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6/13/95

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Revise and send back ASAP

PP1-38

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE SON

-1-

In those days, I was the one who came up from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the River Jordan. And later was John Mark, known as Mark, who in writing his gospel, said of me that when I was with John the Baptist, and rose up out of the water, so did I see the heavens open "and a spirit like a dove descending, and there came a voice from Heaven saying, 'Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'" ^{After was said by} Upon which, Mark next said: "And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness, and He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and He was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him."

That is not untrue, yet its truth is like unto an acorn ^{wherein} compared to the great oak ~~which~~ is its verity. I would not say that Mark brought false message, no more than I would

speak ill of an acorn. Nor would I deride others who come ^{taken} after such as Matthew, Luke or John. Still did they leave errors in recounting my days and many were the pious sayings they gave to me which were often never said, and sometimes did they describe me as gentle when I was wroth of voice. They did not know me, and so told ~~in their words~~ no more than what others related as my sayings; such gospel is to be leaned upon no more than a bush ~~that is~~ ^{that} separated from its roots ~~and~~ blows across a field like a dry thing. Besides, I am the Son of Man, and can speak for myself, nor have I forgotten even one hour of what happened to me, no more than a new coin would forget the die who minted it.

So I will proceed with my true account of the gospel as it was witnessed by me, and if there are some who would ask how the words I speak were written, I would answer: That is a mystery but of no great import; the Lord often spoke through me and I uttered many words that were not mine but His. Nor did I lack for scribes in the hundred years after my death nor in all centuries following. Look then upon this gospel set down by one who is no longer among the living as no more than a miracle of small dimension. But then, my gospel, as is true of the others, is an account of miracles.

So my words need give no pause. Look upon them as a warrant of my days. May it be set down with respect for much of what has already been told, yet still, ^{and} must my gospel explain more concerning my journeys than others are able to reveal.

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In the early years of my apprenticeship as a carpenter, the work would be heaviest when splitting a log to shape our planks. We would use the head of an axe to strike upon a wedge until the wedge divided the trunk along its length, whereupon we split it by the length again, and then again, until eight or sixteen such divisions had been made. And it took a master carpenter to guide the placement of the wedges.

Once, however, that ~~we had shaped~~ ^{were shaped} our planks, which involved much trimming with ~~our~~ axes, then could we obtain a communion with the wood. For never did I forget that the first tree in the Garden grew apples endowed with knowledge of good and evil; often it seemed to me that much good and evil was ^{still} in the will and temper of ^{our} the wood. One had to respect the spirit therein ~~considering that~~ ^{was} a fine piece labored upon for days could betray the tool upon the smallest mistake; sometimes, one's wood might split in treachery for no mistake at all, but rather out of the knowledge of good

and evil and much desire to do the latter.

And I also knew wood that was kin to a dear friend who served my wishes and guided my chisel, and there was wood that resisted the drill whereas other planks would yield with comely grace as if enabled by the hole ~~bored through~~ to breathe, and breathe better. There was wisdom to be respected in this treatment of wood and I used to feel honorable doing such work, and did it so for many years. The scent of a good plank properly shaped for placement gave pleasure since there was concupiscence of spirit between the wood and one's hand--I know not how else to say it, but then being an Essene ^{did give} there was not much to say of such matters; ~~since~~ of all Jews we were the strictest in observance and certainly did not believe in gods of ^{various} ~~all~~ description as did the Romans; so it was not meet to speak of communion with wood. ⁷ Besides I was as devout as my father on earth, who was Joseph, and he wore white robes whenever not at labor, and washed such robes frequently, and often with travail at such time as our river would run dry and our wells became low; ~~inasmuch as~~ to wash our clothes when there was scarcity of water was to suffer with one's skin from the harsh ashes of limestone that we used then to cleanse ourselves. ~~And~~

~~It~~ ^{thereby} was it said of us as Essenes that we were a sect
 which must soon die out considering how the aim of each
 Essene was to live in such cleanliness that ~~we~~ ^{he} would
 never take a ~~woman for~~ wife for too little, or, if with wife,
 would lie ~~down~~ ^{occasionally} with her only on such ~~times~~ ^{(as God said to}
 make a child, whereby, if the Lord never spoke, children
 could not be forthcoming among Essenes. ~~And~~ ^{And} therefore was it
 also said of us that we needed always to make new converts,
 in order that we not die out. I, being so raised, was
 instructed to believe that women, if one did not know their
 nature, were not to be entered, and I even thought seldom on
 such matters, although, given the nature of my mother's
 conception of me, it was meet that I, ~~who was~~ in such great
 part His son, if not indeed entirely His son, did comprehend
 that God would not wish me to spend my hours on lascivious
 pursuit.

So it is that my communion with other spirits in those
 years was nearest while working with the wood of God's trees
 and much they taught me about good and evil, until I was even
 ready to notice that an evil man could not pass by a fine
 tree without saddening its leaves.

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Now in the time of which I write, so was I still a carpenter at the age of thirty and had passed through my apprenticeship under Joseph for twice seven years and was now a master, but if it be asked whether in my youth, other apprentices had jealousy of me because they looked upon ^{him} as my father, I would answer that ^{he} Joseph served God best by treating all of his workers with as much respect as those woods he fashioned for cabinets. Never was I his favorite in these years of apprenticeship, but on certain days, when I would do well and be most scrupulous among the young men of our shop, Joseph would then nod and say, "Thou wouldst make a good carpenter, if that had been intended." And who could say why he spoke in such odd manner, inasmuch as his head was turned to the side, as though to press his lips upon a secret that turned like a wild creature in his bosom even if it were not truly a secret, since I had been told the true story of my birth from the time I was twelve, in which year it was

Joseph who had imparted it to me. But now I was a man, and he was old and his memory had grown weak. So maybe he could not recall that he had related it to me. ~~I~~ Nor was I able to ponder for long upon what I had been told when I was twelve and we were returning from Jerusalem since I came down with a great fever upon reaching our home in Nazareth, and so all that Joseph had told me became curious like a dream one cannot remember but knows, and yet does not know. Only when I was thirty and mourning Joseph's death did I recall all of his words and indeed did I then find the need to visit John the Baptist, of which visit there is much more to say but only in its place. ~~I~~ Speaking of those years ^{from the age of} between twelve ^{until I was} and thirty, mayhap it was not the fever that made me forget what Joseph had said so much as that I ^{had little desire to remember} wished to forget. (For it was without purpose in my life in those years and MOST disturbing on such rare occasion as I recalled it like a dream. Yet ^{Joseph} ~~he~~ had told me all I needed to know even if I had not known what to do with ^{such knowledge} the secret, yet ~~he~~ ^{he did} impart it to me on our return to Nazareth from the Great Temple when I was twelve. In those years, it was the custom of my family to journey to Jerusalem in the week before Passover, and this we would do in company with a host of other Essenes from

Nazareth, rich and poor together, all travelling in a host wearing our white garb to show our dedication to observances of the law, and we were comfortable in the size of our numbers; we did not fear brigands on the road; we were many.

And it was a journey of three days on foot from dawn to dark to traverse the hills and valleys between Nazareth in Galilee and Jerusalem in Judea. And my parents went to this Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem every year until ^{I was twelve} ~~my twelfth~~ year, and then they went no more. Yet, on ^{this} ~~this~~ last year, my

~~twelfth~~, was it different. For when they turned to go back to Nazareth from Jerusalem, I was not ready. Nor can I explain how it was, but I stayed behind in the Great Temple and since most of the other children from Nazareth were walking together, my parents did not notice. Nor did my mother ^{take awareness of} perceive my absence until a journey of half a day had been spent on the road back.

Yet when they looked for me among kinfolk and neighbors, then were Joseph and Mary full of disturbance at my absence, and on ^{their} ~~such~~ ^{rich} ~~unhappiness~~ and return ^{on foot} to Jerusalem still did not find me until ^{they} ~~they~~ ^{came} upon my presence in the Temple where I was sitting in the midst of priests and doctors, Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes, and was asking ^{of many} ~~them~~ questions

(which was, perhaps, permitted of me, a boy, because of my garb as an Essene). And to the astonishment of my parents, ^{so} ~~A~~ was offering answers to my own questions and ~~was~~ behaving as if much learned. ~~if~~ There was long discussion in such days whether the Word had been with God from the commencement and indeed, when John would later write his gospel, all remembered his first sentence: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But in that year when I was twelve, there was dispute among the priests of the Temple: Was the Word ^{present} ~~there~~ before the beginning? ~~↑~~ For as they would discuss the matter; ^{how could} ~~life arise to quicken the heart of the newborn without the~~ ^{of the spirit} ~~spirit coming first?~~ Was it the Word of God which created our flesh or was our flesh made by God with no Word even as He had created the flesh of animals? So, I listened to noted doctors in the Temple that day and they spoke of how in the beginning the Word must have been said in order to form our flesh; otherwise, we should be no better than the animals. Whereupon, they argued, could there be any reason not to raise slaves in order to consume such slaves afterward as meat like tame beasts of a flock? How else, unless ~~it was~~ the Word ~~that~~ made our flesh?

