel. Joe argued with himself, *I'm here to train people, not to scout prospects for finishing the Seven. But ... maybe ... just maybe ... this is the right guy*. It was Joe's job to make sure those who signed up for these human development courses got something out of them, or created something out them. *But I like this guy, I really like this guy*, he confessed the next day, and the day after that. *And it's like ... he would be great as a spokesman. People would like him as much or more than I like this guy*. But then the professional side of him would kick in again after Keith got the entire roomful of attendees laughing at themselves.

Finally, in one of his weaker moments, Joseph walked up to Keith after one of the classes and handed him a copy of his manuscript. He was short and to the point: "I'd like you to read this. See what you think about it." Keith was left there with a blank look on his face as Joe exited the building. The first page had only a title on it: *The Book of Bricks: Blessings, Gifts, and Deeds*. Keith looked back up at the closing door and muttered, "Well, OK. Sure, Joe, I'd be glad to read this," commenting to an invisible audience. Keith was a businessman as well as a student of personal growth. Not only did he own his own florist shop and employ or contract with several people, he also owned his own house and was in a new relationship. Now in his thirties, Keith had found a stable lifestyle by daring to take risks and enjoy the adventure of it in the process. He pressed forward with all life had to offer. The next night he read the entire manuscript. After turning the last page, he stared at the ceiling and said one word: "Wow!"

Late that night, he called Joe at home, conveying how profound the writing had been for him. Like the others, Keith asked if he was one of the seven souls. And like the rest, Joe confessed he did not have the answer to that question, and then asked if he had done the baptism. After saying he hadn't, Keith then opened his heart as wide as cathedral door, telling Joe that if he was one of the Seven, he was willing to do whatever was needed for him to do. He'd sell his house and give the money to Joe to use in any way that was needed. He'd even sell his business.

As Joe listened to this outpouring of generosity, he began to get scared. Never had this happened before. And never had he thought of himself as a Jim Jones or a David Koresh. “No, no, no! Keith. That’s not what this is all about,” he protested in the gentlest way he knew. “Look, this is what you need to do. You need to do the baptism. You need to take time out for yourself. Do the baptism, and see what opens for you. You will either get pretty clear that you are one of the Seven, or no, you are not. If you feel pretty clear that ‘No, I am not,’ then Keith, you probably are not. Now, Keith, I want you to know that this wouldn’t degrade you or devalue you in any way. It’s *your* choice, not mine, not anybody else’s. And whatever is in the manuscript is still very valid. There’s still stuff in there that can assist you in your life. And there’s no rush into this. If not now, maybe later on.”

Keith reiterated his openness and said he’d do the baptism. Joe wanted to make sure this wonderful man understood why he had given him the manuscript. “Please ... you’ve got to remember that this isn’t about what you’ve got to give, not about your worldly possessions, or anything to do with—more or less—buying your way in. If it turns out that you aren’t to walk your path with me, then don’t go looking for someone else, and give him everything you own. Because the truth of the matter is that God doesn’t really need your money, or your house, or your business.” The conversation left both men a bit rattled. As each hung up, parts of the conversation echoed in their thoughts.

That night, Joe took a long and hard look at himself. How could this happen? Because of scenarios that had occurred in workshop exercises, he was aware he could command a strong presence in a room, that he could come across as a powerful guy. He’d even had people go up to conference supervisors and ask if Joe was going to staff the session. And upon finding out he was to facilitate the exercise, they would state, “If he’s the trainer or facilitator in this course, I’m leaving!” Such occurrences did not bother him, for they spoke to the role he played in getting them to examine their own lives, to get them to give up past behaviors that had sabotaged their professional or personal lives. It made him feel good that he worked with people who were trying to move forward on new paths. But what Keith had lain before him was different. It jolted him out of his pride and forced him to examine his own ego. It took all his professional expertise to force himself to do what he had asked thousands in his classes, over the years, to do. With trepidation he had to admit how tempting it was for him to actually

say yes to Keith, to have this talented and gifted man hand over his life. *Sure! Sell your house, join me. And sure! Sell your business, give me the money,* he could hear himself saying. And it troubled him deeply to know that the temptation was not imagined, it was real. He saw himself for the first time in a way he never had before. This whole Michael “thing” had to be handled more carefully than he had previously thought. There existed a greater responsibility than he had ever dreamt. *I’d better be damned clear how I participate in this endeavor,* he concluded to himself. *I’d better make sure there is no misunderstanding that anyone should ever feel like Keith felt tonight.* And with that he turned on the TV to let his mind go. But he could not put Keith out of his mind.

While Joe waited to hear from Keith, e-mail from Steve announced another find. This wasn’t another candidate for sevenhood, it was a wonderful woman on the Internet who called herself the AngelScribe. Steve felt Joe ought to chat with her on the computer, for she not only had wonderful things to say about his website book, but also was interested in promoting him in the Pacific Northwest. How Steve managed to find people was a constant wonder to Joe. The guy was a spiritual detective in search of any source of angelic information. It was enough to make a person wonder how he could work his high-tech sales job, attend healing sessions, and canvass the World Wide Web like some cyber-detective. It didn’t take long for AngelScribe, whose real name was Mary Ellen, to become fast friends with Joe. They talked about everything under the moon. The two were like bread and jam, and it was obvious that Mary Ellen was the jam. She was as sweet as they come, always full of good humor and positive comments. Not only was she willing to sponsor speaking engagements for Joe, she told him about the many people in her area who would love to network with him.

A couple of days later, Keith called. The conversation started out in a much calmer tone than when they had left off. He had performed the baptism. The event had left him with a sense of spiritual connection, which he felt most grateful for. He also described how he felt everything in his life was going to be OK, on course, filled with divine guidance. He felt very satisfied with himself and with life. But, “I don’t feel called to participate as one of the seven master souls,” he confessed to Joe, almost apologetically.

Afterwards, Joe reminisced about how strongly Keith had felt called to sell all his belongings and join him in his angelic mission. He mused over the courage it must have taken for this man to confess, No ... this isn’t for me. This isn’t what I’m supposed to be doing, or the vehicle for me to be doing

it. Such courage, such honesty was just what Joe was looking for in his search for the Seven. It made him want Keith as part of the “team” all the more. Perhaps this dynamic man would change his mind later. At least Joe hoped he would, before his birthday arrived in eight weeks.

A week later, e-mail arrived from Mary Ellen. Not only had she arranged for Joe to travel to the Seattle area to talk about Michael and his teachings, she had also discovered another author of an angel book with a similar message to his. “His name is Gary. And not only is he a great guy, like you are, he is also gay. Joe,” she had typed at the end of her message, “I think he is your missing seventh.”





## THE LAUGHING ANGEL

**I** should have never said never.” Gary frowned at the face looking back at him in the mirror. As he leaned closer, inspecting his beard, his breath fogged the glass, reminding him how cold January mornings can get in Seattle. “Angels,” he huffed to himself as he slid the razor across his face. He liked talking to himself in the mirror, not for the companionship, but for a reason he would admit to no one. It pleased him to wake up each morning and wink at the baby-faced gentleman in the bathroom mirror. And he purposefully used the word “baby-faced.” For a man in his fifties, he could pass for early forties or possibly late thirties in a kinder light. But like so many other parts of his life, Gary tried to keep his vanity a secret. Washing the foamy soap off his face, he checked for missed whiskers. Yes, he should have known better than to promise himself he would never disclose to anyone his hidden intentions. It was one thing to tell Mary Ellen and then Joe that there was no way he would be or could be the last of the Seven, but quite another to conclude that he would secretly support Joe and his messages from the angel in any way he could. Such secrecy bordered on arrogance. For he should have known that when it comes to angels, there is no such thing as a secret.

Requests for booksignings and speaking engagements were stacking up for Gary—thanks mostly to Mary Ellen’s dynamism. The woman seemed to

have an endless enthusiasm that proved to be infectious. *Surely*, Gary thought, *I can endorse Joe's Book of Bricks and encourage my own sponsors to invite him to speak without his knowing it. Innocent enough*, he convinced himself. No one need know what he was doing, and he could operate anonymously as one of Joe's supporters. Or so he thought.

Perhaps his first undoing hid behind his decision to perform the baptism the angel had taught Joe. He argued with himself whether he should even bother. True, it would be a symbolic act of solidarity in support of the messages Joe spoke of. And, true, since he was planning to perform the ritual in secret, it certainly would do no harm or imply any commitment on his part. Perhaps what kept Gary from actually setting a bowl out before sunrise was his busy schedule, or perhaps his own respect for ritual of any kind. To further complicate matters, he had sandwiched in a ski trip up to Whistler, British Columbia, to give himself a much needed rest. That meant the entire months of January and February were completely booked up. If he were to secretly carry out the Last Baptism rite, the only open time slot would be the morning of departure for the ski trip. As he scrutinized his calendar, he saw the only time to himself in the two-month period ahead was that specific morning. His best friend had left him the key to his house in Seattle, since the whole family would be gone that week. With no one at home, this would be about the only time he could try the symbolic act in privacy. It would have to be that morning or no morning at all.

The debate to enact or not to enact the baptism bounced around inside him with each approaching day. *Sure, it would be nice to show this kind of clandestine backing for Joe and his messages*, he argued to himself, but something way down deep inside him felt uneasy about it. Some ancient kind of memory seemed to reach out at him, lingering quietly, almost haunting him with a knowledge of the consequences if he dared to engage the angelic kingdom once again. *I know I'm not one of the Seven*, he would whisper to his soul. But what really bothered him was how the whisper would not echo back, as if the remark had gotten lost in some abyss within him. He shivered at the thought.



The snooze alarm went off for the third time before Gary finally rolled out of the waterbed. Slipping his sneakers on over bare feet, he stumbled down the stairs with untied shoelaces rattling against bare wood. Into the

kitchen he marched to retrieve the punch bowl and wine he had set up the night before. Inside the bowl was a hand-written note describing all the steps, including the final prayer.

It was still dark outside with dawn just starting to grace the outline of the Seattle hills. Frost covered the ground, glistening in the dim light like sparkles from an ethereal eye. He sat next to a Japanese maple tree, wondering where the best spot would be for setting sacred space. Not wanting to disturb the ground, he stretched forward placing the bowl in what seemed like a good spot. Usually, his friend Chris prayed and carried out Native American rituals at a much-used sacred spot next to a tall blue spruce near the back corner of the house. But Michael had told Joe that the wine should be in sunlight during the period of waiting. And the small maple tree adorning the stone-and-flora shrine to Mickey Mouse was the only place in the back yard where sunlight would spill upon the bowl of wine until high noon. The front yard would invite gazes from any number of houses on the rise across the street. And Gary wanted some semblance of privacy when he covered his legs and arms in wine in the middle of a crowded city.

After pouring the entire contents of the wine bottle into the bowl, he started to shiver against the cold. *This is crazy*, he muttered to himself as he placed a small stone on the note of instructions next to the bowl. Everything was ready. Just as he stood, contemplating his return to the waterbed, the first rays of the morning sun flooded the back yard in brilliant orange. The sense of peace that also flooded him made him smile. It may have seemed crazy, but it also felt peacefully right. With arms entwined, he shuffled his shaking body back into the house and dove into the warmth of the waterbed. No use staying up for breakfast because the whole day would be a fast.

Gary spent the remainder of the morning taking care of e-mail, praying, reading, praying, meditating, and more praying. It was his way to take things-spiritual seriously, perhaps a remnant of his seminary training with the Benedictine monks. Prayer was never to be taken lightly. He believed in Joe and his angelic experiences. He believed in the messages and the good they fostered. If he were going to support Joe, it would not be done halfway.

As noon drew near, he piled the last of his bags and ski paraphernalia against the front door. There would be just enough time to take care of the baptism in the back yard, clean himself up, and head directly to the

rendezvous point where he would meet with his buddies, and then caravan to Canada. In spite of the sunshine, it was still chilly outside as he ambled down the path to the back yard. With hands on hips, he stared at the bowlful of wine, its sweet fumes wafting in the still air. *Well, it's do-or-die time*, he thought to himself. As he sat next to the Japanese maple, he removed his shoes and socks, tip-toed the short distance to the bowl, and sat down. Picking up the note to make sure he performed each step meticulously, Gary reached his right hand into the cold liquid and smeared wine all over his feet, every inch. The smell tickled his nostrils as he pulled his sweat pants up high enough to finish the washing all the way to his knees. The hands to the elbows came next. His lips pursed as he remembered his boyhood days when such a smell tormented him. For it would mean that Mommie was drunk out of her mind once again. His forearms covered in purple, he picked up the note and read, "My loving Father, your child has come home to your counsel. Guide me in all things that I must do."

What might happen next, he did not know. His eyes searched around for any signs. Nothing. As he was about to pour the remaining wine from the bowl onto the ground, he stopped suddenly. A warm breeze that swirled around him. "Uh oh," was all he said. This was not the first time he had known such a breeze. Once before, on a spiritual quest in the wilds of the Columbia River Gorge, running between Washington and Oregon, this warm whisper of wind had visited him. At that time, winter gales had thrown rain like icy miniature spears most of the day. The Gorge was well known for its winter storms. But in the middle of the quest, while meditating on the top of Beacon Rock, a natural tower of stone, the gales had suddenly ceased their howling. Out of nowhere danced this gentle, warming breeze. And then, as now, he thought of the story about Elijah in the cave and felt blessed.

In the story of Elijah, the prophet is told that God will announce himself in the holy man's presence. Upon hearing this, he leaves the cave and stands at the entrance of the cave waiting for God to show himself. He witnesses a raging windstorm and knows that God is not to be found in the great storm. Going back into his cave, he prays and waits before returning to the entrance once again. He then witnesses a great earthquake but does not see God in the quaking of the earth. Retreating within the cave, he prays once more hoping that he will see God reveal himself. Leaving the cave for the third time, he waits for a sign at the entrance. A raging fire then erupts on the mountain, and he knows that God is not in the inferno. But where

can God be? It is at that moment that he feels a warm, gentle breeze and realizes that God is hidden in the gentle breeze. And so it was this day, just as it had been up at Beacon Rock. Gary could not escape the feeling that he was in the presence of something sacred and holy. Whether that was God or angels or his own spirit calling to him, it made no difference. What mattered was that, as before, something sacred was calling to his soul. Did it mean he was one of the Seven after all?

As he poured the wine upon the ground, he argued with himself that he was just being fanciful. Even though not a single maple twig had moved in the breeze, he felt he needed more of a sign than this if he were going to change his own spiritual journey by accepting the call of this angel Joe had named Michael. His path was aimed at other ideals, those expressed in his past writings. As he toted the bowl, shoes, and socks back to the kitchen, the warm breeze seemed to follow him. Perhaps it was just the fumes from the wine making him feel warm. But his bare feet on the cold pavement reminded him how cold it really was outside, in spite of the sunshine. If there had been a breeze, it would have made him colder, not warmer. The debate continued as he cleaned up the kitchen, his arms, and his legs. Time was a-wasting. His comrades would be waiting. Clearing the argument from his thoughts, he gathered his bags and filled his car. As he sped north on Interstate 5, he could still smell the wine on his skin, in spite of three washings with soap and water. What would the guys think of him showing up smelling like a wino?

The long weekend at Whistler proved to be a blowout celebration of skiing, dancing, wining and dining, and staying up late filling the night with laughter. Hot tubs and hot stories played against the cold reality that such revelry must come to an end. Simply put, Gary needed a vacation from his vacation. As his bright yellow car zipped back toward the busy-ness that lay ahead in Seattle and Portland, thoughts about the baptism nagged at him. By the time he pulled into the driveway of his Portland rental, he knew something was wrong. The tickle in his throat that had started as he left Canada was turning ugly. Why he felt it had something to do with the baptism was totally irrational, but he could not escape the feeling.

Gary almost never fell to fevers. He was one of those people whose temperature usually dropped lower when he was ill. He could count the number of times he'd had a fever on one hand. And something told him that he could add one more finger this day. As his luggage hit the bedroom floor,

he hit the bed, clothes and all. By the time he woke the next morning, he could barely talk. The thermometer confirmed his suspicions with a 102-degree reading. There was no way he could see clients. After canceling his meeting with his publisher, he decided also to cancel speaking engagements the week ahead. With a bullfrog voice he called Dawn Stansfield, owner of the New Visions Healing Arts in Bellevue, a suburb of Seattle. Mary Ellen, acting as his publicist, had booked the event in spite of his muttering about talking at small bookstores and angel shops. She had felt the big book chains got too much attention. It was an important statement to people if an author spoke at the smaller stores once in a while.

“Hello, is this Dawn?” he asked the sweet-voiced lady on the other end of the line. “Dawn, as you can tell by my voice, I seem to have come down with bronchitis, and I wanted to call ahead of time to let you know that I won’t be able to speak at your store next week.”

There was patient silence on the phone. “Gary, please reconsider. I’ve really been looking forward to this and have sold tickets and made arrangements.” If this had been a big chain store, they would have simply booked another date and thought nothing of it. But the smaller stores don’t have that luxury. “I know you haven’t met me, but I have a gift. Maybe Mary Ellen told you about it. I am what is called a medical intuitive. I can tell that you don’t have bronchitis, you have a virus. And if you will allow me, I think I can help you get better in time for the speaking engagement.”

Gary had seen and heard of wonderful and strange people in his tours. Nothing surprised him anymore. He had not heard about medical intuitives, but was willing to give this a shot. “And if I’m not well enough the day before I’m supposed to come up there, you’ll be able to cancel? OK?”

He could hear her sigh politely. “You’ll be all right. Take my word for it. Here’s what I’d like you to do. Do you have echinacea?”

“Actually, I think I’m out. But I can go get some.”

“Good. Take three capsules immediately, then take three more after you’ve eaten lunch, and three more before dinner. I know that sounds like a lot, but it’s what you need. Also get yourself Gatorade and eggs for lunch. Your body is low on a certain protein that is found in the eggs, and your electrolytes are dangerously low because of dehydration as well. Take lots of Gatorade. Tonight you will break out in sweats, so make sure you have several sheets so you can change your bed. Take the echinacea three times the next day. Call me every day. You’ll see. You’ll get better.”

The speaking engagement was six days away. If she could cure his bronchitis (which wasn't bronchitis) in six days, then she deserved to have a presentation like he'd never given before. As he climbed into his car to purchase the remedies Dawn had suggested, a wave of nausea swept through him. He thought twice whether he should be driving as he slammed the car door. The coughing was growing steadily worse as well.

Waiting in line at the health food store was more of an ordeal than he had imagined. The owner was being considerate and thoughtful with the customer in line ahead. As she took her time explaining the benefits of an herb, Gary began to look for a quick escape. Leaving everything at the cashier's counter, he headed out the door and slouched over the curb. It had been twenty years since he had last tossed his cookies, and he wasn't very happy at doing it now. The cold air helped settle his stomach as he took deep breaths. Dizziness was swarming around him with a buzzing filling his ears. It was time to get back to bed. As he stumbled back into the health food store, he spied his reflection in the window. He looked as pale as an old newspaper. Quickly paying for the handful of cold remedies he had gathered, he headed his car back home. He'd have to get the food stuff later.

That night he woke from wild dreams about keeping himself in prison. As he tried to read the clock, he realized he was soaking wet. Dawn had been correct. The sheets needed changing. Throughout the night, dreams and shivering repeatedly woke him. The next morning he felt worse than ever, unable to speak. He tried to fry himself an egg, but could barely get one bite down from the nausea. Rather than eat, he poured himself back into bed. The phone rang, waking him from his dreariness. It was Beth from the publisher's office wanting to know if she could help in any way.

"I haven't been able to buy any Gatorade, yet," was all he could croak out. She volunteered to drop some by after work. He fell asleep again only to be awakened by the phone again. This time it was Dawn.

"Oh, you're doing better," she chimed. He didn't feel better. He felt like dying. "I'm still picking up that you are still having problems with your protein. Have you eaten the eggs I suggested?"

"Couldn't," was all he gargled.

"You really need to. Your body is having problems balancing itself. What about the electrolytes? Have you been taking the Gatorade?" Her voice was irritatingly beautiful. He felt like a legless man forced to watch a ballerina.

“Later,” was all he could manage.

“I’ll call you again tomorrow. Keep taking everything as I’ve suggested, OK? Love you very much.”

“Bye.” There was no way he was going to get an egg down. And if he did get it down, there was no way he was going to keep it down. His throat felt like raw meat. Every cough felt like saw blades dragging across his throat. His fever had dropped, but so had his spirits. He would wait for Beth.

The knock at the door woke him up. Dragging himself out of bed with covers draped around him, he opened the door to see a paper bag sitting on the doorstep. Beth was standing back at the curb waving. “I think I’d better keep a safe distance. You’ll find lots of Gatorade and aspirin and vitamin C in the bag. Get well soon. But don’t come into the office until you’ve gotten better. You look like shit.” Beth was one of those women Gary thought the world of. She was a nun and a longshoreman rolled into one. She was gorgeous. She was tough. She was a walking paradox poets spent centuries writing about—the lovely maiden who could kill the stag with a rose.

In the kitchen, a dirty glass was cleaned and the Gatorade consumed. It trickled down his throat like fine wine as he polished off three glasses before crawling back into bed. An hour later, his eyes blinked open not from coughing up what felt like glass, but from a sense of actually feeling good. Gatorade? He went back into the kitchen to finish the rest of the jug, and while he was at it, boiled a few eggs that went down quite nicely. Magic! By nightfall the disheveled deathbed was aired out and remade once more to serve as a cradle for rest. Gary felt like calling Dawn. He still had the sore throat, but at least he could eat and watch some TV.

“You need to take lots of liquids,” Dawn continued the next day. Gary was convinced of her gift at this point. If she had suggested dancing naked in downtown’s Salmon Springs Fountain as the next step, he would have asked, How long? “Your body is trying to get rid of all the toxins at this point,” she said.

“But I can still barely talk with this throat.” It was true, he still sounded like a deep-voiced basso with a smoker’s cough.

“Don’t worry. You will be fine by the time you arrive for the speaking engagement.” That was two days away. He didn’t see how his throat would clear up fast enough. And just to be safe, he called his friend, Nattie, in Port Townsend, near Seattle, and asked if he could stay with her while he readied himself for the talk. And, by the way, would she mind doing readings from

his book to help him save his voice for what talking he'd try to do? She readily agreed. The two were more like bosom buddies than friends. And she loved the idea of seeing more of the public life of her longtime chum.

Gary arrived at Nattie's the next day. The two got caught up while he drank liquids like a dying man in a desert. She loved hearing his stories, especially this latest one about the medical intuitive she would meet the following evening. Her house was like home to Gary, with a nice bed in the guest room. It was quiet here. Instead of police sirens waking him in the middle of the night, songbirds or crows eased him out of sleep in the morning. Nattie was a generous woman with a generous heart. Never one to complain, she put her own schedule aside to accommodate her friend and ready herself for her first public appearance as a reader.

New Visions snuggled among several other small shops not far from Bellevue's downtown mall. Dawn had gone to great lengths to create an environment of fine nouveau spiritual art, Native American works, sculpture, and angel-oriented creations of several kinds. It was like walking into Christmas the way she had lights and sounds playing amid the displayed crafts. The book section was small but focused, with Gary's book prominently displayed and a sign announcing tonight's talk. A sparkle filled Nattie's eye as she quietly scouted every inch of the store. Gary left her to her fun as he climbed the stairs to the lecture room. Like everything else in the store, the room was beautifully laid out, with chairs meticulously arranged in a semicircle. People were already seated, even though the talk would not take place for another half-hour.

Dawn swooped over to greet her guest. She could have been featured on the cover of *Vogue*, Gary thought to himself. "You don't know how glad I am to see you!" she bubbled. "And you look great. How's the throat?"

"Amazingly well," her featured speaker answered with a grand smile. "You have a real gift there."

"Why, thank you."

"Makes me wonder why you bother running a store, you're that good." He wanted to let her know how genuine he thought her abilities.

"I try to do both because I love both. I get all kinds of people who come to me: CEOs, housewives, athletes, and hesitant businessmen. I believe this is the direction medicine itself will eventually go. And the store is a nice way to bring beauty into people's lives. It can be a struggle at times, but I love it."

The two chatted on about the book and the unexpected success it had received. Dawn wanted her visitor to know how appreciative she was to have him speak this night, when the chain bookstore next to the mall couldn't get him to come to their establishment. She felt it was a real coup on her part. The room was full of people at this point with many wanting to have their books autographed immediately. Dawn decided it was time to take control and started directing traffic. Nattie snuggled up against her friend and whispered, "What do I do?"

"There's two chairs up front, one for me, one for you. You're not nervous are you?"

"Oh, a little bit. But it's also exciting."

"Go ahead and seat yourself. I'll be there shortly."

The evening was a brew of reading, talking, fielding questions, and then trying to get out the door. Just before he made his escape, two women cornered Gary, almost confronting him with their question: "Why didn't you talk about the angel?" they asked.

"What angel? Are you talking about the angels in the book?"

"No," the other lady said. "We both saw the angel that was standing behind you. We started talking afterwards and realized we both saw the same thing. Each of us was wondering when you would talk about it. Didn't you see it?"

