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In my dream it had been long foretold that I would be three days in Jerusalem before the Romans laid hands on me. Therefore, were my limbs heavy after the evening in the house of Simon the Leper. On the morning of this third day in Jerusalem, I could not rise. Fever seized my limbs again. Even more did my eyes ache from all I had seen, my ears from all that 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, even more than on the first day and the second. But now I was not ready to enter the city until night was nigh. And I took counsel with myself whether it might not be God's will to leave and preach by the Sea of Galilee again. For I knew on awakening that the chief priests of the Temple had held debate during the night on how to take me by craft. This day was the feast of the Passover, and for that reason would some priests hesitate before such action, lest there be an uproar

of the people; still could I not 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, and no more than a man who dwells with fear in his heart.

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 may eat on the Passover?"

And I thought to send them like spies within a foreign land, for at last the words of my Father 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, 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; God had given it to me. But since I had had many a vision through many a night of much that would happen on this third day, so did I also hope that my two disciples would meet no man bearing a pitcher.

They went into the city and found the man. All as I had said. Therefore, they made ready the Passover. And in the evening, in the dark, I came to that house with my twelve, 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, but with such division of the bread came a recollection of the hour when I had broken loaves in the desert and five loaves had been sufficient for a multitude since the pieces were blessed; recalling such happiness at living in the miracle of God's favor, I said now: "Eat of me, for this is my body." And what I said was true and most solemn in its truth. For in our death does not our flesh returns into the earth and from that earth can grain come forth. I was the Son of God; so would I also be present in the grain.

Then I took the cup and offered thanks to the Lord, and gave them to drink of the wine. Even as I poured our wine, so were other nights when we had drunk together among us now, and much recollection of many hours when we had felt as if all were one and all things hidden would be revealed to us. And now indeed was much revealed. For by the aid of the spirit in the wine was I now near again to my Father, and by another manner of nearness: For I could think of Him as if He were a great king, but indeed I had no fear of Him for it was as if He did not know that I pondered upon Him and His labors. But so did I now see how He had sought to bring God's order out of the chaos of our people. How hard He had worked and how often had He fallen into rage and sent us into exile and dispersion for our sins, yet even as he had scattered us, so had He brought us back together and He would seek to forgive us again. Even if much had been spoiled for Him. And so often. Could I tell my twelve disciples at table of my belief that God was soon to come in all His great power to save all Israelites, and we a scattered and sinful people?

I felt as if I had failed. Still were we Jews sinful

and in whole confusion, and I did not know whether what I had accomplished had been enough to keep my teachings alive. And in what manner could they remain alive? The crisis of the world was upon us. Would the rulers of the world be cast out?

Now was I weak in belief and yet must still seek to inspire great belief in my apostles. And said it to myself as a soldier loyal yet weary. "O, Lord," said I to myself, "help Thou my unbelief."

And as I gave them to drink, I said, "This is my blood which is shed for you and for many."

Whereupon, tasting of the sorrow of the grapes that had been crushed to make this wine, so was exaltation also part of the sorrow; such exaltation rose to 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 for this instant did the Kingdom of God seem near.

Now were my apostles stirring among themselves. One said: "How can a prophet give of his flesh to eat and his blood to drink?"

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 much muttering and another spoke out: "But this is a hard saying. Who can hear it?"

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, and then said it: "And from your twelve, is not one a devil?" And this was said with certainty. Indeed, here was cause for the sorrow tasted in the wine. So did I also 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 he must be close to me, as close as my own sins and my own fatigue before great obedience to God. And I felt sorrow for all who would suffer, and 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 spirit of compassion and uttered a silent prayer:

"Beneath the burdens carried by the Father, let the Son grow in compassion." Again, was I stronger.

I arose from supper and laid aside my garments and with a towel, girded myself about. After which I poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of each disciple, then to wipe them with the towel wherewith each was girded.

And when I came to Peter, he said unto me: "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

I replied, "If so, thou hast no part with me," and added, (for I was still thinking of him who would betray me), "Ye are not all clean."

Much composure came to me on this washing of their feet. Some disciples were remarkably clean, 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: "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet. Do as I have done to you."

Still troubled in spirit, I could not keep from thinking: "Verily, one of you shall betray me." Indeed, I could barely hold back such words.

The disciples looked upon one another. Simon Peter even

asked, "Lord, who is it?"