It was then I began to speak. According to ^{Joseph and Mary,} ~~my parents,~~
 who entered the chamber even as ^{then,} ~~I was uttering my first~~
~~words,~~ ^{utterances} such ~~thoughts~~ from the mouth of a twelve-year-old were
 as a miracle. Since I ~~have no~~ ^{am without} recollection of what I said,
 the Lord must have been speaking through me, ^{And} for the first
 time. ^{And} ~~indeed,~~ ^{my mother} my mother in later years, after I had
 begun my mission, would claim that my words were so holy then
 she ~~would~~ not give shape to such ^{pronouncements} ~~utterances~~ with her own
 voice no more than she could pronounce aloud the name of the
 Lord. But as it was told to me later by Joseph, I did say to
 the assembled priests and doctors that even before we had
 need to look upon the Word as flesh, we did well to gain
 understanding ^{that} ~~of how~~ the Word lived in water. For as all
 know, on the coldest day of winter, or on arising in the
 dawn, the breath of a man is like unto a cloud. [¶] So is our
 breath cousin to a small sea, and it is upon this sea that
 the vessel of the Word can be borne. Whether of flesh or
 spirit, therefore, is the Word one with God inasmuch as all
 the waters are His, [¶] ~~even~~ as all the rivers go down to the
 great sea.

And when I was older, and no longer a carpenter and had
 left Nazareth to preach the gospel, so did I also know by

then that the Word was indeed flesh. For if I had never obtained knowledge of a woman, still did I know that to whisper "I love you" into the ear of another was to awaken desire for the creation of ~~flesh~~ *another who is also of flesh,*

Of course, I did not enter discussion of such procreative matters when I was twelve, ~~even if I was speaking~~ *but still* ~~in the voice of the Lord.~~ *the* Nonetheless did I tell those august elders that the Word was in the mist that came from our mouths, and such wisdom proved astonishing to them. My mother would always say that the faces of these doctors, priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes, was engraved forever upon her heart. *in response to such happiness and* And ~~it was for such reason I believe~~ *wondered did Joseph decide* that at this juncture on our lonely return to Nazareth, while walking much alone (and all three of us in fear of brigands), ~~Joseph did then decide, as if to gird our safe passage,~~ *that* ~~to~~ *he must* tell me the true story of my birth.

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^{for me?} Yet ^{what he imparted was} to understand ^{not only by} how it ~~transpired~~ is not simple. For Joseph was ~~not only pious and would bathe all of his body~~ even to three times a day, but always wore white, and sometimes even when at work, and he adjured me constantly that it was better not to marry but to ^{be seen by} ~~pray for the good of~~ the Lord and ^{as} ~~be~~ even more devout than other Essenes. So it could not have been any easy ~~journey of his spirit~~ for Joseph to relate the true story of my conception and my birth. Yet, did he ^{so}, and his words came back to me in all their clarity eighteen years later after he died and I was at the age of thirty and praying at his funeral. Clear as each word had been then, ^{when I was younger} so was it again and I remembered it all and knew for the first time to a certainty whose son was I.

Joseph, in the year before I was born, ^{had been} was already espoused to my mother, Mary. Yet at ^{that} ~~a~~ time ^{had} unknownst to ~~Joseph~~, the angel Gabriel ~~had~~ come down to Galilee and entered the bedchamber of Mary who was then a virgin and

Gabriel said to her, and these words are as Joseph said them to me upon hearing them ~~at a later time~~ from Mary: "Hail, thou that art highly favored; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." ^{yet my} My mother, ~~however,~~ ^{and in such virginity} was not only a virgin ~~but had been~~ ^{but being} much fortified by her mother, ^{knowing much on} also an Essene, ^{concerning how to safeguard chastity before marriage.} ~~yet,~~ ^{Here, notwithstanding,} now was the angel Gabriel, dressed in white, ^{present} ~~standing~~ before her and as handsome as his own radiance. The white of his garments was like the light of the moon; she could see clearly how Gabriel was an angel. Still, ^{And so} did she wonder what manner of salutation was this. ^{we were} She felt weak before Gabriel as if her virtue were already in flux, and all her walls of determination ^{so near} crumbled like sand. It was then that this angel, ~~present~~ in her small room, which no man had ever entered before, said, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Those are the words that are told in the gospel of Luke

and Luke thought they had been uttered from the mouth of the angel Gabriel, and indeed they must be of the general truth, although, according to my mother, the angel said less and she knew more. ^{97 Yet} ~~However,~~ in all her weakness, ^{she still} ~~she did~~ say to Gabriel, "Shall this come to be seeing as I know naught of man nor of such desires?" And the angel said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall be with thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore that holy thing born of thee shall be called the Son of God, for with Him, nothing is impossible." ~~their side.~~

My mother knew then a fear that she would faint, ^{fall away before him,} but she only replied, "Be it according to thy word," ~~and~~ and in such an instant, even as the angel arose and departed, so did my mother know that much had happened and she had conceived and was with child. For she breathed of an air sweeter than any garden, and it was not like any other breath she had taken.

On the consequence, came the unruly passages of a woman who is pregnant, ^{and} they visited her in the next weeks and small illness followed upon small illness; it was forty days from the time she had been seen by the angel that she told Joseph of how she was pregnant.

Now, Joseph was a narrow man, and few were ~~the~~ the Essenes

~~who~~ were more observant, but Joseph had much belief in the virtue of my mother, having prayed beside her often; thereby was he ready not to have neighbors ^{pointing} ~~who would point~~ at her, and so he made plans to hide her away with his relatives of another town. Yet as it transpired, there was ^{no} ~~not~~ such need. In a dream ^{came} ~~did~~ an angel of the Lord ^{he said!} ~~appear~~ to Joseph, and ~~say~~ "Joseph, thou son of David, take Mary as your wife. For she has conceived by no man but was visited only by the Holy Ghost and so can bring forth a son who will save all of our people from their sins."

And Joseph awoke from his sleep with the conviction that they must be wed forthwith and he took Mary as his wife and was scrupulous. He knew her not nor did he desire to know her until she brought forth her firstborn who is myself. And they called me Jesus, which in Nazareth, by our rough dialect, is Yeshua, and as Yeshua was I called until the age of thirty when I went to visit John the Baptist and was blessed by him and would spend forty days on a mountain in the wilderness, at the end of which was one day of discourse with the Devil, ^{did I come} ~~and then I came~~ down from such a mountain to go forth on my mission. ^{And it} ~~Only then~~ was ^{then} ~~it~~ that others began

to speak of me as Jesus, ⁷³ but of all that is there much to
 come.

