

THE KINGDOM OF AFFABEL: LIFE IN ENDEL

And [Jesus] taught them many things in parables
—Mark 4:2 AMP

There was once a world similar to our own yet different in many ways. In this world there were no independent nations, only one great kingdom named Affabel. Though this kingdom spanned the entire known world, it had a single capital city from which all leadership was administered. It was called The Great City of Affabel, which we will refer to from this point on as simply Affabel.

This enchanted city was presided over by a remarkable king named Jalyn. King Jalyn was adored and greatly admired by his subjects. He exuded a depth of love that seemed inexhaustible. He was strong and wise, yet at the same time was kind and possessed a great sense of humor. Though his manner was regal, Jalyn was also personable. To be with him was to find oneself encompassed in an atmosphere of goodness. His presence raised every aspect of life to a higher level. His vision and fore-sight were astounding, and he had an uncanny ability to see beyond the actions of people into the motives of their hearts.

Jalyn's father, who founded Affabel, was known as the Founding King Father. Once order had been established, he turned all leadership of the kingdom over to his son. The residents of the great city helped administrate the rule of Jalyn in the outlying territories of the kingdom. This was accomplished through a hierarchical system of authority and leadership in the ruling city.

The city was enormous, with a landmass of approximately two hundred square miles. It was so well planned that even though it was densely populated, it never felt overcrowded. It was a composite of suburbs, town residences, and villas.

Located in the flatlands, which lay toward the western end of Affabel, were the modest homes of the laborers. (Their modest homes would be considered extravagant in our world.) Even though their jobs were labor intensive, these residents were thankful just to inhabit the king's city.

The mountainous terrains of the northern and southern borders were home to the artisans. These were the ones skilled in the creative arts of music, writing, artwork, and design. These homes had beautiful vistas and were more expansive than those of the laborers.

The most inviting section of the city was the eastern district, which contained an abundance of beautiful villas. This area was known as the Regal Center. This large neighborhood is where the king resided and spent most of his time. It was also home to those who worked closest to the king; here his administration and co-leaders socialized and worked together.

The Regal Center was poised like a jewel on a cliff overlooking the shores of the Great Sea. A constant gentle breeze blew up from the azure ocean and refreshed the city. These waters were fringed by the most pristine white beaches, which were surpassed in beauty only by the royal gardens. The gardens wove throughout the Regal Center, adding color and vibrancy at every turn. This was without doubt the most desirable place of residency in Affabel. Each home was exceeded in elegance only by the king's royal palace.

In the midst of Affabel stood the tree of life. Only the king's subjects were privileged to partake of its wondrous fruit. The fruit was not merely delicious and lovely to behold; it also had within its fragrant flesh the power of the miraculous.

The Community of Endel

To the west of Affabel's flatlands lay the Outer Wilderness, which stretched for almost sixty miles to the Great River Adonga. Once you crossed the Adonga, you would find yourself in another part of the kingdom, which was called Endel. At birth, the children of the citizens of Affabel were brought immediately to the province of Endel. Before their first week had passed,

they were entrusted to the care of the king's nurses. Once these young citizens—or Endelites—were five years of age, they were brought to the School of Endel where they received training for a period of ten years. There they learned the ways of Affabel and of the great King Jalyn.

Only the king's nurses and the teachers had enjoyed the opportunity to meet Jalyn. Every five years or so, he would visit Endel in secret to share his heart for the school and the children. He never made his presence known to all, but even so, his goodness was evident in every aspect of Endel.

The ten years in the School of Endel were to prepare students for the life ahead of them. At the age of fifteen, they would have a short season to apply all they had been taught. In this span of time they would be entrusted with portions of wealth and responsibility. How they stewarded their young lives and resources determined how and where they would spend the rest of their lives, which in their world totaled one hundred and fifty years. Though the season of testing was exactly five years, none of the students were aware of its duration. All they were told was it would not exceed ten years. At the end of this time, each would appear before the king to give account of their life choices.

This span of testing determined the students' allegiances. Those who followed the ordinances of Jalyn with their words and actions acknowledged his leadership. They were admitted as residents of Affabel. Their choices secured rewards for them accordingly.

If, however, the students rebelled and lived only for themselves during the season of testing, they were exiled to the land of Lone. Lone was a desert land of utter darkness where loneliness and hopelessness reigned. There the rebellious ones suffered torment and imprisonment for the duration of their lives.

The first person banished to this desolation was Dagon, who became the founding dark lord of Lone. Though he had rebelled against Jalyn many years before, his influence lingered in the land of Endel. Inhabitants of Endel who acknowledged Jalyn's lordship broke free of the dark power of Dagon. However, those who refused to serve Jalyn remained under this fallen lord's sway.

To isolate any further infiltration of darkness in his kingdom, the great King Jalyn was compelled to establish a decree to protect both the integrity and the social infrastructure of Affabel. All who followed in the way of Dagon and refused to acknowledge Jalyn as king by word and action would be banished for the remainder of their lives to the land of Lone.

So begins our story. We will follow the lives of five students of Endel. Their names are as follows: Independent, Deceived, Faint Heart, Selfish, and Charity. Let me introduce each.

Independent

Independent constantly questions the existence of Affabel. He really can't believe someone called Jalyn, who he has never met or seen, would require not only his allegiance but also such strict adherence to a "list of rules." He suspects this is a scheme to keep him and others under the control of the teachers. In contempt, he refuses to attend classes and learn of this imaginary kingdom.

Independent ridicules others for believing such nonsense. He intends to live as he sees fit and remain free of the laws of Jalyn. The only exception will be if the king's edicts serve his purpose. Then he'll adhere, but only because it's his idea. He has no qualms about letting others know he won't be yielding his life to the will of another.

Deceived

Deceived doesn't question the existence of Affabel. He believes in King Jalyn and even delights in his promises. He mentally and verbally agrees with the school's teachings and policies, yet

large portions of his lifestyle conflict with those teachings. He celebrates his allegiance to the king and his teachings and participates in the school's functions when they are delightful, but if he doesn't see any self-benefit, his outlook quickly changes. His lifestyle is contrary to that of a true follower of Jalyn, and due to his strong personality, he subtly draws others into his ways. He never really stops to consider his pending season of testing and judgment.

Deceived gets along well with Independent, even though they disagree about Jalyn's existence. Deceived is fun and they both have similar interests, so Independent likes his company.

Faint Heart

Faint Heart is the most enthusiastic of all the students. She speaks up frequently in class and consistently makes some of the best grades. She is very active and usually initiates extracurricular activities to help promote the students' involvement in the community. Anyone who assessed the students would say she was the most passionate for Jalyn's cause.

