



JESUS PUSHED OPEN THE WOODEN DOOR and held it for Harry to leave the small house. From the compressed dirt floor of the building, Harry expected to step onto the familiar, unresisting surface of heaven, but instead found himself standing upon another, even more unpleasant surface: mud.

"Oh," he blanched, grimacing as his foot sank down into the wet muck. "What's this?"

Jesus laughed. "What's the matter, Harry. Afraid of a little mud?"

"Mud?"

Part Four  
in a  
Series

"A mixture of water and dirt," Jesus explained. "This is what happens to a road in Palestine when it rains."

"Rains?"

"Never mind, Harry." Jesus sighed, stepping carefully through the muck until he found a drier path, which he followed down the middle of the roadway that passed between two rows of dwellings almost identical to the one they had just left.

Harry tried to keep up, placing his feet carefully along the same path as Jesus, trying to keep his steps out of the unpleasant mud. The light level was dramatically reduced, and his eyes were having a difficult time adjusting. Harry strained to see through the faint light: the seemingly endless rows of drab, mud-colored houses varied only by the dim glow of oil lamps that could

be seen through a few of the open windows.

"Why is it so dark, God?"

"Ah," The Son raised his finger to remind Harry of his mistake. "Jesus, remember."

"I'm sorry. Yes. I'm having a hard time remembering. Why is it so dark, Jesus?"

"This is what is called 'night' on earth. It's how it looks when the earth has rotated out of the sun's path."

"How terrible for them!" Harry gasped. "And how often does this phenomenon occur?"

"Every twenty-four hours, of course."

"Oh my! No wonder they're in such a terrible state."

"Not at all," Jesus chuckled. "It signals a time of rest for them. Very important for the human body. Since I'll be spending a little time in one, I wanted to get the feel of it early on."

## They Need a Savior

“This seems like such a drab existence,” Harry said, continuing on just behind Jesus. He imagined the impact on the residents when The Son burst upon their community, and his breast swelled with pride, knowing that he—a lowly 4<sup>th</sup> Rung angel—was playing even a small part in God’s preparation. “I sure wish I could be there when you make your grand entrance,” Harry said, his voice heavy with awe. “It’ll sure be something to see.”

“Why do you say that?” Jesus said, continuing down the street, glancing here and there at the houses painted by the fading light.

“What? What do you mean?” Harry stammered excitedly. “Why, just picture it: The Son of God arrives on earth in all his heavenly glory! There’ll be trumpets and cymbals and cheering throngs to greet you when you show yourself to them. Why, they’ll be so *surprised*—so happy that the Messiah has finally come, in all your majesty!”

Jesus turned quickly around, stopping the effervescent angel by the shoulders. “Harry, settle down! Listen to me now: It’s not going to be that way.”

Harry gazed up into the eternally patient, yet insistent face of The Son. “It’s not?” he said meekly.

“That’s not how humans are born.”

“*Born?*” Harry cried, his gut filling again with revulsion at the thought of that most unseemly human practice. “But, you—I mean you’re already—”

“Yes. I am,” Jesus said firmly. “But I must become flesh, and flesh must be born. It doesn’t just appear.”

“But Jesus, isn’t the whole idea to make some kind of an impact down there? To actually *change* the world and its ways?”

“The idea, Harry, is to save lives. The idea is to give people a chance to live with God forever.”

“Okay. Right. And I would think the best way to accomplish that is to make a real splash. Give them a display of your power—your *might*. Really impress them!”

“Harry, Harry,” Jesus shook his head sadly. “You don’t know these people as well as you may think. They aren’t impressed with ‘splash.’ You’re forgetting about the

biggest splash We ever made. Remember when We helped Moses save the people from the clutches of Pharaoh? We split the Red Sea into two parts, revealing the dry land, gave them safe passage between towering walls of water. Talk about an impressive miracle!” Jesus gazed sadly around him at the people beginning to emerge from the houses after their small evening meal. “Before the water could even fill in the dry channel they were grumbling and complaining to God.” He sighed, and spoke with a voice heavy with sadness, yet at the same time filled with overwhelming compassion. “No, they may be impressed for the moment, but that’s as long as it lasts: a moment. They don’t need a parade. They need a Savior.”