Joseph was of ancient ancestry ~~born in the~~ ^{born in the} ~~lineage of the house of King David~~ ^{lineage of the house of King David} ~~and Mary~~ ^{and Mary} ~~was it necessary before I was born that Joseph and~~ ^{was it necessary before I was born that Joseph and} ~~Mary should travel with me heavy in her womb all of three~~ ^{Mary should travel with me heavy in her womb all of three} ~~days from Nazareth in Galilee down to Judea into the very~~ ^{days from Nazareth in Galilee down to Judea into the very} ~~city of King David that is called Bethlehem, and such a~~ ^{city of King David that is called Bethlehem, and such a} ~~journey was made because of Joseph's desire that the first~~ ^{journey was made because of Joseph's desire that the first} ~~child of Mary be born in Bethlehem where Joseph had been~~ ^{child of Mary be born in Bethlehem where Joseph had been} ~~born, and the noble ancestors of his family, Joseph, etc.~~ ^{born, and the noble ancestors of his family, Joseph, etc.} ~~There in Bethlehem, was I delivered to the light of a candle,~~ ^{There in Bethlehem, was I delivered to the light of a candle,} ~~and wrapped in swaddling clothes, and my mother gave birth in~~ ^{and wrapped in swaddling clothes, and my mother gave birth in} ~~a manger which, as all know by now, (never should they know~~ ^{a manger which, as all know by now, (never should they know} ~~what I am) was due to our need for shelter since there was~~ ^{what I am) was due to our need for shelter since there was} ~~no room at the inn. And indeed Mary and Joseph were turned~~ ^{no room at the inn. And indeed Mary and Joseph were turned} ~~away because of all that accompanied the birth of an infant~~ ^{away because of all that accompanied the birth of an infant} ~~in a manger. Indeed, who will be there to clean after~~ ^{in a manger. Indeed, who will be there to clean after} ~~the birth? I do not know if that is why the star of gentle~~ ^{the birth? I do not know if that is why the star of gentle}

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Joseph was of ancient ancestry ^{from} ~~for he belonged to the~~ descendants of the house of King David, ^{was he} ~~and was thereby~~ very proud; so was it necessary before I was born that Joseph and Mary should travel with me heavy in her womb all of three days ^{south} ~~from Nazareth in Galilee down to Judea into~~ the very city of King David that is called Bethlehem, and such a journey was meet because of Joseph's desire that the first child of Mary be born in Bethlehem where Joseph had been born, and the noble ancestors of his family, ~~long-gone~~. So, there in Bethlehem, was I delivered to the light of a candle, ^{was} ~~and wrapped~~ in swaddling clothes, and my mother gave birth in a manger which, as all know by now, (even should they know naught else) was due to our need for shelter since there was no room at the inn. And indeed Mary and Joseph were turned away because of all that accompanies the birth of an infant in a strange place; indeed, who will be there to clean ^{all (more)} ~~after~~ ^{such delivery} ~~the birth?~~ I do not know if that is why the odor of gentle

animals and the smell of hay brings me peace, but love rises into my hand from the hide of such beasts, and I offer what is warm in me for return, so that later when I obtained the power to bless, I often put such gifts of the spirit upon barns and mangers, ^{for favors from the Lord} but then who has more need than the husbandman as he labors to provide food to multitudes?

That would be the true story of my birth ^{and not} but for the plenitude of tales told by my disciples who brought forth ^{little} a host of many angels to surround the hour. Yet ~~not~~ much more is true than that a few shepherds were keeping guard over their flocks that night in the fields surrounding the manger and ^{they} did come upon my mother and father and my own presence soon after I was born, ~~and~~ my mother would assert in much certainty that the moonlight on that eve had more radiance by far than other nights; in later years, she would speak of an angel who had come into the fields to tell the shepherds: "I bring you tidings of great joy for unto you this day is born Christ the Messiah of the Lord." And Luke in his gospel was bound to have the angel saying more, but then Luke was allied with Paul in the building of community among those who would worship my name in many churches throughout the world after I was gone, and so Luke did add much language to simple

matters, as in declaring: "With the angel was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men.'" And Luke even would have had it that the shepherds made my birth known throughout the world, but of this I would take exception. ~~For~~ ^M my years were quiet when I was a boy.

So may it even be that the shepherds hearkened to the radiance of the moon outside the manger and spoke much of it in all the places near to Jerusalem. ~~For~~ ^I it is said that Herod, King of Israel, heard of such matters and was troubled, and spoke to his chief priests and to his scribes of how word of a new and most holy birth was descending upon his court from many places. Indeed, by the extent of these tales, did King Herod hear of my being born not only in Bethlehem but in many mangers girding the hills of Jerusalem and much did this vex Herod and put him at great determination to discover the whereabouts of this babe who might be a future king. Herod even made study of the scrolls and saw that the prophets had spoken of such matters taking place in the land of Judah: "For out of thee, Bethlehem, shall come a governor that shall rule my people, Israel."

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In that year of my birth Herod was already an old king. When young, he had been mighty in reknown, and handsome as are few, and was brave more than others; all agreed he was the greatest warrior ~~within~~ in Israel, and with a multiplicity of lusts: He had ten wives. Nor could any noble be his equal at hunting or sport, indeed, none.

Yet, the Hebrews loved him not. For he was also an Idumean from south of Judea and thereby a Jew, but only by half, and Caesar had made him emperor of all Jews through declaration from Rome. For this reason, was Herod hated by many including all most devout among us, and he put graven images of the Roman eagle on the gates of our Great Temple in Jerusalem even if such is forbidden by the Commandments. Moreover, did Herod have a life full of uncleanness and foul *spirit* ~~judgment~~. Few were the Jews who did not know of the array of his bad deeds, yet none was worse than the manner of execution of his beloved wife, Mariamne, and she was his most

^{but}
 beloved, yet he was afflicted with suspicion so dark that he
 could not trust her fidelity, and became convinced that she
 would destroy him by treachery, whereupon he had ^{this} his beloved
 Mariamne struck down. Afterwards, he mourned her and so
 much, that he gave large favors to her two sons with him,
 each of whom now sought to murder ^{them} his father even as he had
 slain their mother, and they plotted and were discovered and
 were ^{in hurry} beheaded by Herod. ^{Whereupon} Then ^{was} it said by the Emperor
 Augustus in Rome: "Better to be Herod's swine than his son."
 And that was much repeated among the Jews.

Also did I learn from the account of Joseph that, as
 Herod grew older, so did he lose more of his reason ^{and more} until the
 greatest of his fears was that ^{this} the babe, born in a manger,
 would replace him. Thereby, even as he was sick and close to
 dying, so did he call wise men into council and inquire of
 them on which night these shepherds had seen the moon become
 so bright, and Herod sent three of his wise men to Bethlehem,
 and told them, or at least so it is said in Matthew: "Go and
 search diligently for the young child and when you have found
 him, bring me word that I may come and worship him as well."
 On which word the wise men left from the Great Temple for
 their short journey. And on the first night they saw a star

in the east which passed above them and moved to the south until in a few hours they came to a manger near Bethlehem and fell down before Mary and Joseph and worshipped me. So it is told. And they opened chests with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh--which is not true, and all should know, for if there had been many presents, Joseph and Mary would have spoken of such in the years that followed. But indeed they offered a gift of greater value inasmuch as these wise men gave warning to Joseph that he should not go back to any land governed by Herod. Indeed, these wise men did not return either, but departed to far-off countries in the hour after recognizing my birth. Nor did Joseph wait until morning but took Mary and myself away in stealth from Bethlehem and traveled all the way into Egypt and lived there until the death of Herod, which would ensue before another year was spent. Yet did Herod exact vengeance most terrible, for he was wroth in that excess of madness peculiar to old men who are in terror of their old deeds and so seek to bury them with more evil acts, and Herod sent forth soldiers to Bethlehem with orders to slay all children born nigh upon the time of my own birth. And the words of the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled: "Lamentation and weeping and mourning, and

Rachel was weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not."

So it was only after Herod had expired that an angel of the Lord came again to Joseph and said to him in the midst of his dream: "Arise, and take this young child and his mother and go back into the land of Israel, for the king who sought this child's life is now dead." And so Joseph returned in the direction of Judea, ^{if yes} but when he heard that Herod had been followed by still another of his sons, the cruellest, named Archelaus, Joseph again felt great fear and turned aside from Bethlehem to go north for three days until he had returned to that village in the hills which is Nazareth, and as such was it written before it ensued; in the words of the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

And when I was told this story in my twelfth year on our return from Jerusalem, so must I have been much aware of the deaths of the many children of Bethlehem and the lamentations and mourning that followed upon it, wherefore I decided at the funeral of Joseph that the powers I had demonstrated before the priests of the Great Temple in my twelfth year had come to me from the spirits of these many children who had died in my place. And I knew that they had left me with a

debt inasmuch as I must now be faithful to the great gifts
 they had relinquished *to the Holy Ghost by such*
early deaths.