Selfish

Selfish also believes in Jalyn and his teachings. He does not doubt the existence of Affabel and is quite vocal as well. He believes Jalyn is such a wonderful ruler and kind judge that he will be gracious to all who profess allegiance to him. He is, however, focused on his limited perception of Jalyn's teachings and character. He has forgotten that Jalyn is a just and holy leader as well as a loving and merciful one. So Selfish has developed a distorted view of who Jalyn really is. He believes that Deceived, Faint Heart, and Charity will no doubt be a part of Jalyn's glorious kingdom, though he has some concerns about the sheer resistance of Independent.

Selfish believes all who acknowledge Jalyn verbally and live a life that doesn't break any major laws will gain entrance to Affabel. However, in keeping with his name, he's largely self-seeking, and often the good he does is motivated by personal benefit. At times, he is motivated by compassion, but when push comes to shove, Selfish looks out for his own best interest.

Charity

Our final young lady, Charity, is one who takes to heart and obeys King Jalyn's laws. Not only has she learned his principles, but she also searches to know the heart behind each edict. She spends a lot of time seeking to know and understand the will of Jalyn. This means long hours of study and freely giving herself for the good of the school and community of Endel. She knows once she reaches the age of fifteen, she will have a short amount of time to carry out the wishes of the great king. Her aim is to live completely for Jalyn's glory, and she will not allow what would benefit her to get in the way of this primary purpose.

Charity loves Jalyn and longs for the day they will meet. She fervently obeys him and frequently speaks with others of his goodness. For this she is often ridiculed and isolated. Though she has suffered for her stance of unwavering loyalty to Jalyn's laws, nothing will deter her from being faithful to the king.

The Graduates

All five of these Endelites turned fifteen. The appointed day arrived, and they graduated along with two thousand other students. Each was entrusted with a specific commission and a corresponding sum of startup funds. This amount was predetermined by Jalyn and was distributed by the headmaster upon graduation.

Among our five students the distribution looked like this: Independent received fifty-five thousand entrustments, Deceived and Faint Heart received forty thousand each, Selfish received

the most at seventy-five thousand entrustments, and Charity received twenty-five thousand. With their money in hand, the young citizens were released with some final instructions.

The Salesman

Though Independent rarely attended classes, he still felt as though some of the teachings hung over his head. There were times when he wondered if some of the school's lunacy could actually be true. If so, he hoped his behavior would not affect how much he would be given once his schooling expired.

Independent's hands trembled as he received the envelope filled with his entrustments. Upon opening it, he had to suppress his surprise and relief at the amount he had been given. He was even more excited when he realized that he received fifteen thousand more than Faint Heart and more than twice as much as Charity. He thought, What a waste! Charity and Faint Heart spent all their time in those useless classes and put in so many extra hours, and now they have little to show for it.

This experience actually affirmed Independent's belief that Jalyn didn't exist. He reasoned that the students' parents, who disappeared so many years ago, had left the money. This furthered his views that the story of King Jalyn was all a scam created by the school to control their young lives and keep them from being freethinkers.

After a couple weeks of celebrating his graduation, Independent realized he had to set up a business. He was beginning to panic over the rapid pace at which he had started to run through his entrustments.

Independent started a car dealership and realized he was a great sales- man. Business went amazingly well. Many of the new graduates used part of their startup funds to buy used or even new cars from Independent's lot. As his finances multiplied, he expanded into other business ventures and found success in those as well. As his assets increased, he expanded and enhanced his personal lifestyle. He realized quickly that money was an amazing source of influence, and it seemed to have the power to purchase happiness. His wealth, assets, and rapidly expanding lifestyle also had the power to attract women, which made life even more invigorating.

Independent didn't attend the community's weekly gatherings, but he was still considered a very good citizen by most because they appreciated his support of community projects. It appeared life couldn't get any better for this hard-working Endelite.

The Builder and Developer

Deceived was more than happy to celebrate with Independent for a couple weeks. Though he hadn't receive as much as others had, he was glad to have more than Charity did. It affirmed his distorted perception of Jalyn as a king of such extreme mercy that certain issues really didn't matter.

Deceived had been sexually loose with a couple girls he had dated in the school, even though this was contrary to the teachings he had received. He saw no conflict in it because he firmly believed in Jalyn and his kingdom. He had formed his own approach to life: As long as I continue to affirm my allegiance to Jalyn and do not hurt anyone too severely, I will remain in good standing with the king. He reasoned that Jalyn understood that everyone has needs and no one is perfect. He was sure all his faults would be covered at the judgment by Jalyn's mercy and grace because he believed in the king with all his heart.

A few weeks after graduation, Deceived started his own business. He became a homebuilder. In the beginning, he struggled to find customers. His model home was excellent in every way, but he couldn't find committed buyers. Some thought his prices were too high; others simply couldn't afford to buy such nice houses. Desperate, Deceived lowered his prices.

Deceived still used his nice model home to draw customers. He continued to make all the

promises he had previously made, but he started putting in much lower grade materials than he had previously featured or promised. In fact, some of his materials violated Endel's codes and standards. Deceived rationalized that the lawmakers who set these marks were overly cautious. He was sure the materials he had chosen would hold up under any stress or weather conditions. Because Deceived's homes seemed to be such amazing bargains, interested Endelites started signing contracts faster than he could build the houses. Business had finally taken off.

After a couple years, Deceived decided to turn to land development. He was tired of complaining customers. He felt that once the land was sold, he'd be done with it all. He wouldn't have to deal with fixing war-ranty items any longer.

Deceived was ecstatic when he came across some land for roughly a thousand entrustments an acre. The deal seemed almost too good to be true. But further investigation revealed the land was a flood plain. This information was only known by a handful of people, all of whom were Deceived's friends. He persuaded a city councilman who was a buddy of Independent's to approve his development without proper geological testing. After all, there hadn't been any floods in his lifetime, so was there really a problem? The deal went through without a hitch. After this, it seemed life couldn't get any better for the young entrepreneur.

The Teacher's Assistant

Immediately following graduation, Faint Heart got together with a few girlfriends for a weekend of shopping. She thought this would be good for two reasons: first, she could spend time celebrating with her closest friends; and second, she could get the clothes and accessories she would need for her new career. Faint Heart's deepest desire was to be a teacher's assistant at the School of Endel. She couldn't remember ever wanting anything more. Her interview was the following Friday.

On the second day of shopping, one of Faint Heart's friends, Gossip, shared with her how a mutual friend, Slander, had told the headmaster that Faint Heart had slept with one of the young male students. Faint Heart burned with anger as she listened to the news. This could severely hinder her chances of being brought on as a teacher's assistant. It was an absurd lie without an ounce of truth in it. She had kept herself pure the entire time of her schooling. She felt certain Slander had done this out of sheer envy and possibly even hatred.

Faint Heart was furious. She was deeply offended, and for the remainder of the weekend her thoughts were consumed with the treachery of this supposed friend. She vowed to make Slander pay for what she had done.