Gary met all kinds when he did book signings and gave talks. Quickly he sized up the two ladies to determine if they were part of the woo-woo crowd or sincere in what they were trying to convey. He decided they were sincere and deserved a meaningful and honest answer. "Well, I don't necessarily see these light beings. Oftentimes I can detect their presence but not really see anything. That's when I need people like yourselves."

"Well, I wish you could see this being," the first lady said. "It's surrounded by this beautiful blue light. In fact, it's still here standing right behind you."

Gary turned around as if to expect a handshake, but could see nothing. "I don't know what to tell you ladies. Can you tell if the angel is trying to say anything?" Both shook their heads no simultaneously.

"That's why we wanted to ask you. It doesn't seem to be saying or doing much of anything—just hanging around you."

Gary searched his mind, trying to find the right thing to say. He looked over at Dawn who spied the look in his eye. She excused herself from her well-wishers and headed over for the rescue. Gary's eyes returned to the two

ladies as he spoke, “Well, I thank you for saying something to me, and I’m sorry I don’t have any information to give you.” To be truthful, this was not the first time people had reported angels or a nimbus of light at one of his talks. However, it was different this time because he felt the presence of something—he just didn’t know what it was.

Dawn arrived, skillfully escorting her guest into her office so the crowd would leave and Gary could get back to Port Townsend. It was a two-hour trip. Nattie volunteered to drive the whole way, and Gary accepted. The closer they got to Nattie’s house, the worse he felt. The fever was returning along with the nausea. By the time they reached the front door, Nattie had to help her friend to the guest room. It seemed he was having a relapse.

That night the cold sweats returned, causing Nattie to have to change the sheets. The next day, Gary stayed in bed. It was about lunchtime when he began seeing the creature. At first, he chalked it up to his high fever. But even after the fever broke, he could still see it standing next to his bed. It didn’t have substance. More like a vision or daydream, but he could see it nonetheless. It was an angel. Its wings were made of an iridescent light, appearing to be pulled back behind the shoulders, and its head was slightly bowed in silence. It stood there for the rest of the day and into the night. Never moving, never speaking, never gesturing except to look over at the object of its attention: the bedridden guest. Gary kept saying to himself, *I must be sicker than I thought*. Taking Gatorade didn’t help, nor did eating a meal. It simply continued watching over his sickbed. Gary fabricated all kinds of excuses. He tried justifying the phenomenon by writing it off as the power of suggestion from the two ladies who had approached him after the presentation the previous night. The fever was gone and back again, so it couldn’t be the fever. Perhaps it was too much echinacea, or too much water. He had heard of people getting water toxicity from drinking too much water to lose weight.

As he awoke the next morning, Gary’s eyes immediately went to the corner of the room where the angel had been. It was still there. Exasperated, he decided he would try to communicate with the creature. *What is it you want of me? Why are you here?* he asked telepathically. He didn’t dare ask out loud, fearing Nattie would surely think him odd or, at least, delirious. He looked up at the angel’s eyes. Nothing. No answer. After much debate with himself, he finally decided to do what Joe Crane had done and speak the words that had brought the angel Michael forth. Feeling foolish, he spoke in a

whispered voice, "Speak, O Lord, for your servant is listening." He waited, half-expecting to be shocked by a response or some change in light. But there was nothing. Nothing at all. It just continued to stand there. Like a child hiding from a nightmare, Gary covered his head with his pillow and tried to go back to sleep.

Nattie cheerfully arrived with breakfast on a tray. "Feeling hungry this morning?" she asked ignoring the fact that her company was behaving rather strangely.

Pulling himself out from under his pillows, Gary decided to find out if he was imagining the whole thing. Once and for all. "Nattie, I consider you a pretty grounded person."

"Why thank you," she smiled back.

"Do you feel any kind of presence in this room?"

"You mean now?" A worried look crept across her face.

"Yes. Now. Do you feel like there is something in the room here with us?" He couldn't believe he was asking her this. He jokingly wondered whether she would call an exorcist or take him to a shrink. Nattie and Gary had been close friends for twenty years. She knew to take his question seriously. Taking an unconscious step backwards, she looked around the room, then back at her visitor.

"Well, the room does seem a bit different. And if I search my feelings, I do kind of feel a nice kind of presence in the room. But that's probably 'cuz you're here." A small grin flashed by and disappeared.

"Seriously." Gary entreated, "If you had to point to where you thought this presence was, where would you point?"

She folded her hands, almost as if in prayer and then quickly pointed straight at the angel.

"Ha!" Gary exploded, almost rising off his bed. "That's it! That's where it is."

"Where what is?" Nattie begged. She wasn't sure whether to feel pleased or frightened.

"Remember when we were at Dawn's store and the two ladies came over and told me an angel was behind me?"

"Is that what they were talking about? I wondered what was going on. I didn't want to eavesdrop, even though they sounded so insistent."

"It's here, the angel is here. It's been standing in that corner for the last twenty-four hours just staring at me."

Nattie was not one of those people who embraced fanciful notions too easily. She was a woman of the earth, a wildlife biologist who loved life and lived it with mud under her feet and twigs in her hair. She understood the wonders of nature like few did. She was a grounded person who smelled the flowers, scoped out birds, and listened in ancient forests for mating calls. Angels didn't really fit into her "life list," as bird watchers like to call it. But she had been close friends with Gary longer than most people are married, and she knew her friend's sincerity was gold. She knew by the look on his face he was dead serious.

"What does it look like?" she decided to ask.

"Well. It's got a kind of blue light around it. Its head stays bowed most of the time. I can't get it to say anything or do anything. It just stands there all the time. I don't know what to do with it."

"Maybe you should call your friend, Joe," she offered. Angels were not her specialty, but she had read Joe's document from Michael—the one he called *The Book of Bricks*—and had been able to relate to it. Joe seemed to be the one who knew a lot about angels. However, what Nattie did not know about was Gary's secret ritual. And he was determined that no one would hear about it.

"I'll give it some thought," he said clearing his throat. "Thanks." This entire affair was beginning to make him nervous. Why was all of this happening? Certainly it could not mean what he was afraid it might mean. He dared not even think about it. There was too much work that needed to be done without entertaining thoughts of getting involved with Joe. His eyes snatched a look at the corner, as if hoping the being of light would not be there. But there it stood. Sleep would not come, peace would not come. The bed covers were beginning to feel like a quilt of tiny fingers lightly tapping on him, pointing to the angel, pointing to the phone. *Ask Joe*, they seemed to tap out in a spiritual Morse code. *Joe will know what to do*. As he tossed and turned, arguing with his own thoughts, suddenly a gasp gave forth. "All right, all right, all right. I'll do it." Who he was talking to, even he didn't know. Fumbling with his address book, he picked up the phone and dialed Joe's number, his own fingers tapping on the desktop.

"Hello, this is Joe," the voice on the other end said. Gary hesitated as if expecting more. "Hello?" the voice said once more.

"Joe. This is Gary. I've got something weird I want to tell you."

Joe chuckled. "I've gotten accustomed to weird of late. Lay it on me.

What's going on?"

Like a man carrying a heavy load, Gary dumped the entire story in Joe's lap—minus the baptism story—hardly taking a breath the whole time. When he was finally done, his fingers started tapping once again. "What do you make of this?"

"Is the angel still there?" Joe asked.

Gary looked around, but he no longer saw the angel in the corner of the room. He was about to apologize and hang up when he realized the angel was right behind him. "Well, he's moved, but he's here."

"Is he close by?" Joe asked in a way that sounded more like a detective than a newfound friend.

"Yes, he's right behind me."

"Hand him the phone," Joe ordered.

"What?" Gary couldn't believe his ears.

"Hand him the phone," Joe stated again, growing impatient.

"How in the hell am I going to hand the phone to an angel? What are you talking about? The thing hasn't spoken since it got here."

"How tall is this guy?" Joe asked.

Gary could not believe he was having this conversation. His voice rose about an octave higher. "How tall? About six feet. What's that got to do with it?"

"Then hold the phone up to his ear."

"All right. You asked for it." Gary leaned back in his chair and held the phone high with his outstretched arm. He was starting to laugh at himself and Joe. Who could believe such nonsense? Then the angel leaned forward into the phone and started laughing. It wasn't the kind of laugh that you'd hear at a party or the kind of snicker that comes from a prankster. It was more of a joyous laugh, like the kind one hears at an airport when old friends greet one another. He could see the angel's lips move, but there were no words. It was then that the right arm of the laughing angel reached right into the phone. It was as if Gary were watching a video movie. For he could see the arm travel through the phone wires all the way down to the Bay Area and out of Joe's phone and touch his heart. Gary understood immediately that this was the signature of Michael's favorite saying, "Bless your heart." At that point the angel disappeared leaving the phone receiver suspended in mid air in Gary's hand. The whole scene was too ridiculous to believe in. It had to be his imagination. Slowly, he brought the phone receiver back to his ear.

“Joe? You there?” he asked suspecting any sane person would have hung up on him by now. Joe seemed to know he was listening once again.

“OK,” Joe said, “Was the angel laughing?”

Gary sat there stunned, his mouth dropping to his lap. “How’d, how’d you know?” he gasped.

“Easy. I heard him. He has two things he wants me to tell you.” Gary leaned over with his head in one hand and the phone in the other. He was afraid to go on with this. It was at that moment when he realized his fever was gone. Had this all been some grand heavenly conspiracy, a plot to get him to talk to Joe?

“What?” was all Gary could utter.

“First. He said that you are dehydrated and you need to drink lots of fluids. Secondly, he says that you are too serious, that you are struggling with something you don’t need to struggle with and we should talk about it.”

“Oh gawd,” was all that Gary could offer back. Joe waited patiently and let the silence work with his friend’s thoughts. “Joe, I’ve got something to confess to you.”

“I’m listening,” came the friendly answer. With resignation the story of the baptism, skiing at Whistler, being so sick, and the presentation at New Visions poured out. Joe realized this was not easy for Gary to tell. In the end, Joe said what he knew he had to say and what he knew his upset friend did not want to hear. “Gary.” Joe spoke in a calming fashion. “Maybe you are one of the Seven.”

A gasp fell from Gary’s lips. “Joe, I can’t be. If these angels want to leave me with a message, they’ve got to do better than show up with me in high fever, wondering if I’m experiencing delirium. Who knows, maybe the sickness was all part of this. But I’ve got choices that I have to make, and I can only make them with a reasoned mind. The truth of the matter is that I have no gurus, no teachers. Michael said that he will be the teacher of the Seven, and I just can’t go along with that. I’m at a point in my life where I believe I am my own teacher, my own source of truth.”

Joe was understanding. He knew he’d said all he could say. He had heard Gary’s concerns and felt compassion for him, but in his own mind he was thinking, *You arrogant son-of-a-bitch*. This would not be the last time the two men would wrestle over Gary’s doubts. Since the dawn of man, angels have been most patient with the most stubborn of men. And Gary was a stubborn man.



## REVELATION DECODED



## THE NEW REVELATION

**A**lmost two years had crept by since Michael had last appeared to Joe. He missed his guide, his heavenly brother and friend. The mystery of whether Joe had truly found all seven of the master souls still hung before him. Michael had promised he would return when all seven had been found. And coupled with that promise was another which stated such an event would occur before Joe's 51st birthday—less than a month away. Gary's reluctance to accept the idea of even being considered one of the Seven complicated matters. Was he or wasn't he?

All these thoughts danced in Joe's head as he picked weeds from under the papyrus plants in his lily pond sanctuary. The three-foot high redwood fence kept the "kids" out, making sure errant, gangly mastiff legs did no damage, and eliminated any chance for their marking doggie domains. Joe brushed his hand over one of the lily leaves to check its health. He loved this spot, its simple beauty—so Zen. It gave him such calm.

Just as he was dipping his hand into the water to remove a bit of pond scum, he noticed a familiar light reflecting off the opposite wall in front of him. As it grew in intensity, Joe breathed out, "Michael?" Turning, he saw before him the light growing to near blinding intensity as the familiar figure materialized within its brilliance. Joe's heart swelled with welcome.

“Michael, you ol’ dog! It’s so good to see you.” Yes, it had been nearly two years—a long wait. A smile formed on the countenance of his angelic friend.

“Knowing how much you love your dogs, I take that as a compliment.”

A joyful chuckle bubbled up from within Joe. He had almost forgotten how magnificent Michael’s presence could be. His eyes soaked in every detail once again. Those deep azure eyes that struck the heart with immediate love, embracing everything they gazed upon. His platinum blonde hair dangling on broad, masculine shoulders. That face of sheer beauty, almost too beautiful, almost feminine. Skin of alabaster, oozing with warmth. So much power surrounding him, yet such gentleness on his face.

“So, Michael, this must mean I have found the seventh.”

“Yes, you have found the Seven. To each you are to give a message. After each has received their message, I will return to you.” Michael paused. “I will speak to you first of the book you are to write with Gary. It will take you less time than you think, but this is not one of the two I told you that you are to write. I will be with you as you write it.”

*So, Gary and I will write a book together,* Joe thought to himself. A quiet grin spread across his face as he thought of the two of them working together. But what kind of role would Michael play? “Do you mean like you were with *The Book of Bricks*, or in person?” he decided to ask. *The Book of Bricks* had come in a telepathic manner, even though he was able to hear Michael’s voice during its creation.

“I will be with you in both ways. Much you have forgotten of that which I have told you of *Revelation*. This was done so you could be about getting *The Book of Bricks* out to the world as a starting place for your brothers and sisters. You will say to Gary this: ‘You are visited by an angel of light to brighten your darkness. His name is as mine, unpronounceable, and he may be called by whatever you choose. Your angel will answer when you open your heart to listen.’ ”

“Wait a minute, Michael,” Joe objected. “What is going on with all this can’t-say-your-names stuff? Why can’t you guys just have names that people can pronounce like every other angel? This can get a whole lot scary to us if we can’t at least use names we can, at the very least, pronounce.” Joe liked asking Michael questions—primarily because he never knew what kind of wild answer he might get in return. Michael could accidentally present him with the most amazing information. Plus, Joe was already aware of skeptics

who wanted to label the angels as something other than heaven-sent, asking for names to bolster their doubts.

“The names your kind calls us are used only by you. Do you really think ‘Gabriel’ is his name? And that he has a title as an archangel? This is not why I have come to you at this time. I have other matters to speak to you of; let us be about that.”

Joe realized he was going down the wrong path with the angel-name stuff, so let it go at that. “OK, but I still want to know about it. And if not now, later.”

“This I will tell you later, and much more. The two of you are brought together to do God’s will with this message you will give. After you have given him that which I have told you, you will say to him this: ‘Gary, you walk in a state of grace and are not alone. Fear not what you must do, for your path will be lighted and your steps will be guided. Sure will be your footing, for you have seen the angel that protects you. Humble yourself not in his greatness but rise up to the greatness that is yours.’ When this is done bless his heart and be about the work you are to do together.”

Michael then relayed to Joe messages for the rest of the Seven. “I will speak to you of the Seven, and you must say to them that which I tell you. The first of the Seven is Deb. To her say that she is doing the work of a provider because her husband has gone lame. She has left behind her true mission for that which is around her. Deb is to do her work, and an angel will point the way. She will no longer live in that which is around her and confusing her. She must write down all that has happened since she has become one of the Seven. This that she writes will help others to grow. She is not to worry, for her husband will begin to heal at a much faster rate. She may now be about her true work.”

“While we are on this seven thing,” Joe interjected, “I want to know something—like when should we all get together? Or do we all *need* to get together? I am really unclear on what to say when they ask me questions.”

“You will gather in the summer. I will tell you the time and place. You have much to do before then, and the time is short. You will say to them what I tell you to say to them. Some you will begin to teach now, and others you will teach later.”

Joe scratched his head. “Great. Just what I wanted to hear. Why can’t you just tell me and be done with it? I don’t like standing around with nothing to say to them except that you will tell me when the time is right.”

“That is as it is. And your likes and dislikes matter not.”

Joe was the kind of guy who appreciated an honest opinion. “OK. I got it,” he said. “Go on with what you have to say. I’ll do my best not to interrupt.”

“To Steve you will say: ‘Play not with things you know not of, for they will lead you astray. Learn to heal first on your own. You are given a gift, and in it is great power. Yet you think it is other than you who is doing the healing. As Joe has told you, you think you know something, and you don’t. You have become separate from people with that which you do. Joe will instruct you in the skills you will need to regain your connection. Be you the master you are; be not the one you think you are. For when someone sees you now, they see the separation, and that frightens them. The closeness you need to do your work is not with you now. Judge not the others in the seven, for they are about their sums as you are yours. You were chosen long ago for this work, and you answered when called. Mighty will be your deeds, overshadowed only by the love you are.’ ”

“Question time,” Joe cut in. “Aren’t you going to be doing these messages in the order I found the Seven? That was one question, and now for another. This one is more like something that I am noticing, and not exactly a question. It seems like, to me, that so far with the ones you have talked about, you have fault with them. Is any of the Seven doing anything right? Or are they all wrong in what they are doing? I can tell you right now, I ain’t too thrilled with telling them they screwed up. How about a little good news?”

Michael’s voice did not shift nor did his demeanor change. “Should you need to hear what I say of them in that way? Are you not open to receive the words I give unless they are in the order you think they need to be? I know well when each was chosen. Do you look to find fault in that which I say? It is you who still sees right and wrong, good and bad. Know that which I speak has nothing to do with being right or wrong. It is as I say and nothing more. I only tell you these things that the Seven will know and grow past them. There is no fault to be found in the Seven. I only give a clearer path that will lead them around the things that will slow them.”

Joe responded, “I am still new at this, and I care for each of them deeply. I would rather build them up at this point because they’re new at this, too. At least I have access to you from time to time, while they have no one. Do you know what I am saying?”

“I do,” said Michael. “The truth is the only thing that matters to the Seven, and you must speak it without judgment. You say they do not have

the access that you do. Yet they have you, and the love you have for them will let them see themselves for the masters they are. You honor the master in them, and they will rise up to it.

“You will say to Kathleen: ‘Blessed are you, my sister, for the work you do. The cleaning of your house is almost done. That which you have gathered unto you will begin to serve you no more. Trust in the love that God has for you, and know that all will be well. That which you do for your children will go untreasured for now. Yet you are to be rewarded a thousandfold for your gift. From this dream, you will awake to a new day. Grow and blossom into the master you are.’ ”

“To Mark, you will say: ‘Rise up and look at that which I have given you. Rejoice in the knowledge that you are loved. Seek not that which is made of gold. You will be given more than you can hold. Take to the world the message that you have been given and will be given in the time to come. The gift that you are is worth more than anything that you could become. Blessed are you in the world for the work you have chosen and been chosen to do.’ ”

“To Shari, you will say: ‘The time is now that you stand as the power you are. Of the Seven, you are the mightiest in the work you will do. Know that God is with you and that you are loved. Put down the cloak of lameness, and stand witness to the love of God. All that you seek will be given to you. Hide not from these gifts that are yours. You have only to open your heart and arms to receive them.’ ”

“To Ben, you will say: ‘My brother, come forth and be known. The Children of God seek you. Hide not from your work, for it is your gift to the world. Wait not, for the time is now. Blessed are you, and I will guide you to your greatness.’ ”

Joe felt he had to speak again. “You really got a lot of faith in me, don’t you? Like I’m going to say this to the Seven, and they are going to buy it. I know, I know, don’t judge it, just do it. I still think you got—pardon the word—the *wrong* guy for the job, but I will do it. Now I have some more things I want to talk to you about. Like Donna’s healing classes.”

Michael stopped Joe before he could finish.

“What she is doing is worthy of her, and she will do things that will be called miracles in the times to come. She is more powerful than she knows, and you must guide her on her way. Oh, and Joe, you still need to listen to her counsel, for she is your wife, not your student.”

Michael finished with, "After the Seven have been given their messages, I shall return. Be at peace and teach only love." His body began to fade into the backdrop of brilliant light. Then the surrounding light, itself, began to fade, leaving Joe invigorated with anticipation. It was all about to begin. He could hardly wait to call Gary and let him know that the decoding of the *Book of Revelation* was about to begin, and the two of them would be working with Michael.

With swift but deliberate hands he finished cleaning up the lily pond, then went back into the house to sit in front of his computer. The word processor was booted up and Michael's first message in nearly two years was typed into Joe's computer. There was much to do. It had been over a year since he had communicated with all six of the master souls. They, too, had waited for the seventh to arrive. And, as reluctant as Gary might be, there was no doubt now that he was, indeed, the long-awaited seventh. A pout crumpled across Joe's face as he wondered if Gary would accept this information. Surely the guy would have to accept Michael's message. Or would he?

His "Michael File" updated and the computer put into sleep mode, Joe decided it was time to call Gary in Portland at the publisher's office. The secretary patched him through right away. "Well, guess who just showed up?" Joe teased.

It took Gary only a moment to realize what must have happened. "The Big Guy appeared to you?"

"Yep."

There was a pause as Gary uneasily toyed at the implications of this event. "So ... that means you have found the seventh?"

"Indeed I have. And you just might know this fella."

Gary started spinning paperclips on his desk, a nervous habit of his. "Is it me?" he finally asked.

"Yep, it's you. Michael mentioned you by name."

The spinning paperclips stopped spinning. "Are you sure, Joe?"

"About as sure as I am about anything. There is a message to you from Michael that I am supposed to give."

"I'm all ears," came Gary's softened voice. His mind was racing like a computer at warp speed. His previous conversations with Joe about having no teachers, no guru, replayed in his mind. Joe's message was not necessarily welcomed news.

Joe's gravelly voice delivered the story verbatim to the reluctant listener. After questions bounced back and forth, Gary finally acquiesced: "When do we start on the book?"

"Michael said he would return after I deliver the messages to the Seven."

"All right. Let me know when you have new information. And Joe."

"Yeah?"

"Happy birthday."

"It's a couple of weeks away yet."

A broad grin erased the sternness from Gary's face. "I know, Joe."

They said their goodbyes. Gary stared out his office window as he unconsciously replaced the receiver on its cradle as a mother would a sleeping baby. A kind of chill flashed up his back as he considered the implication of Michael's message. He would now have another book to write. And his future plans might have to wait.

As Joe sat back in his chair running his fingers through his plentiful, grayish-blond hair, he tried to remember what Michael had previously said about *Revelation*. He remembered weeping at hearing the truth behind the apocalyptic writing, then laughing at how it could have been so misunderstood. He remembered Michael telling him how a message had been given to the Apostle John to give to the seven churches so they might understand the error of their ways. In those days of the early Christian Church, the seven cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea were all located in Asia Minor. Each was more than a spiritual center; each was also a center of power, whether that was trade, learning, the arts, or suchlike. Because of the churches' failure to hear Heaven's message, there began the big lie that closed the door to most of God's children having a personal relationship with God. It had also stopped any further writings in the Bible, and institutional religion was born. The later mystification of *Revelation* by the churches had set into motion a fear-based spiritual concept demanding obedience.

Michael had revealed to Joe that *Revelation* was not meant for the future or the endtimes, but was meant for the early Christian churches of the first century, and not the people. Scholars had searched for the key to open the true meaning of *Revelation* and had fallen short. The later Churches had claimed there was no key, only the written word.

It was now time to bring before the world the true meaning of *Revelation*. This book of mystery, surrounded by great speculation, would soon be

brought before the world by Joe and his newfound friend. That is, if Gary was willing to write the story. Joe remembered the first time Michael appeared to him. He remembered what Michael had said and how he, himself, had to make a choice similar to one that would face Gary. "This you must do or you will not be called upon again," Michael had said. "Teach this which the Lord God has charged me to give you, for it is the Last Baptism of God's children. Have those you teach, in turn teach others, for they are well-meaning in their houses of God. You are not a Christ or even a prophet, but a servant of God (Who will put words in your mouth), and God's children will hear and understand."

It was not easy contacting the other six, as it turned out. Their lives had changed, and in some cases even their phone numbers. Deb had moved to Colorado to a new job. But after multiple attempts at leaving messages, all of the remaining six were eventually told what Michael had to say to each of them. Several days had passed since Gary and Joe had talked on the phone. Gary had made his decision. Something within told him he had to become a part of what Joe was attempting to do. Though he felt no closeness with the other six—and wasn't in much of a hurry to meet them—he finally decided he would allow himself to be considered "the seventh." It now seemed all that Michael had asked of Joe was in place.

Good Friday in California was not much different than any other day. Although some had the day off, Joe decided bills needed to be paid for materials used in a just-completed contract. As his hand scrawled his signature on one of the checks, he noticed sunlight on the wall in front of him. Looking up, he realized that the sun was shining in the wrong direction to be reflecting on his office wall. Not only was it on the wrong wall, it was also getting brighter and bigger. His eyes began to sparkle as he turned around to see Michael's familiar appearance. *He must be returning for another chat*, Joe thought as the brilliant light preceding Michael's form flooded the space before him.

The angel's presence emerged from the light as Joe chortled, "Well, Michael, quite an entrance this time."

The angel looked down at Joe's desk and spoke only one word: "Write."

