CHAPTER TWELVE

GODS-R-US

John took a sip of fresh coffee and said, "Now, tell me your answer."

"I figure this has to be a good answer because it is a direct quote from Jesus, or Joshua as you now call him, and it was written by you in the book of John chapter 10. There Jesus said, *Y e are gods*
."

John smiled and said, "So what is the answer to the question, 'WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU?'"

"I guess men are gods." I replied tepidly.

"I keep telling you to listen to the precise words I say. The question is 'WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU?' not 'What are humans?' Now think over the question and answer again."

"Well, I guess I am God or a god," I said.

"Which one is it? Are you God or a god?"

I didn't think the answer would be that awkward. I tried again. "The Mormons say 'a god,' and the New Agers say just 'God.'"

"And what do you say?"

"I guess I am God," I said, feeling a little strange.

"Should I worship you then?" John grinned.

"No! Of course not!" I exclaimed.

"Then are you sure you are God?"

"I'm not sure," I replied weakly. "Maybe I am just a god."

"So you are a god then," John smiled again with that look in his eye that revealed he knew things that were beyond my grasp. "Then you must have great power. Why don't you levitate that waitress over there and show me your power? Or better still, why don't you snap your fingers and heal your wife?"

His latter words reached the core of my being. There was nothing that revealed my powerlessness more than the fact that I had been unable to help my own wife. "What a fool I

am," I thought to myself. "If I am God or a god, then I should be able to heal my wife." I cast my eyes to the floor with great emotion. I felt like I was nobody, let alone a god.

John looked n my eyes with compassion. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings; I just wanted to get your attention."

"You got it all right," I said. "Boy, do I feel like a fool. I'm no more a god than that ashtray over there. If I was God's little toe I would have healed Elizabeth. I seem to do nothing for her, and I feel like nothing." I felt more emotional than I had in years.

"Don't let emotion take your eyes away from the truth," John said softly. "A true seeker must be part Spock, part Captain Kirk, with a dash of Bones."

I started to laugh.

"Glad I cheered you up. What's funny?"

"I just had an image of John the Revelator watching Star Trek. It just struck me as very humorous -- comparable to Jesus singing a rap song." It's funny how you can sometimes switch from one emotion to another when something strikes you right.

John looked a little perplexed for the first time since I had met him. "I'll have to ask Joshua if he's done any rap lately," he quipped. "Now getting back to the subject. You must be part Spock and part Captain Kirk here to find truth. Emotion often turns the truth upside-down."

"So, was my answer about being God right or wrong?"

"It was not the correct answer."

"So we are not really gods then?"

John paused, and said, "Was your answer about being human the correct answer?"

"You said no."

"But are you human?"

"Yes. So are you saying my answer may be true, but the wrong answer?"

"Exactly. We are called human beings, but since a human doesn't know who he is, then naming yourself human doesn't really bring you any knowledge about yourself, does it?"

"I guess not."

"If I say you are God, and you do not know What or Who God is, then that does not bring you an increase in knowledge, does it?"

"No."

"You don't really know any more about who you are than you did before I told you that you are God."

"I think I see what you're getting at. You're saying I must answer the question with something

that really tells me about who I am. If I say I am flesh, and I don't know the difference between flesh and silicone, then I might as well say I am silicone. My answer means nothing if I don't know what flesh is."

"That is good, my friend. I may use your example with my next student. Yes, your answer must mean something. Saying that you are human, God or a son of God may all be true, but if you cannot explain what the terms mean, then they are just labels without meaning and true knowledge."

Frustrated that I still didn't know the answer, I stated, "Before we go on, I would like you to explain the scripture in John chapter 10. There is a big dispute among Bible believers as to whether Jesus is really telling us that we are gods."

"What conclusion did you come to?"

"It sounds like Jesus is really telling us that we are gods."