The day of the interview arrived, and to Faint Heart's surprise she was chosen for a position. The headmaster informed her that he had indeed heard the rumor, but after some investigation he was convinced it wasn't true.

Not only did Faint Heart get a position, she was assigned as an assistant to one of her favorite teachers. His name was Double Life, and he was one of the most gifted teachers at the school. He was twenty-five and had been instructing young Endelites for a number of years. (The teachers' judgments did not come at twenty years of age, as with the others, but when they were thirty.) Faint Heart was amazed that she was chosen to work with such a dynamic leader.

The semester began, and things were going extremely well, but Faint Heart still carried a nagging offense against her former friend. No matter how well things went, it seemed she could not really get over Slander's treachery.

Even though things looked great, trouble was brewing below the surface. Double Life's name was indicative of who he was. He lived one way as a teacher but quite another way in his private life. His judgment would be the most severe because as a teacher, he had the privilege of personally seeing Jalyn.

One evening when Faint Heart and Double Life were alone together, he made a pass at her. Shocked and outraged, she left his presence immediately. He didn't give up but persisted in

pursuing her over the next several weeks. She began to question her reaction and listened to his persuasion because he was such a great and knowledgeable man. She enjoyed his attention. He was gentle and kind and was considered to be one of the nicest looking men in the community. After a long internal battle, Faint Heart finally gave her virginity to Double Life, and the two entered into a passionate affair.

Faint Heart had never known such exhilarating feelings of passion and love. Each time she saw Double Life, he took her breath away. Thoughts of rendezvousing with him on their set evenings consumed her and temporarily averted her attention from the deep and now hidden offense she still carried against Slander.

However, after four months, Double Life suddenly dumped her. Faint Heart was distraught and devastated; she had to know why. She replayed every encounter in her head and pressed him for an answer. Finally Double Life told her that he had heard about Slander's report of her past affair with a fellow student. This was not the real reason for his change of affection; he had just lost interest in Faint Heart. He was already flirting with another young lady in the community. Young women were hard-pressed to resist the seductive and persuasive powers of this prominent teacher.

Faint Heart was outraged. She couldn't bear the thought of seeing Double Life each day. Unable to go on, she immediately resigned her position at the school.

After several days of sulking, Faint Heart opened a beauty salon with what she had left of her forty thousand entrustments. She stopped going to the weekly gatherings at the school even though Jalyn instructed his subjects not to forsake such meetings. Faint Heart didn't want to associate with hypocrites, and most of the people at the gatherings seemed to be just that.

Faint Heart grew harder by the day. She rarely mentioned the school or Jalyn. Indifference and cynicism replaced the passion she'd previously expressed so freely. When asked, Faint Heart would confess her allegiance to Jalyn, but deep down she blamed him for allowing such a corrupt man to be a teacher in his school.

By the time her days of testing were over, Faint Heart was a very offended and bitter woman, though if asked she would emphatically deny it. She spent the rest of her days trying to get even with those who had hurt her so deeply.

The Mayor of Endel

And now we turn to Selfish. He was simply amazed by the amount of money he'd received. He celebrated, but he knew enough of Jalyn's teachings to steer away from illicit revelry. After a few days' break, he started investing. His trading proved profitable, and he quickly multiplied his startup funds. As his finances grew, he steadily increased in popularity with his peers.

Selfish bought a house in one of Endel's nicest neighborhoods and invited the influential and powerful to his home. Government officials, professional athletes, business executives, and other notables enjoyed the wealth of his hospitality. He was quickly becoming one of the most connected men in the community.

After three years, Selfish decided to run for mayor of Endel and easily won because of his financial clout and social connections. Once in office, he found himself faced with many decisions. One had to do with the school. Due to an increase in population, there was an urgent need for more space. This meant buying land and securing contractors, building expenses, and everything necessary to outfit the school.

The first step was for the community to raise money. In the weekly city gatherings, Selfish heard of their need for more funding. At the end of the fundraising drive, he had given just under a thousand entrustments.

Then came the tough decision. The school finally had enough to buy a particular plot of land. It was an amazing deal, and the price was within their budget. However, there was a large department store that wanted to purchase the same land. The city council was divided. The school

was a nonprofit organization, so it would not yield any tax revenue. The store, on the other hand, would bring in huge sums of tax revenue and create additional jobs for the city's residents.

Since the council was split, the deciding vote had to be cast by the mayor. Selfish was conflicted. The owners of the department store had been very supportive of his campaign by contributing large sums of money as well as leveraging their influence on his behalf. They had been guests in his home on frequent occasions.

Selfish voted in favor of the department store. He justified his choice to the public by stating it was for the overall good of the citizens of Endel. He had paved the way for more employment opportunities as well as increased the city revenue. He recommended the school explore their options in expanding their current facility, even though he knew this was not feasible. His choice disappointed the sincere followers of Jalyn, but the community at large applauded his decision.

Selfish's two-year term was coming to a close, and it was time to campaign for reelection. Feeling a bit remorseful, he made a personal contribution of five thousand entrustments to the School of Endel. With it came a promise to find another plot of ground suitable for them to build on.

This helped him regain the confidence of many of the followers of Jalyn. It looked as though the young leader would easily win a second term.

The Restaurant Owner

Upon graduating, Charity gave three of her twenty-five thousand entrustments as a contribution to the School of Endel's land drive. She was thankful for all she had learned from her teachers and wanted to express it. With the remaining twenty-two thousand, Charity was eventually able to start a restaurant.

Charity loved anything to do with the culinary arts. Coupling this with the fact that she was a savvy businesswoman, running a restaurant appeared to be the best way to utilize her gifts and serve her community. She was able to bring in some of the best chefs in the land. By coordinating their knowledge, she assembled an outstanding menu. Her restaurant was an immediate success.

Though Charity won awards for her restaurant, she always credited her success to Jalyn's wisdom. In interviews she repeatedly thanked her former teachers and praised her fine employees. She refused to boast about her efforts or claim her success as her own. She knew it was only because of Jalyn.

Charity used her prosperity to help both the community and the School of Endel. She contributed food to the school's soup kitchen. Often she would set aside an evening to work the outreach food line. She enjoyed serving hot meals to the poor. She made a commitment to give 25 percent of all her restaurant profits to the school. At the end of the five years, she had given over two hundred thousand entrustments.

Charity was always helping others who were working hard but found it difficult to make ends meet. In addition to financial aid, she was quick to share Jalyn's principles of wisdom and success. She constantly told those she aided how she would never have made it had it not been for Jalyn.

Even though Charity's restaurant was successful, she was never included in the social events at Selfish's home. Neither was she asked to participate in leadership roles in the community. She was seen as too radical in her adherence to Jalyn. Being excluded by the influential Endelites didn't deter or discourage Charity. She was focused on reaching the less fortunate. She loved the weekly gatherings at the school and was always offering to help by giving or serving in various roles. Charity was a fulfilled young woman.

