

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE SON

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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.

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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 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.

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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 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?

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 ^{many travels} 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.

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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.

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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:

"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 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.

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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

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.

Such wrath was vast. I thought of the days of the flood, as recounted in the scrolls, 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.'"

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 Pharaoh 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 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

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 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 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 forgot almost all of that which Joseph had imparted to 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.

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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.

So did my years pass until the thirty-first year of my life when Joseph died and I married him. He had been a good teacher and just and had imparted many skills to me. But now was I also distraught. For with Joseph's death came back to me all that he had recounted about my conception and birth.

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Nor was it long after the year I was thirty that I began to dream of the Great Temple in Jerusalem which I had not visited since my twelfth year. And I wondered if it were too late now for me to learn such crafts as casting in gold and silver, thereby to work upon the gold altar in the sanctuary and the candlestick of light and the pouring vessels and the censers of gold, and other golden ornaments within the Temple that would be mine to fashion for the Lord, who would see that I was able to fashion His vessels and His altar. In such times did I feel the power of greed in me and so could know how lust was stifling to the throat and not for those who would be modest in life.

So did my years pass until the thirty-first year of my life when Joseph died and I mourned him. He had been a good teacher and just and had imparted many skills to me. But so was I also distraught. For with Joseph's death came back to me all that he had recounted about my conception and birth

and I was as reborn. Now, I did not know how to look upon God if He were my Father, and so awesome and thereby strange. And I looked to seek wisdom from afar, and began to think of meeting John the Baptist.

Of him, much may be told, and it could even be said that I knew him before I could meet him: After the death of Joseph, I thought often of John the Baptist inasmuch as he was my cousin; moreover, had I heard from all in Nazareth that we had a prophet among us. Much had been spoken of my cousin during the last year when my mother had been in mourning for Joseph, and I knew that John was a holy man and yet of much ill-repute among the Pharisees in the temple in Nazareth, but then these Pharisees, being merchants of Nazareth and priests, were devout, but never as equal in devotion as those wearing the white garb of the Essenes; many Pharisees grew fat even as we Essenes grew thin. And these merchants had large families and those with wealth even moved to Sepphoris to build fine homes but would come back to our small temple for prayer and in their voices would little be said of John the Baptist agreeable to my ear.

John was my cousin, yet without relation of blood still would I have known much about him: his birth and mine were of

a similarity I pondered upon often in this last year.

His father, a priest of us Essenes named Zacharias, was also a descendant of the family of David and thereby related to Joseph. And the wife of Zacharias, Elizabeth, was of the daughters of Aaron; her ancestors knew Moses. Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were as thin as tall blades of grass who dry in summer drought, and thereby was each like unto an Essene of the Essenes. For both believed that the body was a living temple and so must serve in a holy war against the powers of evil.

On such understanding were they married for many years and were childless, and Elizabeth mourned how she was barren, and no longer young.

Yet, as I was told by my mother, it happened that on a given day, in one half year before I was conceived, Zacharias, alone by the altar, and performing a priest's office, saw an angel appearing before him and this angel was that same Gabriel who would speak to my mother in another six months. And Gabriel said: "Do not tremble, Zacharias, for Elizabeth has been heard by the Lord and she shall bear thee a son. You are to call him John and he shall be great in the sight of the Lord for this son, John the Baptist, will bring

many of the fallen children of Israel back to the Lord their God."

Now, Zacharias lived by observance and prayer; so he said to the angel: "How can I know of this? I am an old man and my wife is without youth." Then the angel grew angry and said unto him, "I stand in the presence of God, being sent to show you good tidings. But because you do not believe my words, behold, I now strike you dumb. You will be unable to speak until the day that Elizabeth bears her fruit." And when Zacharias came out of the temple, everyone on the steps marveled that he could not speak; when he beckoned to them and sought to utter a few words, they heard naught and could see but the straining of his throat.

He did return to his house all the same, and quickly, and marveled how soon after on that same day was he able to give issue to his wife Elizabeth, who thereupon conceived, and was so full of shame (yet so fearful that she would lose what God had contrived to give her) that she hid herself for five months.

But in the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth, Gabriel came to my mother, Mary, and she, knowing that God had visited her directly, departed from her home during the

time when Joseph was debating how to hide her among his family. It was then that Mary went up into the high hill country to the house of Zacharias, whereupon she saw Elizabeth, and gave devotion to her and salutation, kneeling before her to say, "Blessed art thou." Elizabeth heard these words and her babe, who would yet be John the Baptist, leaped in her womb for the first time whereupon Elizabeth knew how it was to be full of the Holy Ghost; she spoke out with a loud voice and with length of breath: "Blessed art thou, Mary, for you have honored me on this day, and my babe has turned in my womb and with exaltation and joy. All generations to come shall call you blessed."

And by these words did the voice of Elizabeth become so fixed in my mother's ear that even when I had become a man, so was there difficulty in living with my mother inasmuch as she was now so content with having been thus blessed that no one could say aught to her; her pride was even greater than her humility. Nor was it easy to contradict her will.

Nonetheless, she was an Essene and much devoted to our practices, and thereby believed that the lowly were superior to the mighty although nonetheless she kept saying, "He that is mighty has done to me great things." Nor did she ever

show hesitation to speak, and often would add, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away." And these are words she said, and they are in the gospel of Luke. Yet if I would ask how Luke obtained such words, word for word, and placed them properly, I do not know; unless it is due to the strength of my mother's sentiment which she related to so many when she was old, and I who would yet believe that the poor are to be exalted and the mighty to be scattered, can say that I owe much of the strength of such sentiments to Mary, and to her repetition of them.

Now, when John the Baptist was born and they came to circumcize him on the eighth day, it was thought by neighbors and cousins that they would call him Zacharias after his father, but his mother said, "No, he shall be called John," and the relatives of Zacharias replied, "None of thy kindred has been called ever by this name," and they made signs to Zacharias who still could not speak, but he, having retained the power to write, asked for a table and upon it put down these words: "His name is John." Then did they all marvel at that moment for the mouth of Zacharias opened, his tongue grew loose, and he spoke. And he gave praise to God for the

deliverance of his voice.

Yet when all neighbors and relatives had returned to their homes, so did fear come onto all of them in the dark hill country where they lived, and there were many who said, "What manner of child shall this be?" Yet, Zacharias, having regained his power of speech, was mighty in voice and blessed his son John and said, "Thou, child, shall be called the Prophet of the Highest for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord and give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, even as I have been given remission from my sin of doubting the words of the angel."

And John grew up, and as I was told, became as lean as his father and mother, and I never met him until my thirty-first year. But also did I know that he was strong in spirit and lived in the desert and preached with much belief and bathed often and would remonstrate with the people of Israel against their sins, preaching in such force and with such determination, that the High Priest sent Levites out from Jerusalem to ask: "Who art thou? Art thou the Christ?" For in those years was that our word for the Messiah. And it was Christ who would come to save the Jews.

But John said, "I baptize with water. I am not the

Christ."

"Then who art thou?" they asked. "Are you Elijah? Are you that prophet?"

And he said, "I walk in the steps of Elijah but I am not that prophet." Yet, did he not know? Who then was he?

They were wise men, these Levites, but their anger grew and they said, "Tell us who you are for we must give an answer to those who sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?"

And he answered, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' and those are the words of the prophet Isaiah."

Now these Pharisees said to him, "You perform baptisms yet you are not Christ nor Elijah nor art thou Isaiah?"

And John replied, "I baptize with water, no more. But there is one coming whom you do not know. He is coming after me and he is preferred above me by the Lord, and the laces of his shoes I am not worthy to unloose." And this was indeed said by John on the day before I went on my visit to him.

Indeed, the wild desert fields of disharmony in the hearts of those who came to him. Yet the wild honey gave warmth to this voice even as John repeated the words of Isaiah: "The crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth."

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And it is true that great curiosity had grown in me about the nature of this cousin, for it was said that he would only baptize in the wilderness, out to the east of Judea by the river Jordan, and that all who came to him had to confess their sins if they sought to be baptized in the Jordan. And they said of him, and such was true as I could see when I met him, that his clothes were of camel's hide, and he had but one girdle of such skin to conceal his loins and he washed every day and many times, being so open thereby to the sun that he was darker than anyone who came to visit. He was a thin man with a thin beard and he ate nothing but locusts and wild honey.

So was it also said that he had the power of such locusts, and could devour fields of disbelief in the hearts of those who came to him. Yet the wild honey gave warmth to this voice even as John repeated the words of Isaiah: "The crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth

and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Yet had I also heard that his countenance was more severe than the face of anyone in Israel. When multitudes came to be baptized by him, he would greet them by saying, "Oh, generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance and do not begin to say within yourselves, 'Abraham is our father,' for that is as no more than for God to say to the stones beneath your feet, 'Ye are also children of Abraham.'"

The people would ask: "What shall we do?" And John the Baptist would say: "Let him who hath two coats impart one to the man who has none, and he that is with meat let him share it." He would always speak of the one mightier than himself who was yet to come and this Messiah would not baptize with water but with the Holy Ghost.

Before making my pilgrimage unto John, I had thought often upon the book of Exodus and remembered how the Lord had brought forth an east wind with locusts who "covered the face of the whole earth, so the land was darkened; and ate every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: so there was not any green thing in the trees

nor in the herbs of the field through all the land of Egypt." And I wondered whether it could be that the wrath of each locust eaten by my cousin could stir fire in him to consume all that was unworthy of the Lord in Israelites who were unclean.

And I was much taken with how John looked when first I saw him before me, and I repeated to myself the words of the unknown prophet: "He hath no form nor comeliness. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and a man of grief. Surely he had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

And the words of this unknown prophet were true. For I wished to hide my face from John. And it was with pain that I looked upon him, and knew that John would not be long among us. As much I knew as with the beating of wings overhead.

I had come with many, but I saw John the Baptist before he saw me, and those others were baptized together and then departed. Yet, I remained. And in the loneliness of this place in the desert he did not see me since I now concealed myself behind a rock. And it was only when the sun became too hot in its descending upon that side of the rock that I walked forward, and he saw me and said, "I have waited for

you."

His eyes were paler than the sky and with the light of the moon. His beard was long. The hair that grew from his ears was matted like the hair that grew from his cheeks. And I saw that the wing and the leg of a locust were also matted in his beard and wondered how this man who bathed others and washed himself numerous times a day would still have such detritus upon him. Yet was it meet that his thoughts were thus far from his body that his beard was like a forest belonging to another and small creatures could live within. And he looked at me again and said, "Thou art my cousin and I have been waiting for you. Today did I see that you would come."

"How," I asked, "do you see upon such matters?"

He sighed and his breath was as lonely as the wind that passes between rocks and through empty places. And he said, "I have been told to wait for thee, and I am tired. So it is good that you have come."

Then did I also scruple to confess my sins and spoke of thoughts of disrespect toward my mother, yet confessed that I had not sinned beyond such matters.

"Well, repent ye still," did he say, and I blessed God,

and John the Baptist came behind me as I entered the water and with the strength of a desert lion, did he seize me by the nose with his fingers and with his other hand laid upon my forehead, did he thrust me back into the river, and it was so sudden, and I passed so quickly from air to water and back to air again, and was gasping at the loss of the last breath that it was if heaven had opened and I could see the Holy Ghost descending in the shape of a dove, and, behold, so was the dove upon my shoulder when I came up from the water.

And I heard a voice come down from the heavens. Mayhap John the Baptist also heard it. The voice said "Thou art My beloved Son and in thee am I well pleased." That way came the word of the Lord into my ear and with the same words that He spoke once to Jeremiah, having said: "Before I formed thee in the belly did I know thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb did I sanctify thee, and ordain thee a prophet unto the nations." Fear and much exaltation came into contest then within me like mighty warriors and I looked again into the eyes of John the Baptist which were as pale as moonlight, and they gleamed with illumination sacred to me, and I said, "Lord, oh, Lord," as if I were speaking to John, and then turned my face to the heavens so John should not

misunderstand, and said, "Lord God, behold, I cannot speak for I am like a child."

And again the Lord came to me in the words He had used with Jeremiah, and I heard: "Say not 'I am a child' for thou shalt go to all places that I shall send thee and whatsoever I command thee, shalt thou speak, and be not afraid of men's faces for I am with thee to the limit, to thy limit," said the Lord. And the Lord did put forth His hand and touched my mouth even as the beak of the dove touched my lips, and the Lord said: "Behold, I put My words in thy mouth. I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant." And I knew His word was in my heart and as a burning fire in my bones, and John withdrew his hand from my head where it had been placed for baptism as we stood in the river. And away went the dove. And John and I spoke to each other and I will tell of that when I am ready, and it will be soon, but as yet I cannot speak of it inasmuch as when I took my departure from John, so did I know that I would never see him again. And he began to sing even as I left but it was to the river Jordan, not to me. And the taste of that brown river was still in my throat and the dust of the desert in my nostrils.

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It was a long march back to the valley and across the desert, and it was late in the afternoon. So did I see rocks turn to gold and they lay there much as the overthrown walls of a temple once built of yellow marble now rests open to desert vultures. And I could still hear John the Baptist singing.

He knew no song and the music of his throat sounded like the throat of a ram and such were the cries that had issued from him. And I went my way of return to Nazareth walking with as much strength as I had ever possessed. For many of the mysteries of my life were as one to me now and I understood why I was not like other men and had no appetite for sin yet could feel no virtue that I was empty of sin. And I understood the pride of my mother, and my legs took larger strides than before.

Yet I did not know what was expected of me, nor of what awaited me, only that I had been blessed and the Lord had

come to me and had been near to me, and close to me withal that His strength was almighty.

A great cloud came over the sky as I walked and it formed with rain even as it passed before the sun. There was downpour. A rainbow rose from one end of the desert to touch the other end, and above me was a great brightness; I knew I was walking through the radiance of the Lord. Soon it dazzled my eyes and I lay upon my face in this desert and heard the voice of the One who could speak and He said, "Son of Man, stand upon your feet and I will speak unto thee."

And the spirit entered into me as He spoke and set me up again, and He said, "Once I spoke to the prophet Ezekiel in these words and Ezekiel strove mightily and saved our people in Babylon, and now these words are for you: Son of Man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation, to a nation that hath rebelled against Me. They and their father hath transgressed against Me, even unto this very day for they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I shall send you unto them and you shall say unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord God.' And they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house) yet shall know that there has been a prophet among them. And thou, Son

of Man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words though briars and thorns be with thee and thou must dwell among scorpions, be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed by their looks though they be a rebellious house. Son of Man, go, get thee into the house of Israel, speak My words unto them for thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language but to the house of Israel, not to people of a strange speech and of a hard language whose words thou canst not understand. Surely had I sent thee to strangers they would have harkened to thee. But the house of Israel will not, for the house of Israel is impudent and hard-hearted. Behold, I will make thy face strong against their face and thy forehead strong against theirs; as an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead. Fear them not. Neither be dismayed at their looks for they be a rebellious house. Son of Man, go, get thee to them."

Then the cloud poured great rain and the voice from the heavens said unto my ear: "Those were My words to the prophet Ezekiel but to you I say also that you are My son conceived by Me and mightier even than a prophet."

Notwithstanding, I still had many hours to travel and

lands I did not know well to traverse. If I felt great exaltation so did I also know exhaustion for as the scrolls I had studied since childhood were not as near to me as these words of this high Lord, my God, yet I could only fear Him. For His temper was as loud as thunder and His anger could scourge the body more than hail that would not cease, and the sound of His voice was in my ear like unto the fall of great rocks even as they reverberated in their fall until their echoes are as the ancestors of those already fallen in the canyon. And I did not know how much was I ready to serve a Lord who could leave boils upon the flesh of every man and beast in the land of Egypt, then offer to Moses no less than the power to stretch forth his hand to heaven and lo, there was hail over all of Egypt to blight every herb of the field and fire to run along the ground, and every tree of the field was consumed and broken. And these were the least of His acts. It was then that I threw up my hands toward heaven as if to ask whether I were truly the one to serve His wish. Could I exercise His force and His command and His desire when He was proud and vengeful? And God then said to me, "Not yet are you strong. Therefore, do not return to your home. Go up rather into that mountain before you now.

It is there!

"And in a wilderness of crags, pray to Me alone, and fast among those rocks broken by Me and My lightning. And drink what water thou wilt. For there is water beneath the rocks. But sup on no food. Not for forty days.

"And I will promise a new vision before the sun sets on the last of those days and thou wilt know why I have chosen thee for the Christ, and as My Messiah wilt thou be anointed. For," said the Lord, "no mountain is equal to this one; this mountain is without a name."

And He knew whereof He spoke since as I climbed and darkness came upon me, I had to take my rest on ground covered by serpents and scorpions, yet none came near. And in the morning I climbed further for much of the day on upward upon the slopes of this mountain and verily it was worthy of the lamentations of the prophet Isaiah, for one could say that the cormorant and the bittern possessed it, the owl and the raven.

And I saw many vultures gathered over these stones, and much emptiness in every direction, and nettles and brambles. And on the ramparts of the rock, did the vultures look down on me, side by side, every one with her mate. It was then I

thought of how John the Baptist had spoken again even as we were saying farewell, and he had said: "Have you ever seen the Lord?"

And I said, "No. Is it not death and destruction to see the Lord?"

And he replied: "Yes, for all but the Christ." And then said John: "Once did the Holy Spirit come near to me, and so near that I put my hands in front of my eyes and I hid in the corner of a rock, but the Holy Spirit said: 'You cannot see My face yet will I turn away and you can look upon My back,' and He allowed me to see that His back was noble, a noble back." Then John grasped me by the arms. "I have known since I was a child that my cousin must replace me even as my mother spoke of your mother," and then he kissed me on both cheeks. "I baptize only with water," he said, "and can cleanse those souls who have repented, and can protect them thereby even as water can extinguish the fire to come, but you will baptize with the Holy Spirit and so bring God's mercy to exorcize evil and heal the sick," and he kissed me again.

I thought of this conversation again as I slept, shielded by the spirit of the Lord from serpents and

scorpions. And it was hard not to remember the breath of John the Baptist when he kissed me for it was full of all that is in the odor of an exhausted man. And indeed, no matter how often one seeks water to soothe the flesh, such odors cannot be washed away inasmuch as great fatigue speaks of all that has been left behind and is lost. Albeit, his skin was honest in its scent and full of the dusts and loneliness of the desert and its many rocks. And so did he smell also of the waters of the river Jordan and the heavy wisdom of its mud and its silt.

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The summit of the mountain was like unto a place where many had been buried; even as one climbed so did rocks stand about like tombs. And treacherous were some of the steps between. It was midday and with a sun of much heat.

At the summit I sat in the shadow of a rock and looked out upon the lands of Israel, upon Galilee to the north and Judea to the south. Peering through such a haze of golden hue was I left to wonder whether gold spires were rising from the hills of Jerusalem. But I was hungry and did not think long on Jerusalem; my stomach spoke and was eager to eat after living without food for a day and receiving so much blessing; my exaltation was now not equal to my appetite.

But then I also knew why the Lord had sent me to the summit of this mountain which had no name. It was not enough to be His son, and cousin to John the Baptist. I must be tested. And the first of such tests was that I did not eat but passed through a fast. Yet even as I said to myself, "I

will not eat for two days, even three," the Lord said, (and neither could I see Him nor feel His presence other than that His voice was in my ear) but He said: "You will fast until I give easement. Then may you return to food."

So I did, and without easement that day and the next. And by the fifth day when the pangs of my stomach were still with me but only in grave emptiness of spirit, so was I weak, and no longer knew if strength remained within to climb down from this mountain. So did I say aloud, "How long, oh, Lord?" and He said, "Prepare thyself. It will be long."

And inasmuch as I was not there to dispute the Lord, but rather to follow His will, in truth, fasting grew easier; no more did I think of many foods. And I shielded myself from the sun in the middle of the day and came to love the taste of water and the forgotten wisdom that is found in the shadow of rocks, until they became too cold at night for any wisdom. And the chill of the air in the middle of each night was cold indeed, for warmth came to me now neither from the rock nor from my chest. And no plants grew on the summit of this mountain where I stayed. Which was as well for there were hours when I could have eaten their thorns.

And in the second week so did I have visions of King

David who was my ancestor if Joseph were my father (but he was not), and I knew that David had committed a great sin. I could not recall the offense, but did remember that in earlier days in the land of Gibeon, the Lord had appeared to Solomon in a dream and God asked: "What shall I give thee?"

And Solomon replied, "Thou hast shown unto my father David great mercy, and Thou hast kept for him this great kindness that Thou hast given him a son, myself, to sit on his throne, but, oh, Lord, my God, I am but a little child. I know not how to go out nor to come in and Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people whom Thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people that I may discern between good and bad for who is able to judge this, so great a people?"

And I recalled that this speech so pleased the Lord that He said to Solomon: "Because thou hast not asked for thyself a long life nor for riches nor begged me for the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for understanding and discernment in judgment, then, behold, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, for there were none like thee before thee, Solomon, and neither after thee shall any arise

like unto thee."

And then God gave him all that Solomon had not asked for, both riches and honors until there were no kings like Solomon in those days, and from such a dream he awoke and had the wisdom to separate two mothers disputing before him over a child, saying he would sever the babe in two so that each mother, thereby, could possess her half, whereupon one could ask: where is the Jew who does not know that the true mother's bowels yearned upon her son and she pointed to the other woman and said, "Give her the child and in no wise slay it."

Solomon had great wisdom that he showed to God, but now I heard the voice of the Lord in my ear saying, "I will not give thee the riches and honors of Solomon because he did not keep My commandments and his failure rests in the riches and honors I gave him," and those words of the Lord went right into my spirit which hovered still about my empty stomach and permeated my flesh in its fasting.

And the Lord whispered further into my ear: "Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs were a thousand and five. He knew the cedar tree in Lebanon and the hyssop that springest out of the wall. He could speak of beasts and

of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes and all people came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and all the kings of the earth. Indeed, King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And kings brought him silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. But," said the Lord in my ear, "King Solomon loved many strange women: the daughter of Pharaoh and the women of the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Sedonians and the Hittites. Women of all the nations concerning which I had said unto the children of Israel, 'Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you. For surely they will turn away your heart after their Gods.' But Solomon cleaved unto these women and he had seven hundred wives and princesses and three hundred concubines and so these wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass when Solomon was old that his heart was not perfect with Me. So," said the Lord, "I will not give you riches and you will never tarry with a woman or you shall lose the Lord."

And it was then I knew in the midst of my fast that he had given me Solomon's sins on which to meditate which was an advantage not given to Solomon.

And I, being empty without food, indeed had no desire

for a woman, but then having lived without the disturbance of carnal desire for all of my thirty years, I did not feel at odds with the Lord's decision and was content to receive the wisdom of Solomon while sparing myself his sins. And my fast continued.

Next did I dream that I was the prophet Elijah, and as Elijah did I have contests with the prophets of Baal and I became the equal of more then forty such prophets who came to make a sacrifice of a bullock while crying aloud and lacerating themselves with knives and lances to show devotion to Baal. Blood gushed forth from these prophets, yet no voice answered; the God Baal did not speak. Then, as Elijah, for so was I in my dream, I did restore the altar of the Lord that the prophets of Baal had torn down. And I took twelve stones to stand for the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob, saying "Israel shall be thy name."

And with those stones Elijah built an altar in the name of the Lord and made a trench about it. And he put wood in its place on the altar and cut the bullock into pieces, thereupon laying the raw flesh upon the wood and told his followers to fill four barrels with water and pour it on the sacrifice and they did, and for a second time and a third,

until water ran all around into the trench he had dug surrounding this altar.

And in such a moment, in the depth of much moisture soaking upon the sacrifice of the altar, before the prophets of Baal and this prophet of Israel, even as evening came, so did Elijah say: "Hear me, O Lord, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God and Thou hast turned their heart back again."

And the fire of the Lord rose and consumed the sacrifice of the bullock and the wet wood and the wet stones and licked up the water that was in the trench. And after such service to the Lord, Elijah was able to slay all the prophets of Baal with his sword.

And he wandered in the wilderness until he saw a little cloud arise out of the sea, no larger than a man's hand, yet that cloud became a heaven black with clouds and winds followed by a great rain. And Elijah traveled into the wilderness and sat beneath a juniper tree and requested the Lord that he might die.

And so I, on the twenty-eighth day of my fast, feeling weak but without hunger, assumed that I must be close to those who are ready to go into heaven or to fall below and I

remembered the prayer of Elijah, for he said, "It is enough now, Lord. Take away my life; I am not better than my fathers." But then an angel of the Lord gave him food and on the strength of the meat did he climb onto Mount Horeb, the mount of God, and lived on the strength of that meat provided by the angel for forty days and forty nights.

And behold the Lord passed by in a great and strong wind and rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks. And after the wind came earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still small voice, and it was so when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entry room of the cave. And lo, there came a voice unto him and said, "What dost thou hear, Elijah?"

And it was here that it came to me that I was dreaming and I was not Elijah but merely remembering some of the words of the scroll concerning Elijah, and I nodded my head and knew that my fast would be also for forty days and forty nights. And I remembered that the Lord had then said unto Elijah: "I have seven thousand left me in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which

hast not kissed him." And so passed the first four weeks of my fast.

And I also thought upon the wisdom of Isaiah. The prophets were often around me in these weeks: Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah and Daniel and Ezekiel, and the meat that left my bones was rendered into memory of all the knowledge I had gained in the synagogue school of my youth and I recalled these prophets' words as if they were my own and could see the wisdom of their instruction, even as those seven thousand good Jews left to Elijah could explain why Isaiah had said, "The Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant" and I took a vow that I would not desert such a remnant for now I could live in the faith that a remnant of good Jews would yet enable me to recover the nation.

If these were the words of the prophets, I was yet to learn that I would love sinners more than I would love those who are pious, and would yet believe that sinners might be of more worth in their saving, especially if one would speak of those who sinned with a light in their eye. For that light, even as they stole back into sin, belonged to the eye of God. But for now, full of the wisdom of Isaiah, I thought of the remnant and I quoted his words to myself: "For though Thy

people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return." And there in my fast in the fifth week and nigh unto the sixth week, full of the spirit of Isaiah, I would repeat his sayings in preparation for the mission I must undertake so soon as the Lord gave me permission to eat again and I could come down from the mountain.

So would I speak aloud and repeat my words aloud by the hour, speaking even into the eye of the sun until my eyes burned and I was obliged to return to the shade, and like a blind man for an hour. I pondered over the prayers I would soon use with sinners and knew I would tell them, even as did Isaiah: "Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together, sayeth the Lord."

And would add, and I could see them before me, and hear my own voice as it would yet be uttered, "Yes," I would say, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the

land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword." But I did not know how to construe the wisdom of this last since I had but small love for the sword, having learned rather the art of cutting in small with the chisel and the gouge, fine instruments for the flesh of wood. So could I not comprehend the crudity of the sword upon the flesh of men and women.

But then Isaiah also said, "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

And it was the fortieth day. The Lord said to me as evening came, "Tomorrow you may step down from the mountain and take food," and I knew hunger at his words, as if all I had not eaten in forty days was now there as spirits ravenous in my stomach to remind me of their sacrifice.

Yet, even as I was beginning to live again with appetite, so did the Lord also say, "Tonight, thou art to remain on the mountain. For a visitor will speak to thee."

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And I do not know what understanding was between Them, but the visitor soon arrived, and he was as handsome as a prince and as well dressed. He had gold bracelets and a gold ornament on a gold chain about his neck, and in this gold ornament was the face of a ram, most bestial yet handsome, and more handsomely than any ram I had seen. The hair of this prince was as long as my own and lustrous and he was beautiful, indeed, a man of such beauty as many a king would emulate.

And now I recalled a single thought apart from all others that had come to me in the middle of my fast, and I believed it had been my own thought and was not from the lips of John the Baptist, nor of any prophet of other times albeit the Lord may have been instructing me in many of those matters that were without boundary between His wisdom and my understanding. Still, in the middle of the night in the middle of my fast, had I said to myself, "The devil is the

most beautiful creature God ever made." And since the visitor who came to see me now was dressed in robes of velvet that were as purple as the late evening, and wore a crown as golden as the sun, he could be no other than who I thought, and indeed he soon introduced himself as Satan, and by his common name, the Devil. But then I knew it was he inasmuch as he had climbed the mountain yet was there no dust on his robes nor sweat upon his skin.

His first words, as he spoke to me, were these: "Dost thou know," he asked, "how the prophet Isaiah met his death?"

