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And to guard against too much solemn brooding on my entrance into Jerusalem, so were we not long 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 ask for a colt on whom no man has ever sat. Loose this wild foal 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 such a colt."

And they went away and by the door in the first street in the village, they found an ass, young and spirited, 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 this colt, wherein could I bring peace to the 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 might never eat again.

Whereupon, seeing a fig tree from afar that was full and with leaves, I trotted toward it, outpacing all who were in the procession in order to take my fill from that tree. Yet upon its branches were no figs ripe.

Did every wind come to me from the anger of my enemies? Much rage now in my speech. For I said to the fig tree, "No man may eat fruit from you hereafter!"

The disciples who heard this were not concerned whether the tree was now cursed. But I was left to support the loss and knew the weight that comes upon the heart for cursing the roots of another. "I am the Son of God," I told myself, "yet also a man; by a thread does man live without willful destruction."

So I also knew that the presence of Satan remained in me. Like a hawk who searches the fields below for one small animal, then strikes to steal a life, so had I scourged the fig tree.

Now the multitude in advance of me had taken down branches from those palm trees we passed and then strewed them on my path 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 some cried out, "Blessed is the one, the king, who comes in the name of the Lord."

There were Pharisees in the throng and they cried out that I must rebuke my followers, but I called back, "If they were silent, so would these stones cry out." For I was proud. I was king indeed.

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

Yet it may be that the fig tree was still upon my heart for I soon thought of the city of Tyre and how it was famous a thousand years ago for its tables of ebony, and its emeralds and purple linens and coral and agate, its stalls of honey and balm, its spices and chests of cedar. Yet, in the day of its ruin, all had been washed away by the sea; would this be said of Jerusalem, as wealthy in this hour as once was Tyre?

And seeing large white buildings with tall columns of such great measure that one knew not whether it was a temple, the house of a great man, or the seat of Roman government upon which one gazed, so did I say to myself, "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). 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, I could not hate Jerusalem. To view its beauty was to know that Israel was still magnificent. And I knew how it had been in the court of King Solomon, for now I could still see it in my heart. 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 Jerusalem in the time of Solomon. And so was it still.

Yet what had my followers to display? I saw a Roman nobleman stop before our procession, and he looked upon our hundreds who walked by twos and by three and four in the

lane. And if some were well attired, yet the majority of my multitude were in rags and bits of colored apparel.

I stared upon this multitude as if never before had I seen a throng, but then the people of Jerusalem were joining 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 old piety, which was now much folded in their heart 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. Then were there also rough men with the fearful dissatisfaction of boredom on their brow.

And then there were the poor. From their eyes came

great need and new 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 are weary of suffering 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 devils more practised. 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 Jew of modest trade approaching a great edifice 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, being built on a mount, so was I well-placed on my own. Nor did the colt allow me to contemplate how large was my respect for what was before me.

Yet in my mind, even before it was in my view, I could still see how the steps rose from courtyard to courtyard, and onto more august buildings and unto sanctums more sacred, even to one chamber where none but the High Priest could enter and then but on one day of the year for it was the Holy of Holies: I was the Son of God, but 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 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 sight on this day of the Temple walls would be over the rise.

But then as I came unto the sight, and my colt jumped and kicked up its feet, so did I also know, that the future of all this wonder and magnificence was in peril and in years to come would enemies besiege it on every side; they would even lay the Temple low to the ground until it was but the remains of a wall and not one stone left to rest upon

another. All this would come to pass should the priests of the Temple not understand that my message was from the Lord.

Sitting upon my colt, I wept at the first sight of the Great Temple, and wept openly. 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 in the eyes of God than the feathers of a thistle.

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

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When I came into the Temple itself, and climbed the first great steps at the entrance, so did I discover that there was naught for the eye passing through the first gate but a large court, and it was filled with the men of Mammon. Here was a place where all were exchanging money and goods. And how much could one admire their beards! For they had been curled by warm iron, and tailored by the scissors and were as immaculate as their pride. To me, these men of Mammon looked like peacocks: so were the priests who moved among them. And indeed all was vanity.

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

Silence did I then gird about me like the robe of a high priest that others dare 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 turned Mammon into tribute to God. Whereas the wealthy give only to impress each other."

And I thought of how money was a great and stinking beast whose offerings were supped upon with slobberings of greed. And all were in such a tumult that they could leave off from such feeding but once a day to give coin to the great box in the treasury.

I thought of how the rich are choked with the weight of gold. And how their gardens bring no fruit to perfection. For there is oppression in the air. How can his blooms bring happiness to his eye when the rich man's neighbor, being wealthier than himself, can display gardens with fruit of greater beauty? So are the rich always envious, and

without rest, for they are always in search of more gold.

And so, here in the outer court of the Temple with the moneylenders, I spoke to all and said:

"No man can pay allegiance to two masters. For 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 seek to bite into the inner spirit of my ear. Therefore was it the Devil who now said to me: "Before it is over, those who are wealthy will also possess you. And they will put images of you upon their wall."

Then, I knew that my soul had been seized by this threat. The voice said: "Your name and alms in your name, will enrich the treasure of mighty churches; men will worship you even as you come to belong to me as much as to Him. Which is just. For I am equal to Him." And he laughed before what he would say next:

"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?"

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

And this was more than my Father ever said to me again about Satan, and His problems with such a Devil; nonetheless it was a thought to attack the palisades of one's faith. 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 wrath greater than any I had known before.

For I could see in the eyes of the moneylenders how covetousness was in them as sharp as the point of a spear, and the rage of Isaiah came into me. In his words did I cry out: "These tables are a pool of vomit. In such filthiness is no place clean!"

And I overturned the table before me with the moneys that were upon it, and exulted as the coins gave small cries on striking the stone of the courtyard, whereupon each possessor ran after his loss like vermin on the hunt for smaller vermin. But to me did the gold coins look like unto the swine of Gadarene as they rushed into the sea.

Then did I knock over the seats of those who sold doves, and opened the cages. On this uproar of wings, a multitude behind me come forward and some may have known how the Lord was in me by this defiance of greed and usury.

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. And so was this true even if they had never stolen one cup of wheat. And in my nearness now to my Father, was I also much aware that many scribes and priests, having heard me from afar, were now speaking of this in all the temples within this Great Temple and in all the courtyards. So did they know that I would not allow the priests and elders of this Great Temple to be loyal to their

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separate accounts with God and Mammon for thereby could they
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:
"Destroy this temple and in three days will I raise it up."