"OK, you got it," Joe rejoined in an almost obedient manner. There was a serious tone in Michael's voice. "But give me a minute to get this thing set up." With nervous hands, Joe started up his Compaq computer and loaded his word processor. "Now, don't go too fast. You know what a lousy typist I am."

Michael said nothing as the software continued to load.

“Done,” Joe said. And as Michael spoke, Joseph typed.<sup>1</sup>

**“Write what I say. Write not what you think I say, nor what you think you hear. Many have been called up to the highest to receive God’s words, and upon returning have lost all meaning of God’s truths. I will speak to you and you will write what I say. Add nothing and take away nothing, for I give you the words as given to me. Write them true, for God’s scribe you will be in this.**

**“To the Whore of Babylon you will say, ‘You have been shown the truth of what was to come if you did not heed that which was shown to you. Did you change from the path you were leading my children down? Not one step did you take to lead them into the light. All that God gave you to alter your path was used to enslave my children to do your bidding. Had God been the angry, vengeful, and jealous God of which you speak, God’s wrath would be now at your doors. The temples that you hold so holy would be laid to dust as would your Scriptures be in ashes. Count your blessings for it is a God of love that speaks to you.**

**“The ransom that God’s Son was said to pay was not to Satan or to any like being but was paid to the Churches. The ransom paid was his teachings, not his life. No treasure on earth is of more value than the words he spoke. This was paid to you for the freedom of my children, and you have twisted the words to bind them in greater numbers. Go to your flocks and say to them that when you were lame you did in God’s name conspire against God’s children. That you demanded their presence in your temples, you required their submission to Scriptures of your understanding, and if they did not obey, you threatened them with the loss of God’s love and the pain of an everlasting hell. Say that you are no longer lame, and you now walk in the light of my love, and do these things no more. When this is done, if you wish to serve as a Church, you will serve God’s children.**

**‘You have taken Revelation and added it to your Scriptures to make your words powerful and true—as if to set them in stone for all time—to judge and to damn by. I give you now, so all can read, that which was given to John. That you might see it has come to pass.’**

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: Citations in brackets refer to corresponding passages found in *Revelation*, also known as *Apocalypse*.

“ ‘Take this message to the seven churches,’ was told to him [John].<sup>2</sup> He wrote to them what he thought it meant. The churches were trying to build a foundation that would stand through the ages. They built it out of the fears and desires of man. They had become like the Tower of Babylon, an object to stand upon to get to Paradise. Over and again you have said that this was the only way. To prove this, it was said that Scriptures could only be understood by the most righteous of my children, and all others were unworthy. Trusting not your brothers and sisters to find their own way to God, you conspired to lead them. God has shown you what would happen and you chose to ignore it.

“To the church of Ephesus, God said to teach divine love and grow in spirit, and they heard not.<sup>3</sup>

“To the church of Smyrna, God said to teach illumination of self through faith, and they heard not.

“To the church of Pergamum, God said to teach consciousness of natural knowing, and they heard not.

“To the church of Thyatira, God said to teach love as Jesus did, and they heard not.

“To the church of Sardis, God said to teach awareness and reason, and they heard not.<sup>4</sup>

“To the church of Philadelphia, God said to open the gates to wisdom, and they heard not.

“To the church of Laodicea, God said to teach compassion and tolerance, and they heard not.

“When they received the messages, they made up stories of what God would do if they were not obeyed. What was shown to them was lost. Now, like an unpaid debt, it is time to be paid and the covenant fulfilled.

“He [John] was called up to the throne and, seated on it was the Love that God is.<sup>5</sup> The rainbow that was like an emerald is the Earth. The twenty-four Elders seated on the thrones are the hours of the day and night. The seven torches are the spirits of God that are given as gifts to mankind. The four beasts are the four natures of mankind.

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<sup>2</sup> [Rev. 1:4]

<sup>3</sup> [Rev. 2]

<sup>4</sup> [Rev. 3]

<sup>5</sup> [Rev. 4]

Mankind is mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual; and the spirit is of God and is in all things.

“It was then said, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’<sup>6</sup> Not one of the churches was found to be worthy to open the scroll. Yet the scroll could be opened with the Christ Consciousness that was given to all of God’s children. Murdered was God’s Son for the truths he gave mankind. These truths will open the seals so that all will know the love that God has for them.

“Shown was the history of what had happened when the first seal was opened.<sup>7</sup> A white horse came forth, and its rider was armed with the bow of truth, and a crown of spiritual awareness was given to him that he could conquer all that lay in his path. In time he laid down his bow so that others could conquer for him. All the knowledge that was given to prosper, to heal, to live happily in a world of peace, was gone.

“The second seal was opened, and a horse of red came forth with a rider that was given a sword by man, that mankind might kill one another. Peace was no longer commonplace on the earth.

“The third seal was opened, and a black horse came forth with its rider holding a pair of scales. With these scales man must now pay to other men for the gifts that I have given to the world.

“When the fourth seal was opened, a pale horse came forth with its rider, and he brought death of all remembrance of the love God has for mankind.

“Then the fifth seal was opened, and he [John] saw all the enlightened ones that could not teach others of a loving God—they were killed for what they knew. They were given a place with God and told that more would come to receive their place, too, with God.

“When the sixth seal was opened, he saw that all the light had been taken or given away by man. All that they were left with was what the liars had told them. Empty were the words that were spoken. Mankind was in despair with nowhere to go, so they hid in the liars’ temples out of fear.

“The four winds are the points of the compass that signify the mental north, emotional south, physical west, and the spiritual east.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Rev. 5]

<sup>7</sup> [Rev. 6]

<sup>8</sup> [Rev. 7]

Jesus brought these into balance that man could learn of God's love and compassion.

"The tribes of Israel were again given the enlightenment by God's Son. These were the twelve apostles that Jesus taught, and there was a great rejoicing for the gates were open to the love of God. More and more of God's children began to know of God's love. The ones that were dressed in white robes were the ones that heard the teachings.

"When the seventh seal was opened, there was a silence.<sup>9</sup> All who had heard the words of Christ need not hear more, for they were one with God. The seven angels that stood before God were again given the information to give to the churches. The message was again distorted, for man had not learned from the teachings of Jesus. Each angel's message was misused for the further spiritual enslavement of mankind. The bottomless pit of Ignorance and Superstition was opened, and most of mankind fell into it. With this loss of spiritual enlightenment, the churches did battle with one another and the earth, and God's children all were to suffer at the hands of one another. Destruction was about the lands as war, famine, plagues, and the poisoning of the earth by mankind's actions.

"The four angels were released.<sup>10</sup> The mental nature was the first woe, and a third of mankind was seen as dead by the churches. The spiritual nature held fast with God. The seventh angel's trumpet was not to be sounded, for the time was not yet for all to hear. 'There would be no more delay,' was to announce that God's love for mankind was being fulfilled.<sup>11</sup> He went then to the angel of the Earth, who had an open scroll. He was given the scroll and told to eat it. God knew that what was in his mouth was sweet, but the digestion of the words would be bitter to him. Yet he was still to speak them to the world about peoples and nations and languages and kings.

"He was given a rod as a standard to measure what the churches said, but was told not to measure the enlightened outside the temple.<sup>12</sup> For they will overcome the false teachings of the churches. The two witnesses will be given the authority to enlighten mankind and will come forth and teach. The sackcloth is the sign of mourning

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<sup>9</sup> [Rev. 8]

<sup>10</sup> [Rev. 9: 14-15]

<sup>11</sup> [Rev. 10]

<sup>12</sup> [Rev. 11]

for the consciousness of mankind. They will speak of a God of love, and their words will be judged, and they will be dead in the eyes of the churches. In but a short time the two will be seen as the bringers of light, and the love of God will be seen. As the teachings of the churches are seen to be unfounded with the love of God.

“The emotional nature was the second woe, and another third of mankind will be seen as dead to the churches. The second woe had passed.<sup>13</sup> The physical nature was the third woe, which was soon to come.

“The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and loud voices were heard, for God’s love was now open to all as Jesus had said it was. This shook the last foundation of the churches.

“The female aspect of God appeared clothed with the sun, and the moon at her feet—both are symbols of light to the world.<sup>14</sup> The crown was that of the twelve powers of mankind. These are kindness, mercy, and contribution in the physical deeds of mankind. In the mental there is perception, understanding, and imagination. In the emotional are compassion, devotion and giving. In the spirit are faith, divine awareness, and consciousness. She is to give birth to a new state of being in mankind.

“The dragon that waits is the teachings of the seven churches, and would devour the child so it can keep its hold on mankind. This time divine intervention takes place, and the old teachings are denied the Child of Love. The woman had been sent into the churches to teach, that she would be safe, for it was prepared by God. The dragon would not easily find her there. The child that was to be born was the male aspect of God, and that is Love. The iron rod is a symbol of that unbreakable love.

“The dragon—being the old teachings of ignorance—and his followers, the seven churches, are cast out of God’s authority to teach God’s children. Then Michael and his angels did battle with the teachings by visiting mankind to spread the truth of God’s love. In the enlightened of mankind, the awareness of salvation was proclaimed.

“With the old teachings having a short time, the dragon went after the woman. Trying to keep its hold on mankind, he spoke falsely of

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<sup>13</sup> [Rev. 11:14]

<sup>14</sup> [Rev. 12]

her. She was enlightened and rose above its words. The dragon, if it could not be accepted by all as the word of God, went to make it so.

“The beast that rose out of the sea was the new churches that rose out of the Age of Pisces, claiming to be aligned with the Christ.<sup>15</sup> It spoke of itself as the true word of God, and many listened to it. Those that spoke against it were killed or looked upon as dead. The God of love knew this and said that if you are taken captive, go into captivity and do not kill your captors.

“Then rose another beast like the first dragon and began to take authority over the earth.<sup>16</sup> As its legions grew, it deceived many, and it had the power over life and death. Anyone that did not have the sign of the beast could not buy or sell.

“Then were those that had the Father’s and the Son’s name written on them. No one could learn the new song but these. And they were those men that did not lay with women or women that did not lay with men.<sup>17</sup> They have been chosen as the first fruits and are the spiritual teachers. They are blameless and speak the truth of God’s love.

“Fallen is Babylon the Great.

“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great.

“That which she has caused others to suffer will now be laid upon her. Those who had followed the beast and received the false teachings find it hard to accept the truth. Those that are enlightened are told to hold fast to the faith. Those that had left the old, false teachings were seen as dead. Those who now leave the false teachings die in the truth and will find peace in enlightenment.

“The false teachings, like grapes, were harvested and pressed to bring out any truth that they might contain. That which the teachings held was brought out into the light for all to see. The false teachings were thick with lies and were poured out on the ground because mankind could no longer consume them.

“The seven angels are called with their seven bowls and told to pour them out on the earth.<sup>18</sup>

“The first angel poured out his bowl onto the earth, and the physical began to heal itself.

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<sup>15</sup> [Rev. 13]

<sup>16</sup> [Rev. 13:11]

<sup>17</sup> [Rev. 14:4]

<sup>18</sup> [Rev. 16]

“The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and emotion healed itself.

“The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers, and the mind became healed.

“The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and the spirit came forth.

“The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of knowledge and changed it to divine knowing.

“The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river of spiritual teachings, and they were seen to be untrue.

“One of the seven angels showed the downfall of all the teachings that were not of God.<sup>19</sup> Another angel came to bring enlightenment to the rest of mankind, and mankind saw what they had done.

“Then came a great awareness of what God has given to mankind, and great joy fell upon mankind. All of God’s children were invited to share God’s love. When they fell on their knees, they were told not to do that, for they were one with God.

“Heaven was open, and a white horse with a rider called Faithful and Truth came forth as the word of God, and was followed by another rider that spoke of God’s love that all heard.<sup>20</sup> Then came an angel calling to the birds to feast on the false teachings. The spirit of mankind would no longer be harmed by these teachings. Then came another angel with a key to a pit and threw Ignorance and Want into the pit.<sup>21</sup>

“Then there was a throne, and on the throne were those that gave the truth a thousand years ago. Blessed were those that heard the first time, for they did not fall back into unenlightenment. Now that the thousand years has ended, the false teachings are to be cast out for all times.<sup>22</sup>

“The fire is the light in the darkness, and the sulfur is the love that heals. Then a great white throne appeared, and it was again the Love of God upon it. All that is unknown or is of suppression is given Truth and is enlightened.

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<sup>19</sup> [Rev. 17]

<sup>20</sup> [Rev. 19:11]

<sup>21</sup> [Rev. 20]

<sup>22</sup> [Rev. 20:3]

**“Then there was a new Heaven and a new Earth, for all that was will pass.<sup>23</sup> The love of God will care for all according to their needs. Then one of the seven angels that had poured out his bowl took John to show him the Earth and all that will be.**

**“Then the angel showed the loving will of God for all mankind. He showed of a world without want, and nothing unloving can be found there. The sign of God will be on the foreheads of all. All that is written will be; blessed are those that can already know this.**

**“These words are as the light in the darkness—do not hide them away.<sup>24</sup> Let the unenlightened be unenlightened, and those that know the love of God know it. The loving God is bringing the rewards to all according to their works and will fill all that is needed.**

**“The last is a warning to those who would change the meaning of what is written.<sup>25</sup> The warning is of that which they denied themselves, of the gifts of God, but will be given in spite of what they do. The love of God is with everyone and everything, as God.”**

Anyone would have felt exhausted by such an intense effort of laying down exactly what had been dictated for such a long period of time. But Joe was aware how Michael’s presence always filled him with energy. And this day was no different. Joe tried to comprehend what he could while taking Michael’s dictation. Despite his efforts, he almost swooned with a sense of being overwhelmed by what lay before him.

“Michael, I am completely overcome by this once again,” Joe said, remembering the first time Michael tried to tell him about *Revelation*. “I don’t know where to start to ask you about all this. I am at a loss as to how people will hear this because I don’t fully understand it myself. I know in my heart what you are saying, but in my mind it’s a hard thing to explain to anyone. Some things are easily understood, but other parts are lost to me.”

The angel responded softly, “You have written things that are of the kingdom of God, not of the mind of mankind. I will teach you these things so mankind can understand. I tell you this now that you will know. Not all will be willing to hear. You will be scorned and called blasphemous names. To those, you will say that you were told to write this as a servant of God, and this you have done. You will not be alone, for one is with you that has known of God’s works before.”

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<sup>23</sup> [Rev. 21]

<sup>24</sup> [Rev. 22]

<sup>25</sup> [Rev. 22:6]

“Are you talking about Gary or someone I don’t know yet?”

“He knows who he is and has been, and the knowledge is but now coming back to him,” Michael said.

“You’re talking about when he lived during the time of Jesus, aren’t you?” Gary had disclosed to Joe that he had been told by three separate adepts that he had walked with the Apostle Paul and other apostles.

“You still know things I have not told you.” Which was Michael’s way of saying, Yes, but why are you asking me something you’ve already been told? Joe had wanted verification of this information, and this was it.

“Does this mean I was someone big in the past?” Joe asked sincerely.

“In the past you were of no great importance to the teachings of the Master or the churches. It is not until this time have you chosen to do so.”

“So what you are telling me is that I was a nothing and a nobody. Is that right?” There was that twinkle in Joe’s eye again. He loved to poke fun at himself.

“All that you were in the past was to bring you and Donna to this point in your enlightenment. That is how it is for all. You are a part of God’s plan, known for all times that were yet to come. We will speak of this with you and your Seven, and not now. I will return in seven days and we will speak again.

“Oh, Gary wants me to ask about some other things, too.”

“In seven days we will speak again. Be at peace and teach only love.” At that, Michael faded back into the surrounding whiteness of light, disappeared, leaving the office in a solemn quietude—as if out of reverence for what had just transpired.





## THE CALL TO THE WHORE OF BABYLON

Something wonderful is going to happen,” Michael had told Joe. The sound of Michael’s voice, the feelings that emanated from his eyes had swept through Joe like an invisible crashing wave. *What could possibly warrant such a statement?* Joe wondered. Other than sounding like a quote from the movie *2010* Joe could only guess. As he reread the codex that Michael had dictated, his mind began to swim with questions. It was as if the decoding of *Revelation* was almost as mysterious as the original writing. How could he present such a document to people? How could anyone really understand it?

It was time to show this to Gary and see what he thought. And with the wonder of e-mail, the two men found themselves sending back and forth questions, and ideas, as well as possible answers. Joe’s typing skills, or lack thereof, forced him to abandon any more e-mail. The next evening he called Gary. Like two kids who’d discovered a secret treasure, they chattered back and forth about the meaning of the latest information from Michael.

“Do you know what Michael meant by ‘something wonderful?’” Gary wanted to know.

“He didn’t elaborate. All I can tell you is we’ll have to stay tuned to see how this will end.” Annie’s barking interrupted the conversation. “Scuze me,

Annie is feeling ignored.” Gary could hear the sound of her panting as Joe most likely was Dutch-rubbing her and talking at the same time. “But did you notice one passage in particular from the codex?”

“Well, I did notice that Michael kind of danced lightly on the matter of 666, perhaps too lightly. Whether Michael thinks so or not, this has been a major topic of theological and evangelical discussion for the last 1,500 years. You ought to ask Michael for more detail.”

“No, that’s not what I meant. Did you notice what he had to say about gays and lesbians?”

“Gays and lesbians? Are you sure?”

“You mean you missed it?”

“Gawd, I guess so. Can you read it to me? I have to tell you that I thought I read and reread that document thoroughly.”

“Hang on. Let me find it.” Joe’s fingers tapped on the keyboard of his computer as Annie began woofing at something. Joe couldn’t handle both the computer and her needs for affection at the same time. “Out!” he yelled with the voice of a drill sergeant. A short snort could be heard across the phone as the taps on the keyboard continued. “Here it is,” he murmured. “You listening?”

“Yep.”

“Then were those that had the Father’s and the Son’s name written on them. No one could learn the new song but these: And they were those men that did not lay with women or women that did not lay with men. They have been chosen as the first fruits and are the spiritual teachers. They are blameless and speak the truth of God’s love.’ Did you catch all that?”

“Yeah, I’m looking at it now. Joe, are you sure Michael was talking about gays? When I read that, I thought maybe he was talking about virgins, which is the classical interpretation, rather than gays and lesbians. I mean, those who choose a life of celibacy don’t lie down with the opposite sex either.”

“Hmmm,” Joe thought for a minute. “Nope, I don’t think that was it. If Michael had meant virgins, I think he would have said virgins.”

“Well, we really need to make sure, Joe. This has a profound impact on people like me. Spiritual first fruits? Jerry Falwell would have a cow. Certainly, I could see him calling us ‘fruits.’ But to be considered ‘spiritual teachers’ and ‘blameless, speaking the truth of God’s love’? Wow! That starts to fit in with my own ideas coming from the ancient notions of the indigenous societies. That gays and lesbians were seen as spiritually oriented

rather than sexually oriented. Having an angel back that notion up could cause you a lot of trouble.”

“Nonetheless,” countered Joe, “I think I’m right on this. But I’ll get more information from Michael when he shows up.”

“Good. Be sure to also ask for more information on the 666 thing. If we do not address that in the book, no one, but no one, will take this information seriously.”

“OK. I’ll ask about it, but that doesn’t mean Michael will answer. He tends to talk about what he thinks we need to talk about. You know what I mean?”

“I do. And if that happens, I’ll respect it.” The two chatted on until thoughts of bankruptcy over the phone bill caused the two of them to bid one another a good night.

As Joe hung up the phone, Annie ambled back into the office. She knew when she could and couldn’t get away with asking for her needs to be met. “Oh, you want more loving, don’t you? Well, what have you done for me lately? Have you done the dishes? No. Have you mowed the lawn? No.” He sat there staring at the huge hound, drool dripping from her jowls. She stared back, answering with a “Woof,” shaking her head excitedly, tossing missiles of white slobber across Joe’s shirt. Rather than cringe, he grabbed for a drool towel like a father with a teething infant. “Come here, you sweet thing,” he sighed tenderly, wiping the rest of the saliva from her drooping jowls, then the stickiness from his own shirt. Who could love such a creature more than Joseph?

After putting the towel down, Joe decided he needed some thinking time. It was just past 11:30 p.m., and what better way to think than getting lost in his favorite pastime—playing Tetris on his computer. Donna had recently reached top scorer, and Joe wasn’t to be outdone. With the focus of a cougar in the hunt, he pursued her hold on first place. After a few failures—or warming up, as he liked to call it—he climbed closer and closer to the tally. *One more level, and I should be able to beat her*, he snorted to himself. A light began spreading on the wall in front of the desk, but Joe was blinded by his great ambition: Tetris or bust. As the circle of light spread to a diameter of three feet, it caught his eye. The sound effects on the computer announced his defeat, but Joe heard nothing, saw nothing but the growing circle of light—now a full ten feet in diameter. The brightness blinded him as he barely made out the edges of the robe and the familiar platinum blond hair. Michael was back already.

Without even a *Hello, how are you*, he turned once again to his computer to load up the word processor. “Just a minute,” he coached Michael, “Let me get things ready.” As he loaded the manuscript of his past dialog with the angel on the screen, he set the typeface to blue and glanced at his heavenly companion. His eyes were like those of a thousand lovers melted into one. *A man could get lost in such love*, he thought to himself. But there was work to do.

“OK,” Joe announced, clearing his throat. “Let’s talk about this.” He sounded more like a guy passing time with one of his buddies than a man sitting in the presence of a heavenly host. “I don’t think what you have told me is any easier to understand than the original *Revelation*. Granted it does sound a lot more loving without the hellfire and brimstone. However, Michael, in order for people to hear this, it is going to have to be made simpler. When you speak it to me, I can see and understand, but afterwards, I just don’t get it. If I can’t, how in the world can anyone who has not talked to you understand? ‘God’s scribe you will be,’ you said to me, and if I am that, then you need to help me write it in a way that anyone can read.”

The loving eyes of the angel stared right into Joe’s soul. “There is wisdom in what you say. Everything existing in the light of God is beyond the understanding of mankind. My name is in that light, and none of your words can say it. What has been shown is in the same light, is so awesome to behold that none can really see it. The words that are heard in that light are whispers in the minds of mankind or as trumpets so loud you will hear it not. I will tell you in a way that all can hear.”

“Great,” Joe grinned with both hands in the air as if he were cheerleading. “Can we go over *Revelation*, like you gave it to me, step by step? If I don’t understand it, or if I have some questions from the Seven, will you say it in a way that we will all understand?”

“I will give to you the words that will open understanding. Yet, some who read this will ask for more, and I have given what I have given.”

Joe tapped his hand on the desk. “That means some people, no matter what we say, will want more information? I totally understand what you are saying. One more thing. Can you talk more like people, without sounding so much like an angel?”

“I will speak in a way that the truth is heard.”

“OK, I guess. Let’s start with the first ... ”

Michael interrupted, “The Whore of Babylon is not a person or the Devil. A Church is not, in itself, the Whore of Babylon. The Whore is what you would call an institution, separate from God, of an idea or concept about God. Like a whore, it gives the illusion of love, and yet there is none. All that visit will need to return again, for they have been tricked into thinking that they have been filled. The words of the Whore are as a beast that will drag its victims back. Escape becomes impossible, for the victim has not the strength to do so and must return. Mankind has come to this, thinking the words are salvation.”

Joe’s fingers stopped their tapping. “So what you are saying, in other words, is that Churches are like that. They offer us a false sense of divine love that they do not have to give. In their teachings they leave us empty, with the need to come back for more, only to let us go, empty again.”

“No,” Michael responded. “A Church is something different than the entity. Or, what has been established as a church has taken the place of the true Church.”

“Now I am really confused,” Joe said. “You told me, before, that the Church has become more important than the people it is to serve. Now you tell me it ain’t the Church. So why was John to take *Revelation* to the seven churches?”

The angel raised one of its hands, as if giving a blessing. “All will come to light as we go through *Revelation*. This a puzzle that has confounded your kind for ages. Be not too quick to understand just yet, for we are only at the beginning. Under each [passage] that I have given, you will write what has been made clear to you. So that your kind will understand, you and I will say it together.”

“Let me see if I got this. You and I will go over everything you have told me? I can ask questions and you will tell me the answers?”

“You know most of the answers to your questions even now,” said Michael. “You will put it in words for all to hear, and I will keep truth in what you write.”

“One more question before we get started, though. Are you going to tell me who I am supposed to tell this ‘Whore’ thing to and how?”

“When the writing is done, the Whore will hear.” Michael then began repeating the introduction to the codex, the message decoding *Revelation*. **“To the Whore of Babylon you will say, ‘You have been shown the truth of what was to come if you did not heed that which was shown**

to you....’ ” The angel continued until finishing the passage ending the direct address to the Whore: “ **‘You have taken Revelation and added it to your Scriptures to make your words powerful and true—as if to set them in stone for all time, to judge and to damn by. I give you now, so all can read, that which was given to John. That you might see it has come to pass.’** ”

As Michael paused, Joe peered at him with a quizzical look. “There are a number of things happening in your opening words. I will tell you what I think is being said, and you can tell me if I am correct:

- (1) The Whore is a creation of man that has taken on a life of its own.
- (2) A message was given to get it back on track.
- (3) The message was misunderstood and used to coerce people into believing, out of fear.
- (4) God sent Jesus with enlightenment as the ransom for the freedom of God’s children.
- (5) The ransom, or the enlightenment, was twisted and used against God’s children.
- (6) John was given *Revelation* to give to the churches, and it was used to frighten people into submission. What Churches must do is recognize their inaccuracies and teach only of God’s love.
- (7) You are giving the true message of *Revelation* so that we can really know about the love God has for us.”