And I, overcome with silence for I had not seen the Devil approach, nor was certain of how he could stand so easily before me, was obliged to hear him say: "Isaiah was killed by a Jewish king, the pagan Manasseh, cohort of Amon. A vassal of Assyria, was Manasseh, and a bad Jew." And so did the Devil nod at this as if he, too, were a Jew (which I knew he was not, but must be a pagan.) Then he held up one finger as if it were a ray of light and spoke more: "This Manasseh, wishing to destroy the religion of his fathers, sent out a royal order that Isaiah, who was much revered and of much culture and lived with comfort in the city, must be uprooted from his home and hunted like an animal. And so

Isaiah, hearing of this, fled from his comfort in the city, and the soldiers of Manasseh set out to chase Isaiah in the wilderness whereupon the prophet, desperate in his peril, looked to find a tree that would contain a hollow large enough for a man to stand within. This sanctuary," said the Devil, "being found by Isaiah in a stout oak with a rotten center, he chose to hide therein. But the officers of Manasseh also discovered this concealment, and brought a great saw to the tree and cut it in half even as Isaiah was sequestered therein. In which manner, did Isaiah die. And he screamed in his death. Did you know?" said the Devil.

"I had not heard of such a death."

Whereupon he laughed. "For gods as for men, is knowledge but the part of a part."

I was weakened by these words, and by more than any deprivation of the fast. I knew pain in the bottomless depth of my stomach.

He, however, was comfortable, and kept speaking. "That manner in which Isaiah met his death need not leave you in great concern," he said, "since you are not a prophet but, indeed, the Son! To my recollection, which is not small, the Lord has thereby performed an act of a new kind. And it is

much to be contemplated upon."

Saying which, he looked at me fondly. His eyes were as black marble, but there were lights within like stars. He said, "Are you hungry? Are you in need of drink?" And he brought forth a jug of wine and a leg of lamb, well cooked, which I would not have known were beneath his robes yet did he produce them. And approached me closely, so closely that I could take in the spirit of the wine by my nostrils and the gravies of the lamb, yea, even the smell of the Devil himself, although I would perceive it through no small cloud of perfume rising from his neck, his armpits and out of the folds of his robe. Despite all of such scents, so could I still perceive how greed came forth from his body. For that was as the odor which lives between the buttocks and rouses offense in us from those who do not wash. Therefore did I refuse his food, even as the odor of his greed entered into my appetite, but such odor was like the savory that comes from an oven when food long roasted is ready for the table. And he, seeing such deliberation, smiled once more and said, "But of course, thou hast no need of this. Being the Son of God, thou can command these stones to be bread. Which, by all measure, is proper food for an Essene. Although thy

garment, for shame, is neither as clean as would befit thee, nor free of dust."

I answered, "Man shall not live by bread alone." And those words I knew were not mine for they were strange to me and indeed had issued from the mouth of God; thereby was I hearing my own speech even as I was seeking to understand what I might be saying.

"That thou art the Son of God," mused the Devil aloud, "is a surprise to me. Why is it that your Father has chosen thee? Say truly to thy Father when next you have converse with Him that I salute Him. For, do you know? Thy Father and I have had much traffic and some dispute, and thereby, are eager always to obtain word of the Other and His doings. Indeed, on those occasions when We meet, so do I tell Him that many of these peoples may be His creation, and the crown indeed of all He hath created among the animals and the plants of the field, yet still it is I, not He, who hath the better understanding of such creation."

Now, was I amazed by this Devil, for he did not inspire fear but comfort. And by such comfort did I know, as I had not known before, how it might be to feel like a sinner in a low canteen drinking much wine; the labors of this last day

of fast now became as balm in my limbs, and so could I talk to the Devil; he was comfortable. If his odor was not without disturbance for my nostrils, so was it also not without agreement to desires in me I had not yet encountered. All such granted, I could not allow that God, the Lord of the Universe, did not understand His creation better than my visitor. "Not ever it is possible," I exclaimed. "He is all-powerful. The heavens and the earth, the stars and the sun, bow down to Him."

I had given vexation. Satan might be before me, but still did he snort like a horse unwilling to accept the bridle.

"Know thee," said the Devil, "that the Father is but one God among Many. There is need merely to count the myriad of gods respected by the Romans. Nor does the Father have the power to command His own Jews. Look to His rages; they are unseemly for a great God and swollen in proportion. Nor can He bear disputation of mind and spirit from any He would call His own, whereas I confide to you that a hint of disobedience and a whiff of treachery are among the joys of life, and are to be ranked with its spoils rather than its evils."

"Never so," did I say. "My Father is God and of many

dimensions, and of all dimensions."

But the Devil replied, "He is not in command of Himself!"

"Therefore," said the Devil, for he did not cease to speak, "your Father hath not the right to seek wholehearted love from His people. Nor does He comprehend how women are different from men and thereby live with separate consciences of all that they would be loyal to. Indeed, your Father hath no inkling of women; His scorn is given over to every word of His prophets. Look to Isaiah. Declare to us that Isaiah does not speak out of your Father's heart when he says: 'Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and slinking as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the Lord will smite with a scorpion the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts.' Not a whit less," said the Devil, "than your secret parts." And he continued to speak as with the words of Isaiah: "The Lord will take away their statures: the stature, the forehead and the beauty, the ornaments

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"Wherefore," said the Devil, for he did not cease to speak, "your Father hath not the right to seek whole exactitude from His people. Nor does He comprehend how women are creatures other than men and thereby live with separate understanding of all that they would be loyal to. Indeed, your Father hath no inkling of women; His scorn is given over to every word of His prophets. Look to Isaiah! Declare to me that Isaiah does not speak out of your Father's heart when he says: 'Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the Lord will smite with a scabbard the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts--' Not a whit less," said the Devil, "than their secret parts!" And he continued to speak as with the words of Isaiah: "'The Lord will take away their attires like the moon, the bracelets and the bonnets, the ornaments

of the legs, the earrings, the rings and the nose-jewels, the fine linen, the hoods and the veils. And it shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; for well-set hair, baldness, and burning instead of beauty."

"My Father was speaking of the nation of Zion," I said. "And so was it taught to us in the synagogue."

"No," replied the Devil. "He would fain speak of the nation of Zion. But it is women He calumniates. For when He would address the nation of Israel, then are His comparisons without dispute; then He speaks only to men: 'The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.' Wherefore is this rage in your Father? Is not His rage inchoate because His failures burn in His heart? Does He not know that He is not all-powerful? But then He is without sufficiency of spirit: He cannot say: 'Yea, I have lost, but my soldiers were honest and fought well.' No, He is vengeful. And beyond measure. 'The palaces will be

forsaken,' says Isaiah, 'the forts and towers shall be dens forever, until the Spirit be poured upon us from on High.'

"But when," asked the Devil, "will the Spirit be poured upon us and from on High? Thy Father would send you forth to improve the hearts of men when His own heart is caked with the blood of those He has slaughtered. His love of all He has created is choked by the curses He has laid upon women. If His rages are mighty, yet do they never accomplish His desire; His language is burdened with much adoration of the grandeur He pretends to despise.

"Discover the face of thy Father in these words of Ezekiel even as Ezekiel heard them from the Lord! Tell me that your Father hath not adoration of women, yet doth hate their power to entice Him: 'I swore unto thee and entered into a covenant with thee,' saith the Lord God, 'and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also in brodered work, and fine linen, and I covered thee with silk, with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thou wast decked with gold and silver; thou didst eat

fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceedingly beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy reknown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee,' saith the Lord God.

" 'But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and played the harlot because of thy reknown, and poured out thy fornications on everyone that passed by; thou didst deck thy high places with divers colors, and played the harlot thereupon: Thou hast also taken my fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and made to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savor: and thus it was.

"And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. And it came to pass after all thy wickedness-- woe, woe unto thee,' saith the Lord God, 'that thou hast also built an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street. Thou hast

built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians, thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms to provoke me to anger. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians because thou wast insatiable; yes, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet could not be satisfied. How weak is thine heart, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious and whorish woman; and hath not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife committeth, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! Men give gifts to all whores: But thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

"Wherefore, O harlot, because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them, behold, therefore, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto

them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

"And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down their high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thy houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot."

"Yes," said the Devil when he had concluded this recitation, "yea, all of this is but to scorn Jerusalem? Say rather that thy Father's language is not without the reek of desire."

"Your words are pollutions even as you utter them," said I to the Devil, and it was the voice of my Father speaking through me.

Satan answered: "Your Father tells thee not to fornicate. Yet is His tongue as ripe with lust as my own."

I was in great confusion, for I knew whereof he spoke; could I deny that the Lord, my Father, had been as cruel in His language as Satan, by repute, was in his deeds? And I had been stirred. My loins, quiet for so long, were now stirred by the fire of such language.

Yet such became my salvation against my visitor. For by this stirring did I know that in hearing the words of my Father as He spoke in ancient years to the prophet Ezekiel, still the voice I heard in my ear had not been His, but belonged to Satan, for with much relish had he spoken of all that was debauched in these women of Jerusalem.

Then the Devil said to me, "I have the power to offer you such visions that you will think no longer of yourself on the summit of this mountain, but rather as sitting beside me and we will be above the holy city. Do you come on such a journey?"

I had no need to say yes but merely to give assent within. For his embrace of my vision was so complete that indeed I now saw the city of Jerusalem beneath me and felt great vertigo from the height we occupied inasmuch as we were now on the highest dome of the Great Temple in Jerusalem. And at that moment did the Devil say to me, "If thou be the

son of God, cast thyself down. For is it not written by the prophets," said the Devil, "that 'He will give His angels charge concerning thee.' Therefore, leap and cast thyself down that the angels may bear thee."

And I felt much temptation to jump into the distance below. So did I know that an abyss was now opening before all generations to come. They would stand on a great height and quiver like one blade of grass in the wind of that unruly spirit who lives in our breath before taking the leap and with much fear of the leap. So did the Devil look at me again with his dark eyes and by the points of light within were his eyes like a night of stars; I knew he was promising extraordinary glory. "To stay with your Father is to labor for Him. To stay with your Father is to be consumed. And by Him. Jump, and thereby seek to save thyself. Jump!"

In this vision Satan had just given to me, so did I know that extinction would be quick, but as quick would be the glory of my return to the living. The Devil did not have to utter yet one more word. He had entered into me. Much was I amazed at how I could live within him and know his speech, even when he did not utter it.

Whereupon, he was telling me now of a future life. It

would be full of joy and riches. "Concupiscence is mine!" cried Satan into the silence we inhabited.

Indeed, in that instant did I see that greed was a godly good to him, and that from rough greed could be brought forth works of great power and rich aroma. "It is the smell of the pits," said the Devil. "My people sit upon the earth with such possession that they do not leave buttons of turd fit for a goat such as those that issue from the bony cheeks of your friend John who will not even shit on the Sabbath. No," said the Devil, "nor will he piss either, though he be doubled in pain. But then he even carries a small hoe to cover his leavings on days that are not the Sabbath."

To myself I said, "These are but words." The Devil would be able to possess me only if I died in the manner he urged. So long as I lived, I was the Son of God.

Whereas if now I jumped and was broken at the bottom of the leap, so could the Devil make arrangement for my birth. Such power would be possess because I had gone to my death at his bidding.

And, indeed, at this moment did he open his lips to say: "In secrecy will you be born. God will be unknowing. He cannot keep record of all who are born each day and I have

power to distract Him, and constantly."

And I said: "It is also written, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'" But again I did not know whether I spoke of my own will or with words imparted to me by my Father.

Then the Devil led me from the spire of this Great Temple on up to an exceedingly high mountain, higher than all, and I would have shivered in my fast if it had been the peak of a true summit for, yea, we were even surrounded by snow, yet it was but a vision. Yet from such height did he show me the kingdoms of the world, all that were kingdoms to the north, to the east, the south and the west and I saw glories amid concupiscence and joy; yet so much passed in parade and so fast that I knew such promises need never be kept. So, I said, "Get thee hence, Satan." And to myself did I say, out of the strength which comes from emptiness itself (for it was the wisdom of the Lord to show me at that moment how even in fasting was strength) that out of emptiness could I find resolve to whisper to myself: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." And I had the power to look into the dark eyes of Satan and say: "It is not you I want, but my Father."

And at that moment Satan gave a cry like a wild goat who

is wounded with a spear. And he left. And behold, I had another vision of angels. And they gathered about to minister unto me and bathe my eyes. And I slept.

In the morning did I wake to see myself on this same mountain whereon I had lived for forty days and I was ready to come down from such a high slope and return to Nazareth. That proved to be a long road and I passed over it for the next day and the next, yet no brigands attacked. Which was as well for I knew that I was much spent by my hour with the Devil, and in my nostrils was my own breath foul. Nor did I feel that I had escaped altogether from him. In rejecting Satan, had I also been amputated of many faculties and was scraped sore in my judgment. Nor did I feel desire within me at that hour to serve the Lord.

Yet was I not wholly distraught. For as I marched, so could I recite the words of Isaiah: "Unto us," I declared, "a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace." And if I were not large enough for any of those words, and supposed that God had chosen me for His son because I was in the midst of all men, rather than

unusual or like a monarch in any way, yet was I also close to many small virtues and common weak habits in others.

Whereby, if I could now increase in my powers, given all that He would now pass on to me, perhaps the world of men might also increase and multiply in virtue. No matter the derision of the Devil, so did I believe in my Father; the Lord was still my Father, and for Him would I labor. If some little part of me had been encircled by Satan, still had my visitor lost by the greater portion. I had been tested, I had proved loyal--in the main had I proved loyal--and so could I believe that virtue was the finer reward. For now did my tongue feel clean.

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I returned to Galilee and entered Nazareth and came back to the house where I lived with my mother. So was she there to greet me and was much relieved because in all the forty and more days that I had been gone, she had supposed in the beginning that I was on a journey with my cousin but then heard near to mortal news of John and it had come to pass while I was on the mountain. Herod Antipas, who was the son of the same Herod, Tetrarch of Israel, who had slaughtered the children of Bethlehem and Bethany who had been born on the day I was born, was not unlike his father, and so Herod Antipas lived in much fear of John the Baptist and had dreams that John would cause the people to rise against him. Therefore had he shut John away where he was not to be rescued from his dungeon. And by that, if by naught else, did I know that the time had come to leave Nazareth and take up a life of preaching and be there for all men as John had been there.

Yet in the midst of forming such resolve came a diversion for me on the third day after my return to Nazareth. A marriage in the place of Cana was made near to my home, and my mother, being an honored guest of one of the two families, asked me to come. Yet when I arrived, was it late and the ceremony having commenced, my mother whispered to me, "They are without wine." And indeed both families were of poor means.

There was that in her voice to tell me how the spirit of happiness is prepared to depart quickly when a nuptial feast is dry of wine. For that is an omen of misery upon a new husband and wife. So did I think to try such powers as might belong to me even if never yet exercised, and indeed was an angel at my side. For at that instant out of the clarity of water was I able to make red wine, and this done by no more than a clear recollection of such a taste. And when the honored guest of the feast had imbibed this water made over and become wine, he spoke thus to the bridegroom: "Every host at the beginning doth set forth good wine, but when men have well drunk, then that which is less than good wine is presented. But thou hast kept your best wine for the end and your marriage will be blessed."

That was the commencement of my miracles and it took place in Cana of Galilee; howbeit I was not quick to feed upon praise since the angel sent by my Father was there to whisper into my thoughts, "Even as a barrel overflowing with honey is soon emptied, so does the foolish son scatter his store of miracles to perform."

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Now I had thought of preaching in Capernaum, which is more than half a day's walk from Nazareth, and on the Sea of Galilee between Cherazin and Magdala. Despite all that the Devil had told me concerning Isaiah's death, still did I think of him as a guide, and the prophet had written that "by way of the sea beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the gentiles, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light. And for them who sat in the shadow of death, light has sprung up." So, I chose Capernaum for its situation by the Sea of Galilee (which is not a sea but a great lake) and I liked Capernaum also for the river Jordan which flows by it south to Jerusalem which is that city to which all preachers hope to arrive with all the power of all that they would say.

First, however, did I decide to commence with an effort more modest. My tongue had not a facility for words equal to my hands with wood; my tongue could make fine fittings of words only when the Lord offered me speech; what I uttered

by myself was often halting and like an affliction. So, I thought before moving to Capernaum that I might ease such stricture by making a first preachment in Nazareth where some, at least, would know me, and mayhap applaud my words.

I went to the synagogue and began to speak but could say hardly more than: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Upon this came silence from the congregation since they expected more, and I, thinking of how faith was most severe, yet must still be made to seem as natural as breath, then said also: "I thank Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

Later would I see the words from the Gospel according to Luke, and they were rank with exaggeration and untruth.

"And all they in the synagogue when they heard these things," wrote Luke, "were filled with wrath. And rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of a hill whereon their city was built that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way."

Such was written by Luke, but then he was not Jewish, and full of wrath against the Jews, and was one born,

moreover, after I was dead. So he was full of desire to teach others about matters he had neither seen nor understood.

In truth, having spoken my words in Nazareth in the temple where I had gone for all of my days as a young man, none were even ready to laugh at me in such a place. Yet nonetheless did I feel laughter creep out of their feet as with an invasion of mice. And it is true that their derision, if silent, might still have run up my back considering how I felt much shame. Indeed, I could hear the whispers before they were uttered: "He speaks like a carpenter, yet doth tell us to repent." And others said, "What are these things He hides from the wise and prudent?"

So I knew that I must leave and move into places where I was not known for thereby would people listen more to the words that God would give me. And I need merely be certain I believed; by now I knew that to repudiate what the Devil had told me would be done best by feeling much joy that God was my Father and had chosen me for His only Son. And if this Son was still simple, still would he strive to do the Lord great honor. So I vowed.

And even if the Devil had sought to teach me how to

linger upon such thoughts, I did not think of women and did my utmost and it sufficed not to know or care what spirit of nakedness women carried beneath their robes, nor how all might seem when revealed. In great cleanliness would be my joy even if such joy now had to suffer such shame as I had known in the synagogue at Nazareth. Wherefore had there been so little upon my tongue?

For when I had last spoken in a temple. those listening had been more learned by far than these priests and merchants of Nazareth. At the Great Temple in Jerusalem when I was twelve, no words had come halting to my tongue. Howbeit, the inspiration of the Lord had been in my veins on that day, whereas now, as I walked the road from Nazareth to Capernaum, so did I come to understand that my heart was still as bruised as if rocks had fallen upon my chest from that high place where the Devil had spoken against my Father. And indeed he had uttered words so powerful that neither the conviction of my limbs nor the dedication of my spirit had been in my replies; the Devil had convinced me, if only for an instant, that while God might be my Father, we were not allied as parent and son in our sentiments inasmuch as I was too gentle in understanding to obey all the orders of the

Almighty. For, even as the Devil had said, He was vengeful.

Thereby, on the road to Capernaum, was I also with understanding that I had never felt great nearness to my Father, mayhap because He was the Lord and, of necessity, far away, and with a rage in many of His judgments to destroy multitudes; I knew so little concerning that.

Moreover, the Devil had mocked Him: yet neither had my Father defended Himself, nor struck lightning upon the mount. Yet on that instant, and in the midst of such thoughts, did I stumble on the road. It was a misstep most unusual. For I was lithe of foot, yet I fell heavily, as if a giant had cast me to the earth. A strong voice entered my ear then, and it said: "Comprehend ye that the words of the prophets are not as My words, even when they dare to speak in My name."

"But how do they dare?"--yet I did not declare these words, but merely thought such.

To which the voice grew softer and remarked: "My prophets are honest yet full of passions that bring them to excess."

I wished to ask if this was due to the work of the Devil. Yet I did not dare. I only said, "My Lord, I am well disposed toward men."

"You are as too well disposed," He said. "Soon will you learn that but a portion are worth the saving."

"Nor am I with eloquence."

And the Lord said: "So did Moses also say: 'O Lord, I am slow of speech and with a slow tongue,' and I told him as I tell you: Who made man's mouth? And who among any of thee maketh the dumb or the deaf or the seeing or the blind? Am I not the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth and I will teach thee what thou shalt say. As I have done with Samuel the prophet, so will I not let any of your words fall to the ground. And when you are ready to preach and ye enter the synagogue or if you are seized and go before magistrates or other powers of the Romans, take no thought what to answer nor what ye shall say inasmuch as the Holy Ghost shall teach you in that same hour what will be there to say."

With that did I now know less uncertainty than in the synagogue at Nazareth, whereupon my Father also said, "You can do well in Capernaum. Get thee unto thy people, and speak unto them and tell them again and again for they are like stones and deaf, so tell them again: 'Thus saith the Lord God.' Be not concerned with whether they hear or

forbear to hear, because words are also among My creatures and know how to travel by many roads. If some are slowed by swamp, others will strain mightily to climb each palisade that separates from understanding."

Even as I came to my feet then from the ground upon which He had thrust me, so did I feel the Spirit lifting me higher. My heart was full with joy again and much greater was this joy than any before; it was like the Lord's reward for forty days of fasting.

And I heard the noise of living creatures who flew about me, and they were invisible, but I could hear their wings and then the sound of a thousand of chariots, a noise of great rushing that came to me as if from over the other side of a hill; so I knew the Spirit while uplifting me had also dissolved much that was lacking in faith. The hand of the Lord was now strong. So I came to Capernaum.

And on the road I spoke these words aloud:

"Ask, so shall it be given you.

"Seek, and ye shall find.

"Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

And was this true? The Lord spoke to me again: "When you believe in Me, miracles are in your hands, your eyes, and your voice."

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And there, my feet upon the small stones of the pebbled shore by the Sea of Galilee, did I see two fishermen. And they were casting their nets. I was much taken with how they appeared to me. For they were large men of great power in their shoulders, and with large hands, and the oldest of the two, who was yet younger than myself, I would soon learn was named Simon and the other was his brother Andrew. And I noticed how Simon, once he had pulled in the fish and emptied his nets, came upon a tear in the net and with strips of rawhide did he mend this hole with dexterity, and quickly.

And I thought to myself, there is need of a man who can mend nets; if by one skill he captures the fish, by another does he prevent the losing of them. And I said without caution to myself nor to them, and yet did my voice have to carry what distance it would take to cast a small stone, still I said, "Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men." And I said it with great merriment and joy

for I realized that to be without other men for forty days is also a fast of much emptiness, and if I had seen men and women at the wedding and in the synagogue of Nazareth, still they were not of my choice, not friends nor fellow hard workers and apprentices.

So I saw these two fishermen as good men, and loved their hands as they cast their nets with a quiet wisdom to put a small spell upon the sea in order that they might bring back many fish. And since I was a carpenter and knew less of water than of wood, so was I taken with their work and it was clear to me that fish must live in a spell within the spell of water that is about them; so must a fisherman be with his own spell to cast if he is to take any or all fish into his net.

And so, "Yes," I said, and was like a man of wealth in my enthusiasm, "come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men." And between their eyes and mine was a compact across the space of water that was at rest between us and such enabled me to feel for the first time how many powers had God helped me to wrench from Satan. And then also did I understand how much had Satan been willing to offer up some of his secrets in such a wager as was our meeting. For

by just so much had he wished to capture me.

Yet now with the help of the Lord would I use Satan's manner when speaking to many. I would address them with the finest courtesy and the most intimate exhilaration, as if we shared among ourselves and only ourselves the wonder of many living things.

And I recalled what I had already forgotten, that before Satan departed he had said to me, "I am with high regard for you and would touch your hand," and I had done so even if the Lord raised the hairs on the back of my neck. But being also afraid of Satan and anxious for him to depart, so, therefore, had I touched one finger of my right hand, my middle finger, to the tip of his, and knew then that I had surrendered a small share of the Lord's protection.

Yet had God also wrenched much power from Satan. For no sooner had Simon and Andrew, his brother, brought their boat to the shore and cast their catch into bags of cloth, and picked them up than they came with me down the road to a small house. There was I introduced to James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, also fishermen, and they were by the shore mending their nets. Yet so soon as Simon called to them, did they leave their father Zebedee with his hired

servants to come along also with us. And I realized then that mayhap I had made a mistake, for these two, James and John, were the sons of a rich man, and were more ready for diversion than for prayer. And had left Zebedee, their father, often before. But still did I have Simon whom I soon proceeded to call Simon Peter inasmuch as he was strong and a rock, and he would be my rock. Which Peter is a name for rock. And Peter would be with me in all hours but one.

So did I march straight to Capernaum with my four followers, and if we did not speak, still there was understanding between us for I looked at each of them, and saw more to honor than to despise. They were good men, at least as well as I could measure it, and having heard it said by the Lord that Capernaum would not be as Nazareth, so did we go to the synagogue and there I preached the wisdom of John the Baptist.

It was the Sabbath and many were there and I understood that if I had found Peter and Andrew and James and John busy at their labors on the Sabbath when all work was forbidden, it was because they did not keep mark of each day but merely labored as fishermen who know only when their own waters are ready. So I also knew they were not learned enough to speak

with me. Yet was I eloquent for all that day considering that the words of John the Baptist were in me to say and with other words as well.

So did I speak to that congregation in the synagogue of Capernaum of how much of God's heart was heavy inasmuch as He had created Adam and Eve and then, from the multitude of men and women He had created, so had He selected His own chosen people, and if these people were His Jews, now were some faithful but many were not, and were sinners. Yet God had prepared a heaven for those Jews that He could judge with happiness, and such would He accept in His Kingdom after death.

Whereas those who betrayed the Commandments and the law and denied the presence of God before them in their souls, those who chased after concupiscence and wine, would suffer other judgment of many shades and depths. For as the stone steps of the dungeon descend into cell that is beneath cell, so are sinners who do not repent brought down step by step into hell, and know thereby the sides of the pit. So do they also know how the earth can tremble in earthquake and they recognize but too late the power of that Hand which brings downfall to a kingdom. Even as a mouse is trodden underfoot!

And words of great strength were in me, and I spoke with the force of a man who hefts a sword, indeed I had never felt such strength.

"Repent," did I say, "and ye will have remission of all your sins." And by this doctrine of John the Baptist, did I speak as one who had authority and my voice was lifted above the singsong of many Pharisees and scribes who in this synagogue of Capernaum as in all others would only read from the scrolls in a weak and whining song, even a singsong of the spirit as if their throats had been dulled by much compromise in themselves until now they could only speak out of the dead coals of the spirit. Which hiss and expire i singsong. Whereas I was ready and with a full voice.

And I said, nor did I know I would say this until my voice rang forth: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, wilt thou cast out our devils?' And then will they be cast out. For I will say, 'I never knew ye. Depart, ye that work iniquity.'"

And it was as I said. A man came forward from the midst of the congregation and he was fearful to others, and looking much like a brigand. His nose was broken, and he had scars

on his face, an old brute with a spirit so unclean that the stench of his body came before him as in warning. Yet he cried out, saying, "What have we to do with thee, thou Yeshua of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art." And mockingly did he say, "The holy one of God!"

And I saw that his features had once been noble but had been thickened by the blows he received by way of the unrest within him. So I stood in my place as he approached. And I stared into his eyes and said, "Hold thy peace."

And he stopped.

I knew I was speaking to an unclean spirit who must be drawn forth from this man's heart and chest even as a mole is torn from a burrow in a tree, yet did I also know that he had come to me so that such evil thoughts might be pulled forth. By a power of attraction that Satan may have left in me, and much with the rectitude of God, so did I say, "Hold thy peace, evil spirit, and come forth. Come out of him!"

And it was then that this unclean spirit tore forth from his throat. And it cried aloud in a large and bestial voice. And did come out of him.

But the devil in this unclean spirit being invisible, was thrown into the midst of the synagogue for benches fell

over. There was a wind on the floor, and dust, and then all such disturbance was gone.

All the good Jews of the synagogue were amazed. In the main were they were pious people and their greatest fear, and none greater, was to be closed into a room with unclean spirits; they knew not how to resist them; so would they have no traffic with people who gave entrance or egress to such. Therefore did they now say, and they were amazed: "What thing is this? What new doctrine? Doth he even command unclean spirits?"

And in that moment it was true that I felt as if I had hurled a great stone far into the midst of the Sea of Galilee and ripples had gone to every shore, for by the time my new friends Simon Peter and Andrew and James and John and I came out of the synagogue and entered into the house of Simon Peter and Andrew, it was as if I could hear accounts of my presence spreading throughout all the region of Galilee and such words washed forth in all directions to pass my words unto others.

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So full was I with the strength of all these matters that when we came into Peter's house, and the mother of his wife was lying there sick of a fever, I had only to take her by the hand and that was encouragement sufficient to rise from her bed. And when she stood, so did I feel her forehead and the fever had left; she was much heartened by this cooling of all such sick heat inside her and ministered to us and cooked for us and we were well fed.

In that evening, friends of Simon and Andrew and James and John came to the house with a few of those who were diseased or who thought themselves possessed of devils and I felt ready for many missions.

Cures came quickly that night and brought me great joy for I had no more than to put my hand upon someone or kiss them on the cheek and out came many small devils and by each of these who came out so was the person before me able to say farewell to divers diseases. And the devils, much

frightened, did not even have to speak as they issued--which is just as well, for they make a terrible sound when they believe there is ground to protest.

