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I began to contemplate my need for disciples who would follow me every day, and could work at those small tasks of which I had much ignorance. When I saw Levi sitting at the customs house, I said: "Follow me." And said it for no more than that he had a good and cunning face, and I had need of cunning. Moreover, there was light in his eye.

Levi came with us. Nor did I concern myself that he was a tax collector. Thereby, I soon learned that few men were as unpopular as those who worked in customs houses gathering the taxes for Romans. Yet I had but one measure for a sinner: was there the promise of a good life in his eye? For even a man who cheated others or worked for Romans could reveal more of God to me than I would find in those who were sinless but downcast.

Moreover, I had need of twelve men, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve who could return my look and allow me to see what was in their hearts. In that manner I

could be ready to forgive them.

There was one for whom I could not declare such, and this was Judas Iscariot, and with his dark beard he was handsome. I wished him to be among my twelve even if I could not see what was in his heart for his eyes were too full of fire. Indeed, I was as if blinded by the blaze of his spirit. Notwithstanding, I welcomed him. He claimed to love the poor, saying that he had lived among the rich long enough to despise them; his father had wealth.

By these different means I lived among those twelve men who were ready to follow me, and I had hope that I could gird them with the power to cast out devils, and send them forth to preach. Yet for that they needed to approach much nearer to me. If I had reliance on Simon Peter, I could not as yet be as certain of James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James, and Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Thomas, and another named James, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot, of whom I have spoken. The publican Levi was also called Matthew, but since he was not that Matthew who wrote a gospel, let him remain as Levi.

In choosing these disciples, I aroused much

dissatisfaction among the Pharisees. When I would eat meat in the house of Levi with the rest of my twelve, so did many sinners also sit with us, and other tax collectors. Heavy in their hearts that they worked for the Romans, they were full of shame before their fellow Jews. So, they had need of me.

Yet when the scribes and Pharisees saw us eating together, they said: "How can he mingle with such dregs?" I was not eager to widen the separation already there between myself and these Pharisees of Capernaum, so I answered: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick need much. I am not here to call the righteous to repentance, but the sinners."

I debated how to tell these righteous Pharisees that sinners, having encountered the Evil Spirit, may even come to feel repugnance for low appetites. Whereas the pious fester through endless trials against the temptations of Satan.

With it all, I was happy in the house of Levi eating with sinners. Some of his friends were poor and unwashed, (for Levi was loyal to old friends) yet by coming to know such people, I began to ponder a grave question. And that was the godlessness in many who were rich. They did not use

their wealth to make others happy, whereas here, at the table of Levi, among these poor sinners who were his friends, I saw how there might be much petty injury each could do to another, yet there was also much simple pity that they would feel for poor friends beside them. So, the faces of the poor at Levi's table shone for me with a dignity not unlike the grain of unpolished wood after it has been exposed to the warmth and the wrath of sun and rain.

Such argument would hardly satisfy scribes and Pharisees; they would say to me, "The disciples of John the Baptist fasted. Why don't your disciples do the same?" And so pious were their voices that at night I would brood over those Jews who spoke for my religion and drove away sinners.

But there were many questions for me. Why was I with men who would rather eat and drink than pray? Yet those who were always in the synagogue and spoke of how they were children of Abraham did not seem to believe that more was needed than attendance and good heritage. I would tell myself that a feast was being prepared in Heaven where all the pious would be cast out, while the poor and the sinful would be invited to the banquet. And with that, I would

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drink my wine even as I saw that wine, to which I was not accustomed, (for the drinking of wine in my family had been reserved for solemn occasions) was there for me at every meal.

If these publicans were rarely solemn, still I trusted the warmth of spirit between us. It was not the time to fast. There was a great deal to do in preparing the way for the Lord, and so much had yet to be achieved. To fast would bring gloom among us and we would be like those pious who accomplish little more than to praise God with their words, while remaining so afraid of other men that they can never praise Him with their deeds.

Those were the thoughts I would have with the wine. There was so little time. One had to sup with sinners. With the gifts given to me by my Father I could now bring salvation to them. Yet my head still whirled with the vertigo of the wine. There were so many obstacles to foresee. What of every pagan who would seek baptism? Would he be ready to cast out his former gods? Would his own family cast him out in turn?

These differences with the Pharisees of Capernaum were

made worse on the day that my publicans walked through the fields on the Sabbath and plucked ears of corn. The Pharisees said: "To harvest on this day is not lawful." And when I answered, my voice was in a race with my caution, so that my speech was almost not uttered; yet my words gained a victory after all. I said: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

On the next Sabbath, when I entered the synagogue, a laborer was there with a withered hand. Many Pharisees now watched to see if I would heal him, and they were waiting to accuse me.

So soon as this man spoke, I was helpless. I could not refuse to cure him. He said: "I used to be a stone mason before my fingers were smashed. I plead with you, Yeshua, give me back a good hand so that I will not have to beg for my family's food."

I said to him: "Stand forth."

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

No one could answer. They had not the courage to say "Cure him." The hardness of their hearts (wherein no heart

is so hard as the timid heart) infuriated me. I spoke to the man, saying: "Stretch forth your hand," and when he did, I did not even have to touch it; at once I could see how his hand was restored as whole as the other. Yet I also felt anguish. For now I had to conclude, as most of those Pharisees left in outrage, that a time might come when I would go to war with some of my own people. Would they be lost then forever to what I wished to teach?

Indeed, later that night, one of my disciples claimed to have heard that two Pharisees in the synagogue had gone to see the officers of Herod Antipas who were living in Capernaum, and all were now considering how this Yeshua of Nazareth might be stilled. Hearing these words, I decided that I must flee Capernaum and look for an empty shore on the Sea of Galilee. For Yeshua of Nazareth would not seem a son of God to the officers of Herod, but only a poor Jew.

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Yet I was not alone. My disciples accompanied me to these wilder shores, and with them, came many. The word of John the Baptist had passed through the hills and valleys of Israel, even into the mountains; already there were men and women in this multitude who came from Idumea and even beyond the Jordan, a great number. And as they gathered about me, I was not ready to speak for fear of being overcome by the magnitude of their need; indeed, my disciples were now obliged to comport themselves as soldiers, and become my guard. Yet I could feel the desire of these people to reach me and to touch me, until so many were about that I was deprived of the power to cure. And, truth, their fingers so implored my skin that I had to think of my own bruises when day was done.

Therefore I told my disciples to find me a small ship and let it wait in a cove of the Sea of Galilee where, once on board, I would be near to shore, but apart, and so could

preach from the prow, yet return to land long enough to lay hands on a few.

While waiting, I went up onto a mountain, but many followed. I came down by another path to a town near Capernaum and entered a house where I was welcome. But another multitude surrounded this house and there were even scribes from Jerusalem among them.

Before long I heard that one of these scribes had said to another, "By Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, he is able to cast out other devils." And I knew that the danger I had been awaiting was near. Even as I was gaining more knowledge of how to cure, so was a plague of ill spirit swelling and ready to oppose me. The righteous had to see my efforts as Devil's labor: For how could a poor man like myself command miracles? Already many were saying that I was ready to deny the Ten Commandments and the law surrounding the tablets. Whereas, good Pharisees wanted a world where all people were law-abiding. So I must speak to these two scribes from Jerusalem who had come to stare upon me. Yet when I looked into their eyes, I was not disheartened; they appeared to be with wisdom.

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So, I said: "You call me Satan. But if I am a demon who is able to destroy other demons, am I not destroying myself? When Satan can cast out Satan, he has become a house divided. Do we not know that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand? No more can Satan rise up against himself."

These scribes went away without reply. A disappointment to me.

It was a day of many ills. To this same house now came my mother, and my half-brothers, James and John, and standing outside they called for me. But a multitude was all about, and I could neither see my family nor hear them. Then one man cried: "Behold, your mother and your brothers seek for thee," but I had heard that my mother had been arguing with my followers, and had said that I, by performing cures on the Sabbath, must now be full of devils and my brothers had said that I was not of a proper mind. They had come to take me home. And indeed I had always known that my brothers were jealous of me. So when the man cried out again, "Behold, your mother and your brothers seek for thee," I answered: "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" And I looked

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around the room as if I had need of every man and woman in it. And I said, "These are my brothers! For he who does the will of God is my brother and my mother."

Later I would hear that my mother wept when my words were repeated to her. How I wished then to gather those words back. For I owed much to her even if our ways together had never been smooth. She had lived in much anxiousness over my birth, and so much fear of catastrophe. When I was young, she had made me afraid of Romans, too afraid. So was she also lacking in pride when conversing with wealthy Jews; she saw them as being of more consequence than herself, and all of this had also been cause to feed my anger.

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In the evening, being not without remorse at what I had said about my mother, I felt a need to go to the sea and said to my disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side."

Now, they had been feasting in every house that welcomed us for they had noticed that the rich in these towns near Capernaum were ready to give us welcome. So they ate much and drank much and with few cares. But I had need of peace. I was again weary.

In these weeks sick people had been conducted to me, and those who were mad, or possessed by devils, also those with palsy; I tried to heal them all. And when the Holy Spirit passed from my heart to my hand, one touch could make them well.