I replied, "He is the one to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it."

And lowering my bread in the wine, I gave this sop to the one I now chose and it was Judas Iscariot. Whatever of me was with Satan entered into him on that touch of our hands. And our souls stood forth in our eyes.

The lights in Judas' dark eyes grew bright and he was now of a purpose whose end I saw, and yet would I still say he was loyal to me--still did I wish to believe in him. 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 out with a blessing since I clasped him by the shoulder. And indeed he went out. And it was dark on this night.

I was as moved as if I was walking again upon the water in the Sea of Galilee.

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 where I go, you cannot come."

And Peter said unto me, "Lord, whither goest thou?"

And I answered, "Thou cannot follow me now. Afterward shalt thou follow me."

Peter said, "Lord, let me follow 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; 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 all that they are, and of no more. 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 more vehemently: "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." And likewise so said they all.

I said in reply: "Are there swords among us?"

When there was no answer to such inquiry, 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.

Yet was this gloom a current I must put aside, and with new breath did I respond when the apostle Thomas said: "Lord, 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 such absence of modesty--it was long too late to search for finer ways to show how it was the way, and not the man, that they were to follow.

Whereupon Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father."

And I told him: "Believe that I am the Father, and the

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When there was no answer to such 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.

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Whereupon Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father."

And I told him: "Believe that I am the Father and the

Father is in me. Philip, believe in me and the works I do, so shall you do."

And I knew as never before that they must believe that I was in my Father and He in me, or they would be without power to do works. So I told them: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things. Know only that you must love one another as I have loved you."

Never had I felt more truth by saying one thing. So never had I felt more love for them. And more compassion for their weakness. Indeed, never did I have more desire to bring wisdom to their hearts for all the perils that would await them. "Behold," I said, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. But beware of men. For they will deliver you to their councils and they will scourge you and you shall be brought by evil judgment by governors and kings for my sake. Yet take no thought of what or where you shall speak, for it will be given to you in that same hour of trial. It is not ye who will speak but the Spirit of your Father." And to that could I bear witness.

These were words to bring fear to those not ready. For

how many can seek for greater faith by climbing ever upward?
So 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."

Now had I severed their thoughts from all previous
thoughts; now they knew the only fear that is true: it comes
from beholding the Lord. They saw that death was not the end
but the commencement of joys or of tortures, and whether of
joys or tortures, would surpass all that was known before.
And which would it be? This much had I accomplished: No
longer would they avoid beholding their death in the hope
that thereby could the judgment that follows upon death be
also avoided.

I spoke indeed as if I were already gone from them, and
I believed it. Yet did I still believe that I would never
leave them, and would be with them tomorrow.

Now did my heart live on each breath, and so I also knew
how all I said had been with truth but for the last, when I
said, "Love one another as I have loved you." By times had
my love been mixed with anger and not always present.

Still would I tell them what was true and must be true:

"Greater love," I said, "hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. Wherefore do I command ye: Love one another. For you know that the world has hated me and soon will it hate 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 not known that they sinned. But now they have no cloak for their evil."

And it was then I heard a sound of roaring in the wilderness and it was at a distance from my ear even if it was within my ear; great boulders were falling upon themselves inside of me. It was the rage of the Devil. And I knew why such rage was immense. For if some Pharisees were now without a cloak for their sins, then so was the Devil pruned of strength. Sin was his harvest. In that war between the Lord and the Devil, so had it taken place in the

Temple; there had God and Satan been at deadlock. And I wondered again if God had brought me forth from Mary to gain this contest for Him. Had I been God's lieutenant even before I became His Son?

"The time shall come," I said to my people, "when whosoever killeth you will think that he does God service. Wars shall be waged in God's name to the profit of the Devil."

And if I was weeping with sorrow that I might not live to see them for yet another morning, still did I say, "Ye shall weep and lament, yet your sorrow shall turn into joy. For when you come to know yourselves, so will you know then that you are also the sons of the living Father."

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 greater part of all that had been my ministry. 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 Him, 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 longer in the world, yet these my men are here and I have given them Thy word, 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. Then can the world believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gave to me I have given them that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in 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.

Even as my prayers gave echo in the chamber where we sat at supper, so did I wonder: Can I truly save? Or is it the praise of men that I love more than the praise of God? And I knew that I must go again to the Temple even if it be the night of the third day, and must go with these many questions in my heart. So, did I set out.