Then in the morning, did Peter say to me, "All men now seek for thee and I do fear of excess, and would caution thee against the curious. They seek to witness miracles. And they will form thy throng, and bring great attention to you. But will that give power to change men's souls?"

I, being much impressed with his wisdom, asked after his inner disposition of thought, and he told me that during all of these years while laboring as a fisherman, he had been waiting for a sign from the Lord; even on seeing me had he known that I was a prophet.

His speech gave me cause to think of John the Baptist in the dungeon of Herod Antipas. And on my next breath did I know pain like a knife within my chest. If the Lord had given me great powers, thereby was I also open to sudden catastrophe, and I encouraged Peter and Andrew and James and John to leave with me so that we might go to other synagogues in Galilee and cast out devils there. And that was as if fewer the devils surrounding us, safer was my cousin. Besides, it would be better to do the deed and leave many

with wonder than to remain with such a circle until their wonder had been converted to dissension. And I knew I was thinking with the wisdom of Peter.

And in another synagogue in another town, a leper came to me and knelt and asked, "Canst thou make me clean?"

I did not know. To cure a leper was a miracle of higher order, and it was much higher. But so did I also know compassion because of the pain in his eyes. And I whispered to the Lord, "Grant me such power on this day."

As I looked at the leper, God gave me to remember the rod of Moses, and how God said to him: "Cast it on the ground." And Moses did so, and the rod became a serpent, and Moses fled before it. But the Lord also said: "Put forth thy hand and take it by the tail," and when Moses caught the serpent by the tail, it had become again a rod and it was in his hand. And the Lord said: "Put down thy hand unto thy bosom," and Moses did as he was told, and when he took his hand out, behold, it was leprous as snow, and God said, "Put thy hand in thy bosom again," and Moses put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out, and behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

And having remembered this, I heard God say to me, "Do

it, and it shall be done, even as if I did it," and I realized that my Father was now offering to me powers once given to Moses.

So, when I put forth my hand and touched the leper, I said no more than, "Be thou clean."

And indeed leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed. So did I also tell him: "Say nothing to any man. Go thy way and be a testimony unto the commandments."

But he went out and in the hour began to blaze abroad on this cure of his leprosy and caused such attraction of the multitude that I knew it was time to go back to the desert or I would be inundated with lepers and I did not need the Lord to tell me that there were grave obstacles to curing them all.

For if it was true that the diseases of man were also ranked and much like the angels in hierarchy of powers, so to cure the highest disease, which is but another way of saying the lowest, or the worst, was to ask the Holy Spirit to descend by ten more dimensions into the pit and I was weak from curing my first leper. I knew if I allowed myself any spirit of indulgence I would not rise from my bed for a day; so, instead, I fled to the desert and told my followers that I would meet them in Capernaum.

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For a night and for another night I was with snakes and scorpions and did my best to live next to them and without fear. In which practice I was not wholly successful, but did recall that John the Baptist could pick up a scorpion and converse with it while in his hand, nor did it sting.

My return to Capernaum was with good omen. The first man to speak to me was a centurion with handsome armor upon his chest, and on his helmet was an eagle. This Roman who was in no wise a Jew, stood before me, a proud man, and who could say how many were dead by his sword? Yet was he polite to me, saying, "Lord, my good servant is sick of a palsy and grievously demented."

And without pause I replied: "Let me come and heal him."

In increase of my respect, did the centurion now answer, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof, but if you speak the word, my servant shall be healed. Speak

it to me and ye need not come to my house, for I am a man who has authority to command a soldier to go, and he goeth. And to another, I tell him 'Come,' and he cometh. So, my sick servant will do what needs to be done should ye give me the power to tell him to rise."

And this centurion had tears in his eyes so that I marveled, and turned to my followers and said, "Have I found so great a faith in anyone so early in these days? No, not in all of Galilee." And I said to the centurion, "Go! Your servant will be healed."

And so was it done. As others came to tell me.

And I was pleased with the warmth of those who welcomed me in the market and on the streets of Capernaum. Many passed to give greeting, and Simon Peter told me that Capernaum, though but a small city, was of great attraction for men who did not know women but only other men. So also was I told that such men would cover their lips with the juice of red berries, although in the taverns, on wine, they would argue concerning their disposition, and say how the bravest of the Greeks were Spartans who lived entirely as men in the arms of each other.

To which others would dispute as follows: "So did these

Spartans also live with the sword whereas you live with such coloring as women seek for their lips?"

Nonetheless, did I feel affection for these sodomites even as I encountered them in Capernaum. They were tender in spirit and gave welcome to me, and would congregate about me beneath a tree with much shade inasmuch as they were not welcome in the temple.

There, each day I preached of the incarceration of John the Baptist who was with me in spirit at all times and all but upon me, and I spoke with the clarity that comes from not knowing what gives fire to one's speech but only that one's thoughts are full and no word goes in need of search of the next. And more gathered each day at the synagogus until there was no bench to receive them, not even in the vestibule nor outside the door. And one day came a man with palsy wholly paralyzed and he was borne toward me by four other men who could not even find approach because of the press of those listening, so in their desperation did those four take a ladder and climb upon the roof, and even broke a hole between two rafters so they could lower the bed of the man with palsy nearer to where I spoke.

And when I saw such exhibition of faith in me, so did I

also know that the desperation in his bearers could also show proof that their concern for this man was worthy, and more; so without pause, did I say: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." For by dint of the cures I had already accomplished, I knew that those ill who have undergone much torment and now came to me were accepting the weight of their sin; a man paralyzed by palsy was equal in his suffering to the evil he had disseminated. In this case could it only be so great that in horror did he not believe he had sanction to move a limb. So I forgave him without hesitation inasmuch as his repentance was already in the paralysis of his arms and legs.

Yet among the scribes sitting in the synagogue there was much affront. I heard one say, "Why doth this man Jesus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only, and no other."

So did I know that I had been in error to speak without caution. Yet already did I find it difficult to bear the presence of those who were pious. And even more noxious to me were the most pious, considering that the odor of their spirit was like unto the death of shellfish when they die by the shore of that sea which had once been of nourishment to them.

Whereupon I said, and still was I without caution: "Why seek to reason these things? Know now that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. So I say unto this man with palsy: Arise, take up your bed, and go thy way into thine house." And the man arose, and neither was he a large man but his bed he took up and carried it forth from the synagogue before them all; if he staggered was it only by a little. So were they much amazed.

And on leaving the temple that day, a multitude from Capernaum choose to follow me and again I did my best to teach them in the shade underneath a tree.

Each day more did I come more to understand why Jehovah had chosen me. I could see how God, my Father, in the breadth of His dimension would be sore tried for patience with us considering how often had we all consumed His charity by repeating our sins and much repeating them. So were men too small to comprehend Him. Thereby, did He have need of me to understand their errors, even as I had known great emptiness when I had fasted and so could now comprehend those waste-places in the soul where no pride can stir over one's good deeds, and the soul is as a void before the memory of its sins.

Now I could not say that the Lord spoke to me on every day for there were many occasions when I was alone and without Him. Yet when I roused myself from sleep, it was as if He had always been there to impart much.

And later in the day would I know when the Lord's voice was speaking through me for then my tongue was with felicity and my mind with prowess I did not know at other times. And my utterances were of peril to me for many were the words my heart would not have dared to utter if unsupported by the Lord.

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Soon did I begin to contemplate my need for disciples who would follow me on every day of the year, and would work at daily tasks of which I had much ignorance. So, when I saw Levi sitting at the customs house, I said: "Follow me." And said it for no more than that he had a good and merry face.

Levi arose and I looked into his eyes which were with light for me; so did I not concern myself that his duties were as a tax collector. Thereby would I yet learn that few men in Galilee and Judea were as unpopular as these publicans who worked in customs houses collecting taxes for Romans. Rather would I measure a sinner by what gleamed in his eye. For even a man who would cheat others often revealed more of God to me than I could see in the eyes of those who were sinless but downcast.

And I had need of twelve men, one for each of the tribes of Israel, twelve men who could look back when I stared at them so that I could see what was in their souls and be able

to forgive them. Nor did that mean I saw such men as free of much warping of the soul within. Yet could I also see, as if God had given me the power to journey to the bottom of the sea, that in their eyes was a soul who would walk down every road with me. Or so I thought.

There was one for whom I could not declare such, and he was Judas, yet so beautiful with his dark beard that I wished him to be among my twelve even if I could not perceive what was in his expression inasmuch as his eyes were too full of fire; indeed, I was as if blinded by the smoke and fumes of his spirit. But then he was the son of a wealthy man and hated his father. Notwithstanding, I welcomed him. For he claimed to love the poor.

In that manner, did I choose twelve men who should be with me, and I had hope that I could send them forth to preach once I had guided them toward the power to heal sickness and cast out devils. If I had already Simon Peter, also did I have James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James, and Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas, and another named James, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot of whom I have spoken; of them all, was Judas the most comely.

Yet in choosing these disciples had I encouraged much dissatisfaction among the Pharisees. When I would sit at meat in the house of Levi, so did many publicans and sinners sit also with us, and many tax collectors now followed me for they were full of shame before other Jews, and were heavy in their hearts that they worked for the Romans; such publicans had much need of me.

But when the scribes and Pharisees saw me eating with them, so did they speak to my other disciples, saying: "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with those dregs?" I was not eager to widen what separation was already between myself and these Pharisees in Capernaum, yet did I say: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick need much. I am here not to call the righteous to repentance, but the sinners."

And I debated how to tell these righteous Pharisees that sinners, having encountered the Evil Spirit, may even come to know surfeit of their appetites. Whereas the pious fester in the weariness of their wars against Satan.

Therefore was I happy in the house of Levi even while speaking to many sinners. Some, indeed, were of disreputable pursuits, and some were poor and unwashed, (for Levi was

generous) yet by coming to know such people, so did I begin to ponder a grave question. And that was the absence of my Father's presence in many who were rich. They did not use the bounty of their wealth for others, whereas here, at the table of Levi, among these poor sinners who were his friends, did I see how there was much petty injury each could do upon another yet also much of simple pity would they feel for poor friends beside them; so, the faces of these poor guests at Levi's table shone for me with a clarity not unlike the grain of wood that has been treated to much exposure to the goodness and wrath of sun and rain.

Such argument would not suffice when with scribes and Pharisees; so would they say to me, "The disciples of John the Baptist did fast. Why do thy disciples fast not?" And so pious were their voices that at night I would brood over those Jews who spoke for my religion and drove away sinners. And I would reply: "New wine must be put into new bottles."

This difference was made worse on the day that my publicans walked through corn fields on the Sabbath, and plucked ears of corn. Whereupon the Pharisees said, "To pluck corn on this day is not lawful." And when I gave

answer, my voice was in a race with my cautions, so that my speech was almost not uttered, yet did it gain a victory after all, saying: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Then, on the next Sabbath, when I entered into the synagogue so was a man there with a withered hand; many Pharisees now watched to see if I would seek to heal him and they were ready to make accusation.

Still, was I confident that I could not serve my Father if I did not speak what was in my thoughts; had these thoughts been in error, so would my Father have rebuked me; no rebuke had come. Therefore, on this Sabbath in Capernaum did I say to the man with the withered hand: "Stand forth."

And I asked of the congregation, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? Is it lawful to save life?"

No one among them could answer. They had not the courage to say "Cure him." Now, the hardness of their hearts (wherein no heart is so hard as the cautious heart) did infuriate me. I spoke to the man, saying: "Stretch forth thine hand," and when he did, so did I not even have to touch it; at once could I see how his hand was restored to him as whole as the other. Yet did I also feel a great

anguish. For in the mystery of this power to heal which the Lord had given me, had something been injured by pride in myself? For now did I understand, even as many Pharisees in much displeasure stood forth and left the synagogue, that a time might come when I must go to war with some of my own people. Would they then be lost to what had been prepared for me to teach?

And indeed, later that night, one of my disciples made claim to have heard even that day how two Pharisees in the synagogue took counsel with officers of Herod Antipas now living in Capernaum; among them had been discussion of how this Yeshua of Nazareth might be stilled. And on hearing such words, I knew that I must flee from Capernaum and go to those shores on the Sea of Galilee which are empty. For Yeshua of Nazareth would not seem like a god to the officers of Herod, no, more like a poor Jew.

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Yet was I far from alone. My disciples accompanied me to these wilder shores, and with them, came a multitude from Galilee. So did the word commenced by John the Baptist pass through all the hills and valleys and deserts of Israel, even into the mountains; already were there men and women in this multitude following me who came from all of Judea and from Idumea and even beyond the Jordan, a great multitude. And as they gathered about me in numbers, I was not ready to speak for fear of being encompassed by their need; indeed, my disciples were now obliged to comport themselves as soldiers, and become as my guard. Yet still did I feel the pushing and consternation of many people and much agony to reach me and to touch me, until so many were about that I was deprived of the power to cure, and, truth, I had enough bruises to think of my own sores when day was done.

So I told my disciples to find me a small ship that could wait in a cove of the Sea of Galilee so that from

there, near to shore, but apart, could I preach from the prow, yet come back to land long enough to touch a few and allow the unclean to fall down before me.

And while waiting did I go up into a mountain, but the multitude followed. I came down and returned to a town near Capernaum and entered a house where I was welcome, and that same multitude surrounded the house of my host, until I was obliged to step out upon the porch to offer cures to a few, and there were scribes from Jerusalem in the multitude come to this house to see if the word was true.

And word did I receive that one of these scribes had said to another, "By Beelzebub, prince of the devils, doth he cast out devils." And I knew great danger was there for me and for my disciples that such word would overflow the land. For even as I was gaining knowledge of how to cure, so was a plague of ill spirit also swelling in readiness, and it would thrive in the hearts of the righteous; they would see my efforts as Devil's labor: For was not a poor man's command of miracles equal in sum to denying the Ten Commandments and all law surrounding the tablets? And indeed, good Pharisees and scribes and their priests looked to make a world where people were just. So did I know that I must speak to these

two scribes from Jerusalem who had come to look upon me, for they appeared most intelligent, and took great care, each, of his beard which was modest and clean.

So, I said to them, "Ye call me Satan yet how can I be the same if I can cast him out and his devils are upon the floor like a wind of dust? A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, nor a house divided; how then can Satan rise up against himself? And so would I warn you, all sins can be forgiven, except for he who shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost. Such a man is in danger of eternal damnation." And they went away without reply for they heard my speech as a threat.

Indeed, had I spoken in words most baleful, and no longer knew whose voice I uttered. For my Father had not seemed near to me in that instant, and so I was not without thought that the Devil had entered my argument.

It was a day of many ills. To this same house now came my mother, and my half-brothers, the sons of Joseph, and standing outside they called for me, but the multitude were pressed all about, and I could neither see them nor hear them. Then one man in this multitude said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren are without and seek for thee," and I

was as if in a fever, for I uttered these words: "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And looked around the room as if I had need of every man and woman in it, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and my mother."

And I did not wish to see my mother; when young had she filled me with fear of Romans and of wealthy Jews who were of more consequence than ourselves, whereas I had need in this hour of much confidence and no fear.

Later did I hear that my mother wept when my words were repeated to her, and then did I wish to gather them back from the air. For I owed much to my mother even if those roads traveled together had never been smooth, not from my birth, but then could I also know that she had lived in much anxiousness over the great secret of my birth and was never without visions of catastrophe yet to befall us.

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In the evening, sorrowing over these harsh words concerning her, so did I feel much need to be calmed by the sea and said to my disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side."

Now, they had been feasting in all houses that bid us welcome and I had noticed that the rich in these towns near Capernaum were ready to welcome my disciples. So they ate much and drank much and with few cares. But I had need of peace. I was weary.

In these weeks they had brought unto me many taken with diseases and torments, and many possessed with devils, and those who were lunatic and those with palsy; with all had I worked to heal them. And in each such moment when the Holy Spirit came to me and passed from my heart to my hand, thereby did my touch make them well.

Yet, in each of such instants, did I have memory again of the leap that I did not take on the fortieth night at the

invitation of the Devil. Now, therefore, must I leap out with the spirit of healing given to my hand onto the body of whoever was before me. Yet did my cowardice also accompany me on each such cure. For it is cowardly to fear death as I had feared it with the Devil. Now must I make amends by recalling that moment each time, and that was just inasmuch as I would then not feel unseemly pride for my cures. And I would wonder in that moment when I had looked to save my body had I thereby been joined to the Devil in some manner I could not fathom, so that, no matter my loyalty to God, still would a part of me, no matter how reduced, belong to Satan.

A new unhappiness of spirit commenced in me. And it increased even as there now came toward us more people, and many did I heal. Not all, but the better part of all. There were a few I could not cure. For these had a great and evil light in their eye dark as the darkest angels of Satan, an evil light to tell me that before their illness had come upon them, they had been stronger in evil spirit than had I been ever in good spirit.

Yet even so had I learned the cause of my unhappiness of spirit and knew I had need again of the sea, or even of a lake so large that it might be like the sea.

And so I told my nearest followers to send away the multitudes. For it was evening. And when most were gone, we went quickly to a ship, albeit there were others who followed us in smaller ships. And that was close to much disaster; a great wind arose on the Sea of Galilee.

The waves beat upon our vessel and near covered it. And I knew naught of this for I slept like one newborn, even if it were tumult for others; peace was given to me by the rocking of the water. Yet when they brought me awake, it was to say, "Many boats will soon founder. Master, dost thou not care if we perish?"

So, I made ready to rebuke the wind, and said unto the sea, "Be still," and there was calm. But in truth, I do not know if I can take such making of a miracle unto myself for in the midst of this storm, still did I sense on awakening how a calm was coming and so knew before others that the end of the storm was upon us. Nonetheless did I take the pleasure of saying: "Why are ye so fearful? Have ye no faith?"

And I could hear them, one to another: "What manner of man is this? Even do the seas obey him."

And the wharf where we landed was in the country of the

Gadarenes and we had come to a beach in back of which were cliffs with many tombs, and out of one of these tombs descended a man with a torch, yet his spirit was thus unclean that the fire of the torch was fierce from his breath. And he came rushing toward me. No man among my followers, not even Peter, was ready to resist this man nor bind him. And I had to say: "Peace." Whereupon, he stopped.

And he said, "No man doth bind me. Not by chains. They seek to do such, but chains I break asunder. No man can command me."

"Then from where is your fright?"

"I am afraid of all things," he replied. "In the day do I live in the darkness of the tombs, and weep. I tear at myself with sharp stones. I cut my flesh. But of you have I heard word, and I worship you."

"What have you heard said?" I asked.

"That your eyes have a great light which now I see," he said, "and your name is Jesus. So much have I heard from those who dare to speak to me. Such people there are, and they speak despite all fear of who I am. Know ye who I am. I am he who contains a multitude of devils, more than any other man has been vile enough to support in his heart.

So, I adjure thee: Torment me not, Jesus! This is fair warning."

I was not without fear in speaking to this man; he had more strength even than Peter whose strength was kin to a bull. Moreover did this fellow live in great filthiness of person. His hair met his beard and these locks were like fards of the great rope that is used to hold large ships to their mooring.

Now did he say to me, "I have fear of myself. I live in the tombs of those who are damned."

I asked, "What is thy name?"

He answered, saying: "My name is Legion. We are many, and the sum of this many are in me."

In truth, I knew that he was with a multitude of devils, yet was I forced to speak and most directly, as if the hand of the Lord was at my back, and urging me forward: "The devils who devoured King Herod are now in you," I said.

"Release yourselves, unclean spirits! Release yourself from Legion." Even as I said this, so did a great herd of wild swine come rushing out of the tombs, and a manifold of devils came screaming from the throat of Legion, screaming as they were put asunder, and in their tongues I heard, or so seemed

it to me: "Give us entrance! Entrance into the swine of Gadarene." For which I gave leave, and these unclean spirits having issued out of Legion, rushed with a great noise of wind to enter the herd of swine who now ran violently down a gorge into the sea. These swine were in numbers two thousand. And all such hogs and sows were choked in the sea, all these swine of Gadarene.

Others soon came to look at this man who had been possessed by so many devils. But now they found Legion clothed and bathed and returned to his right spirit. Yet were the elders of the town of Gadarene afraid, and they prayed, and entreated me to depart from their coast.

As I returned to my ship, Legion began to beg of me that he might come along. I was near-tempted, for he would have made a mighty apostle. Yet their number was already twelve--no more could I add to such a sum, no more than I could add another tribe to the twelve of Israel. Moreover, did I know, having learned much from the Devil, that the separation of Legion from his unclean spirits might not last through a long night. Yet also did I wonder whether this was betrayal of the Lord's mission to send such a man away; therefore, did I feel no pride in my heart at saying to him, "Go to thy

friends and tell them what great thing hath happened today." Yet, in part, did I still abhor the man, for I had heard the uproar of much horror passing over into the swine, even as they perished.

After he departed, Legion spoke well of me in the town of Decapolis which was near to these tombs, and I also heard of those who did marvel at his words inasmuch as they had known Legion in former days in Decapolis and all had been terrified of him.

Now, on my return, again as I journeyed over by ship to Capernaum, were more people gathered and I had to keep out from shore and preach to them from my boat across the water.

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And when I came finally to shore, one of the rulers of the synagogue, and his name was Jairus, came forward to meet me and this man Jairus fell at my feet which startled me, since no one of the rulers of the synagogue had heretofore offered more than a place to teach (and this most grudgingly). Yet here was Jairus at my feet. And he besought me greatly, saying "My little daughter lies near death. I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her that she shall be healed and shall live."

And in that way did I learn how faith was not unlike loss of faith, inasmuch as both stole in silently around the corners of the heart, I understood that if the rulers of the synagogue had not shown me approval, so did it not mean that I had failed to enter into the secrecy of their hearts. And feeling much strengthened by this, I went with Jairus to his house, and without hesitation, and many people made a throng around us. And at that moment, I knew that someone had done

something ill to me, for I felt all virtue go out of me, and I turned about and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

One of my disciples said: "Thou seeest the multitude and thou sayest 'Who touched me?'" But then a woman spoke in fear and with much trembling and fell down before me even as she spoke the truth and said, "I have had an issue of blood for twelve years and have suffered many hours and bad things with many physicians. I have spent all that I have saved and have never been bettered and have grown worse. But I have heard of you, and was among those who were about you, and from behind did I reach through to touch your garment, for I thought: 'If I may reach his cloth, I shall be whole.' And it was so. The fountain of my blood ceased to well forth."

By her face could I see that she was telling the truth, and I said to her, "Daughter, go in peace and be healed of thy plague." Yet even as I spoke, came servants of the house of this ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, and said to him, "Thy daughter is dead."

Nor did I know what to say, for with terror pinioning my heart so did I now fear that the ailing woman had seized the virtue I would have garnered to save the child.

Yet in that instant was my Father there to speak through

me, and I felt more even of His strength than I had known before and saw how such power was drawn from the bowels of the earth and the light of the sky, inasmuch as my own eyes were luminous to me, and I turned to the ruler of the synagogue and said, "Jairus, be not afraid. Only believe," and at that moment, I had hope that the daughter was not dead but rather rested in the long shadow of sleep that comes to those who have need of death. For out of such state could I save her. But I did not know if I could bring her forth to return from those who are truly dead.

Whereupon I recited to myself the words of the prophet Isaiah, as indeed I would on each other attempt I would make to raise those who were gone and departed. I said to myself: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out."

Then, suffering no man to follow me save Peter and James, and John the brother of James, we came to the house of Jairus and saw a great tumult within where many wept and much wailing arose. And when I entered, I said: "Why make ye this ado? The damsel is not dead but sleeps."

I said it to calm their voices, for I knew that to raise the dead was a matter for silence; tumult can drive the dead

further away. Therefore did I ask all mourners to go out from the house of Jairus and I told the high servants of this ruler of the synagogue to return with the father and mother of the damsel, and by their side did I go in to where she was lying. And I took their daughter and held her hand, and recited those words I remembered well from the scroll of the Second Kings, saying: "When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his rest, and Elisha went in and shut the door and prayed unto the Lord. And he lay upon the child and put his mouth upon the child's mouth and his eyes upon the child's eyes and his hands over the boy's hands, and he stretched himself upon the child and the flesh of the child was now warm, and the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes."

"And this," I said to the father and mother, "having been spoken, need not be done again." For I knew that if I lay upon the child and she failed to stir, incalculable would be the damage done. Feeling the power of the Lord, I said only, "Damsel, unto thee I say arise." And straightaway she arose and she walked, a damsel of twelve years. And her parents were astonished and ready to praise me but I told them to give her to eat, and give with much love.

The child, however, looked to me as one in misery, and not happy by more than half that she had returned to the living, although, for truth, even at this moment I did not know if she had been dead. But I did understand that much unhappiness between husband and wife had laid a pall upon the girl and indeed it was apparent that she had lived in a house of many unclean feelings; no air was sweet in these rooms, and those miseries which feed upon themselves were in each scent; so were the scents full of all that is stale. And before I left, I also told them to fast and to pray and to leave a flower in a small jar by the child's bed each morning.

And if it had seemed simple to do when I told the damsel to rise, now was a weight lying upon me; I realized much had been drained from my limbs that morning by the woman who touched my garment and drained again from my limbs by arousing this child who may not have wished to live. So was I then returned to my own gloom. For now I must wonder if I had done such deeds for my glory and had called upon God when it would have been better to save His efforts for other matters. Indeed, I felt a desire then to return to Nazareth, to be back again among my own people, and to apologize to my mother for that hour in which I had wounded her love.

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So I came back again to my own country and my disciples followed me, and in Nazareth did I spend two days with my mother. And I do not know if matters were much eased for how could she forgive such remarks as I had made?

On the Sabbath I began to teach in the synagogue, but at once did I hear clear sounds of discontent, people saying, "From whence has this man come? What wisdom is this which is given unto him?" And if I told them of works I had wrought, of the leper and of the storm, and felt a loss of modesty (and such loss was equal to uncleanness for me) yet it was for naught. I was not believed. It was as if word had reached everywhere in Galilee but for Nazareth. And I could hear them say, "Is this not the carpenter, who is the son of Mary?" They were clearly offended, and I wondered if any blow is greater to pride than to be obliged, and on the sudden, to honor a person who has been for years no more than equal to oneself, whereas now he has returned and is greater.

So I knew that whatever word had reached Nazareth concerning what I had done had to cause my own townspeople to jeer. And I was wroth that they would offer me no love. "A prophet is without honor in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house," I said. Yet had I already spoken here of my deeds with such vain emphasis that in Nazareth I could do no mighty work. I laid my hands upon a few who were not sore ill and could barely heal them.

Still, there came the next Sabbath and I awoke with the strength of my Father as on few mornings and was able to cure a woman who had lived in a spirit of infirmity over eighteen years and she had been bound in her limbs to such degree that she could not lift up from her seat. Yet when I saw her, I had only to say, "Woman, thou art loose from thy infirmity."

Whereupon I laid my hands on her and immediately was she made straight and her voice was as sweet as the innocence of birds who talk to each other in the morning. Yet was I scolded before evening by the ruler of this small temple for healing on the Sabbath day--once more had I done just so!--and he was a rich man, much pleased with himself, and he said: "There are six days on which men are to work and in such days can they be healed, but not on the Sabbath."

To which I answered, "Do you not loose your ox from the stall on the Sabbath and lead him to water? Yet this woman, stricken over eighteen years, cannot be loosed from her bonds on that day when we celebrate the works of the Lord?"

This rich man was one Pharisee ready to enter into debate; he replied: "There are those among us who do not loose our oxen on the Sabbath. Faith is a narrow road." Which offended me. I should have said: "Hypocrite! You, too, lead your oxen to water on the Sabbath so that they do not suffer and decrease in value," but I was silent on this, and said merely: "Yes, narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there be that find it, whereas broad is the way that leads to destruction."

To which he added, as if to come closer to the sweet meat of the question: "The broad highway of simple faith is without peril, but only on fair days. For when it rains, its breadth is as treacherous as a trackless mire. Seek ye, Yeshua, for the narrow road that mounts between the rocks, and do not look for cures on the Sabbath. For that is the broad highway."

And he laid his hand upon my shoulder as if he were fatherly and I was of simple faith; in the touch of his

fingers was the confidence of those who are wealthy. His hand said to my flesh: "Respect my words. Much position rests beneath."

I was shamed by him. My powers now left me. In my own synagogue was I without strength.

Yet was I in great need of strength. I was beginning to understand that the task set for me by the Lord was immense, nor could I carry all of His word alone. Many would be there to oppose and I would need an army of apostles to stand against them. Yet if each of my twelve could find his own twelve and each of these bring to us another twelve, then soon would I have an army for the word of the Lord. So I knew that I would have to send out my apostles without me so that they might make cures and bring others back.