“Well said,” the angel returned with a soft smile.

“That part isn’t too hard to understand, but what comes after that is a mind-twister.”

“Joe, what we are doing is untwisting the thinking so enlightenment will happen for all.”

“Michael, you are speaking in a way that sounds more like we talk. I think this could work, so let’s go on. Explain what is being said with the message to the seven churches.”

With patience that would outlast stone, the angel continued going over the material from the codex. “ **‘Take this message to the seven churches,’** was told to [John]. **He wrote to them what he thought it meant. The churches were trying to build a foundation that would stand through the ages. They built that foundation out of the fears and desires of man. They had become like the Tower of Babylon, an object to stand upon to get to Paradise. ‘Over and again you have said**

that this was the only way.’ To prove this, it was said that Scriptures could only be understood by the most righteous of God’s children, and all others were unworthy. ‘Trusting not your brothers and sisters to find their own way to God, you conspired to lead them. God has shown you what would happen, and you chose to ignore it.’

“I will speak of the churches for what they are,” the celestial continued, “so [all] will see the truth in what is said. A church is a gift from God to mankind to be used to help you through your time on Earth.”

“You are going to need to get a lot simpler than that if you expect all of us to understand. Give me an example of what you mean as a church. You know, like something I can relate to.”

With perseverance and understanding, Michael said, “Jesus was talking to his disciples and asked, ‘Who do you say I am?’ Each had their ideas of who Jesus was, but only Peter knew. Blessed was Peter, for he knew without being told, and it was on this rock that Jesus was to build his Church. Peter listened to his own knowing of truth and spoke with faith.”

“So what does this have to do with the seven churches?” Joe asked with eyebrows raised.

“Churches are gifts that are given to mankind. The seven churches are those having each a gift to use in service to God’s children. The messages to the seven churches were to tell each that they were misusing the gift. Four gifts are masculine: Philadelphia, Sardis, Pergamum, and Thyatira. The three feminine are Ephesus, Smyrna, and Laodicea.”

“OK. I know what you are saying,” said Joe, “but how do I say it so that others will understand?”

“Below each church write what I tell to you.”<sup>26</sup>

*To the church of Ephesus, God said to teach divine love and grow in spirit, and they heard not.*<sup>27</sup>

“Ephesus is female in being and teaching. This church is as a mother’s love, teaching her children of God’s love. With knowledge of this divine love, her children will grow with a spiritual connection to God. John’s message to this church was to put down its obedience to her new husband

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<sup>26</sup> Editor’s note: All material in italic blocks reflects quotes from the codex (decoding of Revelation), found in chapter thirteen.

<sup>27</sup> [Rev. 2]

and return to her children lest they grow to be unknowing in spirit. Taken away will be the gift to the church and its leaders if they do not—but they will eat the spiritual food of God if they listen.”

*To the church of Smyrna, God said to teach illumination of self through faith, and they heard not.*

“Smyrna is female in the gift of life as a mother is. As in the beginning, before birth, a woman knows that there is life. Intuition is the foundation that gives birth to faith. Listen to that which God is telling you and you will know not the fear of death. John’s message to this church was to listen to the truth of God. False teachings will lead you away from your gift, and you will know it not. Those who claim to have authority of God have it not. Let them say what they will, for it is you who will have victory over the second death.”

*To the church of Laodicea, God said to teach compassion and tolerance, and they heard not.*

“Laodicea is female with the gift to manage the home. As a woman runs the house, you will lead with understanding for those who know not. You will guide with mercy and tenderness in the words you speak as the woman of God’s house. Know that you are loved and stand in the light of God, for true wealth is there. Speak of this love with authority and take your place to one side or the other. Give not your silence to those who would hear. Listen to your heart, for God speaks. Ignore it not.”

*To the church of Pergamum, God said to teach consciousness of natural knowing, and they heard not.*

“Pergamum is male in spirit and knowing of God’s love. You hold in your heart the truth, and knowing of God’s love, you will not be moved. If the teaching of half-truths are told, you will only gain that which serves no one in spirit. If you gather that which does not nourish the spirit, your deeds will be made open for all to see. Hold true, for God will feed the spirit and forgive all that has been done.”

*To the church of Thyatira, God said to teach love as Jesus did, and they heard not.*

“Thyatira is male in physical—the action of teaching of the love of God. You are doing the work that God has given you to do. Do not listen to the teachings that call you only to the physical world and of these things. All that was done will be undone when truth is returned. Guilt will be laid upon those who gathered material things only, and it will be laid on them by themselves. To those who kept balance, [they] will carry not [nor] lift upon themselves this burden called guilt. Hold fast and you will be known for loving as God does.”

*To the church of Sardis, God said to teach awareness and reason, and they heard not.<sup>28</sup>*

“Sardis is male in thinking—the mental understanding of the love of God. Clearheaded are those in truth, unlike those that seem to be awake but are yet asleep. Reason is not known to them, and all whom God has told of his love will pass them by. Those who would stay awake, God will give the authority to speak the truth, and the false teachings will shatter like clay pots.”

*To the church of Philadelphia, God said to open the gates to wisdom, and they heard not.*

“Philadelphia is male in the seat of passion and the gate of emotions. The key that you hold is that of outgoing love—the gift, the giving. Other emotions that you have would lead you astray if it were not for the love. Hold fast to the love and wisdom, for the other emotions will bow to you. For this you will be given an understanding of God and all that is of God.”

As Michael paused, Joe summarized, “What I get from this is that each of the churches is more than just an actual building that housed a certain way of believing. Departed from the truth, their teachings were self-serving, to help them to grow in power, compromising what they knew to gain acceptance and be allowed to continue. Each church had a gift, like those given to mankind, and with it they would teach so we could understand. I also see that once they found something that looked like it was working, a

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<sup>28</sup> [Rev. 3]

foothold was made and most started to cater to the means and not the message. John gave each a reminder of the gift they had been given, and told them to use it. Would you say that I have a pretty good understanding of what went on?”

“You say it well. Talk of it with Gary, for his words are of knowing in both worlds.”

Which reminded Joe of the conversations, via e-mail and telephone, that the two friends had engaged in the last two nights. “Glad you brought it up,” said Joe. “Listen. I’ve got a question about all of this. You told me that when God speaks, it is so that all can hear and know what is said. Well, given that statement, how is it possible that it got all screwed up? In case you haven’t been keeping up on past and current events, most people don’t have a clue what was said by John. Depending on whom you ask about *Revelation*, you will probably get as many answers as the number of people you ask. I guess what I want to know is what went wrong? If there was a wrong, that is.”

“Had you been called up to God for this, you would see things that your kind are only now beginning to realize as possible. You are not ready to know of these in your mind. You would have stories of what you saw and heard that your mind cannot tell in true words. The way you receive these words, you have nothing to make up to describe it. I tell you what to write and if you do not understand, I tell you till you do.”

“Would I be in error if I said our feeble minds are not capable of comprehending that much at this time?”

“Yes,” said Michael, “and as Gary would say ‘And that is being polite.’”

“Sorry I asked,” Joe said with a knowing grin. “But I told you that you had the wrong guy for the job. Maybe I can impress you with what I know about the next part, given my limited awareness.”

“Our time is done for now. Speak of this with Gary. After you do, we will speak again. Be at peace and teach only love.” And with that, Michael stepped back into the light and vanished. Joe was getting used to the angel’s abrupt departures at this point. There was little more to do than talk things over with Gary. Usually, when Michael departed, Joe felt exhilarated, wide awake with energy. But this time was different. Tiredness set in. And rather than give Gary another call or send e-mail, he decided to go to bed once the typing of all that had happened was finished and filed away.

The next day, Gary pored over the new e-mail. Each day seemed like Christmas, with a new present waiting for him online. Not only was the

information from Michael spellbinding to Gary, but so were the conversations he was having with Joe. The two had grown quite close as friends. As he sped through the fresh text from Joe, he noticed that Michael had said nothing about the 666, nor had he addressed the question he and Joe had about whether gays and lesbians were, indeed, being addressed as “those that had the Father’s and the Son’s name written on them.” It was time to call Joe.

As the two discussed the phenomenon of Michael and why he would talk about some things and not others, Gary asked Joe how the angel appeared to him. Was it like in a daydream or “for real”?

“I can tell you it ain’t no daydream,” Joe stated matter-of-factly. “He looks just as real as if you were standing in front of me. However, he has this kind of light around him that is unexplainable. If you’ve seen the movie, *Contact*, with Jodie Foster, where she ends up in the scene in space speaking with the alien who appears to her as her father, it’s like that. The colors are like that. They’re soft and almost iridescent. But very real. You could reach out and touch everything and feel it.”

“Have you ever touched Michael?” Gary asked in the most polite way he knew how.

After pausing, Joe answered, “Ya know, I haven’t, nor has Michael ever touched me.”

“Do you feel you shouldn’t touch him?”

“Well, yeah, kinda. I have this feeling that I don’t want to be jolted across the room by touching him. You know what I mean?” The two men erupted into laughter.

“I think I do,” chortled Gary. “In fact, I’d be thinking seriously if I should even be in the same room with him.” There was a message of respect that flowed through Gary’s words. It was one thing to hear people talk about angels. Joe was not the first person to talk to Gary about such matters. His own books relating to the realm of angels exposed him to many people who either had been touched by angels or had ventured into the world of the angelic. But Joe was different. He was not starry-eyed, nor was he a fountain of what Gary called “angel-babble.” Joe’s feet were always planted on the ground. It was even easy to understand why Michael had called him for the work that was to be done. Joe saw the angel as a friend rather than a phenomenon. Michael was not some ticket into prestige. He was simply another loving friend. And Joe was a man who loved his friends.

Gary and Joe continued discussing what Michael might or might not talk about next. Each phone call brought a new list of questions to present to Michael. Oddly enough, Joe never asked one of those questions. He didn't need to. Michael seemed to be aware of them without their being asked. As the two hung up the phone, they both felt a sense of wonder about what was unfolding before them. Glimpses of Michael's early statement that something wonderful was going to happen began to appear between the lines of what was being given to Joe.

The next night, as Joe turned off the late show and headed down the hallway toward the bedroom, he noticed a light in the office. *Donna must've left the light on after working on the computer to finish her report for work*, Joe thought. The closer he got to the office door, the brighter the light emanated. Leaning his head forward through the doorway, it was what he suspected: Michael. "I was planning to go to bed," he told the angel in an almost kidding fashion. The truth of the matter was that he had been up until the wee hours the past three days typing out everything Michael had said to him.

"You have questions that I will answer," was all the angel said in response. It brought a smile to Joe's lips. He was tempted to ask Michael what happened to his sense of humor, but it was late, so why not get to the point?

"I do have a few questions that I would like cleared up," Joe said. "Gary and I were talking, and we got into what it meant about the seven churches. We talked about the meaning of the word "Church"—was it the religion or was it people or was it an institution? One other thing Gary pointed out was that, like the seven churches, the seven masters have things to work out in their lives. Do the seven masters represent the seven churches in this?"

Joe sauntered into the office to sit while Michael continued. "Gary is wise in seeing this. Yet to answer your question: All of the seven masters are as a church with a foundation to stand upon, to speak of God's love. Is it a mystery that each is of a different religion than the other? Each head of the seven churches was given a gift, as was each of your seven. Just as the ones that John wrote to and of, they were and are masters, yet they do not know this. This is your work—to teach them to know which church they are of."

"Why do you always do this to me?" Joe asked. "Why can't you just tell me, and I will tell them, and we can get on with it?"

"Should I tell you, and you them, they would believe it not. They will find which one they are of and will have victory over it. I am not here to talk of this now."

“I get it. We need to move on.” Joe accepted with respect Michael’s decision to get off this topic and move to another.

“This next part is pretty easy,” Joe said, thinking about his next question. “After the seven churches got the message, they misunderstood and came up with what they thought the message was about. Now it’s time to make things clear so God’s plan can happen. Now this is were I get to impress you with what I figured out,” he said with a knowing twinkle in his eye. “I was confused about the twenty-four Elders at first, but I think I got it now. Try this on for size. The Elders are the twelve apostles. I know there are twenty-four Elders, but with each there is day and night. The love of God is like the sun that shines on the earth of mankind. Sometimes there is light and sometimes there is darkness. The light is when we are enlightened, and the darkness is when we are in doubt. When we are in doubt, we have access to the seven torches to light our way. The four beasts are the four natures out of balance with one another.”<sup>29</sup>

“Again you see the truth and speak it,” Michael said.

“Thanks, but that’s as far as I got. You will have to take it from here.” Joe leaned back in his chair, wondering if he was going to have to start typing away. Usually, when Michael wanted material dictated verbatim, he would say so.

*When they received the messages, they made up stories of what God would do if they were not obeyed. What was shown to them was lost. Now, like an unpaid debt, it is time to be paid and the covenant fulfilled.*

*He [John] was called up to the throne and, seated on it, was the love that God is.<sup>30</sup> The rainbow that was like an emerald is the Earth. The twenty-four Elders seated on the thrones are the hours of the day and night. The seven torches are the spirits of God that are given as gifts to mankind. The four beasts are the four natures of mankind. Mankind is mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual, and the spirit is of God and is in all things.*

*It was then said, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’<sup>31</sup> Not one of the churches was found to be worthy to open the scroll. Yet the scroll could*

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<sup>29</sup> [Rev. 4:7]

<sup>30</sup> [Rev. 4]

<sup>31</sup> [Rev. 5:2]

*be opened with the Christ Consciousness that was given to all of God's children. Murdered was God's Son for the truths he gave mankind.*

Michael then said to Joe, **“Jesus was and is that Christ Consciousness. Jesus gave a message to the twelve and to the world. John saw what had taken place and what was yet to come.”**

*Shown was the history of what had happened when the first seal was opened.<sup>32</sup> A white horse came forth, and its rider was armed with the bow of truth and a crown of spiritual awareness was given to him that he could conquer all that lay in his path. In time he laid down his bow so that others could conquer for him. All the knowledge that was given to prosper, to heal, to live happily in a world of peace, was gone.*

**“The first seal was the white horse, and its rider was the corruption of that spiritual knowledge—the spiritual.”<sup>33</sup>**

*The second seal was opened, and a horse of red came forth with a rider that was given a sword by man, that mankind might kill one another. Peace was no longer commonplace on the earth.<sup>34</sup>*

**“The second seal was the red horse, and its rider was given possession, and would destroy to keep them or to gather more—the physical.”<sup>35</sup>**

*The third seal was opened, and a black horse came forth with its rider holding a pair of scales. With these scales man must now pay to other men for the gifts that I have given to the world.<sup>36</sup>*

**“The third seal was a black horse, and its rider was reason, and it judged all that was around—the mind.”<sup>37</sup>**

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32 [Rev. 6]

33 [Rev. 6:2]

34 [Rev. 6:3]

35 [Rev. 6:4]

36 [Rev. 6:5]

37 [Rev. 6:6]

*When the fourth seal was opened, a pale horse came forth with its rider, and he brought death of all remembrance of the love God has for mankind.*<sup>38</sup>

**“The fourth seal was a pale horse, and its rider was death, and it fed on anger, jealousy, and hate—the emotions.”**<sup>39</sup>

*Then the fifth seal was opened, and he saw all the enlightened ones. That they could not teach others of a loving God—they were killed for what they knew. They were given a place with God and told that more would come to receive their place, too, with God.*<sup>40</sup>

**“The fifth seal was opened, and all that was enlightenment was destroyed.”**

*When the sixth seal was opened, he saw that all the light had been taken or given away by man. All that they were left with was what the liars had told them.*

*Empty were the words that were spoken. Mankind was in despair with nowhere to go, so they hid in the liars’ temples out of fear.*<sup>41</sup>

**“The sixth seal was opened, and, out of ignorance, God’s love was gone. Insanity led mankind into temples to find their way to God’s love. The four winds being held were the balancing of the directions of the four natures of mankind. When these four are in balance, no Religion is needed.”**

*The tribes of Israel were again given the enlightenment by God’s Son. These were the twelve apostles that Jesus taught, and there was a great rejoicing, for the gates were open to the love of God. More and more of God’s children began to know of God’s love.*<sup>42</sup>

**“The twelve tribes of Israel—which is Ises, Ra, and El—the three are female, male, and the child of love. The knowledge of this is the**

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38 [Rev. 6:7]

39 [Rev. 6:8]

40 [Rev. 6:9]

41 [Rev. 6:12]

42 [Rev. 7:4-9]

**Oneness of God and is the completion of the number of mankind. When John speaks of a number in his writings, [it is] the vastness of God's love. When he speaks of white robes, he is speaking of those who are enlightened. When he speaks of blood, he is speaking of those who spend their lives in the service of God.”<sup>43</sup>**

*The seven angels that stood before God were again given the information to give to the churches. The message was again distorted, for man had not learned from the teachings of Jesus. Each angel's message was misused for the further spiritual enslavement of mankind. The bottomless pit of Ignorance and Superstition was opened, and most of mankind fell into it. With this loss of spiritual enlightenment, the churches did battle with one another, and the earth and God's children all were to suffer at the hands of one another. Destruction was about the lands as war, famine, plagues, and the poisoning of the earth by mankind's actions.<sup>44</sup>*

*The four angels were released.<sup>45</sup> The mental nature was the first woe, and a third of mankind was seen as dead by the churches. The spiritual nature held fast with God.*

**“The seven angels’ trumpets that sounded were the messages of a warning of what mankind was to lay upon itself. The first four angels warned of misuse of Spiritual, Physical, Mental and Emotional. The fourth angel’s trumpet sounded, and three woes would come out of this. Religious wars would come about. Famine, disease, and ignorance would grow out of this.<sup>46</sup> The first woe would pass, and two more would come.**

*The four winds are the points of the compass that signify the mental north, emotional south, physical west, and the spiritual east.<sup>47</sup> Jesus brought these into balance that man could learn of God's love and compassion.*

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<sup>43</sup> [Rev. 7:14]

<sup>44</sup> [Rev. 8:1-5]

<sup>45</sup> [Rev. 9:14-15]

<sup>46</sup> [Rev. 8:12-13]

<sup>47</sup> [Rev. 7:1]

**“The sixth angel’s trumpet sounded, and the four winds were released to enlighten humankind. Another third of humankind will be enlightened and seen as dead to religions. This is what is meant by ‘All will be visited by the Holy Spirit and the Churches will fall away.’<sup>48</sup>**

**“The seventh angel sounded the seven thunders, but John was not to tell of them. It was not yet time for humankind to hear them. There would be no delay, for John was given enlightenment and told to give enlightenment to all nations. What he had received was the truth of God’s total love for all. John knew that even if he was to speak it, not all would hear and believe. When John told of what he was given to tell, the people heard what they wanted.”<sup>49</sup>**

Michael stopped talking and stared at Joe to see if he had anything to say. “I know what you are saying about all this. But I am not sure that I am typing it in such a way that most people will understand it. My grammar isn’t too good, and the way you talk, it is a little hard to get behind. Do I need not to change anything you say?”

“That which I have given you at first [the codex] is as it was given to me. Write it so,” Michael insisted. “That which I tell you now, you tell in a way that others understand. You will not give it out until I tell you to. The message will not be lost or perverted again in a way so that it becomes lost.”

“Does this mean Gary can fix things to say what you want it to say and be understood?”

“It does,” was Michael’s reply. “For that is why he is chosen. And if he strays, I will lead you back to the meaning. Our time is done for now. Teach only love.”

Joe scooted his chair back to watch Michael fade into the light as he had done before. However, the angel did something he had never done before. Moving over to the sofa against the office wall where Poppy was sleeping, Michael looked down at her, snoring away as she normally did when Joe was at his desk. Michael bent over and placed his hand on her head. Her snoring ceased. As he stood back up and turned, he said to Joe, “You are truly blessed.” Never had the angel touched anyone or anything in Joe’s presence before. The gesture brought a broad smile to Joe’s lips. Michael looked back at Joe, stepped back into the brilliance of light surrounding him, and vanished.

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<sup>48</sup> [Rev. 9:12-15]

<sup>49</sup> [Rev. 10:3-11]



## NEW VISIONS, NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

**A**lmost a week had passed without Michael visiting. Frankly, Joe needed the rest. His maintenance business had suffered a bit from his late hours of typing while Michael spoke. Sometimes he wouldn't make it to bed before 6 a.m., while at other times he simply could not sleep from the charge of energy he had felt in the angel's presence. It was nice to get back to the routine of everyday living. However, it did not take long before Joe missed his celestial friend's company once again.

"Joe, rise and come with me." As Joe's eyes struggled to open, he could see a soft glow filling the dark bedroom. As he sat up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, the angel's light brightened, eventually reaching the intensity of that first visit so long ago in this same bedroom.

With enthusiasm, Joe reached over to shake his wife. "Donna, you gotta see this," his gravelly voice urged loudly.

"She will not hear, nor will she awake," Michael said softly.

Joe looked down at his watch, reading it by the angelic light filling the room. It was two in the morning. He scratched at his haystack of hair, thinking that Michael was like some wrong number in the middle of the night. Only, this night Joe wasn't going to roll over and surrender to sleep after hanging up. With a sense of inevitability, he mumbled, "Give me a minute to get some pants on."

“You need them not. Come with me,” was Michael’s retort. And without waiting for Joe to answer, he exited the bedroom and started down the hall.

Joe crawled out of bed and headed toward the office so he could write what Michael would tell him. But as he reached the doorway, he saw Michael continuing down the hallway toward the living room. *Where is he going?* Joe thought, deciding to follow him. Instead of going all the way down the hall, Michael turned right and went right through the wall.

“This is too cool” Joe chortled. Trying to follow the angel through the shortcut, he abruptly smacked his head against the wall with a thud. Shocked for a moment, Joe then shuffled on down the corridor, peering into the bathroom as he passed. He could see Michael’s light coming in through the bathroom window. The angel had already exited to the outside and into the garden area. Joe quickened his footsteps through the dining room and out the patio door. Once outside, he felt the grass under his bare feet. But instead of coolness teasing the bottoms of his feet, he felt an unexpected warmth against his soles, as if a noonday sun had bathed the yard. For that matter, it should have been cold outside, but it wasn’t. Joe was as warm as if he had stayed in bed. Michael was standing in the middle of the back yard with his back to Joe. Waiting there in his skivvies, Joe thought how comforting it was just to know that even Michael had a back. His hair lay on his shoulders and covered the neck of his robe. Michael’s light shone against the night, reflecting off the fence, the neighbor’s towering trees, the lawn, and all the surrounding plants. He stood there like a Christmas postcard staring toward the back fence. Joe walked up to his side and stood there, looking in the same direction. “What are we looking for?” he asked.

The angel looked down his shoulder at his companion and raised his arm, pointing with his finger in the direction of the back fence. Joe’s eyes followed his arm to the end of his finger and past. As his gaze reached the fence, about head high, another light started to overshadow Michael’s. Joe didn’t know what was going on, but he knew he didn’t like it. Nervousness swept through him as he started thinking about being transported to a place he had never been—like maybe to see God—and he simply was not ready for anything like that.

“Hey, Michael, this whole thing is getting too scary for me. Where are you taking me?” Joe said with a voice that betrayed his fear.

“Fear not,” was all Michael said. But Joe knew that when an angel tells you not to be afraid—well, that usually means there’s a reason to be afraid.

Something big was about to happen. Joe's mind was screaming at him to run away and save himself.

"I have come to show you, not to take you," Michael said comfortingly. This made whatever was about to happen easier, but Joe still didn't know if he was ready for it.

"Couldn't you just tell me, like before?" he implored.

"Behold the love of God!" Michael responded. And Joe stared point blank at exploding light opening before him. In the luminescence he saw what appeared to be a walking stick made of gold and surrounded by an aura of brilliance. The rod was encrusted with jewels along its side as if it were a rule for measuring. As Joe focused in on one of the segments to see how it worked to measure whatever it was it measured, he saw writing on it, formed by the jewels. But he couldn't read the inscription. Down at one end of the rod he saw what looked like a circular band or ring made out of diamond. The ring was about a quarter inch wide and about the same thickness. Although it encircled the rod, the ring didn't fit against it. It was more like a ring that's made too big for one's finger, but instead of falling off, it just hung there, sparkling like a diamond in sunlight. Little beams of light in all the colors of the rainbow shot off in all directions at once.<sup>50</sup>

It seemed odd to Joe that the ring rested at the bottom of the rule rather than the top. Why, he didn't know. His attention was drawn past the rod to what was appearing in the distance—something like a six-sided altar made of stones. The vision of the altar came into focus. The rod started to move towards the altar, and as it did so, the ring moved up to the top of the rule. The rod hovered above the altar for a moment, then eased down beside it as if to measure it. As soon as the rod touched the altar, the ring fell toward the lower end of the staff. When the ring reached a place on the rod apparently showing a measurement, a word sounding like thunder resounded from nowhere. Joe couldn't tell what point was being made, but clearly, a point was being made. Each time the rod moved away from the altar, the ring would slide to the top of the rod again. Each time the rod touched the altar, the ring fell about the same place, and another word thundered forth.