Yet, at such instants, I would often have a memory of the leap I had not taken on the invitation of the Devil. Now, even as the grace of healing passed over into the body of whoever was before me, I could still feel tainted by

cowardice. For it is cowardly to fear death as I had feared it when with the Devil. Now, I had to make amends by recalling this moment many times. That was just. Thereby I would not become too proud of good deeds. For I had to wonder whether I had given some of my fealty to the Devil.

Such sentiments would return when I found people that I could not cure. For these had darkness in their eyes like the darkest angels of Satan. So I knew I had need again of the sea, or of a lake as large as the Sea of Galilee.

I told my closest followers to send away our multitudes. By evening, when most were gone, we went quickly to a ship; still there were some who followed in smaller ships. Whereupon, a great wind swept across the Sea of Galilee.

The waves beat upon our vessel and some washed over the bow. If others were terrified, I knew nothing of their panic. I was sleeping peacefully and this peace had been given to me by the rocking of the water. Yet when my people awakened me, it was to say, "Many boats will founder. And soon. Master, do you not care if we perish?"

So, I said to the wind, "Be still." And soon there was calm. In truth, I do not know if I can say that this miracle

was mine for even on awakening, I could sense that the end of the storm was near. Yet I was pleased to say: "Why are you all so fearful? Have you no faith?"

I could hear them, one to another, saying: "Who is this man? Even the seas obey him."

Now, the wharf where we landed was in the country of the Gadarenes near the shores of Decapolis, a pagan city in the land of the gentiles. I was not easy. This was neither our land nor friendly, and we had come to a beach beneath high cliffs in which were many tombs.

Out of one of these tombs now descended a giant, and he was carrying a torch. His spirit was so unclean that the fire of the torch burned fiercely before his breath. Quickly, he came toward me. No man among my followers, not even Peter, was ready to resist this man, for as all could see, he was a son of the nephilim, and they are the fallen ones. His ancestors had been angels who had lusted after women and made children who were giants. These giants had brought violence to everyone. They were also pagans.

Yet even as I said, "Peace," he stopped.

Having stopped, he said, "No man can bind me. Chains I

break asunder. No man can command me."

"Then of what are you afraid?"

"Of all things," he replied. "By day I live in the darkness of these tombs, and I weep. I tear at myself with sharp stones. I cut my flesh. But of you I have heard. I worship you."

"What have you heard?" I asked.

"That your eyes have a great light," he said, "and your name is Jesus. Or so I have heard from those who dare to speak to me." And by the trembling of his lips I saw that he was ready to call out the name of my Father.

"Many speak in terror of who I am," he said. "For I am he who contains more devils than any other. I adjure thee: Torment me not, Jesus! I offer fair warning."

I was not without fear; this man had more strength than Peter whose strength was kin to a bull. Moreover this fellow was filthy. His hair met his beard and his locks were like fards of the large rope that will hold a ship to its mooring.

Now he said: "I live in the tombs of those who are damned."

"What is your name?"

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

I knew that he was filled with devils, yet I was ready to speak directly. It was as if the hand of the Lord was upon my back urging me forward: "The unclean spirits who devoured King Herod are now in you," I said. "Flee from Legion. Flee." And I growled like a beast, which is what the Essenes do to enforce a commandment they receive from the Lord. And as I growled, so did a great herd of wild swine come rushing from the field beneath the tombs, and a turmoil of devils issued from the throat of Legion. How they screamed! I heard: "Let us in! Let us into the swine of Gadarene." For a demon must inhabit a body. Whereupon, I let them enter the herd, and they rushed with a great noise into the swine who now ran violently down a gorge into the sea. These beasts were in number two thousand, and they all drowned, all these swine of Gadarene. Even such low animals could not bear such foul invaders.

Others soon came forward to look at this man who had been possessed by so many devils. But now they found Legion clothed and bathed and in good spirit. No matter. The

elders from the town of Gadarene were afraid. They entreated me to quit their shore.

Yet, as I returned to my ship, Legion began to beg that I let him come with my people. And I was tempted. He would make a mighty apostle. Yet their number was already twelve, and I could not add another. Moreover, he was a pagan. Yet I took no pride in saying: "Go instead to your people and tell them what happened." In truth, I still abhorred the man. The uproar in those demons as they came out of his throat had been unfathomable.

After he left, Legion spoke well of me among the gentiles in the city of Decapolis where he went to live, and I also heard that many marveled at his words of praise since in former days, never had he a good word for friends or strangers.

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On my return to Capernaum, one of the rulers of the synagogue, (and his name was Jairus), stepped forward and knelt at my feet. Until now, not one of the elders had offered more than a place to teach, (and this most grudgingly). Yet here was Jairus. And he pleaded with me, saying "My little daughter lies near death. I pray thee, come and lay hands on her and heal her so that she may live."

Now I had learned how close was faith to the loss of faith. Both stole silently into the heart. So I understood: the rulers of the synagogue might disapprove of me, but it did not mean that I had failed to enter their hearts. Much strengthened, then, by this meeting, I went with Jairus to his house, and a horde came with us. And as we passed through the street, I knew that someone had done me an ill, for I felt all virtue leave my own heart. And I turned and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

One disciple said: "You see the multitude yet you ask

'Who touched me?'" But then a woman spoke and she was trembling and fell down before us. "I have had an issue of blood for twelve years," she said, "and have suffered with physicians. I have spent all I have, and have only grown worse. But hearing of you, I touched your garment. I thought: 'That shall make me whole.' And so it was. I have stopped bleeding."

I could see by her eyes that she spoke the truth, and I was gentle. I told her, "Daughter, go in peace and you will be wholly healed by tomorrow." No sooner had she left, however, than a servant from the house of Jairus came to him, and said, "Your daughter lives no longer."

Had the ailing woman taken the virtue I had been garnering to save the child?

But in that instant, my Father spoke through me, and feeling His strength, I turned to this ruler of the synagogue and said, "Jairus, be not afraid. Only believe." I had to hope that the daughter was not dead but resting in that long shadow of sleep which is near to death. For then I might save her. I did not know if I could pray for the return of those who are truly dead.

I recited to myself the words of the prophet Isaiah:
"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: For thy dew is as
the dew of herbs."

At the house of Jairus, there was much disturbance.
Many were weeping and wailing. I entered and said: "The girl
is not dead but sleeps."

And this was said to calm them. The dead were best
raised in silence; tumult could only drive them further away.
So I asked the mourners to leave the house and told the
servants to return with Jairus and his wife, and I went with
them to where their daughter was lying. I held her hand, and
recited words I remembered well from the scroll of the Second
Kings, saying: "When Elisha was come into the house, behold,
the child was dead, and he prayed unto the Lord. And he lay
upon the child and put his mouth upon the child's mouth and
his eyes upon the child's eyes and his hands over the boy's
hands, and he stretched himself upon the child and the flesh
of the child was now warm, and the child sneezed seven times
and opened his eyes."

"And this," I told the father and mother, "having been
spoken, need not be done again." For I knew that if I lay

upon the girl and she failed to stir, incalculable would be the harm. With the power of the Lord in my hand, I said only, "Good daughter, unto thee I say arise." And straightaway she arose and walked. Her parents were astonished and ready to praise me but I told them to give her food, and give it with much love, and this I said because the child, now half-awake, was by more than half full of misery that she had returned to the living. Nor did I know whether she had actually died and come back. But I did understand that much unhappiness between husband and wife had laid a pall upon the girl. Indeed it was apparent that she lived in a house of many unclean feelings; no air was sweet in these rooms, and stale miseries which feed upon themselves were with us. So before I left, I told them to fast and to pray and to leave a flower in a small jar by the child's bed each morning.

It had been simple when I told the girl to rise, but now there was a weight on me. Much had been drained from my limbs by the woman who touched my garment and more by arousing this child who hardly wished to live. Had I drawn too deeply upon the powers of the Lord when it would have

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been wiser to save His efforts for other matters? I felt a desire to return to Nazareth, and knew I wanted to apologize to my mother for that hour when I wounded her love.

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So I went back to my own country and my disciples followed, and in Nazareth two days were spent with Mary. Yet I do not know if I soothed her feelings for how could she forgive me after I had said: "Who is my mother?"

On the Sabbath, I began to teach in the synagogue, but at once I heard sounds of discontent, people saying, "What wisdom is this?" And when I told them of my works, of the leper and of the storm, I felt a loss of modesty (which loss was equal to foul spirit for me). Moreover, I was not believed. It was as if word had travelled everywhere but to Nazareth. And I could hear them say, "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" And I wondered if any blow to pride wounds more than the obligation to honor a man who has been no greater than oneself until this hour. I was pained that they would offer me no love. "A prophet is without honor in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house," I said. "Nor can a doctor cure anyone who knows

him, but then a doctor is no better than his patient." And indeed in Nazareth I could do no mighty work.

Still, there came the next Sabbath and again I awoke with the strength of my Father and was able to cure a woman who had lived with an infirmity for eighteen years. Her limbs were bound to such degree that she could not stand up. But when I saw her, I had only to say, "Woman, you are rid of your ills."

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

To which I answered, "Do you not let your ox out of the stall on the Sabbath and lead him to water? Yet you do not allow this woman to be loosed from her bonds on the day when we celebrate the works of the Lord?"