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And as I walked, my sense of foreboding increased; my legs grew heavy.

When we came to Gethsemane, I said to my disciples, "Sit here while I shall pray."

And with me, for I chose them, came Peter and James and John. And I was sore amazed. For my limbs were exceedingly heavy. I began to mount the small hill to the garden of Gethsemane, but now my limbs could not stir, and my soul was sorrowful, even unto death.

"Sit ye here," I said, "and keep watch while I go and pray yonder." And why I did not know, but also said, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

I went forward a little where they could not see me and fell to the ground. Now I prayed that this hour might pass from me and I might live again and with less terror. Sweat was on my brow like unto great drops of blood falling to the ground and again I wished for this hour to pass. So I said,

"Father, all things are possible unto Thee. Take away this cup from me." Yet in this moment did I also know that the cup would not pass and I was as the son of Abraham and like Isaac could be prepared for sacrifice, and yet was I more and less than Isaac for I would be sacrificed. And much that was in me rebelled that God might be ready to give His only-begotten son to the legions of Satan.

Then, even as if the pit which is bottomless can offer foundation, so did I feel the hand of an angel reaching to me, 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. Nor did I know that I was still in the garden of Gethsemane. Not for that first moment when I arose.

Yet when I made my way to the disciples, they were sleeping. And I said: "Peter, couldst thou not watch one hour? The flesh is weak. The spirit may be ready but the flesh is weak." And thereby did I know that Peter was also immersed in terror and no more now than a strong man in the hour of his cowardice. And again he swore fealty to me and said that he would stand guard.

And again I went away and prayed by myself in this garden of Gethsemane; again came the dream I had every night. And the odor of betrayal was in the flowers of the garden. When I returned to Simon Peter and to James and John, so were they again asleep.

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 number of Temple guards and Roman soldiers with swords and staves. 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, and they were burning with unholy desire, also knew that his embrace gave a sign to the guards; how, then, but he must have said:

"Whomsoever I shall kiss is he who speaks as the Messiah." And they would have laid hands on my limbs, but Simon Peter drew his sword, and smote a servant of the High Priest and cut his ear so it was raw with blood.

Whereupon I said to the servant, "Suffer ye no further." And I touched his ear and healed him. And I asked his name

and it his name was Malchus. And the Roman soldiers were silent and did not come to aid Malchus because he was a Jew and I had healed him.

Then I said to all: "Are ye come out as against a thief? I was with you in the Temple and ye took me not." But since all was true to my foreboding, I also said, "The Scriptures be fulfilled." For such a dream as mine must find confirmation in holy writings.

Even as I was seized, my disciples forsook me and fled. Peter, James, and John were gone.

I suffered these guards to lead me away.

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And they took me to the house of Caiphas, the High Priest, a large house of breadth and much length. At the other end of the long hall had a fire been kindled; so did they all sit down together, all followers of the High Priest and the Temple. And I could see how Peter, having followed me, now sat among them and warmed himself by the fire.

The men who held me put a blindfold to my eyes and when I could not see, one struck me on the face. Then, as in a game, several said: "Tell us who it is who smote thee. Prophecy!"

And one began to spit on me and others struck me with the palms of their hands.

Then came the priests and the elders and some of the council of the Sanhedrin, and I knew they sought false witness against me. Soon there came two men 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." Even so did they not agree over whether I had said I would rebuild the Temple with my own hands or without hands.

Caiphas, the High Priest, now gave the order that my blindfold should be removed, and he was tall and his white beard was worthy of the prophets. Now did he stand in the midst of the others and ask of me, but gently: "Dost thou reply to nothing?"

I did not reply. Yet in my silence must have been an insolence for 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 my people; no, not even if I was the Son of God and, by this half, superior to him. Yet I could not betray the oath of all my people, misguided Jews though they might be, to tell naught but the truth to our High Priest. I said, "I am he who you say. Ye shall yet see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God." And these words came as from the sky so far did they seem distant from me as I said them now.

Then, as if not surprised by what I said, and with great deliberation, yet with much passion in the tearing, did the High Priest rend his robes and say, "Behold! What need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard his blasphemy."

And even as Caiphas had torn apart his garment, so had he declared to all who were here and to all of Israel that I was not my Father's Son, but a son of the Jews and a son of such sacrilege upon the Book that he as the High Priest was in mourning for this son, and had rent his clothes.

