

# The Time has Come

A Historical Novel



Dwaine C Senechal

## THE TIME HAS COME

THE TIME HAS COME:

Book One of the Witness Series

By Dwaine Senechal BereanPost Publishing [www.BereanPost.ca](http://www.BereanPost.ca)

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### Prologue:

#### The Silence Before the Voice

Setting: Judea, Between Testaments – Circa 400 Years Before Christ The heavens had not spoken for generations. No prophet thundered from mountaintops. No angel stood in temple courts. The voice of the Lord, once heard in fire and cloud, had grown quiet. The scrolls were closed. The people waited. In Judea, kings rose and fell beneath foreign thrones. The altar still smoked, but the fire felt cold. Pharisees clung to law, Sadducees to power, and zealots to swords. Priests wore their robes, but their prayers no longer stirred the earth. Yet hope had not died. Whispers of promise clung to the edges of every psalm, every prophecy. A virgin will conceive. A child will be born. One like a Son of Man will come with the clouds of heaven. He will be pierced for our transgressions. Scrolls, passed from trembling hand to trembling hand, told of an anointed one. A King. A Servant. A Deliverer. But when? And how? In a hidden chamber beneath the Temple, an old scribe dipped his quill in ink. His hand shook. Not from age—but from what he had just read. “Seventy weeks are decreed...” His eyes widened. “...and the Anointed One will be cut off.” He pressed the scroll closed and whispered into the silence: “The time is near.”

## Chapter 1: The Proclamation

**Setting: Capernaum, AD 27**

The sun dipped toward the horizon, casting golden hues over the Sea of Galilee as fishermen hauled in their evening catch. The salty breeze carried the scent of fresh fish and damp wood from the boats moored along the shore. In the bustling streets of Capernaum, merchants closed their stalls, voices rising in heated barter. The aroma of roasted barley, olive oil, and spiced fish mingled with the dust kicked up by passing donkeys.

Fishermen with calloused hands and tunics damp from the lake made their way toward the synagogue, wiping sweat from their brows. Inside, a growing crowd settled into place, their murmurs fading as a man stood before them. The dim glow of oil lamps flickered across the stone walls, casting shifting shadows over sacred texts. The synagogue's wooden beams creaked softly as anticipation thickened the air.

### **The Call to Attention**

The man at the front wore a plain robe, his sandals worn from travel. The evening light filtered through the narrow windows, painting long streaks on the stone. His presence was unassuming, yet something about him commanded attention—not through the stance of a Roman officer nor the studied poise of a Pharisee, but with a quiet certainty that pressed upon every heart in the room. His gaze swept over them, piercing yet compassionate, as though he saw beyond flesh and bone.

Then, at last, he spoke, his voice steady yet carrying a weight impossible to ignore. *"The time has come."* His pause was deliberate. *"The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news."*

His words struck like a hammer upon stone, each syllable reverberating through the synagogue. Some whispered prayers beneath their breath; others clutched their garments as if bracing for something they could not yet name. Some clung to every syllable with anticipation. Others, like Ezra, a respected Pharisee, felt a surge of unease.

### **Ezra's Skepticism**

Ezra folded his arms, fingers pressing into the fabric of his robe, his brow furrowed. His mind raced, grasping at the scriptures that had shaped his every thought. *Was this truly the way of the Messiah?* He had studied the Law, debated the prophets, and waited—like all faithful Jews—for the promised

Deliverer. Yet this man spoke not of toppling oppressors or rallying armies. He spoke of a kingdom unseen, intangible, a reign of the spirit rather than the sword.

A kingdom without an army? A reign without a throne?

He turned to a fellow Pharisee. "This man's words are dangerous. If the people believe him, they will abandon the Torah for empty hope."

His companion hesitated. "Or perhaps they will listen. The common folk seek a savior."

Ezra's reply caught in his throat as movement rippled through the crowd. A crippled man, bent and frail, was led forward, his every step a battle against his own body. The murmurs deepened, anticipation crackling like the charge before a storm.

### **A Display of Authority**

A piercing, guttural shriek shattered the solemn air. A man—wild-eyed, trembling—rose from the crowd, his breath ragged. *"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?"* His words twisted into a snarl. *"Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"*

Gasps erupted. Women clutched their children. The synagogue ruler, usually unshaken, stepped back, face pale.

Ezra stiffened. *A demon?*

Jesus remained unmoved, his gaze steady. Where others recoiled, he stepped forward, closing the space between himself and the writhing man as though confronting a caged beast.

*"Be silent, and come out of him!"*

A wretched scream tore through the air. The man convulsed, his body arching violently before collapsing to the stone floor. Dust swirled around him. For a heartbeat, the room held its breath. Then, slowly, the man's eyes fluttered open. He blinked, dazed, as if waking from a nightmare.

The synagogue exploded into motion.

"What is this? A new teaching—with authority!"

"Even the unclean spirits obey him!"

Ezra's chest tightened. He wanted to dismiss it—to call it deception—but doubt gnawed at the edges of his certainty. If this was real, if this was power from God, then everything he knew, everything he had built his life upon, stood on shifting ground.

### **Lucius: A Soldier's Perspective**

Outside the synagogue, Lucius, a Roman centurion, adjusted the leather straps of his armor, his sword resting against his hip. The night air had cooled, but tension crackled in the wake of what had happened inside.

He turned to Marcus, his second-in-command. "Another preacher stirring the masses, or something more?"

Marcus smirked. "Aren't they all? This place breeds rebels the way Rome breeds legions."