Then spoke one of the 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 I was ready to wonder at what I had said. For there were many with me in the multitude who were ready to tear down all that did not belong to them. Yet I also knew that even the thought of such destruction if spoken aloud could injure much in days to come. For such words could live in the chill of the 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 among these halls, so would I have been wondrously impressed by the skills of those who had built all that was here.

By such thinking did I calm myself, 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 gentle? I said to my followers, "Be calm. And respect our Temple. These moneylenders are not of the Temple but merely the leavings of evil and that can be found anywhere, and is scrubbed quickly from the stone. Therefore, will I teach. Yet not," I said, "in this unclean place of entrance where moneylenders have 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 we 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 all know that he was a prophet."

Indeed did these priests of Jerusalem depend much on pious Jews, and yet many such Jews had distrust of their priests and thought they were too friendly with the Romans, their rulers. Thereby, these priests also could not say that John was a prophet, for then why did they not protect him but for fear of the Romans? Yes, these priests would work with Romans but not admit as much.

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 from a noble family and most educated. 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 asked, "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 was also saying 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. 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 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 that is hollow. For so could I also see 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. I was not here to build churches, but to bring sinners 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 small? Had He decided the better path was prudence, and so let there be many churches built in the swamps of pride and Mammon?

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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 discourse with 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.' 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-curved 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 speech 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, yet 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.

"Do ye recall the verse," he asked, "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. 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 and he died.'" 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 on the Sabbath, then so may ye lift the scales from the blind and flex the limbs of the halt."

Then did he begin to speak, and he spoke well, but, certainly, did he speak long, nor did I know how long it would be when first he began to speak. Yet he proceeded with such skill that I knew not where to interrupt.

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 can even suffer from the goodness 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, 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, as is written in First Maccabees, King Antiochus, a heathen king, was set over us, and he did declare to his whole kingdom that all should be one people. Jews and gentiles alike. All should obey the laws 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 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.

"Then did King Antiochus command all Jews to leave their children uncircumcized. He even said that whoever did not give assent would die. So were those Israelites who disobeyed him driven to live in secret places, and in return did King Antiochus have swine set upon the altar for sacrifice. Whosoever was found with the Book was put to death. And for those women who caused their children to be circumcized, so did he have those same infants hung, and indeed the doctors who circumcized them were also slain.

"All knew then," said the scribe, "that the Book was as

naught before evil men, unless there was observance of the Book. And so I say to you that as we listen to your sayings we look for your recognition of the ten hundred years of the Book and of the martyrs who died for the law. Yet, 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 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 were some 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 my 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 is humble shall be exalted."

Before he could reply, I was quick to add: "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: "Save the whore? 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 wafted upon 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, and I spoke in Hebrew so that this scribe could recognize that I knew the Book. "From the words of Ezekiel," I told him: "'My sheep were scattered because there is no shepherd, and they became meek to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. Neither did My shepherds search for My flock, but fed themselves. Behold, I am against the shepherds.'"

"And these shepherds," he answered, "are kin to me? Can it be that this is what you say?"

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 prudence that knows what to say for obtaining the most and offending the least. But then much did I want these Pharisees never to forget what I would declare.

"I would," I told the scribe, "wish to deliver my flock from all places where they have been scattered. So I do not despise those who are uncircumcized and ignorant of the Book."

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

"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 yet speak of such things. And can it be that he wondered how it was that the great prophets had dreamed of the hour when God would bring salvation at last to Israel, and it had not come to pass? Now, would this Jesus with his crude peasants be nearer to such salvation than all who were heroes and prophets and kings in the glorious and holy past?

So now I could continue to speak while 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 said, 'Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Raise up the

tribes of Jacob and the strong reserve of Israel,' but He also said, 'I will give thee a light to the gentiles that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.'

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 battle with all of my spirit against the powers of this Temple--which were like unto walls of great thickness and much propriety. So I must speak with the mightiest words I could find. And indeed I finally understood what it was to feel the voice of the Lord not ceasing to come forth 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 so do they love the chief seats in the synagogues and the uppermost rooms at feasts."

And immediately some Pharisees stirred. Others began to leave. Yet did a few, as if twice fortified, now remain and they were serving as spies upon me. Therefore, did I speak once more of how they could only say: "'Look upon me, am I not prosperous?' But do ye ever grieve over the bent fingers of the old women who embroider your fringe?"

The boldest of the Pharisees now began to hoot, and others, more timid, chose again to leave. But I was seeing those widows who had lost their houses through the sharp practice of some of those before me. "Wherefore," said I to the Pharisees, "did you not feed the widow's children instead of acquiring the house? Blind guides! Men of Mammon! Whosoever shall swear by the gold of the Temple, will become a debtor before the Lord. Fools and blind! 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, 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. 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 yet ye are the children of them who killed the prophets."

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. Some ye shall kill and some 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 Zechariah whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar. All of these things shall come upon this generation.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You have stoned those who were sent unto thee!"

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 was 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 and this though some of the Temple Guard were with stones in their hands. And many were the Pharisees with stones in their hearts. But they cast not one bone or rock or clod.

If they sought to take me, yet no man laid hands on my garments. 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.

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? Will ye be with us?"

And again was a multitude about me, larger even 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 I could not gainsay my dream. And I repeated, "I will come when I am no longer among you."

They groaned. Honest was their pain at these words and 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 the strength of the Lord being again in me, I said: "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. Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes. 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 unto all nations and only then shall the end come." And in that instant, surrounded by my multitude, who swayed and groaned 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, and each of these minions would claim to be like unto the return of myself. And I felt as if beneath our feet lay bottomless deception. 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 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 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 listened were warranted to be of that part who would go to life eternal. And in the plaudits of this multitude, so did I also think that if the hossanahs of many were all that one might need to do God's work, then in truth, my tasks were finished, and all

of Israel would be given life eternal. Yet had I still 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. The people of Jerusalem who greeted me on my path had called me King yet they did not know I would ask them to prepare for the Kingdom of Heaven. Rather did they look for a king who would restore to Israel such greatness as we knew under King David. And no part of that would bode well with the Romans.

Yet in the dawn, it was cool, and I was by part restored, and ready to go again to the Temple and have many people come unto me and sit beneath a sacred tree. And I would teach.

On the way, nonetheless, was I interrupted. And again it was at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Scribes and Pharisees stood before me with 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 accuse me of leniency to sinners. Therefore did I look neither at the woman, nor at them, but said: "Thou shalt not commit adultery. And whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart." And these were words for some of the young men among them whose eyes reflected pools of delight that they could gaze upon this woman taken in adultery, and so did I know how their hand would soon provide them with other forms of delight.