Yet to large armies came discord and confusion. So did I now see that faith might be simple for some yet a labyrinth to the Son of Man who now could wonder whether the last turning had brought him closer to the light or nearer to darkness.

Yet did I sleep well on the thought of sending out my apostles.

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So soon as I left Nazareth, belief returned then in all that we could do, and I did call back my twelve apostles who were faithful for indeed I had decided that the time was ripe and I could send them forth two by two, and without me. Nor did I think it unlikely that they might gain power over unclean spirits, and perform such acts as mine. Word of the cures I had wrought was now disseminated among many; so the power of my apostles might have been multiplied; the commencement of every cure is belief in the physician.

I told them to go out with no possession on their journey but a staff to give comfort on long walks; they were to be without bread or money, and would have but one coat. And I said: "Wherever you enter into a house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you, depart from thence, and for a testimony against them, shake off the dust from your feet. So, go your way because I give unto you power to tread on

serpents and scorpions and over all who would look to hurt you.

"Rejoice in spirit," did I also say, "for blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see. Many prophets and kings have desired to look upon these things and have not, and they wish to hear these things which ye hear but have not." I understood that what I said was true for me and so could be true for them.

I was the only one whom the Lord of heaven and of earth would speak to, for we were kin, and thereby was I possessed of an incalculable good. And if my apostles would be thus near to me, so would they also hear the Lord speak.

Yet did I also know that to be happy as the Son of the Lord could be possible only if I never rested in my labors for Him and never felt sorrow for myself, inasmuch as it was in pity for oneself that the destruction of each man was to be found, and this was twice true for the Son of the Lord, and would be also as twice-true for my disciples.

Therefore to them did I say many other things as well for there was much to learn in short time, and much that I said was harsh. For I was coming to understand that to repent of one's sins generates much turmoil; the soul debates

with itself and goes to and fro; thereby, the choice of a gentle word is not always of efficacy in bringing men to save themselves.

So I also told them to listen, but not to ponder long. For if there would be much they could not quite understand, yet would it still be enough to say the same to others, even if those who heard might not understand either. Yet could they act upon it. "What ye hear in the ear," I told them, "that is the wisdom on High speaking to you, and that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them who can kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. Rather fear God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. For God knows all. Not one sparrow shall fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. So are the very hairs of your head all numbered. Fear not, therefore. You have more value than many sparrows."

What I told them next would not come without effort to my tongue and it did seem prideful to my own thoughts even as the words were issued. Nonetheless were they the words of the Lord, and in my mouth, and I said, "Whosoever shall confess unto me, him will I confess also to my Father which is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me, him will I also

deny before my Father." Then did some of my apostles draw back for well did they know that they had denied me in separate ways and some had not been ready to declare to all they met that they were of my cohort.

So did the words that came next partake even more of God's wrath. I looked into the eyes of each of the twelve, and I said: "I am come not to send peace but a sword." And if such was at variance with all I had said before, if I had cured many and calmed a storm at sea and raised a young girl from the dead, so had I come to bring peace on earth. Yet, had I also had visions of battles, and many battles, before peace could come. And my body was even sore with the pain that I had made no fine peace with Mary, but had merely lived in courtesy with her when last in Nazareth. Yet still did I say, and I knew it was the Lord's mouth and the Lord's holy anger speaking through me: "I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and a man's foes shall be they in his own household. He that would love father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, for he that does not take his cross and follow after me is also not worthy of me. He who would find his life shall lose it; he that loses his life for my sake shall

find it."

And now could I see that my apostles were weeping. No thought inspires compassion for oneself more entirely than the thought that one is losing one's life for a friend, since in such an instant, one can feel noble. So, is it natural then to mourn for oneself. And with those words did I send them out to preach.

And I lived alone in a hut abandoned by shepherds that I found not far from Capernaum. And prayed for many days concerning the fears that still I held.

Also can I say that each fear was terrible for each came upon me in the middle of the night when my limbs were heavy and my heart sought to flee. But no road appeared and there was darkness in my dreams.

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Concerning these fears, the first was that John the Baptist was dead; he had been slain. King Herod Antipas was he who had commanded the deed.

And the second fear was of great consequence for me: Many said that John the Baptist had risen from the dead, and was now performing mighty works. Some spoke of how the man who had brought forth such miracles was Elijah; others said it is a prophet. But word of John's works after death was near to my works; so others soon said that it was not John but Jesus, who might be the Christ.

By that was Herod Antipas soon convinced that I was John. He said, "Indeed, this Jesus is the same John whom I beheaded. He is risen from the dead." Then I knew a fear not far less in magnitude than the awe occasioned in me by God's presence. For Herod Antipas was mighty and of ugly conscience; if he had slain John the Baptist once, so could he murder him twice.

These were the circumstances as related to me by my disciples: First had Herod imprisoned John because the preacher had said to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." And it was true. The Lady Herodias who had once been wife to his brother Philip was now espoused to Herod Antipas; thereby did the Lady Herodias form a great animus against John, and would have had him killed gladly, and without pause, indeed, was Herod obliged by her to send forth his guard against John and bind him in prison for her sake.

Yet, despite her anger and wifely beseechments to the king, Herodias could not bring Herod Antipas to order the death of the Baptist. By much did this king fear him.

On the birthday, however, of Herod Antipas, a feast was given to him by his lords and high captains. And before them danced the daughter of Herodias, Salome, who pleased this Herod Antipas so much with ardent movements that when she was placed in a seat of honor beside him, Herod said: "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, I will give it." Then Salome teased him upon the solemnity of his words, saying as how they had been spoken to the air and were not inscribed on parchment.

Whereupon Herod Antipas took a vow: "Whatsoever thou

shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom. That is my oath."

Thereby was my cousin's death made certain; when the coward offers an oath, it is like unto the keel of a ship that he builds for his soul and for his kingdom; the oath strengthens him. Whereas to break an oath, is to damn oneself with the bloody acts of one's followers and the filth of their deeds.

Salome went forth to her mother, asking: "What shall I request?" and Queen Herodias said, "Take nothing less than the head of John the Baptist."

Whereupon Salome returned with haste unto Herod and made demand and the king was in new misery. For his oath's sake, he could not reject her. Immediately did he send for an executioner and gave description how the head of John be brought to him on a bowl of silver, and on receiving it, did Herod Antipas give the salver to Salome. She is said to have danced with such a head before presenting it to her mother.

Hearing of such matters, I did not sleep. I lay suspended between my love of salvation and my fear of Herod Antipas, and could only seek solace in the thought that God was often near to me while this son of Herod was in his

palace and far away.

Lying in the darkness in that hour after I was told of John's death, I wept. His way had been harder than my own, and he had prepared a path for me in all the places of the world that are adamant hard with stone. Yet of John who knew naught of sweetmeat or wine, still did they say that he had a devil; now of me must they say, "Behold, a man bibulous and gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners." Such condemnations spoke of how great a distance was before me and my apostles and of how we would have many enemies who would see us as belonging to the devil.

And I knew, even as I dared to think of it, that I had much terror of the Romans. For with all else, who was I but a poor Jew? So I blessed the centurion who had come to me, and had had faith in me. Thereby had he lightened my burden and made smaller, if only by an iota, my fear of all centurions and their legions and their masters.

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And in my grief and my fear, in that time when I sought to calm my thoughts upon the death of John the Baptist, there came a good day when many of my apostles returned and had much to tell me of what they had done and what they had taught; yet so many were surrounding them that we did not have peace to sit together.

Therefore we departed into a desert place by ship, and privately, inasmuch as Matthew the publican knew many ship owners and thereby was owed many favors; as a publican he counted their taxes. Still, as people saw us departing so did they follow on foot around the Sea of Galilee, and even as we landed on an empty shore adjoining the desert, a group came toward us of hundreds.

I was then moved with compassion and ready to teach for I felt the spirit of John the Baptist within me; what he had commenced I must strive to finish, and I told myself that I had all things great to protect me, being not a prophet but

the Son of God. Moreover was the need of these people as quick in their hearts as sheep without a shepherd. So I sought to teach that day but do not know that much was learned for when seed is cast in handfuls and by haste, one cannot say where it falls nor how much can take root. I knew only that when the day was spent, my disciples said, "Send them away now that they may go back into the villages and buy themselves bread. For they have nothing to eat, and here is but a desert."

But I was feeling exaltation that so many people had walked over so many sharp stones to join us, and I wished to have nothing of the spirit of nay-saying. (In concord could I feel the Lord's hand on my elbow.) So. I said merely: "Give them to eat."

My disciples said unto me: "Here we cannot find two hundred pennyworth of bread. It is you who must provide. Did you not say to us on the last Sabbath: 'Take no thought of: "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" For your heavenly Father will know that ye have need of all these things. Take therefore no thought for the morrow.'"

And I said: "How many loaves are among you?"

And upon looking, they told me five loaves and two fish.

Whereupon I told my disciples to seat all our followers in companies upon the ground. And I took the five loaves and divided them exceedingly small so that there were a hundred pieces of bread from each loaf, and each piece of fish gave up twice two hundred and more small morsels, and with the five hundred of the bread and the five hundred of the fish, each morsel not so large as the tip of a thumb, so did I pass them out to each of the followers, doing it myself for all five hundred, laying one flake of fish and one bit of bread upon their tongues, and each person took these fragments into him, and in so doing, so did their morsels expand within my own head, and each fragment was filled with much of the strength of what God gave me; this strength was shared with each of my followers.

And so completely that few among these hundreds of followers did not believe that he been given a fish and a loaf of bread entire to himself, a triumph of the Holy Ghost rather than an enlargement of matter. Which for the Lord is also but a small deed, since the heavens and the earth did He make out of nothing.

Later, I can say that this story was much multiplied by Mark and by those who would say more than Mark such as

Matthew and Luke. No angel appeared in the sky, nor the manna that God gave to Moses and his people. But then such was the power of the blessing that the Lord had given into my hands that all, as I say, were satisfied and we shared in the fellowship of a banquet even as once a year in earlier years when I did my labor as a carpenter, all artisans who worked with wood and stone in Nazareth would gather, and there were many of us, and we would eat in a green field with much joy and wine. So was this feast in the desert equal, even if Mark gave me not less than five thousand loaves and hundreds of fish and burdened my disciples with twelve baskets of fragments to bear home, whereas we were five hundred, not five thousand.

But then, exaggeration is the currency of the Devil, and no man is free of Satan, not even the son of God (and certainly not Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), so I knew that my followers would exaggerate my feat. Yet I also knew better than all that by His will, did He prefer each miracle to be appropriate to the need thereof. For in the working of miracles can also be extravagance even as such waste exists in other forms.

Afterward, to separate myself from the people, I

debarked with my disciples in the ship and we went to Bethsaida on the other side of this Sea of Galilee.

And when we landed, so did I tell my disciples to debark again and sleep on the ship in the Sea of Galilee while I was alone on the land. And this I ordered because the strength to be more than a prophet came not only from the Lord but out of knowledge gained in my work from day to day; so did I have need of hours to meditate, whereas my disciples would have chattered about me like a throng of children and none would have found benefit. If I would have them like me and ready to work miracles, so were they still like children.

I went up therefore into a mountain apart to pray and would have laid me to sleep, but as evening came, the ship was tossed with waves, and much wind. And as I saw them rowing out, I could see that my disciples were ill at ease and without rest and so I came down from the mountain and walked to them across the sea. Or such was how it would soon be told, although in truth I commenced to swim to the boat, but felt in me much which would lift my spirit, and thereby was I up and above and beyond my body and even as I could see myself swimming below on the surface of the water, so did they in the ship see me as I hovered above in all the

comfort, or so it appeared to them, of taking long strides across the water. And they cried out. I heard many voices as I approached the boat. All were saying, "It is a spirit."

But I spoke unto them saying, "Be of good cheer, it is I, not a spirit. Be not afraid." And Peter being much aware of the small miracles he had worked in curing the ill over these last weeks, now said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

And I said, "Come."

But when Peter stepped out of the ship with the thought that he would walk toward me, so did he also see that the wind was boisterous and he was sore afraid then that he must sink, and thereby did he sink, crying out, "Lord, save me!"

I stretched forth my hand and caught him and said: "O thou of little faith! Wherefore didst thou doubt?"

And it was then I knew how Peter's wish was to be loyal. Yet would he fail me. For his faith was in his heart but not in his legs, and so I knew the woe of understanding that it was not the sentiments of men that revealed the presence of the Lord, but their deeds; this did I know to be true. And the Devil, having made much study of the Lord's words, had become skilled in the art of good speech; thereby he could

utter glorious sentiments worthy of the Lord and stirring to the heart, but naught that was good could come of his words. So, thinking this did I feel that I had come further away from Satan than before, and I was heartened.

When Peter and I had both come back to the ship, the disciples worshipped me in a way that they had not before, and said, "Of a truth, is it that thou art the Son of God?"

Now they had said this many times and on each occasion I could hear in their voice was a part that spoke the truth, and some were coming to believe that I was not less than what they asked; yet was there another portion in their voice, like a house divided against itself; by that did they not yet believe in me. Yet, through many a day had they come nearer. So I understood that my good Peter might wish to be loyal and yet could fail me.

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When we landed again, after this night at sea, we were in the land of Genesseret and once more did multitudes come toward us, and even carried out to us those who were sick on their beds; wherever we entered a village that morning, so were the afflicted laid upon the street. Many besought me, and would say that if I had not time to cure each person, might they at least touch the border of my garment? And many who touched me were improved.

By midday, was I weary, and in the evening, low; my garment was imbued with the entreaties of many. And when I went to the synagogue, so did I find many Pharisees there and some from Jerusalem and scribes among them; it was not long before they wished to speak to me of their concerns.

For in that day after our debarking, had they seen my disciples eat bread with defiled hands. Some of the publicans had not washed. So to these Pharisees, was this not only a sin against the law, but a revulsion. The

publicans, sitting in each village square, had been collecting the tax for the Romans, and so handled coins from early morning until they were done gambling at night with such of those coins as they appropriated to themselves. Their hands were thereby made filthy with money. Yet the Pharisees, when they come home from the market, except they wash, they eat not.

Other covenants of the law had also been broken, particularly the washing of cups and pots and brazen vessels. Having been much pious in my own youth, I could see my followers through the eyes of the Pharisees.

Yet did I also understand that one cannot give an honored place to the pious, for no matter what is done in the way of observance and custom, still are the pious never near to satisfaction. They will find no satisfaction. Even if one would obey the law, one cannot inasmuch as the law always came from those who were more pious than oneself; each time must one's heart bow down then in the woe that the law was broken; one has failed God again. Weary as I might have been therefore on this night, still did I stand before the Pharisees in the synagogue and speak to them like a weary physician, saying: "Hearken unto me, every one of you, and

understand: there is nothing from without that can enter into a man and defile him. It is the things which come out of a man that will defile him. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear."

Much low and unhappy murmur was the response of these Pharisees. Within the synagogue, in the presence of the altar had I spoken of matters that were unclean, yea, I had spoken of the uncleanness of man himself who, even as he lives, must pollute. So my words proved offensive to the altar.

But I was speaking to my apostles as well, and so I said, "What enters from without does not pass into a man's heart but into his belly, and goeth out again into the drain, purging all meats." And I spoke with such purpose that I knew they heard me whisper as to myself, "That dirt which is on the hands of a man is as nothing." Then I said aloud, "But that which cometh out of the man can defile the man. For from within the heart of a man can issue evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, yea, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, blasphemy, pride, even to the evil eye--" And I had no breath to go on, such was my indignation. "All such evil things issue from within and

defile the man."

And I was surprised by my anger which was a host of fury sufficient to seize my breath against those who scolded others for not washing, yet hardly knew how great was the sum of their own evil within. How then could they not be terrified of all and any evil that came to them from without? Yea, of even the dust of the road and the mud of the fields were they afraid, and so much were they afraid that but one mote of non-observance could unbalance the scales within. Whereupon they would be damned.

I left the synagogue. And before the night was done I had even cured one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and that was done by putting my fingers into his ears, whereupon he spit, and I touched his tongue, whereupon he looked up to heaven and sighed, and I said to him, "Be opened." And his ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed and he spoke. And I smiled. For now the Pharisees would have to say, "He obeyeth not the law of washing, but he maketh the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

And on another occasion when multitudes had followed me to another waste of the desert where I hoped to retire for

the day, again there was nothing to eat, yet if I sent these people back to their houses, they would faint in the heat on the way. This time did we have seven loaves, and again I broke them into little pieces and gave them to my disciples, who passed them on, rank on rank, file on file, and all were satisfied.

But for me came a reminder of the concerns of Moses when the children of Israel had wept in the wilderness and said to him, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks, the onions and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away." And I remembered that Moses was not pleased with the manna that God sent down. For its taste had been as coriander seed and its color like bedellium. And the people had gathered it and ground it in mills and beat it in a mortar and baked it in ovens and made cakes of it; but its taste was of the taste of fresh oil. Yet when dew fell upon the camp in the night, so did more manna also fall with it. And people wept at the taste. Every man was at the door of his tent lamenting, and the anger of the Lord thereby was kindled, and Moses was also displeased. And Moses said to the Lord, "Wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight that

Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them? Whence should I have flesh to give unto these people? I am not able to bear them alone. It is too heavy for me."

And Moses began to weep and asked the Lord to let him die in his wretchedness.

So the Lord said, "Ye and your people shall eat until this food comes out of your nostrils and is loathesome to you."

And again I came to know how close is exhaustion to a precipice in the soul. One twisting of the limbs falls next into another and new pain stirs within the pain; still were the Pharisees, on hearing of how I had fed another multitude, without satisfaction. For if I would deny their piety, I would deny them all. They were without miracles. And some, even sensing how deep was the weariness of my spirit, now asked that I show a sign from heaven; whereupon I told them that I had given many signs and they did not see them for their hearts were hardened. And I set out on the road to another place.

When I came back to Bethsaida, a blind man was brought to me; so did I take him by the hand and lead him out of the

town so that no one should witness the cure.

And when I had spit on his eyes, and put my unwashed hands upon him, I asked what he saw.

And he looked up and said, "I see men as trees walking."

To which I replied, "That is because men, like trees, bear the fruit of good and evil, and are divided by it."

And then I put my hands again upon his eyes and he was restored and he saw every man clearly. And once again I said, when I sent him away to his house, "Neither go into the town nor tell it to any," because my heart was laden with the depletions of myself and what might be--or so was I coming to fear--the fatigue of God supporting me.

Yet with it all did I also have the belief on most days that He was there and strong. For when I was disconsolate, and knew much wretchedness like Moses and was ready to cease all effort, so would come surcease of despair and balm for my spirit. And there were nights when only the Lord could have provided such.

Yet, also, were there nights when I would awaken and now know who I was. So that once, passing through the towns of Caesarea Philippi, I asked my disciples: "Whom do others say that I am?"

And some answered that I was seen to be John the Baptist. Others said Elijah. Still others said: "They do not know, but say you are one of the prophets."

And I said, and my heart was beating: "But whom do ye say that I am?"

And Peter answered, looking at me in much modesty; it may be that he was thinking of the hour when he could not walk upon the water, and he said, "Can one say that thou art the Christ?"

It was true that I was indeed the Christ (even if an ordinary man in all ways but one), but being constituted thus as ordinary, so was I also made more certain by Peter's words. And so I loved Peter for the strength that his conviction gave to me and it was as if I knew with more certainty than before that I was indeed the Christ. But then, if I was the Son of God, it was of that part of God who had chosen Man for one of His names: I was the Son of Man, and so perhaps I needed another man to recognize who I might be.

In that instant would I also learn the deepest truth of exaltation, for now I understood that to receive what is best, one must also share the darkness of spirit that lies

close to all that is radiant. And so I told my apostles of a dream that was now coming to me night upon night, and it was a dream I had not yet imparted to anyone; still on every night would I dream that the Son of Man must go to Jerusalem and be rejected by the chief priests and the scribes and be killed; then, in a dream that always followed upon the first, so, after three days, would the Son of Man rise again. As I told them of the first dream and of the second, my disciples began to dissent, saying, "Nay, ye shall live forever, and we with you."

And then I knew why darkness lies so close to exaltation. For now I comprehended that if they loved me, it was for my power to work miracles and not because I might teach them to love others. If they preached like me, it was to increase the power of their own existence; they did not preach in pity for others. And I rebuked then, saying: "You savor not the things that be of God but the things that be of men." Then I said also:

"If I be killed and after three days, rise again"--and I did not know if I spoke the truth or was merely speaking from out the strange flavor of a dream, still I repeated--
"whosoever shall come after me, even if he lose his life for

my sake, shall save it. Whereas he who looks to save his life shall lose it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world but lose his own soul?"

And I looked into each of their eyes, as if to see their soul exposed at just that moment when the miracle of faith is there or is not; but in none of their eyes did I see more than that cast upon the spirit which speaks of self-sustenance. I had been ready to force them into faith but now I realized that I too was acting from no depth of pity for others but out of that other force which searches for power itself. And I sighed at the intricacy of all obstacles in the heart. This much I can say: they sighed after me, as if all of us knew how close we had come to what was truth yet how far away did we remain.

And in another day, and soon after, feeling a desire to be close to Peter and to James and to John, who were, after all, those with whom I had begun my life as a preacher, I led us up into a high mountain apart from the rest, and we four were there by ourselves, or would have been but a cloud followed us as we walked; so had such a cloud been there in the hour when Moses reared up his tabernacle on the Mount, and a cloud come to cover the altar; in the evening on that

tabernacle had been a flame. The tabernacle of Moses remained on the Mount covered by the cloud during the day and was illumined by the fire at night.

And if the children of Israel were to journey through the desert for forty years, so at each place where the cloud came to rest, did they pitch their tents, and they would only move at the commandment of the Lord to take up their journey again. But for as long as the cloud remained in its heavenly abode above the tabernacle, so did Moses and his people rest in their tents.

And here were we, at rest beneath another cloud. Even as I was meditating on such matters, did Peter come to me and say, "Master, let us make three tabernacles: One for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

And when he had built them and the cloud did not move, so was the day dark; still did I notice that my raiment was shining. We had walked in the desert and mounted from rock to rock, and in much dust; still was my garment exceedingly white, and therefore a small wonder. No garment could have been more white.

In that moment did I have a vision of Elijah standing next to Moses; I could even have said that they were talking

to me. But since it was in the language of tongues, I understood not a word. Yet did another voice come out of the cloud, and He said, "This is My beloved son; hear him."

And I said to my three apostles, "What have you seen?"

And Peter answered, "I have heard, but I have not seen; he who sees God will surely die."

And at that moment, a flame rose from the first tabernacle, and Peter knew again that I was the Son of Man. And again he said: "Thou art the Christ."

Then did I speak to Peter of how I must go into Jerusalem before all was done. And I told him of how I might suffer and even be put unto the point of death and killed. Although, did I also tell him, I would be raised within three days: such did I see in my dreams, I said.

But Peter began to rebuke me. "Put it far from thee, Lord. Let not this be unto me."

He could not accept my words. Yet was this after I had given him such great honor as to confide my dream. I knew a rage as sudden in its coming as lightning by its flash; I said unto Peter, "Thou art an offense unto me. Thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Get thee behind me, Satan."

When I saw tears in his eyes, I added, "Take up your cross and follow." I felt most far away from myself as if I were divine, and therefore strange to the feelings of those who might be nearest to me; they were mortal. Yet all of us were still as transfixed from the flame that rose from the tabernacle; even now did it not subside.

It was then I felt a great urge to instruct my disciples and most certainly was Peter the first. So while the flame rose from the tabernacle I spoke to them.

But it was a sermon that would be an essence of other sermons. For if time was gathering close for me, then must all I would say be much compressed:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," I told them, "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Even as I meditated upon each phrase, so were each of those thoughts far apart from all that these four knew, and knew even now after so long with me. Yet did I also feel God entering me and I could know the beauty of the soul that He had granted to me. For by such a soul, did I now believe,

could we all share in every breath that was tender with love.

Sp was I in great need to speak to them of all knowledge that one knows at once. Yet did I also know that if this knowledge had come upon me quickly, so was there much danger of losing it, and it would be lost.

Still, I said it all, even if I had cause to wonder if the time had come to speak of so much. Nonetheless was it my speech and it would be my sword against the Pharisees.

"Blessed in spirit are the poor," I said, "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Never did I utter words that were of more truth to me.

"Blessed are the merciful," I said, "for they shall obtain mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart. They shall see God."

And even as I said this so again did the power of God rise in me, and I saw something of the years to come and said: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad. For great is your reward in heaven. For so did they also persecute the prophets which were before you."

Then did I feel so inspired that my apostles might yet be equal to our martyred prophets that I was able to believe that my words would reverberate and not be lost ever. So I believed.

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So did I believe, yet was I not able to believe this for long. Even on the walk down from the mountain in return to Capernaum did I hear Peter and James and John in much dispute upon a mean matter. And I asked: "Were you naming who should be the greatest among you?"

Since they gave assent, I called to all twelve later in that day and said to them: "If any man desire to be first, he shall be last, and servant of all."

But Judas said: "Before any can speak of who should be first and who last, let there be one who is able to do what you have done. Yet, when we went out as apostles for you, so did we see those who fell on the ground foaming and we could not cast out their devils."

Judas was speaking a truth that no one had told me as yet. If my disciples could not yet cure others, therefore was I still alone. And I was full with anger that they would look to amass power for themselves rather than to earn it or

to share it, or to be able to cure others.

So to master my rage, I spoke an invocation, saying:

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

This was the least of what I had said to them on many days, but now was it loved by them the most. Nor was I happy at the pleasure they took. Would the largest passion I was to find among men be the desire that others would forgive their debt? So was it also clear that what men lacked the most was forgiveness of the trespasses of others.

And so was I in ury. To give them measure of how harsh were the holy demands of the Lord, I said: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. It is better to enter into the other life maimed than to have two hands to take into hell." And when I saw fear in their eyes, I spoke further and with the ferocity of the Lord, "If thy foot offend thee," I said, "cut it off. And if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God and see no more than half with the eye that is left than have both eyes cast into the flames of hellfire, where the worm that eats at your flesh dieth not."

I could see by their faces how few words were here for

them, and this did not ease those sentiments in me that were not far from desperation. I had been hearing a voice in my sleep each night, and it was my own. And the voice told me that I must leave these lands where people waited to touch my garment, and must go down instead into the countries of the proud, into the south of Judea wherein was Jerusalem, and there I must enter into the halls of the Great Temple.

And if in this time of preparation, I had been hoping to form an army of men who needed no swords because their souls were pure, I had gathered instead but a few constant followers and they argued among themselves over who should sit to the right of me and who to the left, and who was to be first after I was gone. So many miracles, so little gain.

And, indeed, I knew none of my disciples but for the moment when I knew each man well by looking into his eyes. Then did their eyes change, and by the hour, and evil licked like fire at the edges of all that was most loyal and compassionate in these men.

Yet had I summoned them as if we were an army, and had tried to grant them power over unclean spirits, yet had they accomplished little. And so might it be yet that the children of Israel would not reach the Kingdom of Heaven but

would be cast into outer darkness? And into the fire.

And now I wondered if the great wrath and harsh spirit of my Father came from knowing that the enemies of the Jews were teeming with evil and loyal to Satan, yet such enemies grew stronger. Thereby to prepare His people must my Father prove harsh in spirit so that all Jews be ready?

That night again did I have my dream and God spoke to me and said, "You shall enter Jerusalem. But among your people will there be betrayal, and thou wilt be scourged and crucified and shall die. Yet will I raise thee on the third day, and it is then that the world will know whom they have lost. All shall mourn."

Yet when this dream would return to me and on many a night, so would I also hear one angel saying: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son. And whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life. For God did not send His son to condemn the world, but that through him the world might be saved."

If the angel spoke truth and I was like unto a light that God had sent into the world, so could I also see that men loved darkness more than light. So would I awake and know not whether I would save the world or was already by the

world condemned, yet each day did I come closer to the belief that when I turned toward Jerusalem, my days would be as numbered as the fingers on one hand, and each day did I know that I must find courage to take up my steps in such a direction.

Later, in those days when we were on the road to Jerusalem, would I say to myself often the words of the angel: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten son and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but will have everlasting life." Over and over did I say this and indeed it would quell my fear against those hours when my death weighed upon each step I took.

At such times would tears be near to my eyes. And I wondered if the blood of all the prophets that had been shed since the foundation of the world would be equal to the blood required of my generation. And again I felt that my death was near.

Nor did I care to speak on this again to others, for such speech would give rise to disloyalty in those who wished to be loyal.