"You are correct. I was actually in His presence several times when He used this argument. After He obtained a certain amount of notoriety in Jerusalem, He was often approached by religious authorities who had heard their followers express the belief that He was either the Messiah, a god, Son of God or an ancient prophet brought back from the dead or reborn. They would often speak to Him with venom, saying something like, *Who do you think you are, the son of God?*

"Then He would answer something like this: *And what if I did say I am a son of God? Why do you think that is a big deal when your own law of God in the Psalms and writings of Moses calls you gods? If those who merely received the scriptures are called gods, why do you think it would be a major claim for me to say I am a son of God?*
'

"Here, let's turn to Psalms." John opened his old Bible to Psalms. "The first verse of the chapter in question reads: *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth AMONG*

THE GODS. Who are the gods that He judges among? It tells us in verse six which reads, *I have said Ye are gods; and all of you children of the most High.*

"Here we are told that the gods that God judges among are the ones who received the scriptures as Jesus said. In fact, there are numerous instances in the writings of Moses where the people who judged among the people were called gods. In the Bibles today, these are usually translated incorrectly, but if you use any Hebrew concordance from a regular Christian bookstore you can prove to yourself that the judges were really called gods time and time again. I'll write down these references so you can look them up."

John scribbled down some references and handed the piece of paper to me. It read *Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:8-9.*
"Now, everywhere the word
judges
is mentioned in these scriptures it comes from the Hebrew ELOHIYM, which is the same word used for the God who created heaven and earth. Interestingly, they translated it correctly in the King James Version in Exodus 22:28."

He handed his Bible to me and I read: *"Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of the people."*

John offered an interpretation: "The ruler of the people was Moses, and the gods were Moses and the judges. This is why David in Psalms called God *as one who judges among the gods*."

I added, "The Fundamentalist Christians think Psalms 82:7 refutes the idea that men are gods. Here, I'll read it: *But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.* Because this comes right after the
ye are gods
statement, they say the
ye are gods
is a mockery."

"What does it sound like to you?"

"It sounds to me David was saying they were gods who were behaving like they were just men."

"That is correct. Now turn to Exodus 4:16, and read."

I read, *"And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God."*

John explained, "Here it is talking about the calling of Aaron to be a spokesman for Moses. However the later translation is poor concerning Moses; the Hebrew reads: *Thou shall be a god to him (Aaron)* ."

"I can see why your life is in danger from life to life." I remarked. "I'll bet you really make some religious people nervous when you talk the scriptures."

John smiled, "Unrealized truth clearly presented can cause a great disturbance. The master at that was Joshua, or Jesus. The Bible does not do justice at relating how angry he made the religious authorities of his time."

"I can imagine," I nodded. "So, from our conversation so far, it sounds as if you're telling me we are gods just as the scriptures say, but that just accepting that does not really tell us who we are, so it is not the answer to your question."

"That is correct. You are both God and a god, and from another perspective, you are becoming a god, but none of these statements mean more than just words to those who quote them. I will give you a hint that will help you realize more of what God is. Read First Corinthians chapter 12, and tell me next week what you come up with. Here, I'll write that down next to the other references."

"I notice you quote a lot from the Bible," I remarked while he wrote. "What do you think of the other scriptures and philosophies of the world?"

"I use the Bible often with you because it carries much weight in this part of the world. There is some truth in all scriptures and all philosophies of the world. I am familiar with many of them and have taught with many of them. Now, getting back to the subject, do you have any other ideas about 'WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE' before I give you your next hint?"

I thought for a moment. "So, basically all my answers are correct, but they just don't mean anything. I am a human, I am spirit, I am soul, I am a son of God and I am even a god or maybe even God in some esoteric way, but none of these statements communicate more than a vague idea. Is this correct?"

"That is exactly correct. Can you think of an answer to the question that does mean something to you?"

"I don't know if I can give you anything intelligent right now. Why don't you give me my next hint, and I'll think about it during the next week?"

"All right, my friend. Here it is. To better understand who and what you are, it is helpful to know what you are not. I think you have already concluded that you are not your body, that the body is merely a vehicle for that which is the real you."

