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Jesus: The Untold Years

By Dale Kueter

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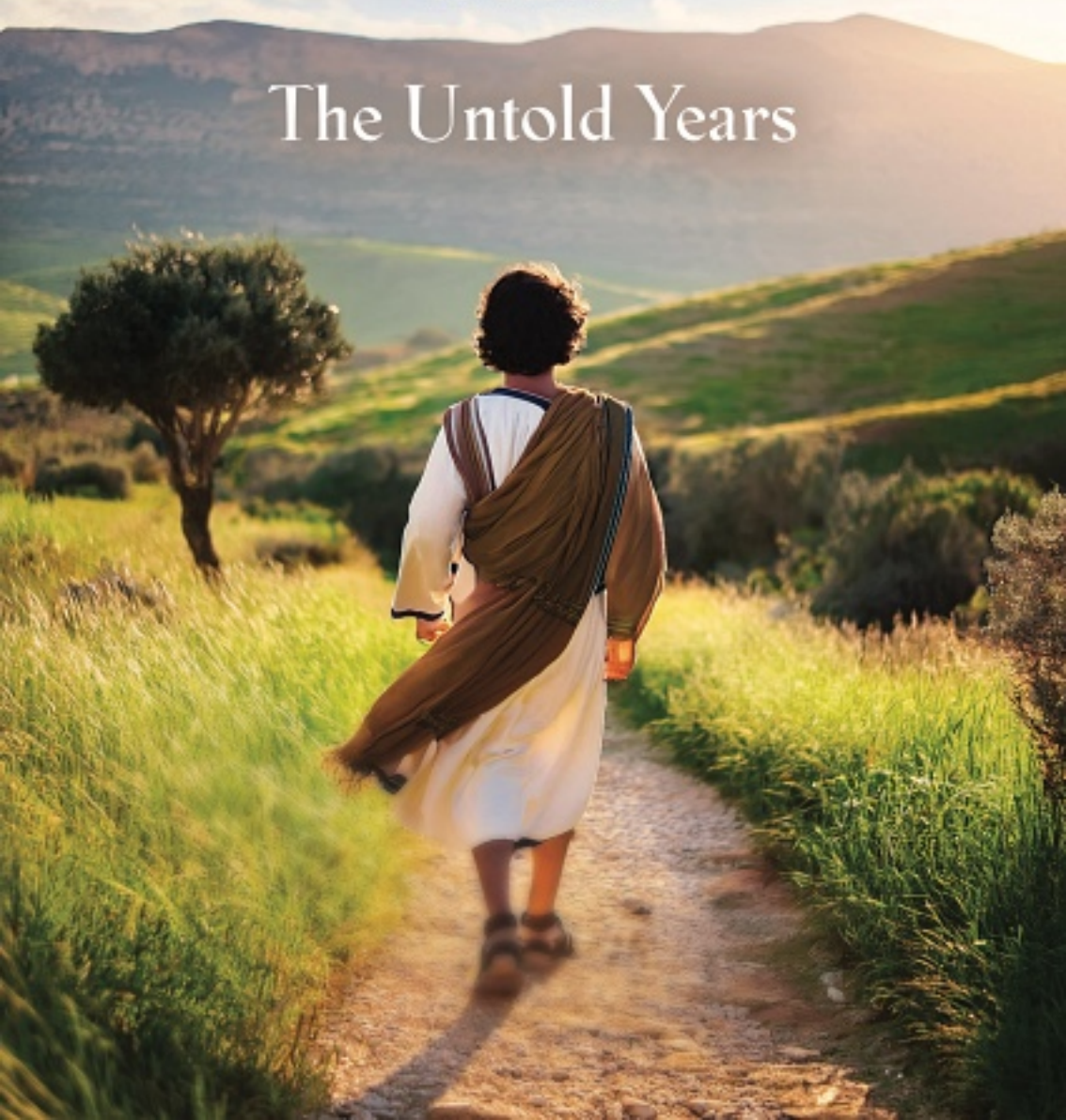
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DALE KUETER

JESUS

A Novel

The Untold Years



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This is a work of historical fiction, based on actual persons and events. The author has taken creative liberty with many details to enhance the reader's experience.