He was a rich man and a Pharisee and ready for debate.

He replied: "Some of us do not loose our oxen on the Sabbath. Faith is a narrow road." Which offended me. I should have said: "Hypocrite! You, yourself, lead your oxen to water on the Sabbath in order that they do not thirst and thereby lose value." But I was prudent and said: "Narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few find it. The way to destruction is broad."

He nodded, as if he were the one who would now come closer to the sweetmeat of the question: "The broad highway of simple faith can be without peril," he said, "but that is only for days that are fair. When it rains, such breadth becomes a trackless mire. Seek ye, Yeshua, for the narrow road that mounts between the rocks. And do not look for cures on the Sabbath. That is the broad highway."

With this, he laid his hand on my shoulder as if he were fatherly and I was of simple faith. In the touch of his fingers was all the confidence of a wealthy man. His hand said to my flesh: "Respect my words. Much position rests beneath."

He had shamed me. My powers left. Once again, and in my own synagogue, I was without strength.

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So soon as I left Nazareth, however, good spirits returned to me concerning all that we could do. Indeed the time had come to send messengers forth. Nor did I think it unlikely that they would be able to perform acts like mine. Word of my power to heal had disseminated among many, and so belief in my apostles would increase.

I told them to go on their journey with nothing but a staff; no bread, no money, and only one coat. I said: "Wherever you enter into a house, abide there until you depart from that place. Whoever does not receive you, leave him quickly, and shake the dust from your feet. Yet, go your way with ease."

I also knew that to give my apostles a part of what the Lord had bestowed on me would become their gift only if I never rested in my labors, and never felt sorrow for myself: the destruction of each man is to be found in pity for oneself. And this was twice true for the Son of the Lord.

So would it also be twice true for my disciples.

I told them much else, but indeed, there was much to learn. And in so short a time. My speech was harsh. I was coming to understand that to repent of one's sins generates turmoil in a man; the soul races to and fro and a gentle word may not be wise. When too distracted, we cannot hear it.

I also told them that even when there were matters they did not understand, they knew enough to teach others. "What you hear," I told them, "is the wisdom of the Lord, and this you may preach from the housetops. And never fear those who can kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. Instead, fear God. He can destroy both soul and body. For God knows everything. Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Fear not, therefore. You are worth more than many sparrows."

What I said next did not come easily to my tongue. It was prideful. Nonetheless, these were the words chosen by the Lord, and so they were in my mouth: "Whoever denies me, I will deny before my Father." Some of the apostles drew back. They knew that they had not been ready to tell everyone they met that they were of my cohort.

I looked into the eyes of each of the twelve, and said: "I have come not to send peace but a sword." And this was different from all I had said before. I had come to bring peace on earth, but now the Lord had given me a vision of many battles before peace could come. And my heart was sore with the pain that I had not made peace with Mary when I was last in Nazareth. So I spoke not only with the Lord's anger, but with my own. My family had left me divided. And so I said: "A man's foes can be the members of his own household. Whoever would love father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, just as he who does not take his cross and follow me is also not worthy of me. He who would find his life must first lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake shall find it."

Now, my apostles were weeping. No thought arouses more compassion for oneself than the belief that one is losing one's life for a friend; in such an instant, one feels noble, and it is natural to mourn for oneself. So, I tried to teach them what is to be found in the laws of love (which are much concealed.) I said: "Love your friends like your own soul. Guard them like the pupil of your eye. Be glad only when you

can look at them with love. And know that no crime is more onerous than to sadden your brother's spirit."

With this, they sighed. For they saw the truth of what I had said, and its difficulty.

On these words, I sent them out to preach.

Now, I chose to live alone in a hut abandoned by shepherds, high in the hills above Capernaum. And I tried to rest, and subdue the fears that still remained with me.

Each fear was terrible. Each came upon me in the middle of the night when my heart sought to flee. Yet my limbs were heavy, and no road appeared.

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The first of these fears was the worst, and it was not a dream. Before my disciples left, they told me that John the Baptist was dead. He had been slain in his dungeon at Machaerus and it was King Herod Antipas who had commanded the deed.

Now, for so long as I had known of John's imprisonment I had believed that God would set him free. If I had any doubt, it was because John had sent two of his men to me and they had asked, "Are you the one who is to come? Or do we look for another?" My disciples, being distrustful of John's disciples, now said that the Baptist was jealous of me. But I knew that if John no longer believed that I was the one to follow him, it was because he had heard of how I was consorting with sinners. That made me sad. The walls of a dungeon weigh upon thought and bend certainty; John might no longer know me. Could he understand that my power to work miracles was a sign that the Lord was not displeased that I

sat at table with sinners, and so I must still be His messenger? After, I heard the questions sent by John, I said therefore: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised. The poor receive the gospel. Blessed is any man who shall not be offended in me." But among my own people, I defended John: "Among them who are born of women," I told them, "there has not risen a greater man than John the Baptist." When they did not understand and only heard this as a diminishment of myself, I added: "Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is still greater than John." Yet I could see that my disciples were still not certain who I was.

After John's death, a second fear followed the first. Since many were now saying that John had risen from the dead, and was bringing forth mighty works and miracles, others might believe that John and Jesus were one. This peril was clear. If Herod Antipas had slain John the Baptist once, how could he not want to murder him twice? And I brooded on the manner of John's death.

Before my disciples left on their travels, they had told me how it came about; they had heard much, and from many:

Herod had imprisoned John as punishment for saying: "It is not lawful for you to have your dead brother's wife." The Lady Herodias, once the wife of Philip, his brother, was now married to Herod Antipas, and for these words, Herodias detested John and reviled his name so constantly that Herod Antipas had to order his guard to put John in jail. It is a rare monarch who is not weak before the righteous wrath of a wife who is without righteousness.

Yet, Herodias could not convince Herod Antipas to name a day for the execution of the Baptist. The king still feared the powers that God had given to John.

On the birthday of Herod Antipas, a feast was prepared in the fortress of Machaerus. Before all of his lords and high captains, Salome, who was the daughter of Herodias from her marriage to Philip, danced. And Salome danced so ardently that Herod Antipas put her in a seat of honor beside him. Then, he said: "Ask of me what you will. I will give it." Salome replied that his words had been promised to the air. Why were they not inscribed on parchment?

Whereupon Herod Antipas vowed: "Whatever you shall ask, I will give it, even if you ask for the half of my kingdom.

That is my oath."

Those words were equal to the death of my cousin. A king's word is like the keel of a ship that he builds for his soul; his oath strengthens him. To break such a vow would leave him damned by the bloody acts of his followers and the filth of his own deeds.

When Salome spoke to her mother, Herodias said, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist."

Whereupon Salome returned to Herod Antipas and made her demand. And Herod Antipas was true to his oath. In that hour, he sent for an executioner and ordered the head of John brought to him. And when it was carried into the banquet room (and on a silver platter), Herod Antipas gave it to Salome. She is said to have danced with the bloody head and face of John the Baptist before all of Herod's guests.

I did not often sleep. Alone in my cave, I looked for solace in the thought that God was near while Herod Antipas was in his palace and far away.

Yet, in the darkness, I would weep. John's way had been hard, and he had prepared a path for me. Yet even John, who never drank wine, was said to have a devil; now, of me, what

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could they say? "A drunkard and a glutton." My apostles
would meet many enemies.

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There came the day when many of my apostles returned. And in speaking of their attempts to cure others, they were woeful. They asked often: "Why could we not cast out devils? All things should be possible to him who believes."

Even when one wished, I told them, for one's faith to be perfect, a portion of oneself remained without faith. "I asked a man once if he could believe. He answered, 'Lord, I believe. Help me in my disbelief.' This," I told them, "moved me more than anything he could have said."

My disciples were gloomy.

By the next day, since nothing had been satisfied concerning their failure to cure the sick, I thought to take a day with them on the Sea of Galilee. Levi knew ship owners who owed him favors; he counted their taxes. So we were soon able to find a ship and escape our followers for a few hours. Yet people saw us departing and followed on foot around the empty shore. And when we landed and went up into a mountain,

so did they follow.

I had been weary but now I was moved with compassion and ready again to teach. For by now, how could I not know every error I had made? My throng were like sheep without a shepherd, and I had given them cures and for that they had loved me. But they had not loved my Father enough. Nor had I, not enough. Nor had I trusted Him with the whole faith that I asked my followers to offer. I must put away, therefore, all doubts. I must convince them of my love for Him. And in this manner I taught for most of that day on the mountain.

Later, those who became my scribes, and most notably, Matthew in his Gospel, would speak of my Sermon on the Mount. They had me saying all manner of things, and some were opposite to others, and Matthew put in enough sayings, indeed, to have me speaking for a day and a night and two days after, but I can only recount what I know which is that I wished to bring all of them to my knowledge of God.

I was beginning to understand that the task set for me was immense, and I could not carry the Lord's word by myself. Too many would oppose me. I needed an army of apostles. If each of my twelve could find his own twelve, and each of

these new apostles were to bring to us another twelve full of faith, then I would have an army. So I knew that I would have to send my apostles out again; they must learn to work cures; they must return with others.