Still did I know that this woman before me had in her all the filth of fornication, and all odors and effluence of the Devil was in the act. So did I also know how the Devil had conquered all places that are not in the city of God, (in which city may procreation be honorable for it is sanctified by marriage).

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 one mote of Devil's spew nor one odor that was foul, nor even the suspicion of such; fornication was the most powerful limb of the Devil.

Yet, was I also in confusion at 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; therefore, I did no more than stoop down. And with my finger I wrote in the dust as though I heard them not.

I knew how calculating were their minds; they understood my hatred of these matters, inasmuch as to an Essene unseemly fornication deserves the fire. And all I had acquired from the scrolls concerning these perils of an unclean woman, yea, even unto the suppurations between their thighs, was recalled to me now. So could I remember what was written of Jezebel in the Second Book of Kings; this Jezebel had been thrown down from the high window of a tower, and her blood was scattered on the wall, and they, in their disturbance, trod upon her and left her under foot. And when the king saw this, he said, "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? She was a disseminator of much peril. Thereby did I not dare to look upon her whom the Pharisees had brought to me, but continued to write with my finger in the sand.

To myself I 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. 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, sitting beside me on the ground, kept unrolling the scroll that he carried to read when we would rest, but with great difficulty, for he was near to unlettered.

Yet he was close to my thoughts, and he pointed to a passage with his stout finger, twice in thickness the width of one of mine, and whispered, "Here does it say: 'On account of a whorish woman, is a man brought to a piece of bread,'" and when I nodded to go on, he whispered further:

"An adulterous woman eateth and wipeth her mouth and sayeth, "I have done no wickedness.""

So did I keep nodding in order that I not look upon this woman. And I recited the words of Ezekiel upon the harlot Aholibah: "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 nakedness, yet did she multiply her whoredoms for she doted upon men whose issue is like the issue of horses."

And thereby, given buttress from these words of scripture, which were as strong as sinews to my thoughts, so did I look at last upon the woman taken in adultery.

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

Then did the furies wherein was my hatred of fornication cool in my heart before the soft voice of another spirit that came into me, even as if it were her angel seeking for mercy, and I was offered a vision of this woman in the depth of sin, at wallow in the fumes of fornication with a stranger who

could offer no better than the odor rising from hair when it burns. Still must this woman be a creature of God, as were all of us, and so might she be close to the Lord in ways I could not see, and 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.

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?" I lifted myself up and said unto my disciples and to the circle of the scribes and Pharisees, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." And I was amazed for indeed I believed what I said and felt purified by my own words.

A tumult of feeling arose from them. And it was of such force that I knew vertigo and stooped once more and continued to write on the ground as if I were still in whole concern for what my finger could say to the earth.

And then their fury dissipated. And soon did it dissipate even more. For now they were pained by their own

misdeeds.

So, I saw them go away. And they left one by one. They commenced with that one of the elders who was oldest and so, mayhap, 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 in so doing did not see her eyes, but had visions of the hair that grew at the head of her thighs: "The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of a master's hand," were the words on my tongue, and they were from the Song of Songs, and "thy navel," were the next words I did not utter, "is like a round goblet." I told myself I was in the presence of evil angels. For I was feeling evil in my belly and it was rich and dark and begging to be cast forth from me. Yet in my belly did these evil angels remain. And so painful were they that now I had need to be wary of this creature of beauty.

So I chose to speak again in the words of the prophet Ezekiel. Since I did not know her name, so did I call her "Aholibah," and "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, and they shall come against thee with chariots and wheels, and they shall deal furiously with thee; they shall take away thy nose and thy ears 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 remember Egypt any more.'

And this harlot whose eyes were as purple as the hour of 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."

Yet it was not enough. For I felt many echoes within her of whoredom and war. And I said: "But where are you going? You are still bound by fornication. Indeed you are bound."

To which she replied: "Do not pass judgment on me if you do not condemn me. Without the flesh, there is no life. So do not say," and here she gave imitation of how a Pharisee would speak, "'Where the mind is, there is thy treasure.'"

She was vain. She was strong. And I could see that she was wed to the seven powers of Wrath, and their seven demons. So did I seek to cast all seven powers and demons out from her, but with great pain for me since they came forth slowly. One by one they came forth and clawed at all good spirit between us. And some were sly and some were lewd, and more than one was hideous. But then had she been much enslaved by these seven powers and demons of which the first power was Darkness and its demon was treachery. So, too, did I know all seven and could thereby realize even as I named these powers and demons that I had learned a good deal from Satan and may it have been more than he wished to impart. So was Desire the second power which knew pride as its demon. And the third was Ignorance and that has a demon of great appetite for the meat of swine whereas Love of Death is the fourth power whose demon will lust to eat another. Whereby came the fifth that seeks Whole Domain and that demon looks

to defile all spirit; indeed was the good spirit between us much buffeted as this creature came forth. And the sixth power was Foolish Wisdom for its demon had the urge to steal a soul. Of them all was the last power most fearful since it was the Wisdom of Wrath and its demon is the lust to lay waste to a city. And such were the seven powers and demons I drew forth from her, and now could I say and with more conviction: "Go and sin no more." And she left.

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 many Jews who died in war against the Romans now lay under the foundations of buildings erected by later Romans. So this woman Mary Magdalene had committed adultery upon ground that held the bones of our martyrs. Yet did I not regret what I had done. For also was she gentle and withal she belonged to God. 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 brought death to John the Baptist. Before me was an accursed 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 blind from birth who had known none of the delight of a child's vision. And one of my disciples even asked: "Master, what sin did the parents of this man so commit, that he was born blind?"

Once again did I speak faster than my comprehension of these words, 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 I had meant until finished with speaking. For on this morning I was still living within those hours of despair when I awoke in the night and could

see nothing to come after me but the dark. For if I failed, then God might despair of man and of woman; they had little of what was noble in beasts and long-suffering; nor did we have that grace of beasts which speaks of the Lord's presence. Out of such despair did I now repeat, "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 I thought of the boy who frothed at the mouth and was with fits and how the father had said, "I believe, help thou my unbelief." Was I not like him? And were not the souls of all humans forever in danger of living as two halves?

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

And I spat on the ground and made clay of this spittle and then 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 thereto, 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 he could see, I heard him say, "A man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed me, and he said, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash,' and having done as he said, I have received sight."

Then they said, "Where is this Jesus?"

And the man said, "I know not."

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: "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?"

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. And they were in confusion; his parents 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, nor of who hath opened his eyes, we know not." And 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: "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 thine eyes?"

And he answered, "I told you and you do 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, "We are 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. I felt blessed to have given sight to such a fellow. "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, "Born in sin, and now thou dost teach?"