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Jesus: The Untold Years

CAPERNAUM, GALILEE, about 29 AD – My name is Simon, although it is formally Shimon.

I don't know how the 'h' was extracted, but my older brother, Andrew, claims my father scared the 'h' out of me years ago when I talked back to our mother. I can believe that. My father Jonah always liked Andrew better.

While I have no formal education, our mother – her name is Joanna – was an excellent teacher. She made sure we knew our letters, understood numbers and could converse intelligently. Still, I have a difficult time reading.

I am a fisherman. The entire family fishes for a living. My father has said he knows the Sea of Galilee like the back of his hand. I've also heard him say he is as familiar with the fishing business as David was with Bathsheba. But he'll deny saying that.

My family fishes mainly in the northern region of the sea and our headquarters are in Bethsaida, a north shore town where I grew up. I now live with my wife Eden and her mother in the nearby town of Capernaum, which is about a two-hour walk west of Bethsaida. Our small house is a stone's throw from the seashore and just across the street from the Capernaum Synagogue.

I must tell you that lower Galilee is the lushest part of all Israel. As the rainy season transforms to drier weather, the valleys and slopes burst forth in spectacular color with honeysuckle, jasmine and other wildflowers and blossoming trees. Grape vines, pomegranates, fig and olive trees get their juices flowing in the pleasant subtropical climate.

In an ambition of nature, as one vintner describes it, plants are forced to coexist in ambient sustenance. The tempered breezes provide cooler air for walnut trees and a mix of hotter winds to nurture palm trees. In a seeming lesson for mankind, vegetation that would compete for space and favorable weather share in harmony. Almonds, apricots, and plums flourish side by side.

On nearby ridges terebinth trees and evergreen oaks share the skimpy soil. In lower lands, people and animals are grateful in hot weather for the shade cast by the soft, silvery leaves of olive trees. Before the Romans came with their high taxes, the farmers and commoners, who make up the vast majority of our citizens, supported their families without worry.

The Hebrew word for the season (spring or April) is Nisan. Under the influence of the Greco-Roman civilization, the Jews divided the year into four seasons. Tishri became October, Tevet became January and Tammuz, July, or summer.

In much of Galilee, especially along the Great Sea (Mediterranean) to the west, there is heavy dew. Moist air drifts eastward during the dry season, and then falls to the ground as the night cools. The dewfall makes a significant contribution to the moisture needs of farming. It also saturates sails, ropes, and other gear of fishermen. That's the situation this morning.

"I swear this confounded wetness delays fishing time more than ordinary rain," I complained to anyone who would listen. I struggled to untangle the nets. "This stuff weighs twice as much as when it's dry. Whoever piled these nets in the corner of the deck should teach knitting lessons to the women and girls. What a mess!"

"Simon, Simon, Simon," father repeated for emphasis. "First off, you shouldn't swear about anything. You know the Commandments. Do you pay attention to the rabbi at Synagogue? Second, how can you be so grumpy on such a beautiful morning? The sun is warm. The sea is glistening. The fish wait to be caught."

Then he showed signs of scoffing mirth. "And thirdly," he said, "It was you who piled up the nets when we finished our last outing."

Father is tolerant and patient. You had to be enduring if you fished for a living with sometimes contrary sons. But we seldom come home without a catch. Sometimes it is just enough for supper, but often there is plenty to sell to neighboring families and the market.

Unlike many men, father pays scant attention to Roman politics. While Capernaum, a major trading town on the Damascus to Jerusalem road, is ruled by Herod Antipas, Bethsaida is under the jurisdiction of

his brother, Herod Philip. Both levy heavy taxes on fishermen. On everyone for that matter.

“Andrew, give your brother a hand in sorting out the nets.” I confess Andrew is far less impetuous than I and more interested in the business end of fishing. He not only soaks up father’s experience at boat operations, but also his fishing knowledge. Andrew is able to read the water for schooling musht, biny, sardine and other species.

Andrew is 28, taller and stronger than me. I just turned 26. We get along in a brotherly fashion, he says largely due to his even-handedness and forbearance. Andrew is such a humble guy. He is the quiet type, doesn’t like to stir up the water. His Greek name supposedly means brave, but he’s as meek as a fish tip-toeing on the sea floor. I hate it when he gives me the silent treatment.