The Appointed Judgment Day

The final day of testing arrived. Those who were about to be judged knew it would happen sometime in the next five years because the first five years had already passed. No one imagined it would be so soon.

The day began just like any other, but it ended very differently. Late in the night, the Royal Guards of Affabel swept the two thousand graduates away. Their secret exodus happened while the other Endelites slept.

These two thousand young citizens were ushered through a secret passageway. It was a deep tunnel that brought them beneath the Adonga River. Once through the channel, they traveled an additional two days across a barren wilderness. Throughout the journey, the Chief Guard provided their every need from a store of food, water, and supplies.

The guards were kind yet reserved. All their energy was focused on the task before them. Though they would answer some questions, the Endelites posed others that were not permitted to be answered. The guards' standard reply to these questions was, "All will be made known in due time." This only served to heighten the travelers' curiosity.

The Endelites almost didn't notice the discomfort of the wasteland as they sojourned toward the long-awaited city. As the third day dawned, they crested a hill. There, silhouetted by the morning sun, was the majestic city. Affabel was even more magnificent than any of them had dared to imagine.

As they approached the city, the revelation of its wonder grew and expanded. Even in their approach from the flatlands, it was apparent Affabel was without compare. Endel was puny in comparison to the outskirts of this city.

As the men and women from Endel entered the central portion of the city, they discovered that in Affabel everything was vibrantly alive. It was such a magical place that the birds not only sang but also had the gift of language. Their wondrous and melodic songs interpreted the beauty they beheld and served to further magnify the glory of the city.

This did not come as a total surprise to the Endelites, who had heard the horses of the Royal Guards speak. These noble beasts not only spoke to each other but conversed with their riders as well. It was obvious there was an affectionate relationship between the horses and their riders. It was now apparent all the creatures within Affabel had been gifted with speech and with the capacity for affection and joy.

In every direction the young Endelites turned, they beheld breathtaking vistas. They were enraptured with the awe of Affabel. The air alone was invigorating. It brought both clarity of mind and strength to their travel-weary bodies. The water that flowed throughout the city intrigued them. Somehow it seemed more substantive, as though it glistened with life. Threads of enchanting music permeated the atmosphere and soothed their excited souls with an abiding sense of peace. Everything ranging from the smallest plants to the very air seemed more than alive; it all possessed the ability to give life. Each element was full to overflowing in this miraculous land.

The young citizens could not help but extend their hands and touch everything within their reach as they passed through the concourse of the great city. They longed to run free and explore but somehow knew it wouldn't be permitted at this time.

They were led straight into the large anteroom of a massive auditorium. Here the males and females were separated. This superstructure the young people had been escorted to was so vast it appeared to have unlimited capacity. At least one hundred thousand people could have been contained within its marble walls without issue.

Within the anteroom, the Endelites were allowed to refresh themselves in fragrant baths or showers and were given robes in preparation for their audience with the king. They were all too happy to discard their dusty clothes from Endel. Their old garments seemed awkward and strangely out of place in this radiant city. A deep desire to dwell in Affabel wove itself into the fiber of each Endelite's being. They had the strangest sense of homecoming.

After bathing and dressing, the group gathered again for a meal. This breakfast banquet was set up in a magnificent courtyard where they were allowed to eat and fellowship for a short

time. After they ate, the group was separated again, this time by name. Charity, Selfish, and approximately five hundred others were brought to an adjacent hall on the right. Faint Heart, Deceived, and Independent were led with the remaining fifteen hundred to another auditorium on the left. As they entered the halls, they noticed each had a name inscribed over its threshold. The names were strange and in a language unknown to the young Endelites. The name of one auditorium was the Hall of Life; the other, the Hall of Justice.

The Halls of Justice and Life

As he crossed the threshold into the hall on the left, Independent found himself strangely disturbed, almost to the point of being terrified. He reached back into his school memories and tried to comfort himself with what he had briefly heard about Jalyn. It all seemed so confusing now. He found himself regretting that he had missed so many classes.

Obviously, he had been wrong; both the city and the king existed. He tried to block his rising fear and focus on what he remembered of Jalyn's love and merciful nature. At that moment, he did not want to consider Jalyn's justice and holiness, even though they were what now fought for his attention. He attempted to reassure himself by recalling the ways he had been a good citizen and supported the volunteer services in the community.

Taking a deep breath, Independent began to look around and take stock of the company he was in. He could not help but notice he was among some of the worst in Endel. He recognized thieves, swindlers, and drunkards. There were both those who rarely worked and those who worked everything to their advantage. His fear mounted, but just as panic threatened to overwhelm him, he caught sight of Faint Heart. Independent closed his eyes and released a sigh of relief. He immediately remembered her as one of the most outspoken and enthusiastic followers of Jalyn in his class. Hadn't he even heard she had worked at the school? If she was in this hall with him, it would most likely turn out for his good.

As Independent moved in Faint Heart's direction, he bumped into Deceived. Another good sign! Though he had lost touch with Faint Heart, Independent knew Deceived was a strong believer. They even used to argue about Jalyn. As he embraced his old friend, Independent's mood totally changed.

Deceived was both boisterous and positive in his manner. The two men engaged in conversation as all Independent's fear subsided. Jalyn's mercy must have been even vaster than they had known. Look how freely he had forgiven the ones Independent wouldn't have imagined making it. How could this be anything but true? Wasn't the great teacher Double Life just a little way off from them? Independent felt more assured that all would be well. However, he was slightly troubled by the absence of Charity and Selfish. He also found it difficult to ignore that some people wept in the corners of the room. But maybe they were just overwhelmed by Jalyn's goodness.

The other hall was filled with emotion as well. Friends who had lost touch after graduation were thrilled to again be reunited. There was an overwhelming excitement that dominated every conversation: they would soon behold Jalyn! The time had come to enter their true purpose and promised destiny.

All were abuzz with the wonder of the city. They had always known it would be a better place than Endel, but their initial impression exceeded their expectations. It was more than they could take in. Could it possibly be true they'd spend the rest of their lives in such a glorious place? Any one of them would willingly clean floors to have such an honor! All who waited in this hall knew they'd followed Jalyn, but as time passed, a solemn attitude overtook the room. Had they been faithful? Time would soon tell. Excitement intertwined with a measure of fear as these humble servants waited to see their king.

The first to be judged were those waiting in the Hall of Life. However, we will return to them later. For now our story will take us into the Hall of Justice.

The Summons

It was midday. The inhabitants of the Hall of Justice had been restored to a level of comfort and confidence that all would go well for them. They attributed anything that seemed confusing or out of step to Jalyn's mercy or the mystery of his ways. This reasoning comforted them.