Lucius exhaled sharply. *This land was a tinderbox.* The slightest spark—a prophet, a zealot, a madman—could send it up in flames. He had seen charismatic men rise before, kindling sparks that became infernos. Revolt. Chaos. Rome did not tolerate threats to its rule.

Yet, this man unsettled him. No banners, no swords—only words. And somehow, *they carried weight.*

"This one bears watching," Lucius muttered. "Power like that, uncontrolled, can break empires."

### Yosef's Decision

At the back of the gathering, Yosef, a historian, clutched his scroll tightly. He had been sent by the Sanhedrin to record events in Capernaum. *But what he witnessed challenged his neutrality.*

He scribbled down Jesus' words. *The kingdom of God is at hand.*

The phrase sent a shiver through him. *History is a mirror*, his father had once told him. *It reveals truth, but only to those willing to see it.*

Should he report this to the Sanhedrin as a threat? If he did, they would expect an account dismissing the man. But if he documented the power in Jesus' words, he might place himself at odds with those who controlled history itself.

His quill hovered. One stroke, and history would remember. One hesitation, and it might all be lost.

### A Divided Reaction

The crowd lingered, torn between awe and fear. Some whispered excitedly, their faces alight with wonder. Others cast wary glances, afraid to acknowledge the moment.

Ezra walked away, his footsteps slow, his mind a battlefield of doctrine and doubt. Lucius gave orders, watching the man who had commanded a demon with nothing but his voice.

Yosef remained, his fingers tight around the parchment, feeling the weight of history pressing against his chest.



Above them, the sky deepened into twilight. Yet beneath the heavens, something far greater than the setting sun had begun to rise—a shift, a spark, the quiet tremor of a world about to change.

**Chapter 2:**

**The Dispute Begins**

**Setting: Jerusalem, AD 27**

The early morning mist lingered over the Temple courts as the first merchants laid out their goods. The rhythmic chants of priests echoed off the limestone walls, blending with the distant clang of Roman armor as soldiers patrolled the city streets. Jerusalem, ever a city of tension, buzzed with quiet unrest. The rumors of the teacher from Galilee had reached the ears of both the Sanhedrin and the Roman authorities.

**Pilate's Concern: A Political Balancing Act**

Pontius Pilate stood at the edge of his palace courtyard, gazing out over the city that had been more of a burden than a prize. Rome did not concern itself with the petty quarrels of the Jews—until those quarrels threatened order. And now, this Jesus of Nazareth had begun to stir the people.

Lucius stood before him, straight-backed, his expression unreadable. Pilate turned, his eyes sharp. “This man. What do you make of him?”

Lucius hesitated. “He does not call for revolution. No swords, no banners. And yet... the people listen.”

Pilate exhaled sharply. “A dangerous thing, words. They have overthrown more kingdoms than armies.” He turned, expression tightening. “If he divides them, he serves us. If he unites them, he is a threat. We cannot afford another uprising. Monitor him closely. But do not create another Jewish martyr.”

Lucius nodded but hesitated before stepping away. Pilate studied him, his gaze narrowing. “You seem uncertain, Centurion.”

Lucius kept his face impassive. “I have seen many prophets, Prefect. None like this one.”

Pilate’s lips curled slightly. “Then watch him closely. Power takes many forms, and a man who bends the will of the people can be more dangerous than an army.”

### **Lucius’ Doubt and the Roman View of Spiritual Forces**

As Lucius left the palace, his mind churned. He had seen countless preachers, revolutionaries, and self-proclaimed prophets rise and fall. Most faded into obscurity. Some were crushed beneath the weight of Roman law. But this one—*this Jesus*—was different.

It wasn’t just the words. It was the authority with which he spoke.

And then, there was the other matter—the exorcism. He had seen it with his own eyes: a man, writhing, screaming words in a voice not his own. Then Jesus had spoken, and it had ended. Not through force. Not through ritual. Just a command, and the unseen force had fled.

The Romans were no strangers to spirits and omens. The gods spoke through signs and portents, and demons were whispered about in the streets of Rome as much as they were in the alleys of Judea. Sorcerers, priests, and mystics claimed power over the supernatural, but their tricks were often just that—tricks.

Lucius had seen frauds before. Yet what had happened in Capernaum had felt different. There was no incantation, no ceremony. Only a man who spoke, and the world obeyed.

*What kind of power was this?*

His fingers grazed the hilt of his sword as he walked. Rome ruled with steel and discipline. This man ruled with neither—yet his influence spread like fire. That, perhaps, made him more dangerous than any warrior Lucius had ever faced.

### **Yosef Faces Pressure from the Sanhedrin**

The chamber of the Sanhedrin was dimly lit, the scent of oil lamps thick in the air. Caiaphas, the high priest, sat at the center, his gaze heavy upon Yosef. Around him, scholars and elders muttered in hushed tones.

“You were in Capernaum,” Caiaphas stated, his voice carrying the weight of authority.

“I was,” Yosef replied carefully, his fingers tightening around the scroll at his side.

“And what did you see?”

Yosef hesitated. The truth pressed against his tongue, but so did fear. “The people listen to him.”

Caiaphas narrowed his eyes. “Then give them something else to hear.” He leaned forward. “A false teacher, a deceiver—this is what you must write. We shape the record of history, Yosef. Do not let it shape itself.”