## A Lot to Take In

Harry was silent, watching the face of The Son as he studied the people around the houses, images momentarily oblivious to their audience. Harry felt the sadness like a great heat coming off The Son’s figure, and enveloping even him like an uncomfortable woolen cloak. The angel could not bear the weight of God’s emotions, and stumbled back away from him.

Harry still felt he needed to confirm the unbelievable news. Finally breaking the silence, he said, “So you’ll be born.”

“Just like everyone else down there,” Jesus answered quietly.

The angel shuddered and said more to himself than to his companion, “There’s got to be a better way.”

Jesus grinned at Harry, relaxing again. “Oh, and We’ve already picked out my mother,” he said teasingly. Harry, still having a difficult time comprehending all this, remained silent. “She’s a sweet girl,” Jesus continued, “from Nazareth—a small town very much like this.” He swept his arm around to encompass all the streets and dwellings and people around them. “She’s engaged to be married to a man from the

same town, so I guess that’ll be my home town.” Then he repeated the name, as if enjoying the simple act of forming the word between his lips. “Nazareth.”

Their path had taken them to where the rows of houses stopped, where the road broadened into the coarse scrub of the surrounding low hills. Jesus stopped, scanning the horizon, still immersed in thoughts of his new family.

“Her name is Mary,” he said with quiet delight. “That’s a nice name, isn’t it Harry. Her betrothed is Joseph. Mary and Joseph—they’ll be my parents.”

Harry was still wrestling with the mental picture—struggling to place The Son in the lowly confines of a humble village such as the one in which they now stood, surrounded by people of low means, such as these that milled about the town’s mud streets. He tried to imagine The Son as a tiny babe held in the arms of a young girl named Mary, and the idea was so incredible to him that the image kept vaporizing before he could complete the picture in his head. It was just too much for his small mind to comprehend. Harry thought about the girl, her innocence, her fragility, and the amazing idea that she could actually hold God in her two small hands.

“Will she know?” Harry asked.

“Know what?”

“That she’s giving birth to the Son of God.”

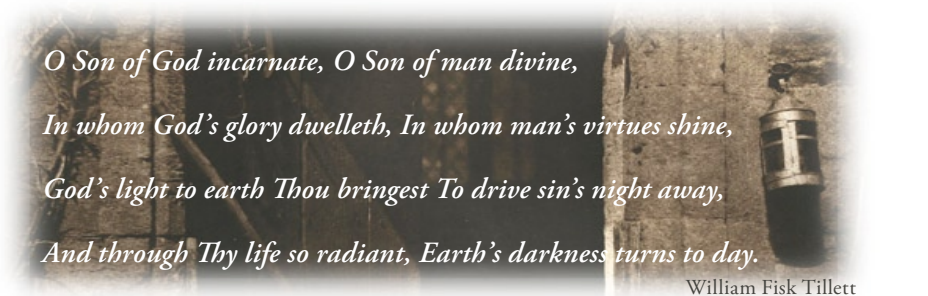
Jesus nodded his head. “Gabriel’s already told her.”

Harry was beginning to realize that these humans must be made of tougher stock than he had first imagined. “Must be quite a lot for a young girl to take in,” he said seriously.

Jesus turned to head back down the street, deeper into the darkening light between the crude hovels, back to the villagers now preparing to retire for the night.

“Yes. I imagine so,” He quietly sighed. dst

*(to be continued...)*



*O Son of God incarnate, O Son of man divine,  
In whom God's glory dwelleth, In whom man's virtues shine,  
God's light to earth Thou bringest To drive sin's night away,  
And through Thy life so radiant, Earth's darkness turns to day.*

William Fisk Tillett