We both love the sea and fishing. I’m the one with a missing tooth and bird inkings on my upper body. I won’t go into detail about the missing tooth other than to say the other fellow didn’t fare well either. I admit I’m on the boisterous side and even like being the center of attention. Andrew shuns such behavior and knows twice as much as me about Scripture and Mosaic law.

“How can I help you?” Andrew approached with caution, not wanting to ignite my fuse by any insinuation that I was unraveling my own mess. “I will try to untangle the weights section if you want to work on the upper part of the net,” he proposed. “If we free up the weights, the rest will unfold much quicker.”

I agreed. We had all the knots and debris removed from the nets in short order. Then we swabbed down the boat, rinsed off the remaining fish blood and waste, and reorganized the other fishing tools – spears, knives, ropes. There was a place for everything on the boat, which is 17 cubits long and eight cubits wide. It sits just under three cubits above the water.

Our vessel is smaller than most commercial crafts on the Sea of Galilee. The sea, also known by the Hebrew name as Lake Kinneret, is shaped like a heart, 28,000 cubits wide and 45,000 cubits long. It is a freshwater lake, 95 cubits deep in places and primarily fed by the Jordan River. (A cubit is the length from the tip of an adult’s middle finger to the elbow, about 1.4 feet.)

Father says there are some 200 commercial fishing boats on the lake. It is a demanding, labor-intensive business. He knows the competition and customers. Many operators are gruff, hard living sorts. None are social climbers. Father is a moderate man, savvy about the lake's structure and where fish would likely congregate. Some Sea of Galilee fishermen cull their catch, tossing out oysters, lobster and other shellfish forbidden by Old Testament law. Father sells those to Greek residents and the scaled fish to Jewish families.

"Please make sure the net is in order and folded neatly in the stern," father yells out. "And make sure there are no rents, no holes."

"Yes, father, we know," I replied. "This isn't our first boat ride."

The usual procedure, after scouting an inlet for schools, is for Andrew and me to wade into the shallows, each guiding a section of the net. The weights drag part of the net to the bottom while floats keep the top section on the surface. Father rows the boat in an arc, in hopes of trapping fish, which are ultimately drug ashore or on the boat in a frenzy of flopping.

"All right then," father said. "If everything is ready, we will try our luck this afternoon. Andrew, run up and tell your mother we'll be back by nightfall. The weather looks mild. When you return, we will raise the sail and head down the eastern side."

On hot days, when the sun radiates off the water and boosts the temperature even higher, fishing crews go bare-chested. Only a scant wrap covers their mid-section. In such conditions, they often go out early in the morning or in late afternoon, avoiding the warmest part of the day. Those days are still several weeks away.

By midday, we had drifted into an inlet. Six eyes scan the water for feeder fish and larger ripples. An hour passed with no signs of fish. We hoisted the sail again and drifted into another cove. This time there was success. In the excitement of the catch, we gave little attention to the rising temperature and gathering clouds. Shoreline cypress and red gum trees veiled a developing storm.

"Father, look at the western sky, over the trees!" Andrew shouted from his position in the shallow water. It was a fearsome firmament, red and pinks to the east and fast-moving billows of black and gray approaching quickly from the west. The sail began snapping in the

rising wind. Waves rocked the boat, first gently like a mother rocking a baby at bedtime, then with a mounting intensity that fashioned fishermen into drunken sailors.

“I’m going to lower the sail completely,” father yelled. “You boys bring in the net and walk toward the shoreline just beyond that large cypress. I will try to maneuver the boat toward the same place. We’ll have to wrap things up in a hurry.”

The storm’s force grew as if being pushed by an angry giant. Streaks of lightening slashed the sky and were accompanied by nearly simultaneous thunder, meaning the tempest had arrived. We were soaked by sheets of rain and our vision was hampered. The only fortunate part of the situation was that we were not caught a distance from shore.

Usually, father is wise to any unexpected weather developments, but this time the elements caught him by surprise. His attention had been occupied by the prospects of a sizeable fish haul. Fishing activity often picks up with an approaching front. Now, however, attention had to be re-directed to the storm.