So did I have him brought to 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 still than any I had known at 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 the most quiet reaches of my heart where much gentleness did still 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, "In your sin are you blind."

I had said too much. For now could I feel the recoil of

the Holy Spirit; my pride had become too large for many of God's purposes. Whereupon several of the Pharisees said, "He hath a devil and is mad." Yet others argued, "Can a devil open the eyes of him who is born blind?"

So they disputed. There was much dispute.

And even as I walked 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 ask if we might have converse. He said, "Many of us who are pious Jews feel that thou didst well to overturn the tables of the moneylenders. For in such an act did you give real tribute to God. Whereas among us are not enough who are willing to give rebuke to greed. So, I would speak to you." 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.

"The Lord," he said, "is generous and created us to be much like Him. Yet even much as we are in His image, still do we know that we are not."

Since there was much of decency in this elder, I said, "Even if a man believes that he is like God, and is created

in His image, yet there are no miracles in his hand."

"Yes," he said. "You have spoken. But what can we say of the man who has miracles in his hand and in his voice? Is he nearer to God? Or can he be deluded by the Devil? For the Evil One might make use of his power to do good; that is also within the art of the Devil; cannot Satan succeed in giving sight to one who is sightless? In that manner could he 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. He said, "I know you are of noble heart. It speaks from your eyes. So I would warn you. Ye need not believe me, but I wish you well."

"I believe you," I said.

"Then I would caution you. Already a few say that you are the Son of God. Some say that you say it yourself. I pray that harm may not come to thee from this. Certain it is that if you meet the High Priest, Caiaphas, say it not to him. For if he should hear such from your mouth, the

sacrilege would be of depth beyond measure.

"Whereas for so long as he does not hear it from your mouth, but only from the lips of others, he will prefer not to listen. In that manner will he not have to declare that a sacrilege exists. Of such is your safety."

So did I smile at him but I did not know if I would take his advice.

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And on this second day in the Temple my throng had multiplied and were numerous in the courtyard. Being also much unruly, there was need to speak upon how to comport oneself when with the Lord.

"Do not be as the hypocrites," I said, "who love to pray while standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets. Rather, shut thy door and pray to thy Father in secret. And do not use vain repetition, for such deadens the soul. Be ye not guilty, therefore, of excessive prayer; your Father knows what ye have need of."

They were eager to hear of wondrous things, however, and of great signs in the heavens that would forewarn them; therefore, when there was more calm among them, 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 of those things

which are coming on the earth. But then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And then may you lift up your heads, For your redemption draws nigh." And to myself I said, "Oh, Lord, let my words be true."

Yet I felt as if I cried out to Him alone and from a sullen sea. Still did I want my words to reach into their hearts and remain even if no more than a timber that keeps each man afloat for a time.

From afar, beyond the throng, could I see Pharisees and Chief Priests talking to officers of the guard of the Great Temple. And one of the priests standing closer to me said, "Will ye go among the gentiles and teach them?"

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

This priest answered: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? By the scrolls it is said that the Messiah shall be from Bethlehem."

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, "He is of Galilee. And out of

Galilee, can arise no Messiah." 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.

But then in this Temple on this second day I was always near to sorrow or to rage; before complacency I was short in patience and with large emotion. So I wished to break into the declarations of this priest. Yet I did not warn myself by enough: For a man of small mind develops 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 may be required of this generation."

When this priest drew back a step so did I push forward to say to him further: "Yea, and this be so from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias who perished between the altar and the table."

In my eye could I now behold the ancestors of this priest and the hands of these ancestors were stained with the

blood of the prophets. Yet did this priest not 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 chose to upbraid me for laboring at cures on the Sabbath.

I was short concerning this oft-repeated matter, and said to him: "I know you, and in you is not the love of God."

How I wished to smite the piety of these Jews who were sharp of practice and narrow of mind. And I could have prayed that they find some of the good spirit of those other Jews with whom I had built houses in Nazareth. Those had been equals; those had been my friends.

I said more. I said: "The hour is coming when all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they who have done good and they that have done evil. And my judgment is just unto all thy ancestors." This did I repeat: "Unto all thy ancestors."

By that speech did I arouse a greater rage than any on the first day: It burned in these priests and Pharisees and without let. For if they suffered in their soul from lust for Mammon, so did they also believe (and use such belief

like balm) that protection would be offered to their acts by the intercession of their ancestors. They believed in their ancestors before they believed in God. Indeed was it their true faith that these ancestors would carry them across the gulf now separating them from God. And here was I, uprooting the graves of these ancestors. And passing judgment on ancient and evil deeds.

Disbelieving me, so would they double their rage. They could not endure that I reveal all that their ancestors had not done for God. For so was I also revealing what they had not done for their neighbor. And, indeed, did they feel righteous at closing their ears. They believed that they must not listen. Thereby would they must give no audience to the Devil.

The tears stood forth in my eyes like sentinels on guard. For I knew that the most powerful of my own people saw me as the Devil. And I could not believe how much pain was in this for me 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. So great was

their rage that all light of the day became red to my eyes; their souls were as in the fire. Toward such rage as they felt did I offer no peace. 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, so were they full of pride of the most subtle construction; invisible towers of much self-esteem offered homage in their hearts to themselves. So, 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: "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 you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and there is no truth in him."

Was I preparing a furnace by whose heat iron would melt?

Never had I seen Pharisees more provoked. Their eyes became 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 your father Abraham who rejoices to see my day."

Whereupon these Pharisees said: "Thou art not old yet of fifty years, and thou hast seen Abraham?" Indeed, did they see me as fifty, and so that old must I now appear. Much rather would I have taken a blow from a fist.

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

They took up stones to cast at me. Now I could not pass among them as I had on the first day when some were ready to hurl a rock, yet would not. I had passed then through their midst and gone by. Now, one, and soon 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 slip away. Even as they raged in their fire, still did they have fear of following me.

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Now my disciples had much concern at where I could stay, and with safety, and so we chose the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany. None would think of looking there. Still did word of my presence go out. Even as we were at table on this second evening, so came a woman with an alabaster box of spikenard; very precious was such ointment, and she laved it into my hair. And this spikenard was of great worth, even unto three hundred denarii, and that is as much as a poor man can earn by his labor over many a month, and even a year.

Yet was its power over me equal to its worth. For within its aroma did I hear many sweet words from the scroll of the Song of Songs. And first was the voice of the Bride. She said, "While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance."

Now there were some among my disciples who felt indignation and one said, "Such great waste! Why was not this ointment sold, and all given to the poor?" It was Judas

who asked this.