Yosef nodded but hesitated, his grip tightening on the parchment. He had spent years recording the deeds of rulers, the judgments of priests. But now, he was being asked not to record history, but to *alter* it. His quill hovered just above the page later that night. A moment of truth—*to write what he saw or what he was told to see?*

### **Ezra and Nicodemus: A Clash of Interpretation**

Ezra paced the outer courtyard of the Temple, his thoughts a storm of conflicting truths. He had spent his life studying the law, debating the prophets. And yet, Jesus had undone certainty in mere

moments. His mind returned, unbidden, to his father's words long ago: *Never let a false teacher take root. If the Messiah comes, He will bring the sword, not mere words.*

A shadow moved beside him. Nicodemus.

“You look troubled, Ezra.”

Ezra turned sharply. “I should not be.”

Nicodemus studied him. “You saw what happened in Capernaum.”

“I saw a man who speaks dangerously.”

Nicodemus tilted his head. “Or a man fulfilling what we have long awaited?”

Ezra scoffed. “The Messiah does not heal beggars and cast out spirits. He does not speak of a kingdom without thrones.”

Nicodemus clasped his hands. “And yet, Isaiah wrote of a suffering servant. Daniel spoke of one ‘like a son of man’ who would establish an everlasting dominion. Are we so certain of what we expect?”

Ezra hesitated. He had debated these scriptures countless times. And yet, they felt different now.

“I fear he misleads the people,” Ezra said finally.

Nicodemus sighed. “Or perhaps he leads them to something we have yet to see.”

Ezra exhaled sharply, running a hand over his beard. “I have spent my life studying the signs. If I am wrong, then everything I have believed has been built upon shifting sand.”

Nicodemus placed a hand on his shoulder. “Then ask yourself, Ezra—what if the foundation is not shifting, but being revealed?”

### **Historical Flashback: Antiochus IV and the Expectation of a Warrior Messiah**

#### **167 BC – The Temple in Ruins**

The acrid stench of burnt offerings—*pagan* offerings—hung in the air. The great altar of the Temple, once the place of divine sacrifice, now bore the blood of unclean beasts.

## THE TIME HAS COME

Antiochus IV Epiphanes stood on the steps, his Greek robes bright against the soot-stained walls. “You will worship the gods of the empire,” he declared. “Or you will die.”

The priests lay slain before him, their blood seeping into the cracks of the Temple floor.

In the shadows, a young Jewish man clenched his fists. He had heard the prophecies. The Lord would send a deliverer, one to drive out the oppressors and restore what had been lost.

The Maccabean Revolt had begun.

**Chapter 3:**

**Encounters with Followers**

**Setting: Galilee, AD 27**

The dust of the road clung to the sandals of weary travelers as the midday sun cast long shadows across the path. The Sea of Galilee shimmered in the distance, its waters calm despite the growing unrest in the hearts of men. Jesus had left Capernaum, but his name had not. In every village, his teachings spread like wildfire, igniting both devotion and fear. And now, three men—each for their own reasons—sought answers.

**Ezra's Interrogation: Searching for Contradictions**

Ezra sat beneath an olive tree, his robes folded carefully as he watched two of Jesus' disciples converse. He had spent the morning engaging with them, dissecting their words, waiting for inconsistencies. And yet, their testimonies held firm.

"You claim he fulfills the Law," Ezra said, folding his arms. "Yet he heals on the Sabbath. He touches the unclean. He dines with sinners. How can this be?"

Peter, his eyes sharp with conviction, leaned forward. "Because the Law points to him. The prophets spoke of him. He is not breaking the Law—he is fulfilling it."

Ezra's jaw tightened. He had expected contradictions, faltering logic, uncertainty. But there was none. These men spoke not as deceived followers, but as those who had seen and could not deny.



Frustration gnawed at him. “Then why does he not take up the sword? Why does he not claim the throne of David and drive out our oppressors?”

John, who had remained silent, spoke at last. “Because his kingdom is not of this world.”

The words struck Ezra like a sudden wind. He had no answer. No retort. Only the uneasy feeling that he was losing control of the debate.

### **Lucius Witnesses a Roman Officer’s Servant Healed**

Lucius stood at a distance, arms crossed over his chest as a Roman centurion—a man he had fought beside—approached Jesus. The centurion’s face, usually carved from stone, was lined with worry. His servant was dying.

“Lord,” the officer said, lowering his head slightly—not in submission, but in recognition. “My servant lies paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

Jesus met his eyes. “Shall I come and heal him?”

The centurion shook his head. “I am not worthy for you to enter my home. But only say the word, and he will be healed. I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes. To another, ‘Come,’ and he comes. Just as I command my men, so too can you command sickness.”

Lucius’ breath caught. He had seen this man command legions. Had seen him crush uprisings without hesitation. And now, he stood before a wandering preacher, placing the fate of his servant in nothing but his **word**.

Jesus smiled. “Truly, I tell you, I have not found such faith in all of Israel.”

At that very moment, a messenger arrived, breathless. “The servant—he is healed!”

The centurion exhaled, his shoulders relaxing for the first time in days. He bowed his head. “Thank you, Lord.”

Lucius clenched his fists. His entire life had been built on Rome’s power, Rome’s superiority. And yet, this man, this *Jewish teacher*, had done what Rome’s might could not. His grip tightened around the hilt of his gladius.

He turned and walked away. He needed to think.

### **Yosef and the Essene Mystic: A Prophecy Foretold**

Yosef had heard of the Essenes before. A radical sect that lived in the wilderness, rejecting the corruption of the Temple. Unlike the Pharisees or Sadducees, they prepared for war—an apocalyptic battle where righteousness would triumph. They studied the prophets obsessively, seeking signs of the Messiah.

Some said they were mad. Others whispered that their scrolls held the key to the future. But if they were right... then history itself was at a turning point.

Yosef followed the narrow path leading into the hills outside the city, his heart pounding in his chest. He had been sent to investigate a lone Essene mystic—one who had been warning that prophecy was unfolding.