“The net is too heavy with the catch!” Andrew shouted. “I can barely drag it, and I know Simon will have difficulty.”

“Take care of your end, big brother!” I bellowed. “I’ll handle my chore.” But I stumbled. My haughty determination was dashed by a five-foot wave and mouthful of water. Resolve gave way to reality. I wanted to be as strong as Andrew, and certainly didn’t want to disappoint father. Vanity was checked by nature, and father saw me struggling.

“Simon, Andrew,” he yelled. “Drop the net. Release the catch. Swim to shore. We will recover the net after the sea settles. It’s still anchored to the boat. And don’t sit directly beneath the cypress. The tree attracts lightening!”

“But father, these are beautiful fish, enough to keep us in business all week,” I responded.

“Do as I say, Simon, or I’ll have Andrew drag you to the shoreline.”

With that, we released the net and the fish found freedom. We swam and waddled our way to shore. Father strained to beach the boat, manipulated the oars and kept the rudder fixed. As he worked the boat

closer to shore, the waves grew higher. A gust sprayed his face, and the accompanying surge nearly swamped the vessel.

Just 10 boat-lengths from shore, he tossed a rope as far as his waning strength could muster. Andrew waded out, grabbed the line and pulled the boat onto the beach. I helped secure it to a nearby tree. Then we all collapsed on the sand, faces battered by the slamming rainfall and the howling wind. Father said a prayer of thanks that we were safe.

The Sea of Galilee is made to order for quick-developing storms. Winds can change in the blink of an eye. Differences in temperature along the seacoast and surrounding mountains are the formula for potential bad weather. Warm, moist sea air is suddenly bombarded by dry, cool mountain air and the clash creates trouble. Small boats further out on the sea are especially in peril.

“We were lucky not to be far out,” father said. “Did you boys notice any other fishermen out there? The wind is starting to slacken. Let’s walk out on that point and look for other boats. Our trip may turn out to be a rescue mission.” We walked 200 cubits but spotted no one on the lake.

“Father, instead of looking for other fishermen we should be looking for our fish, the ones that may still be trapped in the net,” I proposed. “Otherwise, we will be eating leftovers from last night instead of fresh fish.” Andrew said nothing.

“Simon,” father responded, still scanning the sea for any foundering fishing crews, “someday you will understand that it is more rewarding to fish for men than to fish for fish.”

I wasn’t sure what my father was talking about but it sounded a lot like that preacher who is making the rounds. He has spoken at our Synagogue several times. Pretty good speaker. Knows his Scripture. What I like about him is his relaxed manner. He loves people of all kinds. Even me, a not too pious person who tends to violate the commandment against swearing.

But I don’t cuss at home. Eden would kill me. She is a devout person and knows Scripture like this Jesus fellow. He’s from Nazareth, a dot on the map southwest of here. I have to admit I usually don’t cozy up to rabbis and preachers, but this Jesus is different. I’ve known him for several months now and he seems like a regular guy.

He tells me he is spreading the kingdom of God, whatever that means, and he needs help. He said he is forming a band of followers and even asked me to join, that sons of Zebedee have already signed on. Maybe he needs to get to know me better. I told him I was a sinner and he said he knew that, and that I could change. I pointed out I am married and have a job, and he said he knew all that, too. He must have spies.

I said I would think about it, talk it over with Eden. He has quite a story. Born near Jerusalem. Spent his early years in Egypt. He's a carpenter, taking over the trade from his deceased father. I'd say he is a couple years older than me. Lately he seems unsettled, like there is something worrisome on his mind. He said he had to talk to his mother about it.

I met her when visiting their Nazareth home a short time ago. I don't think she likes me very much.

The wind eased and waves obeyed in kind. We recovered the net, raised the slightly tattered sail, and returned home to leftovers.

Chapter 6

NAZARETH, GALILEE (about 4 AD) – “Did you finish building the table for Rabbi Shimon and his wife Gittel?”