If they had smote me before, so did the 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, and so did they beat me openly upon my face.

And all the while, from a part of me most remote from this strife, so could I see down the long length of the hall. And there was Peter on a bench still warming himself. A servant came up to him even at that instant and asked, "Was thou not with Yeshua 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, a man came by and said to Peter: "Surely thou art one of them. For thy speech has in it the sound of Galilee."

But Peter must have known fear of retribution for the wound he gave to the ear of Malchus; 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; now he could recall what I had said.

He left the porch. He was weeping. He wept. And for this while I did not feel the pain of being struck upon the face. Even as I was beaten, so had I held close to the presence of the Lord, and it had been like armor for my flesh.

Yet did I feel the anguish of Peter. My sorrow for Peter was a lance in my chest. For he was a good man, and my chest ached. And I knew he would spend his life offering amends for this brief hour when he had denied me. So would his life be hard.

The High Priest Caiphas was soon gone, and with him

departed the elders of the Sanhedrin. So was I cast upon their departure into a small dungeon for an hour and then another and then through the night. Since I was alone, therefore did I seek to give judgment to myself upon my situation. Nor could it be ordinary since members of the Sanhedrin never met at night, yet last night had they met.

If it was Judas who had betrayed me, still was he not far from me in this hour because of such knowledge as I had gained from him in the many months of our travels in Galilee. Of all my disciples was Judas the wisest when it came to understanding the Romans and all that transpired between our priests and them. Of Judas could it be said that he knew much, and by his understanding could I expect that Caiphas would come again with the Sanhedrin and I would be bound over in the morning and delivered to the Romans.

Now was such fear felt that I knew I was but an ordinary man born of Mary. I had heard much of the cruelty of the Romans and how they were of evil cunning when it came to heartless acts, and showed much severity when wrecking punishments upon those Jews ready to utter even one word of rebellion against the Roman state, now rulers of Israel. To

be a Jew was to live in fear of Romans, and with this fear had we all lived, even as the Romans lived in their fear of our rebellion.

And in the morning would I be delivered over by Caiphas to the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate.

Nor had Judas been unknowing of how matters might be arranged between Pontius Pilate and the High Priest Caiphas and often had he spoken of how they were in close communion, even as one, and thus could they keep much peace in Jerusalem. Therefore did Pontius Pilate not encourage insolence among Roman soldiers against the Great Temple and its priests, nor did Caiphas offer up prayers to those Jews who would see Romans as enemies and sought to drive them out of Israel. Nor would Caiphas honor those Jews who died in the hills after strife with Roman soldiers. Yet was it a fragile peace. For the Romans, believing in many gods and demons, were pagans of much power whose faith was in destiny and the best of such destiny was their own. Whereas good Jews believed in baptism as superior to destiny, for it offered a new beginning; the laws of God were more elevated than all the words of all the pagans inspired by Satan. God

being One was thereby more powerful than all of those invisible beings in whom Romans believed. Where, then, could there be agreement?

Nonetheless was agreement there between Caiphas and Pontius Pilate wherein the Roman Procurator now received gold and treasures of value from the Temple and this had come to be after the early years of his domain over Judea. For at first had Pilate sought to bring into Jerusalem graven images on Roman coins. And the image of the Roman eagle had been flaunted upon the standards of the Roman garrison. There had been great demonstrations of Jews against Pontius Pilate and a multitude of Jews stood outside the residence of Pilate and refused to leave and were ready to die rather than to accept graven images in the Temple. Then were they surrounded by Pilate's legions and were ordered to give way or be massacred, but these Jews did not give way. So did Judas tell me of this with great pride. It was Pontius Pilate who gave way to the Jews on this occasion at the beginning of his reign as Procurator of all Judea. Now had he ruled over Judea for more than five years, and peace had been kept despite all fear of revolt, but then Caiphas had been High

Priest for more than ten years, and both were together and had many arrangements, yet the sum of such agreement was equal only to much fear of uprising and revolt. So had said Judas, who had always been ready to speak his dissatisfaction that I was not willing to lead such a revolt against Romans, but only wished to bring people to my Father. And in all of that was there much uneasiness on what could happen in the morning.

So could I speak.