And I thought of Herod Antipas and of Herod his father who had wished to kill me at birth. What a bloody works was

man. And again I thought of Jerusalem and said to myself, "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," and for a moment I knew hope. Might it be that as we approached, the Kingdom of God would appear? So did I dream also of that for I knew I must lead my followers to Jerusalem and suffer all that might await me there, and all that might await my Father.

My journey in Galilee. Our problems were many. My apostles, some, by word of one sort, and some by another, were unable to choose the hour. And, indeed, even on the day when all were ready to leave, did I declare one further delay. For Matthew the publican had disappeared. And many among us knew that he was drunk and consorting in alleys with those he had left behind when first he came to join us. Other apostles were displeased and said: "We remain eleven of twelve; let us depart."

But I said: "If a man have a hundred sheep and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine and go into the mountains and seek for the one who has gone? And if it be that he find such a sheep, then can he rejoice more than over the ninety and nine which went not astray."

We were full of discord. I could hear the good voice of Peter saying, "Lord, when I was a boy and went to live in the

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Even as I girded myself for the days in Jerusalem, so did I tarry in Galilee. Our problems were many. My apostles, some, by need of one sort, and some by another, were unable to choose the hour. And, indeed, even on the day when all were ready to leave, did I declare one further delay. For Matthew the publican had disappeared. And many among us knew that he was drunk and consorting in alleys with those he had left behind when first he came to join us. Other apostles were displeased and said: "We remain eleven of twelve; let us depart."

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We were full of discord. I could hear the good voice of Peter saying, "Lord, when I was a boy and sent to live in the

land of my uncle, so was I also a shepherd, and it was our practice among such hills and rocks to let the rebellious sheep flee in order that we might guard all others."

"No," said I to him, "the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." And I can say that in this moment I heard the sigh in God's voice. For could it be a thousand years that the children of Israel had been His? And in such time so much had been lost. So now I waited for Matthew. The sheep that strayed had much of the Devil; to bring back such a creature was to mortify much in Satan.

That day, Matthew returned at evening and was distraught that he had delayed us; yet I knew his fear. A man who drinks too much wine and needs it for each of his days is close to fears in other men; Matthew could feel how much wrath was waiting for us, unuttered and dark in the heart, yea, even unto the Temple of Jerusalem, and there perhaps most.

That night I did much preaching, as if to ameliorate the unrest in my own heart and continued to speak even as I saw the light go out of the eyes of my apostles. They had heard my words before and had heard it much. Yet, even if they would weary of me, so would I speak to others and always

there were new ones among us. And I chose to instruct by parables inasmuch as I had come to learn that part of the Lord's yoke was that the creature, man, whom He had created in His image, possessed much of the pride of the Lord, and so learned best when not suffering a preacher's adjurations but instead was presented with what partook of mystery; thereby could one feel virtuous if successful at calculating it out.

"Behold," I said, "the sower went forth to sow and some of his seeds fell by the wayside and fowls came and wild birds and devoured them up. And some of his seed fell upon stony places which had not much earth and sprung up forthwith, for there was no depth of soil in which to rest, but since their sprouting was quick, they were scorched. Their roots were shallow and they withered away. And some of the seed fell among thorns and such thorns choked them. Yet others fell into good ground and brought forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some even a hundred. Those who have ears to hear among you, let them now hear."

And when I was alone with my apostles, I said to them: "Live with the parable of the sower, for when any of our people who listen understand not, then the Wicked One can seize that which was sown."

I knew how if no one else gave ear, still would the Devil listen to each of my words, and use them against the Lord, but then how could I suppose that the Devil had not gained entrance already to the Great Temple? So could I also see Satan's influence suppurating in the hearts of high priests who would seek to be all holy, and indeed, even as I spoke, so could Sata's dark angel be preparing the ears of the priests against me in Jerusalem. Mayhap these priests had betrayed our Lord of the Kingdom many times and were full of that corruption of the spirit which is worse even than corruption of the flesh.

And again I did not feel ready to enter into Jerusalem. So I searched for a parable to cheer my own spirit and soon became occupied in explaining to many new followers that the Kingdom of Heaven was like unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; yet while he slept, so did his enemy come and sow weeds among the wheat; these weeds appeared with the fruit. All who listened to me could comprehend a parable such as this and one even spoke out to say: "Should the servants of the householder go then and separate away such weeds?"

And I answered, "Nay. For ye will also root up the wheat. Let weeds and good grain grow side by side until our

harvest. In that time ye can gather together the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them, even as ye bring the wheat into my barn."

So was I obliged to ponder in what great degree good and evil did grow together and knew that my Father's angels would labor to separate good from evil at the end, except now I had less joy in my understanding inasmuch as my journeys had also taught me how cunning were men and more cunning were priests, until I had a vision of a temple at the gate of heaven that was like a customs' house. Through such gates passed many an evil person and was it that a few had even been given the keys after listening to my parables?

"Who has ears to hear, let him hear," I had said, but were my minions smaller in number than that other multitude who would partake of what I said and use it for themselves, not others, thereby partaking of a meanness of spirit that pervadeth throughout.

Over and over was I learning that to my fellow men it mattered less whether they were tall or short of stature, lean or wide of body, of noble features or ugly of cast, even strong of limbs or weak: All were the same by one regard--they were prominent in their lack of compassion, and greed

was their guide to search out and find their path.

So, in a given hour, when Peter said unto me, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have in recompense?" it was a considerable blow for me inasmuch as Peter might be my favorite. I replied by relating one more parable (and it was told for the ears of those closest to me.)

And this parable was of how a man who hired his laborers for a penny a day had sent them early one morning into his vineyard. But as the hours passed toward afternoon, so did he hire others in the third hour and more in the sixth and even in the ninth hour of the day, until by the eleventh hour, finding now men and women who were idle, he said, "Why stand ye here?" and they replied, "Because no man hath hired us." And he said unto them, "Go ye also into the vineyard."

And at the end of the day, it was time to reward all who had worked and he told his steward, "Call the laborers and pay them their hire beginning from the last unto the first," so that each man, those from the first hour and those of the eleventh, all received a penny. Since the first had supposed that they would receive more, they whispered against the good man of the house. But he told them, "Didst thou not agree

with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go. I will give unto this last even as unto thee. So the last shall be first and the first last, for hark ye, many may be called but few will be chosen." I was uplifted as upon a cloud by the strength of my voice and spoke with such force that the Lord whispered: "Enough! There is no wisdom in your speech but only the seed of much discontent. When you are without Me, the Devil is your near companion." And I felt a point of pain between my eyes as if the Lord held a thorn to my brow, for I no longer knew what I saw nor to whose voice I listened. And I understood that to be the Son of God was not equal to being a Prince of Heaven but was rather my apprenticeship into how to speak without greed or guilt or anger or the desire to bewilder others with the confidence of my light; it was meet upon me to speak only with wisdom.

Still, was it a good morning and full of relief from dark clouds of thought that we were ready at last to set out for Jerusalem.

Now, a man knelt before my feet and asked, "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? I have observed all the commandments from my youth."

And his eyes showed much desire to please, and full

measure of concern for others. And I felt love for this young man in the midst of much turmoil around us at leaving and said, "One thing thou lack: Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and then will you have treasure in heaven."

But the young man was not made glad by my words and went away grieved; he was with many possessions and loathe to lose them. So I said to my disciples, "How hard it becomes for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven!" And when some of my disciples, by the gleam of displeasure across their eyes did show the darkness in their hearts, I could say and did: "Children, how painful it is for those that trust in riches."

And when they asked why, I said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." They were astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" And one of them whose face was hidden by others, now muttered, "God enriches those whom He trusts. Why else is there high regard and much respect for riches?" And still others said, "If not the rich, why, who then can be saved?"

And I looked upon them and sighed and said, "The Egyptians believe such. They honor rich men. But do ye

listen to me or are my words like the rain that is dried by the fever of the sun? I tell ye that no man can be saved if he would count on his money. So look not for riches." At which point, Peter was ready to remind me: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee."

And I repeated: "He who has left houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and is persecuted for my sake, so shall he receive a hundredfold in his time and rich houses and brethren and lands in the Kingdom of Heaven and will live in the waters of eternal life. But those that are now first in this world shall be last in the next."

Yet was I obliged to tell myself that my disciples were but men and lived among the small passions that sit on the scale of balance in all people, and thereby were no better yet no worse than others. If I could, therefore, succeed to uplift their hearts, so might other men and women increase in goodness. Whereby, thinking this, I also thought of how good grapes might also suffer and their cries be unheard in the winepress. For if all men were of mean and ordinary dimension yet still belonged to God, then how could my Father be vastly superior to His creation? Despite all effort not

to dwell on such a sacrilege, so did I wonder now whether my Father was merely larger than us, and of vastly greater force. And in such a low moment did I even despair for Him.

Yes, such was still the darkness of my thoughts before we set out, but then, there came our first steps and we set out. We were going to Jerusalem and all of us were afraid. And in our fear was also happiness that we were not the slaves of such fear. And our legs knew their own joy.

Then, and only then, did we truly set out. And in the second hour of such quick march did the belief soon germinate that in two days, so soon as we were near to Jerusalem, and could see the city from afar, so would the kingdom of God come to appear.

And indeed, some of my brethren were saying already: "Ye will walk in Jerusalem openly, will ye not? So that we may witness the works ye will perform at the Temple?"

This was Judas who spoke. And I could see by his impatience before we set out, that he was ceasing to believe in me; now he said: "There will be an open feast in the market. Will ye be there with us from the first?" and I replied, "The world does not hate you, but me it is ready to punish because I testify that the works of the world are

evil. Go ye, if you wish, unto this feast, but I may choose not to go. My time is not yet come."

Whereupon Judas replied: "Where is the value of a man if he does a thing in secret when he seeks to be known to all?"

And I could hear murmuring as Judas related to others what I had said, and he made much afterward of telling me how some declared of me, "He is a good man," but others said, "Nay, he deceiveth the people." And then I knew as I had never known before that I must go to the feast. And indeed, Judas said: "Many await thee and how ye will show yourself to all."

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Much did this conversation with Judas disturb me, and on the road to Jerusalem I found myself in fever. Silently I walked while my limbs ached, and at night my rest was not without pain. So was it also on the second morning even as our road passed through desert, then by fruit groves, and again I was silent and did all possible not to complain. And I brooded upon my weakness in giving assent to Judas and promising to attend the feast.

On this second evening, however, even as we were still a full day's march from Jerusalem, so did we pass through Jericho where a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the publicans and rich, made an effort to see me. Many were in the throng, however, and he was little of stature. Therefore, he climbed up into a sycamore tree.

When I looked up and saw him, I did say: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for tonight I abide at thy house."

He received me joyfully. Others murmured saying that it

was not fitting that I should be the guest of a man who was not only rich, but a publican. Yet Zacchaeus said to me, "Behold, Lord, now that I know thee, half of my goods will I give to the poor."

I said to him, "Salvation has come this day to your house."

And since we were on the road to Jerusalem, I was gladdened. For this was a good sign. If a rich man could surrender half of his fortune and believe in me, then other such walls must be ready to fall in that city where God was at war with Mammon.

Next morning, however, even as we set out, came two sisters of my follower Lazarus to meet us on the road. Lazarus had dined with me in Capernaum on his travels, and he was a good man; now his two sisters, Mary and Martha, had walked a distance from his house in Bethany to join my multitude and then said, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick, our Lazarus."

And by the way in which it was said, so did I know to ask: "Is this a sickness unto death?"

They wept and could not answer. Then, as if I were brother to his sickness, so was I worsened in my own illness

and all that had been good in my night of rest at the house of Zaccheus was lost, and I had to abide two more nights without moving, still a full day's march from Jerusalem. When I awoke on the fifth day of our departure from Galilee, I was well in body but in great woe of feeling and said, "Lazarus is dead."

And the apostle Thomas who was simple, and so would say what others only chose to think, now said aloud, "Let us go to Jerusalem so we may die with him." And there was much displeasure with Thomas.

Then we marched for all of that day and into the evening and came to Bethany nigh unto Jerusalem which was where Lazarus lived not fifteen furlongs from the Temple, and indeed not a walk of an hour. And I could see many Jews on their way to the house of Lazarus to comfort his sisters. The one who was named Martha came out to meet me, and said in sorrow, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died. But may it be that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, the Lord will give it thee."

There was naught in my mind. Nonetheless, I said, "Thy brother shall rise again."

Then came the other sister named Mary, and she sat at my

feet and also said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." And she was followed by others also weeping who came with her and when they looked at me, I said, "Where have ye laid him?"

They said: "Lord, come and see."

And then it was close that I did not weep. How could I know whether the Lord would allow me to return him to his sisters when he had been dead these two days?

And many Jews around me, friends of the dead man, seeing me in such anguish, said, "Behold, how he loved Lazarus!"

Once more did I know much guilt at how I had come so late.

Then, they led me to the grave of Lazarus which was a cave with a stone across the entrance. Whereupon I said, "Take away the stone."

But Martha said: "Lord, by this time he has been two days dead, and who can speak for his body?"

Yet at my sign, they removed the rock from the entrance to the tomb and I lifted my eyes and cried out in the loudest voice, and it roared in my throat: "Father, let Lazarus, come forth!"

And I was silent. I knew that when the spirit left a

man, so all that was unclean in his spirit had also been loosed, and to call upon other ugly spirits. So the state of the dead man, and particularly his odor, might insult the nose. But if I would purify Lazarus, so must I live first in my own sins. It was then that I recalled how a woman in our company had lifted up her voice as I passed and said, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps which thou hast sucked," and I replied, "More blessed are those who hear the word of the Lord and keep it." And by such response had I been cruel once more to my mother's name and did not understand why I took pleasure in denying her love when she had loved me from the moment she knew she had received me from God.

And my fears for Lazarus returned and were large. And of myself I asked: "Wherefore can I raise a man from the dead if I have partaken of evil? Evil is itself the measure of weight that keeps men in their tombs.

So even if I were the Son of God, still did I call upon the prophet Elijah who had raised the son of a woman in whose house he had dwelt when the boy was gone beyond and there was no breath.

Indeed, the woman had cursed Elijah and said: "Oh, thou

man of God, did thou come unto me to slay my son?" And Elijah had said unto her, "Give me thy son." And as it is written, he took the boy from her bosom, and carried him up into the loft where he abode and laid him upon his own bed and cried, "O Lord my God, hast Thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourned by slaying her son?" and Elijah stretched himself upon the child and cried unto the Lord, "I pray Thee that this child's soul come into him again," and God heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came back to him again.

Then, as if the Lord had also spoken to me in that moment, so to my closed eyes was shown the face of Lazarus in his tomb. And so did I see Lazarus stir.

Again I cried: "Lazarus, come forth," but now I saw Lazarus deny me and shake his head. And I heard him speak, even if no one else could hear, but still was Lazarus in his tomb and I without.

"Oh, Master," said Lazarus, "small creatures pray to me, but they say, 'thou art not our god, Lazarus, only our wiping-cloth.' Thus speak the maggots and scorpions."

So now, in my prayer, did I call upon this pestilence to withdraw and to leave Lazarus in peace; I even called upon

the powers of Legion whom I had freed from the swine of Gadarene, and then he who had been dead rose in his tomb and Lazarus came toward me but could only move with little steps, being bound head and foot in his winding sheet. And his face was also wound about. I said to his sisters, "Loosen him, but do so without looking upon him." For I knew the face of Lazarus was ravaged.

Then, in the voice of a man who has dwelt among dreams that others would abhor, so did Lazarus say, "Yes, now the maggots have left me, and the scorpions," but his voice was like the screech of a bird distraught. Yet was he alive.

And the Jews who witnessed this, and many were Jews living in Jerusalem, fell back in wonder. Whereby I knew that the priests and the Pharisees and the scribes in the Temple would hear of this by the first witness to reach their presence, and they would gather in council. For many had seen Lazarus arise and knew that he stank of the grave, and that he spoke of the maggots and scorpions he had seen; so did I also know that the Pharisees would calumniate me as a demon for having the power to raise those who were ready to rot.

And I could hear the Chief Priest in council even as if

I were near him: He and his followers would declare: "If we leave this Jesus in peace, soon will all Jews believe on him. Then shall the Romans come and take away our place and our nation inasmuch as all Jews will be seen as in rebellion."

And I knew that the High Priest Caiphas might even say, "One man may even die for our people that the whole perish not."

On that day I did not continue to Jerusalem but slept in the house of Lazarus and with a heavy heart. May it be that I had visions of the dreams of Lazarus concerning maggots and scorpions. In the morning when I said goodbye, he was weak, and his demeanor was low, yet I asked, "Do you believe?" and Lazarus said, "I am frightened of the things I saw when dead. I am still as one who is frightened. Yet, I try to believe."

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And it may be that his words left me with a need to find antidote against brooding and most solemn brooding for we were not long walking upon the road when I sent forth two of my disciples and said, "Go your way into the village of Bethphage which is before us and so soon as ye enter there shall be a colt whom you will recognize for on him no man has ever sat. Loose such a wild colt from where he is tied and bring him to me. And if any ask why do you this, tell them that the Lord hath need of the colt."

And they went away and found the beast by the door in the first street of the village and loosed him and brought him to me. And I sat upon this colt whose back was ignorant of a rider and my hands were gripped into the mane upon his neck, but then, if I could not subdue the colt, how could I bring peace to what must be the same spirit of uproar in the hearts of men awaiting me at the Temple?

Thereupon, we walked in procession (and I upon the

colt). I was hungry and knew more desire for food than in a year, as if indeed I were now preparing to eat and then not eat again.

Whereupon, seeing a fig tree from afar that was full of leaves, I trotted up upon it, outpacing all who were in the procession in order to take my fill of figs from that tree, but when I came nigh there was naught but leaves. The hour of ripe figs was not near for this tree.

Out of the furies in the colt must his outrage have been borne in on me, and with him was every wind that arose from the anger of my enemies; of a certainty was much rage now in me for I said to the fig tree, "No man may eat fruit from you hereafter!"

Those disciples nearest to me heard it, and took it as an omen that this tree was now cursed, and they were not concerned. But I was left to support the loss and burden of a fig tree whose roots I had severed. "I am the Son of God," I told myself, "yet also a man; thereby must that be a word for willful destruction."

So I knew that the presence of Satan remained in me. Like a hawk who searches the fields below for one beast and swoops to steal a life, so had I struck at the fig tree.

Now the multitude in front of me took down branches from those palm trees we passed and strewed them before me and sang, "Hosannah! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our David who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest."

And I soon forgot the fig tree for I was sweet amazed at how the people of Jerusalem (and some had never seen me before) were full of favor; in the windows we passed did many wave: Some of our good deeds had ridden in advance of us.

Mayhap the fig tree was with me also for I soon thought of Ezekiel who had spoken of the city of Tyre and how it was famous a thousand years ago for its horns of ivory and its tables of ebony, its shops with emeralds and purple linens and jewelry of coral and agate, its stalls of honey and balm, and wine from Cassia and Calamis, and many precious cloths for chariots in the markets of Tyre, and all spices and chests of cedar.

Yet all had been washed away by the seas in the day of Tyre's ruin; would this soon be said of Jerusalem, as wealthy in this hour as was once the city of Tyre?

And seeing full white buildings with tall columns of such great measure that one knew not whether one gazed upon a

temple, the house of a great man, or the seat of Roman government, so did I say to myself, "Victory is of the Lord and a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches," but such words were too pious in my mouth (for my heart had also leaped at the sight of these riches) and so I also said to myself, "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit. And a great city is like unto a strange woman."

Yet how could I hate Jerusalem? In its beauty was it magnificent. Then could I see in my heart the court of King Solomon on that day when he had made a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon and the pillars thereof had been fashioned of silver and the base of gold. The seat of the palanquin was purple and its claws had been wrought by the daughters of Jerusalem. Wondrous was the love of display in Jerusalem.

Yet what had my followers or myself to display? I saw a Roman nobleman stop to look at our procession, and he gazed upon the hundreds who walked by twos and by three and four in the lane before me and at the hundreds who followed. And if some were well attired, yet the majority of my multitude were in rags and bits of colored apparel.

I looked upon this multitude as if never before had I seen a throng, but then the people of Jerusalem had joined in

among us now, and by large numbers; so did I see as many faces as there are aspects of man, and among those who followed were many who could be counted as less than believers, but rather were among the curious, and the tormented, and the cynical, these last accompanying us so that they could jeer against the Pharisees and thereby repay old rebukes.

Also present were some who were solemn and with much hope that I might provide new piety more solemn than their last, much folded in their hearts from repetition of old prayers. And there were children who looked on all the sights and on myself as well, and laughed at the wonder of God's bounty when it came to the faces of people, and these children were the ones closest to joy and to awe. Then were there also men who were as ruffians with the fearful dissatisfaction of boredom on their brow. They, too, were in part of the throng.

And then there were the poor. From their eyes came a power of poverty composed of great need and great hope and much depth of sorrow; they had been disappointed many times. And I spoke to all as if they were one, since great changes for the better can occur at times such as these, and in a bad

man more quickly than in a good one. For with the heat and the fever, there can also be sudden recognition of the truth; such truth can rest in the illumination between a word and a throng, and many bad men are quick to know their sins and suffer sore within from the effort to resist remorse.

Now as the throng deepened, so was the colt as full of demons as the swine of Gadarene yet its wicked spirits were young and without the foul odors of practised devils. Still, did my beast buck and take no order to stop, and it was in his mind to cast me over his mane onto the stones of the road. Yet I rode him with the knowledge that he was the colt for me.

For now my expectation of reaching the Temple had become mixed with the awe that I was still a simple Jew of a modest trade approaching a great edifice of walls and buildings of much consecration wherein were still other congregations of chapels and courtyards open for speech and meeting and barter, and this Temple of all temples was on a mount, so was I well-placed on my own mount, and the colt did not allow me to contemplate how profound was my fear and how large was my homage of what was before me.

Yet in my mind, and without seeing it, could I still see

how the steps rose from courtyards to courtyard, and on to more august buildings behind and unto sanctums more sacred, even to one room where none but the High Priest could enter and then but on one day of the year for it was the Holy of Holies: so even though I was the Son of God, so was I also the child of my mother and was feeling more respect for the Temple than could be equalled by my desire to change all within. And I felt whole disturbance and some weakness. And I shivered when the multitude in front of me began to cheer as they mounted over a great rise in the road. For then I knew that my first view of the Temple walls would be on the other side.

But then as I came to the sight, and my colt trotted and jumped and kicked up its feet, so did I also know even as I approached this last rise, that the future years of all such wonder and magnificence was in peril and enemies would compass it around and besiege it on every side; they would they even lay the Temple low to the ground until it was but the wreckage of a wall and not one stone left to rest upon another. And all this would come to pass should the priests of the Temple not understand that my visit was as a message from the Lord and to be honored.

So when I came before it, I wept at the sight of the Great Temple, weeping openly upon my colt. The Temple was beautiful to my vision yet I knew then that it was not eternal. And indeed I understood that the works of man, even if they be in stone, endure no longer than the stamens of a thistle.

And I thought of the words of Amos who said: "The houses of ivory shall perish."

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And when I came into the Temple itself, and dismounted from my colt and climbed the first great steps at the entrance, I discovered between the gates that there was naught for the eye but a large court filled with the men of Mammon. Here was a place where all were exchanging money and goods. How could one admire their beards which were much curled by warm iron, and immaculate and much tailored by the razor and the scissors and their vain pride. To me, these men of Mammon looked like beasts and birds of great pride, even as peacocks: so were the priests who moved among them.

A great rage was growing in me at the thought of wealthy men and their tables enriched with every bounty of food while the poor sat in mud and filth in the stinking alleys of the city.

Silence did I then gird about me like the robe of a high priest that others must not touch, and so did I sit alone on a stone bench by the treasury and beheld how people cast

money into the great box. And many who were rich cast much within. Then, came a poor woman and her shawl was threadbare; she threw in her small coin. Then did the Lord give a sign and my heart leaped.

I called to those disciples who were nearest and said: "This poor woman hath cast in more than all the rich. They leave a tithe of their abundance, while she gave up all she had, even her living for this day. So she has performed a wonder; she has turned Mammon into tribute to God. Whereas the wealthy give to the Lord only to impress each other; thereby do they seek to amass more of Mammon."

And I thought of how money was a great and stinking beast whose foul offerings were supped upon with slobberings and greed, men's bellies full of lust. And all were in such a tumult that they could give off from such feeding but once a day to go to the Temple and pray and give a coin to the great box in the treasury.

And I thought of how the rich are choked with cares that come from the weight of gold. Thereby do their gardens bring no fruit to perfection. For there is oppression in the air. The rich man's blooms bring no happiness to his eye for he only considers that his neighbor, being wealthier than

himself, will display gardens with fruit of greater beauty. And so is the rich man envious, and he suffers the curse of envy and is without rest.

Yet still did I ponder upon how to speak to these wealthy who were here in the outer court of the Temple with the moneylenders. And should I tell them:

"No man can pay allegiance to two masters. Either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will cling to the one he needs and seek to despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

But I thought again of how all who were wealthy would not hear my words for hating them.

Then the Devil spoke to me, and this I knew at once for my Father, even in the darkest night of His meditations, would not address me with such a tongue, nor with teeth to bite the inner spirit of my ear: therefore did the Devil now say: "Before it is all over, those who are wealthy will possess you as well. They will put images of you upon their wall."

Then, I knew that my soul had been seized by this threat; but the voice went on: "Your name and alms in your name, will enrich the treasury of mighty churches; men

will worship you even as you come to belong more to me. For indeed you will belong to me as much as to Him; that is just: I am equal to Him." And I heard him laugh before he also said:

"Greed is a beast whose defecations are weighed in gold. Yet is not gold the color of the sun out of which all things grow? Ponder such matters, Jesus, and do not deny me too quickly."

To which God now replied in my other ear, and I knew it was my Father: "All that he says makes much sense until it fails to make sense. He gives this speech to all who catch his eye, and his eye is only for the best, and those most beautiful. Alas, all those whom I have fashioned with great hope. Whereas he scorns all who are modest but remain with Me."

And this was the most that my Father ever said to my ear about Satan and His problems with such a Devil; nonetheless was it a thought to torment the palisades of my faith? I wondered if only for a moment: Did we praise the meek, He and I, because those were the only ones who would have allegiance to us?

These thoughts were of such disturbance that in subduing

their mockery, I fell prey to a great wrath.

For I could see in the eyes of the moneylenders a covetousness as sharp as the point of a spear, nay, it was more like unto the evil that is in the eye of the sharp-beaked bird who looks for prey. Then the rage of Isaiah came into me, for in his words did I cry out: "These tables are a pool of vomit and filthiness and there is no place clean!"

And I overturned the table before me with the monies that were upon it, and felt an exaltation in my ears as the coins gave their small cries on striking the stone of the floor, and each possessor ran after his own loss like vermin on the hunt for smaller vermin.

Then did I knock over the seats of those who sold doves, and freed the cages. To this uproar of wings did a multitude behind me come forward and some may even have been feeling the exaltation of the Lord that was in me at this defiance of greed and usury.

Many reverberations did I feel within these holy walls, holy now, yet not so holy as once before, for now more tarnished by greed than before.

And I said: "My house shall be known before all nations as a house of prayer. Is that not written? But ye have made

it a den of thieves."

Indeed it was but the truth that men who sought Mammon were thieves even if never had they stolen one cup of wheat. And in my nearness now to my Father, did I gain the joy of a holy rage yet also was I much aware that many scribes and priests had heard me from afar, and so it was as if I could hear the Pharisees speaking in all the temples within this Great Temple and in all the courtyards, and I knew that in overturning the tables I had given offense that would blind all judgment of what I would say next.

For I would not allow these priests and elders of this Great Temple to be loyal to their separate accounts, then now must they think of me and thereby feel discomfort that they were ready to pray by evening and weigh Mammon in the morning, and thereby water all the vines of cupidity that grew from one side of their soul to the other.

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Amidst the disorder of the tables so were my next words said; they were: "Destroy this temple and in three days will I raise it up."

Then spoke one of these moneylenders, and he was an old man, and stout, but with clear eyes, "Forty and six years was this Temple building. Thou will rebuild in three days?"

And then was I ready to wonder at what I had said. For there were many in the multitude about me ready to tear down much of what was before them in this Temple, and that with joy. What did not belong to them might well be destroyed. Yet I also knew that even this thought of such destruction spoken once aloud could injure much in days to come. For what is said aloud and heard by others can, when awful by its thought, become the ghost of all that has gone before, and so will live in the chill of dark and never relent and never forgive. That I had spoken of tearing down the Temple could yet bring forth such a ghost. Still had I said it, and

despite all, for to me were here many buildings of immaculate beauty. If I had been but a pilgrim wandering through these halls, so would I have been wondrously impressed by the dedication of their skills, these ancient carpenters and stone masons who had built these great buildings.

By such thinking did I grow calm, and know that I was here to teach, not to destroy.