Anne, already busy preparing the evening meal, quizzed her husband as he walked through the portal of their Nazareth home. Joachim, his faded blue tunic wet from perspiration, wasn't ready to participate in a “how was your day” discussion. His body ached and his blackened thumbnail throbbed in rhythm with his heartbeat.

He didn't respond. Instead, he grabbed a basin, went back outside to the nearby village well, drew water and poured it over his head. For an encore, he removed his outer garment and pitched another basin across his sweaty chest before proceeding to wash his hands and face. He relished the breeze that wafted from the southwest, across the plains from Mount Carmel.

Joachim sat down on the two-foot-high circular wall that surrounded the well. An empty bucket and a rope-like lift system for procuring water hung from the upper structure. His mind was a jumble of conflicting questions. He ran his calloused hands through his wet hair as if that may bring order to a subliminal collision of thoughts.

Just where was history headed?

The Mount Tabor region in the far distance brought back the story of Israel's victory when its army leader Barak defeated forces of the Canaanite king of Hazor, commanded by Jabin. How many opposing forces have walked the hillsides of Nazareth? And today? How would the town fare under the rule of Herod Antipas, son of the late Herod the Great?

More precisely, how would their grandson, knowing what their daughter Mary said about his conception, fare under the Romans? Jesus' future was a mystery in many ways. The immediate question was the location of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Joachim had confidence in Joseph providing safety for the family, but that didn't wipe away worry.

Little Nazareth, he pondered. A Jewish village of 450 souls in the middle of nowhere. Of little consequence to the world. Mostly poor people, some with fertile plots for agriculture on the plains to the south.

Any wealth in the region was in Sepphoris, the luxurious Greek-style city where Antipas had his headquarters.

Joachim often worked in Sepphoris, which was several miles northwest of Nazareth, an hour's walk. It was a gleaming place with a colonnaded main street set atop a hill, a fortress city rebuilt by Antipas after a civil war among Roman antagonists. Workmen like Joachim knew little about such conflicts and politics but profited from Antipas' ambitious restoration projects.

However, he and Anne were aware that Antipas' father, Herod the Great, had caused their daughter, Mary, and son-in-law, Joseph, and grandson, Jesus, to flee Israel for Egypt. Word of Herod's killing of innocent boys in hopes of doing away with Jesus had been relayed from family members and other Jewish friends in Jerusalem.

Elizabeth, Mary's distant cousin, gave information through a personal messenger that Herod was on a warpath and seeking the death of the infant Jesus. The informant told of the Holy Family's escape to Egypt. She and her husband, Zechariah, had become close friends of Mary and Joseph, and were present at Jesus' circumcision. In keeping with Jewish law, the Brit Milah ceremony took place eight days after his birth.

All that was more than three years ago.

The relatives in Jerusalem, like immediate family in Nazareth, could only wait and hope for the best. They were aware of the sizeable Jewish population in Egypt, people who would take in the refugees. They had confidence in Joseph's keen protector sense. And Elizabeth often recalled Mary's visit when both were pregnant and the comforting thought that Mary was mother of the Messiah.

God would watch over them.

Elizabeth, a good deal older than Mary, after all was part of God's mystery. She was six months into her pregnancy – a surprise to everyone because of her advanced years -- when Mary came to visit her in the Judean hill country on the western outskirts of Jerusalem.

She rejoiced in the recollection that her baby, John, kicked wildly in her womb when Mary unexpectedly arrived. She knew then that Mary was with child, too. During the visit, Mary told her about Jesus'

conception, how the angel explained that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and her child would be called the son of God.

Talk about the Scripture coming alive!

She and Zechariah were faithful followers of God's law as outlined in the Hebrew bible. That's why they were so disappointed not to have been blessed with a child. What had they done to be rebuked by God? Neighbors had whispered scornfully about their fate. No longer.

They could recite Isaiah's prophecy by heart. Frequently one of them started a passage and, like long-married couples, the other would complete it. The prediction of Jesus' birth and its impact upon the people of Israel was among their favorite passages.

Therefore, Isaiah had written some seven centuries before, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. The couple frequently reassured themselves that Isaiah's words of *God with us* would show favor to the Jewish people. The prophet cast Jesus as wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, and prince of peace.