And I looked at him with much disfavor, causing Judas unease. 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, and so was this yet another Mary in the home of Simon the Leper) and Mary not only anointed my feet now with the last of the spikenard, but wiped my feet with her hair. And I felt peace as she gave homage and cleanliness to my feet and again did verses come to me from the scroll; they were: "Rise up, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over, flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds is come."

And in such a moment did I realize that abasement is next to godliness for I saw beatitude in her eyes at washing my feet and knew equal happiness in me. And the house was filled with the sweet odor of the ointment.

Again, did Judas ask: "Why was this pomade not sold?"

And when others also murmured against the woman, I said, "Why trouble ye her? She hath left 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 of two sides 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 feel like a friend of the poor: Indeed was I poor myself, and living with short breath and in fear of death, and how soon would it 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 surcease to the loneliness in my belly.

Then did I also know how the rich feel. Now, I could understand their need for much display. To them, was lavish display as worthy as blood. And then, too, did I come to understand how greed was their potion against foreboding. Which was cause for me to wonder once more at how much of myself must belong to Satan inasmuch as I, too, now spoke with a forked tongue. If 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 of my mouth, did I issue sentiments no better than a

malediction: "Ye have the poor with you always."

Did I speak in such opposites that I might reach out to all who were to either side of me? It is certain that I was provided with an image of great temples and beautiful edifices and all erected to me; how then could I know in this moment whether God or Devil spoke in my heart? Or, was it myself between them?

I could see 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 derision. Did the Devil suggest--and through me!--that it was not ungodly to enrich oneself?

I noticed that Judas had left our presence. If he loved me, so did he also hate me, and gone away into the night, into that same night where many now wandered on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem and wondered about great changes to come and men's hearts failing them for what was yet to arise on the earth.

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. I was like all others, had he said, for I did not remain true to those convictions that chafe and burn. And I felt much injury. Yet was I obliged to forgive Judas. For I had already spoken ill of myself on this night even if it had been only to myself.

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In my dream had it been long foretold that I would be three days in Jerusalem before the Romans laid hands on me. Therefore, my limbs were 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. Multitudes, I knew, would be waiting to accompany me to the Temple, even more than on the first day or the second. But now I was not ready to enter 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 might some priests hesitate before such action lest there be an uproar of the people. Still I could

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 low 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?"

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 door. And say ye to the good man of that 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.

But they went. They found the man. And all was 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. Yet by 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 how I had lived in the miracle of God's favor, I said now: "Eat of me, for this is my body." And what I said was true but most solemn in its truth. For in our death does not our flesh return into the earth and from that earth grain comes 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. Even as I poured our wine, so were there recollections of other nights when we had drunk together

through many hours when we had felt as if all were one, and things hidden would be revealed to us. And now, indeed, was much revealed. For by the spirit in the wine did I now feel near again to my Father, yet by another manner of nearness: For I could see Him as if He were a great king, but had no fear of Him. It was as if He did not know that now I spied upon His long labors 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 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 for Him had much had been spoiled. Could I now 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 who would not be saved but judged.

I felt as if I had failed. We had been sinful and in whole confusion, and I did not know what I had accomplished nor whether it had been enough to keep my teachings alive. And the crisis of the world was upon us.

I was weak in belief and yet must inspire great belief

in my apostles. And as a soldier loyal yet weary, I said to myself, "O, Lord, help Thou my unbelief."

And as I gave them to drink, I also 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 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. Whereas he who will eat my flesh and drink my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. He will dwell in me and I in him."

Yet I also heard much muttering. Another spoke out: "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 what I would say next, 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 I also said: "One of you shall betray me. And woe to him. Good it were for that man if he had never been born."

And of whom I was speaking I only knew that he must be close to me, as close as my own sins and my own fatigue. And I felt sorrow for all who would suffer, and was sorrowful most for this man who would betray me. His suffering would be greater 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. 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 of my disciples were 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."

But I was still troubled in spirit, and could not keep from thinking: "One of you shall betray me." Indeed, I may have whispered such words for now the disciples looked upon one another and Simon Peter 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 chose and it was Judas Iscariot. Whatever in me was still of 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 I would still say he was loyal to me even now--so much did I wish to believe in

him, sop or no. Thereby, even as I was the Son of God, and yet not much 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 you will do, do quickly." And I did not know for certain, and was tender in my voice. Whereupon, no man at the table understood with what intent I spoke; 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 could walk 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. 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 and in that moment did Peter displease 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?"

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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 revealed 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 such gloom was a garment I must put aside, and with new breath did I respond when the apostle Thomas said: "Lord, how can we know the way?"

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 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 Father is in me. Philip, believe in me, and then 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. And never had I felt more love for them. Nor 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 subject to evil judgment by governors and kings for my sake. Yet take no thought of what you shall speak, for it will be given to you in that 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. How many can seek for greater faith by climbing upward, 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."

I had severed their thoughts from all previous thoughts. Now, they knew the only fear that is true: 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 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 my heart lived on each breath. I also knew how all I said had been with truth but for the last. I had said, "Love one another as I have loved you," but 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. I would love them. "They have persecuted me," I said. "They will also persecute you. And all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake. For if I had not 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 with less of strength. Sin was his harvest. In that war between the Lord and Satan, 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

a 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 will kill you will also think that he does God service. Wars shall be waged in God's name to the profit of the Devil."

And if I was with all 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 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 also knew that my Father's heart was heavier in this hour than my own. And again I did not dare to wonder whether I had failed in the greater part of 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 to them that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in me."

Then could I feel the love of God. Such love was like an animal of heavenly beauty and its eyes glowed in my heart.

Even as my prayers gave echo in the chamber where we sat at supper, so did I know that I must go again to the Temple even if it be the night of the third day, and go with many questions in my heart. So did I set out.

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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 legs 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 to Peter, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

I went forward where they could not see me and fell to the ground. Now I prayed that this hour might pass and I might live again with less terror. Sweat was on my brow like unto great drops of blood. 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 I also knew that the cup would not pass and I was as the son of Abraham and like Isaac could be prepared for sacrifice. Yet might I be more and less than Isaac. For I would be sacrificed.

Then, even as 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 strength return. I rose up, but with much weight. Nor did I know for the first moment that I was still in the garden of Gethsemane.

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

And again I went away and prayed by myself in this garden of Gethsemane: 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.

I said, "It is enough. The hour is come. He who hath betrayed me is at hand."

Even as I spoke so did Judas come 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, Judas marched straightaway to me and said, "Master, Master." And he kissed me on the mouth.

Knowing his lips in this hour, and they were burning with unholy fever, so did I also know that his embrace gave a sign to the guards; 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 which was Malchus. 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."