Yet large armies also bring discord. So I now saw that if faith might be simple for some, it would soon be a labyrinth to the Son of Man; at each turning I would have to wonder whether I was closer to the light or nearer to darkness. And it may be that for just such a reason, (my faith still remaining simple to me) that I spoke with much conviction on this day and was full of admiration for my Father's works. Indeed, I was, in this hour, confident that His love was ready to forgive all who would come to Him. So I sought to bring them over to love of God rather than to adoration of my cures. Never did I speak more from the desire to love God altogether.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," I told them on this day on this mountain, "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. And blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; they shall inherit the earth." And saying this, so, too, did I believe it.

"Blessed are those who thirst after righteousness," I told them, "for they shall be filled. And blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

I felt hope rise in all who listened, and it was as visible to me as the gathering of light in the morning; so I spoke of light and I told them: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick and then it gives light to all who are in the house."

And if I would bring them to a greater love of God, I knew that I must also use words that they would not wish to hear, and would have trouble in believing since the desire for revenge was not only in the marrow of their souls, but in mine. Yet if I would love God in such a way that they also could love Him, then they must believe in Him as I did at this moment, and so I said what they could hardly bear to hear:

"If someone," I said, "shall strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other cheek. And if a man will take

your coat, give him your cloak as well." And I could feel the desperation with which they sought to understand this. "You have heard it said," I told them, "that you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say: Love your enemies. Bless them who curse you. Do good to those that hate you. And pray for them who persecute you. And then you may become the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on the just and on the unjust. If you only love those who love you, what reward do you have? Be perfect, therefore, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." And that I repeated: "Even as your Father in heaven is perfect," and I knew that they, like me, had a great desire to believe this.

And I sought to explain how His generosity was mighty:

"Therefore, I say, take no thought for your life, nor what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor yet for your body, or for what you shall put on. Is life not more than meat? And the body more than raiment? The fowls of the air do not sow, neither do they reap. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Consider the lilies of the field: they toil

not, neither do they spin, and yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothed the grass of the field, shall He not clothe you? Therefore, take no thought to go about, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'Where shall we be clothed?' For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added into you. Take, then, no thought for the morrow; tomorrow will take thought for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

And I said to them: "Let us all pray together," and as I heard their voices repeating the words of my voice, so did I feel as mighty as a leviathan rising from the deep.

Together we prayed:

"Our Father, who art in heaven,

"Hallowed be Thy name.

"Thy Kingdom come,

"Thy will be done

"In earth as it is in Heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread,

"And lead us not into temptation

"But deliver us from evil.

"For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory
forever.

"Amen."

And I said "Amen" many times as we descended from the mountain. And it was late in the day. My disciples said, "It would be wise to send them away now. They must go back into their villages and buy bread. For they have nothing to eat, and here is but a desert."

But to send them away was not natural. I was feeling exalted. These people had walked over many sharp stones to join us and had listened to me for many hours. And I could feel the Lord's hand at my elbow. I said: "Give them to eat."

My disciples said: "You are the one who must provide. Did you not say to us: 'Take no thought of: "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" For your heavenly Father will know that ye have need of all these things.'"

Truth, I had said it. It was so. "How many loaves have we?" I asked.

They looked. There were five barley loaves and two

dried fish.

Whereupon I told my disciples to seat all our followers in companies upon the ground. And I took these five loaves and divided them exceedingly small so that there were a hundred pieces of bread from each loaf. Then, each piece of fish gave up more than twice two hundred small morsels. And with five hundred bits of bread and five hundred of fish, I passed these morsels to each of the followers, doing it myself for all five hundred. I would lay one flake of fish and one bit of bread upon each tongue. Yet when each person had tasted these fragments, so do I believe that each morsel became enlarged within his thoughts, until few among these hundreds would say that they had not been given sufficient fish and bread. And this was a triumph of the Holy Spirit rather than an enlargement of matter. Which for the Lord is also but a small deed, since He made the heavens and the earth out of nothing, and could certainly have changed five loaves into five hundred.

Later, this story was much exaggerated by Mark and Matthew and Luke. No angel appeared in the sky, nor did the manna that God gave to Moses and his people now appear.

But such was the power of the blessing of the Lord that all my followers were satisfied and it was as if we were apprentices again and artisans gathered in a green field (rather than on the stones of a desert beach) and were eating with much joy in the fellowship of a banquet, and so, indeed, it was equal to a feast, even if it were no more than a fragment on one's tongue. Perhaps that is why Mark gave me not less than five thousand loaves and hundreds of fish and burdened my disciples with twelve baskets of food to bear home. Whereas we were five hundred, not five thousand.

Exaggeration is the language of the Devil, and no man is free of Satan, not even the son of God (and certainly not Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). So I knew that many of my followers would bring an increase to my feat. Yet I also suspected that my Father preferred each miracle to be in good measure to the need that had called it forth. Even as waste will exist in all matters, so in the working of miracles, there can be extravagance, and it is best avoided.

Yet it was not for me to understand my Father. Not all of my miracles would be so modest. For a little later, after I debarked again with my disciples, we rowed to Bethsaida on

the other side of this Sea of Galilee.

When we neared land, I told them to sleep on the ship while I went ashore by myself. And this was to satisfy my desire to meditate upon the events of this fine day.

As night came, a gale arose and from high on the shore, I could see that the ship was tossed by waves. So, I came back to the water and commenced to swim to the boat, yet, behold! Of a sudden, I was up and above the waters. I was walking on them! And it was from the buoyance of my Father. I could even hear His laughter at my pleasure in walking upon His water; then came more of His laughter because I had concluded that in miracles there should be no extravagance. And indeed it had been said already in the Book of Job: While creating the world, our Lord had trampled upon the back of the sea. I, walking now upon water, (if with a gentle step) thought of how my Father had spoken to Job out of the whirlwind, and told him: "Here shall the proud waves be stayed," yes, and He had "entered into the springs of the sea" and He had "walked in search of the depth." I had read of this many times in the Book of Job when I was young, and now the waves beneath my feet were themselves a path. And

God was joyful at my admiration of Him. For now I knew the extent of His domain. He had lived before the day was born, or the water, or the earth. He had brought my seed from the east and had gathered me from the west, and He controlled the waters of chaos. And I was joyful for such a vision, and did not want my joy to end. I was going to walk right on by the boat of my disciples, yet I could not. For they were frightened of me. Who could be striding beside them in such a manner? I heard them crying out in fear and saying, "It is a ghost," but I said, "Have courage. It is I. I am." Which is to say that I was not a spirit. And added, "Be not afraid."

Peter now said, "Lord, if it is you, ask me to come to you."

I said: "Come."

Peter stepped out of the ship, thinking that he, too, could walk, but the wind was wild. He sank. "Lord, save me!" he cried.

I stretched out my hand and caught him and said: "Why did you doubt?" And I went back into the boat with him.

It was then I knew that Peter wanted to be loyal. Yet

he would fail me. For his faith was in his mouth, not in his legs; thus did I understand that it was not men's sentiments which would reveal the presence of the Lord, but their deeds. For the Devil, having learned the arts of speech from the Lord, could utter glorious sentiments worthy of the Lord and stirring to the heart. Yet, naught that was good could come of his words.

When Peter and I returned to the ship, my disciples worshipped me as they had not done before. They asked: "Are you the Son of the Highest?"

Now they had asked this many times before and each time I heard in their voices something that told me they were ready to believe that I was what they asked; but in their voices I also heard how they did not yet believe in me, not completely, even though with each day they might come closer. So I understood that even as they wished to be loyal, they must often fail me. In the presence of my great joy on this night--and I was feeling great joy at having come so close to my Father--their hearts had to harden. For they could not share my wonder.

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After our night at sea, we came ashore in the land of Genesseret and once more multitudes awaited us. Even those who were sick in bed had been carried out to us. Wherever we entered a village, the afflicted were laid out on the street. Many said that if I had not the time to cure everyone, could the sick touch the hem of my garment? And some who did, claimed to feel better.

By midday, I was weary; by evening, low; my garment was imbued with the entreaties of so many. And when I went to the synagogue, new Pharisees were there who had come from Jerusalem; there were scribes among them. It was not long before they wished to speak of their concerns.

They told me that they had seen my disciples eat bread with unclean hands. Was this not only a sin against the law, but revolting in itself? The publicans, sitting in each village square, had been collecting taxes for the Romans, and had handled coins from early morning until they were done,

whereupon they gambled at night with the coins they kept for themselves. How could their hands not be filthy with money? Whereas the Pharisees, when they come home from the market, do not eat unless they wash. I, being equally pious in my youth, knew how these Pharisees looked upon my publicans.

Yet, one cannot honor the pious. For, no matter how much is done before them in the way of observance, they are never satisfied. Should one try to obey the law absolutely, one cannot; the laws of observance were written by men more pious than oneself. Therefore, one's heart must always bow down. The law, if by a tittle, has once more been broken. One has failed God again. So, I stood before the Pharisees in the synagogue and spoke to them like a physician, saying: "There is nothing that can enter a man and defile him. It is only the things that come out of a man. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear."