Mary and Elizabeth became more than friends. Despite their age difference, they were like sisters. They giggled about changes in their bodies, food cravings and a mutual dislike of goat meat. They shared concerns of their babies' health and if the offspring would have the prescribed ten fingers and ten toes. And they discussed the rigors of childbirth.

Elizabeth could not forget how much Mary had helped her during those last three months of pregnancy, with cooking, cleaning and tending the small garden. Mary, confronted with morning sickness and other issues of early pregnancy, stayed until John was born. And Elizabeth treasured that day when Mary first came and the exchange that followed.

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb," Elizabeth had said.

And Mary's response was:

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of the Almighty's servant.

*Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name.*

*God's mercy is for those who fear God
from generation to generation.*

*God has shown strength with God's arm;
God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;*

*God has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.*

*God has helped servant Israel,
in remembrance of God's mercy,
according to the promise God made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.*

Just how long he had been sitting on the well rim, pondering events, Joachim wondered. The more he sized up his grandson's destiny under Antipas the more he convinced himself the Roman ruler was not the threat that his father, Herod the Great, had been. For one thing, Antipas had family politics and his own place in the Roman hierarchy to worry about.

"Just when do you plan to come in for supper," Anne yelled from a nearby walking path. "Whatever you're thinking about, I doubt if wishing at the well will bring answers. Come. We're having baked sacra and bread with dates, one of your favorite combinations."

"Sorry," Joachim shouted back. "I'll be right in."

He walked the short distance eastward to their modest home. Anne was placing the fish on the table as he walked in the door. The fragrance ignited his appetite. The hungry craftsman temporarily set aside the matters of the world. The demands of an empty stomach took precedence.

"That sure smells good!" he said, giving the word *sure* an elongated prominence. "Anne, you must come from a long line of good cooks,"

he said, hoping to schmooze his way forward to make up for his tardiness. "I knew when I first saw you at Synagogue lo those many years ago that you were the cook for me. Aye. And, I must say, you keep a good house. How blessed I am."

"And, Joachim, I always admired your chutzpah," Anne said. "I hope our meal didn't cool off too much. What took you so long at the well? Did you have a sliver in your hand? Or was there something in your head? But you are right about me coming from a long line of excellent cooks. For sure," she said with a sly look, "my house has been known centuries for its cuisine."

"Ah. I sense your meaning," he said.

They sat down to supper and prayed. Both knew what would be discussed during the meal. Much of what was on their minds had been talked about before, but, like the food on their plates, there was renewed sustenance in exchanging thoughts again. The fate of their family was never a closed subject and reviewing and praying together eased their anxiety.

"You are worried about Mary and her family," Anne said reading her husband's mind.

"Aren't you?" he replied.

"Of course. My guess is that they are on their way home. Herod is dead. Joseph has been informed of this, and he's decided to pull up stakes in Egypt and return to Nazareth. It will be a tedious trip, one full of unknowns. Will they have enough to eat? What about the weather? Which route is the safest, free from robbers and other danger?"

"What makes you so sure they'll return to Galilee?" Joachim injected. "It's possible they have found a village in Egypt that they like. Good neighbors. Plenty of work for Joseph. Mary has settled in, found new friends. And Jesus. He's probably having a good time playing in the sand. How old is he now?"

"You don't know how old your own grandson is? Oy vey!" Anne looked across the table as if the existence of God was questioned. "Feh!" she said with editorial exclamation. After an appropriate interlude, she declared with exactness: "He will be four at the 17th of Tevet."

“Hmm,” Joachim muttered between chews. He ignored her dramatics. “Growing up fast. We haven’t heard about him since Elizabeth’s account of the presentation in the Temple. And that was hardly a family reunion. Faster than you can say *mazel tov*, the three foreigners visited, brought gifts and praise to Jesus, departed, and Herod goes on a rampage to kill all baby boys. Those Eastern visitors informed Joseph of Herod’s maniacal plan, and they left for Egypt.”

His graying eyebrows raised to exclaim such frenzy. His face appeared tired, yet he looked at her with profound tenderness.

“How did we get through those days?”