"That is so," said the man who led me by the arm, and he added, "And our parents do 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."

And my guard told me that they were taking counsel up

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And in the dawn, I was taken to a small chamber at the side of the court of Pontius Pilate. There would he listen to the complaints of Jews and any others 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 this man of the Guard tell me that Judas had also repented of his betrayal of me and in the night had come to return thirty pieces of silver paid to him by the elders. And when the money was refused by the priests, he cast down the silver in the Temple, all thirty pieces, and went. And he hanged himself.

Nor could I speak.

"That is so," said the man who led me by the arm, and he added, "And our priests do 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."

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.

Now, I stood before Pontius Pilate. He was a small man with a sharp nose and sharp shoulders. 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 might not wish my death, even if nothing of benevolence passed from him over to me; rather did he look at me as I were part of the winds of disorder, and he detested such.

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 who is perverting the nation."

"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 asked more questions of these priests, and they said that he "forbade all to give tribute to Caesar and called himself a king."

Whereupon Pilate asked of me: "Do you call yourself the King of the Jews?"

I answered, "Did others tell it thee?"

And Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your priests have delivered you to me. What have you done?"

I answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."

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, "Still art thou a king, indeed a king?"

And I answered, "Thou sayest that. Yet but for one cause was I born: I am only a king in that I bear witness unto the truth."

And Pilate said unto me, "What is truth?" He was without belief. For next 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 sound 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 this utterance of their small 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. or he is the Emperor of Samaria and Idumea and Galilee as appointed by us. And Herod is this morning not only in Jerusalem but visiting my court, and he 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 here 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 I was accustomed to gaze upon, and she now sat at table with him. And he was an old man, and fat. Yet when he saw his soldiers smile at seeing me since they must have heard much of my journeys but now could see no more than my rags, Herod commanded that a robe be brought 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." And by these words was he most pleased for I could see that he would send me back to Pontius Pilate. He would want nothing of a man who could cause him to remember another man, a prophet now dead. Still did Herod also say: "Since you are a Galilean and have come from lands I oversee, so do I return you to Pontius Pilate properly dressed." And his eyes were small and buried far in his head, may it have been not to bear again the weight that had been in the sight of the severed and

bloody head of John the Baptist. And indeed he had hardly looked at me for his hand was on the woman.

Back was I led across the halls and columns of the palace to Pontius Pilate and there before the Procurator now stood the Caiphas. And he looked this morning as if he had slept no more than me. And Pilate was speaking: "Ye have brought this man to me as one who perverteth the people, yet behold, I have found as yet 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 this man 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."

And now could I see that this was but a game between the two men. For Caiphas showed no discontent but merely smiled and ruefully as if he knew that the price of Roman justice would not be small on this day since Pilate knew wherein was the value that Caiphas sought. And it was that Pontius Pilate should condemn me to death and for that might Pilate be ready but only at his price.

And if I was not used to the clarity of such thoughts in

understanding men such as this, now did I think of Judas and how his spirit might seek in this hour to guide me still. For what was man if not perverse? And I knew that the pit wherein was all bitterness could also await me.

Now did Pontius Pilate repeat his words to Caiphas. "I will condemn this man if you insist, but is it necessary? 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?"

And the priests of the Temple turned to the people who were around them; now I saw again that none of my disciples were here.

Yet were my people poor, or, if rich, 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, with wealth. All of them were 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 he was a prisoner within these walls who had made insurrection against Rome.

And Pilate then said: "What then should I do with this Jesus who is called Christ?"

Then did some shout: "Let him be crucified!" But they were less in number than expected, and Pilate smiled at Caiphas for again would his price increase.

And Pilate said, "Why? What evil has he done?"

I could see that he was truly curious 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 may be placated by worship of another god. Being pagans, they believe in many gods. Thereby is the Kingdom of Heaven but a marketplace to them. And prophets no more than merchants. Wherefore, you do not kill a false merchant, merely chastise

him. Yet now the multitude were more aroused and cried back to Pontius Pilate, saying, "Crucify him! Crucify this Jesus!" And he saw that their passion 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, and receive much payment from Caiphas.

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, whereas Pilate would only take a gift.

And I was wounded grievously and felt myself already upon the cross; it was in the spear of the certitude of my people. 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 in catastrophe beyond dimension."