The first of the fifteen hundred Endelites in the hall to be called was Independent. Four Royal Guards came to escort him to the Great Hall of Judgment. In an attempt to lighten the solemn mood, he smiled and winked at one of the guards who happened to make eye contact with him as they left the room. He was surprised when this drew no response.

As he heard the hall door shut behind him, Independent found his questions returning. His heart beat against his chest like a drum. It was so loud he imagined the guards heard it, but if they did they gave no sign. He wished Deceived could have come with him. He would soon stand before the Judge and he preferred to not be alone. Independent was rapidly losing confidence.

Before they entered the Great Hall, one of the guards briefed Independent on the appropriate protocol. He nodded, though he feared he would not remember what was said. His pulse was pounding in his ears and threatened to impair his hearing. The guard nodded his acknowledgement of Independent's understanding of procedure, and the doors of the hall were thrown wide open.

As Independent took his first steps into the enormous hall, he noticed his body was trembling. Beads of sweat collected on his usually cool brow. He was completely disoriented because what he saw blew his mind!

THE KINGDOM OF AFFABLE THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Jesus constantly used these illustrations when speaking to the crowds. In fact, because the prophets said that he would use so many, he never spoke to them without at least one illustration. For it had been prophesied, "I will talk in parables; I will explain mysteries hidden since the beginning of time."

- Matthew 13 :34-35 TLB

Before continuing our allegory, I'd like to highlight Jesus's statement concerning the coming judgment once again. He announced in John 12:48, "The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." We already know the standard by which we will be judged by before His throne: the Holy Scriptures.

Because of this, superscript numbers will appear by many of Jalyn's statements in the Judgment Hall scenes that follow. These numbers refer to scriptures from various translations, whose references can be found at the end of this book. Most of Jalyn's words are composed of scriptures organized in a way that applies to the characters in our story.

With this in mind, let's return to Affabel.

The Judgment of Independent

The Great Hall was more spectacular than anything Independent had imagined. If given the chance to report his experience to the fifteen hundred people still waiting, he would have had no words or frame of reference to describe its grandeur. Its architecture made anything he'd known in Endel obsolete. The auditorium was filled with quite possibly one hundred thousand people in attendance. Independent had never seen so many in one place at one time.

As he stepped closer, Independent caught a glimpse of the citizenry of Affabel. First he noticed that they were regal with radiant faces. Then, almost as an afterthought, he was taken aback by their astounding beauty. It was as though they were from another world. This transformation was because they were all permitted to eat from *the tree of life*.

Independent wondered, Is it possible these are former Endelites? Then he caught sight of one he knew. Her name was Goodness. She was a few years older than Independent, and he remembered how she was constantly ridiculed for her homely appearance. Now she was gorgeous. Her features were the same, making her recognizable, but somehow she was now more beautiful than any person he had ever known in Endel. In fact, everyone he beheld--even the least in beauty--was far more attractive than any he had ever seen in his homeland.

After recovering from his initial shock, Independent noticed that all of those in attendance were focused on an area just ahead of him. It was like nothing he had ever seen.

It was a throne. But this description did not do it justice, for it was indeed a most glorious throne. Independent's eyes took in the one who sat upon it, and in an instant he realized the source of all the majesty of the city. It all proceeded from the man seated on the throne. *This must be Jalyn*, thought Independent. Suddenly he profoundly believed in the one he'd so emphatically denied.

Jalyn's features were handsome yet seem, at least at that moment. Wonderful but frightening would be a more accurate description. His whole appearance was enthralling, yet with every step Independent took toward him, terror grew steadily in his heart. Any confidence he'd once had was now completely gone. What would become of him?

Jalyn then asked the Chief Scribe, "Is independence's name found in the Book of Life?"

Without hesitation the Chief Scribe answered, "No, my lord." Jalyn then spoke.

"Independent, you are guilty of choosing an evil nature and are to be taken to the forsaken land of Lone to spend the rest of your life in the torment of utter darkness, hopelessness, and loneliness."

Shocked, Independent cried out, "Lord, why?"

"You did not believe in me," responded Jalyn. "Your teachers taught, 'If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' They also taught, 'And there is salvation in and through no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by and in which we must be saved.'"

Independent continued, "But Lord Jalyn, what about my good works? Didn't they outweigh my evil?"

Lord Jalyn replied, "It is not a matter of how little or much you break the law for, 'the person who keeps every law of God but makes one little slip is just as guilty as the person who has broken every law there is.'"

Independent mustered some boldness and countered, "How then can anyone be saved?"

Jalyn didn't immediately respond to this question but rather glanced over to a female citizen of Affabel. She seemed to be an underruler to Jalyn, for she sat on a similar but smaller throne. The woman spoke. "Did not your teachers tell you? 'Jalyn saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from Jalyn. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.'"

Jalyn followed her, saying, "Long ago I paid the price for the laws that had been and would be broken by the citizens. It was impossible for anyone to not sin against me or to redeem themselves from their treasons, but because I loved all, I paid for their wrongs myself. So my salvation is a gift that cannot be earned; you couldn't have done enough good deeds to merit citizenship in Affabel. Your access comes through believing in me. Yet you rejected what I did to save your life."

Stunned, Independence was silent for a few moments, then soberly replied, "I see." He felt as though he was about to drown in a sea of hopelessness.

Grasping for something to latch on to, he questioned, "Then all I did was for nothing?"

Jalyn responded, "Again it is written, 'The dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered. Whatever they did in their lifetime—loving, hating, envying—is all long gone. They no longer have a part in anything.' And again, 'For the evil have no future; their light will be snuffed out.'"

Independent was taken aback by Jalyn's words and remained speechless. He regretted all the classes he skipped. Perhaps if he had attended he might have heard the truth and not made this fatal mistake with his life.

In the moments of silence that followed, another thought came to him. It was the one he'd comforted himself with all day. He rallied his courage again and said, "Yes, what you have said is all true, but, Jalyn, you are a merciful king! How can you send me away if this is so?"

Jalyn responded, "I am a merciful king, and that is exactly why I'm sending you away. By choosing to spend your time in Endel the way you did, you permanently chose your nature, that of the dark lord Dagon.

How could I be merciful, true, and loving if I allowed your immoral ways to pollute the purity of this great city? I would put the innocent of Affabel in harm's way. Your chosen nature would soon manifest and thus corrupt thousands of pure lives. You have chosen your own way. You will be recompensed for it exactly as the one you followed, Dagon, has been. If I give you less than I gave him, then I would be an unjust leader, and that I am not!"

Jalyn then addressed the entire assembly and quoted the ancient sayings of his father. "He who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment

will be rewarded."

What transpired next left the assembly solemn. The king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Screams of horror and the agony of dread seized Independent as he was bound by the Chief Guard and carried toward the side door of the auditorium. Not a sound could be heard among the thousands in attendance. They watched in sorrow as one who had so unwisely wasted his life was carried out to his lifelong punishment.