Now must I speak a little of my life from the time I was
 born unto the time I was twelve. For in Sighet we had a
 life like others and Joseph who, in all ways but one, was my
 father, had become such a devout man that he spent much time
 in the modest house of prayer that was our small synagogue
 and often studied from those few scrolls to be found in the
 synagogue of such a small place, and he would read in the
 language of the ancient Israelites. And from that time when
 I was four was I sent to school in the house of prayer and
 there instructed, so I knew many of the ordinances that had
 come to us from Moses inasmuch as each of the Ten
 Commandments had given birth to another ten and these hundred
 in turn another ten hundred, until the law of the Jews by the
 year of my birth was a cumbersome mass inasmuch as laws and we
 knew the five books of the Pentateuch which are Genesis,
 Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and the book of Deuteronomy. And
 I also studied the sayings of Elijah, and Isaiah and Ezekiel

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Now must I speak a little of my life from the time I was born unto the time I was twelve. For in Nazareth we had a life like others and Joseph who, in all ways but one, was my father, had become such a devout man that he spent much time in the modest house of prayer that was our small synagogue and often studied from those few scrolls to be found in the synagogue of such a small place, and he would read in the language of the ancient Israelites. And from that time when I was four was I sent to school in the house of prayer and there instructed, so I knew many of the ordinances that had come to us from Moses inasmuch as each of the Ten Commandments had given birth to another ten and these hundred in turn ^{produced} another ten hundred, until the law of the Jews by the year of my birth was a compendium most immense of laws and we knew the five books of the Pentateuch which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and the book of Deuteronomy. ⁷ And I also studied the sayings of Elijah, and Elisha and Ezekiel

and Isaiah and much of what had not been written in our scrolls was remembered and spoken by those who passed on the word from great-grandfather to great-grandchild. So had I not been wholly unprepared to talk to the priests of the Great Temple in Jerusalem, being full of the spirit of the miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha and could explain to Joseph on our trip back to Nazareth, inasmuch as he consulted me on my opinion, that the Lord could not be pleased with the people of Israel since He had granted of late no miracles fitting to our needs, and Joseph had replied: "Now is the time of the Romans, and Israelites must live under the yoke. It is meet. For thereby we repay the Lord for our sins."

"But when the Messiah comes," I said to Joseph, "he will bring miracles,"

"When comes the Messiah?" he asked of me.

If he still treated me as a child, nonetheless did he deem me worthy of respect through the circumstances of my birth, but until the day that I spoke aloud in the Temple, he had not seen me as more than ordinary by any other way. Yet now as he recalled how even the High Priest had come to listen before I was done, Joseph's spirit was full of joy on our return and this despite our danger each night of

encountering brigands. And so he said to me with a light in his eye, "Ye who know more than any, tell of when we will see the Messiah."

"That will be ³~~only~~," I said, "when God believes ^{the} ~~A~~ year has arrived in which to change the hearts of men."

"All powers are possible for the Almighty," said Joseph.

To which I replied: "All but a power to change the hearts of men."

"So do you speak," he said, "but you do not know," and there was that in his tone to tell me I must now be silent for fear of giving great displeasure to the Lord, ^{but} ~~but~~ to myself I said, "I will try to change the hearts of men." A great peace full of sweetness came upon me then as if an angel had heard what I did not say aloud and had brought benefices from that Father who was other than Joseph.

When we were back to Nazareth, I had dreams where I spoke to God and He returned to me in His words, but in truth, I knew not what to believe, and could not see myself as His son, for in my heart I could understand no reason why the Lord would choose a woman from a simple family when it was Joseph, not Mary, who could speak of ancestors back through many generations to David the King. Yet from scrolls

I had read and with much discussion of text in our school, so did I also know that the Lord looked upon rich women and their jewels as next to harlots, even as those of us who were Essenes looked so upon rich women, but still I was not at ease with the Lord, even if He had decided to choose a common person like myself, no, not by any way was I at ease, being not only in awe of His majesty but in fear of His wrath.

in the scrolls
Such wrath was vast. I thought of the days of the flood, *as recounted* when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth and that every imagination and the thoughts of his heart was evil continually and the Lord even repented that He had made man upon the earth for it grieved Him in His heart and the Lord even said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the creeping things.'" *9* And then I also thought of the great cry that arose out of every house in Egypt on the night when the Lord slew all the firstborn, from the firstborn of Pharoah even to the firstborn of the poorest Egyptian hut in the sand, even to the captive in the dungeon. There was not an Egyptian house where there was not one dead. And I repeated His words: "I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and to

the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me," and I knew the Lord ^{even} ~~often~~ thought of wreaking ^{such} (destruction upon His own people. And I remembered how the Lord had said to Moses, "Behold, these people will rise up and go a-whoring after the Gods of strangers, and will forsake Me and break My covenant and then shall My anger be kindled against them," ~~and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured and many evils and troubles shall befall them.~~" So did He also speak of the limitless fire that would be kindled from His anger until it "shall burn unto the lowest hell and shall consume the earth with her increase and shall set afire the foundations of the mountains. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat and with bitter destruction. I shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also and the man with gray hair. Indeed would I scatter them into all corners were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy." And that occasioned me great confusion. For in the midst of God's wrath, yet would He still take cognizance of the wrath of His enemy. [?] So I wondered how large could such an enemy be, yet was I no longer knowing in my confusion, thinking of all He had said in the scrolls of how he was a Lord immense beyond measure, ^{but still}

~~Yet~~ did he also see Himself in contest among other Gods? [¶] I
do not know if I felt His wrath because of having such
thoughts in my dream but a great fever ^{came} ~~did come~~ upon me and I
was ill near unto death in my twelfth year and on into my
thirteenth year was I weak after our journey home from
Jerusalem and I ~~did~~ ^{did} forget ^{important to} almost all of that which Joseph
had ~~told~~ ^{told} me on those three days of travelling back to
Nazareth. [¶] And when I recovered from fever, I was again like
other children although now a young man for I was a day more
than thirteen. And so I began work as an apprentice in the
shop where Joseph was master carpenter and learned much from
him and spent seven years as a simple apprentice and then
seven again as a full apprentice until I could say that I was
a young master of carpentry. [¶] And the first seven years were
spent acquiring the wisdom of how to make mud-bricks and
build framing for roofs and doors and windows. Also did I
learn to build beds and tables, stools and cabinets, boxes of
all size, and plows and yokes for oxen. By my second
apprenticeship of another seven years did I work in Sepphoris
which was the capital of Galilee and an hour's walk from
Nazareth, and there did I finish my education as a young
master by learning to work upon fine houses with walls of

stone and furniture to be fashioned of the finest kind, and Joseph taught me much for he knew many arts.

-8-

Joseph used to say: "Where wood can¹⁵ be joined to wood by ^{that} the carpenter who loves the subtlety of the joint, so will one board of wood cleave to another, as in a marriage that is blessed. But planks joined by nails look to fall apart even as a nail rusts or a marriage is corroded by adultery."

So was I never given tools that were made of iron until after I had served my first apprenticeship of seven years with tools of bronze, and Joseph spoke to me always of obstacles faced by carpenters in other lands and ancient times, and he would tell of how Egyptians would fashion small chests of great loveliness, even if in their earliest days they had no ^{better} more ~~for~~ wood ~~working~~ than acacia and sycamore, or fig and tamarisk, all knotty and too fibrous, and thereby were obliged to finish all surfaces with plaster, or paint and gold leaf, so that it was only later, after trade with Lebanon had commenced for cedar, cypress, juniper, pine and yew as well as ebony from Punt, that these Egyptians could

make their finest chests, but by then they knew to use ivory for fine inlay and could excise all knots in inferior wood, and cover such defects with veneer using many small chips for a marquetry. So the deeds of Egyptians in carpentry, even when limited to bronze tools, were more beautiful than our own despite the softness of their chisels and adzes. Even to make a round hole in wood required much care then, nor were their bow drills the equal of the brace drill Joseph would employ which was made of iron. Still, the Egyptians had been masters of joints and their work knew mitres, shoulder mitres, dovetail mitres, and the dowels of hard wood and bronze pins.

Now, in our work, we had iron and indeed the use of lead to work the iron into steel was known to us, and in Sepphoris we would see swords that came from smelters so far away as ~~Abyssinia~~ and Damascus where men knew how to turn steel into cutlery and fine weapons, but then, steel was more costly than gold.

Still, we had many woods with which to work: maple, beech, oak, yew, fir, lime, and cedar, and I recall how I learned to look upon oak, whose wood was hard, ^{as growing for a door,} and upon maple which was supple for beds, and cedar that was sweet-smelling

for chests. Sycamore, holly, lime and boxwood did I also use for turning legs of chairs; and for tool handles did we look ^{to} ~~for~~ the wood of wild olive, excellent in its hardness, as was elm or ash. And citron wood, even as with steel, was more expensive than gold, but we used it for the fine veneers of chests, as also ^{were} ~~was~~ employed terebinth and palm, the alder root and the wood from a holly tree.