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

I suffered these guards to lead me away.

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They took me to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, a large house of breadth and much length. At the other end of a 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 looked for false witness against me. Soon there came two men who told the High Priest Caiaphas 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 use my own hands or would rebuild without hands.

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

I did not answer. Yet in my silence must have been much insolence for now did this High Priest Caiaphas 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. So, 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 might have come from the sky so far did they seem distant to me even as I said them.

He did not seem surprised by what I said. With great deliberation, yet with much passion, did the High Priest tear his robes and say, "Behold! What need have we of witnesses?

Ye have heard this blasphemy."

And even as Caiaphas had ripped 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 who had committed such sacrilege that he as the High Priest was in mourning for this son. Therefore had he rent his clothes.

Now did the Guard beat upon me. Such statement by the High Priest had removed all fear that I might bear witness upon those who struck at me. So they beat me openly upon my face.

And all the while, out of a part of me remote from this strife, so could I see down the long length of the hall. And there was Peter on a bench and he was still warming himself. A servant came up to him 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: "Thou art one of them. For thy speech has in it the sound of Galilee."

But Peter must have been in fear of retribution for the wound he gave to Malchus; he declared: "I know not this man of whom ye speak."

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 could not feel pain at being struck upon the face. Even as I was beaten, so had I held close to the presence of the Lord, and it was like armor for my flesh.

Yet I could feel the anguish of Peter. This sorrow was like unto a lance in my chest. For did I also know that Peter would spend his life offering amends for this hour when he had denied me. So would his life be hard.

The High Priest Caiaphas soon departed, and with him were gone all the elders of the Sanhedrin. And I was cast into a small dungeon for an hour and then through the night, and I looked to find understanding upon my situation. Members of the Sanhedrin did not meet at night, yet last night had they met. And when matters were strange for all,

so might there be an inkling of hope.

Judas had betrayed me, yet he was not far from me in this hour: Of all my disciples had Judas been the wisest in his interpretation of what transpired between the Romans and our priests. So I looked to comprehend what Caiaphas might seek when he came in the morning with the Sanhedrin. And I wondered if they would bind me over to the Romans, and by this felt my share of fear. I had heard much of the cruelty of the Romans and of their cunning at evil punishments upon those Jews guilty of rebellion against Roman rulers. To be a Jew was to live in fear of Romans, even as the Romans lived in their fear of our rebellion against them.

And in the morning would much depend on what was agreed between the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate, and Caiaphas.

Often had Judas spoken to me of those two and how they were in close communion; thereby did they keep peace in Jerusalem. Neither did Pontius Pilate encourage insolence among his soldiers against the Great Temple, nor did Caiaphas offer up prayers for those Jews who died in attacks upon Roman soldiers.

Yet, was it a fragile peace. For the Romans, believing in many gods and demons, were pagans of much power and their faith was in destiny. And the best of such was Roman destiny. Whereas good Jews believed in one God and he was One and thereby more powerful than all myriad of invisible beings in whom Romans believed. Where, then, could there be agreement?

Nonetheless was there agreement in these days between Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate. For in secret, Judas had assured me, did the Roman Procurator receive gold from the Temple and this was of considerable difference from the first years of his domain over Judea. In that time had the Roman eagle been in broad display upon the standards of his garrison in Jerusalem. There had been great demonstrations against Pontius Pilate. A multitude of Jews had stood outside his residence and refused to leave. Then, were they surrounded by Pilate's legions and ordered to give way or be massacred. But such Jews did not give way. It was Pontius Pilate who acceded to the Jews on this occasion. And it was at the beginning of his reign as Procurator of all Judea. Now he had ruled over this part of Israel for more than five

years, and peace had been kept in the face of all fear of revolt

It was Caiaphas who had made it so. He had been High Priest for more than ten years, and the sum of his agreement with Pontius Pilate was equal to his abhorrence of uprising and revolt. So had said Judas, and he had often been ready to speak his dissatisfaction that I was not willing to lead a revolt against Romans. Nor was it enough, he had said, to wish to bring my people to my Father. And thereby could I also know that I was innocent of rebellion against the Romans.

Yet was this cause for hope? Already had my bruises begun to drone upon their misery, and it was dark in my dungeon.

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And in the dawn, I was taken to a small chamber at the side of the court of Pontius Pilate. Now, as I was led by one of the stalwarts of the Temple, my arms bound, my legs free, so did this man of the Guard tell me that Judas must have repented of his betrayal for in the night he had come to return the thirty pieces of silver paid to him by the elders. And when the priests refused the money, he cast down the silver in the Temple, 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, "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 also told me that they were taking counsel on the thirty pieces of silver 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 indeed it is 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.

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 and 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 I had forbidden all to give tribute to Caesar and called myself a king.

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

I answered, "Did others tell it so?"

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."

He looked at me then with attention and yet with much that partook of amusement. For several colors of punishment were upon my skin. He said, "Still art thou a king?"

I answered: "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 from the party of the High Priest gave a small sound of dissent. If they knew nothing else, 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 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. For 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. May it be, he would hope to see some miracle performed."

Whereupon Pontius Pilate smiled. "Can miracles be performed in the courts of the gentiles? The gods of the gentiles, considering all, may have more domain in this place than the gods of the Jews."

So was I taken across the palace and into the chambers of Herod Antipas. He was an old man and fat and he spoke to me but a little being much distracted by the presence of a woman of beauty who now sat at table with him. Yet when his soldiers smiled at seeing me, since they 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 he said: "Since you are in Jerusalem, so are you in the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate." And by these words he was most pleased for I could see that he would send me back to Pontius Pilate. He wanted 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 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 the sight of the bloody head of John the Baptist. And indeed he hardly looked at me. His hand was on the woman. And I did not know whether he was indifferent to me, or merely pretended as much.

Back was I led across the halls and columns of the palace to Pontius Pilate; there before the Procurator now stood Caiaphas. And he looked as if he had slept no better than I. Pilate was speaking: "Ye have brought this man to me as one who perverts your people, yet I have found as yet no fault in him concerning your accusation. Nor does Herod. Behold, he has sent him back in a robe of purple. Therefore will I chastise this man and release him. When ye ask that I

condemn a man to death, it can be done only if he is a grievous malefactor."

And now I could see that this was but a game. For Caiaphas showed no discontent. He merely smiled, and ruefully, as if he knew that the price of Roman justice would not be small on this day inasmuch as since Pilate now knew wherein was the value that Caiaphas sought. And it was that Pontius Pilate should condemn me to death. 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 by this thought did I know that the pit of bitterness could be waiting for me.