The man stood beside a fire, his robes simple, his eyes like embers. “You seek truth,” the mystic said without turning. “But are you ready for it?”

Yosef hesitated. “I have seen much. I have heard much. But I do not know what to believe.”

The mystic turned to face him. “You were in Capernaum. You have seen the signs. And you have been told to alter them.”

Yosef’s breath caught. “How do you—”

“The truth cannot be buried forever,” the mystic interrupted. He stepped closer, lowering his voice. “Have you read the words of Daniel? Of Isaiah? They speak of one who will suffer, who will be rejected, and yet, who will reign forever.”

Yosef swallowed hard. He had studied those prophecies since his youth. “But that is not what we were taught. We were taught to expect a king, a warrior.”

The mystic nodded. “And yet, does not the Lord work in ways man does not expect?”

Yosef clenched his fists. Every instinct told him to dismiss the man. To report him as another mad hermit crying of the end. But something in his words, something in his presence, made that impossible.

“Go back to your scrolls,” the mystic whispered. “But this time, read them with open eyes.”

Yosef turned and left, his heart heavier than before.

**Historical Flashback: The Maccabean Revolt (164 BC)**

### **The Temple, Jerusalem – 164 BC**

The clatter of swords rang through the desecrated halls of the Temple. The air was thick with the scent of burning incense and spilled blood. Judas Maccabeus led his men forward, their cries of war shaking the very foundation of the sanctuary.

“For the Lord! For Israel!”

The Seleucid soldiers fell beneath their blades. The pagan altars were torn down, their idols shattered. The Temple was reclaimed, purified, rededicated.

The people had fought, and they had won. Their land was restored. Their faith, vindicated.

Judas stood before the great menorah, watching as the sacred flame was rekindled. “The Lord has given us victory,” he said. “And Israel is free once more.”

### **The Parallel to Jesus’ Time**

Ezra stood at the edge of the city, looking down toward the gathering crowds. The memory of the Maccabean victory had been seared into the hearts of every Jew. They had won their freedom before. Why should they not fight again?

And yet, this Jesus did not call for war.

He called for something far more difficult.

Repentance.

Ezra turned away, his thoughts a battlefield of their own.

#### **Chapter 4: Jesus Challenges Authority Setting: Galilee and Jerusalem, AD 27**

The weight of expectation pressed upon the land. In the marketplace, in the palace, in the shadows of the archives—tensions simmered. Jesus' words were spreading, and with them came conflict. The religious leaders felt their grip loosening, the political rulers sensed rebellion on the horizon, and the scholars of history began to question what they had always believed. The time of silence was over.

#### **Ezra Witnesses Jesus Rebuke the Pharisees**

The afternoon heat pressed down like an iron weight, thick with the scent of dust, sweat, and the pungent bite of spice. Jesus stood in the heart of the marketplace, his voice rising above the clamor. Pigeons flapped from the synagogue rooftop as if startled by his words, and merchants paused mid-sale, hands hovering over scales. The air itself seemed to tremble as he turned toward the Pharisees, his gaze sharp as a blade.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, yet you yourselves do not enter!"

Ezra stiffened, his pulse quickening. Jesus' eyes swept the crowd—and then landed on him.

"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me, yet you refuse to come to me."

The words struck deep, lodging like a barb in Ezra's chest. This wasn't just a challenge to the Pharisees. It was **personal**. The murmur of the crowd rose, some nodding, others casting skeptical glances.

Ezra clenched his fists. This man—this *nobody from Nazareth*—was turning the people against the very foundation of the Law. He had no army, no throne, and yet, with words alone, he threatened everything.

Unable to listen any longer, Ezra turned and shoved his way through the crowd, but the words followed him, searing into his mind like fire.

### **Lucius Meets Herod Antipas**

The air inside Herod's palace was heavy, thick with the scent of oil-drenched meat and rotting fruit. Attendants whispered in corners, their glances darting toward the door as though expecting an unseen enemy to step through at any moment. Outside, the Dead Sea lay motionless beneath a blistering sky, its surface glass-like—silent, ominous, much like the ruler who now sat before Lucius.

Herod's fingers drummed against the armrest of his chair, his eyes shadowed by unease. "I killed the Baptizer," he muttered. "But now the people whisper of another. A Galilean." His gaze snapped up. "Jesus."

Lucius remained still. "Rome does not concern itself with wandering preachers."

Herod scoffed. "Then perhaps Rome is blind. Do you think I have forgotten the uprisings? My father crushed them with Caesar's favor, but the people do not forget so easily. The Messiah fever has not died—it has only changed its name."

Lucius watched the ruler carefully. Herod was no fool, but he was drowning in paranoia. **And paranoid rulers were dangerous.**

"Do you fear this man?" Lucius asked.

Herod let out a dry, humorless laugh. "Fear him? I fear what he could become. One prophet becomes two. Two become twenty. Soon, the streets are burning. And when that happens..." He leaned forward, his voice dropping to a whisper. "Rome will not punish *him*. They will punish *me*."

Lucius remained silent, but the words settled heavily in his mind. **Jesus was no longer just a religious problem. He was becoming a political one.**

### **Yosef Discovers the Prophecy of a Suffering Messiah**

The air inside the archive was stale, thick with the scent of dust and aged parchment. Stacks of scrolls loomed like forgotten sentinels, their edges curled and yellowed by time. A single crack in the ceiling allowed a shaft of pale light to fall upon one particular shelf, as if drawing Yosef's attention. He hesitated before reaching for the scroll, his fingers brushing against brittle parchment—words untouched for generations.