“That was an awful and worrisome time,” Anne agreed. “It’s difficult to understand Herod’s cruelty. We are blessed that Elizabeth and Zechariah have good contacts, not just in Israel but Egypt, too. Within weeks we learned that Mary and the family had escaped and were safe out of Herod’s reach. They’ll be back. Why do you doubt it?”

Joachim had an even stronger notion that his daughter’s family would return to Galilee. He knew Joseph and he knew Joseph’s devotion to his family. He could not have hand picked a better son-in-law. He was also an excellent and dependable mason and carpenter. And, he couldn’t deny that he liked to hear Anne get riled up and *spiel* away.

“Do you forget what our own daughter said when she became pregnant with Jesus?” Anne continued. “What the angel told her? His destiny? All that is written in Scripture?”

Joachim smiled. He looked at her across the table. They were on the same page.

“My dear wife,” he said with solemnity, and then a pause. “Would you please pass me that last piece of fish?”

Anne returned an affectionate look and handed over the plate. And then a slice of bread. They sat there, a couple in love, proud parents and proud grandparents. Suddenly, Joachim began to laugh. It began with a chuckle and grew to a boisterous rumble, one that required him to put down his fork and place hands on his bouncing stomach.

“What?” Anne asked in puzzlement. “Are you *meshuga*?”

“No, no. I’m not crazy,” Joachim replied, still guffawing. “You asked me some time ago if I finished the table for Rabbi Shimon and his spouse. The answer is no. I didn’t finish the table.”

His belated response, and Anne’s awareness of the matter, produced a duet of chortling. Their mirth was abruptly defused by heavy knocks on the door. *Who could that be?* was evident on both of their faces.

“Open up now!!” a deep-voiced man ordered. “Now!” and he rapped as though intending to break the door down. Joachim motioned for Anne to go to a back room. He approached the front door.

“Hurry it up!! We don’t have all night.”

Joachim lifted the metal latch and slowly opened the door. The gruff-talking man’s stature punctuated his presence. He was at least three inches taller than Joachim, dressed in the uniform of a minor Roman official.

“Good evening. How may I help you?” Joachim inquired. He was not surprised to see Roman soldiers in his yard. But what could have provoked such a hostile arrival? Why did a sense of animosity accompany the visitor? Indeed, what had happened to compel a late-day call?

“Are you Joachim, the so-called carpenter?” the man said harshly.

“Yes. I am Joachim. What is it you want?”

“I am a mere courier,” the brusque reply came. “What Antipas wants, and more precisely what his chief builder wants, are workers who will work. The ruler of Galilee is building a great city. He has plans for other great cities. The question is whether he can rely on Jewish carpenters like you. You haven’t been to Sepphoris this week. Why? You have agreed to work there.”

Joachim nodded. He had signed on to work on Antipas’ projects in Sepphoris. The truth was he had no choice, no matter what work he had lined up elsewhere.

“I agree. I should have spent more time there,” Joachim answered. It would have gained him nothing to explain that his son-in-law had been gone for several years and another worker was sick.

“We investigated your whereabouts,” the courier said sternly. “We know you have been working on furniture for a rabbi. I am here to

inform you that the tetrarch of Galilee, the great Antipas, and all Romans for that part, come before everyone else. Rome respects Jews and their culture, but not at the expense of our needs. Do you understand?"

The carpenter stroked his beard out of habit and nodded assent.

"Be there tomorrow!" the messenger ordered, his finger pointed at Joachim's nose. Then he and the entourage departed.

"I guess the rabbi's table won't be completed tomorrow either," Joachim told Anne back inside.

"I hope you are right, that Joseph and his family are on their way back. I can use his help. Anne, I must turn all my attention to work in Sepphoris. I don't have a choice. Other projects in Nazareth, the rabbi's table, the farmer's shed and your to-do list here will have to wait. And who knows how long? Antipas and the Romans are not a patient lot."

They finished supper. Physical hunger was satisfied, only to be replaced by an emptiness rooted in uncertainty. What was the future under Roman rule? Would high taxes lead to Jewish revolt? Was Antipas turning into his father? That was really the big elephant in the room. Where was Mary and her family?