Now did Pontius Pilate say again, "I will condemn this man if you insist, but is it necessary? Today is one of the days of your feast, and by our law and by your law it is agreed that I am to release one Jew who is in prison during this time. Will ye that I release unto you, therefore, this King of the Jews?"

The priests of the Temple looked to the people around

them for an answer: now I saw again that none of my disciples were here.

Yet my people were poor, or, if rich, timid; nearly all were unlettered, and in fear of the Romans. Whereas here were many elders of the Temple, and scribes, and Pharisees, and townspeople of wealth. They were the ones surrounding the priests. So I came to understand, and much too late, that the voice of a multitude is no more than a storm of wind: It can do much damage in its passage, but will leave no better trace of its purpose than the spoil strewn by its path.

So when Pilate asked of them, "Who would ye that I release?" the multitude answered, "Barabbas." And he was a prisoner who had made insurrection and killed a soldier of Rome.

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

Some did shout: "Let him be crucified!" But they were not large in number, and Pilate smiled at Caiaphas for again would his price increase.

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

I could see that he was curious. Why had it not been Barabbas? Romans believe in all that is orderly; so to them is murder a deed worthy of the sentence of death. Whereas blasphemy is merely an insult to a god and may be placated by worship of another god. To them is the Kingdom of Heaven but a marketplace. And prophets are no more than merchants. Wherefore, you do not kill a false merchant, merely chastise him. Yet now the multitude became more aroused and cried back to Pontius Pilate, saying, "Crucify him! Crucify this Jesus!" And he saw that their truth was not land but punishment of sin.

Pilate called for a bowl of water and he washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this person." Yet did I also know that it was his way of giving assent to their decision.

All of Caiaphas' 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.

I was wounded grievously by this certitude of my people. 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. They plaited for me a crown of thorns, placed it upon my head, and handed me the stout stalk of 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 they cried out: "Hail, King of the Jews."

Whereupon they rose and spit in my eyes and whipped me upon the head. They were Romans and crude.

Then they 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 the robe was taken away, and in my nakedness did they return my old raiment to me. And it felt as tender upon my skin 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 I knew why they had mocked at me when I was without raiment. When naked, what was left to me but my bones? No longer was I the carpenter who came out of the hills of Galilee; now had I been 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.

We came unto a place called Golgotha. And that is a word of much rarity among us, for in Hebrew it says: "the place where lives a skull."

There followed a great company, and in the main were they women who 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 from feeling the pain I was yet to suffer.

I knew that I had not given of my understanding to many women. Rather had I sought to save the world through the efforts of men; now my throat was dry, but this much could I say aloud: "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 she looked at me like a mother; I was of her flesh and I was being torn from her. Now, and so late, did I understand all that had been in her love for me. And how she had never felt that I was of her flesh so much as I was a gift from the Lord. So, in her awe of me, had she also been contentious with all I did. For to live forever in awe is equal to not knowing one's name. Yet now in my plight, so did she take me back, 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, "Don't cry. I am returning to my Father. Woman, behold thy

son." And to him I said, "Here is your mother," and he understood. I knew from that hour he would bring her into his own home. And so did I feel better. Of all my disciples, he was one to take care of her.

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

Now would three crosses be soon erected on the hill of Golgotha. And with me were two thieves. Indeed, already they had been tied to their frames and raised. Yet, before I was told to lie upon the ground, so did Pontius Pilate approach and look at the sign tied around my neck; 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.' Rather should it be, 'He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" One does not become a king by saying it."

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

So could I see how his reply was clever. And again I

could understand his thoughts. For if it should later be seen that I was King of the Jews, then indeed it was better for Pontius Pilate to have said as much. And if I were not a king, so would he be esteemed for his power of ridicule. After all, had he not insisted upon such a sign, and for such a wretch as me? So he was being a good Roman. For it took wisdom to keep in balance two conclusions when they were opposite to each other. Thereby could I even wonder whether by such means had these Romans conquered much of the world. Nor did I wonder long.

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

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

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Then they drove 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 the pain was with me in such brightness that I knew all the colors of the rainbow; they were but the strings of that soul which is luminous in pain. And at last did I understand that 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. Now I was with agony. For all of me now hung from the four nails in my flesh. And this pain was larger than all the seas, and I swooned and did not return until I opened my eyes to see soldiers kneeling beneath me. And they were looking to part my garments. They were also debating on how to rend my coat with fair share for all of them. Yet this garment was without seam and woven

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

And I saw a soldier take up my garment after they cast their lots and so seeing did remember that woman who had been cured of an issue of blood by touching my garment; now it hung from the arm of the soldier who won it. But the cloth was now like the skin of a snake and limp.

Beside me someone groaned, and another answered with his groan. And I looked and saw two thieves being crucified with me. And one was on my right hand, and another on the left. Below us were a few who chose to pass by the hill of Golgotha. And one of them said: "He saved others; himself he cannot save," and another said: "If he is the Son of God, where is his Father?"

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

I thought, "This man thinks of his own life before all others. So is he criminal." And I turned my head to the other thief who said "Lord, remember my face when entering into thy Kingdom."

And I said to him: "Today shall thou 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 had been less than a whisper.

Though it was still morning, darkness came over the land, and it was very dark. Already were my wounds mortified. And to myself I recited from the Psalms: "My bones are burned with heat and cleave to my skin. The pain that gnaws takes no rest. My bowels boil; my skin is black." Such words came, and served for relief by saying them.

So did I come to think that the hand of the Lord 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 thought of the power of my Father to work miracles even in the valley of bones.

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: "The face of the deep is frozen." No longer could I see God. Nor did He speak to my shivering. And when I said, "I thirst," one soldier offered me vinegar.

When I refused, for such vinegar was worse than thirst, he said: "King of the Jews, why can you not come down from the cross?"

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?" 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. 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 louder than my pain, "Wouldst thou annul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me so that thou can be justified?"

I began to weep. For I did not have the courage of Job. Yet once more did I seek to give of my last best effort, and I said to Him: "While breath is in me and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, surely shall my tongue not 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 many small fish encircling me. So did I pray again to my Father: "Grant me one miracle for myself," I asked.

All was emptiness.

Pain was written upon the sky. And everything was in darkness but for pain. That came like lightning from the black sky and thunder did not follow. Naught but the sound of groans. So were they my groans. And my Father did not hear me or could not.

Yet if my Father had withdrawn Himself, then I was no longer the Son of God but only a man. How awful was it to be naught but a man! I knew my Father existed but at a distance. There was still a pull on me, but from far away.

And in desperation did I think 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."