Once out of the building, Independent was placed in another large waiting room. Here there were thousands of small, barred cells, which held the condemned until the number of all who would be sentenced to exile was completed. Over the entrance to this area these words were written:

Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.
But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Independent scared at the words. Rage boiled within him. He was now completely under the influence of his nature. Any good that was in his character before was now swallowed up by the very moral fiber he had chosen. His behavior was rapidly deteriorating into that of a mad dog. Without the influence of the king, he was completely given over to a reprobate mind.

Deceived before Jalyn

A few hours passed. Many had already been called out of the Hall of Justice; still waiting amongst the few hundred who remained were Deceived, Faint Heart, and Double Life. Deceived still carried an optimistic attitude, and his demeanor kept the others hopeful as well.

The doors opened and the four Royal Guards once again appeared, this time calling for Deceived. Tension gripped him, and he began to quiver. His time had come. To cover his nervousness, as he was clever at doing, he said to those who yet remained, "Well, guys, my number's up!"

After Deceived was briefed on protocol, the doors to the Judgment Hall swung open and he was escorted down the main aisle. He experienced feelings similar to those Independent had. He likewise saw the size and beauty of the hall and the countenances of the citizens. As he walked down the aisle, he recognized several people he had known from the School of Endel who had graduated a year or two before him. He recognized more citizens than Independent had since Deceived almost never missed a meeting at the school.

One person he recognized who didn't attend classes was a man named Ruthless. He was one of the most notoriously wicked men in the community. Deceived stopped in his tracks, wondering, What is he doing here? The Chief Guard motioned to Deceived that it was fine for him to speak to this man.

Deceived walked over to him and asked, "Are you Ruthless?"

The man responded, "I was once known as Ruthless, but at his Judgment Seat, Lord Jalyn changed my name to Reconciled."

Deceived blurted out, "How in the world did you ever get in here? You were considered a wicked man by most in our community. You never went to school and you opposed Jalyn more than anyone I knew."

Reconciled replied, "Yes, this is true. But I hated who I was and what I did. Since I didn't

attend school, I had never heard Jalyn's life-changing word. However, a week before my Judgment Day, I went for a meal at Charity's restaurant. She knew my life was a wreck and somehow detected my pain. She paid for my dinner with one condition: that I stay and talk with her. She then spent two hours telling me of Jalyn, his goodness, his salvation, and of this place called Affabel."

Reconciled continued, "She explained it was not too late for me to give my life to this great leader. I could still be forgiven unconditionally and accepted as a citizen in his kingdom. I was overwhelmed by Jalyn's love and pledged the rest of my life to his lordship. Though I was only able to serve him in Endel for a week, I did so with all my heart. I went to those I had oppressed or stolen from and asked their forgiveness. In some cases where it was appropriate I gave back even more than I'd taken."

Deceived was speechless. He looked back at the guard, who nodded his head in affirmation. Reconciled then stepped back into his place, and Deceived proceeded toward the throne.

As Deceived walked, he couldn't help but ponder what he had just heard. He had been told of the great mercy of Jalyn but had now witnessed it in a manner that was staggering. This man had been one of the worst he had ever known, and now he was as regal as the others. Deceived was more convinced than ever that he would find favor with Jalyn because he was such a strong believer in him.

Once Deceived stood before the throne, he was given the same order as Independent: "Give an account of your stewardship."

Just as Independent had, Deceived witnessed his life from the first day of school till the day prior in the three-dimensional hologram. What a relief to see his faithful school attendance and outspoken support of Jalyn before the assembly.

However, Deceived was soon appalled. His lifestyle accused him. He had justified his ways, but as they came to light before this majestic judge and the morally pure witnesses, he was embarrassed and ashamed. When his sexual promiscuity was made known before this regal assembly, he wanted to crawl into a hole and hide.

Not only were his acts brought to the light but his intentions and motives as well. How could Jalyn know these things? How could he judge Deceived for things no one even knew? His deepest secrets were no longer hidden. The entire assembly beheld his lust for gain in his business transactions, in the sales of his homes, and in his land development. They saw the slander and gossip he habitually used to get what he desired.

It seemed everything he did was motivated by his desire for more. He wanted his own way in everything, and he wanted everything for himself. There was no arguing with the facts. However, Deceived comforted himself in the knowledge that none of this really mattered because he believed in Jalyn and professed his allegiance to him.

Once Deceived's life had been fully reviewed, Jalyn turned to the Royal Scribe and asked, "Is Deceived found in the Book of Life?"

The scribe responded, "No, my lord."

Jalyn announced, "Deceived, you are guilty of denying me. You are to be taken to the forsaken land of Lone to spend the rest of your life in the torment of utter darkness, hopelessness, and loneliness."

Deceived was paralyzed with utter shock. His mind raced. *No, this is a mistake. This cannot be happening! I'm a believer in Jalyn. What does he mean, "denying me"?*

He blurred out, "How have I denied you?"

Jalyn said, "Did you not listen when your teachers warned of those who 'claim they know Jalyn, but they deny him by the way they live'?"

Again Deceived countered, "But, great king, I attended your school. I was faithful to not miss classes, and I was involved in many activities. I even called you lord!"

Jalyn immediately said, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and yet don't do what I tell

you? Did you not hear my words when I said not all who sound religious are really godly people? They may refer to me as 'Lord' but still won't get to Affabel. For the decisive question is whether they obey my Father. At the Judgment many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we told others about you and used your name.' But I will reply, 'You have never been mine. Go away, for your deeds are evil.'"

Deceived was frantic. "But I had faith. I believed in you, so according to your word, I should be saved!"

Jalyn was patient but resolute. He looked to a citizen in the assembly, a former teacher in the school who now sat on a smaller throne. "Read to Deceived what you caught in your classes."

This gentleman read from the sacred writings, "Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can't save anyone. It isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all - it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, 'Some people have faith; others have good deeds.' I say, 'I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds.' Do you still think it's enough just to believe that there is one Jalyn? Well, even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror! Fool! When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is useless?"

Jalyn reiterated, "You say you had faith, yet faith is not faith unless it is accompanied by corresponding actions of obedience. It is not enough to say you believe, for even the demons believe but are certainly not saved. Those who truly believe will exhibit a changed nature and no longer produce the fruit of an evil one. You continually bore the fruit of the evil lord Dagon, which was only evidence that you never truly believed in me from your heart."

Deceived was having a hard time comprehending all that was said. He countered, "But what about this evil man Ruthless? I was better than him! How could you let him in and keep me out? You are not being fair!"

Jalyn responded, "You say the Lord isn't being fair! Listen to me. Am I the one who is unfair, or is it you? If a wicked person runs away from his wickedness and obeys the law and does right, he shall save his soul, for he has thought it over and decided to turn from his sins and live a good life. He shall surely live-he shall not die."