He unrolled it carefully, eyes scanning the inked letters.

*He was despised and rejected, a man of suffering, familiar with pain. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities... and by his wounds, we are healed.*

Yosef's breath caught. **This could not be right.**

The Messiah was meant to reign in power, to overthrow the oppressors—not suffer and die. And yet, the words were here, written long before his time. Had the elders ignored this prophecy? Had they **buried** it, unwilling to accept a suffering Messiah?

A rat scurried past, its tiny claws scraping against stone, breaking the silence. Yosef exhaled sharply, rolling up the scroll. His heart pounded. If this was true, if the Messiah was not a conqueror but a sacrifice, then everything he knew—everything he had been taught—was in question.

And he was no longer certain he wanted the answer.

### **Historical Flashback: Rome Conquers Judea (63 BC)**

Smoke curled into the sky above the Temple ruins, thick and choking, mingling with the scent of blood and burnt parchment. The cries of the fallen echoed off the shattered stones, their voices drowned beneath the triumphant march of Roman legions. At the Temple steps, Pompey stood motionless, watching as the banners of Rome were raised high above the Holy City.

Jewish priests lay slain beside the altar, their white robes soaked in red. The sacred scrolls—scriptures passed down through generations—were **trampled under Roman boots**, their pages torn, their words reduced to ash.



One elder, a survivor, knelt amid the ruins, his trembling hands clutching the fragments of a scroll. His voice, hoarse with grief, whispered into the wind: "The Lord will send His anointed one... He must."

As the legions marched on, the words remained—floating through the ruins, carried by the wind into the generations to come. A **promise**, a **desperation**, a **hope** that would not die.

### **The Parallel to Jesus' Time**

Ezra stood at the edge of the city, looking down toward the gathering crowds. The memory of the Maccabean victory had been seared into the hearts of every Jew. They had won their freedom before. Why should they not fight again?

And yet, this Jesus did not call for war.

He called for something far more difficult.

Repentance.

Ezra turned away, his thoughts a battlefield of their own.

## Chapter 5: The Turning Point Setting: Jerusalem and Roman Headquarters, AD 27

The city pulsed with unrest. Whispers of Jesus' miracles, his teachings, and his growing following reached the ears of those who held power. In the temple courts, in the Roman halls, and in the shadows of history, three men faced the defining choices of their lives.

### Ezra's Betrayal – A Pharisee Cast Out

The grand hall of the Sanhedrin was cold, its stone walls echoing with murmured judgments. Ezra knelt before the council, his head bowed, his heart pounding. His mentor, the man who had shaped his understanding of the Law, stood above him.

“You have walked too close to the heretic,” the elder Pharisee's voice rang out, each word like a blade. “You have questioned the truth of the Torah for the ramblings of a blasphemer.”

Ezra's fingers clenched against the cold floor. He wanted to argue. He wanted to defend himself. But what could he say? The words of Jesus still rang in his mind: *You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me.*

“I am loyal to the Law,” Ezra said, voice tight.

His mentor's expression did not soften. “Then prove it.”

The silence was suffocating. Then the elder spoke again: “Deny him. Publicly. If you cannot reject the heretic from Nazareth, then you are no better than him.”

The weight of the demand crushed Ezra's chest. The faces around him blurred, their judgment piercing deeper than any Roman sword.

“I...” Ezra’s throat tightened. He could not do it. And that alone was enough.

His mentor turned away. “You have no place among us.”

The council dispersed, robes rustling, voices fading. Ezra remained where he knelt, the realization sinking in—he had been cast out. Not by the Romans. Not by the sinners Jesus so easily forgave. But by his own.

A thought clawed at the back of his mind. *The time has come...* Jesus had said. Ezra had spent his life waiting for the Messiah. *Had he misunderstood all along?*

### **Lucius and Pilate – Rome Begins to Worry**

The Roman headquarters loomed over the city, a fortress of power and restraint. Pilate stood by the stone balcony, his gaze fixed on the masses below. The city never slept, and neither did the whispers of rebellion.

Lucius waited, hands clasped behind his back, silent as Pilate paced.

“A man with a sword is dangerous,” Pilate murmured, more to himself than anyone else. “A man with words is more dangerous.” He turned suddenly, eyes locking onto Lucius. “Tell me, Centurion... is he a revolutionary, or is he something worse?”

Lucius hesitated. Pilate did not tolerate uncertainty.

“He does not call for war,” Lucius said finally. “But the people listen to him.”

Pilate exhaled sharply. “That is the problem.” He took a goblet from the nearby table, swirling the wine absently. “Rebellion does not begin with swords. It begins with faith.” He turned back to Lucius. “The prophet Daniel spoke of four empires rising and falling before the people of Judea saw their true ruler.” He let out a dry chuckle. “And Rome... Rome is the fourth.”

Lucius’ jaw tightened. He did not believe in Jewish prophecies. But something about Pilate’s words unsettled him.

“Keep watching him,” Pilate ordered. “If the tide turns, I want no surprises.”

Lucius gave a crisp nod. “Understood, Prefect.”

As he left the chamber, unease settled in his gut. Jesus was no longer just a preacher. He was becoming a political problem. And Rome did not ignore political problems.

### **Yosef’s Dilemma – Truth or Safety?**

The archives of the Sanhedrin were dimly lit, the flickering oil lamps casting wavering shadows across the scrolls. Yosef sat before his desk, two parchments before him. One contained the truth— his firsthand account of Jesus’ teachings, miracles, and growing influence. The other was what the council expected—an official record denouncing Jesus as a deceiver.