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, and it was 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 forced 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, Simon by name, a Cyrene, and he was chosen to bear my cross. Thereby did I know why they had laughed at me when I was without raiment and had mocked my nakedness. For what was left to me but my bones? No longer was I equal to the carpenter who came out of the hills of Galilee; now was I worn to but a part of my weight by the desire to move mountains. And they laughed at me and called me King of the Jews.

Walking, we came unto a place called Golgotha. And that is a word of much rarity among we Hebrews, for it says: "the place where lives a skull."

There followed 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 save the world through the efforts of men; now my throat was dry, but this much did I say and with much warning before what was to come: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me but for 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 I had cursed and to myself added, "For that too do I ask forgiveness."

And in the crowd I saw my mother, and for the first time did my mother look at me like a mother, as if I were indeed of her flesh and was being torn from her. Now, and so late, did I understand all that had been in her love for me. And in all these years she had never felt that I was of her flesh so much as I was a gift from the Lord and in her of me so had she also been contentiousXwith all I did. For to live always in awe is equal to not knowing one's name. Yet now in my plight, so did she take me back as of her flesh, and she

was in great pain at all that awaited me. Beside her was standing a disciple I knew, and it was Timothy, so I said unto her, "Woman, behold thy son," and to him I said, "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 since of all my disciples, he was one to take good care of her.

And then not far from my mother did I see Mary Magdalene. And I said to her, and it was apart from all that had been said to the daughters of Jerusalem, but to Mary Magdalene I whispered, "Take hope. Have children. For God hath forgiven you."

Now, would three crosses be soon erected on the hill of Golgotha. And with me would be two thieves. Indeed, already had they been tied to their frames and raised. Yet, before they would come to me, so did Pontius Pilate approach and look at the sign tied around my neck, and it said, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Not many were the priests of the Temple still present, but there was one and he said to Pilate, "Write not 'the King of the Jews,' but that 'He said, 'I am King of the Jews.''" He did not become a king by saying

it."

And Pilate answered, "What is written, is written."

So could I also see how his reply was clever. And again could I understand his thoughts. For if it should prove to be that I was King of the Jews, then indeed was it better for him to have said as much. And if I were not such a king, so would he be esteemed for his power of ridicule since he had insisted upon such a sign upon such a wretch as me. So he was a good Roman. For in balance could he preserve two conclusions and they were opposite to each other. Thereby was I able to wonder if by such means had these Romans conquered so much of the world.

Now did the Roman soldiers lead me to my cross and it was on the ground, and took pleasure in letting me gaze upon it. And this cross was crude and ill-fashioned, but then these Roman soldiers took pleasure also in putting together crosses that were nailed at off-measure. Thereby were they awkward in appearance and at odds with one's body, and so could they mock you more.

And I took a breath and the morning was dark and they made me lie down upon the cross and stretch forth my arms.

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Then did they drive a spike into each of my wrists and another spike did they drive through each of my feet. Nor did I cry out. I would not cry out. Yet in the nailing of my flesh, did I see the heavens divide.

And it was worse, and took so long that I knew all the colors of the rainbow; they were but the strings of that soul which is almighty and luminous in pain. And I understood then how pain is the possession of God and in pain has He dwelt. Yet did I still know nothing for into greater pain did I descend when they raised my cross and I was with agony for all of my now hung from the four nails in my flesh. And this pain was larger to me than all the seas, and I swooned and did not return to what was beneath my cross until I opened my eyes to see soldiers kneeling on the ground. And they were looking to part my garments. So were they also debating on how to rend my coat with fair share for all of them since this garment was without seam and woven from one

end to the other. Therefore did they decide: "Let us cast lots since it is good only for one."

And I saw one take up my garment after they cast their lots and I remembered that woman who had been cured of an issue of blood by touching my garment, but now did it hang from the arm of the soldier who won it, and the cloth was like unto the skin of a snake and limp.

And beside me did someone groan, and another answer with his groan, and I looked and there two thieves being crucified with me, and one was on my right hand, and another on the left, and below us were a few who chose to pass by the hill of Golgotha, and one said: "If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross." And other words were offered with much ridicule, and I heard: "He saved others; himself he cannot save," and one said: "If he is the Son of God, where is his Father?"

The thief on the cross by my right side now said, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and me!"

And I thought, "This man thinks of his own life before all others." And I turned my head to the other thief who said aloud to the first: "This man between us hath done

nothing." But then this second thief also said, "Lord, remember my face when thou comest into thy Kingdom."