The rule measured each of the six sides of the altar. Then the staff and ring rose to just above where it had started before measuring. When it stopped rising, Joe heard what sounded like lightning start to crackle. The sound sizzled constantly without gaining or losing volume.

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<sup>50</sup> [Rev. 11:1]

The rod pulled away from the altar towards Michael, and it then moved away as if to go somewhere else. Every time the rod arrived at something that looked like it was a religious object, it would measure it. Thunder erupted each time it measured, and then the crackling-of-lightning sound returned. Every time the rod moved, it went to what appeared before Joe like a statue or a grotto or an altar—some place of worship. Or a shrine or temple combining two or three sacred objects would appear before him and be measured. Most of the holy sites he didn't recognize, but he sensed that some kind of worship was held there. Then the rod started to move faster and faster from one place to the next. The space between one thundering word and the next became shorter and shorter. The crackling became a hiss, intensifying with each sacred place or object measured.

Joe then saw what looked like an Assyrian or Babylonian temple coming into view for measurement. Faster and faster and faster, from one to the next, ring and staff zipped like thoughts through one's mind. Some temples Joe recognized, and some he didn't. Each time the ring would move higher or lower on the shaft, and at no time did the ring go to the top. Then Joe saw the temple at Jerusalem in all its glory flash by, as did other temples, mosques, and churches. The Vatican, the Dome of the Rock, the Wailing Wall, mighty cathedrals, even tents, and structures of every known religion were measured. The sound of the hissing crackle was now so loud Joe thought it would wake the neighborhood around him. He didn't know how much more of this maddening sound he could take without losing his sanity. He covered his ears to shut out the sound, but he could feel it vibrating in his head.

He yelled to Michael, "End this before I lose my mind!"

There was such an intense burst of all the released energy before him that Joe expected to be blown into fragments. Brighter than an atom bomb was the light, but there was no heat. The flash was the brightest thing he had ever witnessed. What he thought would be a forceful blast passed over him like a gentle breeze on a warm summer's day. A peacefulness engulfed him, filling him with a love he had never known. He felt ecstatic. There was nothing he needed or desired. He stood there bathed in a wash of love that he, in turn, felt for all of life. Turning to Michael, he asked, "Is this the reward for all of us from God?"

"No, Joe," Michael said with unequaled love, "What you feel is only the beginning. And like you say, 'You ain't seen nothing, yet.' Look." He pointed

to the light again. Joseph turned to witness what he thought was impossible. He knew, without being told, it was the Christ, both in body and spirit, one a reflection of the other. The rod that had measured all the religions returned and measured the body, and the ring rose to the top of the rule. With each measurement the rod took, the ring stayed at the top. The sound it made was like music, and a gentle breeze carried forth the scent of flowers. The rod then went to the spirit and measured, and it was the same.<sup>51</sup>

“Why am I being shown this?” Joe asked.

“These things that I show to you are so that you may understand the work you are doing.” Joseph looked back to the light and beheld the spirit and body once again. Then the two aspects of the Christ faded away.

He turned to Michael and asked, “What’s this all about? First you tell me to write a book, and I do. Then you tell me to gather seven masters, and I do. Then you tell me to write about *Revelation*, and before we are even done with it, you start me down another path, showing me this. Why?”

“Look at what you have learned from this. You now know what the rod was and how it was used. You know who the two witnesses are, and you know something else that you do not know you know.” Joe remembered one of his conversations with Gary about the passage in *Revelation* regarding the two witnesses. Michael was answering this and other questions the two men had spent time pondering.

“This is like a puzzle,” Joe said, “and you only give a piece of it at a time. Can’t you give me the whole thing so I can figure it out?”

Michael responded, “This that you call a puzzle was given to John, and no one has been able to figure it out since then. If I tell you, you will believe it or you will not. If I take you through it, and *you* put it together, others will do the same through what you write with Gary.”

“So then, you are still talking about *Revelation*?” Joe asked. “I need to go in and see where we left off last time, and maybe I will understand what you’re saying.” Joe turned to go back into the house and saw three of the dogs sitting in a row watching angel, man, and the light on the back fence. He looked around for the missing mastiff. “Where is the Bear?” he said out loud to himself.

“He guards the sleep of your wife and will not leave her side until your return,” Michael answered.

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<sup>51</sup> [Rev. 11:3]

Having had his question answered, Joe headed back to the house, the dogs following closely behind. As he shuffled through the door, he spotted the light he knew was Michael going down the hallway to the office. *I wish I could walk through walls*, he thought to himself. Rounding the corner, he joined the angel in the office. Michael stood in front of the desk. Poppy came into the room and walked around him to lie down at her usual place on the sofa. Joe could hear Annie climbing on the bed with Bear and Donna. Bogie had plopped himself in his favorite spot on the bathroom floor and had already begun his snoring sonata. Sitting down at his desk, Joe found where he and Gary had left off with the writing and started reading once more:

*He was given a rod as a standard to measure what the churches said, but was told not to measure the enlightened outside the temple. For they will overcome the false teachings of the churches. The two witnesses will be given the authority to enlighten mankind and will come forth and teach. The sackcloth is the sign of mourning for the consciousness of mankind. They will speak of a God of love, and their words will be judged, and they will be dead in the eyes of the churches. In but a short time, the two will be seen as the bringers of light, and the love of God will be seen. As the teachings of the churches are seen to be unfounded with the love of God.<sup>52</sup>*

“OK, I get most of this and what you showed me in the yard. Now it says that the two witnesses are given authority. I take this to mean that Jesus, the man, is one, and Christ, the spirit, is the other. John says that they will teach for three and a half years and then be killed. You said they will be seen as dead in the eyes of the churches.” Joe went back and read again what Michael had said and saw what he meant. “Oh, I get it,” he said. “Jesus, the man, was killed. When that happened, the spirit was gone, too. Three days pass, and resurrection. Both were called up to sit with God. Correct?”

The angel said nothing, so Joe guessed he was putting it together as it should be. “The sound of the seventh angel’s trumpet was the announcement that the love of God is open to all freely. That shook the bases of all religions, given that they were not needed for us to have a connection with God.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> [Rev. 11:1-7]

<sup>53</sup> [Rev. 11:15-19]

*The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and loud voices were heard, for God's love was now open to all, as Jesus had said it was. This shook the last foundation of the churches.*

“You see and hear that which is true,” Michael verified. “Be at peace and teach only love. We will speak again soon.”

Michael faded away into the light and was gone. Joe got up and headed off to bed.



The next day Gary was on the phone again after receiving an e-mail about what had transpired the previous night. “Joe, am I mistaken, or is Michael showing you what was shown to John before he wrote *Revelation*?”

“I believe that is exactly what is happening,” said Joe. “And I’m not sure I care to see any more.”

“Are you kidding?” Gary challenged, his voice filled with incredulity. “You get to see the visions of John, to witness the Christ, to hear the voice of God in thunder and music, and you don’t like it?”

“It’s not so much that I don’t like it, it’s that I am bothered by where this is going, where I might end up next. You didn’t go through it. I actually thought I was going to go insane when that booming thunder went right through me. It was the loudest sound I ever came close to beholding. How would you feel having this going on around you?”

“Yeah, I see what you mean. Well, one thing is nice. And that is Michael is starting to give us the answers to the questions we’ve been coming up with. One can only wonder what else we’re going to be told.”

“Hang on to your shorts, Bubba, ’cuz I don’t think this is over by a long shot.”

The two discussed what each symbol meant and why Joe was allowed to see it. Their ideas only brought up more questions. Gary was beginning to understand Michael’s comment about there never being enough words to tell everyone what the symbols meant. Like Jesus teaching his disciples with parables, the truth is in the story rather than the words. Each person hears as much meaning in the story as each is capable of understanding. It works like a hologram. For those who have little understanding, the story tells a little, but nonetheless contains the full truth. Not all truth is understood in

the head. Indeed, it was becoming apparent that the greatest truth is understood by the heart.

The next day, Joe went outside to check the lily pond. Periodically it needed water added, especially during the oncoming of summer. As he approached the Zen-like enclosure, he noticed a misty light forming just above the pond, and knew Michael was coming back. The closer he edged to the pond the clearer the angel became. Michael came into full view, then moved through the surrounding fence. He stopped and waited for Joe to approach.

Michael spoke: “Remove your shoes.”

Joe realized that Michael was referring to this area being holy ground because of doing the Last Baptism there. Joe stepped out of his shoes as quickly as he could, commenting, “I guess this means we are going to do something?”

Michael was standing to the right side of the pond. Joe stood just outside the short fence, facing his heavenly companion. Michael raised his right arm up with his palm towards Joe, and, with a gesture, bid him to gaze at the pond. Joe noticed the papyrus plants had turned to gold. He moved up to the fence, and leaned on it with both hands. Peering down over the fence he noticed the rocks were also gold, as were the lilies in the water. The water had been changed to what seemed to be shining liquid silver. He thought to himself, *All this gold and silver must be worth a bazillion dollars*. He felt a little woeful, knowing Michael wouldn’t leave it that way when he left. Light beams were shooting up and out from around the sides of the pond. “Impressed” would be an understatement for anyone who saw this spectacle.

**“Behold, and write it,”** Michael instructed.

Immediately, an image started to form in the water, and it became clear to Joe that it was a woman. He thought, *This must be the woman that John spoke of. Yep, it has to be*, for she fit the description. She was standing on the moon and wrapped with sunlight. Her crown had twelve stars, like jewels, each a different color.<sup>54</sup> Joe didn’t know how he knew, but he absolutely knew that the stars were the twelve powers given to humankind. They were placed on a crown because these were the highest of God’s gifts to us. The child brought forth from her was to teach us about them and their use.

“Mary?” he asked.

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<sup>54</sup> [Rev. 12]

“If it will help you understand,” Michael returned.

That is when Joe felt that this wasn’t a person as much as an aspect of the feminine. He saw the woman pregnant and crying out in the birth process, but not because the pain of birth was great. She was crying out because of the pain humankind was having spiritually. Through her would come the enlightenment. She was to end the spiritual suffering in the world.

*The female aspect of God appeared clothed with the sun, and the moon at her feet—both are symbols of light to the world. The crown was that of the twelve powers of mankind. These are kindness, mercy, and contribution in the physical deeds of mankind. In the mental there is perception, understanding and imagination. In the emotional are compassion, devotion, and giving. In the spirit are faith, divine awareness and consciousness. She is to give birth to a new state of being in mankind.*<sup>55</sup>

Michael continued speaking as the visions appeared in the pond: **“The dragon is the ancient sign of spirituality. The color red is the symbol for the physical nature of mankind. The seven heads are the churches with seven headdresses that symbolize unenlightened thinking. The ten horns are the ten commandments on which the churches use to impale the minds of mankind.”**<sup>56</sup>

Joe added, “The child is the Christ Consciousness that Jesus brought, and the iron rod is the unbreakable love that God is. What are the stars thrown to earth by the dragon’s tail?”

**“Whenever the darkness of unenlightenment stirs, it causes the light of true knowledge to fall upon the very darkness it is.”**<sup>57</sup>

“I think the woman in the wilderness symbolizes the women teaching in the early times, after Jesus was taken to God.” Joe said. “The nature of woman fosters a birth of new enlightenment. She is honored as a teacher of light for about as long as Jesus is on Earth. The war that broke out in Heaven was really the conflict between the false teachings and the truth. Since then, you and others have visited us to help us know of the love that God is. The dragon being thrown down is the false teachings being seen as false. The Devil is unenlightened thinking and all that comes out of it.” Joe

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<sup>55</sup> [Rev. 12:1-5]

<sup>56</sup> [Rev. 12:3]

<sup>57</sup> [Rev. 12:4]

kept looking into the pond, watching this strange show of events, and realized what was being shown. Whenever any of it became unclear, Michael would speak to clear it up.

**“The wings that are given to the woman are intuition and the ability to give birth to the innocence of truth. These things have allowed the light of the world to grow from time to time. The wrongful thinking is as the dragon, and it spews forth false words like a river. The earth opening its mouth and swallowing the river is the place where all lies will be tested. Truth will swallow up the muddy waters of the wettest of lies.”<sup>58</sup>**

*The beast that rose out of the sea was the new Churches that rose out of the Age of Pisces, claiming to be aligned with the Christ. It spoke of itself as the true Word of God, and many listened to it. Those that spoke against it were killed or looked upon as dead.<sup>59</sup>*

**“The old teachings of old religions are losing the hold they had on mankind. Knowing this, a new beast rose out of the sea. That being the time of the Age of Pisces, it aligned itself with the signs of the age. The dragon had the same heads, headdresses, and horns as before. The blasphemous names were the names it called itself. With lies, it spoke of having authority given it by God. The dragon gave the beast all its teachings to tie the old with the new. One of the heads was claimed to be that of the teachings of Jesus who was slain. From this head, the beast had tied itself with the old covenant and the new. Mankind was enslaved to false religious systems that claimed authority from the old teachings of God. None could make war on the beast, for that would mean going against the will of God. Anyone who was enlightened was only to believe what they were told and worship the teachings of the beast.”<sup>60</sup>**

Joe saw what looked like the waters that had been swallowed by the earth rise out of the earth again. This appeared to be a transformed image of the first beast, a greater likeness to the teachings of Jesus. He could not understand what this was all about, and Michael’s words came to his aid.

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<sup>58</sup> [Rev. 12:14-16]

<sup>59</sup> [Rev. 13]

<sup>60</sup> [Rev. 13:1-10]

**“The second beast teaches that which is false. Look at its horns. They are like the male and female love of God, yet they are not. The mortal wound has been healed, it is said, and surely the path that is given is the true way to God. Humankind is now drawn into the big lie, saying that if you did not believe, you would be dead to God. The churches used an old ritual to bind humankind to the beast—this was the baptism on the forehead as a mark. A ring was placed on the right hand with a sign from one of the seven heads of the beast. Mankind was told they could not get or give enlightenment without this mark. God would recognize only those who had this mark, to be allowed into the love God is. This is the lie they told so often that it became as if it were true.”<sup>61</sup>**

Joe gasped as he finally realized what the last part concerning the number of the beast really was. “Michael,” he said. “I know the number of the beast.”

Michael just smiled back and said nothing, as if he was waiting for him to speak.

“When you came to me the other night,” said Joe, “you showed me the number of the beast didn’t you? It was all of the religions of the world, wasn’t it? I bet if I had counted them all, they would have come to 666, wouldn’t they?”<sup>62</sup> That has been the lie we have been told over and over. *When we turn our relationship with God over to any system, we have taken the number of the beast.* That’s why you are making me go through this a piece at a time, so I can find the light of truth from within.” *I win the purple jelly bean for this,* Joe joked to himself. He understood the importance of his realization.

“Even better, Joe, you have taken the mark of God on your mind. Look again into the pool and see those that have the mark even now.”<sup>63</sup>

Of all the things Michael had shown Joe, this was something he was not ready for. He burst into tears as he saw people he knew and had known standing with what looked like, what appeared to be, the Christ. He sobbed at the sight of his past gay friends who had died years ago. The joy was almost more than he could stand, knowing that they had made it. Heaven was theirs. Some of the people he saw were still alive today, and some were dead long ago. When he saw his old friend, Chico, who had died from AIDS, in the crowd, happy and healthy, he lost it. Joe’s knees buckled under him,

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<sup>61</sup> [Rev. 13:11-17]

<sup>62</sup> [Rev. 13:18]

<sup>63</sup> [Rev. 14:1]

hitting the ground. Losing even his sense of balance, he fell, his back thumping against the fence. His emotions poured out of him.

“It’s true,” Joe choked through the tears, his nose running like rain on a window. “God is a God only of love, and God loves all of us.” He then felt the warmth of a hand on the top of his head. Looking up he saw Michael leaning over him with his arm outstretched.

“Bless your heart,” was all he said. The tears stopped and Joe regained his composure, but was still unable to stand.

Michael had never touched him before, and he had never tried to touch his heavenly friend. He didn’t know why. As Joe’s mind cleared, he thought, *Given the people I have just seen, and the fact that they were gay, does it mean I am too?*

“No,” Michael said, knowing his thoughts. “You knew that these people were gay when I first gave you what to write. You and many others know things that you are not aware of yet. Be not surprised when you do. The song they sing has been learned, and is being learned, by the male and female in the male and female. These are the ‘first fruits’ spoken of in *Revelation*.<sup>64</sup> They are in touch with the male and female natures in all things. These are the ones who chose, and were chosen, to live life this way. The religions of the world have cast them out as sinners and allowed them not the love of God. Blessed were they, for the love of God was all they had. They were set free to find the connection with that love.<sup>65</sup> They feel the spiritual connection of both masculine and feminine.”

*Then were those that had the Father’s and the Son’s name written on them. No one could learn the new song but these. And they were those men that did not lay with women or women that did not lay with men. They have been chosen as the first fruits and are the spiritual teachers. They are blameless and speak the truth of God’s love.*<sup>66</sup>

Joe responded, “Gary said this part could mean that they were celibates or virgins.”

“Religion would tell you so,” Michael said, “yet that does not make it so. When you abstain from sex, you abstain from nature, and are out of balance.

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<sup>64</sup> [Rev. 14:4]

<sup>65</sup> [Rev. 14:3]

<sup>66</sup> [Rev. 14:4-5]

Only when the four natures of humankind are in balance will you be one with God.

“The wisdom you have found will be found by others, and those that read this will see the truth in what is written. Much has been asked of you, and much have you given. I will not speak to you again until you have rested. Be about that which is before you. Be at peace and teach only love.”

With that, Michael stepped back into the brilliance of light and disappeared. Joe sat there stunned by all he had seen, heard, and felt. The lilies were no longer made of gold nor the water silver. He stretched his hand over the fence to touch the pond, sending ripples across it, as if to remind himself and the life in the pond that they were still a part of the extraordinariness of ordinary life, though on sacred ground.

The next day, Gary devoured every syllable of Joe’s e-mail. It was like reading a mystery, a love story, and letters from God, all wrapped into one. As his eyes widened toward the end of the message, gulping every word Michael revealed about gays and lesbians, he dared not believe what he was seeing. Reading and rereading the passages could not satiate his desire for more truth. The fullness of the message grabbed his soul as if yanking it into a bonfire of light. Consumed with a growing blaze of feelings, he scooted his chair back burying his head in his hands. The weeping started softly as the realization that “those men that did not lay with women or women that did not lay with men” need not suffer any longer. Millennia of hatred, bigotry, retribution, and torture could now come to an end.

The weeping now became sobbing. Beneath the tears, Gary reviewed his own life in retrospect. So many wasted years living in fear, so many wounds uselessly inflicted, so much living in loneliness with dark secrets that could have been celebrated in the light. Michael’s words echoed through his mind, his heart, reaching deep into his soul. He sat there reeling, seeing himself clearly for the first time. Amazement replaced grief. Could the world accept what he was reading? That all the separation, all the us-versus-them, all the hatred and violence were nothing more than waste and illusion? Nothing more than people choosing fear over love?

It would be so easy to rage against centuries of abuse fostered by the very religions that were supposed to inspire all of humanity to greater heights. But Gary found the angel’s words were far too powerful for anger. The past was completed. It was time to look ahead to a new kind of world, a new way of living in the fullness of love. His soul now felt a healing balm

in the truths Michael had shared. Heaven had delivered a gift. It was up to humanity to open that gift and delight in it. Like a sea moving to high tide, Gary was slowly flooded with a knowingness of what had to be done.

Automatically, his thoughts drifted back to what Joe had said about Mark. Had not Mark's own life been a harbinger of what was to come? Mark made no big deal out of the fact he was gay. In fact, he'd get just a little upset if people saw predominantly that in him. Mark had lived his life as a bridge builder, traversing many barriers that others had tried to beat down, blow up, or rage against. He had dealt not only with racial prejudices and religious prejudices, he had also dealt with being shamed for being severely dyslexic. And what about Shari? She was not a woman looking for retribution. Her loving ways sought only truth, sought only peace. Her conversion to Buddhism was not a backlash response to the emotional injuries suffered at the hands of a Judeo-Christian culture. No. What she had asked from life was, simply, love and harmony. How trite such a notion might seem if applied to anyone else but this fortress of a woman. It was too plain to see—watching Shari snap a picture was an act of witnessing this woman of power capturing the most subtle beauties of life on film. Gary, Mark, and Shari all wanted the same end result: that they be acknowledged and accepted as a normal part of life. Michael was taking such acceptance one step further. Not only were these people a part of life, but an important part of life.

As Gary thought about what Mark stood for, his mind reflected on another Black man who had impacted his life in ways he could not have imagined. This gifted man was an African shaman-priest, Malidoma Somé by name. In American society, the closest description people could apply in describing him was "medicine-man," or "shaman." Not only was Malidoma no ordinary indigenous, he was no ordinary human, period. A learned scholar with two Ph.D. degrees and three master's degrees, Malidoma had divined for Gary things about himself he had told no one. It was Malidoma who had taught him about the "Gatekeepers," the spiritual ones. In his own tribal culture, there was no word for gay, because those who were gay were not seen as sexually-oriented. They were seen, treated, and revered as spiritually-oriented beings. They were a necessary and natural part of the village. These were the ones who could heal, could divine the future, could cross the dimensions between the natural and supernatural. These ancient tribal people knew why such transgendered beings existed. In the Otherworld, there was no male nor female. There was only the Oneness.

And those who were blessed with the capacity of embracing both the masculine and the feminine were able to cross the boundaries of what Western civilization labeled “supernatural.” To these people, there was no boundary between the natural and supernatural.

Had not Christian teachings carried a similar message buried within their own writings?: In Christ there is no male nor female. Was this not also what Michael was referring to when he said, “You and many others know things that you are not yet aware of. Be not surprised when you do. The song they [gays] sing has been learned, and is being learned, by the male and female in the male and female. These are the ‘first fruits’ spoken of in *Revelation*. They are in touch with the male and female natures in all things. These are the ones that chose, and were chosen, to live life this way.”

Had not humanity created war between the male and female? “East is east, and West is west [men are men, and women are women], and never the twain shall meet.” Such separation was a war between the sexes, and such war was inevitably a war against the Self. In college, Gary had discovered (in his readings of psychologist Carl Jung) that in all of us are both male and female. This statement had led Gary on a search that never ceased. His first clue to the truth came in a course on history of the Bible. In the class, the instructor went back to the original Hebrew word for God. In Hebrew, the word is neither masculine nor feminine as it is in English. In fact, the Hebrew word for God is neuter. In English, neuter denotes neither masculine nor feminine, but in Hebrew neuter *includes* both masculine and feminine. God is not a he nor a she. God is a *we*. Once again, amazement filled him as he had experienced the full inclusiveness of God as described by Michael.

Gary knew that Michael’s message foretold of a world of peace—not only physical peace, but mental and spiritual peace as well. His journeys with Malidoma had taught him that those who were gay had the capacity to own both their masculine and feminine in the most powerful of ways, living the Sacred Marriage of the Self. Even those who are not gay have the capacity of acknowledging and ultimately embracing their spiritual androgyny—their masculine and feminine balanced in harmony. All wars begin within individuals. All peace begins there as well.

Gary had to talk to Joe about all that was crashing in on him. *Imagine what Joe must be going through*, he pondered. *The visions of John are being relived and offered once again to all of us. Joe’s mind must be in tatters, to say nothing of his heart.* That was it. He had to call Joe and bless his heart.



## THE END OF ENDTIMES

**I**t had been several days since Michael's last visit, and Joe was not looking forward to the next. He had been overcome by the emotions and power of Michael's last two visitations. The sheer wonder and magnitude of the visions had taken his mind beyond its limits and his soul to its depths. Both Joe and Gary wondered what could be coming next. They joked about it on the phone.

"I hope that was Michael's peak performance this last time," Joe said half seriously, half hoping for a laugh. "Wouldn't it be nice if the rest of what Michael had to say was just warm and fuzzy stuff? You know, like everybody be happy, smile, peace will reign forever, and war will come to an end. That's not asking too much, is it?"

"Somehow, Joe, I don't think that's going to happen. There are still a few big questions that Michael hasn't addressed and a few small ones that are still on my list. Say, next time you see him, why don't you just kinda hint about leaving some of that silver and gold behind. I'm sure we could put it to good use."

The two men enjoyed a bit of irreverence mixed in with the awe that stared them in the face. "Kinda keeps things in balance," Joe would say. Gary had never met someone with the sense of humor and sagacity that Joe

possessed. It was as if vestiges of his Harley Davidson days, his long hair, too many cigarettes, and smelly leather, yearned to tease at the profundity enveloping his life from the angelic realm. Like giggling in church, this impish side wanted to do its own stirring up.