"Yes, I have pretty much accepted that."

"Just like you have a car which is a vehicle that takes you places, with the real you inside the car, so do you have a body, which is not the real you, which is a vehicle that takes you places. The real you directs the vehicle. What many do not realize is that the real you has other vehicles besides your physical body.

"There are two other things you are not: You are not your emotions, and you are not your mind. Instead, these are two other vehicles you use to take you places.

The question remains: If you are not your body, your emotions or your mind -- what remains? WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU?"

"That's interesting," I mused. "Many lay philosophers like myself are aware that we are not our bodies, but most see our feelings and thoughts as part of our eternal nature. But you say they are not a part of our real selves, but just vehicles?"

"That is correct," John replied. "Contemplate this and the scriptures I gave you and we'll meet back here at Denny's next week at midnight."

"Are you going back to your bell-ringing job?" I asked.

"I may have to skip it for the rest of the season," he said. "Joshua needs my help to place some safeguards on some terrorism that has potential to hinder the purpose of God on earth. Whatever you see happening the next few years, I want you to know it would have been a lot worse without our intervention. Hopefully, we can get things taken care of the next few weeks. Don't ask me any questions about it. There is little I can reveal at present."

"Sounds like you're a spiritual James Bond," I said smiling.

John returned a light smile.

"Elizabeth told me to tell you she appreciates the fact you gave her hope."

"How is she doing?"

"She had her strength back for a short time, but now she is like she was before or perhaps worse."

"Ask her this for me," said John. "Ask her if she has discovered her fears and thoughts she has been hiding from herself, and has she learned to put them in their right place?"

"I'll ask her,' I said.

John arose as if he was ready to go. He pulled a red handkerchief out of his pocket and handed it to me. "Tell her to rub this on her forehead three times a day. It will give her additional strength and make life more bearable for her for the next week. However, you must return it to me next week."

"I'll do it," I nodded, taking the handkerchief from his hand. "Do you have to go now?"

"I'm afraid so." We paid and walked out the door. As we were walking down the street he said, "Your car is in the other direction."

"I know, but I'm curious. Where are you going and how are you going to get there?"

"I'm going to the Middle East. The exact point I will not say. 'How?' You may ask. Let us go behind that tree and I will show you."

I walked with him behind a tree where we were out of sight from passers-by. He stood perfectly still, closed his eyes, bowed his head slightly and whispered a word ever so softly. In an instant he was gone. He didn't fade away like some ghost in the movies, but he was just instantly gone.

I wasn't sure which word he uttered, he said it so softly, but it seemed like it was "Joshua."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Hidden Fears

On my way home I found myself thinking there was now no way I could doubt that John was a mystical being. I was already very convinced of his reality because of the power of his teachings and the internal spiritual feelings he generated. But when you see someone just disappear before your eyes like that it brings home a realization of a higher reality that is just undeniable.

After I arrived home I tried getting into bed without disturbing Elizabeth, but without success.

"Honey, it's after three. I was worried that you and John ran off together."

"Not a chance. You're lucky he had to go. I could have talked to him for days without sleeping. I hope you've gotten some sleep since I've left."

She was silent. That meant that she never slept. "I wish you'd listen to me about your rest," I said. "You've been awake all this time, haven't you?"

"How do you expect me to sleep when you're out there having high spiritual drama?"

"I've got to admit, I couldn't have slept either."

"So did you have the right answer? Are we gods or what?"

I replayed to her the dialogue that had occurred between John and me.

"Let me get this right," she said. "Everything everyone thinks we are is not what we really are because they are just phrases that don't tell us anything. We are also not our bodies, feelings or thoughts. There doesn't seem to be much left for us to be. Maybe we are just blobs of nothing."

"That sounds about as good of an answer as any, the way I feel right now," I said, somewhat frustrated.

"Let me try out that handkerchief," she said.