Much low and unhappy murmuring came from these Pharisees. Within the synagogue, in the presence of the altar, I had spoken of the uncleanness of man, who, as he lives, must pollute. So my words were offensive to the altar.

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But I was speaking as well to my twelve and our followers, and I did not cease: "What enters from without does not pass into a man's heart but into his belly, and goes out again into the drain." And I knew they heard me whisper to myself, "That dirt which is on a man's hands is nothing." Then I said aloud, "But what comes out of a man can defile him. For from a man's heart can issue evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, blasphemy, pride, even the evil eye--" And I had no breath to go on, such was my indignation. "All such evil things issue from within and defile the man."

And I was surprised by my anger which had arisen in such a host of fury that it took my breath away. And this anger was for those who scolded others at not washing, yet hardly knew how great was the sum of their own evil. How could they not be terrified of evil from without, terrified even of the dust of the road and the mud of the fields? For as they would see it, and only in this manner could they see, it took no more than one mote of non-observance to unbalance the scales within, and then they were guilty of sin. Dirt, to them, was a sea of sin. But where in them could one find

a love of God that was ready to sacrifice all that they had?

I left the synagogue. Before the night was done I had even cured a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. And this was done by no more than putting my fingers in his ears, whereupon he spit, and then I touched his tongue, causing him look up to heaven and sigh. With that, I said to him, "Be opened." His ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed; he spoke. I smiled. For now the Pharisees would have to say (and their speech would be most elevated), "He obeyeth not the law of washing, but he maketh the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

On another occasion when I had been followed to another waste of the desert where I had hoped to retire for the day, again there was nothing to eat. This time we had seven loaves, and again I broke them into little pieces and gave them to my disciples, who passed them on, rank on rank, file on file, and all were satisfied.

But those hours on the mountain when I had given my sermon were no longer as near to me. That day I had not spoken to my multitude with words that the Lord offered my tongue, no, I had spoken out of my love of Him, and so the

words had been mine. Now my life was filled again with duty, and I had many thoughts concerning Moses for he had had to listen to the children of Israel weeping in the wilderness. His followers had said to Moses, "Who shall feed us? We remember the fish we had in Egypt, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away." And no one of these children of Israel had been pleased with the manna that God sent down. They had gathered it and pounded it in a mortar and baked it in ovens and made cakes of it; but it tasted like oil and coriander seed. Every man was lamenting at the door of his tent, and the anger of Lord was kindled. Yet, so was Moses displeased. He said to the Lord, "Why have You laid the burden of all these people on me? Have I begotten them? It is too heavy for me."

And Moses asked the Lord to let him die. For his life now was misery.

The Lord said, "Your people shall eat until this food comes out of their nostrils and is loathsome to them."

And by now I had understanding of the exhaustion in Moses. Fatigue of the spirit is much like a twisting of the

limbs; new pain enters into the old.

One day, on the road to Bethsaida, a blind man was brought to me at the gate; I took him by the hand and led him out of the town so that no one should witness the cure.

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

He looked up and said, "I see men who look like trees that are walking."

I replied, "That is because men, like trees, bear a fruit of good and evil."

Then, I put my hands on his eyes again, and he was wholly restored and saw every man clearly. Once again I sent him away to his house, and told him not to speak of it (although I knew he would) but I was not certain how long I could go on with these cures when they were equal to depletions of myself. I was coming to believe that God might be suffering His own weariness at the cost of supporting me. But this thought I did not care to say even to myself.

Now there were nights when I would awaken and not know who I was. And once, passing through the town of Caesarea Philippi, I asked my disciples: "Whom do others say I am?"

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

And I said, and my heart was pounding: "But whom do you say I am?"

And Peter (and it may be that he too was thinking of how I had walked upon the water,) now asked gently: "Can one say that you are the Christ?"

I was an ordinary man in all ways but one, and so I loved Peter for the strength that his conviction gave me; it was as if I now knew with more certainty than before that I was indeed the Son of God. Yet the Lord had also named me the Son of Man; could it be that I needed another man to recognize me? Thereby I knew that even in exaltation modesty should be found. For now I understood that there is a cost to illumination; one must also partake of the darkness that lives beneath the radiance of spirit. And so I looked to open my apostles to such a truth and tell them of a dream that had come to me. For on every night for seven nights I had been dreaming that the Son of Man would go to Jerusalem and be denied by the High Priest and die. And this dream I

had not yet told to any of them.

On hearing it, my disciples said, "No, you will live forever. And we will live with you."

Then I knew why darkness lies close to exaltation. If they loved me, it was for my power to work miracles. It was not because I might teach them to love others. They wished to preach like me, but only to increase their power; they did not wish to preach with love. So I rebuked them, saying: "You savor not the things that be of God but the things that be of men." And in the silence formed by these words, the dream was upon me again.

"If I am killed, I will rise again after three days," I said, and did not know if I spoke the truth.

I looked into their eyes to see if their souls were open. For at just this moment, the miracle of faith would be present or would not; in their eyes I saw no more than that heaviness of spirit which speaks of concern for oneself. I had wanted to drive them toward faith but now I realized that I, too, was not acting out of love for others, but was looking for power to convince them. So I sighed at the intricacy of the heart. And they sighed after me, as if we

all knew how close we had come to truth yet how far away we remained.

On another day, not long after, I felt a desire to be close to Peter and to James and to John. Had I not begun my ministry with them? Therefore, I led them up into a high mountain, and we were there by ourselves. Yet, a cloud followed. And I knew that such a cloud had been overhead in the hour when Moses raised his tabernacle on Mount Sinai, and that cloud descended to cover the altar.

In that time, the children of Israel had journeyed through the desert for forty years. And at each place where the cloud came to rest, they had pitched their tents. They only moved when the movement of the cloud told them to take up their journey again.

Here were we, at rest beneath another cloud. Even as I pondered such matters, Peter came to me and said, "Master, let us make three tabernacles: For you, for Moses, and for Elijah."

And when he had built them, the cloud above us did not move, and the sky was without sun. Yet, my raiment was shining.

In that moment, I also saw Elijah, and he was standing by me. Beside him was Moses.

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

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

At that moment, a flame rose from the first tabernacle, and Peter said: "You are the Christ."

Then I spoke once more to Peter of my dream and how I must go into Jerusalem.

In reubke, Peter said: "Put it far from thee, Lord."

He could not accept my dream. I said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." For if Satan could disguise himself as an angel of light, why could he not be with me as Peter?

But tears came to his eyes, and I felt a great urge to help these apostles. Of them all Peter would be the first. I wanted Peter to know the beauty that was in his soul. And as I thought this, the power of God rose in me, and at that moment, I feared my dream less.

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I could not keep the Lord's power for long. As we walked down the mountain, Peter and James and John fell into dispute on who should be greatest among them. I was silent, but as soon as we returned to Capernaum, I gathered my twelve and said: "If any of you dares to desire to be first, know that he shall be last."

And at that moment, as if I had called for an example to show such a difference, there came a young man up to us and he knelt before my feet and asked, "Good master, what shall I do? How may I inherit eternal life? I have observed all the commandments from my youth."

In his eyes I saw that he had a desire to please, and so I said (and this was for my apostles): "Sell what you have, and give to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven."

But the young man was not happy; he confessed that he had many possessions and was loathe to lose them. I said:

"He who has found the world should renounce the world." But this left him even more aggrieved. I said: "Many sons and daughters of Abraham are living in filth and dying of hunger. Your house is full yet how much goes to them?"

He went away.

I remarked to my disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven!" But some of them showed the greed in their hearts for they murmured unhappily. I said: "Children, it is painful to trust in riches. You will learn that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." They were astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" And one of them whose face was hidden by the others, muttered, "God enriches those He trusts. Why else is there high regard for wealth?" Another said, "If not the rich, who can be saved?"

I said, "No man can be saved if he counts his money." At which point, Peter would remind me: "We have left everyone to follow you."

Now I had to tell myself that my disciples were but men and lived among small passions; they were no better, and no

worse, than other men. But indeed I was stiff with wrath concerning Peter's dispute with the others over who came first. I said to them: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." They did not hear the mockery in my voice.

They liked such a saying. Was this the largest passion among my men--to be forgiven all debts? It was clear that they would not be so forgiving for the debts owed them.

I had been hoping to form an army of men whose souls were so pure that they would need no swords. Instead, I had gathered a few followers. They were looking to have their debts forgiven. And they argued among themselves. They worried over who would sit to the right of me and who to the left, and who would be first when I was gone. So many miracles, so little gain.

If I had thought that I could know each one of my disciples by looking into his eyes, each had eyes that changed by the hour; discontent licked at the edge of their loyalty. Did the great wrath of my Father come from knowing that pagans might be more loyal to Satan than His chosen people to Him?

That night, in my dream, I heard one angel say: "For

God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son. Whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life. For God did not send His son to condemn the world, but to save it."

If the angel spoke with truth then I was like a light sent into the world by God. Yet so could I also see that men might love darkness more than light. I awoke, then, and was in confusion. For I did not know whether I would still save the world or had I been condemned already by the world? Each night I had been hearing a command in my sleep, and the voice was my own; it was there to tell me that I must leave these lands where people waited to touch my garment and must go instead among the proud of Jerusalem; I must enter the halls of the Great Temple, even if my days might be numbered by the fingers of one hand. At such times, death weighed upon each breath I took.