Then, could I comprehend. His lightning might strike on the hill beside Golgotha, and His thunder be as loud as His

voice, but I had come to believe what one must not believe: I, like Eve, had entered into the knowledge of good and evil. And if God was still my Father, I must ask: Was He all-powerful? Or was He not? 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 its taste was so vile that I cried out again in a loud voice and with the last of my share of the heavenly rage my Father had given to me. Yet I also knew 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 in hope that all not be lost, so did I look upon the jeering face of the Roman soldier who had given 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 a comfort in my extremity. And I said: "My Lord, they are blind in their hearts and do not see. For they came into the

world empty and will depart from the world empty. Meanwhile are they drunk. 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 brilliance of heaven if heaven is of a white light.

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And in the years that followed, in the lifetime of those who came after me, were scrolls written (and most pious) by those who had known me. So were gospels also set down by those who had not. (Even more pious were they!) Still, such scribes--and now were they called Christians--had heard much about my journeys. And they added much. They spoke of angels arising at my death; others gave description of lightning and how the great lintel of the Temple was broken in two on that day, and rocks split apart, graves opened. When they pulled the spikes from my limbs and set me on the ground, the earth shook. Some said that the bodies of many prophets arose, came out of their tombs, and marched into the holy city where they appeared to many. And the people feared greatly and said: "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Of those who had been near to me were many plentiful with exaggeration; in truth, few had believed in the son or in the Father by enough to say no more than the truth. Which

truth, as ye have seen, was much. Therefore, I, like Daniel, would now seal my gospel and hope 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. Indeed did it happen that I rose on the third day; yet can I also say that my disciples were far in their descriptions from this truth. When a man sees a wonder and is illumined by its light, Satan will enter his tale with every exaggeration.

Yet this much I expect is true: On the afternoon of my death came a man named Joseph of Arimathea, who was one of my followers, 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 I was like that animal beloved by the farmer for he makes him rich. 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 washed me, and wound my body with new clothes and put me in a linen shroud together with these spices, as is the manner of us

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, and Joseph of Arimathea had prepared it for himself. But such was his need and his generosity that they laid me there, the sepulcher being at hand.

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

Now, Caiaphas and some of his high priests had slept in much doubt, for by then they knew not with certainty whether what they had done was for good, and such doubt could they not diminish for they heard that many good Jews were beating their breasts in the streets of Jerusalem and saying, "If the lintel of the Temple has broken then will our sins bring woe upon us." Yet were the priests of Caiaphas not good Jews. Their fear was only for those bad consequences that could befall them. On the morning after my death, therefore, did they also come before Pilate, and tell him that I had said to many: "After three days will I rise again." Thereby, they would request of the Procurator that he safeguard the sepulcher for these 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 could the first disruption 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, by now, was an exceeding sum. And Pilate said, "I am clean of this man's blood. It is all of your doing." Which they saw as a threat. Then did they decide to pay him after all, and so Pilate gave them Petronius the centurion, with his Roman soldiers, to guard the tomb. And these Romans put seven seals against the large stone at the entrance and set their own watch.

There are some who say that an earthquake came. They would have it that the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door. And the guards seeing that the raiment of this angel was white as snow, all fled.

Others tell us that very early on the morning of the third day, even as the harlot and the woman who is virtuous are brought together by death, so, on the rise of the sun, did Mary Magdalene come to the sepulcher and meet Mary, my

mother. And with other they agreed that on the day I was crucified they could not come near and weep for me, but still there were rites they must perform. And they worried. Who would be there to roll away the stone?

But when they looked, they saw that the tomb was open and they could enter within. There could they also see a young man who wore 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 close to such as that. For I do know that I was risen on the third day. 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 and thought I was a stranger in Jerusalem and thereby did not know what had befallen. So they said to me, "Our sorrow concerns Jesus of Nazareth who was a prophet mighty in deed. But our rulers have crucified him. Yet did we believe that

he would redeem Israel."

And I said unto them: "Behold my hands and my feet!" And Thomas even felt of the holes in my wrists. And Thomas to this day is known as Doubting Thomas. And now they believed, and all came to agree that I was received in heaven and seated on the right hand of God. And many of my disciples went forth and preached how the Lord was working with them. And, in my name, did many come to believe that they had the power to cast out devils, indeed did they speak with new tongues and were able to take up serpents and many another deadly thing. Nor would it hurt them. And when they laid hands on the sick, so did some of the sick recover. Many were their claims.

But among the Jews came much division after my death. For a large number went forth with my disciples and became new followers, such Jews calling themselves Christian, whereas others remained close to the Temple and argued 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; how could they 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 it must 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 Pharisees of the Great Temple. In fact are they often greater in their hypocrisy than those Jews who condemned me then.

Among Christians are many churches in my name. And the greatest and the holiest is named after Peter; it is a place of much magnificence in Rome. Nowhere is there more gold.

And God and Mammon still grapple for the souls of all men and women. Nor does either the Lord nor Satan 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. For I know His secret, even as did Eve after tasting the apple. Nonetheless, I rejoice, and I honor my Father, even if I understand that His vision is mightier than His powers: surely He sends forth as much love as He can afford to offer; His love, I know, is not illimitable. His wars with the Devil augment, and forever do they augment.

Great battles have been lost, and this is true even at this second millenium of my birth.

Yet is it believed by most that God did not lose but won. So it is also believed that He gained such victory through me. Mayhap the Devil did not have sufficient respect for my Father and His resources at recovering from debacle, disaster, and catastrophe. For it is true that in some fifty years or a little more after my death the Gospel According to John was composed, and the work of this John who was unknown to me must have been illumined by my Father since it had words unforgettable to others: 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." Indeed, so great in strength was such a thought that never was a prophet succeeded by so many ready to die in his name. But then, I was not only a prophet but His son.

Thereby let it be understood: I did not conquer the Devil, and indeed, was a great victory lost. Two million Jews would yet die in a war against Rome not forty years after my death, and the Temple was left with no more than one wall standing. Still was my Father as wise and cunning as

the Devil for He saw how to save much from defeat by calling it victory. And that was in the Gospel of John. But then Christians like these even believe that all had been won for them by me, and before they were born. Such victory had come from my suffering on the cross. So does my Father find purpose for me still. In truth, it is through me that the Lord sends what love He still possesses down to that creature who is man, and that other creature who is woman, and I remain the bearer of all love that is tender.

So I would wish to bestow the blessing of tenderness on all who read my gospel, these, my words.

Yet with such love would I also remind us how Pontius Pilate did remark that in peace was no truth, and in truth was no peace. And so it is true that I do not bring peace but a sword and this sword would wage war on all that degrades good women and good men.

The end