And I would say that the Lord was still with me. For had it not been also His rage? And was He not telling me now to be wise, to be gentle? I said to my followers, "Be now calm and respect this Temple. These moneylenders are not of the Temple but merely the leavings of evil and that can be found anywhere, and be scrubbed quickly from the stone. Therefore, will I teach. Yet not, " I said, "in this unclean place of entrance where moneylenders were congregated. Come with me further into the holy places."

And I led them to a quiet arbor that was above another rising of stairs and between two small chapels; indeed there was even a cedar to give me shade. Then, as I had foreseen, a delegation came to me of priests and scribes and many of the elders of Jerusalem and they said, "We have been awaiting thee but do not understand the manner of your arrival. Who

gave thee authority to foment uproar?"

I answered, "I will ask one question, and if you can reply, I will tell by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John," I asked, "was it from heaven, or of men?"

And I knew they would reason as follows: "If we say 'From heaven,' he shall say, 'Why then did ye not believe John?' Yet if we say that John was of men, then he was a prophet, and we should have protected him."

So, they answered only, "We cannot tell."

And I said, "Neither do I tell thee by what authority I do these things."

Then came a scribe from the other side of these priests. He came walking forward with such ease that I knew he was a Pharisee from a noble family and educated beyond the measure of others. His eyes were blue and his beard was gentle and of a soft brown, and he smiled as if he were full of affection for me and said, "Master,"--which was a courtesy I looked upon with regard, since in his manner was even a suggestion that he, too, was speaking upon the disruption in the courtyard of the moneylenders; if he could not give approval of such an act yet would he still call me "Master," and so, "Master," he said, "we know that thou desirest to

teach the way of truth so I would ask for an answer to this question. It is of much weight to us and gives us much dispute when we do not know how to reply. Concerning the Romans, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or shall we not give?"

And I knew that for all his gentle warmth, the Devil had minions even so fair as this man and his question was as a snare. For if I replied that one should not give tribute to Caesar, which I expect was the reply he awaited, then these Pharisees could give testimony to the Procurator of this city that I was in rebellion against the Romans. But I feared not the snare. My wit, in this hour, was like an arrow eager to leap from my heart to my lips, and I said, "Give me a penny that I may see it," and when they brought it, I said to them, "Whose is this image?"

And he replied, "Caesar's."

And I said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." And I was pleased inasmuch as I had also as much as said that Mammon was the god appropriate to the Romans and not to the Jews.

I heard a murmur in the multitude of the Temple party as if my words were again displeasing to them. Yet I knew that

this scribe and these Pharisees were marveling at my means for eluding such traps as they set forth. And I could feel their respect. That was now as balm to my agitation. For now must they see that I had the strength to overturn the tables of the moneylenders yet the wisdom to avoid a rash reply. Still, did I also know that my remark had been exceedingly clever; indeed, it reverberated in my ears with that surfeit of wisdom which leaves an echo as hollow as the fall of a stone into an abyss. For could I see also how many a church would find a path to survive in many an evil land on the strength of such words. And would speak of them as my words. Yet was I not tearing at the roots of what I believed? I was not here to build churches, (and all such churches compromised), but must strive rather to bring all to salvation and with God's speed. Why, then, had I spoken thus? Had God estimated the size of my harvest and seen it as so small that He had decided the better path was prudence and thereby let there be many churches built in the swamps of pride and Mammon?

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And as I was preparing to teach in this courtyard, so could I see that the scribe who had addressed me as Master wished to continue his questions to me and he asked, "Master, which is the first commandment of them all?"

And I answered, " 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And so shalt thou love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength.' This must be the first commandment."

"What is the second commandment?" asked the scribe.

"To love thy neighbor as thyself."

The scribe said to me, "Thou hast spoken well. To love one's neighbor as oneself is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And I said to him, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

He was very wise. Mayhap he was the Master of the Book in this Great Temple and so was the man I would seek out on

many matters. Yet, if he had a fine face, still his eyes were as pale as the blue of the sky on a day when there is little of blue and the sky is white; so I did not trust him, albeit his manners were as fine as his beard. That was as well-curled as if he were the noble son of a family whose lands took into their fold many gardens tended by skillful servants. And his speech was as handsome as his appearance. He said, "We are all among the circumcized, and are a people of one faith. And I am of the persuasion of many of us in this Temple that you have not come to this holy place to rend us asunder, but rather to bring us nearer to one another, yea, even though disruption has followed you like the dust before a storm." He paused to great effect and all were listening. "Nowwithstanding, there are many storms that cleanse. So I would ask of you, Master, when comes the Kingdom of God?"

And as he spoke, so could I hear those two voices that live as one in many a Pharisee. Often did their voices come to my ear endowed with good manners and much breeding; yet all the same was there quiet mockery in the utterances of their throat, but as finely sifted into their courtesies as powder into sand. Still did I listen first to his good voice

for it was not without desire to hope that I might be, indeed, the Son of Man; for that, he had great passion to know. And those priests who had sent him were also of such interest. So was I ready to speak to this scribe.

We conversed on many matters and as men who were equal and of much courtesy toward each other. Only by the second hour did he begin to display his knowledge of the scrolls, and thereby began to discourse with me over the working of cures on the Sabbath.

And so did he murmur: "Publish this not in the streets of Askalon . . . lest the daughters of the uncircumcized triumph." And he smiled as if I would not know that such verses came from the second book of Samuel. "Do ye recall the verse," he went on, "that is saying: 'And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day, and they brought him unto Moses and Aaron and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. But the Lord said unto Moses, 'The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him.'" And all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones and he died, as the Lord commanded

Moses.'" Then the scribe said, "That was in days that are now a thousand years old, and a congregation of this day would not stone such a man. Yet doth not the principle remain? Thou shalt not labor on the Sabbath."

I replied that I had answered this question in many a way. "I say to you again, if you circumcize a babe or a man on the Sabbath, then so may ye lift the scales from the blind and flex the limbs of the halt."

And he said, "I have been waiting for all of this year to converse with you. For I have thought of your works, Master, and I would say that which the Prophet Samuel said to King Saul: 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.' And if ye come from He whom you will not declare and wish us to assume that ye are from the Lord, you do not say as much. So we must suffer from the brilliance of your deeds. For your cures can appear to us as witchcraft and full of the bright fire of rebellion. And we in the Temple have fear of that bright light, of such conflagration and such flaming of light, since we have labored for ten hundred years to learn what is in the Book and many have died for the five Books of the Torah. And with what strength we have left, so have we built the walls of our belief in this place and we live by

the light within that is provided by the deeds of our martyrs who died for our scrolls. So would I remind you that it is written in First Maccabees that King Antiochus, a heathen king, who was set over us from without, and he was a despot. So did he declare to his whole kingdom of Jews and gentiles that all should be one people. Jews and gentiles alike. All should obey his laws, and partake of his religion.

"And all of his heathen and gentiles agreed to the commandment of this king. And to our shame, so did many of the Israelites also consent to this religion before idols and such Jews profaned the Sabbath until the only clear measure of a man who would continue to be a good Jew was that ye could kill him but he would not profane the Sabbath. Yet did King Antiochus continue to deny our holy people and reward those Jews who would sacrifice swine's flesh.

"And then did he command all Jews to leave their children uncircumcized. King Antiochus even said that whoever would not give assent to his commandment should die, and so the Israelites who would not obey him were driven to live in secret places, and abominations were set upon the altar. Whosoever was found with a book of the testament was put to death. And for those women who caused their children

to be circumcized, so did he have thoss same infants hung, and the doctors who circumcized them were slain.

"All knew then that the Book was as naught before evil men," said the scribe, "unless there was observance of the Book. And so I say to you that in your thought must be recognition of the ten hundred years of the Book and of the martyrs who observed the law and died for the law. So, too, do I say to you that in your haste to serve God, ye encourage the publicans, the sinners, and even the uncircumcized. Ye rush to destroy that which ye have not learned in patience and meditation and in observance of the law on many a Sabbath and in all of your years. Stubbornness is also as iniquity and idolatry."

The scribe had spoken to more and more sound of assent among those who heard, even among my own people was much muttering that he was right, and many were weeping at the death of so many Jews.

Therefore was it not simple to reply.

"Think not," did I tell him, and slowly, "that I am here to deny the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For I say that unless the righteousness of our people shall exceed the righteousness of your scribes and

Pharisees, then we shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

"But I would offer a parable," I told him. "Two men," I said, "went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. And the Pharisee stood and prayed: 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in a week; I give tithes of all I possess.' And the publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven but smote himself on his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' I tell you this man went down to his house more justified than the other. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

And before he could reply, I added: "All that you say is just if people observe the Book. But they do not. And this land of Israel hath committed great whoredoms in departing from the Lord, and the Lord looks upon the people of Israel as in whoredom and even searches for a way to save the whore."

Now did the scribe answer me in a tone so light and so full of the wings of confidence that each of his words might

have been a creature to dance upon his tongue; in that moment could I hear Satan in the voice of this scribe for he said, "Yes, you will finish by saying to a people who are not your people, 'Thou art my people.' and they will say, 'Thou art my God.'" And the scribe laughed again and all the mockery he had mixed like powder into the soft sand of his courtesy was now separated and washed over me as if he had seen all things evil and wise whereas I had not.

So did I not speak further until I could find passages to utter; then did I turn once more to the prophets: "From the words of Ezekiel," I told the scribe: "'My sheep were scattered because there is no shepherd, and they became meek to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered, and none did search or seek after them. My flock became meek to every beast of the field because there was no shepherd; neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but fed themselves and not my flock. Behold, I am against the shepherds.'"

"And these shepherds," he answered, "are as my kin? Can it be said that is what you say?"

Nor was I polite in reply.

"Beware," I said, "of scribes who love to go in long

clothing and look for salutations in the marketplace and the chief seats in the synagogues and the uppermost rooms at feasts. They devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. These shall receive greater damnation."

And to myself I was thinking that even a drunken man could lay claim to more knowledge of what was politic than myself. In this Temple I was without guard over the wisdom that knows what one must say to obtain the most and offend the least. But then some of these Pharisees I might never see again and much did I want them unable to forget what I had declared.

"Know me," I added, "that I would be as a good shepherd and would wish to deliver my flock out of all places where they have been scattered on the cloudy and dark day. So I do not despise those who are uncircumcized and ignorant of the Book."

"And thereby would you give a light to the gentiles?" asked the scribe.

"Yea," said I, "so would I also give a light to the gentiles. It will be for the salvation of all."

Then the scribe was silent; I think he was weary. He had not thought that I could stand before him in the words of

the Book and face to face. So I continued to speak when he was silent, "The Lord hath called me from the womb," I said, "from the bowels of my mother, and He made my mouth a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me and hath made me a polished shaft. In His quiver hath He hid me and said unto me, 'Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Raise up the tribes of Jacob and the strong reserve of Israel,' and He also said, 'I will give thee a light to the gentiles that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.' For my Father has said that I must be His salvation, and I know not the meaning of that."

To which the scribe said, "Is that not blasphemy?"

And I replied, "It is what my Father hath said."

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And by now, as the shadows in the great courtyard grew long upon the ground in the lowering of the sun, so did the echoes return to me of all that was contested between the scribe and myself. And I spoke alone to the multitude and to my disciples. And by now was I ready to say all that I thought for I could see that the cause of my Father would not prevail without readiness to give of all my spirit against the powers of this Temple--which were like unto walls of great thickness and much propriety. So must I speak with the mightiest words I could find. And indeed I finally understood what it was to feel the strength of the Lord and by His voice, much as though it came from me.

Many Pharisees were among this multitude, and thereby did I commence by saying: "The scribes and the elders sit in Moses' seat and the Great Temple of Jerusalem is their throne. Whatsoever, therefore, that they bid you observe, that observe. But do not do as they do. For they lay heavy

pieties on men's shoulders, grievous to be borne, yet they will not move such burdens with one of their fingers. Broad are their philacteries, for so do they have them made. And they enlarge the borders of their garments; so do they seek for the uppermost room at a feast and love the chief seats in the synagogues."

And immediately some Pharisees stirred and others began to leave yet were these other Pharisees, as if twice fortified by anger now serving as spies upon me. And they chose to remain. Therefore did I speak once more of the width and sheen of their prayer shawl and how the leather wrappings on their arms had more of substance than their prayer for were they not there to say, "Look upon me, am I not prosperous?" And it was the same with the embroideries on the hem of their costumes. But did they ever grieve concerning the bent fingers of the old women who embroidered their fringe?

Then was my voice loud: "Woe unto you, ye scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye neither go in yourselves to the Kingdom of Heaven nor do ye suffer those who would wish to enter. Ye devour widows' houses and make long prayer. Therefore, shall ye receive the greater damnation."

At which the boldest of the Pharisees began to hoot at me; and others, more timid, chose again to leave. But in my words was I seeing the widows who had lost their houses through the sharp practice of some of those before me. "Wherefore," said I to the Pharisees, "did ye not feed the widow's children instead of acquiring the house? Ye are blind guides! Ye are men of Mammon. But whosoever shall swear by the gold of the Temple, becometh a debtor before the Lord. Fools and blind! Which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin and omit the weightier matters of the law, and of judgment and of mercy and of faith. These ought you to have done and not to leave the other undone, ye blind guides who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe unto you! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter. But within are they full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisees, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter that the inside may be also clean. Woe unto you! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers which appear beautiful without but are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so, ye build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the

sepulchers of the righteous and ye say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the death of the prophets.' Yet ye are the children of them who killed the prophets. Ye are the measure of your fathers. Ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

And I knew that I spoke this last with the brave voice of John the Baptist and so now was I truly his cousin. "Behold," I said now: "I will send unto you prophets and wise men and some of them ye shall kill and some shall ye crucify, and some shall ye scourge, and persecute from city to city. And upon you will fall all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zachariah whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar. All of these things shall come upon this generation.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who stoned those who were sent unto thee! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate! For you shall not see me henceforth until ye say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

Yet my heart was heavier than a burden of many stones. For I feared that my words were true. If these were my people and this my Temple, then I must mourn for Israel. And

it was time to depart from the Temple; by now had the Pharisees summoned many officers of the guard and all of such people were wroth with my words.

Yet, the multitude who surrounded me were like unto a tempest of whirling sands upon the desert, and this multitude was of my followers. And they, being much moved by my words, were so ready to bring me forth that no man interfered with my leaving although some of the Temple Guard were not without stones in their hands. And many were the Pharisees with stones in their hearts. But they cast not one bone or rock or clod.

They sought to take me yet no man laid hands on my garments. Mayhap my hour was not come. They would approach and fall back, and approach and fall back, and there was that in my eye which told them not to touch my cloth.

And in such manner did I depart from the Temple on the first day.

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And once without the walls of the Great Temple did all of my throng, being full of exultation, now climb with me to the Mount of Olives.

Then one after another, did disciples come forward on the Mount and having heard me in the Temple, did say: "When shall great things be? And what shall be the sign? And will we all rise at the end of the world, and will ye be with us?"

And again there was a multitude about me, even larger than had been in the Temple. And I said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For the sign of my coming and the end of the world will be only when I am no longer among you." And I knew not why I said so much as that unless it was the power of my dream coming to me every night so that whenever I awoke by darkness or in the dawn, still did I feel as if I had been scourged and had died, and now was risen. Yet here was I each morning and the mission still before me and all others. So powerful was the dream that I could not

gainsay it; so I repeated, "I will come when I am no longer among you."

They groaned; honest was their pain at these words; such feeling brought tears to my eyes. For I could see that, withal, they loved me. So did I feel a new need to bring them counsel. And with all the strength of the voice of the Lord still within me, I said, "Take heed! For many shall come in my name saying, 'I am Christ' and shall deceive many. Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not troubled for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. First, shall nation rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. All these are but the beginning of sorrow. And they shall deliver you up as my followers, and they shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax strong for gold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and only then shall the end come." And in that instant, surrounded by my multitude, who swayed and even growled at such words issuing

from my lips, did I hear the Lord speaking to me of the minions of the Devil who would come upon the earth armed with a store of small miracles, each of these minions claiming to be the Christ, to be like unto the return of myself. And I felt as if beneath me lay a bottomless pit of deception, and I said:

"If any man shall say unto you, 'Lo, here is Christ,' or say, 'He is here,' believe it not for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and they shall show great signs and wonders insomuch, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. Wherefore if they say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert,' go not forth. Or, 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers,' believe it not. For if the lightning comes out of the east and shines even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon not give her light and the stars fall from heaven and the power of heaven shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet and they

shall gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words not. Watch, therefore, for ye do not know the hour your Lord doth come. But know this: if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready. For in such an hour that you think not, the Son of Man cometh.

"And when he cometh, then shall he say to them, 'Go ye, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me. Yea, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did not to me.' And these who did not, shall go away unto everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal."

And they cheered mightily, as if all who were listening were guaranteed to be of the party who would go to life eternal. And in the plaudits of this multitude, so did I also think that if the hosannas of many were all that one might need to do God's work, then in truth, my tasks were finished, and all of Judea would be given life eternal. To remind us, therefore, of tasks ahead, I said, "In two days will be the feast of the Passover and the Son of Man will be betrayed and crucified." And as I said it, I felt my words travel far into the sky and so did I know also that in the palace of the High Priest, they must be consulting how they might take me by force or by subtlety, and how they should condemn my life. For other answers were not. And so had I spoken with more force in my voice and more anger in my heart than before and ever before. Soon might all of this multitude be without me, and if without me, would they have learned any means to find their way again to the Lord?

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That night I chose to fast and I prayed, and in the morning was by part restored. It was cool early after dawn and I was ready to go again to the Temple and have many people come unto me and sit about in a circle in a large and open courtyard. And I would teach.

Yet on the way was I interrupted and again at the foot of the Mount of Olives by scribes and Pharisees. They brought unto me a woman; they set her in the midst of all, and they said unto me, "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses and the law commanded us that such should be stoned. But what sayest thou?"

And I knew that they looked to find further cause by which to accuse me of leniency to sinners. I stared not at the woman, therefore, nor at them, but said: "Thou shalt not commit adultery. And whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart." And this was indeed advice for the young men among them whose

eyes might have provided delight in looking upon this woman and their hand soon provide them afterward with surcease and other forms of delights.

I knew whereof I spoke. For I had suffered already from lust. If never by deed, yet had I suffered the secret adultery of the heart (even if I had allowed no such entry into my loins.) Still, I could see, and without looking at this woman before me, all the filth of that which is fornication, and it was the Devil's sport; all the odors of the Devil were in the act.

But so did I also understand such desperation as comes upon witnessing the filth of those who fornicate for their own sake; I was one with John the Baptist on such matters and knew why he had dwelt in the desert and fed on no better than locusts.

And it was then that I also knew how the Devil had conquered every place that surrounded the city of God, (in which city procreation may be honorable for it is sanctified by marriage). Whereas the Devil is master of all that is outlying and in outskirts of the city and those who stray from this capitol of the Lord are mired in fornication.

So did I also understand that in order to give

conception to me, God had not chosen a good man like Joseph but had come forth as Himself so that there not be not one speck of Devil's spew nor one foul odor, nor even the suspicion of such; fornication was the most powerful limb of the Devil and could capture by its grasp an Essene even as purified in spirit as Joseph.

Then, in confusion as to how to reply to these Pharisees who stood before me in much confidence and pride that I would find a way to pardon this woman and thereby could be accused of trafficking with whores, so did I do no more than stoop down. And with my finger I wrote on the ground as though I heard them not.

I knew how wise and far-seeing were their minds at calculating certain matters, and they understood my hatred of fornication, inasmuch as to an Essene doth unseemly fornication deserve naught but the fire. And of all wisdom I had acquired from scripture concerning these perils of an unclean woman, yea, even unto suppurations between their thighs, was all recalled to me now, and much of what was written of Jezebel and how she had been thrown down from the high window of a tower even as it is told in the Second Book of Kings, and her blood was thereby scattered on the wall,

yea, even on the horses, which in their disturbance did tread upon her and leave her under foot. And when the king saw this, he did eat and drink and said, "Go, now! Bury this cursed woman for she is a king's daughter." But they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came and told him and he said, "This is the word of the Lord: 'Dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field.'"

And if such vengeance had been exacted upon one evil woman, what would visit all men who had known her? And so was an evil woman a disseminator of much peril. And thereby did I not dare to look upon this woman whom the Pharisees had brought, but continued to write with my finger in the sand.

To myself whispered from the book of Proverbs: "The lips of a strange woman are honey and her mouth is smoother than oil, but her latter end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword, and her ways are unstable; but she knoweth it not. So do her feet go down to death, these feet that be swift in running to mischief."

And still had I not looked at her. Peter, beside me, kept opening and unrolling the scroll that he carried to

read when we would rest, but with great difficulty for he was near to unlettered; he knew of fish better than the words of scripture. Now, being often close to my thoughts, he pointed with one of his stout fingers, twice the thickness of one of mine, to a passage, and he whispered, "In the scrolls does it say: 'Lust not after beauty in thy heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For on account of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread,'" and when I nodded so that he might go on, he whispered further: "'An adulterous woman eateth and wipeth her mouth and sayeth, 'I have done no wickedness.'"

To myself I nodded. So did I also murmur to myself from the words of Ezekiel upon the harlot Aholibah: "For Aholibah doted upon the Assyrians, her neighbors, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses and desirable young men. Then I saw that she was defiled, and that she increased her whoredoms, for when she saw men portrayed upon the walls, the images of the Chaldeans made with vermillion, girded with girdles upon their loins, she doted upon them. And the Babylonians came to her, into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom and she was polluted with them so she discovered her whoredoms,

and in nakedness, yet she multiplied her whoredoms for she doted upon men whose issue is like the issue of horses."

And now, given fortification from these words of scripture, which were as support to my thoughts and like sinews, I looked up at the woman taken in adultery.

Even as I feared, she was beautiful to look upon. She was fine of bone and flowing of hair, and her eyes were painted with much art. Yet there was that in her which was gentle, even as her mouth was proud and foolish.

So the furies of that oven wherein was my hatred of fornication now cooled in my heart before the soft voices of another spirit that came into me, even as if it were her angel seeking for mercy from such as me, and I was offered a vision of this woman in the depth of sin, buried in the fumes of fornication and with a stranger who could have no better odor to offer than the smoke that rises from hair as it burns. Still must this woman be a creature of God, as were all of us; so might she be close to the Lord in unseen ways, even in her fornications with strangers, even as God and the Son of Man must be close to all strangers, yea, a woman close in her heart to God even as the Devil's hands embraced her body.

And so when these Pharisees, having been long silent and as patient as fishermen, now asked me again, saying, "Moses and the law commanded us that such should be stoned. What sayest thou?" (for they were at an end of patience), I lifted myself up and said unto the circle and unto my disciples and to the circle outside even of the scribes and Pharisees, "He that is without sin among you, come and let him cast the first stone." And I was amazed by what I said for I believed it and felt purified by my own words and was not without virtue and bliss.

A tumult of feeling rose up from them. And it was of such a fury of strength that I knew vertigo and stooped once more and continued to write on the ground as if I were at whole command of all that would ensue.

And soon was their fury dissipated. For they who had heard my words were now pained by their own consciences.

So, I saw them go out one by one. And they commenced with that one of the elders who was oldest and so had the most sin to support, even to the last who was young and near to innocent. And I was left alone. For even Peter had left. The woman was standing before me.

Not yet did I lift myself up and gaze into her eyes, but

then I did, and so doing had visions of the hair that grew at the head of her thighs: And I told myself I was in the presence of evil angels. For I was feeling them much in my belly and they were begging to be cast forth from me. Yet in my belly they remained. And so painful were they that now I had need to be wary of this creature of beauty.

So did I choose to speak again in the words of the prophet Ezekiel, and therefore did I call her "Aholibah," since I did not know her name. "Aholibah," I said, "behold thy sin. For, as it is written: 'I will raise up thy lovers against thee, all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses, and they shall come against thee with chariots and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which will set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about thee and cast thee out, and I shall set judgment before them and they shall judge thee according to their judgments, and I will set My jealousy against thee and they shall deal furiously with thee; they shall take away thy nose and thy ears and thy remnant shall fall by the sword and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes and take away thy fair jewels. Thus will

I make thy lewdness to cease immediately and thy whoredoms be brought out of the land of Egypt: so that thou shall not lift up thy eyes and hear them, nor remember Egypt any more."

And this harlot whose eyes were as purple in the evening, said gently, "I do not wish to lose my nose."

And I said, "Woman, where are thine accusers? Hath no man accused thee?"

She said, and now was her voice modest, "No man is here to accuse me, Lord."

And I said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

Afterward would I learn that her name was Mary Magdalene for she was from Magdala, which is in Tiberius. And that is a city where the bones of Jews who had died as martyrs now lay under the foundations of buildings erected by the Romans. So this woman Mary Magdalene had lain and committed adultery on ground that held the bones of martyrs. Yet did I not regret what I had done. And the woman left. Nor did I know that I would see her again.

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And as I continued along the Street of Herodias on the morning of the second day, so was I thinking of how such a street had been named after the Queen who had brought death to John the Baptist. Before me then was this accursed and fearful name and it was on the avenue that leads to the great gate of the Temple; then also on this street did I encounter a man who was blind from birth. Alas, he had known none of the cunning of sight in early days, and thereby were the many joys and pains of sight not to be seen in the shape of his nose nor in the lines that give subtle understanding to the mouth. He was innocent of vision, and one of my disciples even saw to ask me, "Master, what sin did the parents of this man so commit, that he was born blind?"

Once again did I speak faster even than my comprehension of those words for me, and I replied: "This man is blind so that the works of God can be made manifest to him. But I will cure him for God hath made me the light of the world."

Nor did I know what was meant until I had finished speaking. But on this morning so was I still living within those hours of despair when I awoke in the dark and so could see that nothing might come after me but the night. For if I failed, then God might despair of man and of woman since they were as bestial as the beasts yet had little of what was noble in beasts and long-suffering; nor did many who were human have that which was of grace in beasts and spoke of the Lord's natural presence. So it was out of despair and not from any spirit of vanity that I repeated, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." For how long would I be in the world?

And then I looked upon the eyes of the blind man and naught was remaining there with which to work, not even one sightless eye on either side of his nose; there was naught but the entrance to two small caves in the skull of his head.

I spat on the ground and made clay of this spittle and then I anointed the eyes of this blind man with my clay and said to him, "Go. Wash in the pool of Siloam," which pool was by our side.

And he groped his way therefore, tapping with his stick. And when he came back, he could see. Even as I could hear

him speak to his neighbors who said, "Is not this he that sat and begged?"

To which others replied, "That is he."

Still others said, "No, he is like him, but it is not he."

To which the man who had been blind now replied, "I am he."

And when they asked how his eyes were opened, I heard him say, "A man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and he said unto me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash,' and having done as he said, have I received sight."

Then they said, "Where is this Jesus?"

And the man said, "I know not."

In that day at the Temple, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight, and he said the same, and some of the Pharisees were quick to say, "This man Jesus keepeth not the Sabbath day."

And others asked, "How can a man do such miracles when there was not even a dead husk of blind eyes, but only a void on either side of his nose?"

So there was division among them. And they asked the blind man, "What sayest thou?"

He replied, "The man is a prophet."

There were Pharisees of much reason and logic who would not believe that this man had been blind from birth. So they spoke to the parents. To which his parents were in confusion; they could only say, "We know that this is our son and he was born blind, but by what means he now sees we know not, or who hath opened his eyes, we know not."

And then could I understand that they were of so little courage that God might indeed have punished them with a blind son, for now they said, "Our son is of age. Ask him. He shall speak for himself."

Again did the Pharisees call the man who had been blind and they said to him: "Give God the praise. The man who laid clay upon your eyes is a sinner."

This man replied: "Whether he be a sinner, I know not. But I was blind and now I see."

"How then," asked the Pharisees, "how then did he open thy eyes?"

And he answered, "I told you and ye did not hear. Wherefore would ye hear it again?" And his voice was like mine. "Will ye also be his disciples if you believe?"

The Pharisees reviled him for such a remark and said,

"You may be his disciple. Yet are we followers of Moses. God spoke, we know, unto Moses. But we do not know from whence this Jesus is."

In each moment that he saw the world and the walls of the Temple, this man became bolder and I felt blessed to have given such a fellow the return of his sight. "A marvelous thing," did he say now, "that ye know not from whence this Jesus is, and yet he has opened my eyes. If this man were not of God, could he do anything?"

They cast him out. They beat upon him with their fists and said, "Thou wast born in sin, and now thou does teach?"

So did I have him brought unto me and he said, "Lord, I believe." And he fell at my feet and I said, "I am come into this world that those who do not see might see, and they who would claim to see may be made blind."