And I said to him: "Today thou shall be with me in paradise."

But my pain did not abate. So I could not know if I believed my words. Nor whether the thief could hear them. My voice was less in sound than a whisper.

Now, darkness came over the land, and it was very dark; already were my wounds mortified, and my head having been much beaten, so was I amazed how one's body could suffer. And to myself I recited 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 withered like grass. 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 came by saying those words.

So did I come to think that the hand of the Lord might be near me again, and that He had set me down in the midst of a valley full of bones; behold, they were very dry. And I knew the words of Ezekiel when he said: "Can these bones

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 into that chill which is worse than fever, 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 at this moment in my shivering. And when I said, "I thirst," one soldier kept offering me vinegar. And when I refused, for such vinegar was worse than thirst, he said: "King of the Jews, why can you not save yourself?"

And I remembered how it was written in the second book of Kings: "Hath he not sent me to the men who sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you?" And the words of Ecclesiastes were as real as the pain of my limbs, even as the prophet had said: "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."

In my pain I cried out to my Father, "Why do Ye nothing?"

Evil opens like a flower. Can 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?"

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 said to Him: "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 empty and 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: "Grant me even one miracle for myself," I asked.

All was emptiness.

Pain was written upon the sky. And everything was in blackness but for pain. That came like lightning from the dark sky and thunder did not follow, only 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 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 then was I able to comprehend. For His lightning might strike at this hour on the hill beside Golgotha, and His thunder be as loud as His voice, but I knew what one must not know: I, like Eve, had entered into the knowledge of good and evil. And God was my Father but was He all-powerful? Or was He not? And such was the knowledge of good and evil. And I cried out, "My Lord, why hast thou forsaken me?", but even as I asked did I know the answer He could not give. God my Father was but a god and He lived among other gods. And I had failed my Father.

They took a sponge and filled it with vinegar and gave me to drink.

And I cried out again in a loud voice with the last of my share of the heavenly rage that my Father had given to me.

Yet did I also know that I must not die in rage and with a curse in my heart. Rather must I seek to justify what I had taught. And thereby, in hope that all not be lost, so did I look upon this jeering face of the Roman soldier who gave me vinegar to drink and recalled how I had told my disciples, "whosoever seeks to kill you will think he is performing service for God," and that was as a comfort in my extremity and I said: "My Lord, forgive them. For they know not what they do."

All the strength of my life passed then into the Spirit. And we went out together even as 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. So were scrolls also written by those who had not seen me. (Even more pious were they!) Still, such scribes--and now were they called Christians--had heard much about my journeys. And they added much. Such scrolls often spoke of angels arising at my death; others gave description of lightning and how the veil of the Temple was broken, and rocks split apart, graves opened. Some said that the bodies of many prophets arose and came out of their tombs, and marched into the holy city and appeared to many. And that the people feared greatly and said: "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 had been near to me were many plentiful with exaggeration in every description; in truth, had few believed in the son or in the Father by enough

measure to say no more than the truth. Which truth, as ye have seen, was much. Therefore, I, like Daniel, would now seal my gospel so that its truth is everlasting.

Yet I cannot. For I must speak of what was said after I was gone. I have been told many tales, and some seem to keep with the events I know more than others, but it is not for me to know; even as was foretold in the scriptures, so did I rise on the third day; of that do I know enough to say that my disciples were never close to this truth. When a man sees a wonder and is illumined by its light, how long can he hold off the Devil before Satan will enter his tale with every exaggeration?

Yet this much I expect is true: That after my death came a man named Joseph of Arimathea, who was one of my disciples, and he was a rich man, who in secret besought Pontius Pilate for permission to take my body. And Pilate gave him leave. And for a good sum. To Pilate was I like that animal of the farm who is special and makes rich the farmer. Therefore did Joseph of Arimathea 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 my body with new clothes for a shroud together with these spices, as is the manner of we Jews when we bury. And near the place where I had been crucified was a garden and within 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 at hand.

So was I placed in a rich man's tomb. And they rolled a large stone before the door of the sepulcher and departed.