His hand hovered over the ink, quill poised.

The elder scribe’s words echoed in his mind. “History is written by those who understand the weight of truth. But truth can be dangerous, Yosef. Write carefully.”

He swallowed hard. To write what he had seen was to risk everything. To write what they wanted was to betray the very reason he became a historian.

He glanced at an ancient scroll resting nearby—the writings of the prophet Daniel. He had read it before. He had memorized it. But now, with all that had unfolded, the words took on a new weight.

*“Seventy weeks are decreed for your people...”*

His pulse quickened. The Essene’s voice echoed in his mind—*“The scroll of Daniel speaks of weeks appointed by the Lord... The final week is near.”* Yosef had dismissed it as the ramblings of a mystic. But now, he wasn’t so sure.

And the suffering servant prophecy—*“He was pierced for our transgressions.”* He had read it just days ago, yet now it aligned perfectly with the prophecy of Daniel’s anointed one being “cut off” in the final week.

His breath came shallow. Was the prophecy unfolding before him? Was Jesus truly the anointed one?

A deep breath. A single stroke of ink.

And a choice that would change everything.

### **Historical Flashback: Herod's Temple Corruption (37 BC)**

The stench of blood and incense clashed in the air, thick and suffocating. The Holy Temple—once the seat of God's presence—had become a battlefield. Herod's soldiers stormed the inner courts, their swords flashing beneath the sacred lampstands.

A priest, his robes torn, stumbled backward, his hands raised in plea. "This is the house of the Lord!"

A soldier sneered, driving his blade forward. The priest collapsed, blood seeping into the white marble floors.

On the Temple steps, Herod himself watched, his golden robes gleaming even as destruction raged before him. Behind him, a Roman official smirked. "The gods of Rome find little resistance here."

Herod did not reply. He turned to the high priest he had installed—a man who had bought his way into power. "Ensure the sacrifices continue," he ordered, voice as smooth as the wine in his cup.

The priest hesitated, glancing at the dead men strewn across the court. "But... these are God's servants."

Herod's eyes darkened. "I am God's servant now."

**Chapter 6: The Breaking Point**

**Setting: Jerusalem, AD 27 – The Final Days Before Passover**

The Temple was a storm waiting to break. Ezra stood on the steps of the inner court, watching pilgrims flood the grounds. The Passover crowds swelled like a tide, pressing against the walls of the Holy City. The chants of priests mixed with the bleating of lambs, the metallic clink of coins, and the low growl of unrest. Above it all, the name of Jesus rippled through the masses—whispered, shouted, debated. He’s coming. Ezra had heard it a dozen times that morning. He’s coming. Ezra clenched his jaw. The elders said they would act soon. But each hour that passed without resolution tightened the knot in his chest. Doubt lingered like a shadow behind every conviction. He needed clarity. Certainty. Anything but this unrelenting tension. Lucius atop the Antonia Fortress... Yosef finding scrolls... Ezra confronting Nicodemus... All foreshadow what tomorrow would bring. The wind picked up across the rooftops of Jerusalem, stirring the banners of the Temple, rustling the robes of the watchers, whispering in the darkened alleys. Tomorrow, He would come again. And no one would leave unchanged.

Chapter 7: Witnessing Jesus

Setting: The Temple Courts, Jerusalem, AD 27 – The Confrontation Begins

The air in the Temple courts was thick with the scent of incense and burning sacrifices. The Passover crowds surged through the outer courtyard, merchants calling out prices, money changers clinking their coins, and pilgrims purchasing animals for sacrifice. It was a holy place—but it had become a marketplace. And today, it would become a battlefield.

Jesus Challenges the Authorities – The Temple Cleansing

The Temple courtyard erupted in shattered wood, scattering coins, and the wails of outraged merchants. The heavy scent of burning sacrifices mixed with the sweat of startled pilgrims as tables overturned, silver clattered onto stone, and goats and doves broke loose from their pens, bleating in panic.

Jesus stood in the center of the storm. His breath was steady, his gaze sharp, his presence unshaken amidst the chaos he had unleashed. The whip of cords in his hand cracked through the air like the voice of judgment itself.

*“It is written!”* His voice thundered across the courtyard, silencing all. “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!”

His voice was not just loud—it carried weight. Something deep in the bones, something that made even the Roman guards hesitate.

A merchant lunged forward, rage twisting his face. “Who do you think you are?!” he shouted, grabbing for Jesus’ arm.



Jesus turned, locking eyes with him. The man **froze**, as though a force unseen had pressed him back. His hand trembled as he staggered away, face pale.

The Pharisees stood at the edges of the crowd, their lips pressed tight, their eyes burning with silent fury. This was no longer just blasphemy—this was open rebellion.

And yet no one stopped him.

Even the Temple guards hesitated, gripping the hilts of their weapons but refusing to draw.

This was a man who commanded authority—without a sword.

### **Ezra's Fury – A Pharisee's Dilemma**

Ezra's heart pounded like a war drum. His breath came fast, his hands clenched at his sides. He wanted to call this blasphemy. He needed to.

But the words of the prophets screamed through his mind—words he had known since childhood, words he had debated in the halls of the Sanhedrin.

*“The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.”* (Malachi 3:1) *“Zeal for Your house will consume me.”* (Psalm 69:9) *“Behold, your King is coming to you, righteous and having salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey.”* (Zechariah 9:9)

Ezra's stomach twisted. Had the Messiah really come? Had he already been standing before them, and they had not recognized him?

No. No, this couldn't be.

Then why was his body shaking?

Why did Jesus' voice sound like the prophets of old?