And in me was an anger larger than any I had known before, even upon the tables of the moneylenders; such anger was not in my hands nor in my feet nor even in my voice, but an anger that stole into what had been hitherto the most quiet reaches of my heart where much gentleness did reside. And when one of the Pharisees who had overheard me say these words, now asked, "Am I not blind?" and said it with much

mockery, I replied, "If you were blind, you would have no sin. But since you see, therefore does your sin remain. And to your sin are you blind."

And yet had I said too much. For now could I feel the recoil of the Holy Spirit in me as if my pride had become now too large and too vengeful for many of God's purposes, even though God be full of wrath. And now I could not shape my voice to be more gentle, but still did I say: "I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep."

Whereupon several of the Pharisees said, "He hath a devil and is mad." And others argued, "Can a devil open the eyes of he who is born blind?"

So they disputed. There was much dispute.

And even as I walked away on this Street of Herodias did an old Pharisee with a kind face, and many lines of wisdom in the twist of his nose and his mouth, come up beside me and he asked if we might have converse. And, by way of presenting himself, he said, "Many of us who are Pharisees would feel that thou didst well to overturn the tables of the moneylenders. For in such an act did you give real tribute to God. And among us are not enough who are willing to give such rebuke to greed. So, I would speak to you." And he

said that he wished me to understand a matter that he had not comprehended when of my age. And being of a desire to calm myself, I gave assent.

"In those days," he said, "I worshipped God, and even did worship in the spirit of your words. For God is generous and He created us to be much like Him. Yet even so much as we are in His image, still is there one gate we cannot pass and it keeps us from believing that we are as He is."

Since there was much of decency in this elder, I said, "Even if a man believes that he is like God, and is circled in his image, still there are no miracles are in his hand."

"Yes," he said. "You have spoken. Yet what do you say of a man who has miracles in his hand? Is he elevated? Is he nearer to God? Or can he be deluded by the Devil? For the Evil One might even make use of his power to do good since that is also in the art of the Devil; thereby can Satan succeed in giving sight to one who is sightless, and that in order to delude thee further, noble Jesus, concerning the source of your miracles. Thereby would he also increase the delusions you bring to Jews."

"What you say," I told him, "is so subtle that it is you who could be of the Serpent rather than myself."

He sighed and he said, "I know you are of noble heart. Your heart speaks from your eyes. So I would warn you. Ye need not believe me, but I wish you well."

"I believe you," I said.

"I would caution then. When you speak to others and say that you are the Son of God, and that will ye do, I know, I pray that harm may not come to thee; therefore, if you meet him, say it not to the High Priest, Caiphas. Should he hear such a word from your mouth, the sacrilege would be of a depth beyond all depth.

"But for so long as he hears it not from your mouth, only from the lips of others who are saying that you have spoken so, he will prefer not to believe it. And for so long as he does not, the sacrilege will not exist. Such is your safety. For his word is all among God-fearing Jews in Jerusalem."

So did I nod and smile at him and not know if I would take his advice. But then, how could I command the wisdom of my Father? Or request that He be prudent?

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And soon on this second day in the Temple had my throng multiplied from all that had been heard and spoken in Jerusalem from the day before. And it overflowed from the courtyard where I preached. And because they were much unruly so did I seek to teach how to comport themselves when in communion with the Lord.

"When thou prayest," I said, "do not be as the hypocrites: For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Rather, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father shall reward thee openly. And do not use vain repetition as do the heathen, for such repetition kills the soul. Be ye not guilty, therefore, of excessive prayer; your Father knows what ye have need of, and even before ye ask him."

But they were eager to hear of wondrous things and of great signs in the heavens that should forewarn them; so,

later in the day when there was more calm I spoke of how there would be signs in the sun, the moon, and in the stars. "Upon the earth," I told them, "shall there be distress of nations and perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. But the powers of heaven shall be shaken and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh." And to myself I said, "Oh, Lord, can my words be true? May I pray that they come true?"

Yet I felt as if I cried out to Him from a sullen sea. But still did I want my words to reach into their hearts and offer such support as a timber that keeps afloat each man who holds onto it and above many a wave.

And from afar, beyond the throng, could I see the Pharisees and the Chief Priests talking to officers of the Guard of the Great Temple. Therefore, thinking of them, did I say to a few who were near: "Ye shall seek me but not find me."

And one of the priests standing close to me said, "Will ye go among the gentiles and teach them? What manner of

saying is this, that we shall not find you?"

But others said, "Of a truth, this is the prophet; this is the Christ."

This priest answered: "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? From scripture is it said that the Messiah shall come out of the town of Bethlehem wherein David was born."

Another said, "Jesus is of Bethlehem. For wherewith is a man's nature if not in the land where he was born?"

But the priest said, "Is he not also of Galilee? Out of Galilee can arise no Messiah." And he nodded his head wisely. He knew. He knew naught of God but could tell you where it was and where it was not that the Messiah could arise. And to a certainty.

But then in this Temple on this second day was I always near to large emotion of sorrow or rage; before complacency was I always short in patience. So I wished to break into the declarations of this priest.

Not by enough did I warn myself that a man of small mind has developed for himself a hard shell to protect his little thoughts.

"Your fathers killed the prophets," I told him, "and you

build the sepulchers of the prophets. God will send new prophets and apostles and you will slay and persecute many of them, and so great will be their bloodshed that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundations of the world will be required of this generation." And so did I repeat: "All the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation."

And this priest drew back but I pushed forward to say to him:

"From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias which perished between the altar and the table, verily I say unto you it shall be required of this generation."

In my eye could I now behold the ancestors of this priest and their hands were stained with the blood of the prophets, even from Abel to Zacharias; none of these Pharisees near about me now were ready to bear witness to the blood shed by their fathers, and by their fathers' fathers. Rather would they occupy themselves with building sepulchers for the prophets. All the blood of all the prophets from the foundation of the world would now be required of this generation--all such whole recompense.

Not quickly did this priest give ground. He was small in mind, and small in body, but he was as certain of what he knew as a scorpion, and he said: "Thou bearest large record of thyself, but how are we to know if that record is true? It is written in our law that only by the testimony of two men, when it accords, is truth verified."

And I replied, "I bear witness of myself. And my Father, who sent me to you, also bears witness for me."

Whereupon he said, "Where is thy Father?"

I answered, "Neither do you know me nor my Father. For if you know me, you would know my Father also."

Then did he choose to upbraid me again for laboring at cures on the Sabbath, and others cheered for him.

I was short concerning this oft-repeated matter, and I said to him and to all who were like him: "I know you, and in you is not the love of God. I am come in my Father's name and you receive me not. Do you not think I will accuse you to the Father?"

I said this with intent that my voice should ring, but then my rage was larger even than my intent. How I wished to smite the piety of these Jews who were sharp of practice and narrow of mind and had none of the good spirit of those other

Jews with whom I had built houses in Nazareth. Nor did these priests have the honest courage, no matter what faults, of those who had joined me as disciples.

I said more. I said, "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life, and hath given him authority to execute judgment. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming when all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they who have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. And my judgment is just unto all thy ancestors." And this did I repeat: "Unto all thy ancestors."

And by that speech did I arouse a greater rage than any on the first day: now it burned in these priests and Pharisees and without let. For if they had a belief that would be balm to all cankers in their soul arisen from all that was lacerated in them by the strain between piety and Mammon, so was it that they lived in full belief of the protection offered to their acts by the intercession of their ancestors. They believed in their ancestors before they believed in God, but then was it not their faith that these ancestors would carry them across all seas and gulfs

now separating them from God. And here was I, uprooting the graves of these ancestors, and passing judgment on ancient and evil deeds. And all this said before I even came to the sins of the sons.

They would disbelieve me. So would they double their rage. They could not endure such a plenitude of pain in their souls. For I knew I was revealing all they had not done for God. And so was I also revealing all they had not done for their neighbor. Such sins of omission made it hopeless for them to listen. And, indeed, did they feel righteous at closing their ears. So they believed they would not listen in order that they give no audience to the Devil. And I could have wept.

The tears stood forth in my eyes like sentinels on guard; I knew that the most powerful of my own people saw me as the Devil. And I could not believe how much pain was there for me in knowing that I was repugnant to the leaders of my people, truly repugnant, yea, even as the swine of Gadarene had been repugnant to me.

Still had I agitated them grievously. They were sore displeased even if they had not listened. So great was their rage that all light in our chamber became red to my eyes, and

indeed their souls were as in the fire. Toward such rage as they felt did I offer naught. For I could not restrain my tongue: "Ye shall know the truth," I told them, "and only the truth shall make you free." If these were Pharisees and their robes gleamed with the whiteness of its cotton and their hands were clean, full were they of pride of the most subtle construction; invisible towers had risen in their hearts to offer homage to themselves; they answered me: "We are of the seed of Abraham and were never in bondage to any man. How sayeth thou, 'Ye shall be made free'?"

And I answered them: "Whosoever committeth a sin is the servant of sin. Ye are Abraham's seed yet ye seek to be rid of me, a man who hath come to tell you the truth, as I have heard it from God."

They answered, "We, too, have one father and He is also God."

To which I said, "If God were your father, you would love me. Why do you not understand my speech? It is because you cannot hear my word. You are of your father, the Devil. It is the lusts of your father that ye will do. You hear me not because you are not of God."

Was I preparing a furnace by whose heat would iron melt? Never had I seen any Pharisee so provoked as were these. Their eyes beccame as red as the light to come off their bodies. "Now do we know," they said, "that thou hast a devil. For do you not dare to say that you are greater than our father Abraham? And are more honored by God than he?"

"My honor is as nothing," I told them. "It is my Father who honors me. Ye have not known Him, but I know Him. And your father Abraham rejoices to see my day."

Whereupon these Pharisees said to me, "Thou art not old yet of forty years, and thou hast seen Abraham?"

I replied, "Before Abraham was, I am."

Then they took up stones to cast at me. Such anger was in their resolve that I could not pass among them as I had in the late hours yesterday when some had been ready to hurl a rock, yet had not. I had passed through their midst and gone by. Now, I could not. One, and then another, would be bold enough to cast a stone. And after the first stone, many. So I stepped behind one of my disciples, and he behind others, and so did we did slip away. Even as they raged in their fire did they have fear of following me.

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And among my disciples was concern at where I should stay now and so we chose the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany. None would go there nor wish to think of looking there. Still did word of my presence go out to some. Even as we were at table on this second evening, so there came a woman to visit me with an alabaster box of spikenard; very precious was such ointment, and she broke the box and laved it into my hair.

Now there were some among my disciples who felt indignation and said, "Why such great waste of this ointment? Why was it not sold, and for more than three hundred pence, and all given to the poor?" It was Judas who asked this.

And I looked at him with much disfavor, causing Judas unease. But then this woman, and her name also was Mary, the same name for my mother, for Mary of Magdalene, and for that Mary who was a sister to Lazarus. So was this yet another

Mary in the home of Simon the Leper, and she not only anointed my feet with the remains of the spikenard, but wiped my feet with her hair.

And in such a moment did I realize that abasement is next to godliness for I saw beatitude in her eyes and knew such happiness in my loins. And the house was filled with the sweet odor of the ointment.

Again, did Judas ask: "Why was this pomade not sold for three hundred pence?"

And when others also murmured against the woman, I said, "Why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me." Being wroth with Judas, I said more: "Ye have the poor with you always," I said, "and whensoever you will, you may do them good. But me, you have not always."

I was also wroth with myself. For the ceremony bestowed upon me by this woman and the love that came into me from her hands had given great happiness; at this instant I did not, in truth, feel like a friend of the poor: I was living in short breath and fear of my own death, and how it must be oncoming; so did I also brood upon the Egyptians who prepare a body for its death. And the perfumed substance in the spikenard gave filling to the loneliness in my belly.

Then did I now know how the rich feel. Now, could I understand their need for lavish display. To them, was lavish display as worthy as blood. And then, too, did I know then how greed was their balm against much foreboding. Which was cause for me to wonder again how much of myself must belong to the Devil inasmuch as I, too, was now speaking with a forked tongue. If, from the left corner of my mouth I had said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, yet from the other corner, did I issue sentiments no better than a malediction: "Ye have the poor with you always."

Or, was it at the behest of the Lord? Did I speak in such opposites that I might reach out to all who were to the left of me or to the right? On this thought was I provided with an image of great temples and beautiful edifices erected to me and so no longer knew in this moment whether God, man, or Devil spoke in my heart and made it of such complication.

What I could see was that I wanted to be all things to all men; it was meet that each should take from me a separate wisdom; indeed did I now think: Many roads lead to the Lord. Yet neither was I free of the worm of inner

derision. And it was there to tickle my ear. Mayhap the Devil had also installed his evil wisdom; through me, could he now suggest that it was not ungodly to enrich oneself.

And I noticed that Judas had left our presence and was gone away into the night, that same night where many were wandering on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem and all spoke of changes to come.

Disciples came to me on this night and said that Judas had spoken ill of me, He had declared that I was ready to betray the poor and that I was like all others who do not remain true to their convictions in the time when such convictions commence to chafe and burn. And I felt much injury at such remarks. Yet was I obliged to forgive Judas since I had already spoken ill of myself to myself.

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Now on the third day after the evening at the house of Simon the Leper, I knew on awakening that the chief priests had held debate on this same night concerning how they might take me by craft and put me to death. But there were other voices in my ear to tell of other priests who had said, "Not on this day of feast, lest there be an uproar of the people." For today was the feast of the Passover and of unleavened bread.

I cannot know if the Lord was with me or the Devil pinioned my feet, but I chose not to go to the Temple on this third morning. If prudence be derived from God and cowardice from the Devil, then there is a line between that no man can mark. On this morning I was not as the Son of God, but only a man in my heart, and no more than a man who dwells in fear.

In my dream had it been long foretold that I would be three days in Jerusalem before the Romans laid hands on me. So were my limbs heavy on the morning of this third day in

Jerusalem; I could not rise. Fever seized my limbs again and my eyes ached from all I had seen and my ears from what was heard; unholy spirits congregated in my chest; I wished to quit the city of Jerusalem. Multitudes, I knew, would be waiting to accompany me to the Temple for teaching, even as had been on the first day and more on the second. But now I could not stir and was not ready to enter the city until night was nigh. And I took counsel with myself whether it might not even be in God's will to leave and preach by the Sea of Galilee again; here in Jerusalem was but an abundance of sinners strong as in their resistance to those who might say: Sin no more.

I could not rise from my bed. God's voice was not in my ear. By afternoon, the disciples gathered about me and said, "Since this is the first day of unleavened bread, tonight they will kill the paschal lamb. Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat on the Passover?"

And I thought to send them out like spies within a foreign land, for at last I heard the words of my Father even as they reached my tongue and I said, "Go forth, ye two." And if there were two I had chosen, it was only by looking at their feet, so I cannot say their names: "Go forth, ye two,

into the city," I said, "and there shall you meet a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him unto wheresoever he shall go in by a gate. And say ye to the good man of the house, 'My Master sayeth, "Where is the guest chamber? I shall eat the Passover here with my disciples."' And the good man will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared. There make ready for us."

And all this I saw with clarity, and knew that God had given it me. But since I had also had many a vision through many a night of much that would happen on this third day, I hoped that what I saw now would not be fulfilled. Let it be that my two disciples would meet no man bearing a pitcher.

But no, they went into the city and found all as I had said. My disciples made ready the Passover. And in the evening, when it was safe to travel, I came to that house with my twelve, and we sat, and we ate.

I was silent. So did I remain silent until I took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave a piece to each of my twelve and then I said, "Eat of me, for this is my body." Every word I uttered on this night, must, I knew, be cut to the exactitude of a gem. Thereby, in that moment wherein I said, "Eat of me, this is my body," so did I also know that

what I said was true and most solemn in its truth. For in our death is it not that our flesh returns into that soil whereon grain will come forth; since I was the Son of God, so would I also be present in the grain.

Then I took the cup and gave thanks to the Lord, and gave them to drink and said of the wine, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for you and for many."

And in my foreboding, so did I know that my blood was like unto the spirit that comes to us from fruit and from grapes. Whereupon, tasting of the sorrow of the grapes who had been bruised to make this wine, so was exaltation also part of the sorrow; such exaltation rose to the crown of my head, and I told them, "Verily, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it in the Kingdom of God."

And then I had a vision of my blood pouring forth from me into the Sea of God, and that was true: All blood was in part of water, and water had only to leave its own vessel to embark on a journey that would not rest until was found another bowl of fluid small or vast in which to meditate. And I could see my own blood pouring forth from me on its way at last into the Sea of God.

But I could feel my apostles stirring among themselves. One spoke up to say, "How can a prophet give of his flesh to eat?"

And I said: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him."

Yet did I also hear muttering among my disciples and one spoke out: "But this is a hard saying. Who can hear it?"

And I answered: "Have I not chosen you? Are you not my twelve?" It was in my tongue, but I resisted that which I would say next: "Have not I chosen you, and from your twelve, is not one a devil?" And that I knew, and with as much certainty as that with which I would watch a fly loosing its poisons into my soup even as it swam in the circle of its death. Yea, and with such certainty did I know that this must be so. And in great sorrow. But here was cause for the sorrow I had tasted in the wine. So did I say: "One of you who eats with me now shall betray me. And woe to him. Good it were for that man if he had never been born."

And to whom I was speaking I did not know, yet I did

know, and he was close to me, as close as my own sins and my own fatigue before my great obedience to God. And I felt sorrow for all who would suffer, but was sorrowful most for this man who would betray me. His suffering would be more than mine. And thinking such thoughts, I grew stronger, and was pleased to live in the benefice of such compassion and uttered a prayer to myself: "Under the burdens carried by the Father, let the Son grow large in his compassion." And again was I stronger.

And I arose from supper and laid aside my garments and took a towel and girded myself about, after which did I pour water into a basin and I began to wash the feet of each disciple, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith each was girded.

And when I came to Peter, he said unto me, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

And I said unto him, "What I do, thou understandest not now, but shalt know hereafter."

And Peter said to me, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

Then I replied, "If so, then thou hast no part with me," and added, (for I was still thinking of him who would betray me), "Ye are not all clean."

It gave me great composure to wash their feet, and some were remarkably clean before I touched them, and others stank of the alleys of Jerusalem; still, I knew whose feet were brave and which were ready to flee. But when I was done, I said: "If I have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. Do as I have done to you."

But I was still troubled in spirit and could not keep from saying to them all: "Verily, one of you shall betray me." And indeed, I could not hold back such words.

And now the disciples looked upon one another and in great uneasiness, and some by the depth of their perplexity were innocent to my eye. Simon Peter even asked, "Lord, who is it?"

I replied, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it."

And dipping my bread in the wine, I gave that sop to Judas Iscariot, and whatever of me was like Satan did enter into him on that touch of our hands. And our souls stood forth in our eyes: Indeed, did a portion of the Devil leave me for him?

The lights in Judas' dark eyes grew bright and he was now of a purpose whose end I saw, and yet would I still

expect it not. He was Judas and loyal to me--still did I wish to believe in such. Thereby, even as I was the Son of God, and yet no more than a man, so could I now understand how men could have faith, yet be faithless; praise God and worship Mammon. So I said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly." And I did not know what he would do and was tender in my voice. Whereupon, no man at the table understood with what intent I spoke to him, and some could have thought I sent him on a good mission since I clasped him by the shoulder. And indeed he went out. And immediately. And it was dark on this night.

I was as moved as if I had stepped into that night when I swam in the Sea of Galilee and yet my body in the water and I was above.

And I said, "A new commandment I give unto all of you: Love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples. For soon I go, and whither I go you cannot come."

And Peter said unto me, "Lord, whither goest thou?"

And I answered, "Thou canst not follow me now. Afterward shalt thou follow me."

Peter said, "Lord, let me follow thee now. I will lay

down my life for thy sake."

And I answered, "The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." And wherefrom I said it, I did not know, yet did I grieve as if I did know, and I could not bear to look upon Peter.

And he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee into prison and into death." He believed it. He was strong where he stood. Yet I felt the vertigo of his spirit and in that moment Peter displeased me. There was that in his countenance which was smug, even as the best of warriors can grow fond of themselves and gross. And so I said unto him, 'This day, even in this night, before the cock crow once, thou shalt deny me thrice.'

But he spoke the more vehemently: "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." And likewise so said they all.

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I said in reply: "Are there swords among us?"

And when there was no answer to my mockery, I said, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."

But then they spoke, "Lord, behold, here are two swords," and two of the twelve did reveal that they had swords, whereupon Peter took one.

And I said unto them, "It is enough," even if I knew that twelve legions of angels might not be enough for my need. But then I was sore with the uneasiness that is nigh unto death.

Yet was gloom like a garment that I must put aside, and with effort and new breath did I respond when the apostle Thomas said: "Lord, we know whither thou goeth, yet how can we know the way?"

And I said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father except by me." And I felt no shame at this absence of modesty--for now it was too late to search

for finer ways to explain that it was the way and not the man.

Whereupon Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father."

And I asked him: "Dost thou not believe that I am the Father and the Father is in me? Verily I say unto you, Philip, believe in me and the works I do, shall you do also."

And I knew as never before that they must believe that I was in my Father and He in me, or they would have no power to do works. Yet I could not leave them comfortless. So I told them: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. Love one another as I have loved you."

And never had I felt more love for all of them. And more need to bring wisdom for all that would await them. So, "Behold," I said, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men for they will deliver you up to the councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake for a testimony against them and the gentiles. But when they

deliver you up, take no thought of what or where you shall speak, for it will be given you in that same hour. For it is not ye that speak but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." And to that could I bear witness.

These were words to bring fear to all but my best. For few can seek for greater faith within their faith by climbing ever upward. That, I saw, might even be the achievement of the meek--to be braver than others on their ascent up the palisades of faith.

Then I added: "Be not afraid, my friends, of them that kill the body; fear, rather, Him who hath power to cast into hell. Fear Him."

And if I had had a sword in my hand, I could not have severed the thoughts of their head more from all previous thoughts; now they knew the only fear that is true: it comes from beholding the Lord. Now they saw that death was not the end but the beginning of joys or of tortures surpassing all known before. And which would it be for them in death--joy or torment? This much had I accomplished: No longer would they avoid contemplating death in the hope that they could avoid the judgment that follows upon death.

I spoke indeed as if I were gone, and I believed it.

Yet also did I believe that I would never leave them. These were moments of instruction between them and myself, and I saw how in conceiving of my absence, so could they receive the import of what I would teach. And therefore did I believe that I would be with them tomorrow. And be able to repeat this lesson.

Yet, with such foreboding did my heart live, and on each breath, that I also knew-how all I said was true, except the last, for when I said, "Love one another as I have loved you," I had much to ponder inasmuch as my love had been impure and not always present.

So, to tell them what was true and must be true, I added, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. Wherefore do I command ye these things, that ye love one another. For you know that the world has hated me and soon it will hate you. If ye were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, so I have chosen you, and the world, therefore, hateth you."

I looked at them and some were ugly and some were misshapen of body; some were misshapen of nose; and the hands of many were thick and broken, the legs of others were

crooked, yet they were not only my disciples but my friends and I would love them. "They have persecuted me," I said to them. "They will also persecute you. And all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, for if I had not come and spoken unto them, then they had known that they sinned. But now they have no cloak for their evil deeds."

And it was then I heard a sound of great roaring in the wilderness and at a great distance away from my ear even if it was a sound within my ear; mountains were dividing and folding upon themselves inside of me; it was the rage of the Devil. And I knew why his rage was immense. For if the Pharisees would be without a cloak for their sins, then so was the Devil pruned of his strength and scourged in his pride. All of sin was his harvest. If there had been a war between the Lord and the Devil, so had it taken place in the Temple, there were God and Satan at deadlock. And I wondered again if God had brought me forth from Mary to rend this contest asunder. Had I been God's lieutenant even before I became His Son? Had the Lord conceived me first in His heart?

"The time shall come," I said to my people, "when whosoever killeth you will think that he does God service."

All wars shall be waged in God's name to the profit of the Devil."

And I was weeping with joy which was possessed of the terrible sorrow in its midst that I might not see them for yet another morning, and I knew that if my loyalty was to God, my love was for man.

And I spoke across to them to say, "Ye shall weep and lament, yet your sorrow shall turn into joy."

Then if it were my desire that this be true, and, for all of eternity, true, still I knew also that my Father's heart was heavier in this hour than my own and I did not dare to wonder whether I had failed in the larger share of my mission. But I lifted up my eyes to heaven and prayed, "Now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." And never had I presumed to say as much to my Father, but it gave me great hope against trials to come, that He had been with me from the beginning, yea, even before the beginning.

"If, Father," I said, "I am to be no more in the world, yet these my men are here and I have given them Thy word and the world will hate them soon even more because they are not of the world, so I pray that Thou shouldst take them into

Yourself, and keep them from the evil of others. As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, may they also be one in Us that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in me. And that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me."

And I could feel the love of God, and such love was like an animal of heavenly beauty whose eyes glowed in my heart.

Yet no better did I now know whether my foreboding was equal to death or I was living still in the shadows of my dream? Even as my preachments were with echo in the chamber where we sat at supper, so did I wonder: Can I truly save the world? Or are my words no more than the moisture from my breath? Is it the praise of men that I love more than the praise of God? And thinking such, knew that I must go again to the Temple even if it be the night of the third day, and I must go with all these questions in my heart.

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And my sense of foreboding grew; my legs were heavy and my chest was a furnace.

And when we came to a place named Gethsemane, I said to my disciples, "Sit ye here while I shall pray."

And with me, for I chose them, came Peter and James and John. And then I was in amazement, and sore amazed, for my limbs were exceedingly heavy. I began to climb the small hill to the garden of Gethsemane for it was a place I knew for its beauty after passing through on the day before. But now my limbs were exceedingly heavy. So I said to Peter and to James and John, "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." Indeed, I could protect them no longer from my fear.

"Sit ye here," I said, "and watch while I go and pray yonder." And why I did not know, but I also said, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

And then I went forward a little where they could not see me and I could support my weight no longer and fell to

the ground like a log whose pores are heavy with water. As I lay there so did I pray that this hour might pass from me and I might live again in less great and immediate terror of my death. My sweat was on my brow like unto great drops of blood falling to the ground and again I wished for this hour of desolation to pass. So I said, "Father, all things are possible unto Thee. Take away this cup from me."

And then as if that pit which is bottomless could find bottom, so did I feel the hand of an angel reaching to me in succor and I said to my Father, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt." And felt some return to my limbs. I rose up, but heavily.

Yet when I made my way to the disciples, they were sleeping. And finding them so, I said: "Peter, couldst thou not watch one hour? The spirit may be ready but the flesh is weak."

And I also knew that had my disciples been loyal enough to overcome fatigue and keep watch, then might my foreboding be smaller. Whereas they had slept, and could hardly save me. So I knew that Peter was full of terror and also absent of strength, inasmuch as such a man would avoid his duties only if ill and full of fear: sleep, for many strong men, is

their hour of cowardice.

And again I went away and prayed by myself in this garden of Gethsemane and again I felt the power and the truth of the dream I had had every night for a fortnight. And the odor of betrayal was even in the flowers of the garden. For when I returned to Simon Peter and James and John, so were they again asleep. And once more did they not know how to reply.

So I said, "It is enough. The hour is come. He who hath betrayed me is at hand."

And even as I spoke so came Judas toward us and with him a great number with swords and staves and none of them were of my people; rather were they of the Temple guards. And as soon as these men were upon us, so did Judas go straightaway to me and say, "Master, Master," and he kissed me on the mouth.

And I, knowing his lips in this hour also knew that such desire for me was in his mouth that his embrace must offer a sign to the guards; how, then, could it not be that he had said: "Whomsoever shall I kiss, that same is he who speaks as the Messiah." And they would have laid hands on my back, but Simon Peter drew his sword, and smote a servant of the High

Priest and cut his ear so it was raw in flesh and with blood.

Whereupon I said to the servant, "Suffer ye thus far and no further." And I touched his ear and healed him. And I asked his name and his name was Malchus.

Then I said to all: "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the Temple teaching and ye took me not." But all of this was but true to the weight and meat of my foreboding; out of omens rise all deeds. And so I said, "The Scriptures must be fulfilled," inasmuch as now I knew that such a dream as mine would find confirmation in holy writings.

It was then even as I was seized that a young man with a coat of linen cloth wrapped about his naked body, came into the garden. When the soldiers laid hold on him, so did he slip out from his linen and flee in his naked self. And I was not without a glance at his male beauty and knew that I might never look again upon the nakedness of a man and never now upon a woman, for no woman had ever been mine. And therefore knew what loss it was, as well as a vast blessing to be the Son of Man but now a man oneself. And the naked young man had looked like a girl. And my disciples forsook me and fled.

I suffered these guards to lead me away.