Now Caiphas and some of his high priests had slept in much doubt, for by then they knew not in certainty whether what they had done was for good, and such doubt could they not diminish. Whereupon, they repudiated it and on the next morning did they also come before Pilate, and tell him that I had said, "After three days will I rise again." Which was ground for request of the Procurator that he safeguard the sepulcher through three days, "Lest," they said, "the disciples of Jesus should come by night and steal him away and then 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." For they would not pay him what he asked which was an exceeding

sum.

So they went to the sepulcher and sealed the great stone of the entrance and set their own watch.

There are some who say that an earthquake came in answer to them and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door. Because the raiment of this angel was white as snow, so did these guards flee in terror.

And there are others who tell us that very early on the morning of the third day, even as the harlot and the virtuous woman are brought together by death, so, on the rise of the sun, did Mary Magdalene come to the sepulcher with Mary, my mother, and they did not know how to roll the great stone away from the tomb.

But when they looked, they saw that the door was already apart from the opening and they could enter within and there could see a young man clothed in a long white garment and he said unto them, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, but he is risen. Go your way and tell his disciples and Simon Peter that he goes before you into Galilee and there shall you see him."

And the truth may be not all different from that. For I do know that I was risen on the third day, and it was not unlike the hour when I walked in the Sea of Galilee. And I recall an hour when I left the sepulcher to wander through the city and the countryside.

Some would say I appeared among my disciples and said unto them, "Why are ye sad?" And they did not recognize me for thinking I was only a stranger in Jerusalem and so did not know all that had befallen. And they 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 crucified him. Yet did we believe that he would redeem Israel."

And I said unto them: "Fools! Behold my hands and my feet. Handle me. See that ye are witnesses of these things." And Thomas even felt of the holes in my wrists. Nonetheless, among my followers, all agree that I was soon received into heaven and seated on the right hand of God. And many of my disciples went forth and preached that the Lord would work with them. And, 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. And many were their claims.

But among the Jews was much division after my death. For half went forth with my disciples and became new disciples, such Jews becoming those who would call themselves Christian, whereas the others would cleave to the Temple and argue among themselves for a hundred years on whether I was or was not the Messiah.

Be it said that the rich among them, and the pious, prevailed; they could not believe that the Messiah was a poor man with a crude accent--God would not permit such! Indeed, do they live by the same beliefs today.

Still must it also be said that many of those who follow Christ and call themselves Christian are by now rich and pious themselves, and 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 among the Christians are many churches in my name. And the greatest and the holiest is named after Peter; and it

is a place of much magnificence in Rome. Nowhere is there more gold.

And God and Mammon still grapple for the soul of all men. Nor does either triumph. I remain on the right hand of God, and look for greater wisdom than I had before, and think of many with love. And my mother is much honored. Yet my Father does not often speak to me. I know His secret, even as did Eve when she tasted the apple. Nonetheless, I rejoice, and I honor my Father, even if I know that His vision is mightier than His powers: surely He sends forth as much love as He can ill afford to offer; His love, I know, is not illimitable; His wars with the Devil augment, and forever do they augment, and great battles have been lost, even to the end of the second millenium.

Yet is it understood by most that God has not lost but has won and has gained such victory through me. And indeed the Devil had not sufficient respect for my Father and His resource. And it is true that in some fifty years after my death when the Gospel According to John was being composed, so was it illumined by my Father and words as unforgettable to others were inscribed, and we know that they say: "For

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have eternal life," and indeed, so great in strength was such a thought that I was but the first of many martyrs and never was a prophet succeeded by as many other martyrs in his name. But then, I was His son.

Thereby let it be understood that if I did not conquer the Devil, and indeed, was a great victory lost and two million of all Jews would yet die in war against the Romans not forty years after my death (and the Temple was destroyed), still was my Father even as wise as the Devil and saw how to save much from defeat and call it victory in the Gospel of John. And later would it even be claimed by Christians that the souls of those who die for the faith can depart from the body with glory sufficient to destroy the power of many demons. But then such Christians even believe that I won all for them, and even before they were born, by my suffering on the cross and such is much believed since who is there alive that hath felt pain in his hands and in his feet and with all his heart? So does my Father have purpose for me still, and indeed it is through me that the Lord still

sends such love as He 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 if some here have found confusion for themselves and others are with pain from my offering, then even more is all of this with value. For where is the cure that does not injure the root if the physician has naught that is tender in his heart? And so I would now bestow the blessing of tenderness on all who read my gospel, these, my words.

The end