That night, as Joe played back in his mind the verbal fun and silliness the two men had exchanged over the phone, he could not escape a feeling of relief at not having heard from Michael in over a week. If the truth be known, Joe was even a little scared of seeing his angelic buddy again. There was no denying the changes that were coming over him at being the recipient of knowledge the world had long puzzled over. As the question, "Why me?" formed in his mind, out of the corner of his eye, Joe spied Poppy raising her head for no apparent reason. Automatically, he turned to see what she was looking at. "Well, here we go again," was all he said as he watched the familiar light overtaking the office space.

Trying to stall any show-and-tell stuff like he had witnessed during the last visit, Joe started talking even before Michael was fully present. This was Joe's counterpart to whistling in the graveyard. "Michael I have been reading the 'Babylon has fallen' part. That is another easy-to-understand part of what you have given me. Let me tell you what I think it means, and then you can tell me if I got it.

"The first angel brings a message of God's love to all people. He tells the religions of the world to return to teaching only of the love of God. The hour of judgment is to bring the truth of their teachings into the light.

"The second angel proclaims the fall of Babylon. What he is saying is the gathering of wealth by religion and governments is at an end.

"The third angel tells of torment that comes from their loss of all they have said to be true. To me it's like a man who has grown rich by taking advantage of others. He wakes up one morning to find all that he has is being taken away. He can't sleep, he can't eat, and worst of all, he has lost his ability to get it back.

"The inner voice of enlightenment says, Hold on to the truth. Blessed are those that are seen as dead by religions, for they live in the light of knowing.

"The Son of Man is the Christ Consciousness. The sickle is his teachings, and that is what brings all the enlightened together.

"The fourth angel that came out of the temple announced it was time to gather all the enlightened. The Christ Consciousness cleared the earth for spiritual knowledge of oneness with God.

“The fifth angel came out of the temple with a sickle that is the love of God. The sixth angel, from the altar, is the life that emanates from God. The seventh angel, with the fire, is the light of God.

“The grapes are the religious teachings that had grown over the years. They are pressed outside the city so everybody can see what was really in them—the city being all that was built on the foundation of these teachings. The blood that was pressed out are the lies that have been told for the last two thousand years. Given it takes two thousand years to go from one age to the next—which brings me to another point concerning the seven angels pouring seven bowls. If we are about to enter the Age of Aquarius, and that sign is a man pouring something, too, I don’t think it is a coincidence.”

Michael stared patiently as Joe finished his soliloquy. “It is not. For God has put the stars in the sky as a sign for all times, past and to come. You have done well with what you have seen.”

Still stalling, Joe posited, “This brings up a couple of questions from Gary.” The angel waited with patience. “Michael, Gary needs to know why you didn’t answer me with some kind of response to what I said about the number 666? Also, what are you saying about religions being a gift from God?”

The heavenly guest answered, “One was not needed, for your words were true. Had you spoken of the sixty-six books of the Bible in the sixth century, I would have led you back to the path of truth. I will tell you when you are off the path.”

Joe had to smile. For this answer indicated that Michael had been eavesdropping on the phone conversations that the two men were having. Joe had put forth the idea from information he had gleaned from a World Wide Web site which had postulated that 666 was in reference to 66 books existing in the Bible in the 6th century. Gary had disagreed, and believed the topic too important for conjecture. He had asked Joe to wait and see what Michael would say.

Joe tried to make his point one more time. “I want you to know that I trust you and what you say and don’t say. However, if there is room for those to dispute it, they will. So all Gary wants to do is to make sure that it doesn’t happen.”

“I hear, and tell you this: Be not foolish in your thinking that mankind will not bend or deny what is written. I spoke not of religions being a gift from God, I spoke of the Church being a gift from God. Did not religions demand human sacrifice of children? Did they not do the same of women

and men? Religions take from God's children, saying it is for the love of God. Did you not hear?" Michael asked point blank.

"Yes. I heard you," Joe said. "But most people seem to think of 'Religion' and 'Church' as one in the same."

Michael countered, "As they do money as wealth, sex as love, and dying as the end. A Church is a gift from God, that you may live in the knowledge of God's grace. A Church is the foundation on which the spirit stands. A Church is a wedding of like spirits to serve their brothers and sisters. They find their own Church. Religion [however] is a creation of mankind, to gather to itself, that it might grow and be powerful. Religion will make false claims to their kinship, God being the only kinship. Religion offers indebtedness to one another. A Church gives love freely to all of God's children."

"I feel like I am being scolded for not understanding a very basic concept. Michael, if you want people to understand, you'll just have to put up with these questions."

"Come," was all that the angel said.

Inside Joe rose an *Uh, oh*. "Can't you just tell me about whatever it is that we are going to see?"

"Come," Michael said again as he turned down the hall. Joe knew there was no getting out of this, so off he trundled, once again adorned only in his skivvies. Michael passed through the wall again while Joe raced through the patio door to the back yard. His eyes delighted in watching Michael move across the lawn with his light shining in the night as if he were a giant glow-stick trick-or-treating the neighborhood. The humor of the moment kept Joe's mind off of what might happen next. His celestial companion stood in the middle of the yard like a fountain of light and pointed his finger at the top of the neighbor's pine trees. He then began to move his hand down with his finger still pointing as if tracing some outline against the night sky. As his finger moved down, the trees against the backyard fence began to glow with light. The tops of the trees turned to gold, as did the outside branches. As the trunks of the trees turned to gold, Joe realized, given the size, this was going to be something big. He swallowed hard, remembering the last time the angel displayed such wonder, although on a much smaller scale.

The fence and the pond were nothing compared to what was unfolding before his eyes. The trees were easily three stories high, and the space between them large enough to park an eighteen-wheeler. *Yes*, Joe thought to

himself, *This could kill me.* A polished-silver water filled in all the space between the trees. A great tent of gold appeared, and it opened. As it did, Joe witnessed an angel looking a lot like Michael, but with red hair, emerge. Other angels now exited the tent, but they didn't look like Michael. One looked like he was Arab, the next looked Asian, another was African. The next looked like a Native American, followed by a Polynesian, and the last appeared to be Indian or Pakistani. Joe tried to make them out more clearly but couldn't quite get any of them in focus. Each was holding a golden bowl, and he heard a voice tell them to pour the contents onto the earth.<sup>67</sup>

The first angel came forward, and Joe couldn't help but notice his flaming red hair. *Irish*, he thought to himself. As the angel poured his bowl onto the earth, all that was unclean came to the surface of the land. What Joe could see was more than the earth itself. He saw what looked like flesh doing the same, appearing like pus from a festering wound. As the uncleanness came into the light, it was dissolved away.<sup>68</sup>

*The first angel poured his bowl onto the earth, and the physical began to heal itself.*

The second angel came forth. He looked Polynesian, at least as far as Joe could make out. Or perhaps he was from some island nation. He poured his bowl into the sea, and it turned red as it rendered up anger and sorrow and hatred along with all the emotions that do not serve love. And they were dried up by the light.<sup>69</sup>

*The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and emotion healed itself.*

The third angel came forth and poured his bowl into the rivers. This was the Arab-looking angel. What he poured into the river attached itself to everything that was in the river and brought it to the surface. As all the substance surfaced, it turned to a blood-red color, very different from the sea. Joe felt a madness in mankind vanishing as the water cleared.<sup>70</sup>

*The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers, and the mind became healed.*

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<sup>67</sup> [Rev. 15:5-16:1]

<sup>68</sup> [Rev. 16:2]

<sup>69</sup> [Rev. 16:3]

<sup>70</sup> [Rev. 16:4-7]

The fourth, Indian-looking angel, poured his bowl onto the sun, and the sun became very bright. As the sun began to grow in size, Joe could feel a strange warmth, as if he were standing in front of a campfire. What seemed so strange was, instead soaking the warmth up from the outside into his body, it was just the opposite. There seemed to be a loving, warm glow beginning deep inside his body which then radiated outward. It was very clear to Joe that he was not his body.<sup>71</sup>

*The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and the spirit came forth.*

The fifth angel was African in appearance. And he poured his bowl on what looked like a throne. The throne was made of books and scrolls that looked as if they were gold but were not. The throne started to fall apart and blow away like ashes in the wind. Joe saw people trying to catch the pieces that were blowing away. Frantically they attempted to put the throne back together. As the fake gold came off, Joe could see a throne of golden light taking the old throne's place.<sup>72</sup>

*The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of knowledge and changed it to divine knowing.*

The sixth was the Asian angel, and he poured his bowl on a great shining river. Craters made of words came fourth as the river's light dried up. Joe saw people walking away from the false teachings. One by one, they walked away and became a light of their own. Some did not walk away but gathered together in numbers to have what has been, be again. Those not of light came down many roads to the place where the old throne had been. Some on the road became beings of light and walked away from those who were not of the light. Those remaining called after those of the light who were leaving. "Return to the flock and be saved. Go not, for if you do, you will perish and suffer forever," they cried out.<sup>73</sup>

*The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river of spiritual teachings, and they were seen to be untrue.*

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<sup>71</sup> [Rev. 16:8-9]

<sup>72</sup> [Rev. 16:10-11]

<sup>73</sup> [Rev. 16:12-16]

The seventh angel, who appeared to be Native American, poured his bowl into the air. **“It is done,”** said a voice coming from the temple of the golden tent. Lightning flashed, and thunder sounded as the face of the earth changed. A great city of power was split into three parts. The first part of the city was that of religion, which was the emotional. The second part of the city was that of government, which was the mental. The last part was material things, and that was the physical. When these were split from one another, they could no longer hold power over the people. Small groups, like islands of false teachings, disappeared, and great multitudes, like mountains of false beliefs, crumbled away. Like giant hailstones of light, enlightenment fell from the heavens as gifts to God’s children. Those who had not yet received a gift cursed what was happening as the enlightened left the flocks.<sup>74</sup>

Then the angel with red hair said, **“Look! I will show you the truth of the Great Whore and of the nations drunk with ignorance.”** Joe was shown what looked like a kindly mother caring for her children. She was adorned in what, at first, appeared to be fine silken robes, and she was covered with jewels, pearls, and gold. Looking closer, he could see the riches she wore were fake, dull like that of a copy, or paste. Her robes were made of rags, made to look as if they were silk. She had a cup of what looked to be gold filled with her own teachings. And she, too, was drunk with ignorance.

**“Behold the truth of the woman and the beast and the one yet to come.”** Then Joe saw the seven churches that had strayed away from enlightenment. They held the chair of the woman, as a slave would, to do her bidding. Another church was about to come forth but was not visible yet. This church was to be the one that would claim to be the Christ returned to lead God’s children back to God. The church would even appear to betray the Whore, but will be of her. The ten horns are the ten commandments that are falsely used to rule over God’s children for a short time. Even as the Christ Consciousness dwells with the children of God, they will be told it is of Satan. Many will fear because they have not been enlightened yet. The Whore will appear to be overthrown and devoured by the beast and his followers. All this is done to pacify the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of humankind until the time when God’s love is understood and received by all.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> [Rev. 17:1-2]

<sup>75</sup> [Rev. 17:3-17]

*One of the seven angels showed the downfall of all the teachings that were not of God.*

The figures became unclear, and the light started to fade, until there was only darkness where the vision had been. The light that came from Michael was all that was left in the night surrounding Joe's back yard. He was glad that the vision was over, sparing him from more tears. For the first time since this whole thing started, Joe was beginning to see real hope for everyone, who would now know that God loves everyone beyond measure. He turned to look at Michael and ask him a few more questions. But the divine guide started to talk, so Joe just listened.

**“Write what you have seen here, for it has not yet all come to pass. That which you do not understand now, you will, as you see it happen. What Gary and you do together is blessed, and many are the bricks you make by your hands. Our time is over for now. Be at peace and teach only love. We will speak again.”**

Michael faded, leaving the darkness of the night to fill Joe's back yard once again. He stared up at the sky, soaking in the stars and thought, *What a wonderful time to be alive. I am so lucky to be able to be a part of all this, even if I don't know how it will all turn out*, he said to himself. Then it hit him, *I'm standing in the back yard with no shoes on, and it's dark. I hope I don't step in anything the dogs left behind.* He tip-toed his way back into the house, very carefully avoiding the doggie land mines.

The next day, Joe arose to reexamine the words he had typed in the wee hours of night before. Once again indescribable feelings rolled through him like the crescendo of a symphony playing at close range. The truth be told, Joe was a bit worn out from all that had transpired. He sat staring at the computer screen thinking to himself, *I can give myself a day off. After all, I am the boss of my own company. Who's going to fire me?* Besides, he had unfinished business with his publisher. Problems had developed over *The Book of Bricks*, and it was time to get it cleared up. Getting dressed, he thought about what needed to be said, asking Poppy what she thought about it. Her big brown eyes looked up as if to ask when the next hug was coming. Chuckling to himself, he rubbed her down, said goodbye to the other three darlings, and climbed into his truck. As he headed the truck toward the freeway, he waved to the front door, causing the furry quartet to shake the neighborhood with their harmonious barking.

Still composing dialog for the meeting with the publisher as he crossed the Bay, Joe piloted his low-flying truck over the bridge, unconsciously exiting off one of the Berkeley ramps. *Damn*, he thought, *This isn't the best way to get to where I want to go in Berkeley. Now I have to go through the Berkeley hills and down Ashby.* While charting the fastest route through the grid of streets, Joe started to think about a woman he once knew, named Holley, who had shown him a spot that overlooked San Francisco Bay. From there, one could scope out the panorama from Berkeley to San Francisco, as well as from San Jose to Marin County. It was one of his favorite places. *Why not?* he thought as he turned off the highway and headed up the road to the top of the hill. The higher up the hill he drove, the more he could see of the Bay. He searched for the spot where he and Holley had stood together some nine years ago, but everything looked so different. As the truck rounded a curve, Joe tried to keep his eyes on the road and still find the best view at which to stop. And there he was. Michael. Standing smack in the middle of the road.

The truck slowed to a crawl, Joe wondering what the angel would do if he just kept going. Would Michael disappear or would he pass right through the truck? An unmistakably impish grin stood out on his face as he imagined the newspaper headline: "Angel Run Over by Pick-up Truck." Thinking better of it, he pulled over to the side of the road, stopped, and eased himself out of the truck. By this time Michael was standing at the cliffside.

As Joe ambled over to his roadside companion, he opined, "Why do I get the feeling taking a wrong exit and getting the urge to come up here was no accident?" His head turned, checking out a car loaded with people drive by, gazing at the view. *They had to have seen us standing here,* Joe thought, *but just kept driving on past us.*

"No. They did not see me, nor did they see you," the angel stated.

"Too cool," Joe grinned. "I am invisible." *The invisible Joe*, he thought with a smile. *The fly on the wall.*

"You know what happens to flies, don't you?" Michael kidded, reading his thoughts.

"Just a thought," Joe said. "You're trying to be funny again, aren't you?" Michael just smiled and said, "Take off your shoes."

Knowing no one could see him standing barefooted at the side of the road, Joe slipped off his footwear. *Besides, this is People's Republic of Berkeley I am in,* Joe mused, *and stranger things than these are seen every day.* Spotting different sizes of pebbles and stones on the ground, Joe started thinking

about his tender feet. And the pavement was hot. That's when he noticed the sun was shining, yet it didn't feel hot outside. The wind was blowing through the trees but Joe couldn't feel so much as a breeze in the air. As he stood up, he noticed the ground felt like grass in that it was neither hot nor cool. *Something tells me I am not in Kansas any more*, Joe joked to himself. Looking back at Michael, he saw the angel gesture toward the Bay with his right arm. All of the land turned to gold and the water became silver as in the previous visions. The blue sky was gone, as was the sun. All he could see was an ocean of silver surrounded by gold that gave off a beautiful light. A sense of anxiousness flooded Joe, not knowing what Michael was going to show him this time. But given the size of this frame, he knew it was going to be big.

**“What you see is the beginning. Those that speak of the Endtime speak of their end.”**

Joe looked and saw what appeared to be all the temples and places of worship he had seen measured in the earlier vision. All the places of worship were clumped together so, they looked like a big city. Idols and altars of stone were the foundation, shored up with crosses. Religious artifacts paved the narrow streets that ran from one temple to another. Joe began to understand that all this holy stuff was just so much junk that people believed in.

**“The demons you see are the lies that have been told. The foul spirits are the nightmares to which the unenlightened have given life. The birds are the rumors of deceit spread to frighten all who search for truth. The beasts that prey the streets are the hate that each temple teaches of the other.”<sup>76</sup>**

As Michael talked, Joe could tell how religion after religion had taught hatred of other religions. This hatred of one another bound them together like the weaving of a web made by a spider gone mad. Fear and mistrust of one another brought them together and made them the same.

**“The nations that you see are the lands that give sanctuary to the false teachings, and the kings are those who gave power to those teachings. Buyers and sellers of goods paid tribute to the religions of the land. The voice you hear calling the children is the inner-knowing voice of God's love. You have heard this voice when you did not believe the lies you were told. Others hear it and walk away as you did.**

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<sup>76</sup> [Rev. 18:2-3]

**Look again to this Mother of Lies as she claims to be the Queen of God’s Word. See how she has demanded tribute and said she will speak to God on their behalf. See how she has gorged herself with her own lies. Now look as those lies consume her.”<sup>77</sup>**

Light, as if it were a fire, fell upon the city—which was she and her lies—and it began to consume the city. Joe stared unblinkingly as altars and the idols that surrounded them crumbled to sand. Scrolls and books of her teachings and commandments melted into pools of a black liquid that burned everything it touched. Those who had not left were coming out of the city like a flood. Nations and their leaders, along with people of business, fled her like the plague to distance themselves from her.

**“This is to be the fate that the Mother of Lies will bring upon herself. No evil thing can last in the light of God’s love. All who did speak of a final judgment and punishment knew not of what they spoke. It is not God that will judge, for all God gives is love, and all else will wither in the presence of God’s love. ‘Fear not’ was the message given over and over by God’s messengers through the ages. ‘Fear God’ was the message given by religions over the ages.”**

Joe witnessed all that happened fade away leaving only the silver ocean in his sight. A rumble of a voice came from everywhere around him, drawing his focus into the silver ocean. He saw what looked like a ring of a sound, a wave go across the land announcing the love of God that is in all of us. The wave spread, and each person it touched became connected to the others it had touched. *This must be the Oneness I have heard about*, he thought.<sup>78</sup>

“Michael, you have shown me many things, but are these the things that are to come, or things of the past, or the present?”

“That which you have seen is as it was and is to be,” Michael said. “I have shown you what John was shown. I have shown you what John has done, and will do before we are done. Whether they have been or will be is of no importance. That which you must know, is that they are for you now to see.”

Joe responded, “I have been able to follow what you have shown me in your last visits, pretty well. I see just about where we are in relationship to the writings of John in the Bible, but it is getting confusing. Where it talks about the marriage of the lamb, is that the acceptance of the Christ

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<sup>77</sup> [Rev. 18:4-19]

<sup>78</sup> [Rev. 19:6-8]

teachings? Along with those who were invited at the Last Supper, also invited was humankind to partake in the love of God that Christ taught?”

“You see most of it, yet not all. In what you call the Last Supper, Jesus gave each bread, as the body of his teachings, and wine, as the blood, being the love in his teachings. He then washed their feet to symbolize that they were no less loved by God than he was. When John fell to the feet of the angel, he was also told not to humble himself in such a way, for he was a child of God—as are you and all of humankind, held in that perfect love.”<sup>79</sup>

*Then came a great awareness of what God has given to mankind, and great joy fell upon mankind. All of God's children were invited to share God's love. When they fell on their knees, they were told not to do that, for they were one with God.*

**“Look and see what has been and what will be.”**

A rider on a white horse appeared. And whoever he was, Joe knew he was no one to mess with. He said to Michael, “This is the Faithful-and-Truth guy, isn’t it?”

**“This is the true word of God given by Christ, and his armies are all of those who have heard the Word. For the first thousand years, his words would be heard—and people lived and died for them. These new teachings would open the hearts of humankind, and some would hear and some would not. This is what you and John have seen as a battle between two armies. When in truth it is the battle that one has with their own body and soul.”<sup>80</sup>**

“I can see what you are saying,” Joe said, “but you need to explain about the birds, the lake of fire, and those being killed by the sword. This writing has scared the hell out of people over the years. Besides, you know Gary is going to ask about it anyway.

**“Look and see the birds feed on the flesh, which is the substance that covers the truth. When it is picked away, all that will be left is the truth that is within everyone. You have done this, as have others when they question those that say they are righteous in the sight of God and have God’s word. As the birds do, so do the enlightened. When you speak of the beast and of people being thrown into a lake of fire, the**

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<sup>79</sup> [Rev. 19:10]

<sup>80</sup> [Rev. 19:11-16]

rest that you see are not being killed by a sword—as mankind has done. The sword is the Light of Truth that cuts through the lies that are being told. God does not kill. God brings life to the body and soul. This is when all their deeds and actions are brought into the light. The angel that comes with the key to the bottomless pit is a sign there is no ground to build on. The ones you see around the throne are all those who have been enlightened by the teachings of the Christ. We have spoken of the second death before, and that is what you see now, and that is why death has no power over them.

“The ignorance has been called ‘Satan’ by religions, and their teachings are trying to deceive humankind again. The lake of fire that you see is the light of God.<sup>81</sup>

*Heaven was open, and a white horse with a rider called Faithful and Truth came forth as the Word of God, and was followed by another rider that spoke of God’s love that all heard. Then came an angel calling to the birds to feast on the false teachings. The spirit of mankind would no longer be harmed by these teachings. Then came another angel with a key to a pit and threw Ignorance and Want into the pit.*

*Then there was a throne, and on the throne were those that gave the truth a thousand years ago. Blessed were those that heard the first time, for they did not fall back into unenlightenment. Now that the thousand years has ended, the false teachings are to be cast out for all times.*

*The fire is the light in the darkness and the sulfur is the love that heals.*

Then Joe was shown a great white throne, and he saw a being of perfect love and light seated on the throne. So great was the presence of the one sitting on the throne that neither the earth nor the heavens could be seen. He saw all the people of the world standing before the throne, and a great book was opened. Then another great book was opened, and he asked Michael what the two books were.

“The first book is the writings of all the religions and what they had to teach. The second book is the Book of Life. As each person that was seen as dead by religion comes forth, their name is found and

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<sup>81</sup> [Rev. 19:17-20:10]

their blessings, gifts, and deeds are recorded in the book. They are rewarded for these. And if they have fallen short, they are given all that was missing. The first book is used for those who have not been enlightened, so they will be. That which appears to be a judgment is a rewarding. That which is death and Hades is Ignorance and Want. Those found there are enlightened, and all who have been left wanting are filled. Ignorance and Want are cast into the lake of fire to be seen for what they are. All of God's children have been rewarded for their works and are enlightened."<sup>82</sup>

Not one person went into the lake of fire, but all the demons brought into being were cast in. For the first time, Joe was beginning to really see the love of God. All he had been told about God judging the earth and its people was a lie. *The God that I see is a God of mercy and love for all things*, Joe said to himself. *The God that I am only beginning to know is in all of us. Whatever we have put in front of us to keep us separate will be removed by God's love for us.*

**"Look again and see the love of God,"** Michael said.

This time Joe saw a new world that was clean and fresh with trees he had never seen before. And beautiful flowers. He saw all of the animals that had souls, because their blood was red, just as Michael had told him. He remembered why he had wept the day he was first told this while writing down the material in the scrolls of *The Book of Bricks*.<sup>83</sup>

"Won't that just be grand?" he said to Michael.

"It will only get better from here, Joe. That which I will show you next is the promise that God is. You must go now, but we will speak soon. Be at peace and teach only love."

Michael stepped off the cliff and floated out towards the middle of the Bay. He didn't shrink in size even though he got farther away from Joe. When he reached the middle of the silver ocean surrounded by the gold hills, he started to descend. The hill of gold returned to the way it had been with houses, buildings, and roads winding through them. It was as if everything was being pulled towards Michael. The Bay was starting to return to its watery essence, and Michael began to get smaller. Everything was back to normal, except a little dot of what was left of the vision, and Michael.

Joe was waiting to see it all vanish when he heard Michael ask, "How was that for an exit?"

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<sup>82</sup> [Rev. 20:11-14]

<sup>83</sup> [Rev. 21:1-4]

“Show off,” Joe called back. *Of course he could do that, he’s an angel.* Joe turned and took a step forward to leave. “Ouch! That hurt!” he complained, stepping on gravel and hot pavement at the same time. *Next time I will put my shoes on before I start walking to my truck,* he promised himself. Whatever he had to talk to the publisher about could wait for another day. Jumping back into the truck, he drove home to write down all that Michael had shown and told him.