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And they took me into the High Priest's house. And it was a house of much length. At the other end of the hall where a fire had been kindled, so did they all sit down together, all followers of the High Priest and the Temple. And I could see how Peter had also followed and now sat among them and warmed himself by the fire.

The men who held me put a blindfold to my eyes and struck me on the face. They then mocked me as in a game for they said: "Prophecy! Tell us who it is who smote thee."

And some began to spit on me and other of these servants of the Temple struck me with the palms of their hands.

Then came the chief priests and the elders and all the council and I knew they sought false witness against me to put me to death. But no one could they find, yea, until at the last came two false witnesses who told the High Priest Caiphas that I had said "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and within three days I will build another

made without hands." And yet even so did their witnesses not agree, for they disputed whether I had said I would rebuild it with or without hands.

Caiphas, the High Priest, was tall and of kindly presence and his white beard was worthy of the prophets. Now did he stand in the midst of the others and ask of me:

"Answerest thou nothing?"

I held my peace and did not reply.

But now did this High Priest Caiphas say: "I adjure thee by the Living God that thou tellest us whether thou be Christ the Son of God, our Messiah."

He had adjured me. I could not swear false oath to the High Priest of all of my people, no not even if I was also the Son of God and by such a half superior to him. Still I could not betray the oath of my people, misguided Jews though they might be. So I said, "I am he who you say. I am the Son of the Blessed. Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then, with great deliberation as if not surprised by what I said, and yet with much passion in the tearing, did the High Priest rend his robes and say, "What need have we of witnesses? Behold, ye have heard his blasphemy."

And as Caiphas had given rip to his garments, so had he declared to all of Israel that I was not my Father's Son, but his own, a son of the Jews and thereby was I of Caiphas, and a son of such sacrilege upon the Book that he as the High Priest was in mourning for the son for whom he had rent his clothes. Thereby had he given his judgment: I was to be treated as a sacrifice and given up to Rome.

And if they had smote me before, so did his Guard beat upon me now. Such statement by the High Priest had removed all fear that I might bear witness upon those who struck at me, so did they remove the blindfold and beat me openly upon my face.

And all the while, from that part of me which had been remote from such strife, as if an angel stood lightly by my shoulder and upheld my spirits, so could I see down the long length that was the hall. And there was Peter on a bench warming himself. A damsel came up to him even at that instant and asked, "Was thou not with Jesus of Nazareth in the Temple?"

And he said, "I know not, neither do I understand what thou sayest."

And he left her and went out onto the porch even though

the night was cold. There another maid saw him and began to say, "This is one of them."

But again he denied me, saying, "Woman, I know him not."

Yet was there another moment. Even as they were finished with beating upon me, so did a man come by and say to Peter: "Surely thou art one of them. For thy speech is from Galilee."

But Peter must have been in fear of retribution over the cost of what he had cut from the ear of Malchus for he began to curse: "I know not this man of whom ye speak."

It was then the cock crowed and Peter stood as if stricken; then I knew he would recall what I had said to him.

He left the porch weeping. He wept. And bitterly. And for this while I did not yet feel the pain of being struck in many places and on the face. Even as I had been beaten, so had I held close to the presence of the Lord, and of His angel; they were like armor for my flesh.

Yet did I feel the anguish of Peter. My sorrow for Peter, sharp as a lance in my chest, hurt most. For he was a good man. And I knew he would spend his life making amends for this brief hour in which he had denied me. So his life would be hard.

Afterward, in a small dungeon where they cast me for an hour and then another, and then through the night, and into the dawn, I came to know my bruises.

And in the dawn, the High Priest Caiphias came again with chosen elders and scribes and his council and I was bound again and carried away. They delivered me to the Romans.

Now was fear felt by the man born of Mary. As a boy I had heard much of the cruelty of the Romans and how they were of evil cunning when it came to heartless acts. Never could I listen to stories of concupiscence among Jews---I had been an Essene!---but still was there much gossip among young men of Nazareth concerning deceptions between Roman wife and Roman husband even when one was Empress and the other Emperor; also did we hear of their royal sport with lovers and mistresses, and of betrayals and of beheadings. Even more did we hear of the severity of the Romans when they wreaked punishments upon such Jews as would utter even one word of rebellion against the Roman state these Romans had enforced upon Israel. To be a Jew was to live in fear of the Romans. Now was I being delivered by my High Priest to the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate.

So did I also know that Pontius Pilate was a man who

lived in fear and awe and trembling of Herod Antipas, the emperor of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea as appointed by the Romans. Or of such was his reputation, this Pontius Pilate, that of Herod Antipas was he afraid. Yet Herod Antipas was he who had lived in fear of John the Baptist.

And in this dawn, I was taken to a hall at the side of the court of Pontius Pilate. There would he listen to the complaints of Jews and other people not Roman. Now, as I was led by one of the stalwarts of the Temple, my arms bound, my legs free, into the presence of the Procurator, so did I hear from this man at the guard that Judas, having betrayed me, had also repented last night. Upon hearing that I was condemned by the Jews, so had he come to return thirty pieces of silver paid to him by the elders. And the priests said, "What is that to us?" which I did not believe, since priests did not speak in such fashion, but maybe it was the Temple guard by whom Judas was killed. And so he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, all thirty pieces, and went. And he hanged himself.

I could not speak.

"That is so," said the man who led me by the arm, and he added, "And our priests did not know what to do with this

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I could not speak.

"That is so," said the man who led me by the arm, and he added, "And our priests did not know what to do with this

thirty pieces of silver. It is not lawful to put such coin into the treasury when it is the price of blood."

What he said was true and without fault and all priests would obey such law. But then that is the way of the pious. And my guard told me that they were taking counsel on the thirty pieces and would seek to buy the field of the potters of which use is made to bury strangers.

The words of Jeremiah had been fulfilled. He had said, "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, and gave them for the potters' field." And again I felt how my dream and the scriptures were as one and were now upon me. For it was written.

Yet even if written still did I have hope that Pontius Pilate would release me; mayhap he shared the fear of Herod Antipas whom, I had been told by publicans (who had been told by Romans) that Herod Antipas would try to sleep but was without sleep after beheading John the Baptist.

Now, I stood before Pontius Pilate. He was a small man with a sharp nose and sharp shoulders and even sharp were his knees, as if he had climbed to many a position by the quickness of his mind and his joints. And it is indeed rare to find a man with a sharp nose who is stupid. So could I

also see that he was wary, and did not wish my death, even if nothing of benevolence came from him to me; rather was it a detestation of the winds of disorder.

Now was his morning occupied with me. And he was sore annoyed.

He said to those who had brought me, "What accusation carry ye against this man?"

They bowed and said modestly, "He is, sir, a malefactor."

"Then take him," said Pilate, "and judge him according to your law."

They answered: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." And indeed did these Romans reserve all power of execution for themselves. Whereupon, Pontius Pilate left his hall of judgment to take counsel, and when he came back, he said unto me, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

I answered, "Did others tell it thee?"

And Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your nation and your chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What then hast thou done?"

I answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. For if it were, then would my servants fight, even as would your

servants fight for you, and then I should not be delivered to the powers of the High Priest."

Pontius Pilate looked at me then with attention and yet with much that partook of amusement. For my bruises were manifold, and several colors of punishment were upon my skin. He said, "Art thou then a king indeed?"

And I answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. Yet but for one cause was I born: I am only a king that I should bear witness unto the truth."

And Pilate said unto me, "What is truth?" So did he speak like a Pharisee yet was he without beliefs. For he said, "Where there is truth, there will be no peace. And where peace abides, there will you find no truth."

Some Jews of the High Priest's party now gave a small moan of dissent. If they knew aught, so did they know what was truth. And on this morning their truth was that I should be condemned by the Romans.

Having heard their utterance of unhappiness, Pilate asked again: "Yes, what is truth?" And answered the question himself for he added, "In property is truth. In land is truth, especially in the ownership of it. And in the law of the land is the most truth. And ye are a Galilean

whereby ye are of Herod's jurisdiction, not mine. And inasmuch as Herod is today and this morning not only in Jerusalem but visiting my court, and has spoken to me of you and has long been desirous to see you, having heard many things of you, may it be, he would hope to see some miracle performed by you." Whereupon Pontius Pilate smiled. "Can miracles be, however, performed in the courts of the gentiles? The gods of the gentiles, considering all, may have more domain than the gods of the Jews."

So did Pontius Pilate speak. If I now had hope, it was not large.

Thereby was I taken across the palace and into the chambers of Herod Antipas who spoke to me but a little and was much distracted by the presence of a woman of more beauty than was I accustomed to gaze upon, and she now sat at table with him. Neither did he introduce her. Yet, his soldiers smiled at seeing me since they must have heard much of my doings and now could not see more than my rags and my welts. But Herod stood up and commanded that a robe be brought that was worthy for a king, or, he said, a robe fit, at least, for the officers of a king, and now did he have it put upon me.

Then did he say: "Since you are in Jerusalem, so are

you in the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate. But you are also a Galilean and have come from lands I oversee. So do I send you back to Pontius Pilate properly dressed." And his eyes were small and buried far in his head, mayhap not to bear ever again the weight of the sight of the bloody head of John the Baptist. And indeed he had hardly looked at me for his hand was on the woman. Mayhap he had not heard as much of me as I had heard of him.

Back was I led across the halls and columns of the palace to Pontius Pilate and there before the Procurator still stood the High Priest. And Pilate was speaking: "Ye have brought this man to me as one who perverteth the people, yet behold, I have as yet found no fault in him concerning those things of which you have made accusation. Nor does Herod. Behold, he has sent him back in a robe of purple. Therefore will I chastise him and release him. Should ye bring a man before me and ask that I condemn him to death, it will be done if he is a grievous malefactor. Today, however, is one of the days of your feast, and by our law and by your law it is agreed that I must release one Jew who is found in prison during this time of the feast. Will ye that I release unto you, therefore, this King of the Jews?"

There was a prisoner named Barabbas within these walls who had made insurrection against Rome; therefore, did Pilate say unto my accusers, "Will ye that I release Barabbas, or do I release this Jesus who is called Christ?"

And the priests of the Temple turned to the multitude who were around them; now I saw again that none of my people had accompanied me; so were they not part of this multitude.

And this much could I see since my people were poor, or, if rich, were timid, and nearly all were unlettered, and in fear of the Romans. Whereas were here many stalwarts of the Temple, and scribes, and Pharisees and Saducees and elders, and many townspeople who were, by their garb, not without wealth. All of them were among this multitude surrounding the priests. So could I come to understand, and much too late, that a multitude is no more than a storm of wind: It can do much damage in its passage, but will leave no other trace of its purpose than the spoil strewn behind.

So when Pilate asked unto them, "Who would ye that I release?" the multitude answered, "Barabbas."

And Pilate than said: "What should I do with this Jesus who is called Christ?"

Then did they shout: "Let him be crucified!"

And Pilate said, "Why? What evil hath he done?"

I could see that he was truly curious and somewhat vexed concerning their passion to punish me unto death. Why had it not been Barabbas? Romans believe in an empire that is orderly; so to them is murder a deed worthy of a sentence of death. Whereas blasphemy is merely an insult to a god and so does not concern them. They believe in many Gods. Thereby is the Kingdom of Heaven to them but a marketplace. Wherefore, you do not kill a false merchant, merely chastise him. Yet the multitude cried back to Pontius Pilate only the more, saying, "Crucify him! Crucify this Jesus!" And he saw their passion. Their truth was not land but punishment of sin.

Now Pilate called for a bowl of water and he took it and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this person," even as he was ready to accept their decision and thereby keep the peace.

To which all of my people replied, "His blood be on us, and on our children." They were sincere. They would take a vow upon their children.

And I was wounded grievously and felt myself already upon the cross; it was the spear of their certitude that

wounded me. Hearing their voices, so did I want to cry out:
"Do not take such a vow! My blood will be not only upon your
children but upon your children's children, and all
descendants, and your blood will congregate one thousand,
even two thousand years from now in catastrophe beyond
dimension."

And Pontius Pilate released Barabbas unto them. But as
if I were a mansion of many parts to be felled column by
column and room by room, so did the dream that I had
undergone of suffering on the cross reveal itself to me now
as not an illusion but the history of my life written before
I knew it for myself. So was it no test that my Father had
prepared for me, nor even a test to try the faith of my
disciples, but merely the story of my end written before I
was born; so were the rooms in the mansion of my heart laid
low even as my soul was laid low.

And soldiers took me into their common room and stripped
me and covered me with that purple robe fit for a king, or
the officer of a king, and plaited for me a crown of thorns,
placed it upon my head, and handed me a reed for my right
hand. So was it placed in mockery of a sceptre.

Then did they bow before me, touching their knees to the

ground and cried out: "Hail, King of the Jews."

Whereupon they rose and spit into my face and with that reed, they whipped me upon the head. They were Romans and crude.

Then they placed a cloth upon the crown of thorns to protect their hands and wound the wreath firmly onto my forehead, pressing on the thorns until the blood began to pour from my brow, and such trickle of blood was like unto the white worm of death creeping upon my flesh after the bite of the scorpion that lived in the thorn.

Now was the robe taken away, and in my nakedness did they return my old raiment to me, and it felt as tender upon my flesh as the hand of the Lord upon a newborn babe.

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As we came out of the palace of Pontius Pilate, there was a man, a Cyrene, also Simon by name, and him they compelled to bear my cross, and thereby I knew why they had laughed at me when I was without raiment and had mocked my nakedness. For no weight was left to me but my bones. No longer was I equal to the young man carpenter who came out of the hills of Galilee; I was now a thin man, worn to but a part of his weight by the desire to move mountains. And they laughed at me and called me King of the Jews.

Whereupon, walking, and in shame that I was too weak to bear my cross, so did we come unto a place called Golgotha. which is a word of much rarity among the Hebrews, for it says: "the place where lives a skull." There, they gave me vinegar to drink mingled with gall, and it was as bitter as my fortunes, and I could not swallow.

There followed us a great company of people, and in the main were they women who wailed and lamented after me. For

now that I had been condemned, few from the Temple chose to remain, whereas some of my followers had returned, the women being first among them, and they cried out at knowing the pain that I would receive.

I knew that I had not given understanding to their deeds, having sought to change all through the efforts of men; if my throat had not been too dry for speech, I would have turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me but for yourselves and your children. The days are coming in which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren, for the wombs that never bore and the breasts which never gave suck.'"

Yet saying this, did I think of the fig tree that I had cursed and to myself added, "For that too do I ask forgiveness."

And in the crowd I saw my mother and a disciple I knew, standing by my mother, so I said unto her, "Woman, behold thy son," and to him I said, and it was Timothy, who was simple, "Behold thy mother," and he understood; I knew from that hour would he take her into his own home. And so did I feel better for having said this since I knew that of all of my disciples, he would yet take great care of her.

And then not far from my mother did I see Mary Magdalene. And I said to her, and it was the opposite of all I would have said to the daughters of Jerusalem, but to Mary Magdalene I whispered, "Take hope. Have children, and multiply. For God hath forgiven you."

But had God forgiven me? Or had I failed in His purpose?

Now, had the crosses been erected on the hill of Golgotha; there were three crosses. To the left of me and to the right were thieves already tied to their frame. Yet, before they put me up, so did Pontius Pilate come by and look at the sign tied around my neck which said, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." And one of the few priests of the Temple still present said to Pilate, "Write not 'the King of the Jews,' but that 'He said, 'I am King of the Jews.''" He was not a king by saying it."

And Pilate answered, "What is written, is written."

I could see how his reply was clever. It was as if I understood his thoughts. For to Pilate, should it prove to be that I was indeed King of the Jews, then was it better for him to have said so. And if I were not such a king, so would he be esteemed for his scorn in placing such a sign upon a

wretch. So he was a good Roman. For he could preserve two conclusions opposite to each other, and by such balance exhaust the strength of one against the other. Thereby could I wonder if that was how these Romans had conquered so much of the world.

Then did they drive a spike into each of my palms and
but one spike through both of my ankles; I did not cry out.
My throat heaved as in asphyxia, yet would I not cry out.
For now I would remember the myriad of nails I had hammered
into wood planks, and never thought of the pain of the toes,
on the forest, whereas now, into the nailing of my flesh, did
I see the heavens divide even as the spikes pierced my palms.

And it was worse, and took so long for my ankles that I
knew all the colors of the rainbow; they were but the strings
of that almighty soul which is limitless in pain. Then I
understood that pain is the most powerful possession of God
and in pain has He dwelt.

As His son, was I now ready to share His pain. At this
moment did pain seem larger to me than all of the seas.

Early as I hung upon that crucifix, did I see the
soldiers kneeling below me; these Romans were parting my
sweats. They would even debate on how to rend my coat.

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Then did they drive a spike into each of my palms and but one spike through both of my ankles; I did not cry out. My throat knotted as in seizure, yet would I not cry out. For now I could remember the myriad of nails I had hammered into wood planks, and never thought of the pain of the tree, or the forest, whereas now, into the nailing of my flesh, did I see the heavens divide even as the spikes pierced my palms.

And it was worse, and took so long for my ankles that I knew all the colors of the rainbow; they were but the strings of that almighty soul which is luminous in pain. Then I understood that pain is the most powerful possession of God and in pain has He dwelt.

As His son, was I now ready to share His pain?. At this moment did pain seem larger to me than all of the seas.

Early as I hung upon that crucifix, did I see the soldiers kneeling below me; these Romans were parting my garments. They would even debate on how to rend my coat

inasmuch as it was without seam and woven from the top throughout. Therefore did they decide: "Let us cast lots for it whole and thereby keep it whole and for one." And the wounds in my flesh hung upon the nails while yet another part of scripture was fulfilled which sayeth, "They have parted my garments among them but for my vesture they did cast lots."

Of two thieves who were crucified with me, one on the right hand, the other on the left, were no nails driven through their palms, nor a spike through their ankles. Having been tied to the cross so did they hang from their wrists, and were in pain sufficient for their agony to hover above me as it passed by my head from one side to the other and back.

And those who chose to pass by the hill of Golgotha would revile me as they passed, saying, "If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross." And other things did they say and with much ridicule, such as, "He saved others; himself he cannot save," and "He said, 'I am the Son of God.' But where is his Father?"

The thief hanging on the cross by my right side now railed at me; he said, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and me!"

And I thought, "This man is a malefactor from his birth; he thinks of no more than his own life, no matter how mean." And I turned my head to the other thief who said aloud to the first, "Dost thou not fear God? We receive the reward of our deeds, but this man between us hath done nothing amiss." And then this second thief said unto me, "Lord, remember my face when thou comest into thy Kingdom."

And I said unto him: "Today shall thou be with me in paradise."

But my pain was great. So I could not know if I believed my words. Nor whether he could hear them. My voice was of less wind than a whisper.

In the sixth hour after they had driven these spikes into me, darkness came over the land, and it was very dark; already were my wounds mortified, and my head having been much beaten, so did I dream of the mollifying warmth of ointment, and was amazed that I could suffer in such wise and not cry out. And I recited to myself from the Psalms, speaking to myself within: "My days are consumed like smoke; my bones are burned as a hearth and cleave to my skin. I am like an owl of the desert and have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping. My days are like a shadow and

I am withered like grass and the pain that gnaws takes no rest. My bowels boil; my skin is black; my bones are burned with heat." Such words came to me, and served in some little, as balm, for relief did I feel by saying those words.

So did I come to think and for a little that the hand of the Lord was near me, and that He had set me down in the midst of a valley full of bones; behold, they were very dry. And even as I knew that these were the words of Ezekiel, so did I also believe that all of this was with me and happening to me while I suffered on this cross and I heard Him say unto me: "Can these bones live?"

And I answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest."

He said: "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live."

And I, thinking of the power of my Father to work miracles even in the valley of bones now had hope that if I died, so would I rise again.

Yet even as Job passed from fever unto that chill which is worse than fever, as is written, "out of whose womb came

the ice and the hoary frost to heaven," so, in my loincloth did I shiver for my nakedness and said aloud if any could hear: "The face of the deep is frozen." No longer could I see God. Nor did He speak any further at this moment in my shivering.

And one soldier kept offering me vinegar now that he saw it was distasteful; and he kept saying with more vigor and even more, as I grew faint, "King of the Jews, why can you not save yourself?"

And again as is written in the second book of Kings: "Hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you?" Now I knew the words of Ecclesiastes, and they were as real as the pain of my limbs, for now I also understood that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live and after that they go to the dead."

And in my pain I cried out to my Father, "Why do Ye nothing? Evil opens like a flower and flourishes. Canst Thou not see what a damage will be done if Ye allow me no miracles in this hour?"

When my Father replied, it was like the voice from out

of the whirlwind; He said in my ear with a voice even louder than my pain, "Wouldst thou annul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be justified?"

Then I began to weep. For I did not have the courage of Job. And once more did I seek to give of my last best effort, and I said: "While my breath is in me and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, neither shall my tongue utter deceit."

The words were as empty as my torment was large. "Woe to him," had Ecclesiastes said, "who is alone when he falls and hath not another to lift him up." And my confusion was like a myriad of small fish encircling me. So did I pray again to my Father, praying "Grant me even one miracle for myself."

And all was emptiness.

Pain was written upon the sky. And all was blackness but for pain. It came like lightning from the night sky and thunder did not follow, but only came groans. So were they my groans. And whether my Father did not hear me or could not, so did I go backward and again backward and retreated still another step, reaching backward through the scroll of the scriptures from the end to the beginning, and I thought

of the hour in the Garden of Eden when the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, "Of every tree in the Garden thou must freely eat, but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat."

And it was then I could comprehend. For when His lightning did strike at this hour on the hill beside Golgotha, so was His thunder as loud as His voice; then I knew what one must not know; I, like Eve, had entered into the knowledge of good and evil. And I comprehended that God was my Father but was He all-powerful? He was not. Such was the knowledge of good and evil. And if I cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?", I knew the answer He could not give. For God my Father was but a god and He lived among other gods. And I had failed Him.

They took a sponge and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave me to drink, and one of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

And I cried out again in a loud voice, and it was the last of my share of the heavenly rage that my Father had given me. Yet did I also know that I must not die in rage and with a curse in my heart. Rather must I justify what I had taught. And thereby, in hope that all be not lost, so

did I look upon this jeering face of the Roman soldier who gave me vinegar to drink and I prayed: "My Lord," I said, "forgive them. For they know not what they do."

All the strength of my life passed then into the Spirit. And it went out from me. And I said, "It is finished." And I died. I saw a white light that shone like the brightness of heaven if heaven was of a white light.

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And in the years that followed, in the lifetime of those who came after my life, were scrolls written (and most pious were they) by those who had known me. And so were scrolls also written by those who had not known me. (Even more pious were they!) Still, such scribes--and they were now called Christians--had indeed heard much about my journeys. Their scrolls often spoke of angels arising at my death, and others would claim that the veil of the Temple was broken, and rocks were split apart, graves opened, and the bodies of many prophets who had been sleeping arose and came out of their tombs, and they marched into the holy city and appeared to many. And the people knew and feared greatly and say: "Truly, this was the Son of God."

I was not there and cannot say whether there was much untruth in this, yet of those who were near to me were many who were plentiful with exaggeration in every description of me; in truth, many believed neither in the son nor in the

Lord by enough measure to say no more than the truth. Which truth, as ye have seen, was much. Therefore, I, like Daniel, if I had my wont, and if I had my will and my way, would now seal my gospel so that its truth is everlasting, even to the end of time.

Yet I cannot. For much was said after I was gone, and I must speak of that as well.

Of what follows, I have been told many tales, and some seem to me to keep with more of the events I know than others, but then it is not for me to know, since as was foretold in the scriptures, so did I rise on the third day, and of that I know enough to say that my disciples were never too close to this truth.

Any man who sees a wonder and is illumined by its light, can hold off the Devil for long, but yet will the Devil enter his tale with every power of exaggeration.

Yet this much I expect is true: That to hasten the death of the robbers who lingered long after me, soldiers came and broke their legs which great pain took away their power to survive, whereas when they came to me, it was seen that I had expired already. Indeed, only my ankles had been broken with their spike.

One of the soldiers pierced my side with a spear and forthwith there came forth much blood and water.

Then came a man named Joseph of Arimathea, who was one of my disciples, albeit a rich man, but in secret for fear of the consequence, he besought Pontius Pilate for permission to take the body of this Jesus. And Pilate gave him leave. Therefore did Joseph of Arimathea come and take the body that once was mine and with him came Nicodemus, and they brought a mixture of myrrhh and aloes, about a hundredpound weight and wound what had been my body with new clothes together with these spices, as is the manner of the Jews when they bury. And near the place where I had been crucified was a garden and in that garden, was a sepulcher newly hewn from the rock which this Joseph of Arimathea had prepared for himself. But they laid me there inasmuch as the sepulcher was nigh at hand.

So was I placed in a rich man's tomb. And they rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher and departed.

The Chief Priest and some of his Pharisees had slept in much doubt and anguish, for by then they knew not whether what they had done was for good or ill, and such doubt could they not bear. So on the next morning did they come together

before Pilate, and tell him that I had said, "After three days will I rise again." Whereupon they requested of the Procurator that he safeguard the sepulcher until the third day until dark, "lest the disciples of Jesus come by night and steal him away and then proceed to say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead,' in which case the first error shall be compounded by the last."

And Pilate said to them, "Keep your own watch."

So they went to the sepulcher and sealed the great stone and set a watch.

Now there are some who say that that was when an earthquake came and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door; because his raiment was white as snow, so did these keepers flee in terror.

And there are others who claim that very early on the morning of the third day, even as the harlot and the virtuous woman are brought together by death, so did Mary Magdalene come with Mary, my mother, unto the sepulcher at the rise of the sun, and the women said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?"

But when they looked, they saw that the door was already

apart from the opening and they could enter into the tomb and there could see a young man clothed in a long white garment and he said unto them, "Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, but he is risen. He is not here. Go your way and tell his disciples and Simon Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee and there shall you see him."

And the truth may be as something like that. For I do know that I was risen on the third day, and it was not unlike the hour when I swam in the Sea of Galilee yet walked above my body. And I believe I can recall an hour when I left the sepulcher to wander through the city and the countryside. But I know not what became of my remains, nor whether others took them away for burial, since I was now living in the spirit that had come out of my remains.

Yet did I also hear that some of the Temple elders gave money unto the soldiers to claim that my disciples came by night and stole me away in order to claim that I was risen. There is much confusion.

Some would say I appeared among my disciples and said unto them, "Why are ye sad?" And they thought I was only a stranger in Jerusalem and so did not know what had befallen. And they then said to me, "Our sorrow concerns Jesus of

Nazareth who was a prophet mighty in deed and before God and all the people. But our rulers have delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him. Yet did we believe that it was he who would redeem Israel."

And I said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart. Believe!"

But there were some still who doubted and I had to say to them, "Behold my hands and my feet. It is I. Handle me. See that ye are witnesses of these things." And they felt of the holes in my palms. Nonetheless, all agree, among those who followed me, that I was at last received into heaven and sat on the right hand of God. And many of my disciples went forth and preached everywhere that the Lord would work with them and would confirm the word with many signs. And now, in my name, did many come to believe that they had the power to cast out devils, and indeed they spoke with new tongues and were able to take up serpents and many another deadly thing, and it would not hurt them. And when they laid hands on the sick, so did some of the sick recover. Many were their claims.

But were the Jews were mightily divided after my death. For half went forth with my disciples and became new

disciples; such Jews became a continuation of the Jews but called themselves Christian, whereas the half that would cleave to the Temple argued among themselves for a hundred years on whether I was or was not the Messiah.

Be it said that the rich and pious among them prevailed; they could not believe that the Messiah had come among them as a poor man with a crude accent--God would not permit such! Indeed, they live by such beliefs today.

Still must it also be said that those who follow Christ and call themselves Christian are by now also rich and pious and they are no better than the Jews of the Great Temple; in fact they are often less in their sincerity than those Jews who condemned me then.

Yet the Church is in my name and is greatest in all the world, and its holiest temple is named after Peter; it is a place of much magnificence in Rome. In no place is there more gold.

And God and Mammon still grapple for the soul of man; nor does either triumph. I remain where I am, on the right hand of God, and look for greater wisdom than I had before, and I think of many with love. Yet my Father does not often speak to me. I know His secret, even as did Eve when she

tasted the apple from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Nonetheless, I rejoice, for the throne on which I sit is like unto the Garden of Eden and I honor my Father, even if His vision is mightier than His powers: surely He sends forth all love which He can afford to release inasmuch as His love is not illimitable; His wars with the Devil augment and forever augment, and great battles have been lost, even to the end of the second millenium. Yet, through me, will He send such love as He still stores for that creature who is man, and that other creature who is woman, and I remain the bearer of the Holy Ghost of all love that is tender and so I would now bestow the blessing of tenderness on all who read my gospel, these, my words.

The end