I retrieved it and handed it to her. "He said to rub it on your forehead, and it would give you strength. I know it sounds crazy, but after what I have experienced with John so far I'm willing to try anything."

She took it and placed it on her forehead. Then she rubbed it back and forth, with her hand seemingly growing steadier. Finally, a smile graced her face as if she were experiencing pleasure. She looked at me and said, "Sweetheart, make love to me."

I do believe I was more surprised at this request than at John's disappearance. She hadn't shown any interest in lovemaking for some time, now, because of her illness. "Are you sure?" I asked.

"Very sure," she said with a very sensual voice.

We made love immediately, with more feelings of pleasure and sensuality – and, on the other extreme more spiritual feelings -- than I had ever felt in lovemaking. The only way I could describe the feeling was as a union that belonged to the gods and not humankind.

Afterwards, we were lying together in silence, contemplating the experience. "If I never get better," Elizabeth said softly, "this moment is worth a lifetime. How many live a whole lifetime in good health and never have one moment as we have just had?"

"Very well said. But of course, no one else is married to you."

We embraced and fell asleep in each other's arms.

We both arose the next morning after just a couple of hours sleep, but we both felt refreshed. Elizabeth seemed to have her strength back again and insisted she make breakfast. After we sat down together, she asked, "So have you done any thinking about who or what you are?"

"A little."

"So, if we are not just a blob of nothing, what are we?"

"I've been thinking of it this way. If my body is taken away, I may still have feelings and thoughts. If my body and emotions were taken away, then I have thoughts, but if all three were taken away I would still be something. I've been imagining stepping aside from my vehicles and visualizing what is there. I know and feel there is something there, the driver of the vehicles. Some type of livingness."

"Maybe you are just life itself," she said.

"I know what John would say if I said that. He would ask, 'What is life?'"

"And the answer to that has baffled philosophers for ages," she said.

"Maybe we ought to start with the easy stuff," I said. "John told me to ask you if you have discovered the thoughts and fears you have been hiding from yourself, and if you have learned to put them in their right place.

"I must be hiding them well, for I'm not sure what they would be."

"Have you thought about them at all?"

"What's there to think about? I think I'm pretty open about my thoughts and fears. Actually, I don't have many fears outside of becoming incapacitated with this disease."

"I've thought a little about it. If you are hiding certain thoughts and fears, perhaps they are especially hidden from yourself as you said. So if you try to look for them, they are hard to find because you yourself have hidden them from yourself."

"So you're saying I've hidden them so well that I can't find them?"

"Maybe it's something like this: Let's say you have an extra twenty dollars and hide it in a cookie jar. For some reason, you forget about hiding it there. Then some time later you need the twenty, and it does not occur to you to look anywhere for it because you cannot even remember

that it ever existed. Perhaps you haven't seriously looked for these hidden thoughts and fears because you do not believe they exist. But just as the twenty dollars still exists in the cookie jar whether you believe it or not, so do your hidden thoughts and fears exist, waiting to be found."

"You've been spending too much time with John. You're sounding just like him."

"Thanks for the compliment, but I've known you a long time, and I sense that you have a reluctance to find these hidden fears."

"If they are hidden, and I don't know they exist, then they don't have power to hurt me. Why should I go looking for trouble?"

"You may not have been looking for trouble. In fact, you have probably been trying to avoid it. Nevertheless, trouble has found you. If John is right, you must realize you have to let down the barriers and find what you have hidden."

Elizabethlooked like she wanted to hit me. "So if you know me so well, you tell me what I'm hiding."

"I don't know if I can find it for you. I think only you can recognize them when found, but maybe I can encourage you and push you in the right direction."

"So push me then, I've drawn a blank here."

"I have a feeling you have some residual fears that are connected to your early religious upbringing."

"That's silly. My religious beliefs have changed drastically over the years. Just like I no longer

fear the bogeyman, I also no longer fear the fire and brimstone teachings of the old-time religion."