I had friends in other shops in Sepphoris who ^{were learning} ~~wished to~~ learn ~~how~~ to plate fine objects in gold and silver or ^{to} ~~use~~ horn and ivory for inlay, and some of us even spoke of migrating to Rome so that we might apprentice our skills to great masters, but such were only the dreams of apprentices, ~~and~~ ^{if} indeed I received much mockery from others since I, like my family, observed numerous practices of purity, (even to abstention from the use of iron ^{to} ~~tols~~ when building an altar) whereas Rome was licentious. It was even said that the Emperor and Empress indulged in practices about which none of us could speak for fear of ^{sores on} ~~burning~~ our tongues.

For that matter my trade was ^{often} ~~for the most part~~ enough for me, and I was proud of the tools within my box and they were a rasp, a plane, a hammer, an auger, a gimlet, an adze, a cubit rule, a saw, and chisels for paring, as well as a

gouge; all such were mine, and I knew how to set the teeth of my saw so that the dust flew out from the cut with each pull and again on each push. Then was I also adept with brace and drill, a claw hammer, and a draw knife. And in the last year of my second apprenticeship, did I even acquire my own lathe, becoming thereby a young master in the craft of carpentry and knew how to season wood in all seasons by stripping the bark from certain trees to dry them before they were felled yet could separate others who by nature ~~being~~ ^{had to be} dry, ~~were~~ stored away for a year under cover of fresh manure, which we renewed from time to time, in order that such wood when worked did not split.

Also did I learn how to make fir ~~fit~~ ^{offer} for flooring, and we said many prayers over such wood ~~that~~ ^{in order that} it not burn ~~for~~ ^{impressed upon} fir seemed attracted to fire. And other prayers were learned for winter oak, ~~for~~ turkey oak, and beech, all of which were liable to decay. And I knew how alder was excellent for the foundations of small houses since the wood did not perish underground being too pure in nature to rot. And cypress was looked upon as blessed, for it resisted the worm; birch could ~~also~~ be chosen for foundations. Heavy, it would not rise with flooding.

If I speak much of foundations and floorings, so did we also work on roofs, and yet in truth, even in Sepphoris was I not only a carpenter but, by times, was ^{part} back in my first apprenticeship, a laborer covered with mud when we made bricks for the walls of ordinary houses and did employ the Greek measure of dimensions, five palms square was a brick for public buildings and four palms square for a man's home. And we covered such bricks with limestone which, being porous, would take a moist plaster, and I knew how to burn fragments of this limestone to make a stucco upon which others could paint.

Much knowledge of my craft was acquired in the art of steaming long thin pieces of a wood of wavy grain around a carved template and of those grains I used, the first in esteem were the tiger-striped, the panther-spotted, and those we called maculate, inasmuch as a swarm of bees could have been living in the grain. And I would speak of the beauty of citron wood which had many little waves and small spirals as if one were looking upon wine mixed with honey and I learned to polish with oil of juniper and oil of cedar compounded well with beeswax and among some of us grew an art to stain and polish one wood until it looked like another.

~~For~~ ^{If} Joseph ^{master of masonry} was a complete carpenter and taught me much, yet did he also give me instruction on those arts where he was not a master; ^{still} but much he did understand about red basalt and brown or cream limestone from Tivoli, and travertine marble, which cracks in fire although it is immune to ice, which ice came upon us on occasion in Nazareth in winter, for we lived among the hills. And Joseph told me, although I never saw it, about a substance called pozzolana, which was a volcanic earth in the lands south of Rome; pozzolana, mixed with lime, became cement. Which led me to think of the wisdom of the Lord who knew the earth so well that heavy soil thrown out of its bed by the voice of His volcanoes could yet be treated to take up a new nature and now was determined to hold all stones together. And although I did not know whereof I was meditating, still did I think much on the nature of the Lord who was my Father and of all the resources of His Kingdom that we learned to work upon with our hands.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE SON

-1-

In those days, I was the one who came up from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the River Jordan. And Mark, in writing his gospel, said that when I was with John the Baptist, and rose up out of the water, so did I see the heavens open "and a spirit like a dove descending, and there came a voice from Heaven saying, 'Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'"

After which, was said by Mark, "And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness, and He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and He was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him."

That is not untrue, yet its truth is like unto an acorn wherein the great oak is its verity. I would not say that

Mark brought false message, no more than I would speak ill of an acorn. Nor would I deride others who come later such as Matthew, Luke or John. Still did they leave errors in recounting my days and many were the pious sayings they gave to me which were often never said, and sometimes did they describe me as gentle when I was wroth of voice. They did not know me, and so told no more than what others related as my sayings; such gospel is to be leaned upon no more than a bush separated from its roots that blows across a field like a dry thing. Besides, I am the Son of Man, and can speak for myself, nor have I forgotten even one hour of what happened to me, no more than a new coin would forget the die who minted it.

So I will proceed with my true account of the gospel as it was witnessed by me, and if there are some who would ask how the words I speak were written, I would answer: That is a mystery but of no great import; the Lord often spoke through me and I uttered many words that were not mine but His. Nor did I lack for scribes in the hundred years after my death nor in all centuries following. Look then upon this gospel set down by one who is no longer among the living as no more than a miracle of small dimension. But then, my

gospel, as is true of the others, is an account of miracles. So my words need give no pause. Look upon them as a warrant of my days. May it be set down with respect for much of what has already been told, yet still must my gospel explain more concerning my journeys than others are able to reveal.

-2-

In the early years of my apprenticeship as a carpenter, the work would be heaviest when splitting a log to shape our planks. We would use the head of an axe to strike upon a wedge until the wedge divided the trunk along its length, whereupon we split it by the length again, and then again, until eight or sixteen such divisions had been made. And it took a master carpenter to guide the placement of the wedges.

Once, however, that our planks were shaped, which involved much trimming with axes, then could we obtain a communion with the wood. For never did I forget that the first tree in the Garden grew apples endowed with knowledge of good and evil; often it seemed to me that much good and evil was still in the will and temper of our wood: One had to respect the spirit therein. A fine piece labored upon for days could betray the tool upon the smallest mistake; sometimes, one's wood might split in treachery for no mistake

at all, but rather out of the knowledge of good and evil and much desire to do the latter.

And I also knew wood that was kin to a dear friend who served my wishes and guided my chisel, and there was wood that resisted the drill whereas other planks would yield with comely grace as if enabled by the hole to breathe, and breathe better. There was wisdom to be respected in this treatment of wood and I used to feel honorable doing such work, and did it so for many years. The scent of a good plank properly shaped for placement gave pleasure since there was concupiscence of spirit between the wood and one's hand-- I know not how else to say it, but then being an Essene did not give much to say of such matters; of all Jews we were the strictest in observance and certainly did not believe in gods of various description as did the Romans; so it was not meet to speak of communion with wood.

Besides I was as devout as my father on earth, who was Joseph, and he wore white robes whenever not at labor, and washed such robes frequently, and often with travail at such time as our river would run dry and our wells became low; to wash our clothes when there was scarcity of water was to suffer with one's skin from the harsh ashes of limestone that

we used then to cleanse ourselves.

Thereby was it said of us as Essenes that we were a sect which must soon die out considering how the aim of each Essene was to live in such cleanliness that he would never take a wife for too little, or, if with wife, would lie with her only on such occasions as God said to make a child, whereby, if the Lord never spoke, children could not be forthcoming among Essenes.

And therefore was it also said of us that we needed always to make new converts, in order that we not die out. I, being so raised, was instructed to believe that women, if one did not know their nature, were not to be entered, and I even thought seldom on such matters, although, given the nature of my mother's conception of me, it was meet that I, in such great part His son, if not indeed entirely His son, did comprehend that God would not wish me to spend my hours on lascivious pursuit.

So it is that my communion with other spirits in those years was nearest while working with the wood of God's trees and much they taught me about good and evil, until I was even ready to notice that an evil man could not pass by a fine tree without saddening its leaves.

Joseph who had imparted it to me. But now I was a man, and he was old and his memory had grown weak. So maybe he could not recall that he had related it to me.

Was and I able to ponder -3- long upon what I had been told when I was twelve and we were returning from Jerusalem.