Frustrated and angry, Deceived ranted on, "But I shared your word and witnessed to people about you. I even volunteered and substitute taught at your school!"

Jalyn, now stern, replied, "Recite my laws no longer and stop claiming my promises, for you have refused my discipline, disregarding my laws. You see a thief and help him, and spend your time with evil and immoral men. You curse and lie, and vile language streams from your mouth. You slander your own brother. I remained silent - you thought I didn't care - but now your time of punishment has come, and I list all the above charges against you."

Deceived was silent. His mind was reeling, but he had nothing more to say in his defense. A few moments passed. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind his hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

As the Chief Guard approached, Deceived hurled profanities toward Jalyn, the guards, and the citizens of Affabel. Enraged, he thrashed violently. Any good within him was swallowed up by the revelation of his true nature.

Deceived was bound hand and foot and carried out of the auditorium, cursing the entire way. Like Independence, he was held in a cage until the judgment of all was complete.

Once Deceived was out of the auditorium, Jalyn addressed the gathering of witnesses: "There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness."

Faint Heart before Jalyn

Less than one hundred were left in the Hall of Justice. Faint Heart and Double Life were in their number. Faint Heart stayed as far away from Double Life as she could, as she yet maintained a bitter resentment toward him. He avoided her as well.

The four Royal Guards entered and summoned Faint Heart. She was nervous about where she was going but grateful to leave Double Life behind. Like the others before her, she was led to the entrance of the great hall, briefed on protocol, and ushered in.

As she passed by the citizens of Affabel, she too recognized many who had gone on before her. Most were not as outspoken and passionate about their faith as she had been while in school. Faint Heart was amazed to see a number of people present who she'd thought would surely be absent.

Faint Heart approached the throne and noticed the smaller thrones surrounding it. She recognized a few teachers and others she would have expected to see as leaders in the kingdom. However, there were many more who surprised her sitting on these thrones. They were the lesser-known citizens of Endel. There were some present who had been wealthy as well. How could the rich be in such places of honor? she thought to herself.

Before her mind could answer, she heard Jalyn's voice. "Give an account of your stewardship."

The hologram displayed her life. Faint Heart was delighted with the review of her schooling period. All her volunteer work, extra study, and class leadership bode well for her. She was proud of her boldness and diligence. However, her mood changed with the showing of her response to Slander's lie. It was clear she had refused to let go of the offense. Her heart issues were exposed, and they weren't pretty.

Then her affair with Double Life began. She had never repented of her involvement with him. She had always felt the victim and laid all the blame on Slander and Double Life. This caused her to never take responsibility for her choices. As her life unfolded, she watched anger, bitterness, and a desire for revenge multiply. Though she had managed to suppress some of these issues, she had never dealt with their root. This revealed itself not only in her perpetual offense against Double Life and Slander but in the fact that she actually blamed Jalyn for her hardships as well. How could he have allowed a man like Double Life to reach in his school? Her resentment and unforgiveness were being exposed as hard and relentless.

As the review concluded, it was clear Faint Heart was an embittered woman who lacked goodness toward others. However, even with all this revealed before the great assembly, she was confident her previously strong commitment would secure her favor with the king. She dreaded a little scolding but never foresaw what was coming.

Jalyn turned to the Chief Scribe. "Is Faint Heart's name found in the Book of Life?"

The scribe responded, "No, my lord."

Jalyn pronounced his judgment. "Faint Heart, you are guilty of falling away from righteousness and denying me by treason. You are to be taken to the forsaken land of Lone to spend the rest of your life in the torment of utter darkness, hopelessness, and loneliness."

Faint Heart was stunned beyond description. Hers was an even greater shock than that of any of the others before her. This couldn't be happening! She was crapped in a bad dream-no, a nightmare-and somehow she must wake herself! Maybe she had misunderstood.

In disbelief, she questioned, "Jalyn, did you say I am to be taken to the dreaded land of Lone?"

"Yes, Faint Heart, you heard correctly," replied the king.

"How can this be, Lord Jalyn? I believe in you. This was clearly shown in my life review. I had a good life to back my beliefs. I know my heart became hardened and the love within me died, but that wasn't my fault. It was the fault of Slander and Double Life. Their treachery caused

me co grow cold."

Jalyn responded, "Did you forger my warnings through your teachers? 'Such will be the spread of evil that many people's love will grow cold. But whoever holds out to the end will be saved.' You did not endure to the end."

Faint Heart continued, "But, Lord Jalyn, I am a righteous person because of my belief in you. I may have lost my witness, but I believed that once a person was saved, they would always be saved and could never lose their salvation. Even some of the teachers proclaimed this. According to them, no one could pluck me out of your hand."

Jalyn responded, "Yes, this is true. No one can pluck you out of my hand, but I never said you couldn't walk away. You alone hold that power. For did you not read the sacred writings? 'If people have escaped from the corrupting forces of the world through their knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jalyn, and then are again caught and conquered by them, such people are in worse condition at the end than they were at the beginning.

It would have been much better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and then turn away from the sacred command that was given them.' If I stated it would have been better for such people to not have known the way of righteousness because they are now worse off than they were before being saved, how could you believe it was impossible co lose salvation? If it could never be lost, then how could they be worse off than before?

"Why did you listen to teachers who taught contrary to what my word stated? I recorded it carefully so all could know the way of righteousness. Why did you allow yourself to be deceived? If you had believed what I said, you would have confronted the bitterness in your heart. Instead you allowed it to grow unchecked out of your false comfort in unconditional security and now face a judgment chat could have been averted."

Faint Heart pleaded, "But what about all the good I did?"

Lord Jalyn replied, "Again, did you nor read what I clearly stated through my prophet? 'If righteous people turn to sinful ways and start acting like other sinners, should they be allowed to live? No, of course not! All their previous goodness will be forgotten, and they will die for their sins. Yet you say, "The Lord isn't being just!" Listen to me. . . . Am I the one who is unjust, or is it you? When righteous people turn from being good and start doing sinful things, they will die for it. Yes, they will die because of their sinful deeds.' It is just as it was written; your goodness and righteous acts are forgotten and will nor be credited to you."

Still grasping, Faint Heart said, "But lord, you said if I confessed you as my savior, my name would be written in the Book of Life. How is it possible it is no longer there? Why can't your scribe find my name? How could it have been erased?"

Lord Jalyn, patient but resolute, answered, "Did you not hear what was stated earlier? 'He who endures co the end shall be saved.' Those who endure all the way to the judgment are those who overcome, and I clearly said, 'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life. If I stared I will not erase someone's name from the Book of Life, it means it can be erased. Otherwise I would have said, if you confess me as lord, your name will be forever secured in the Book of Life.'"