I thought of how King Herod had wished to kill me at birth. What a bloody creature was man. The wrath of my enemies was like the heat of hell-fire.

No matter how, I knew that I must lead my followers to the Great Temple, and suffer what would await me there. And I must do this soon even if there was no time of year less

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auspicious. For Passover approached and Jews from all of Judea and Galilee would be approaching Jerusalem from all directions. In truth, how could we Jews forget that this feast commemorated our flight from Egypt when we had wandered in the wilderness for forty years to find a new land. We had thrived in the new land, and then we had lost it. The memory of the glory that had been lost was unsettling. In many years, there had been large riots of the Jews against the Romans at the time of Passover, and so no time would be more alive with peril.

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I hadgirded myself for the trip to Jerusalem, yet I was obliged to wait in Galilee. My twelve men were not able to come together on the hour of departure. During the day we were ready to leave, there was further hesitation. For Levi had disappeared. We knew that he was drinking wine in alleys with the men and women he had left behind when first he joined us. Other apostles were displeased and said: "We remain eleven of twelve; let us go."

I said: "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will the man not go into the mountains to seek the lost one? For if he finds such a sheep, he can rejoice more than over the ninety and nine."

We were full of discord. Peter said: "Lord, when I was a boy, I lived with my uncle, and was a shepherd. And it was our practice not to chase the rebellious sheep but to guard the others."

"No," I said, "the Son of Man has come to save what is

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lost." I heard God sigh. For a thousand years the children of Israel had been His. And in this time so much had been lost. Now, I waited for Levi.

That evening, on his return, he was distraught; I knew his fear. A man who will drink each day is close to the fears of others; was Levi keen to the wrath waiting for us in Jerusalem?

That night I did much preaching, as if to soothe the unrest in my own heart. In truth, I continued to speak even as I saw the light leave the eyes of my apostles. They had heard my words before. Still, there were new faces among us, and I chose to instruct by parables for I had come to learn that man, having been created by the Lord, possessed much of the Lord's pride; so one learned best when not suffering the yoke of a preacher. It was better to ponder a riddle and feel virtuous if able to solve it.

Therefore, I offered this parable: The Kingdom of Heaven, I told them, was like a man who sowed good seed in his field. As he slept, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the wheat began to grow, the weeds also grew. The owner of the field said to his servants, "Go and reap the wheat and bind the bundles into sheaves, and take the weeds and burn them." So they reaped the wheat and bound the bundles into sheaves. Then the owner of the field said to his servants, "Go and reap the wheat and bind the bundles into sheaves, and take the weeds and burn them." So they reaped the wheat and bound the bundles into sheaves. Then those who listened, one now spoke out: "Should the servants

of the householder separate away such weeds?"

I answered, "No. For you will also uproot the wheat. Let weeds and good grain grow side by side until our harvest. Only then should you bind the weeds in bundles and burn them, even as you bring the wheat into my barn."

Then, however, I was obliged to ponder to what degree good and evil did grow together. Would my Father's angels be able to separate all good from evil at the end? My journeys had taught me how cunning were men. And priests were more cunning still. What if there was a temple before the gate of heaven and it was like a customs' house? Through such gates could pass many an evil person.

Over and over I had been learning that to my fellow men it mattered less whether they were tall or short, lean or wide, of noble features or ugly, even strong or weak: In one way all were the same: they were prominent in their lack of compassion. Greed was their guide.

So, when Peter said to me, "We have forsaken all and followed you; what shall we have in return?" it was a blow. I replied with another parable, and it was for him.

A man hired his laborers for one denari a day and sent

them into his vineyard. But as the hours passed, so did he hire more in the third hour and more again in the sixth and even in the ninth hour. Finding more men and women who were idle, he said, "Why stand ye here?" And they replied, "Because no man has hired us." And he said to them, "Go into the vineyard."

At the end of the day, it was time to reward all who had worked and he told his steward, "Call the laborers and pay them beginning with the last." Each man, those from the first hour and those from the ninth, all received one denari. Since the first had supposed that the last would receive less, they whispered against the good man of the house. But he told them, "Did you not agree to work for one denari? Take what is yours and go. I will give as much to the last man as to you. So will the last be first and the first last. Many may be called but few are chosen." I was uplifted by the strength of my voice and spoke with such force that the Lord whispered: "Enough! In your speech is the seed of much discontent. When you are without Me, the Devil is your near companion." And I felt as if the Lord held a thorn to my brow; I no longer knew what I saw nor to whose voice I

listened. And I understood that to be the Son of God was not equal to being a Prince of Heaven but instead was my apprenticeship in learning how to speak without greed or guilt or anger or the desire to bewilder others with the brilliance of words; it was my duty to speak with wisdom, but simply.

Now, all was in order. We were ready at last to set out for Jerusalem, and it was a good morning. Then came our first steps. We were going to Jerusalem and none of us were without fear. Yet we were touched by happiness that we had not been enslaved by fear. And so our legs knew their own joy.

Then, and only then, did we truly step out. And in the vigor of our march, many began to believe that in two days when we were near enough to see Jerusalem from afar, so would the Kingdom of God appear. The Lord would be among us. And this was true for all of my twelve apostles but Judas. Was he ceasing to believe in me? He said: "In Jerusalem, there will be an open feast in the market. Will you be with us from the first?" I replied, "The world does not hate you, but I am the one who testifies that the works of the world

are evil. Go, if you wish, to this feast. I may choose not to go."

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

And I could hear others murmuring. Afterward, Judas made much of telling me that some in our procession had declared, "He is a good man," but others said, "He deceives the people." And then I knew that I must teach openly.

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So much did this conversation with Judas disturb me that on the road to Jerusalem I found myself in fever. As I walked through desert and then by orchards, my limbs ached, and at night no rest was without pain. And it was the same again on the second morning.

By the second evening, still a full day's march from Jerusalem, we passed through Jericho where a rich man named Zacchaeus wished to welcome me. Many were in the throng, however, and he was a small man; therefore, he climbed into a sycamore tree in order to be seen.

I said: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down. Tonight I will stay at your house."

He received me joyfully. Others said that it was not fitting that I should be the guest of the wealthiest publican in Jericho. But Zacchaeus said: "Lord, now that I know you, half of my goods I will give to the poor."

I was gladdened. For if a rich man could surrender half

of his fortune because he believed in me, then might there not be other walls ready to fall in Jerusalem? That night I slept well in the house of Zacchaeus.

Next morning, however, as we set out, two sisters of my follower Lazarus came to meet us. I had dined with Lazarus who came to see me in Capernaum, and he was a good man. I had felt love for him. Now, his two sisters, Mary and Martha, had walked from his house in Bethany to find me, and they said, "Lord, Lazarus is sick, our Lazarus."

And by the way in which it was spoken, I knew it was a sickness unto death.

They wept. As if I were brother to his illness, my fever came back; my night of rest with Zaccheus was lost. I had to stay for two nights more in his house, and we were still a full day's march from Jerusalem. When I awoke on the fifth morning of our departure from Galilee, I was well in body but otherwise full of woe and I said, "Lazarus is dead."

The apostle Thomas was simple, and often uttered what others thought. Now, he said aloud, "Let us go to Jerusalem so we may die with him." There was much displeasure with Thomas.

We marched all that day and into the evening before we came to Bethany where Lazarus lived not an hour from the walls of Jerusalem. And I could see many Jews on their way to the house of Lazarus. Indeed, his sister, Martha, came out to meet me, and she said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

I was ready to agree with her. Nonetheless, I said, "Your brother shall rise again."

Then came Mary, the other sister, and she sat at my feet and was followed by others also weeping, and when they looked at me, I said, "Where have you laid him?"

"Lord, come and see."

How could I know whether God would grant me the power to return him to his sisters? Lazarus had been dead these two days.

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

They led me to a cave with a stone across the entrance. I said, "Take away the stone."

But Martha said: "Lord, who can now speak for his body?"

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

Then, I was silent. When the spirit left a man, all that was unclean in his spirit was also loosed. So, I waited for the odor of the dead man to insult my nose. Indeed, I asked myself: "How can one raise a man from the dead when it is evil that weighs him down in his tombs?"

The Lord must have heard me, for I saw the face of Lazarus in his tomb. I saw him stir.

Again I cried: "Lazarus, come forth." Then, I heard him answer, even though Lazarus was in his tomb.

"Oh, Master," said Lazarus, "small creatures speak to me, and they say, 'you are not our master, Lazarus, but our wiping-cloth.' Thus speak the maggots."

In prayer, I called upon this pestilence to cease. And it was then that Lazarus rose in his tomb and moved with small steps toward me. And these steps were small because he was still bound in his winding sheet. So was his face also covered. I said to his sisters, "Loosen him, and do so without looking at him."

Then, in the voice of a man who has dwelt in lands that others would never enter, Lazarus said, "Now the maggots have left me." His voice was like the small cry of a bird. But he was alive.

All who witnessed this fell back in wonder. I knew that the high priests and Pharisees of the Temple would soon hear of this, and they would gather in council. For more than a few had seen Lazarus rise and knew that he stank of the grave. So I also knew that the Pharisees would call me a demon for now I even had the power to raise a man who had begun to rot.