Now in the time of which I write, so was I still a carpenter at the age of thirty and had passed through my apprenticeship under Joseph for twice seven years and was now a master, but if it be asked whether in my youth, other apprentices had jealousy of me because they looked upon Joseph as my father, I would answer that he served God best by treating all of his workers with as much respect as those woods he fashioned for cabinets. Never was I his favorite in these years of apprenticeship, but on certain days, when I would do well and be most scrupulous among the young men of our shop, Joseph would then nod and say, "Thou wouldst make a good carpenter, if that had been intended." And who could say why he spoke in such odd manner, inasmuch as his head was turned to the side, as though to press his lips upon a secret that turned like a wild creature in his bosom even if it were not truly a secret, since I had been told the true story of my birth from the time I was twelve, in which year it was

Joseph who had imparted it to me. But now I was a man, and he was old and his memory had grown weak. So maybe he could not recall that he had related it to me.

Nor was I able to ponder for long upon what I had been told when I was twelve and we were returning from Jerusalem since I came down with a great fever upon reaching our home in Nazareth, and so all that Joseph had told me became curious like a dream one cannot remember but knows, and yet does not know. Only when I was thirty and mourning Joseph's death did I recall all of his words and indeed did I then find the need to visit John the Baptist, of which visit there is much more to say but only in its place.

Speaking of those years from the age of twelve until I was thirty, mayhap it was not the fever that made me forget what Joseph had said so much as that I had little desire to remember. For it was without purpose in my life and most disturbing on such rare occasion as I recalled it like a dream. Yet Joseph had told me all I needed to know even if I had not known what to do with such knowledge, yet did he impart it to me on our return to Nazareth from the Great Temple when I was twelve. In those years, it was the custom of my family to journey to Jerusalem in the week before

Passover, and this we would do in company with a host of other Essenes from Nazareth, rich and poor together, all travelling in a host wearing our white garb to show our dedication to observances of the law, and we were comfortable in the size of our numbers; we did not fear brigands on the road; we were many. And it was a journey of three days on foot from dawn to dark to traverse the hills and valleys between Nazareth in Galilee and Jerusalem in Judea. And my parents went to this Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem every year until I was twelve, and then they went no more.

Yet, on that last year was it different. For when they turned to go back to Nazareth from Jerusalem, I was not ready. Nor can I explain how it was, but I stayed behind in the Great Temple and since most of the other children from Nazareth were walking together, my parents did not notice. Nor did my mother take awareness of my absence until a journey of half a day had been spent on the road back.

Yet when they looked for me among kinfolk and neighbors, then were Joseph and Mary full of disturbance and on their quick return on foot to Jerusalem still did they not find me until coming upon my presence in the Temple where I was sitting in the midst of priests and doctors, Pharisees and

Sadducees and scribes, and was asking of them many questions (which was, perhaps, permitted of me, a boy, because of my garb as an Essene). And to the astonishment of my parents, so was I offering answers to my own questions and behaving as if much learned.

There was long discussion in such days whether the Word had been with God from the commencement and indeed, when John would later write his gospel, all remembered his first sentence: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But in that year when I was twelve, there was dispute among the priests of the Temple: Was the Word present before the beginning?

For as they would discuss the matter: Was it the Word of God which created our flesh or was our flesh made by God with no Word even as He had created the flesh of animals? So, I listened to noted doctors in the Temple that day and they spoke of how in the beginning the Word must have been said in order to form our flesh; otherwise, we should be no better than the animals. Whereupon, they argued, could there be any reason not to raise slaves in order to consume such slaves afterward as meat like tame beasts of a flock? How else, unless the Word made our flesh?

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It was then I began to speak. According to my Joseph and Mary, who entered the chamber even then, such utterances from the mouth of a twelve-year-old were as a miracle. Since I am without recollection of what I said, the Lord must have been speaking through me. And for the first time!

Indeed, in later years, after I had begun my mission, my mother would claim that my words were so holy then she could not give shape to such pronouncements with her own voice no more than she could pronounce aloud the name of the Lord. But as it was told to me later by Joseph, I did say to the assembled priests and doctors that even before we had need to look upon the Word as flesh, we did well to gain understanding that the Word lived in water. For as all know, on the coldest day of winter, or on arising in the dawn, the breath of a man is like unto a cloud.

So is our breath cousin to a small sea, and it is upon this sea that the vessel of the Word can be borne. Whether of flesh or spirit, therefore, is the Word one with God inasmuch as all the waters are His. Even as all the rivers go down to the great sea.

And when I was older, and no longer a carpenter and had left Nazareth to preach the gospel, so did I also know by

then that the Word was indeed flesh. For if I had never obtained knowledge of a woman, still did I know that to whisper "I love you" into the ear of another was to awaken desire for the creation of another who is also flesh.

Of course, I did not enter discussion of such procreative matters when I was twelve, but still did I tell the august elders that the Word was in the mist that came from our mouths, and such wisdom proved astonishing to them. My mother would always say that the faces of these doctors, priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes, was engraved forever upon her heart. And in response to such happiness and wonder did Joseph decide at this juncture on our lonely return to Nazareth, while walking much alone (and all three of us in fear of brigands), that to gird our safe passage, he must tell me the true story of my birth.

-4-

Yet for me to understand what he imparted was not simple. For Joseph would not only bathe all of his body even to three times a day, but always wore white, and sometimes even when at work, and he adjured me constantly that it was better not to marry but to be seen by the Lord as even more devout than other Essenes. So it could not have been easy for Joseph to relate the true story of my conception and my birth. Yet, did he, and his words came back to me in all their clarity eighteen years later after he died and I was at the age of thirty and praying at his funeral. Clear as each word had been when I was young, so was it again and I remembered it all and knew for the first time to a certainty whose son was I.

Joseph, in the year before I was born, had been already espoused to my mother, Mary. Yet at that time had the angel Gabriel come down to Galilee and entered the bedchamber of Mary who was then a virgin and Gabriel said to her, and these

words are as Joseph said them to me upon hearing them later from Mary: "Hail, thou that art highly favored; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." Yet my mother was not only a virgin, and in such virginity much fortified by her mother, but also an Essene, knowing much on how to safeguard chastity before marriage. Here, notwithstanding, was the angel Gabriel, dressed in white, present before her and as handsome as his own radiance. The white of his garments was like the light of the moon; she could see clearly how Gabriel was an angel. Still, did she wonder what manner of salutation was this.

And she felt weak before Gabriel as if her virtue were already in flux, and all her walls of determination were crumbled like sand. It was then that this angel, so near in her small room, which no man had ever entered before, said, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Those are the words that are told in the gospel of Luke and Luke thought they had been uttered from the mouth of the angel Gabriel, and indeed they must be of the general truth, although, according to my mother, the angel said less and she knew more.

Yet, in all her weakness, did she still say to Gabriel, "Shall this come to be seeing as I know naught of man nor of such desires?" And the angel said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall be with thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore that holy thing born of thee shall be called the Son of God, for with Him, nothing is impossible."

My mother knew then a fear that she would fall away before him, but she only replied, "Be it according to thy word." And in such an instant, even as the angel arose and departed, so did my mother know that much had happened and she had conceived and was with child. For she breathed of an air sweeter than any garden, and it was not like any other breath she had taken.

On the consequence, came the unruly passages of a woman who is pregnant, and they visited her in the next weeks and small illness followed upon small illness; it was forty days

from the time she had been seen by the angel that she told Joseph of how she was pregnant.

Now, Joseph was a narrow man, and few Essenes were more observant, but Joseph had much belief in the virtue of my mother, having prayed beside her often; thereby was he ready not to have neighbors pointing at her, and so he made plans to hide her away with his relatives of another town. Yet as it transpired, was no such need. In a dream came an angel of the Lord to Joseph, and he said: "Joseph, thou son of David, take Mary as your wife. For she has conceived by no man but was visited only by the Holy Ghost and so can bring forth a son who will save all of our people from their sins."

And Joseph awoke from his sleep with the conviction that they must be wed forthwith and he took Mary as his wife and was scrupulous. He knew her not nor did he desire to know her until she brought forth her firstborn who is myself. And they called me Jesus, which in Nazareth, by our rough dialect, is Yeshua, and as Yeshua was I called until the age of thirty when I went to visit John the Baptist and was blessed by him and would spend forty days on a mountain in the wilderness, at the end of which was one day of discourse with the Devil; then did I come down from such a mountain to

go forth on my mission. And it was then that others began to speak of me as Jesus. But of all that is there much to come.