"Your mind, Joachim, isn't on carpentry and masonry work in Sepphoris. I can tell." Anne looked at his weary face. "Your worries concern Jesus once Antipas finds out he's back home and recalls his father's rampage after all the excitement about a new king being born and the Magi coming to pay homage. What will Antipas do? Will he react with similar wrath?"

She had read Joachim's thoughts precisely. He had had the same talk with himself out at the well. He eventually convinced himself that Antipas, even if he did find out about Jesus' presence in Nazareth, had too many other problems. That included dealing with family matters and hanging on to his cushy lifestyle.

"I am positive Antipas will know if Jesus is back in Israel. He will probably know before we do. The Roman intelligence system is extensive, and, sad to say, some of it is fed by Jews. If you are correct that our daughter and family are on their way back, and I hope you are, I have confidence that Joseph is aware of the political dangers. He has good sense."

“Don’t I know the same? My fear with Jesus, and it will exist until I die, is the nature of his being, the purpose of his mission, the impact he will have on people. Knowing what we know, Joachim, what Mary and Joseph have told us, how that corresponds with the prophesy of the Scriptures, how do we proceed? What will happen?”

Joachim looked at her, his face in amused agreement. He smiled at her litany of concerns. It was territory he had already traversed.

“That, too, I pondered out by the well. Your questions are my questions. How can anyone know the future?” Anne was about to speak. “Wait, please,” he extended his hand. “Hear me out. Even though Jesus is no ordinary boy, perhaps the best thing we can do is to treat him like an ordinary boy.” He looked at her for concurrence.

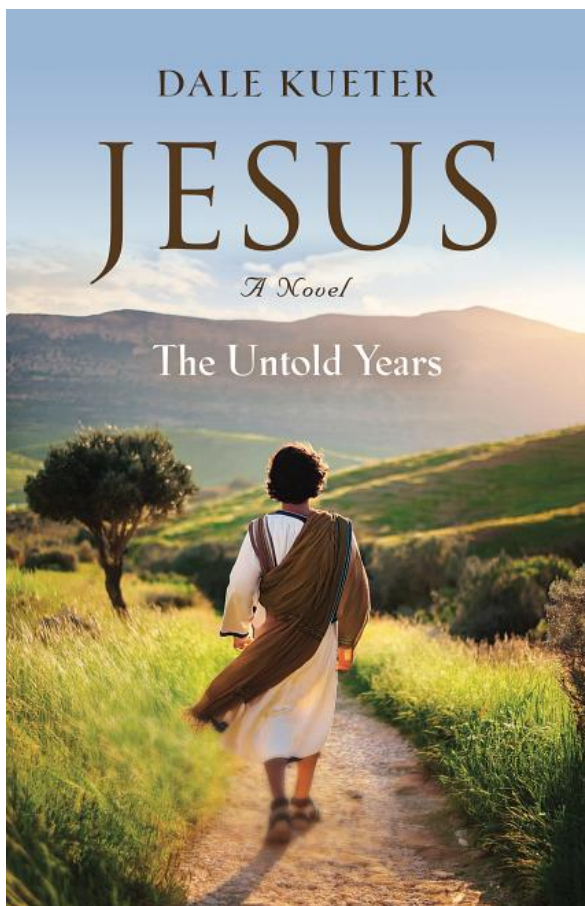
“If he walked in the door right now, are we to get down on bended knee and begin praying to God?” Joachim rambled. “Are we to launch into The Aleinu? Is it our duty to start a session of praise and thanksgiving? Do we light candles and have an incense offering? Or, as I suggest, do we run up to him and give him a big hug?”

This was no mundane matter for the two of them. It was not a new subject either. Sometimes the issue of how to handle Jesus as God became more than a little complicated.

“So, we merely say, ‘Welcome to Nazareth. We are your grandparents. It’s nice to have you home. How was the trip?’” Anne teased.

Joachim’s long day and the unexpected and unfriendly visit from Antipas’ envoy coalesced into a drained mood.

“Anne. I’m tired and I’m going to bed.”



Thousands have written about Jesus Christ, the best-known figure in history. Aside from the New Testament words recorded by the people who knew him, his life is a mystery. "Jesus: The Untold Story" suggests answers about his unknown life.

Jesus: The Untold Years

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