## WHAT GOD HAS MADE

Word began to leak out to the rest of the Seven as to what was transpiring between Michael and Joe. It was not Joe's custom to act as if he had a special secret to which no one else was privy. If Steve wanted to ask what the latest was with Michael, then it was in Joe's nature to tell him. Kathleen, being the gregarious creature she was, talked with everyone, especially Steve and Joe. Almost all of the Seven had e-mail. It didn't take long for questions to start flying. Usually, when someone was ready to ask, it meant they were also ready to listen. When details were requested, Joe asked for patience, for he wanted to have the whole picture from Michael before giving the Seven the transcription of the new revelations the angel had imparted. Besides, Michael had asked that no one see the codex until "it was time."

In the meantime, Joe and Gary competed to see whose phone bill would be the most outrageous. Even though e-mail was cheap and immediate, Joe's typing skills made it too cumbersome to permit the exchange the two men were enjoying.

"Joe, you know, it seems to me that we are coming to the end of the *Revelation* material. Michael has pretty much answered all the questions I have. And the ones he hasn't given the particulars to, I can either fill in the blanks or read between the lines. Did he say when he'd be back?"

“Nope. He said what he said. Since the time before last, when he said you’d have questions, he hasn’t really asked me to do anything. It’s mostly been show-and-tell time.”

“No kiddin’. Are you doing OK with all this? I mean, if it were me, I’d be brain-warped by now.”

“Actually, I’m doing all right. Those first visions really overwhelmed me, but I seem to have adjusted. Now that I know what John saw, I have an appreciation for what he must’ve gone through. However, I also feel he should’ve done what I did.”

“What’s that?”

“Ask questions. From what Michael has said in the past, John somehow lost his reference when he returned to ordinary reality. He lost the meaning of what was told him and ended having to just write about what he saw. That’s happened with me once or twice. And I’ve had to ask Michael over again to give more clarity so that I could write it down. Some of this stuff is almost impossible to put into words.”

“I know what you mean. And I think you’ve managed well. Part of me feels like I ought to have a thousand more questions to ask. But another part of me feels like I actually understand what’s going on here. It’s like the message itself is holographic. Not unlike what Jesus did with parables. Whenever Jesus would tell one of his stories, the apostles would bombard him with questions. Half the time he would ignore them, telling them the meaning would be found in their hearts. And the times he did go into explanation, he would only end up getting more questions. I feel this material is the same way. I need to look into my own heart for much of the meaning. I know it’s there. There is as much truth in what Michael has given as there is room in each single heart for letting that truth in. Sometimes, I can sit for hours just thinking about one phrase he has handed us. For instance, scholars have been guessing for centuries what the mark of the beast placed on the forehead meant. When Michael revealed it was the misuse of Religions’ sacramental baptism, where water is poured over the head, it really shocked me. I spent a couple of days thinking about that one. And finally, I realized the truth of what Michael was saying. Who are we to say who goes to heaven and who doesn’t? I remember when Catholics were taught by parish priests that Protestants couldn’t get to heaven because their baptism wasn’t legitimate. And I remember Protestant friends telling me that I couldn’t get to heaven because Catholics weren’t Christians. What a bunch

of nonsense. Even though this kind of foolishness has gotten a lot better, the damage is still done. Instead of Protestants and Catholics, now it's Mormons and Buddhists who can't get to heaven, or who aren't Christian. I could sit and read this material forever trying to undo a lifetime of guilt and fearmongering."

"Let's hope this manuscript from Michael will help," said Joe. The two then discussed their own roles and what more they could do to make sure people were able to read about the truth of *Revelation*. That reminded Joe he still had unfinished business with his old publisher. Wishing each other the best and blessing each other's hearts, the two friends went about their day with the knowledge that the boundary between Heaven and Earth was fading away. Every time Michael visited the line faded even more.

Donna had gone to a work-related training session leaving Joe to "bach" it for a couple of days. Frozen lasagna, ready-made soup, and sandwich fixin's had been spread out in the refrigerator. Even special little treats for the dogs had been left. Joe found himself immediately missing her bright personality, her tenderness for all she touched, and her unapologetic beauty. The sun had not yet set, and a cool breeze was blowing in from the open patio door. Joe began to smell what he thought was the odor of roses wafting in from the back yard. This seemed odd because there weren't any roses in the back yard. *What could the dogs have spilled to cause such a smell?* he wondered. "Better go see what they've gotten into," he mumbled to himself. Pushing the patio door aside, he stepped onto the concrete floor of the covered veranda. The corner of his eyes caught a figure over by the lily pond. With a jerk he recognized his angelic guest. His right hand pulled the patio door closed in slow motion. A sense of apprehension flowed through his whole body. Somehow, he knew this would be the last of the *Revelation* teachings. What also worried him was that the visions had grown bigger and more overwhelming with each subsequent teaching. What was going to happen this time?

"Where to this time, Michael?" he called to the back of the yard, where Michael stood motionless.

**"Come and see that which God has made for all."**

Approaching the pond, Joe could already see it changing to gold and silver as it had done before. "Can you leave the gold this time?" he asked, watching the rocks match the luster of the papyrus. The lily pads turned gold and moved to the side of the pond giving way to the liquid silver that

was replacing the water. Michael ignored the question. Joe remembered the last time he had kidded Michael about giving him the lottery numbers. “What could I give you that you have want for?” he had asked. “Do you not have everything you need?” It was true. Joe had a blessed life. Sure, a million dollars might be fun to play with: establishing charities, helping the homeless with outreach programs, maybe even getting a new house. But would he be the same Joe? Probably not. He smiled at the thought. He was happy with himself as he stood beside Michael, gazing into the liquid silver. A vision began to form, like a dissipating mist letting him see what had been hidden within its shroud. Although he was looking down into the pond, he felt as if he were looking up through a window.

This window was at the bottom of a valley opening out to the world. Joe saw trees bearing fruits of every kind and flowers so beautiful they took his breath away. Grains covered the lowlands in a field watered by streams and rivers flowing down from the mountains. The air smelled clean like it does after a rain. The water was so pure he could see to the bottom of the rivers and lakes scattered over the lands. All the deserts were gone as was rocky ground where nothing would grow. The world was full of life, a regular Garden of Eden. He then saw what looked like a city descending out of the heavens, not from above but more as if it were an airplane coming in to land.

Like John, he heard a loud voice from the throne saying, **“See, the home of God is with you, God’s children. All that is not of love is passed away.”** He then heard the voice say, **“See, I have made all things new. It is done. The love, I AM, is the beginning and the end. No one will thirst for this love ever again. All that has kept this knowledge from you is gone.”**<sup>84</sup>

Another of the seven angels with the bowls appeared in front of the two companions, angel and man. The viewpoint changed before them as if they had been moved to a higher vantage. From this vantage they now looked down upon the city.<sup>85</sup>

“Michael, is this the city that God has built for humankind to live in?”

“No, Joe, it is not as a city of buildings. It is a state of being that mankind has risen to.”

“It looks like your run-of-the-mill city to me. Maybe cleaner and a lot more spectacular than anything I have ever seen, but it’s still a city to me.”

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<sup>84</sup> [Rev. 21:5-8]

<sup>85</sup> [Rev. 21:9-10]

“When you were shown Babylon, it was as a city, yet it was not. The city you saw was like a magnet drawing everything into itself.”

“I understand that, but for me to describe this to people, as was done in *Revelation*, will produce the same questions. You need to tell me what it all means, if it does mean anything.”

**“Look as I speak that you will know. This city’s radiance is the enlightenment going outwards from within. It’s high walls have twelve gates with twelve angels, and on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes. On the eastern three gates are written the names of the spiritual. On the northern three gates are written the names of the mental. On the southern three gates are written the names of the emotional. On the the western three gates are written the names of the physical.**

“The walls of the city have twelve foundations, and the names of the apostles are written on these foundations. The walls are the masculine, and the foundations are the feminine of God. The angel holding the measuring rod of gold that you have seen measures the Spiritual, Emotional, Mental, and Physical to show complete balance. The twelve foundations are covered with jewels that are the symbols for the powers of humankind represented by each element within the groupings of twelve. The twelve gates are each a single pearl as a symbol of God’s perfect love. The gold streets are a symbol of all paths coming from and leading to God. There is no temple, for humankind is one with God, and that is all there is. No light shines down for enlightenment, for the enlightenment comes from within. All people are of this light and need no other teachings. The gates will always be open to show that, with God’s love, none will need protection.<sup>86</sup>

“The angel then shows the River of Life from the love of God. You see both sides of the river. One side is male and the other is female. Each of the twelve trees bears a different fruit and so does each month. The leaves of the trees heal all the nations, and nothing accursed will be found there. The name written on the foreheads is the symbol of the knowledge of God’s love.<sup>87</sup>

“You have been shown this as had John been shown. Blessed are the ones that know this, for God is coming soon to reward all of

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<sup>86</sup> [Rev. 21:10-27]

<sup>87</sup> [Rev. 22:1-5]

humankind. John fell down to worship at the angel's feet again and was told for the second time that he must not do that. Humankind is to be one with God. 'So why would your kind worship yourselves?' is the message he was given. John was told to let the people do as they do and religions do as they do, for none is beyond the love of God.<sup>88</sup>

" 'I am coming soon, with my rewards to repay all for their works. My love is the beginning and the end of all that is. It comes first and last.' Blessed are those whose robes are washed in truth. For all of God's children will have the right to the Tree of Life. Everything that was unenlightened will be away from God's children, so all will know of God's love. The Christ Consciousness calls out to the Spirit and the Bride, which are the male and female of humankind, to come. Let everyone who hears, come; and everyone who is thirsty, come. Most important of all, let everyone that wishes take the Water of Life as a gift from God freely. These things you have seen are as it is, and what you have heard is as you heard."<sup>89</sup>

The gold faded back to rocks, the silver returned to water, and the vision was gone. Joe turned to Michael and asked about the warning that John had given. "Won't I get a warning to give so these writings are left intact?"

"John set a warning with what he wrote to make sure what he had written was kept. What he saw and wrote held humankind for ransom by his words, and this will not happen again. What will be is no longer in the hands of humankind. That which has been promised by God will come to pass."

"I was expecting a bigger picture for this last part of *Revelation*," Joe kidded, "but I got what you gave me. Does this mean we are finished?"

"We are for now," Michael said. "Yet, you will see this is only the beginning of your work. Give what you have written to Gary for he will have questions. We will speak again soon. Be at peace and teach only love."

Michael faded into the light and was gone. *I have a lot to think about with all this information and the impact it will have. Maybe Gary will have something to ask. I am sure he will.*

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<sup>88</sup> [Rev. 22:6-11]

<sup>89</sup> [Rev. 22:11-17]



## THE GATHERING

**D**id Michael say anything yet about the small scroll that is eaten?”<sup>90</sup>  
Gary asked.

“Never came up,” Joe replied blankly.

“Which means he probably said nothing about who the angel was clothed in a cloud with a rainbow over its head?”

“Not a word,” admitted Joe.

“Ya know, Joe,” Gary said, “Michael seems to have answered all my questions about *Revelation* except a consistent few. Those he never seems to speak of. Other than these remaining questions, I really don’t have any new ones.”

“It’s interesting that you bring this up. We both know that Michael said he’d answer any questions we had. So why not these? Do we just wait?”

Gary sat silently, trying to make up his mind whether to tell Joe the real reason why he had e-mailed these unanswered questions in the first place. “No, I think the waiting is over. I have a sneaky suspicion that the time for questions and talk is over. Remember when Michael said that people would always have questions? And not to concern yourself with the endlessness of people’s doubts? Well, I think this is the reason the remaining questions will

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<sup>90</sup> [Rev. 10:8-11]

never be addressed, because something inside me tells me they have already been addressed, or we already know the answer. You, yourself, said that experiencing the visions gave you an unspeakable awareness of what John the Beloved had really seen some 2,000 years ago. Because of what Michael did with you, having you experience the visions, it seems to me you have become a walking library of actual experience. Maybe you haven't noticed it but I have. More and more you seem to know things before Michael speaks of them."

"I hadn't thought of that. But I don't have any recollection of a rainbowed angel."

Like a school kid holding his breath before diving off the school's high dive, Gary paused, wondering whether to jump into this issue or not. A hissing of breath escaped his lips. "Well, maybe this isn't one of the answers hidden inside you." He didn't want to say any more.

"Are you saying you know who the rainbow angel is?" Joe pressed.

"I don't know. Maybe. How can you tell with these things?" There was no way to kid Joe about this. The two had become such close friends that Joe knew Gary was hiding something. But rather than dig it out of him, Joe decided to let it go for a later time. The two men had shared together the wonders of truth from Michael's decipherings. It was not necessary they divulge their personal secrets as well. For Joe had a few of his own secrets. Something within told him that in the future there would arrive a time for revealing even these personal secrets.

Changing the subject, Joe commented, "So it seems neither of us has any new questions for the Big Guy."

"To be honest," confessed Gary, "I can't think of any question I need an answer to."

"Does that mean we are done with *Revelation*?"

This seemed to be one of the clumsier conversations between the two men. Gary knew the angel had been generous in addressing his questions as well as his doubts. But he also knew that the information from the angel had affected him in ways he could tell no one. It was as if ancient memories had awakened, memories he did not wish to share with anyone. At least not right now. And it was going to be that way regarding the rainbow angel. Now was not the time to tell Joe or anyone else that he had already met this angel. What had happened was deeply personal, life-changing. It was too important personally to share with anyone. "No, I don't think we are done," he countered

begrudgingly. “I think there is much more coming, but in a different kind of way. I’ve been examining this information with a magnifying glass. And I’ve come to the conclusion that the heavens are giving the earth a second shot at the gifts which originally were bestowed on the seven churches spoken of in the new *Revelation*. It is my belief that these great gifts are being bestowed once again. If you look carefully at the messages Michael gave to each of the Seven and compare them against what the original seven churches were given—and misused—I think you will find that we represent the new symbol for the seven churches of *Apocalypse*.”

“What?” interrupted Joe. “You mean the seven of you are a representation of the seven churches?”

“Bigger than that,” continued Gary. “Remember that each of the Seven is to go forth and find seven more. I believe that each person in each of the sevens is an archetypal representation of what was intended 2,000 years ago. In other words, we may represent the new effort by Heaven to bring blessing to the Earth once again. In fact, I have matched up each of the seven churches with each in our Seven.” As Gary listed the names of each person and the corresponding church, Joe wrote them down. He had to ask Michael about this.

It would be another three days before Michael appeared to Joe. Before he could open his mouth, Michael stated, “It is time for you to gather the Seven.” All ears, Joe listened carefully to each word as angel and man discussed what the gathering would mean, what would happen, and how it should happen. *It’s finally beginning*, thought Joe as he pondered the consequences of heavenly intervention in the ways of humanity. A shiver traveled through him as he remembered Michael’s previous words: “Something wonderful is going to happen.”

After Michael had finished his instructions for the gathering, Joe added, “Gary seems to think that each of the Seven represents one of the churches of *Revelation*.” He watched as Michael’s unblinking eyes looked deep into him. If an angel could ever be accused of smiling, Michael seemed to be doing it.

“Gary is correct,” he said simply. “Each of the seven masters is one of the seven churches, as is everyone else. You were told which church each of the Seven belonged to. What you were told was lost to you for a reason, and some of what I have given you will return.” It was not uncommon for Joe to forget some information while remembering other information in vivid detail. It was as if Michael somehow assisted his remembering process for

some of the teachings while purposely letting his mind forget other parts. “This happened that you might find it with the Seven when you all meet. I will give you enough to get you started and you will find the rest together.” What Michael implied was that oftentimes, the real truth is in the journey rather than the idea or the goal. As the angel began to speak about the churches, Joe took notes. He didn’t want to forget again.

“Deb is as the church of Laodicea,” Michael began. “This church is female in nature and as female it is a mother to all. People of this church have a natural sense of nurturing. This gift is given to both men and women as a path in life and in teachings. They are the ones that care for others as their children. They solve conflicts, understanding both sides with compassion—never making one or the other wrong. Tolerance is the teaching they easily share. People listen to them, learning to live and work together. They are merciful to those who have wronged them and do not seek revenge. The tenderness in their hearts lights the world.

“There is a trap that those of this church must look for in the work they do. So caring are these people that they will not teach, out of the fear they might hurt another’s feelings. When this happens, they, themselves, think they are unworthy to give the gift they were given. They become silent and take no action one way or the other. They become poor in spirit and forget they are wrapped in God’s love. They cannot see the gift they have been given and find no riches in what they do. The way to free themselves of this is to give to themselves the gift they have been given. When this is done they will be a light to the world.

“Kathleen is as the church of Ephesus. This church is female in nature, and as female it is a mother to all. This church has been called the church of Mary. Like the mother of Jesus, the men and women of this church are people of divine love. Their gift is the uplifting of others. Their joy is giving of themselves for the happiness of others. They can see the divine light that shines in everyone and everything. They speak of it freely, wanting God’s children to play and find the joy of life. They will support others in their work and will defend the greatness of those they love.

“There is a trap for them in their very nature that they must be watchful of. Their desire to lift everyone and everything up to its true magnificence is the nectar of life for them. They may find themselves as a butterfly fluttering from one flower to the next, being lost in the excitement of the flight. As an old bride to a new husband, the fire of the moment burns with

passion and the children are forgotten. They forget the gifts they are and look to what they do to make themselves worthy. This church thinks it has need to suffer and do penance if all does not go well. The freedom of those of this church rests in the gifts they are, and only when they see this will they give to themselves. This gift to themselves opens their hearts to the divine love they hold.

“Shari is as the church of Smyrna. This church is female in nature, and as female it is intuitive. The people of this church have a gift for teaching others to see the truth in themselves. The faith they call forth in others opens the door to insight. They know things without being told and have faith in what they know. They lead others to a better place in life, from darkness to light. Where they go, others follow. With God’s love for them and others, they are always being enlightened.

“Their trap is made by themselves. They will speak of themselves as unworthy. They will listen to the lies of others about them and believe it is so. They will lose union with their gift and sleep though they are awake. In this sleep, they are truly lost. For they can’t lead and they will not follow. For them to awaken they must listen to what God is telling them and know the power they are.

“Mark is as the church of Thyatira. This church is male in nature. The gift of this church is that of a father holding his children in love. The male and female give teachings that are soft and gentle of words. They open their ears and hearts to what the children say. There is no judgment in what they hear. They have only love for those in turmoil, desiring only to help. As a father labors with his body to feed his children, so does this church. The church is the master of the song and dance, creating with its hands things of beauty through which lessons are learned.

“The trap that this church may fall into is that of material things. When they go searching in fulfillment of material and physical needs, they may lose union with the gift they are to give. Their desire for riches leaves them poor in spirit as well as gold. The song they sing is sour, the dance is that of the lame, and the creation of their hands is twisted and unkind to the eye. The escape from this trap is to give their gift back to themselves. God will supply all that is needed for the fatherly care of his children.

“Ben is as the church of Pergamum. This church is male in nature and seeks truth and knowledge to give to his children. Like a father who will find light to guide the way for his children in the darkness, this church is the one

that makes the maps. Into uncharted areas, he will explore the best paths, lest his children should come to harm. Of all the churches, this church will find truth in the most cunning of lies. The sum of all wisdom is at their beck and call; and that which is true, they will find.

“The trap for those of this church is lack of faith in themselves. Their desire to be certain of what they say is true will be their undoing. They become internal, losing the reason for their work, and their gift is lost to them. They will give bits and pieces of the truth until not even they can put them together again so that it makes sense. The way out of this trap is for them to give themselves the gift of natural knowing. Connecting to their own consciousness and reason: That is their gift which will set them free.

“Steve is as the church of Sardis. This church is also male in nature, and those of this church are drawn to cure things. That which is bent, they will make straight. And that which is broken, they will mend. They are truly the healers of the churches in the works they do. Their work consumes them and is nourishment for them.

“The trap they can fall into occurs if they begin to feed on the gift they have. They focus on themselves and are lost in the drunkenness of their own authority, only to find themselves empty and alone. The path out of this trap is to give out of nothing, save for the love of God. The power they have comes from God alone, and no other can fill it. This is the gift they have and must give to themselves.

“Gary is as the church of Philadelphia. This church is male in nature, with the gift of passionate wisdom. As a gift to all God’s children, knowledge is the driving force of this church. Teaching is as the very air they breathe. These are the ones who hold the keys of wisdom that unlock the gates to let in the light. They are aware of body, mind, emotions, and spirit, and are in touch with both female and male aspects of themselves. They love all God’s children equally, setting none higher or lower than the other.

“The trap for those of this church is the loss of any of the fourfold natures given to all humankind. When the balance is gone, the giver cannot give, and the teacher will not teach wisdom. The escape from this trap lies in the gift of the wisdom and love given back to themselves.”



It was a typically gorgeous California summer day as Deb arrived at Kathleen's house. The trip from Colorado had gone smoothly; the rest of her family was enjoying their vacation with old friends not far away. It was August 1, 1997, the first day of the gathering. Deb looked through the open front door and yelled for Kathleen. "Anybody home?" she called out. No answer. How typical of Kathleen to be off and running at God-knows-what, leaving the front door wide open. Deb smiled as she eased herself into the living room. As she stared out the window overlooking the large deck that took up most of the back yard, she thought how this day had come about. The truth of the matter was that it almost had *not* come about. Joe had settled on the date shortly after Michael's last appearance, when Deb had called to tell him about coming out to California for a vacation the first week of August. Joe had taken it as a sign to plan the gathering around that date, since she and Ben lived the furthest away. But Ben was troubled with having to pay plane fare and pay substitutes to cover for him at his second job at temple. Then Shari had chimed in with concerns about a photo shoot she had to do this weekend. The closer the date for the gathering, the more the Seven seemed to find friction with one another or nit-pick about details that seemed to get in the way. At one point, it looked as if the event simply was not going to occur. Finally Joe had to put his foot down, stating in a message he e-mailed to everyone:

It's not like these problems mean anything. This stream of questions and issues has no weight in what we are supposed to be about. Please pay attention to what's going on here. Whenever something important approaches in our lives, we get nervous. Whether it's a wedding or graduation or the birth of a child, we tend to get preoccupied with what's wrong in our lives, and it prohibits us from accomplishing those things that are really important to us. So either we let this moment slide by or we hang in there. The bottom line is that we have set a date for our gathering. Either you are going to make room in your lives for this, or you aren't. Hope to see you soon.

Love,  
Joe

Like a house of cards swept away by a summer breeze, all objections had disappeared after that. Ben found a cheap flight, Shari rescheduled her shoot, and Deb had made arrangements with her family to let her spend this weekend with these special people, of whom her family knew little. And here she was, alone, in Kathleen's house, wondering where everybody was.

Not long afterwards, Steve arrived laden with groceries, water bottles, and picnic accouterments. "Hi, Deb. Where is everybody?"

"The place is empty. When I arrived, the front door was wide open. You don't think something has happened to Kathleen, do you?"

"Nahh," he said dropping bags on the kitchen counter. "She's probably out jogging. My guess is that she's nervous and needs to run off some steam." Deb smiled. She had heard from Joe that Steve was psychic, sometimes in an uncanny way. He would prove to be right about Kathleen. Ben, who had arrived the night before and, along with Steve, had stayed at Kathleen's house, hoisted a five-gallon water bottle through the door.

"Hi, I'm Ben."

"This is Deb," Steve offered. "Both of you have come a long distance. Deb used to live in the Bay Area." Introductions continued as each of the Seven arrived. Some were nervous, others delighted. Kathleen acted the perfect hostess after showering off the sweat from her run. It was about to begin. Steve was of the mind that Michael might make an appearance, in spite of cautions against such expectations from Joe. Others wanted to know what was supposed to happen. Steve and Ben had stopped by Joe's house the day before and passed on information they had heard from him. The truth be known, Joe wasn't sure *what* was supposed to happen. Michael had given him only so much information and no more. Apparently, it was up to them to make of it what they would. Gary had also stopped at Joe's the previous day, having driven down from Seattle, and had discussed some of the information from the angel with Joe. Everyone was abuzz with questions and excitement as they shared stories, waiting for the last two people to show up.

Joe arrived just as lunch was being prepared, and began setting up the living room the way Michael had instructed. All the furniture was taken out, and seven straight chairs were arranged in careful placement. In front of each chair, Joe placed a colored mat, each a different color of the rainbow. Plants were moved to block off the front door entrance into the living room, leaving the dining room as the only access. Gary finally arrived.

Everyone but Joe surrounded him and offered introductions along with drink and food. Gary stared at the large bottles of water. Steve seemed to read his mind and explained, “Joe said we’d be drinking lots of water. So we brought alot.”

Joe emerged from the living room and hugged Gary like a long lost brother, even though they’d seen one another at Joe’s house the day before. He searched Joe’s face, finding emotion and seriousness camping out in every facial line. With a smile, he put his arm around the man who Michael had said would be “the servant” to the Seven at this event. “It’ll be great, Joe. You’ll see.” It was time to begin.

In a loud voice, not unlike a town crier, Joe raised a hand to quell the chatter that had taken over the house. “Folks, we will start after lunch.” Pointing to the large living room like some kind of tourist guide, he continued, “That room is now sacred space. Do not go in there with anything on your feet. And do not go in unless your feet are washed before entering. This is what Michael told me, and I now tell you. Once you enter, you won’t be leaving until we are done. We won’t have long sessions, so don’t be concerned about holding your water. But take your potty breaks before you enter the living room. Once a session starts, you are to remain in your place until that session ends. I’ll tell you more when we all enter the sacred space. Enjoy your lunch.”