Joseph was of ancient ancestry from the descendants of the house of King David; whereby was he very proud; so was it necessary before I was born that Joseph and Mary should travel with me heavy in her womb all of those days north from Nazareth in Galilee down to the very city of King David that is called Bethlehem, and such a journey was most because of Joseph's desire that the first child of Mary be born in Bethlehem where Joseph had been born, and the noble ancestors of his family. So, there in Bethlehem, was I delivered to the light of a candle, and was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and my mother gave birth in a manger which, as all know by now, (and should they know naught else; yet due to our need for shelter since there was no room at the inn. And indeed Mary and Joseph were turned away because of all that accompanied the birth of an infant in a strange place; indeed, who will be there to clean all linen after each delivery?

-5-

Joseph was of ancient ancestry from the descendants of the house of King David; thereby was he very proud; so was it necessary before I was born that Joseph and Mary should travel with me heavy in her womb all of three days south from Nazareth in Galilee down to the very city of King David that is called Bethlehem, and such a journey was meet because of Joseph's desire that the first child of Mary be born in Bethlehem where Joseph had been born, and the noble ancestors of his family. So, there in Bethlehem, was I delivered to *the* light of a candle, and was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and my mother gave birth in a manger which, as all know by now, (even should they know naught else) was due to our need for shelter since there was no room at the inn. And indeed Mary and Joseph were turned away because of all that accompanies the birth of an infant in a strange place; indeed, who will be there to clean all linen after such delivery?

I do not know if that is why the odor of gentle animals and the smell of hay brings me peace, but love rises into my hand from the hide of such beasts, and I offer what is warm in me for return, so that later when I obtained the power to bless, I often put such gifts of the spirit upon barns and mangers. But then who has more need for favors from the Lord than the husbandman as he labors to provide food to multitudes?

That would be the true story of my birth and not the plenitude of tales told by my disciples who brought forth a host of angels to surround the hour. Yet little more is true than that a few shepherds were keeping guard over their flocks that night in the fields surrounding the manger and they did come upon my mother and father and my own presence soon after I was born. My mother would assert in much certainty that the moonlight on that eve had more radiance by far than other nights; in later years, she would speak of an angel who had come into the fields to tell the shepherds: "I bring you tidings of great joy for unto you this day is born Christ the Messiah of the Lord." And Luke in his gospel was bound to have the angel saying more, but then Luke was allied with Paul in the building of community among those who would

worship my name in many churches throughout the world after I was gone; so did Luke add much language to simple matters, as in declaring: "With the angel was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men.'" And Luke even would have had it that the shepherds made my birth known throughout the world, but of this would I take exception. My years were quiet when I was a boy.

So may it even be that the shepherds hearkened to the radiance of the moon outside the manger and spoke much of it in all the places near to Jerusalem. It is said that Herod, King of Israel, heard of such matters and was troubled, and spoke to his chief priests and to his scribes of how word of a new and most holy birth was descending upon his court from many places. Indeed, by the extent of these tales, did King Herod hear of my being born not only in Bethlehem but in many mangers girding the hills of Jerusalem and much did this vex Herod and put him at great determination to discover the whereabouts of this babe who might be a future king. Herod even made study of the scrolls and saw that the prophets had spoken of such matters taking place in the land of Judah:

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In that year of my birth Herod was already an old king. When young, he had been mighty in reknown, and handsome as are few, and was brave more than others; all agreed he was the greatest warrior in Israel, and with a multiplicity of lusts: He had ten wives. Nor could any noble be his equal at hunting or sport, indeed, none.

Yet, the Hebrews loved him not. For he was also an Idumean from south of Judea and thereby a Jew, but only by half, and Caesar had made him emperor of all Jews through declaration from Rome. For this reason, was Herod hated by many including all most devout among us, and he put graven images of the Roman eagle on the gates of our Great Temple in Jerusalem even if such is forbidden by the Commandments. Moreover, did Herod have a life full of uncleanness and foul spirit. Few were the Jews who did not know of the array of his bad deeds. Yet, none was worse than the manner of execution of his beloved wife, Mariamne, and she was his most

beloved, but he was afflicted with suspicion so dark that he could not trust her fidelity, and became convinced that she would destroy him by treachery, whereupon he had this beloved Mariamne struck down. Afterwards, he mourned her and so much, that he gave large favors to her two sons with him, each of whom now sought to murder their father even as he had slain their mother, and they plotted and were discovered and were, in turn, beheaded by Herod. Whereupon was it said by the Emperor Augustus in Rome: "Better to be Herod's swine than his son." And that was much repeated among the Jews.

Also did I learn from the account of Joseph that as Herod grew older, so did he lose more of his reason and more until the greatest of his fears was that this babe, born in a manger, would replace him. Thereby, even as he was sick and close to dying, so did he call wise men into council and inquire of them on which night these shepherds had seen the moon become so bright, and Herod sent three of his wise men to Bethlehem, and told them, or at least so it is said in Matthew: "Go and search diligently for the young child and when you have found him, bring me word that I may come and worship him as well." On which word the wise men left from the Great Temple for their short journey. And on the first

night they saw a star in the east which passed above them and moved to the south until in a few hours they came to a manger near Bethlehem and fell down before Mary and Joseph and worshipped me. So it is told. And they opened chests with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh--which is not true, and all should know, for if there had been many presents, Joseph and Mary would have spoken of such in the years that followed. But indeed they offered a gift of greater value inasmuch as these wise men gave warning to Joseph that he should not go back to any land governed by Herod. Indeed, these wise men did not return either, but departed to far-off countries in the hour after recognizing my birth.

Nor did Joseph wait until morning but took Mary and myself away in stealth from Bethlehem and traveled all the way into Egypt and lived there until the death of Herod, which would ensue before another year was spent.

Yet did Herod exact vengeance most terrible, for he was wroth in that excess of madness peculiar to old men who are in terror of their old deeds and so seek to bury them with more evil acts, and Herod sent forth soldiers to Bethlehem with orders to slay all children born nigh upon the time of my own birth. And the words of the prophet Jeremiah were

fulfilled: "Lamentation and weeping and mourning, and Rachel was weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not."

So it was only after Herod had expired that an angel of the Lord came again to Joseph and said to him in the midst of his dream: "Arise, and take this young child and his mother and go back into the land of Israel, for the king who sought this child's life is now dead." And so Joseph returned in the direction of Judea.

Yet, when he heard that Herod had been followed by still another of his sons, the cruellest, named Archelaus, Joseph again felt great fear and turned aside from Bethlehem to go north for three days until he had returned to that village in the hills which is Nazareth, and as such was it written before it ensued; in the words of the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

And when I was told this story in my twelfth year on our return from Jerusalem, so must I have been much aware of the deaths of the many children of Bethlehem and the lamentations and mourning that followed upon it, wherefore I decided at the funeral of Joseph that the powers I had demonstrated before the priests of the Great Temple in my twelfth year had

come to me from the spirits of these many children who had died in my place. And I knew that they had left me with a debt inasmuch as I must now be faithful to the great gifts they had relinquished to the Holy Ghost by such early death.

Now must I speak a little of my life from the time I was born unto the time I was twelve. For in Nazareth he had a life like others and Joseph who, in all ways but one, was my father, had become such a devout man that he spent much time in the quiet hours of prayer that was our small synagogue and often studied from those few scrolls to be found in the synagogue of such a small place, and he would read in the language of the ancient Israelites. And from that time when I was four was I sent to school in the house of prayer and there instructed, so I knew many of the ordinances that had come to us from Moses himself as soon as the Ten Commandments had given birth to another ten and these hundred in turn produced another ten hundred, until the law of the Jews by the year of my birth was a compendious most immense of laws and we knew the five books of the Pentateuch which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and the book of Deuteronomy.

And I also studied the sayings of Elijah, and
Elisha and Ezekiel and Isaiah and much of what had not been
written in our scrolls was remembered and spoken by those who
passed on the word from great-grandfather to great-grandchildren. So had I not been wholly unprepared to talk to

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Now must I speak a little of my life from the time I was born unto the time I was twelve. For in Nazareth we had a life like others and Joseph who, in all ways but one, was my father, had become such a devout man that he spent much time in the modest house of prayer that was our small synagogue and often studied from those few scrolls to be found in the synagogue of such a small place, and he would read in the language of the ancient Israelites. And from that time when I was four was I sent to school in the house of prayer and there instructed, so I knew many of the ordinances that had come to us from Moses inasmuch as each of the Ten Commandments had given birth to another ten and these hundred in turn produced another ten hundred, until the law of the Jews by the year of my birth was a compendium most immense of laws and we knew the five books of the Pentateuch which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and the book of Deuteronomy.