"You say that, but is it possible that you almost put too much emphasis on the idea that you're not afraid of a burning hell, and that guilt is beyond you?"

"I think the idea that God would send you to a burning hell is ridiculous. A loving God would not do that."

"Logically, that's true, but things you were taught as a child may have had a much more powerful effect than you may admit. Weren't your parents very religious fundamentalist Baptists?"

"Yes, I had to go to church every Sunday, no matter what."

"I remember you said that your dad's favorite preacher was this hellfire-and-damnation guy who loved to shout out the punishments of God. You said he portrayed all humans as terrible sinners who are going to suffer unimaginable pain and suffering if they don't follow the Bible and the line of virtue one hundred percent."

"Yeah, I cringe at the memory of that guy", Elizabeth replied. "Dad made all of us sit in the front row and listen to that horrible diatribe. At the dinner table during the week, he would talk about the sermon and how it applies in our lives. When I got interested in boys, Dad really hammered virtue into me. He made me feel that if I ever slipped and had sex before marriage I was going to burn in Hell forever."

I paused a moment and said evenly, "And those old teachings don't bother you any more?"

Elizabethsniffed. "Of course not. Like I said, I've put them behind me like the bogeyman."

"I don't think you've put them entirely behind you. For one thing, I can tell the memory of those days still bothers you."

"Everybody has painful memories they don't like to think of," Elizabeth said, wheeling her chair out of the kitchen.

I decided to change the subject for the moment. Elizabeth was getting pretty defensive. I stood in front of her. "Your mother was a perfectionist, wasn't she? Didn't she put a lot of pressure on you to be the perfect child?"

Elizabethlowered her eyes. "When I was little I tried to never do anything to disappoint my folks -- like I never misbehaved or talked back to them. I remember even apologizing to them in little notes I wrote for not being better in some way ... But when I got older and more independent and started dating, they both seemed disappointed in me."

"Disappointed how?" I asked.

"I don't know how to describe it ... like, their innocent little girl, their perfect child, grew up and innocence was lost. I did feel sexual guilt, I guess. My mom gave me the third degree after every date and my dad wasn't comfortable being physically affectionate anymore. I really felt their discomfort with my sexuality. Maybe I was feeling their sexual guilt instead of my own." Elizabeth added after a pause, "It seemed like I couldn't do anything right."

"Did you ever feel like they didn't love you for who you really were, or that their love was conditional on you conforming to their idea of perfection?"

Elizabeth's eyes moistened. "Yes" she replied softly. "And I never measured up no matter how hard I tried. They never got to know me as a person, and, after a while, I didn't want them to. I got a little rebellious -- did my share of sowing wild oats -- and I'm sure they didn't want to know about that side of me either. It would have killed them, I think."

"That may be it!" I exclaimed, kneeling in front of Elizabeth. "If your folks knew who you really were, the real you, you think it would have killed them. So you punished yourself by suppressing the real you ... by killing the real you."

Elizabethlooked a little pale. "You need to get to work. We can talk about this later."

"Work can wait," I replied. "Do you see now how there might be some connection between this fear of discovery, your suppression of the truth, your guilt and your disease today?"

"Um-m-m, maybe," Elizabeth frowned. "I think I've worked through my stuff pretty well, though. I'm my own person now; I don't need my parents' approval anymore."

"But you need your own," I said gently, taking her hand. As I got up, I said, "I think we need to explore it. I'll go to work now but I want you to promise me something. Promise me that you'll think about the guilt you may still feel about those days and the fear of not measuring up to your parents' standards for you."

"What good does it do?" Elizabeth looked up at me angrily. "It doesn't change anything."

"No, but facing your fears can change you," I said, squeezing her shoulder. "Will you try, please? It may heal your disease."

"I'll see what I can do, but I think it will do more harm than good."

"Trust me on this one. I think this is the right direction."

I kissed her good-bye and put on my coat, hoping I was right.