Why did this moment feel like destiny was crashing into reality?

The eyes of the Sanhedrin were on him, waiting for his reaction. His mentor's words from the night before echoed in his mind:

*"We will act against this heretic soon."*

The pressure of expectation tightened around his throat.

And yet—he wasn't sure anymore.

### **Lucius in the Riot – Rome Watches Closely**

From the steps near the outer gate, Lucius tightened his grip on his gladius. The weight of his armor felt heavier than usual, the tension in the air more suffocating.

His soldiers stood ready, their eyes flicking between him and the growing disturbance. Nearby, a temple guard looked at him for guidance, awaiting an order.

"This is madness," Marcus, his second-in-command, muttered. "A rabbi with a whip, stirring the people? If this escalates, we'll have blood in the streets."

Lucius said nothing.

His gaze was fixed on the man at the center of the storm. Jesus was no common agitator, no zealot calling for war. There was something different about him. The people weren't just following him—they were hanging on his every word.

Pilate had warned him: *A man who stirs hearts is unstoppable.*

Lucius took a step forward, the cool steel of his sword hilt pressing against his palm. Was this the moment Rome needed to act? Or was this a moment Rome could not stop?

### **Yosef's Realization – The Weight of History**

Yosef clutched his scroll, his quill hovering above the parchment. His scribe's instincts screamed at him to capture this—this was history unfolding before his very eyes.

But as he looked around, he saw more than just an act of defiance. He saw a prophecy being fulfilled.

The words of the prophets came rushing back to him:

*“And the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to His temple.”* (Malachi 3:1) *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.”* (Isaiah 40:3)

**The Temple authorities were stunned, the people were divided, and Rome was watching.**

This moment would be **remembered.**

But how it would be written... that was up to him.

## The Aftermath – A City Divided

The merchants gathered their scattered coins in hushed fury. The Pharisees murmured among themselves, their anger simmering. The Roman guards did not act—**not yet.**

But the lines were being drawn. **A storm was coming.**

Ezra turned away, his stomach in knots. **The time had come to decide.**

Lucius sheathed his sword, watching Jesus disappear into the inner courts. **This was no ordinary man.**

Yosef dipped his quill into the ink, his pulse steady. **History had changed today.**

And soon, the world would know it.

## Chapter 8: The Time Has Come

### Setting: Jerusalem, AD 27 – The Night of Betrayal and the Morning of Execution

The city had never felt so heavy. Darkness settled over the streets like an omen, the scent of smoke and incense lingering in the air. The walls of Jerusalem, usually teeming with life, seemed to press inward, suffocating, as if the city itself knew that everything was about to change.

### Jesus' Arrest – A Night of Torches and Betrayal

The Garden of Gethsemane was quiet, but not peaceful. The twisted branches of the olive trees clawed at the night sky, their gnarled forms casting distorted shadows in the flickering torchlight. The damp scent of earth and crushed grass mingled with the distant murmur of the city beyond the walls.

Then, the silence broke.

A procession of torches slithered through the trees like a serpent. The air crackled with the soft clank of armor, the hushed murmur of voices, and the steady, rhythmic footsteps of approaching soldiers. At the front of the procession was a familiar figure—Judas.

Jesus stood waiting beneath the twisted branches. His eyes were calm, his posture still. He did not flee. He did not resist.

The disciples stirred uneasily. Peter's fingers twitched around the hilt of his sword, his breath ragged.

Judas hesitated for a moment, then stepped forward, voice tight. "Rabbi."

His lips brushed against Jesus' cheek. The kiss was warm. The betrayal was ice.

Jesus held his gaze. "Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

The soldiers closed in. Peter moved without thinking. The sword flashed in the moonlight, and a cry of pain split the air—a soldier staggered back, blood seeping through his fingers as he clutched his ear.

Jesus raised a hand. "No more of this."

Before the stunned onlookers, Jesus reached out and touched the wound. The flesh knit together. The pain vanished. The soldier gasped, stumbling backward, his eyes wide with something that might have been fear.

Lucius, standing just beyond the front line, tensed. This was not the desperate struggle of a man about to be arrested. **This was something else.**

Jesus turned to the soldiers. "This is your hour—when darkness reigns."

The ropes tightened around his wrists.

The disciples scattered. Fear won.

### **Ezra's Public Denunciation – A Decision He Cannot Undo**

The chamber of the Sanhedrin was suffocating, the air thick with sweat, incense, and whispered conspiracies. The torches cast flickering shadows along the stone walls, making the room feel smaller, more claustrophobic.

Jesus stood in the center, battered, bruised, yet silent. The weight of the moment pressed in on Ezra like a physical force.

Caiaphas took a step forward, his voice sharp, demanding. "Tell us plainly—are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

The room held its breath.

Then, Jesus spoke.

"I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The silence shattered. Caiaphas tore his robes. The chamber erupted—shouts of blasphemy, clenched fists, spittle flying in the torchlight.

Death.

Ezra stood frozen. **This is wrong.**

He had spent his life studying the Law, guarding the faith, ensuring that Israel remained pure. But now, as he stood in the midst of the men he had always trusted, something inside him screamed.

Caiaphas' voice rose above the chaos. "Who among you stands against this false prophet?"

Ezra swallowed hard. His chest was tight. He could feel the eyes of the council on him, waiting. Expecting.

The image of Jesus in the Temple flashed in his mind—the overturned tables, the righteous fire in his voice, the words of prophecy fulfilled in his very presence.

And yet—

"I do."

The words left his mouth like stones sinking into deep water.

Jesus turned toward him. Their eyes met.