I could hear the Chief Priest even as if I were with him: He would declare: "If we leave this Jesus in peace, all Jews will believe in him. In turn, the Romans will believe we are in rebellion. Before it is done, the Romans will take all that we have."

And I knew that this High Priest Caiaphas might even say, "Is it wrong for one man to die so that the rest will not perish?"

That day I did not go to Jerusalem but slept in the house of Lazarus. In the morning when I said goodbye, he was

weak, and his spirit was low. I asked, "Do you believe?" and Lazarus said, "I am frightened of the things I saw when dead. Yet, I try to believe." And in his weakness, he took my arm and said, "But an angel came to me. All is not heavy."

I said to Lazarus: "Do not fear. You are well-favored by the Lord." And to myself I prayed that I was telling the truth.

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Since I wished to enliven my people on our entrance into Jerusalem, I sent forth two of my disciples and said, "Go into the village before us and ask for a colt on whom no man has ever sat, and bring him to me. And if any ask why you do this, tell them that the Lord is in need of such a colt."

And they went away and in the first street of the village, found an ass, young and spirited, and they led him back. And I sat upon this animal who, until now, had been ignorant of a rider, and I held to his mane. For if I could not subdue such a young beast, how then could I calm the uproar in the hearts of men awaiting me at the Temple?

In time, the colt jumped about less, and pranced more, and we were able to walk in procession. And I liked the animal. And I felt as hungry as if I might never eat again.

Whereupon, seeing a fig tree that was heavy with leaves, I trotted toward it in order to take my fill from that tree. Yet, on its branches, I found no ripe figs.

Did an ill wind blow toward us? I said to the fig tree,
"No man may eat fruit from you hereafter!"

A weight came upon my heart, however, 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 heedless destruction."

So I also knew that Satan still held fast to me. Like a hawk aloft who searches the fields for one small creature, then kills, so had I scourged the tree.

Now the multitude who walked in advance of me had taken branches from the palm trees we passed and they strewed them on my path and sang, "Hosannah! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom of our David who comes 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."

I soon forgot the fig tree. These people of Jerusalem (and some had never seen me before) were full of favor; in the windows many waved: Word of our good deeds had come to Jerusalem before us.

Yet the fig tree was not forgotten. Thinking of how its

branches would be bare, I also thought of the city of Tyre. It had dwelt in splendor a thousand years ago, renowned for its tables of ebony, its emeralds, its purple linens and stalls of honey and balm, its coral and agate and chests of cedar. Yet, the sea had washed it away; would this yet be said of Jerusalem, as wealthy in this hour as Tyre once had been?

Here, I gazed upon great white buildings with columns so tall that I could not know whether I beheld a temple, or a seat of Roman government, I said to myself, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches," but the words were too pious (for my heart had leaped at the sight of these riches). So, I also said: "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit. And a great city is like a strange woman."

Yet, I could not scorn Jerusalem. The people of Israel still lived with magnificence even as in the time of King Solomon when his palanquin had been made from the wood of Lebanon, its pillars fashioned of silver, its 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 wondrous was it now.

Yet my followers could show no such glory. I saw a Roman noble stop before our procession, and look at our hundreds walking by twos and by three and four in the lane. Some were well attired, but most of my multitude were in rags and bits of colored clothing.

I, too, now stared at them as if I had never before seen such a throng. The people of Jerusalem were joining us in large numbers; and I was seeing as many faces as there are aspects of man; 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, and these last were accompanying us to jeer at the Pharisees and thereby repay them for old rebukes.

Some of these new followers were solemn and in their eyes shone the hope that I might provide new piety more solemn than their old piety, now drab in their hearts from too much repetition of the same prayers. And there were children who looked on all the sights and laughed at the wonder of God's bounty when it came to the faces of people; they were the closest to joy. There were also men with the fearful dissatisfaction of boredom on their brow.

And there were the poor. In their eyes was great need and new hope and much depth of sorrow; they had been disappointed many times. And I spoke to all, good and evil equally, as if they were one, since changes for the better can occur at times like these. In a bad man, evil and good shift more quickly than in a good man, but then, many bad men are quick to know their sins and feel weary of their struggle to resist remorse.

As the throng deepened, so was the colt full of many wicked spirits but they were young and without the foul odors of more practised devils. Still, my beast would buck, and I knew it was in his mind to cast me over his mane onto the stones of the road. Yet, I rode him. He was the colt for me. And for this moment, I felt like the master of good and evil.

Only in this moment. For soon my expectation of reaching the Temple grew solemn with awe, and again I was no more than a Jew with a modest trade approaching a great and consecrated edifice, indeed, a Temple of all temples, and they had built it on a mount.

Even before it appeared in my view, I knew that its

steps would rise from courtyard to courtyard, facing ever more august chapels and sacred sanctuaries, and there would be one chamber which only the High Priest could enter and on only one day of the year. For it was the Holy of Holies. I was the Son of God, but I was also the child of my mother and so my respect for the Temple grew larger on each breath than my urge to change all that was within. I shivered when the multitude in front of me, on mounting an incline in the road, began to cheer for it was clear that my first sight, this day, of the Temple walls would be over that rise.

But as I came on the sight, I also knew that the future of this magnificence was in peril; in years to come, enemies would besiege it on every side, and they would tear down the walls until nothing would remain but one wall and hardly a 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 openly at the first sight of the Great Temple. It was beautiful, but I knew that it was not eternal. And I thought of the words of Amos who had said: "The houses of ivory shall perish."

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Having climbed the steps at the entrance, I came into the Temple itself. Beyond the first gate, there was a large court and it was filled with men of Mammon. Here was a place where all could exchange money and goods. And how much one had to admire the beards of these men! For they had been curled by a warm iron, and were immaculate in their pride. These moneylenders looked like peacocks. So looked the priests who moved among them. All was vanity.

Great was my rage at the sight of these rich men. At home, their tables would be enriched with every bounty of food while the poor sat in the stinking alleys of the city.

Like the robe of a high priest that others will not dare to touch became the silence that I wrapped about me, and I sat alone on a stone bench and beheld how people cast money into the great box. Many who were rich cast much. But then, came a poor woman and her shawl was threadbare; she threw in her small coin. My heart leaped.

I called to those disciples who were near, and said: "This poor woman has put in more than all the rich. They leave a tithe of their abundance, while she gave her living for this day. So she has turned money into tribute to God in the same hour that the wealthy give only to impress each other."

I thought of money, and how it was a stinking beast whose offerings were eaten with slobberings of greed. Once a day, these men of Mammon could leave off from such frenzy to drop their shekel into the great box. And I thought of how the rich are choked with the weight of gold. Their gardens can grow no fruit to satisfy them. For there is oppression in the perfume of the air. How can a rich man's blooms bring happiness to his eye when the rich man's neighbor, if he is wealthier, can display gardens of greater beauty? So are the rich always envious, and without rest, for they are always in search of other men's gold.

Here, in the outer court of the Temple, surrounded by these moneylenders, I spoke to all and my voice was strong. I said: "No man can pay allegiance to two masters. For he will cling to the one he needs and despise the other. You

cannot serve God and Mammon."

But I thought again of how these wealthy men would not hear my words.

Then I heard the Devil speak to me for the first time since I had been with him on the mountain, and he said: "Before it is over, those who are wealthy will possess you as well. And they will put images of you upon their wall. Your name and the alms raised in your name, will enrich the treasure of mighty churches; men will worship you most when you belong to me as much as to Him. Which is just. For I am equal to Him." And he laughed. He knew 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?"

The Lord now chose to reply in my other ear: "All he says makes sense until it does no longer. 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. He scorns those who are modest but remain with Me."

And this was more than my Father ever said again about

Satan, but it gave no force to my faith. Did my Father speak well of the meek because only they would remain loyal to Him and to me? How full of chaos was such a thought. I fell prey to a wrath greater than any I had known before.

For I could see the eyes of the moneylenders and their greed was as sharp as the point of a spear; the rage of Isaiah came to me. In his words I cried out: "These tables are a pool of vomit. In such filth, nothing is clean!"

And I overturned the tables before me, throwing them over with all the money that was on them, and I exulted as the coins gave small cries on striking the cobblestones of the courtyard. And each possessor ran after his loss like vermin on the hunt for smaller vermin. But to me the gold coins looked like the swine of Gadarene as they rushed into the sea.

Then, I knocked over the seats of those who sold doves, and opened the cages. On this commotion of wings, the multitude behind me came forward and cheered at this defiance of usury.

I said: "My house shall be known before all nations as a house of prayer. Whereas you, men of Mammon, have made it

a den of thieves."

Indeed it was the truth. Men who sought Mammon were thieves, even if they had never stolen a cup of wheat. Yet their greed robbed all who would emulate them of a sense of virtue.

Soon, the scribes and priests would be speaking of this in all the temples within this Great Temple. For they, like the moneylenders, also kept separate accounts with God and Mammon and so could water all the vines of cupidity that grew from one side of their soul to the other.