Faint Heart pleaded, "How can you send me to Lone, the place where the living dead are sent?" Jalyn turned to one of the underrulers. "Read the ancient writings that have been made known to the citizens of Endel."

The ruler read, "A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead."

Faint Heart was rendered speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind her hand and foot, take her away, and cast her into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, bur few are chosen."

As the Chief Guard approached, Faint Heart cursed Jalyn. She was overtaken by the

violence of her bitterness and twisted by her twice-fallen nature (see Jude 12). She was like a late autumn tree pulled up by its roots with no fruit of righteousness remaining.

Faint Heart was bound hand and foot and carried toward the side door of the auditorium. She also was held in one of the cages. Once she'd left the auditorium, the Chief Scribe enlightened the congregation of witnesses:

"Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins. There will be nothing to look forward to but the terrible expectation of Jalyn's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. For we know the one who said, 'I will take vengeance. I will repay those who deserve it.' He also said, 'The Lord will judge his own people.' It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living Jalyn."

The last person to be called out of the Hall of Justice was Double Life. He knew the laws of Jalyn and already knew his judgment would not be favorable. He would soon discover just how much his transgressions had cost him.

Double Life felt faint as he was escorted into the judgment hall and had to be assisted by the guards in order to approach the Judgment Seat of Jalyn. His life was reviewed, and he too heard the woeful words that his name was not found in the Book of Life.

Jalyn firmly announced, "Double Life, you are guilty of treason, falling away from righteousness, and being a stumbling block. You are to be taken to the forsaken land of Lone, where you will receive the greatest punishment and torments."

Double Life listened in horror, then pleaded, "But lord, I was a teacher in your school. I gave my life for your cause."

Jalyn answered, "You were a teacher, but did you not read from the books you taught? 'Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the school, for we who teach will be judged by Jalyn with greater strictness.'"

Double Life countered, "How was I a stumbling block?"

Jalyn's tone became harder. "You caused many of my little ones to stumble and fall permanently. Faint Heart is just one example. She was entrusted to your care. I gave you authority to protect her, not to use her for your own advantage. You used your influence to satiate your lust and violated her and others. A sister already wounded her and you, who should have brought healing, took advantage of her. You shipwrecked her faith. She has been sentenced to Lone. Surely you remember the warning I gave: 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.'"

Double Life pleaded, "Jalyn, I know I'm to be banned to Lone, but why am I to receive the greatest torment? Why are you so hard on me? I was one of your servants, not an unbeliever. I wasn't like Independent, who would have nothing to do with you. Why?"

Jalyn, still resolute, said, "You knew and caught the ancient writings. Why do you ask these questions of me? I will remind you so you may remember these words. The ancient writings are dear: 'But if the servant thinks, "My master won't be back for a while," and begins oppressing the other servants ... the master will return unannounced and unexpected. He will tear the servant apart and banish him with the unfaithful. The servant will be severely punished, for though he knew his duty, he refused to do it. But people who are not aware that they are doing wrong will be punished only lightly. Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given.'"

Jalyn continued, "Independent was far less aware of his transgressions. You had both awareness and knowledge. His punishment, though severe, will be lighter than your own. For you, I've reserved a place ... in the deepest darkness."

Jalyn then commanded the Chief Guard, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and

cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

As the Chief Guard approached, Double Life spewed profanities at Jalyn, the guards, and the citizens of Affabel. He was violent and even tried to break free to physically attack Jalyn. His true nature was completely revealed. Any good within was swallowed up by his duplicity. He was bound hand and foot and carried out the side door of the auditorium, cursing the entire way. He joined the other fifteen hundred people who were immediately transported to the land of Lone.

As soon as Double Life exited the auditorium, the Chief Scribe closed his book and shouted: "The judgments you have made are just. They are getting what they deserve!"

A voice from the altar replied, "True and just indeed are your judgments!" The fifteen hundred condemned and caged Endelites were escorted by the Royal Guards on a two-week trip to the blighted land of Lone. This journey brought them into the Great Desert of Fire, where the heat that rose from the parched earth was unbearable. Suddenly, in the middle of nowhere, where the heat was the most unbearable, a very large and foreboding structure loomed in the distance. As they approached, the condemned were able to read the sign: "The Forsaken Land of Lone."

Upon closer inspection, they realized the large structure had no windows or openings other than one large door at the base. Passing through the door, they heard what seemed like tens of thousands of screams coming from inside. Within moments they could make out the pleas directed to the Chief Guard, which came from those imprisoned near the entry. "Hasn't it been long enough? Please ask for mercy on our behalf. Our punishment is too much to bear!"

"How long have they been in this place?" Independent asked a guard.

"Their times range from one year to 129."

Deceived was shocked. He had somehow hoped all that had transpired in the past two weeks would turn out to be a nightmare or scare tactic. He inquired of the same guard, "This is truly where I will spend the rest of my life?"

"Yes. It is exactly as you were forewarned in Endel."

Many of those slated for the greater punishment were placed higher in the metal building where the heat was greater. Those who didn't know the truth but still committed things worthy of exile were placed in the lower portions of the enormous structure. Even this placement was unbearable for a day, let alone for more than one hundred years!

The agony of Double Life's abode was unimaginable, worse even than the fate of those at the highest level of the building. He was taken to a dungeon underground, near the hot sulfur rocks. The smell alone was unbearable, and with no venting, the heat was more intense than in any other location in Lone. This place was not in the building but deep within the bowels of the earth. It was without doubt the greatest place of suffering and torment. Here Double Life would suffer all alone. The area was large enough to separate those who shared the same measure of condemnation. They were unable to hear any voice but their own.

Once the condemned were securely imprisoned, the Chief Guard made his way to the entrance. When the massive iron door shut behind him, not a fragment of light could be found within the confines of the structure. The poor souls inside would spend over 125 years in utter darkness and loneliness. The only hope of light they had was when a new round of prisoners was brought in once a year. Yet not all even saw this, only those who were near the great door. Others, like Double Life, would never again see the light of day. For him, the blackness of darkness was reserved as punishment.

Reflections

These four citizens of Endel regretted for the rest of their existence their choice to not listen to the truth. Alone, they continually pondered the foolishness of not carefully heeding the words of Jalyn, which had been accessible in the land of Endel. They would have done anything for the chance to go back and change their destinies. Oh, how they wished they had not listened to the majority or the popular opinion of their day! If they could do it over again, each would spurn their own foolish reasoning and embrace the ancient writings, which never varied and could never be broken.

The condemned were tormented by images of Affabel, that most remarkable kingdom. In their continual anguish, they could still see the beauty of the city even though they'd only experienced it for a few moments. The contrast magnified their torment. The fiery hear, acrid stench, and darkness of Lone only served to punctuate the truth. Beauty had been theirs for the choosing, and they had forsaken it all through their folly.