There was no anger. No accusation.

Only sadness.

Ezra felt something inside him break.

### **Lucius Oversees the Crucifixion – The Roman's Doubt**

The hill of Golgotha was a place of death, barren and cruel. The air was thick with the stench of sweat, iron, and blood. The wind had died, leaving an eerie stillness that made even the most hardened soldiers shift uneasily.

Lucius stood at the foot of the execution post, arms crossed over his chest. He had seen this before. He had commanded it before. He had watched men curse, scream, beg for mercy.

But this was different.



Jesus hung between two criminals, his body a canvas of wounds and agony. And yet, there was no defiance. No hate. No pleading.

His lips parted. His voice, though weak, carried through the unnatural silence.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

A deep rumble rolled through the earth. The ground trembled. The iron nails creaked in the wood.

Lucius exhaled sharply. This was wrong.

The sky darkened, the air thickening with something unseen, something more than a storm. Soldiers shifted, muttering prayers to their gods.

The centurion beside him whispered, voice tight. "Truly... this man was the Son of God."

Lucius said nothing.

But deep down, he feared it was true.

### **Yosef Preserves the Truth – A Legacy at Risk**

The chamber beneath the Sanhedrin archives was cold, damp, and filled with secrets.

Yosef worked quickly, his fingers trembling as he pressed the scroll into the hollow space between the stones. He covered it with another slab, making sure it was hidden.

The Sanhedrin would erase Jesus from history. They would call him a fraud, a criminal. A liar.

But not if Yosef could help it.

His heart pounded. If they found out what he had written, they would burn it. They would burn him.

The truth had to remain.

He closed his eyes, whispered a silent prayer, and stepped away from the hidden scroll. **Would anyone ever find it?**

He did not know.

But he had to try.

### **The Moment of Finality – A City Changed Forever**

The sun dipped below the horizon, the sky bleeding into deep violet and gold. The streets of Jerusalem were restless, filled with murmurs and tension, yet unaware that the world had just changed.

Ezra stood at the edge of the Temple courtyard, staring into the distance. He had made his choice. And yet, in the hollow of his chest, doubt festered.

Lucius walked away from Golgotha, his grip tight on the hilt of his sword. For the first time, he did not believe in Rome's justice.

Yosef wiped the ink from his hands, his heart steady. The truth was hidden. It would survive.

## THE TIME HAS COME

Above them, the wind whispered through the streets, carrying the weight of a world that had just been broken.

The time had come. The kingdom of God had arrived. But they did not see it. Not yet.

**Epilogue: Aftermath Setting: Jerusalem, AD 27 – The Days Following the Crucifixion**

The city pulsed with uncertainty. The dust from Golgotha had not yet settled, and the whispers of what had occurred spread like wildfire through the streets. Something had changed. The air itself felt different, though few understood why.

**Ezra – A Pharisee Haunted by His Choice**

Ezra stood in the Temple courts, surrounded by familiar rituals, but nothing felt the same. The prayers, the incense, the murmured recitations of the Law—it all felt hollow. He had watched Jesus die, yet something inside him refused to rest.

Since that day, he had been plagued by a single thought: *What if we were wrong?*

The rumors disturbed him. Some whispered that the tomb was empty. That Jesus' followers were emboldened, claiming He had risen. That He had been seen—alive.

Ezra shook his head, but doubt gnawed at him. He had condemned Him. Spoken against Him. If Jesus was the Messiah, then Ezra had not just failed—he had committed an unforgivable betrayal.

His mentor approached, laying a firm hand on his shoulder. “The heretic is dead. The people will forget him soon.”

Ezra forced a nod. But deep inside, he knew: *he would never forget.*

## Lucius – A Soldier Caught Between Rome and Truth

Lucius stood at the Antonia Fortress, staring down at the city below. He had carried out his orders. The Galilean preacher was dead, crucified like all the others who dared disturb Rome's order.

And yet...

The words of the centurion beside him still echoed in his mind: *"Truly, this man was the Son of God."*

Lucius clenched his jaw. He had overseen countless executions, and yet none had unsettled him like this.

More troubling still were the rumors. The body was missing. Some said his followers had stolen it. Others—whispered that He had risen.

Pilate had already dismissed the claims, ordering soldiers to suppress any talk of resurrection. "Rome does not entertain superstition," he had said.

But Lucius was not so sure.

That afternoon on Golgotha had shaken something loose within him. He had seen men die a hundred times before. This was different. This was... *unfinished*.

For the first time, he wondered if Rome's justice had failed.

### Yosef – A Keeper of Hidden Truth

Beneath the halls of the Sanhedrin, Yosef ran his fingers along the stone wall where his manuscript lay hidden. He had done it. He had preserved the truth.

For now, at least.

He had not fled like the others. He had not declared faith like the fishermen who followed Jesus. But neither had he erased the record of what had happened.

Truth had a way of surviving, even when men tried to bury it.

But how long could it remain hidden? And when the time came—would he have the courage to bring it to light?

### A City on the Brink of Revelation

The Passover had ended, but the city was not at peace. The religious leaders thought they had silenced a threat, yet His name refused to die. The disciples, scattered and afraid, would soon gather again.

Storm clouds gathered on the horizon, but they were not the kind that brought rain. **A new storm was rising—the kind that would reshape history.**

The Temple still stood. Rome still ruled. The Sanhedrin still held power.

But **not for long.**

**Final Words of the Novel:**

*The time had come. The kingdom had been proclaimed. The world would never be the same.*

**End of Book 1**

**To Be Continued in Book 2: The Kingdom Unveiled**

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