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In the midst of such disorder among the tables, I said:
"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

Then one of the moneylenders spoke, a stout old man, but with clear eyes: "It took forty-six years to build this Temple. And you will rebuild it in three days?"

I could wonder at what I had said. For there were many in this multitude ready to tear down all that did not belong to them. Even the thought of such destruction, once spoken aloud, could do great harm in days to come. Harsh words live in the dungeons of the heart, and never relent and never forgive. Still I had said it.

I knew regret. Here were many buildings of immaculate beauty. If I had been but a pilgrim wandering these halls, I would have been wondrously impressed by the skills of the builders.

By such thinking did I calm myself. By such thinking did I remind myself 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 His rage there with mine? And was He not telling me now to be gentle? I said to my followers, "Respect our Temple. These moneylenders are the leavings of evil that can be scrubbed quickly from the stone. Come with me further into the holy places, and I will teach."

I led them to a quiet garden that was above another rising of stairs and between two small chapels; indeed there was even a cedar to give shade. Then, as I had foreseen, a delegation came of priests and scribes and many of the elders of Jerusalem to say: "We have been awaiting thee. But we do not understand the manner of your arrival. Who gave 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 you not believe John?' Yet if we say that John was of men, then they will all know that he was a prophet."

Indeed these priests of the Temple depended much on

pious Jews, and such Jews knew that their priests were often friendly with the Romans. So, the priests would not say that John had been a prophet, since they would then be asked: why had they not interceded with the Romans?

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

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

A scribe came forward. He approached with such ease that I knew he was from a noble family and educated. His eyes were blue and his brown beard was soft, and he smiled as if he were full of affection for me and he said, "Master,"-- which, after the disruption I had caused in the courtyard, was a courtesy; if he could not approve of such an act, he still would call me "Master." And so, "Master," he said, "we know that you want to teach the way of truth. Therefore I would ask for an answer to this question. It is of weight to us and gives to much dispute. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar? Or, shall we not give?"

With all the gentle warmth that this man offered, I also knew that the Devil had minions who were as fair. If I replied that one must not give tribute to Caesar, which was

the reply, I expect, that he awaited, then these Pharisees could tell the Procurator of Jerusalem that I was in rebellion against the Romans. Yet my wit, in this hour, was like an arrow, and I said, "Give me a penny."

When they brought it, I asked, "Whose is this image?"

He replied, "Caesar's."

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 saying that Mammon was the god appropriate to the Romans and not to the Jews.

By their murmur, I knew that this scribe and these Pharisees were marveling at how I had eluded their snare. I could feel their respect. Now they saw that I had the strength to overturn the tables of the moneylenders and the wisdom to avoid a rash reply.

Later, upon reflection, I would also know that my remark had been too clever. Many a church would survive in evil lands on the strength of these words. I was not here to build churches, but to bring sinners to salvation. Why, then, had I given such a reply? Had God decided that prudence was the better path, and so He would allow churches to be built in the swamps of pride and Mammon?

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As I was preparing to teach in this courtyard, I could see that the scribe who addressed me as Master wanted to continue our discourse. He asked, "Master, which is the first commandment of them all?"

I answered, "'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.' This must be the first commandment."

"What is the second?" asked the scribe.

"To love thy neighbor as thyself."

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

And I said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."

He was very wise. Perhaps he was the Master of the Book in this Great Temple. His manners were as subtle as his well-curled beard. And his speech was as handsome as his appearance. Yet, if he had a fine face, still his eyes were

as pale as the blue of the sky when the sky appears almost as white. So, I did not trust him. Still, I listened as he said: "We are all circumcized, and we share a single faith. Many of us in this Temple believe that you have not come here to rend us asunder, but to bring us nearer to one another, and this we still believe even though disruption has followed you like dust before a storm." He paused to great effect among all who were listening and said, "Notwithstanding, there are storms that cleanse. So I would ask of you, Master, when will the Kingdom of God be with us?"

As he spoke, I could hear the two voices that live side by side in many a Pharisee. Their speech is often endowed with good manners, yet there is also quiet mockery in their voices and this is as finely sifted into their courtesies as powder into sand. Still I listened carefully for he was not without desire to believe that I might be the Son of Man. It was possible that those priests who had sent him were also ready to listen.

We spoke as men who were equal and showed much courtesy toward each other. Only in the second hour did he reveal his knowledge of the scrolls, and thereby begin a gentle dispute

over the working of cures on the Sabbath.

"Do you recall the verse," he asked, "that says: '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 to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. But the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him." And the congregation took him outside the camp and did stone him and he died.'" Then the scribe said, "That was a thousand years ago, and our congregation today would not stone such a man. Yet does not the principle remain? You shall not work on the Sabbath."

I replied that I had answered this question many times but now would content myself by saying: "If you circumcize a babe on the Sabbath, then you may also lift the scales from the blind and flex the limbs of the halt."

But here he began to speak with such skill that I did not know how or where to interrupt.

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, even as the Prophet Samuel said to King

Saul: 'Rebellion is the sin of witchcraft.' And if you do come from Him whom you will not declare but wish us to believe is still the Lord, then why do you not say as much? For if you do not, suffering could result from your good deeds. Your cures will appear to us as witchcraft that is full of the bright fire of rebellion. We in the Temple fear that fire. We have labored for ten hundred years to learn what is in the Book. Many have died for the five Books of the Torah. And with the belief that we keep, we have built the walls of this place and are able to live by the light within, that is, the same light which is provided by the deeds of our martyrs. They died for our scrolls and our laws. So I would remind you, even as it is written in First Maccabees, that King Antiochus, a heathen king, was set over us, and he declared to his whole kingdom that we should now be one people, Jews and gentiles alike. And all would obey the laws of his religion which was not ours.

"The gentiles agreed. To our shame, many Israelites also consented to this religion which worshipped before idols. So many of us agreed that the only clear measure of a man who was still a good Jew was that you could kill him

before he would profane the Sabbath.

"And then King Antiochus commanded all Jews to keep their children uncircumcized. Whoever did not obey, would die. Good Israelites had to flee Jerusalem and live in secret places. In return, the priests of King Antiochus placed swine upon the altar for sacrifice. And whoever was found with the Book was put to death. When his soldiers found infants who were circumcized, they hung them and their doctors.

"We learned then," said the scribe, "that the Book could not restrain evil, unless all of us gave absolute obedience to the laws of the Book. So, as we listen to what you say, we also wait to hear 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, you encourage publicans, sinners, and even the uncircumcized. You rush to destroy all that you have learned from the Sabbath in all the years of your schooling. Blind rejection can be as evil as idolatry."

As the scribe continued to speak, there were more and more sounds of assent among those who listened. Some of my own people were muttering that he was right, and many had

wept on hearing of the death of so many Jews and so many circumcized babies.

I was slow to reply. "Do not think," I told him, "that I am here to deny the law, or the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Here I stopped and looked into his pale blue eyes. "Unless the righteousness of my followers exceeds the righteousness of your scribes and Pharisees, we shall not 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, one a Pharisee, the other a publican. And the Pharisee stood and prayed: 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men who are extortioners, or unjust, or adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess.'

"The publican did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven but struck himself on the breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' I tell you this man is to be praised more than the other. For he who is humble shall be exalted."

Before he could reply, I added: "All that you say is just if people observe the Book. But they do not. This land

of Israel has committed great sins in departing from the Lord, until the Lord now looks upon the people of Israel as living in whoredom. So we must search for a way to save the whore."

The scribe answered in a tone so light and so full of the wings of confidence that his words danced upon his tongue; in that moment I heard Satan stir in his throat. For he said: "Save the whore? Yes, you will finish by saying to gentiles, a people who are not your people, 'You are my people,' and they will say, 'You are my God.'" And the scribe laughed softly. All the mockery he had mixed like powder into the fine sand of his courtesy settled over me as if he had seen all things evil and wise where I had not. So he knew to a certainty that gentiles were ignorant and worshipped statues whereas he, like other good Pharisees, was of the Chosen.

I did not speak until I could find the words of the passages I sought. And then, I spoke in Hebrew even as I had read it in the Book. "From the words of Ezekiel," I said: "'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," the scribe answered, "are kin to me? Can it be that this is what you say?"

I was thinking that even a drunken man would know better than I what it was now politic to say. I was lacking in all knowledge of how to offer what would obtain the most and offend the least. But then I had no desire for that. I wanted these Pharisees to remember my words forever.

"I look," I told the scribe, "to gather my flock from all places, from wherever they have been scattered. So I do not despise those who are uncircumcized, nor those who are ignorant of the Book."

"Are you saying that you would give a light to the gentiles?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "that would be for the salvation of all."

The scribe was silent; I think he was weary. He had not believed that I could use the words of the Book to defend such things. The great prophets had dreamed of the hour when God would bring salvation to Israel, but it had not come to

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pass. Was the scribe wondering whether this Galilean with his crude peasants could know more about salvation than our heroes and prophets and the kings of the glorious and holy past?

I continued to speak. "The Lord," I said, "has made my mouth a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden me, and said, 'Raise up the tribes of Jacob and the strong reserve of Israel,' but He also said to me, 'I will give you a light to the gentiles in order that you may be My salvation unto all the ends of the earth.'"

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

I replied, "It is what my Father has said."