Everyone crowded around the entrance to the living room to see the curious formation the chairs were in. By this time, Ben and Steve had informed everyone about the two formations Michael had taught Joe, that he was to teach them. Excitement filled the air as the Seven got to know one another. The party atmosphere moved out onto the deck, everyone enjoying the beauty and privacy of Kathleen’s back yard. She sat on one of the benches, not eating. Gary sat down beside her and asked if she was OK.

“I’m not feeling too good right now. What a time for this to start. Gawd, I hope I’m not going to miss any of this.” Gary looked her over noticing how she wrung her hands like an old washerwoman, her skin fading to a waxy look. He could see she was starting to shiver. Searching his own heart whether he should do anything about this, he decided perhaps it was time to let the others know this other side of him. He looked over at Steve. “Hey, Steve, could you give me a hand here? I think Kathleen could use a little help.” Almost dropping his sandwich, Steve quickly moved his large frame over to help Gary escort Kathleen back into the house. And without

saying a word, the two men laid her on the carpet, with Gary placing his hands on her forehead and right arm. “Kathleen, is it OK if we do some work on you? Would you mind?”

“Mind? Are you kidding?” her voice croaked. “I’ll take any help I can get.”

The two men looked at one another as if reading the other’s mind. Steve seemed to know what Gary wanted to do. “Go ahead,” he said, “I’ll balance you.”

As Gary looked across to Steve kneeling next to Kathleen, he silently began offering a prayer of assistance to the Highest. Closing his eyes while simultaneously adjusting his touch, he began to breathe in deep breaths, praying for Kathleen’s highest good to come to her. Steve watched as his cohort moved into what he assumed to be a trance. And in turn his hands moved down the full length of Kathleen’s body as if scanning for the cause of her discomfort. As his hands returned to the area of her liver, they locked into place, suspended for a while. Then in pirouette fashion, his hands seemed to dance in the air above her body, his fingers making motions hinting at the movement of energy. Steve’s eyes stared into Kathleen as if he could see inside her, but what he was seeing was the *chi* or bio-force that surrounds the body. His hands were like shovels digging out blockages, trying to bring her body back into balance. He looked up at Gary once again as his cohort’s breathing went from undulating breathing to large breaths that could be heard from across the room. It was as if he had finished running a race and was trying to catch his breath. The two men knelt in place, as one and then two of the Seven started to take notice.

“My goodness, your hands are getting hot,” Kathleen volunteered. Steve had finished his hand dance and was now laying open palms on Kathleen’s shoulder and left hand. For twenty minutes the three of them turned to statues, except for the soft weeping of Kathleen. Tears trickled down her face as a loving warmth swept through her in waves. She could feel the love as surely as if hugging her own sons. But this time she was receiving rather than giving. She thought about her two sons, both teenagers, who were away for the weekend with friends, almost laughing at the thought of what they’d say if they could see this. They wondered about her as it was, the way she tried to dedicate herself to her health, the way she provided them with a roof, and the way she lovingly threw her motherhood into their lives while they protested like typical teenagers. Yes, if they saw this now,

they'd surely think she'd lost it. A smile replaced the tears as her heart opened up to her boys. She missed them.

At that moment, Gary's breathing returned to normal. He opened his eyes and observed Steve as his large hands once again scanned Kathleen from head to foot. "I think that will do it for now," he concluded. "We can help you out again later if you need it. Just say the word." Steve knew that Kathleen's progress was one of baby steps. As a healer, he knew he could only assist Kathleen in her own healing process. With emphasis on the words "her own."

"You should drink a full glass of water," added Gary, groaning as his fifty-year-old legs protested having been folded under his body for so long. "I need to get grounded," he croaked as he stumbled off toward the kitchen faucet. Cold water poured over his hands as he offered a prayer of thanks.

Steve eased up alongside him as if his head hung in prayer. "That was truly great, my friend. I don't get to have an experience like that very often. The energy was wonderful."

"Sure, Steve, glad you could use your gift like that," was all he said as the coldness of the water ached through his hands. After taking a few more deep breaths, Gary fluttered his hands violently as if trying to flick off pain instead of water, turned off the faucet, and returned to finish his lunch. Steve picked up the remains of his meal and sat down beside his co-conspirator. A few minutes later, Kathleen stepped out onto the deck with water in one hand and a piece of fruit in the other. All eyes turned to her as she smiled at everyone.

"I feel great!" she sung out. "Can you believe this? What a weekend we're going to have." Little did she know how right she was. Eyes paired up in wonderment as if asking fellow gatherers what they had gotten themselves into. No one spoke a word for a few minutes. Kathleen joined Steve and Gary in conversation until Joe stuck his head out the patio door.

"We will begin as soon as everyone is ready."

While waiting for the Seven to finish up and join him at the living room entrance, Joe decided to carry out Michael's last instruction in preparing the sacred space. Walking into the center of the room he raised his hands and in a loud voice invoked, "Bless this room. All that I have not invited here depart away. All that is unholy in spirit or of spirit be gone." He took a deep breath, turned 180 degrees, and continued. "God's work is done here today, and God's children will not be interfered with. Go in peace. Go in love.

Depart away in the light of God.” There. It was done. It was time to begin the first session.

In bare feet, Joe exited the room and faced the starry-eyed Seven. “There are a few rules we need to go over before you start to enter this sacred space. First of all, you are only to enter this space bare-footed. The first time you enter, I will wash your feet as your servant and God’s servant. After that, I will no longer wash your feet because you will wash one another’s feet. If you have to leave the room, you must have your feet rewashed by one of the other masters before you re-enter. This is to remind you that you are both master and servant. Michael asked me to have you address each other as master followed by your first name. So Master Shari would address Mark as Master Mark if she wants to talk to him. You get the idea. There is a pitcher of water mixed with oil of myrrh as well as towels next to the entranceway. If you have any questions, save them for the next session. This first session will be short. I will seat you in your places as Michael instructed me. The formation of the chairs is one of two formations that Michael wanted me to teach you. I’m still not sure what they are for. Some of us have discussed what these formations might represent. We’ll discuss that in the second session. OK? Let’s begin.”

Joe stepped inside the entranceway, seriousness taking his face hostage, yet filling him with a combination of mystery and awe. It wasn’t the kind of seriousness that causes one to worry, it was the kind of seriousness that tells you not to laugh in church, or to automatically genuflect before the altar at Mass. He stood there waiting for the first bare-footed person to step forward. But no one moved. “Come on, come on,” he exhorted, “someone’s got to start. Deb and Steve stepped forward while the rest lined up behind them.

Deb looked down at her feet as Joe began pouring a mixture of water and myrrh, her face now matching his with seriousness, as a profound humility traveled up from her feet and into her heart. Softly, Joe chanted, “As I am a servant to you, so must you be a servant to others, ever mindful that I wash your feet to honor the master in you.” As Joe reached for the towel, Deb’s eyes grew moist with emotion. *How beautiful an idea*, she said to herself. She could feel every fiber of terry cloth on her skin sensitizing her to the fact that she was about to step onto holy ground. As Joe stood up, he leaned over and whispered into her ear, “Fold your arms across your heart and close your eyes.” Like a caregiver leading a blind person, Joe escorted Deb to the north side of the room and gingerly sat her in her seat. “You can relax

now,” he said softly. She looked around the room at the remaining empty chairs and could not help but stare as Joe went to wash Steve’s feet. As Steve was seated in the south, the rest began to feel emotion filling the air. No one knew what Joe was doing. The truth be known, Joe didn’t know what Joe was doing. He was following Michael’s instructions, hoping all this would explain itself.

Ben was placed in the northwest, Shari the southeast, and Mark the southwest. As Joe washed Kathleen’s feet, her tears returned once again. She covered her face with her hands as he spoke the words and dried her feet. As she was seated in the northeast, a gladness came upon her while watching Gary take the last chair, in the west. Joe then sat on a short stool in the east, the place of the servant. Leaning over, he switched on the portable CD player. Gentle music mixed with the air as each of the Seven sat in silence. It was a silence the world had long waited for. The kind of silence that wakens the heart with a peace that passes understanding. Beauty fills the soul with such power that what we would call “calm” is more like a stealing of breath. Life teeters on the edge of ecstasy. The mind is deeply stilled, but the body fills with a verve that echoes its way into the heart like a thunderclap trapped within an empty canyon. All one can do is to decide whether to totally let go or fight for strings of consciousness that tie us to this world.

“Are there any questions?” Joe asked, shattering the peacefulness with his words the way a lightning bolt splinters a giant oak. No one could speak. Joe explained that he wanted everyone to have a brief experience sitting in the geometric formation to “kind of test things out.” He went over some of the material found in Michael’s *Revelation*, wanting everyone to understand why they were sitting where they were. He asked Gary to explain to the rest what he had explained to him the day before. Clearing his throat, unable to speak, Gary coughed to get his voice back. Reflecting on how he had felt the previous day, when Joe had shown him the new sacred geometry conveyed by the angel, a sense of ancient knowledge rose up again in him. Feeling almost embarrassed, he stuttered forth the explanation. “In my studies, I have read about certain formations that the Apostles were taught by Jeshua when he walked the earth.” Gary’s studies had included more than what can be found in books. “This information later became known as the secret teachings. I believe what Michael has given us is part of those secret teachings—what were called the triads. I believe we are sitting in one of the triad formations. Joe has received another geometric formation from

Michael, which the angel called the Formation of Giving and Receiving. Like this formation, I believe it is one of the triads that were used for healing. But I'm not sure. Apparently, Michael wants us to figure these things out for ourselves rather than tell us outright."

Discussion filled the room after that. What were they to do? How did this relate to *Revelation*? What did it all mean? As a review, Joe had every person reread the message Michael had given to each, as well as read about the church they represented. Each person was to describe their gift and their trap. After all the questions had been answered, Joe ended the session, encouraging everyone to drink lots of water and use the bathroom during breaks.

The entire group stepped outside the room to chatter about the opening event. "Does anyone have any aspirin?" someone asked. "I've got a splitting headache."

"Me too," came another voice, and a third and a fourth. All but one person were suffering from sharp headaches. "I could really feel the energy in there," Steve reported, "but why do we all have headaches?"

Ben, true to his nature, joked, "Maybe we blew a circuit."

"Or maybe a fuse," Mark countered, "for those of us who live in the older section of the city."

"Wow. I wonder what's going on?" Deb asked in her sweet, gentle way. "Did someone say they had Motrin®, instead of aspirin?" A pharmacy of analgesics appeared as everyone tried to quiet their headaches. While all this was going on, Joe stepped outside for a breath of fresh air and a cigarette. Upon his return to the entranceway into the sacred space, everyone kidded him about his habit and the heavy tobacco aroma following him.

Steve immediately took the position as the servant to wash Kathleen's feet. She in turn washed Shari's feet. All took turns washing one another's feet as Joe stood with arms crossed, realizing he would be out of a job as soon as the weekend ended. Returning to his short stool, he once again turned on a melodious CD and asked everyone to breathe in and out three times. Everyone was invited to meditate as the music continued. He waited patiently until the last person finished the meditation. Turning the music off, he sat in silence and just stared at everyone. For a good fifteen minutes, everyone sat there wondering what they were supposed to do.

"Does anyone have anything to say?" Joe finally asked. Again he waited as minutes ticked by. "Does anyone see anything?" Heads turned to see if anyone was going to speak. Finally, Steve volunteered. "I don't see anything,

but I can definitely detect a presence. He pointed to the center of the formation. "It's right there in the middle."

"OK," Joe said, looking around at everyone. His eye caught Gary sitting across from him. It was obvious something was bothering him. "Gary?"

He said nothing. His face twisted as if he were trying to keep himself from burping.

"I ... I ... well ... yes. I do see something. It *is* in the middle of the formation." His face turned bright red with embarrassment. He had not wanted this to happen. But there it was. Just like the laughing angel he had seen months before, this new angel stood staring at him from the middle of the room. Unlike the laughing angel, it had no wings. "I'm not sure," he continued, "but I think it is Michael." *Ob shit!* he swore to himself, *What is everyone going to think of me? How in the hell do I even know this is Michael?* Because of the difference in height, this angel being almost seven feet high, and because of the love that poured forth from it, something told him it had to be Michael. "I'm not seeing this the way you see Michael, Joe."

"That's OK," Joe encouraged. "Go on. Is it telling you anything?"

"Yes, it is. I'm not hearing it in my ears the way you do. I hear it speaking in my mind, telepathically."

This is exactly what Joe had hoped for. But getting Gary to reveal what he was seeing was like trying to get a knotted sock away from one of his dogs. "Don't worry about that. Just tell us what is happening."

"Well, the angel is pointing at Kathleen with one arm and me with the other."

"Ahhh," Kathleen bleated out. "No wonder I'm feeling this way. I feel like I've accidentally grabbed hold of a faulty wire and electricity is humming through my body. I thought I was going crazy!"

"The angel tells me to give you a message." At this point, Gary suddenly became aware of himself and what he was doing. Embarrassment flooded him. His mouth hung open like an empty mailbox. She could see he didn't like drawing attention to himself. But this was different. It had to do with her, and she wanted to know what was going on.

"Well, don't just sit there. What's he saying?"

"Uhhh, he says that you have gone through much, and there is still more you will have to face, but he tells me to tell you that your healing will be greatly accelerated. Be open to your own healing, for soon you shall be cured of your lupus." At that, the angel disappeared. Gary slumped in his chair as

if trying to hide. But there was nothing to hide, in this place, with these people.

“Oh my God,” Kathleen whimpered. “The buzzing is getting stronger. I’m starting to perspire. What’s happening to me?” Panic seemed to be taking over as her body began to shake quietly at first, then uncontrollably. “What’s happening to me?” she asked again, this time almost crying. Everyone in the room sat stunned, especially Gary. Joe looked over at him, and he back to Joe. *Something should be done*, he said to himself.

“Joe, perhaps we should move into the Formation of Giving and Receiving.”

“I had exactly the same thought,” said Joe. And without a word he started barking out orders. “Quick, move the chairs out of the way.” Deb scurried over to Kathleen to lend support. As her hands touched Kathleen’s, she could feel the heat rising off her. Kathleen’s breathing was growing labored, but strong. Her eyes were beginning to take on a glassy look.

“What are you guys doing?” she whimpered again.

“Gary, you stand here,” Joe ordered. “Steve on the opposite side. You two will be in the focus positions.” As each of the Seven was put into the formation, Joe gave instructions as to what to do. He had discussed this with Gary, who somehow knew what this formation was for. As Gary stared at Steve and Steve at him, Gary’s heart began to pound. *This seems so familiar*, a voice inside him said. *But why?*

“Kathleen, you stand here in the middle. You are the receiver.” He helped Kathleen to stand up, her body still shaking. As Steve and Gary raised their hands on either side of Kathleen, the only thing in the room that could be heard was Kathleen’s teeth starting to chatter. Immediately, a heat possessed Gary and grew steadily in intensity. His hands grew red with heat. Sweat began beading up on his head and arms.

“I’m so hot,” Kathleen reported.

“You aren’t the only one,” Gary whispered under his breath. He stared across at Steve who was also turning bright red from the heat. Gary was now feeling so hot that he was starting to worry if something was going to happen to him. Gulping large amounts of air, he tried to funnel off some of the intense energy that was filling him by blowing the air out of his lungs to one side. Ben was standing behind him, and now Ben’s hands were feeling like hot poker. Kathleen’s head went back as she started to mildly convulse. As she collapsed backwards, Joe’s hands caught her.

“You guys put your hands together under her and lift her up,” Joe ordered. Quickly the two men at the focus point responded, lifting Kathleen into the air with Joe holding up her head. She was on fire, and the fire was being felt by all seven participants. Gary felt he was standing in an inferno of light as sweat soaked through his clothing. Watery beads flowed down his face, neck, and arms. He felt as if on the verge of bursting into flame. Just as he was about to collapse, it all stopped. As suddenly as it had begun, the buzz of electric energy slackened. Steve’s eyes opened wide as if questioning whether Gary had felt it.

“OK,” was all he could say.

Steve signaled Joe. “Let’s get Kathleen into a chair, you guys.” The formation broke as others carried Kathleen to a soft chair in the dining room. Gary stood in shock in the sacred space. He could hear Kathleen beginning to titter, then laugh, and eventually erupt into uncontrollable laughter. The other women tried to attend to her, starting, themselves, to laugh at her laughter. Her unstoppable laughter reminded him of charismatic religious gatherings where he had witnessed similar events. They had called it “holy laughter.” Whatever it was, he must be the only person who didn’t think it was funny. His body numbed against his gyrating emotions. The heat and the sweat were only slowly diminishing.

“I need to ground myself again,” he mumbled, heading once again to the kitchen and the cold water of the faucet. As he placed his hands under its frigid stream, stronger and stronger emotions began to fill him—fill him to the point of making him dizzy. Placing his elbows on the edge of the sink to keep himself from falling to the floor, he fought for all he was worth to move the emotions out of his body, into the water, and down the sink. But Niagara Falls itself could not wash off the power of these emotions. Realizing he either had to pass out or quit trying to control the monumental flood of tenderness and love mixing with peaceful bliss, he began weeping. The leak in the dam turned into a flood as his weeping exploded into sobbing. He could not even sob quietly. It was as if all the gladness and the sadness of the entire world was trying to move through him. He shook with emotional weeping. His voice was that of Rachel weeping for her children—no, it was King David weeping with joy in his dance before the Lord. Mark and Steve were visibly alarmed by what they were hearing. Both men hurried over to see if Gary needed assistance. Ben completed the effort as the three men supported their friend as he wailed from the overwhelming emotions pouring out of him.

In the other room, Kathleen's laughter had changed to weeping, as well. Now, she, too, sobbed as if in a duet with Gary. Deb and Shari had no idea what to do except to hug her closely. The house was filled with contrasting silence of those embracing Kathleen and Gary whose voices cried out with unfathomable feelings. It was a minor miracle the neighbors did not call the police. Joe stood quietly by as all this unfolded. He was both delighted and shaken. *What was it that Michael was delivering to them?* he asked himself. What, indeed?

After waiting a half-hour for everyone to compose themselves, Joe called the group to gather again. Gary and Kathleen were the last to enter the sacred space. Neither was sure they wanted to see any more. If this was just the start of the first evening, what would the rest of the weekend be like? Each person in their own way needed to discover that. It was obvious to everyone. As Kathleen's and Gary's feet were washed, each felt the blessing and honor of the others as they entered on common ground. This was more than an individual experience, it was a group encounter with the heavenly. And like it or not, they all had said yes to heaven long before this day. Now was not the time to bail out.

That evening, Deb and Shari also entered into the Formation of Giving and Receiving. And like Kathleen, each had her own deep experience, though not as dramatic as had been witnessed with Kathleen. Each described to the group what she had heard, felt, and realized after the beautiful energy had coursed through, awakening her soul, stirring her with self-awareness. Each discovered a part of herself she had forgotten or never believed in. It was that part which shines with beauty, a kind of undeniable beauty which unleashes an inner light that can never be extinguished. Deb was aware the Navajo had a word for this kind of beauty: *bozro*. And she had felt *bozro* this night. It is the kind of light that touches all humanity when humanity is in harmony with Life.

It was close to eleven before Joe closed the first day of the gathering. After he headed home for a well-deserved night of rest, Deb felt the urge to approach Shari and Kathleen. After Shari had entered into the Formation of Giving and Receiving, Deb had felt a connection with both women she could not quite understand. She knew that all three were in *bozro*, touched by the sacred bond of harmony. It was a triangle of light, a sacred triad, flowing between them. She wanted all three of the women to return to the center of the sacred space. Initially, her rational mind interfered, telling her

it was late, everybody needed their rest. It had been a long and emotional day. But the feelings flooding her could not be dammed up, and finally she approached the other two women. Both Kathleen and Shari acknowledged feeling the same as Deb about the powerful force that seemed to connect them. At Deb's suggestion, the three washed one another's feet and returned to the center of the room where they all had been touched by the forces of heaven. All three huddled together with arms around one another. The light within them seemed to surge and propel their souls up from their bodies like swirling birds rising in flight. Each whispered about the sensation of looking down upon the triad, their spirits joining in oneness. For the longest time their bodies gently swayed in unison, words unspoken as tears trickled across their smiles. It was a night never to be forgotten, a night where the feminine moved into symbolic oneness as if foretelling a living prophecy to the world itself.

The women understood little of what they were sharing. It would be months later before the meaning of their celebration would speak to them. Each woman would inevitably realize the necessary role the feminine plays in the Divine Plan. In the future, the angelic realm would convey messages as to the role of the feminine in bringing healing to humanity and, ultimately, to the Earth. It was time for the world to recover from self-inflicted wounds propagated by a people blinded by their inability to recognize their own giftedness. What the three women commonly shared this night would be understood only in hindsight, as heaven would continue to reveal new teachings. They would come to realize how the blending of the masculine and the feminine, in *hozoro*, is necessary in returning Eden to the Earth, borne on the wings of heaven.

While the women continued in their reverie, the men went their own ways, Gary sitting outside under a sumac tree hoping the night air might cool him down. His logical mind strained, trying to figure out what had just transpired. Part of him sought to hide from his own embarrassment, while yet another part hummed with awe. Had some healing force caused this? Would Kathleen be cured of lupus? Or had the angels simply joined the Seven in a celebration of oneness, thereby unleashing both joy and profound emotion? Like the women, his questions would find answers months afterwards. All would face the inescapable confrontation either of discovering heavenly truths through earthly giftedness or of facing difficult lessons through their own individual traps.

As Gary continued in his thoughts, Ben and Steve compared ideas of what they thought was happening to the group. Mark enjoyed the starry night, his eyes serving as a testimonial of the coming together of Heaven and Earth this very night. No one felt like going to bed. Everyone felt giddy, as if something within each of them whispered, *This is the beginning. The great curtain between the natural and the supernatural has been rent. The realm of angels shall no longer be divided from humanity. All shall be One within the bosom of God.*

Joe arrived home sometime past midnight. He was drained, but could not sleep, even after trying to satisfy Donna's desire to hear what had happened. It was obvious by the look on his face that *something* had happened. As he sat in his office staring at the wall, light began to fill the space. It was Michael. Joe could only stare at the angel, unable to utter a word. Too much had affected him. His eyes said it all as they poured out thank-yous to his angel companion. "Joe, you have done well, as have the seven masters." Michael's praise could not make him feel any better than he was already feeling. He listened as the divine messenger bequeathed one more mystery to be taught to the Seven at the end of the gathering. Joe smiled, knowing the significance of the angel's trust. He and the seven master souls had learned more than heaven had assumed they would in this short amount of time. It was a good sign not only for them, but for all of humanity. Perhaps humankind was, indeed, ready to hear the teachings from the angel.

Joe finally felt able to sleep. While rearranging his pillow first one way then the other, he began to reminisce about all that had led up to this night. The next day he would discover an entire new phenomenon as the men would enter into the Formation of Giving and Receiving. But that is another story for another day. Ben would be changed forever, his clever mind to be balanced by an open heart that would touch many. Steve would learn the lesson of his life, nearly sabotaging the entire purpose of his being called by heaven. Gary would be thunderstruck once more as Kathleen would bring healing to him in a completely different way than he had served as an instrument for her. Months from now, Kathleen's physicians would find no trace of her lupus—and no explanation as to its disappearance. She was cured, that was all they would be able to say. And Mark would continue to be Mark, ever the bridge-builder. Only later, his bridges would span more than cultural differences, they would span spiritual gulfs. These Seven would represent a never-ending story, given by Heaven to the people of the Earth.

Any who hear these words of the angel, who choose to enter into the Last Baptism, can drink from the cup of moonlight given to Joseph Crane. And as you drink from this cup, you may wonder as Joe did whether you are drinking of moonlight—or of moonshine that will steal your senses. Though others may wonder who filled this cup, it has become obvious to those who are filled by its light that this drink came from the hand of Heaven. That hand was given a name by Joseph Crane, and he called it “Michael.”

Although the three mysteries given to the Seven cannot be put on this page, any may inherit these mysteries by crossing the path of one of the Sevens. For the seven men and women who shared this night with Joe Crane would be called to find seven more, and that seven, seven more. The mysteries are for anyone’s ears, but for no one’s pen. Look only for the light that shines in people, and you may have the chance to know what is meant for all of earth to know: We are not only masters of our destiny, we are masters of our souls. To fully know our souls is to find oneness with God. And in that Oneness lies the path back to Eden. Who of us would deny ourselves such an opportunity?

As sleep crowded around Joe, his mind played back the vision when he had heard the loud voice from the throne say:

**See, the home of God is with you, God’s children. All that is not of love is passed away. See, I have made all things new. It is done. The love, I AM, is the beginning and the end. No one will thirst for this love ever again. All that has kept this knowledge from you is gone.**

To be continued ...

Part V: Gateway to Miracles  
Remembering How to Heal Ourselves