And I also studied the sayings of Elijah, and Elisha and Ezekiel and Isaiah and much of what had not been written in our scrolls was remembered and spoken by those who passed on the word from great-grandfather to great-grandchild. So had I not been wholly unprepared to talk to the priests of the Great Temple in Jerusalem, being full of the spirit of the miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha and could explain to Joseph on our trip back to Nazareth, inasmuch as he consulted me on my opinion, that the Lord could not be pleased with the people of Israel since He had granted of late no miracles fitting to our needs, and Joseph had replied: "Now is the time of the Romans, and Israelites must live under the yoke. It is meet. For thereby we repay the Lord for our sins."

"But when the Messiah comes," I said to Joseph, "he will bring miracles,"

"When comes the Messiah?" he asked of me.

If he still treated me as a child, nonetheless did he deem me worthy of respect through the circumstances of my birth, but until the day that I spoke aloud in the Temple, he had not seen me as more than ordinary by any other way. Yet now as he recalled how even the High Priest had come to

listen before I was done, Joseph's spirit was full of joy on our return and this despite our danger each night of encountering brigands. And so he said to me with a light in his eye, "Ye who know more than any, tell of when we will see the Messiah."

"That will be," I said, "when God believes the year has arrived in which to change the hearts of men."

"All powers are possible for the Almighty," said Joseph.

To which I replied: "All but a power to change the hearts of men."

"So do you speak," he said, "but you do not know," and there was that in his tone to tell me I must now be silent for fear of giving great displeasure to the Lord.

But to myself I said, "I will try to change the hearts of men." A great peace full of sweetness came upon me then as if an angel had heard what I did not say aloud and had brought benefices from that Father who was other than Joseph.

When we were back to Nazareth, I had dreams where I spoke to God and He returned to me in His words, but in truth, I knew not what to believe, and could not see myself as His son, for in my heart I could understand no reason why the Lord would choose a woman from a simple family when it

the captive in the dungeon. There was not an Egyptian house where there was not one dead. And I repeated His words: "I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me," and I knew the Lord even thought of wreaking such destruction upon His own people. And I remembered how the Lord had said to Moses, "Behold, these people will rise up and go a-whoring after the Gods of strangers, and will forsake Me and break My covenant and then shall My anger be kindled against them." So did He also speak of the limitless fire that would be kindled from His anger until it "shall burn unto the lowest hell and shall consume the earth with her increase and shall set afire the foundations of the mountains. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat and with bitter destruction. I shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also and the man with gray hair. Indeed would I scatter them into all corners were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy."

And that occasioned me great confusion. For in the midst of God's wrath, yet would He still take cognizance of the wrath of His enemy? So I wondered how large could such

yokes for oxen. By my second apprenticeship of another seven years did I work in Sepphoris which was the capital of Galilee and an hour's walk from Nazareth, and there did I finish my education as a young master by learning to work upon fine houses with walls of stone and furniture to be fashioned of the finest kind, and Joseph taught me much for he knew many arts.

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Joseph used to say: "Where wood is joined to wood by that carpenter who loves the subtlety of the joint, so will one board of wood cleave to another, as in a marriage that is blessed. But planks joined by nails look to fall apart even as a nail rusts or a marriage is corroded by adultery."

So was I never given tools that were made of iron until after I had served my first apprenticeship of seven years with tools of bronze, and Joseph spoke to me always of obstacles faced by carpenters in other lands and ancient times, and he would tell of how Egyptians would fashion small chests of great loveliness, even if in their earliest days they had no better for wood than acacia and sycamore, or fig and tamarisk, all knotty and too fibrous, and thereby were obliged to finish all surfaces with plaster, or paint and gold leaf, so that it was only later, after trade with Lebanon had commenced for cedar, cypress, juniper, pine and yew as well as ebony from Punt, that these Egyptians could

make their finest chests, but by then they knew to use ivory for fine inlay and could excise all knots in inferior wood, and cover such defects with veneer using many small chips for a marquetry. So the deeds of Egyptians in carpentry, even when limited to bronze tools, were more beautiful than our own despite the softness of their chisels and adzes. Even to make a round hole in wood required much care then, nor were their bow drills the equal of the brace drill Joseph would employ which was made of iron. Still, the Egyptians had been masters of joints and their work knew mitres, shoulder mitres, dovetail mitres, and the dowels of hard wood and bronze pins.

Now, in our work, we had iron and indeed the use of lead to work the iron into steel was known to us, and in Sepphoris we would see swords that came from smelters so far away as Damascus where men knew how to turn steel into cutlery and fine weapons, but then, steel was more costly than gold.

Still, we had many woods with which to work: maple, beech, oak, yew, fir, lime, and cedar, and I recall how I learned to look upon oak, whose wood was hard, as framing for a door, and upon maple which was supple for beds, and cedar that was sweet-smelling for chests. Sycamore, holly, lime

and boxwood did I also use for turning legs of chairs; and for tool handles did we look to the wood of wild olive, excellent in its hardness, as was elm or ash. And citron wood, even as with steel, was more expensive than gold, but we used it for the fine veneers of chests, as also were employed terebinth and palm, the alder root and the wood from a holly tree.

I had friends in other shops in Sepphoris who were learning to plate fine objects in gold and silver or to use horn and ivory for inlay, and some of us even spoke of migrating to Rome so that we might apprentice our skills to great masters, but such were only the dreams of apprentices.

Indeed I received much mockery from others since I, like my family, observed numerous practices of purity, (even to abstention from the use of iron tools when building an altar) whereas Rome was licentious. It was even said that the Emperor and Empress indulged in practices about which none of us could speak for fear of sores on our tongues.

For that matter my trade was often enough for me, and I was proud of the tools within my box and they were a rasp, a plane, a hammer, an auger, a gimlet, an adze, a cubit rule, a saw, and chisels for paring, as well as a gouge; all such

were mine, and I knew how to set the teeth of my saw so that the dust flew out from the cut with each pull and again on each push. Then was I also adept with brace and drill, a claw hammer, and a draw knife. And in the last year of my second apprenticeship, did I even acquire my own lathe, becoming thereby a young master in the craft of carpentry and knew how to season wood in all seasons by stripping the bark from certain trees to dry them before they were felled yet could separate others who by nature dry, had to be stored away for a year under cover of fresh manure, which we renewed from time to time, in order that such wood when worked did not split.

Also did I learn how to make fir for flooring, and we offered many prayers over such wood in order that it not burn. For fir seemed attracted to fire. And other prayers were impressed upon winter oak, turkey oak, and beech, all of which were liable to decay. And I knew how alder was excellent for the foundations of small houses since the wood did not perish underground being too pure in nature to rot. And cypress was looked upon as blessed, for it resisted the worm; birch could be chosen for foundations. Heavy, it would not rise with flooding.

If I speak much of foundations and floorings, so did we also work on roofs, and yet in truth, even in Sepphoris was I not only a carpenter but, by times, was put back in my first apprenticeship, a laborer covered with mud when we made bricks for the walls of ordinary houses and did employ the Greek measure of dimensions, five palms square was a brick for public buildings and four palms square for a man home. And we covered such bricks with limestone which, being porous, would take a moist plaster. And I knew how to burn fragments of this limestone to make a stucco upon which others could paint.

Much knowledge of my craft was acquired in the art of steaming long thin pieces of a wood of wavy grain around a carved template and of those grains I used, the first in esteem were the tiger-striped, the panther-spotted, and those we called maculate, inasmuch as a swarm of bees could have been living in the grain. And I would speak of the beauty of citron wood which had many little waves and small spirals as if one were looking upon wine mixed with honey and I learned to polish with oil of juniper and oil of cedar compounded well with beeswax and among some of us grew an art to stain and polish one wood until it looked like another.

If Joseph taught me much, yet did he also give instruction on those arts where he was not a master; still, much did he understand about red basalt and cream limestone from Tivoli, and travertine marble, which cracks in fire although it is immune to ice, which ice came upon us on occasion in Nazareth in winter, for we lived among the hills. And Joseph told me, although I never saw it, about a substance called pozzolana, which was a volcanic earth in the lands south of Rome; pozzolana, mixed with lime, became cement. Which led me to think of the wisdom of the Lord who knew the earth so well that heavy soil thrown out of its bed by the voice of His volcanoes could yet be treated to take up a new nature and now was determined to hold all stones together. And although I did not know whereof I was meditating, still did I think much on the nature of the Lord who was my Father and of all the resources of His Kingdom that we learned to work upon with our hands.